

# **Windham Town Plan**

**Adopted  
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## **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

### **A. Objective of the Windham Town Plan**

The Plan for the Town of Windham should provide for an understanding of where the Town came from, its current attributes and assets, and a clear direction that the property owners of the Town desire to continue. It also provides planning policies to assure that decisions made at the regional and state levels agree with the objectives and policies of the Town.

### **B. Statement of Policy & Purpose**

There are many factors which contribute to the current status of the 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 lack of objectionable noise. 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 Timberside. The buildings themselves have tended to be two stories or less, and be clustered in these areas. This results in the maximum amount of open land.

The Windham Town Plan reflects the Planning Commission's perception of the trends and pressures affecting our Town. It is a guide to future growth and development of land. We commit to maintain Windham's natural resources and physical features. Growth, which is good for the Town should enhance the social, environmental, cultural, and economic values of our rural community. The ability of taxpayers to support the Town on a sound financial basis must be taken into consideration.

In order to obtain 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. Discourage 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.
3. Identify and conserve both natural and man-made resources that have significant economic value to the citizens of Windham, such as mineral deposits, prime agricultural lands, water supplies, forests, and public facilities.

### **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 of the Plan's recommendations. Consideration was also given to population and employment characteristics, housing needs and types, patterns and rates of growth, classes of use of land, community finances, history, land suitability, and the location of future growth. The Plan contains all ten required elements, addresses each of the goals stated in 24 VSA Section 4302, and is consistent 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**

A town plan, properly prepared and well thought out, is a blueprint to guide both elected and appointed town officials, citizen boards, state agencies, regulatory boards and commissions, developers, and residents in fulfilling the visualized future condition of the Town. The Town Plan is not meant to discriminate 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 serves 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 may also consider the impact on the town plan. Therefore, although the plan's recommendations may be for the long term, they may 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 has strong intentions of ensuring a requirement is accomplished.

## **F. Organization of the Town Plan**

The Town Plan is divided into chapters which contain descriptive material concerning natural resources; energy; land use; community facilities and services; transportation; historic, recreational and scenic resources; and housing. Each chapter includes *Policies* which help define the direction the Town will take and *Actions* which provide the Town with suggested action steps which will make implementation of policies 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 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 townspeople 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 held to build a school. At 22 feet squared feet, 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 building 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. Geographic 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 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 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 operations have been removed.

### C. Population

The 2000 US Census reported Windham with a population of 328. 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 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Windham began to experience population growth. From 1970-2000, Windham's population has nearly doubled.

**Table 1: Population Trends** (Source: U.S. Census, UVM Center for Rural Studies)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Annual Population</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>
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	

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 suggests that Windham will continue to experience a steady growth over the next 10 years.

**Table 2: Windham Population Projection 2000-2015** (Source: VT Department of Aging & Independent Living, MISER Population Projections 2003)

<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%

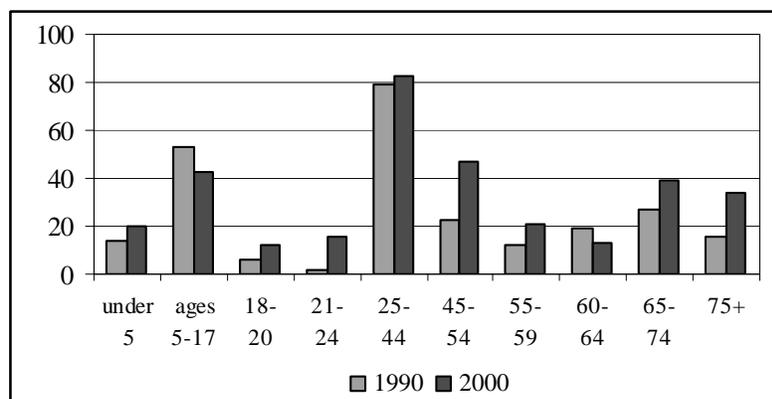
Table 3 shows Windham's growth as compared with data from its neighboring towns in Windham and Windsor counties. While Windham was the fastest growing town when looking at the percent change in the population, all of the neighboring towns but Grafton had larger increases in the actual population numbers than Windham.

**Table 3: Population Trends in Nearby Towns** (Source: U.S. Census, UVM Center for Rural Studies)

<i>Town</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>	<i>Actual Change</i>
Windham	251	328	47%	77
Londonderry	1,506	1,709	13%	203
Jamaica	754	946	25%	192
Townshend	1,019	1,149	13%	130
Grafton	602	649	8%	47
Chester	2,832	3,044	8%	212
Andover	373	496	33%	123

The age distribution in Windham has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years. There have been some changes, however, and they appear to reflect two population trends. The more dramatic of the two trends is the continue aging of the Baby Boomer population. The Baby Boomers are an unusually large segment of population throughout the United States who were born following World War II. Most of them are now between the ages of 40 to 58 years of age. The second trend is the general increase in the proportion of residents over the age of 65 years of age. In 2000, they represented 22% of the population as compared to 17% of the population in 1990.

**Figure 1: Town of Windham Age Distribution** (Source: US Census)



#### **D. Housing**

Windham had a total of 354 housing units in 2000. Table 4 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 continually had more seasonal units than owner occupied units. Annual Town Reports provide further evidence of the fact that the majority of homes in Windham are for seasonal use. Table 5 shows the distribution of parcel types in Windham and the number of parcels with vacation homes outnumber the number of parcels classified as residential.

In 2000, of the 150 occupied housing units, 84% were owner-occupied, with the remaining 16% being renter occupied. The number of owner occupied and renter occupied housing increased between 1990 and 2000. This is an indication that there was growth in the year round residential population of the town. Between 1980 and 1990 there was a significant increase in seasonal housing. This was concurrent with the expansion of the nearby ski resorts. In between 1990 and 2000 there was a decrease in the number of actual seasonal units, possibly the result of seasonal homes being converted to year-round residences.

**Table 4: Housing by Unit Type** (Source U.S. Census)

<i>Unit Type</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>% Change 1980-1990</i>	<i>% Change 1990-2000</i>
Owner Occupied	80	86	126	8%	47%
Renter Occupied	11	15	24	36%	60%
Seasonal	106	198	182	87%	-8%
Vacant	109	35	22	-68%	-37%
Total Units	306	334	354	9%	6%

**Table 5: Parcel Ownership** (Source: Windham Town Plans and 2004 Windham Town Report)

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

Windham is predominantly a community of single-family detached home. Table 6 shows the number of housing units by the number of units in the structure.

**Table 6: Number of Units in Structures** (Source: 2000 U.S. Census)

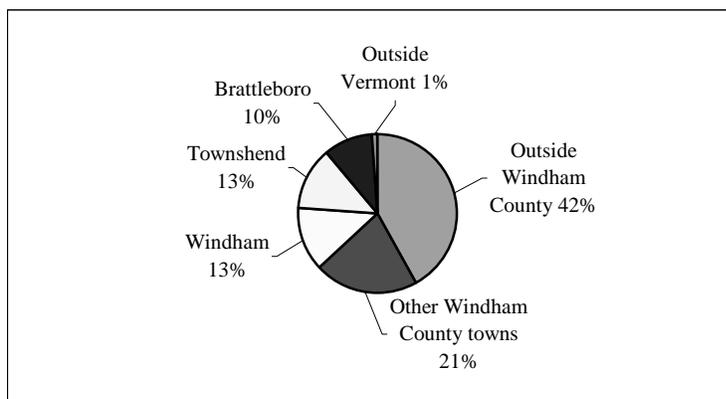
<i>Units in Structure</i>	<i>Actual Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1-unit, detached	349	92%
1-unit, attached	8	2%
2 units	7	2%
3 or more units	0	--
Mobile Home	15	4%

## **E. Economy**

At the time of the 2000 Census, 178 Windham residents aged 16 and over were employed in the regional work force. This compares to 96 in the 1990 Census. Part of this increase is likely a reflection of the increased population in the Town. The 2000 Census indicated that 13% of the Windham residents that are employed work in Town. The majority of residents work outside of

Town. Figure 2 shows the distribution of locations in which Windham residents reported working.

**Figure 2: Place of Work** (Source: 2000 Census)



Windham residents are employed in a variety of industries. The 2000 Census indicated that 26%, the largest percentage (26%) of Windham residents were employed in the education, health and social service fields. Four people reported working in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations.

The median household income in Windham, according to the 2000 Census, was \$39,659. In 1990, the median household income was \$26,250. After adjusting the 1990 median household income of \$26,250 for inflation (\$34,585), it is apparent that the median household income has increased. Table 7 shows that the percentage of households making between \$35,000 and \$50,000 more than doubled between 1990 and 2000. According to the Census, 6% of the town's population fell below the poverty level in 2000.

**Table 7: Household Income in Windham** (Source: US Census)

<i>Income</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>% of Households 1990</i>	<i>% of Households 2000</i>
less than \$15,000	15	18	14%	12%
\$15,000-\$35,000	52	32	50%	22%
\$35,000-\$50,000	15	52	14%	35%
\$50,000+	23	45	22%	31%
total number of households	105	147		

## **CHAPTER III COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Community facilities and utilities are the infrastructure provided by the Town of Windham, or provided in cooperation with the Town, for the health, safety, benefit and enjoyment of the general public. These include municipal government, emergency services, schools, solid waste disposal, and recreational facilities.

### **A. TOWN GOVERNMENT AND FACILITIES**

#### **1. Government**

The official business of the Town is conducted at the annual Town Meeting held in March and at occasional special Town Meetings. The three-member Selectboard conducts most of the regular business of the Town between Town Meetings. All elected officials are chosen by Australian Ballot and, with the exception of education items which are voted on at the appropriate school district meeting, the other items on the Warrant are voted on at the Town Meeting. The Town functions through the active participation of its residents and volunteer groups. Residents serve on boards and committees. Various ordinances and bylaws are in force in Windham, including, but not limited to the Zoning Regulation and Traffic Ordinance, Dog Ordinance and Road Ordinance.

#### **2. Facilities**

The following facilities are owned by the Town of Windham (see Utilities and Community Facilities Map for locations):

- **Town Office** - The Town Office is located on Windham Hill Road, adjacent to Windham Elementary School. It is a new building that was erected in 2001. In addition to housing the Town Clerk and the Town Treasurer, the Listers have an office which they share with the Zoning Administrator, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Adjustment. The Selectboard's office also has meeting space that is used by the various boards.
- **Town Garage** - The Town Garage is located on Windham Hill Road. It houses the town highway maintenance equipment. A covered salt and sand shed is also located on the property.
- **Windham Meetinghouse** – The Windham Meetinghouse is located on Windham Hill Road. Built in 1802, the Meetinghouse contains the Town Hall which is owned by the Town and the Congregational Church. The Meetinghouse is located in the Windham Historic District which is on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Windham Town Library** - The Windham Town Library is located within the Windham Meetinghouse. The Library offers programming for both adults and children. Membership is free and books and videos are available for borrowing. It is open from 3-5 on Wednesdays and during the Windham Day Camp. The Library offers many programs including a Swap Table, a reading group, a knitting class and a writing class.

- **Town Cemeteries** - The Town maintains cemeteries, each under the supervision of a separate cemetery commission. There are four cemeteries in Windham: Center Cemetery, North Windham Cemetery, West Windham Cemetery, and Woodburn Cemetery.
- **Windham Elementary School** - The Windham Elementary School is located on Windham Hill Road.

**Policy 1: Provide as efficient, effective, and convenient municipal services as is possible keeping within the financial capabilities of the Town.**

*Actions*

1. Promote volunteerism and recruit to fill vacancies on Town committees as appropriate.
2. Continue to evaluate and strengthen local government with technical assistance from appropriate state and regional agencies.
3. Encourage the use of the Windham Elementary School facility by community groups.

**Policy 2: Enhance library services.**

*Actions*

1. Increase funding to the Windham Library so that the Library can meet the State of Vermont's minimum standards.
2. Provide a public access internet station at the Library.

**B. COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**1. Solid Waste Disposal**

Windham is a member of the Londonderry Group Solid Waste District which includes the towns of Landgrove, Londonderry, Peru, and Weston. Town residents utilize the Waste Disposal Center in Londonderry.

**2. Education**

Windham is a member of the Windham Central Supervisory Union, which includes the towns of Jamaica, Townshend, Newfane, Brookline, Marlboro, Wardsboro, Dover, and Winhall and is also a member of the Leland & Gray Union. Middle and High School (grades 7 through 12) are provided at Leland & Gray Union High School which is located in Townshend. The facility currently has a student body of approximately 400.

Windham Elementary School provides education for kindergarten through grade 6. An addition to the school was completed in 1996 and the school provides for an enrollment of 30 children. The population at the school has generally remained between 24 and 32 students. No significant change in the student census is projected and therefore expansion of the facility is not anticipated to be required.

### 3. Child Care

The population of Windham has grown by 30.7% between 1990 and 2000. In 2000, 19% of the population was under the age of eighteen with 6% (20 children) under the age of five and 13% (43 children) between the ages of six and seventeen. In 1990, 4% of the population was under age five.

In 2000, 91 families were residents of Windham with 35% (32 families) of these families having children under the age of 18. Of the families with children under age 18, 16% were single parent homes headed by a female with no husband present. This percentage was smaller than both the Vermont (19%) and the Windham County (22%) average.

There has been both an increase in the number of children under the age of 5 as well as the number of residents since 1990. According to the 2002 Windham County Vermont Child Care Needs Assessment, Vermont has a larger percentage of women in the workforce. If these trends continue it is possible that there will be an increase in the number of families needing child care.

As of April 2006, the Vermont Department for Children and Families reported that there were no registered or licensed child care facilities in the Town of Windham. Child care facilities can be found in some of the towns that surround Windham including Grafton, Londonderry, Townshend, and Chester.

### 4. Senior Services

As a small, rural town, Windham depends on regional services to offer opportunities for its seniors. Some of the services that they can take advantage of include:

- **Meals on Wheels** – While there are no community dinners held in Windham, residents can take advantage of meals in the neighboring towns of Grafton, Londonderry, and Townshend. The Council on Aging for Southeastern Vermont (COASEV) also coordinates home delivery of meals by using volunteer networks that bring the meal to the individuals.
- **Transportation** - Local transit services are provided by CT River Transit. They provide transportation for Medicaid recipients; non-Medicaid medical transportation for life threatening conditions, and bus service for groups of people as long as 20% of the cost of the service is recovered from donations.
- **Housing** - The Smith Haven Home in neighboring South Londonderry is the closest subsidized housing facility, offering 24 units for the elderly. The West River Valley Senior Housing complex in Townshend was completed in 2007 with 24 units in affordable housing and 28 units for assisted living. Other senior housing opportunities are available in the Windham Region.
- **Socializing** – Regular meeting for friendship, expressing concerns and connecting with others in the community.

COASEV also provides support services to seniors aged 60 years and older living independently. This organization can assist seniors in obtaining information on caregiver support, nutrition and legal services, transportation, housing, as well as many other services.

## **5. Recreation**

Windham's recreational resources are predominantly based on its natural resources. There is a playground and an adjacent area that can accommodate field games such as soccer at the Elementary School. In July, the Windham Day Camp is operated for children ages 3 to 12 at the Windham Meeting House. Funding for the camp is provided by donations and camp fees. Other recreational facilities include the Tater Hill Golf Club which provides 18 holes of golf. There are 3 major ski areas (Magic Mtn., Bromley Mtn, and Stratton Mtn.) that are located within 25 miles of Windham. School children are accommodated at some of the ski areas.

## **6. Fire and Emergency Services**

The Town of Windham is served by a voluntary fire department located in North Windham. A two-bay garage houses equipment consisting of two fire trucks and a water tanker. The Windham Volunteer Fire Company is a member of the Tri-Mountain Mutual Aid. Emergency services in Windham are provided by the Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad, Inc. This is a volunteer non-profit organization which is funded through donations. The Town is part of the Enhanced 911 state service.

## **7. Police**

Windham is served by a constable. In addition, the State Police are on call for emergencies.

## **8. Health Services**

Healthcare services are available in nearby towns. Medical care is usually obtained at one of the area facilities including Grace Cottage Hospital in Townshend or the Mountain Valley Medical Clinic in Londonderry. The Mountain Valley Medical Clinic is a non-profit organization that is supported by its own fundraising, volunteers, and community stipends and fees. Other health services in the area include the Ellsworth Home Health Agency, Visiting Nurses Alliance and Health Care and Rehabilitation Services of Southeastern Vermont along with nearby regional hospitals in Springfield and Lebanon, New Hampshire.

## **9. Community Service and Education**

The Windham Community Organization (WCO) provides financial and other assistance to families experiencing short term needs and sponsors activities and education to encourage a strong sense of community.

## **10. Public Utilities**

Electric service in Windham is provided by Central Vermont Public Service. The Vermont Electric Power Company maintains a major transmission line that runs north to south through Town. There are two different phone companies providing service to customers in town, Verizon and VTel, Vermont's largest independent telephone company. VTel services the northern part of Town and offer Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) which provides high-speed downloading Internet connections. DSL provides an "always on" access through a permanent internet connection which may be over existing telephone lines and is great for home or small business use.

Verizon, which serves the majority of Windham residents, operates their service in Windham over antiquated copper lines and from a switching station in Jamaica that has old and faulty equipment. The discrepancy in service between Verizon and VTel has become a source of

frustration for the many of Verizon customers in Windham. Service reliability is critical for the safety and economy of Windham. While it is possible for one company to buy out the other company's facilities, this is not usually done at the small local scale.

**Policy 1: Maintain effective safety services.**

*Actions*

1. Continue to provide financial support to the Windham Volunteer Fire Company so that an effective fire protection and fire prevention system can be maintained.
2. Continue to work with neighboring communities to ensure adequate ambulance services for the Town.
3. Ensure adequate police services for the Town by periodically reviewing the adequacy of the police protection available to residents.

**Policy 2: Provide the highest quality education as is possible while keeping within the financial capabilities of the Town.**

*Actions*

1. Monitor population and school enrollment trends to address future needs in an efficient manner.
2. Plan cooperatively with the Windham Central Supervisory Union and Leland and Gray Union to prevent undue burdens on the schools and Town.

**Policy 3: Support Town and regional efforts to increase the availability and affordability of childcare.**

*Actions*

1. Monitor the demand for childcare in Windham.
2. Continue to allow state registered or licensed child care facilities serving 6 or fewer children as a permitted use of a single-family home in accordance with state law.

**Policy 4: Promote the well being and quality of life for seniors in Windham.**

*Action*

1. Engage in public awareness activities to inform community members of services available to seniors.

**Policy 5: The development and provision of public utility facilities and services should be based upon projection of reasonably expected population increase and economic growth and shall recognize the limits of the town's human, financial and natural resources.**

*Action*

1. Natural and cultural resource areas, as identified in this Plan, shall be avoided in the location or routing of new power and phone lines and substations.

2. The Town of Windham shall consider the visual impacts of the siting of utility poles, and transmission and distribution line route shall be designed to minimize aesthetic impacts. Use of wood support structures, appropriate conductor colors for the background are required and direct burial is encouraged.

**Policy 6: Advocate for Verizon line upgrades to ensure service reliability in Windham.**

*Action*

1. Send letters to the Public Service Board and Verizon expressing concerns over Verizon's service in Windham.

**Policy 7: Promote efficient and environmentally sound solid waste disposal.**

*Action*

1. Support local recycling efforts.

**C. LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING**

The Town of Windham supports emergency planning and disaster preparedness. Planning and preparedness may help reduce the risk to life and health, the damage to public and private property and the environmental damage that often occurs as a result of a disaster. Also, this encourages the Town to prepare calmly and realistically for likely emergencies; to know the location of resources and equipment that will be needed; to inform residents of the potential dangers and the ways to avoid these potential dangers; and to quickly arrange for help when it is needed.

The Federal Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act requires that when certain quantities of hazardous materials are stored at a facility, they must be reported to state and local officials. According to the 2003 list of Vermont's Tier II sites, the Windham Mine, Hamm Mine, and Town Garage are listed as storing hazardous chemicals at such a quantity to require reporting to the State and local fire department.

According to the 1977 Flood Hazard Boundary Maps, the middle and south branches of the Williams River, Saxtons River, and Burbee Pond have areas in the 100-year floodplain. Flooding is a serious problem in Windham. The Town experienced extensive public and private property damage as the result of significant flooding over the period of July 21 through August 18, 2003, resulting in approximately \$700,000 in damages. The storm all but destroyed Route 121 and was so significant that the Town had to obtain financial aid from a local bank in order to subsidize the repairs. This disaster was declared a federal emergency and federal funding was provided for road assessment and repairs.

Windham does not have Flood Hazard Regulations and therefore is not eligible to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Without flood hazard regulations that meet the NFIP minimum standards, property owners with structures in the flood plain are not able to purchase flood insurance. Without flood insurance, property owners may find it difficult to obtain financing for damages resulting from a flood event. The NFIP is a Federal program

enabling property owners in participating communities to purchase insurance protection against losses from flooding. This insurance is designed to provide an insurance alternative to disaster assistance to meet the escalating costs of repairing damage to buildings and their contents caused by floods. Participation in the NFIP is based on an agreement between the Town and the Federal Government that states if a community will adopt and enforce a floodplain management ordinance to reduce future flood risks to new construction in Special Flood Hazard Areas, the Federal Government will make flood insurance available within the community as a financial protection against flood losses.

There are open mine pits at the U.S. Talc/North Windham Talc Mine which have been subject to flooding. This is serious concern to the residents of Windham and is something that must be addressed in order to prevent damage to neighboring properties.

**Policy 1: Land subject to periodic flooding shall be limited to development which will not restrict, accelerate, or divert the flow of flooded waters and thereby endanger the health, safety, and welfare of the public during flooding.**

*Action*

1. Adopt a Flood Hazard Regulation and participate in the National Flood Insurance Program.

**Policy 2: All new public and private roads and driveways shall be properly constructed so that they do not contribute to the damage of Town roads from run-off.**

*Action*

1. Continue to enforce the Windham Road Ordinance. Review the Ordinance and update as necessary.

**Policy 3: Work with state and local emergency preparedness organizations.**

*Actions*

1. Annually update the Rapid Response Plan for the Town.
2. Adopt an all hazards pre-disaster mitigation plan.
3. Adopt the regional multi-jurisdictional pre-disaster mitigation plan.
4. Install generator to support town office and school.

## CHAPTER IV NATURAL RESOURCES

### A. LAND RESOURCES

#### 1. Forest Resources

Windham has abundant forest cover throughout the Town. The Town is fortunate that it retains several areas of large, unbroken forest. In 2001, Windham's citizens voted to amend the Windham Zoning Regulations to create four Forest zoning districts within the town. These areas are shown on the future land use map that is included in this Plan. It is the policy of the Town of Windham that land uses and development in these Forest Resource districts be limited to forestry, agriculture, mineral resource extraction, recreation, and low density residential uses, as specified in the zoning regulation. Commercial uses other than those related to the foregoing are not permitted in the Forest districts. State regulatory boards and commissions, and other users of this plan, shall consider both the provisions of this Plan and the provisions of the Windham Zoning Bylaw when making determinations of the Town's intentions for the future use and development of the lands within the Forest districts.

The Town's forestland is managed by private landowners. The Styles Brook Tract, currently owned by Meadowsend Timberlands, is one of the largest contiguous, privately owned parcels of forestland in Windham County. It is currently managed for long term timber production. With so much forest land in private ownership, the challenge for Windham is to ensure the health of its forest ecosystems, water quality, ridgelines and wildlife while also sustaining the economic health of the forest industry.

With over 93% percent of the Town made up of forestland, careful consideration must be given to the sustainability of this resource in the town planning process. While it is important to track the resources or potential resources in each forest parcel, it is also critical to look beyond parcel lines and understand the forest landscape without divisions. Below are the important aspects that Windham must protect:

- **Wildlife habitat** - Diversity of forest type is essential in preserving wildlife habitats. It is important to evaluate existing wildlife habitats and to consider those in the forest planning process so as to avoid forest use conflicting with wildlife preservation.
- **Recreation** - Windham's natural environment is a tremendous resource in regards to outdoor recreation. Residents have enjoyed the use of forest land belonging to many private landowners. Recreational use requires tracts of connected land. Windham's forested land offers recreational opportunities such as camping, hunting, and fishing. Informal and formal trails provide for hiking, biking, skiing, snowmobiling, and other recreational pursuits.
- **Aesthetic Values** - Scenic landscape is an important resource for the town. Distance (foreground, middle, and background), topography (slope, ridgelines, contrasts providing shape and texture), forest cover, special features, visibility and protective screening are aesthetic criteria that need to be protected.

- **Forest based industry** – Windham has a sustainable forest resource which can and does provide quality forest products. A forest-based economy supports employment and provides landowners with financial returns through planned timber harvesting.

## 2. Agriculture

The US Department of Agriculture has identified soil types that are best suited to crop production based on soil quality, growing season and moisture supply. These areas, called prime agricultural soils, are likely to produce the highest crop yields using the least amount of economic resources and causing the least environmental impact. Windham has a very small area of prime agricultural soils but has been successful at farming on the secondary agricultural soils.

Windham allows agricultural activity in any part of Town. Although agriculture is not extensive in Windham, the remaining agricultural areas are still important resources that serve many functions including providing local seasonal produce and planting materials; providing open space, serving as an educational resource, and contributing to the rural character of the Town.

The largest active farming operation in Windham is the Dutton Farm, which has been a dairy farm for several generations, encompassing 230 acres. The farm continues under family ownership, and is being converted from dairying to the production of fruits and berries. Other farming operations in Windham include:

**Table 8: Farming Operations in Windham** (Source: Windham Planning Commission)

<i>Owner</i>	<i>Agricultural Product</i>
Chase	hay
Corriveau	cattle, chickens, hay
Dutton	dairy, fruits, berries
Lemay	hay
Partridge	sheep, rabbits, horses
Pease	Christmas trees

## 3. Use Value Appraisal Program (also known as Current Use)

The Use Value Appraisal Program was established by the Vermont Legislature in 1977 in recognition that the high tax burdens placed on farm and forest lands was contributing to the rapid development of prime agricultural and forest lands across the state. The Current Use program allows farm and forest lands to be taxed on their resource production rather than their value for development purposes. The program includes a Land Use Change Tax as a disincentive to develop land. For forest land to be eligible, participating owners must have a minimum of 25 contiguous acres to enroll in the program (not counting the 2 acres surrounding any dwelling) and must manage the forest land according to the provisions of a 10 year forest management plan. Agricultural land has a different set of eligibility requirements; however, the land must be at least 25 acres, not counting the 2 acres surrounding a dwelling.

Table 9 indicates that there were 38 properties enrolled in the Current Use program in 2004 for a total of 9,855.11 acres, over half of the Town's acreage. Most of the land in the Current Use

program is contained within the adopted Forest Zoning District, further supporting the desire to maintain these areas as rural and undeveloped.

**Table 9: 2004 Use Value Enrollments in Windham** (Source: VT Dpt. of Taxes)

# of Properties	Total Program Acres	Forest Acres	Agricultural Acres
38	9,584.19	9509.85	74.34

#### 4. Soils and Topography

Soils are one of the most important environmental factors that governs the use of land in rural areas. Soils are classified on the basis of structure, form, composition, and suitability for various types of development. Four characteristics are of primary concern when doing land use planning: bearing capacity, erodability, drainage, and resource value.

The Town's agriculture and forestry depends upon the availability of high quality soils in large, adjoining parcels. The Windham County Soil Survey has ranked soils in Windham. Approximately 1,130 acres are categorized as having important farmland soils with about 15 acres being ranked as prime soils. However, only 44% of the important farmland soils are located on lands that are classified as open. The majority of Windham's important agricultural soils are located along the Town's streams and brooks and major transportation routes, as shown on the Earth Resources Map.

Forestry soils are important to maintaining the forest and timber resources that are a part of Windham's identity. Many activities, such as timber harvesting, tree farming and maple sugaring, are dependent on the presence of quality soils. Using USDA Soil Conservation Service soil data, soils in Vermont have been assigned a productivity class for application in the state's Use Value Appraisal Program. Windham's soils are predominantly classified as Site I, the most productive sites. Table 10 shows the breakdown of the percent of land area by each forest productivity site classification:

**Table 10: Forest Productivity Classes for Use Value Appraisal Program** (Source: WRC GIS)

Site Classification	Potential Productivity (per acre per year)	Percent of land area
Site I	>85 cubic feet	54%
Site II	50-85 cubic feet	37%
Site III	20-49 cubic feet	6%
Site IV	<20 cubic feet	3%

The slope of the land is also an important determinant of development capability. Slopes of less than 8 percent are generally most suitable for building. The erosion potential of such slightly sloping land is low, their ability to absorb runoff is high, and soils are usually of adequate depth and composition for septic systems. Exceptions are extremely flat areas, some of which may be classified as wetlands, where drainage is poor. As slopes increase, the suitability of the land for development decreases. In areas of steep slopes, the velocity of runoff, and therefore the potential for erosion, increases. The ability of the soil to filter septic leachate is decreased.

Overcoming site constraints becomes increasingly costly. Slopes of 15 to 25 percent present significant constraints and slopes exceeding 25 percent are not suitable for development.

## **5. Wildlife**

Windham provides habitat for a wide diversity of plant and animal species. Windham's unfragmented forest land provides some of the most valuable wildlife habitat. A primary characteristic of habitat that is not fragmented habitat is the absence of roads. Roads often are a barrier to wildlife movement and can be a cause of mortality. The impact of a road can vary with their type and intensity. A dirt road that is not maintained does not represent the same threat to wildlife as most paved highways for several reasons. Dirt roads tend to be narrower, necessitating lower speeds and lessening the chances of automobile-wildlife contacts. Narrow dirt roads in wooded areas also allow the tree canopy to extend over the road, thereby retaining a greater degree of forest cover and habitat to many species of wildlife, particularly birds. Careful consideration of road placement and configuration is therefore one of the most important steps that can be taken to safeguard significant blocks of wildlife habitat.

In addition to the large forest blocks, other important wildlife habitat areas include the woodland, wetland, and surface waters in and around Burbee Pond. Abundant wildlife has been sighted in this area including, but not limited to beaver, bear, deer, moose, otter, mink, fox, fisher cat, Canada goose, osprey, blue heron, red-tail hawk, bald eagle, cormorants, and American bittern.

## **6. Earth and Mineral Extraction**

Windham has a history of mining activities with both talc and marble having been mined in the Town. Talc mining operations ceased in the mid-1980s. A green marble quarry, located at the end of Abbott Road and Wheeler Road, is also no longer in operation.

Inactive talc mine sites continue to pose health and safety hazards, not only on the property, but for neighboring properties as well. Flooding from the open pits may pose serious problems. In addition, unsecured mine shafts and abandoned equipment are concerns that the Town would like to see addressed by property owners.

## **7. Ridgelines**

Windham's ridgelines contribute to the scenic landscape of the town. Parallel north-south ridges run almost the entire length of Windham. The main north-south road, Windham Hill Road is located in a high-elevation valley that runs between the two ridges. To the west of Windham Hill Road is Glebe Mountain which rises steeply in elevation; to the east of Windham Hill Road and south of Route 121 is a series of lower elevation hills in the area of the Styles Brook tract that form a distinct horizon. Both of these features, shown on the Utilities and Community Resources Map, form a forested backdrop for views from lower areas and also provide high elevations for viewing distant ridges. Settlement has occurred in harmony with this landscape. West Windham, South Windham, and Windham were settled on flatter terrain with views of the hillsides in the foreground. Rural settlement has also expanded along existing roads which are primarily located in the lower elevations.

Not only are these ridgelines highly visible from lower elevations in Windham, they serve an important ecological function as headwater areas. The cumulative affects of development in

these areas (which include significant destruction of the scenic beauty of the community, degradation of water quality, increased downstream runoff and flooding problems, loss of habitat linkages, erosion) would have a substantial impact on the character and environmental quality of Windham. Consequently, these areas have been included in the Forest District so as to carefully limit development and prohibit all commercial use except that which is already permitted in the Zoning Bylaw.

**Policy 1: Direct development away from unsuitable areas.**

*Actions*

1. Prohibit development in areas where the topography and soil conditions may cause contamination of surface or sub-surface waters or failure of waste disposal systems
2. Prohibit development in areas dominated by slopes greater than 25 percent.
3. Minimize areas of earth disturbance, grading, and clearing of vegetation on slopes over 15%. Evaluate erosion and sedimentation control measures in areas where development occurs on slopes over 8% during Site Plan Review.
4. Further delineate ridgelines and other visible high-elevation areas requiring protection. Revise Zoning Bylaws to prevent visible development on ridgelines.

**Policy 2: Enhance the economic viability of agriculture and forestry activity in Windham.**

*Actions*

1. Maintain the purpose of the Forest District primarily for forestry activities.
2. Work with the Vermont Land Trust, or other appropriate non-profit organizations to encourage the voluntary protection of productive agricultural and forest lands. Techniques such as conservation easements or donation of land should be explored.
3. Continue to evaluate timber harvesting practices during the site plan review process to ensure that surface waters, shorelines, and stream banks are protected.
4. Continue to allow agriculture in all districts in Town.
5. Encourage participation in the Vermont Land Use Appraisal Program to support the viability and maintenance of farm and forest land.

**Policy 3: Carefully review and regulate marble and gravel extraction, and related transportation activities to minimize environmental impacts.**

*Actions*

1. Amend the zoning bylaw to limit extraction of earth and mineral resources to areas of Windham that are not heavily settled and that will not have significant impact on bridges and roads and watershed areas.
2. Amend the zoning bylaw to require plans for earth and mineral resource extraction that include measures to minimize noise and adverse impacts on aesthetics, surface waters, air quality, adjacent properties, and the character of the area.
3. Amend the zoning bylaw to require that all proposals for earth and mineral extraction include a site rehabilitation plan that ensures the possibility of future use of the land.

**Policy 4: Preserve and protect the natural scenic beauty and related natural resources of the upland areas in Windham.**

*Actions*

1. Site buildings and structures below the ridgelines so as not to intrude upon the skyline.
2. Create additional conditional use standards for the Forest District that will be designed to prevent erosion and sedimentation associated with stormwater runoff; to ensure that new development is sited and landscaped in manner which limits the visual impact of ridgeline development; and which avoids adverse impacts to water quality and headwater streams.

**B. WATER RESOURCES**

**1. Watersheds**

A watershed, also known as a drainage area, is a land area which collects precipitation and contributes runoff to a receiving body of water or point along the watercourse. Watersheds are delineated by identifying the highest topographic points in a given area, and determining the direction in which water will flow from these points. Land uses within a watershed can affect water quality. Because the drainage area of any given water body may extend beyond the Town's borders, intermunicipal coordination of land uses is essential to ensure effective management and protection of the water resource.

Lands within Windham drain into the West, Williams and Saxtons river watersheds (see attached Watershed Map). These three watersheds are identified by the state Agency of Natural Resources, for planning and management purposes, as Basin 11. In fact, Windham contains much of the headwater areas of this basin. Efforts are currently underway to develop a Basin Management Plan for Basin 11. This is a public process that inventories uses and problems and develops strategies for maintaining or enhancing water quality; identifies strategies to remedy problems, and assigns Water Management Types to maintain or attain desired water quality. Issues such as water quality, erosion control, stormwater runoff, deforestation and buffer loss, and flow regulation and flood control are addressed within the basin planning process.

**2. Surface Waters**

The surface waters of Windham include lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and wetlands (see Natural Resources Map). Surface water resources serve many functions for a community. Windham's surface waters provide for water storage, groundwater recharge, water supply and wildlife habitat.

Windham's location at the headwaters of many of the areas brooks and rivers means that each headwater watershed in Windham plays a very important role in determining the water quality in the downstream, lower elevation areas of Basin 11. The standard for downstream water quality is established here at the beginning in Windham. Of particular note is the Cobb Brook watershed, a Class A1 stream by recognition of the State of Vermont. In the 1991 decision to reclassify Cobb Brook, it was noted that the Cobb water quality was among the very highest in the state and the level of sedimentation was among the lowest of streams in the state. Turkey Mountain Brook includes a spectacular gorge on its way downstream to Jamaica and encompasses another notable

resource in Windham, namely Burbee Pond. Covering 50 surface acres, Burbee Pond is a source of constant wildlife sightings of hawks, osprey, otter, beaver, blue heron, deer, moose, ducks, and geese. It is also a popular canoeing and fishing location. The upper reaches of the pond offer diverse wetland habitat, which supports this rich diversity of wildlife. Other critical surface water resources include Saxton's River, North Branch of Williams River, Middle Branch of Williams River, Howe Brook, Wiley Brook, Stiles Brook, and Tannery Brook.

### **3. Wetlands**

Wetlands are lands that are saturated with water at least part of the year and include marshes, swamps, sloughs, fens, mud flats, and bogs. Wetlands serve many important functions. They store large quantities of water during periods of high runoff and gradually release water during low flow periods. Loss of the storage capacity will not only adversely affect stream behavior but also will also increase floods and reduce stream flow during crucial low flow periods. Wetlands are also important for the maintenance of water quality. The biological activity of a wetland area enables the absorption and assimilation of nutrients and thus purifies, to some extent the water which is discharged. Wetlands are centers of ecological activity and support many kinds of wildlife. Several state and federal laws also provide protection for wetlands including the US Army Corps of Engineers permits, Act 250, and the Vermont Significant Wetlands Regulations.

Windham has extensive wetlands. Some examples of the wetlands include the upper reaches of Burbee Pond, an extensive wetland complex which provides for diverse wildlife. Also, in Windham Center, an excellent chain of wetlands begins just north of the Village and stretches along the east side of Windham Hill Road all the way to Route 121. An active beaver population maintains open water for a wildlife and habitat similar to the Burbee Pond area.

### **4. Flood Hazard Areas**

The floodplains in Windham are primarily related to seasonal high water flow in the middle and south branches of the Williams River and the Saxtons River. Floodplains are low-lying terraces adjacent to rivers and streams which are periodically inundated when swollen waterways exceed their bank-full capacities. Federal mapping indicates that floodplains exist in the central and northern portion of the Town.

### **5. Groundwater**

Groundwater is an extremely valuable natural resource in the Town of Windham because it provides the primary source of potable drinking water for residents. Groundwater is water that has infiltrated into the soil through sand, gravel, or rock. The area where groundwater is stored is called an aquifer. Groundwater occurring in fractured bedrock is highly susceptible to contamination. Failed or inadequately designed septic systems are potential sources of groundwater pollution. Aquifer recharge areas for Windham are not currently mapped. Regardless, it is important to note that the entire Town is an important groundwater recharge area for the region as it is high valley plateau.

Of particular concern in Windham is the safety of groundwater supplies in the areas where the talc mines were operated. The network of mine shafts was extensive and their exact locations are not well known. Since the closure of the mines, the water table has returned to a higher level, flooding the mines shafts. There remains a possibility that a water supply system might tap into

one of the mine shafts and the water may not be potable. Any parcel of land with mineral rights attached to it has the potential to be impacted by an underground mine shaft.

## **6. Water Quality**

There are several threats to surface water and ground water quality. The two main categories of pollution are point source and non-point source pollution. Point sources are those that can be traced to a specific source, such as a pipe or sewer outfall. Non-point sources of pollution are more diffuse in origin. They can include stormwater runoff, septic system effluent, snow dumps, road salt, soil erosion, etc.

Water quality is greatly impacted by the presence of impervious surfaces that are associated with development. Impervious surfaces include buildings, paved roads, driveways and parking lots. These surfaces reduce the natural infiltration of stormwater into the ground, thereby reducing the recharge of groundwater resources. Where increased imperviousness results in direct stormwater discharge into streams or rivers, the result is often the alteration of the natural flow of the stream, causing erosion and sedimentation, loss of aquatic wildlife habitat, and increased flood hazards.

The most significant, ongoing, source of sediment discharge to streams and ponds in Windham is sand and gravel washed off of gravel surfaced town roads. The erosion of road surface material into watercourses damages both the watercourse and the road, and is wasteful of public funds. The material eroded into the watercourses must continually be replaced in order to maintain the road surface.

In 2002, the State passed new Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Rules. As part of those rules, the State of Vermont will have the sole responsibility for issuing septic permits in 2007, unless the Town of Windham decides to seek approval to be delegated that responsibility. As a part of the new rules, all permits, licensed certifications of design and installation, and installer certifications of installation related to the Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Rules generated by the state will be required to be filed in the municipal land use records.

### **Policy 1: Maintain or enhance the chemical, physical and biological quality of Windham's surface and ground waters.**

#### *Actions*

1. Support surface water classification and management strategies that will maintain or enhance existing water quality.
2. On-site septic systems are to be properly designed and then permitted by the State.
3. Use road maintenance methods and materials that will maintain or improve water quality, such as those described in the *Vermont Better Backroads Manual*.
4. Maintain the Forest District which effectively limits development in:
  - a. Watersheds of upland streams
  - b. Watersheds characterized by steep slopes and shallow soils
  - c. Areas supplying large amounts of recharge waters to aquifers.

### **Policy 2: Preserve the natural condition of watercourses and their shorelines.**

*Actions*

- a. Devote lands within flood-hazard areas to agricultural and open space uses. Enact a Flood Hazard Bylaw and enroll Windham in the National Flood Insurance Program.
- b. Require that site plans identify all water features, including but not limited to rivers and streams, wetlands, and lakes and ponds. Use the Zoning Bylaw to require maintenance of undisturbed, naturally vegetated buffers sufficient to protect water quality. Buffer areas, including the depth and type of buffer, shall be shown on the site plan.

**Policy 3: Retain wetland areas in their natural state for the provision of wildlife habitats, retention areas for surface runoff, recreation and resource value.**

*Action*

1. Conduct field studies to identify and better understand wetlands.

## **CHAPTER V ENERGY**

Energy resources are necessary for heating, electrical generation, and transportation. Sufficient energy supplies at an affordable cost are essential to a town's growth and economic development.

### **A. ENERGY SOURCES**

#### **1. Home Heating**

The residents of Windham use a variety of energy sources. According to the 2000 Census, residents heat their home primarily with fuel oil (64.8%) and secondarily with wood (29.3%). The remaining heating fuel sources include propane (14%), electricity (2.7%) and solar energy (1.3%).

#### **2. Electricity**

Currently, Windham's electric needs are attained from a combination of resources including oil, propane gas, nuclear energy hydropower, coal, wood, and solar. In terms of infrastructure, the Vermont Electric Power Company maintains a 345 KV transmission line that runs north to south through Town. Central Vermont Power Service provides electricity to Windham.

### **B. RENEWABLE ENERGY**

#### **1. Commercial Wind Energy Systems**

Commercial wind energy systems (wind farms) are defined as those that are regulated under Section 248 of Title 30 of the Vermont Statutes but not including net metering applications (as per 30 V.S.A. §219a) or temporary meteorological towers. These are generally large-scale projects with multiple turbines designed to generate electricity. It is the policy of the Town of Windham that commercial wind energy systems are prohibited throughout all of town.

This policy is consistent with Windham's Zoning Bylaw as well as the land use plan. Commercial wind is neither a permitted or conditional use in the Zoning Bylaw, therefore it is prohibited. In addition, Windham's high elevation lands - those most desirable for commercial wind energy development - contain many important natural resources and are among the most sensitive sites from a development perspective. For these reasons, these high elevation lands have been located in the Forest District where development is limited to agriculture; commercial forestry; forestry for research, education, and demonstration; and camps.

While Windham rejects commercial wind energy systems, the Town recognizes the fact that they may still be allowed by the Vermont Public Service Board. Should this occur, the Town requests that the Public Service Board require the developer to provide the following:

- A wildlife habitat assessment, including assessment of impact to migratory, resident and breeding avian and bat populations
- A rare species assessment; and mitigation plans (if necessary)

- A visual impact assessment, including pre- and post-construction photo simulations of the project as seen during the day and at night
- Alternative sites analysis.
- Adequate financial surety, either in cash or letter of credit, to repair damage to local roads and to stabilize the entire construction site during construction of the project. The financial surety should be available to the municipality in the event that the municipality is forced to conduct work to secure the stability of the soil and vegetation on the site, including the access road, after construction is completed.
- Sufficient decommissioning funds, kept in an escrow account associated with the property that is separate from the developer's general accounts, so that the site will be restored to natural conditions if the project is not repowered at the end of its useful life.
- A contingency plan that outlines mitigation action, in the event of unforeseen and unacceptable negative impacts from the completed project.
- Financial assistance to the town to pay for the hiring of qualified engineering, environmental, and legal consultants to assist the Town in reviewing the application and establishing local revenue agreements.

## **2. Individual Wind Energy Systems**

Wind energy systems are beginning to be used as an energy source on a residential scale. There is currently one individual wind energy system in Windham. Towns may only regulate wind facilities that do not connect in any way to the public power supply. The Vermont Public Service Board regulates wind systems that are connected to the power grid. Individual wind systems with blades less than 20 feet in diameter are not regulated unless a town specifically addresses them in their zoning bylaws.

Rural areas with low density residential development or working agricultural landscapes are the most appropriate places to locate individual wind systems. Their height and visual prominence make them incompatible with densely settled areas. Individual wind energy systems must be designed so that they are not located as a focal point in one of the designated scenic areas of Windham. The permitting of these facilities should be reviewed under the conditional use review process with additional safeguards specified in the Zoning Regulations. At a minimum, the additional safeguards should regulate setbacks which accommodate a fall zone, operational noise levels, and lighting.

Net metering is one way in which a homeowner can realize savings from operating an individual wind system. Under net metering, a homeowner is permitted to connect suitable generating equipment to the public power grid. During periods when more energy is generated than the property is using, the metered amount of electrical energy provided to the grid reduces residential electric bills. In order to net meter, the homeowner must receive a Certificate of Public Good. Wind energy systems of up to 15kW or less are eligible for net metered electric rates. Windham supports net metering, and does not view it as a commercial use.

## **3. Hydroelectric**

Hydroelectric energy generation is another form of renewable energy. While Windham has abundant water resources, their potential to generate energy is limited because, as a headwater community, most of the streams are small and have low seasonal flows. The possibility of developing small "micro-hydro" systems may exist. Micro-hydro systems do not dam rivers or

streams. Their utility depends on the dynamic head, amount of water flow, and the efficiency of the turbine. In Windham, if this type of system is feasible, it would probably act to augment other power sources. However, in addition to stream flows, cost and the effect of cold weather climate on the equipment will likely be deterrents to wide spread usage of this type of renewable energy.

#### **4. Solar Energy**

Passive solar designs can reduce heating and electricity bills. No mechanical means are employed in passive solar heating. Instead, siting and design measures, such as south facing windows, open floor plans, and ventilation are used. Photovoltaic systems can be used to convert sunlight to electricity. These systems require equipment such as solar panels, a charge controller, batteries, and an inverter, which convert DC currents into AC current for use in outlets for regular household appliances. Photovoltaic systems of up to 15kW or less are eligible for net metered electric rates, after receiving a Certificate of Public Good. Windham supports the use of solar energy.

#### **5. Wood**

Wood is considered a biomass fuel. The use of biomass fuel can replace or reduce the use of non-renewable fuels such as heating oil. When grown and harvested in conjunction with effective forest management plans, woodlots can provide an alternative fuel source for landowners, thereby decreasing dependence on non-renewable resources. While burning wood does create air pollution, wood-burning technology has improved and emission requirements have been implemented. Windham supports the continued use of wood as a fuel source and encourages residents to use low-emission wood burning appliances.

Outdoor wood furnaces or boilers are gaining popularity across the country as a home heating method. These are free-standing combustion units located outside the home or structure that is to be heated. When used properly these systems can be a clean and economical way to heat a house and water. Nonetheless, concerns over the safety and environmental impacts of these heating devices, particularly the production of offensive odors and potential health effects of uncontrolled emissions exist. The State of Vermont does have regulations pertaining to these systems. Amongst the provisions are the fact that they must be located at least 200 feet from neighboring residences and that the stack on the furnace must be higher than the roof line if the furnace is between 200 and 500 feet from the nearest neighboring home.<sup>1</sup> The State regulations also permit towns to have their own ordinances regulating outdoor wood furnaces.

### **C. ENERGY CONSERVATION**

Energy resource availability and costs are generally not within the control of Windham residents; however, consumption can be influenced through education, technology, and the alteration of use patterns. Effective land use planning can promote energy conservation. Targeting new development towards areas located close to the community's major roads and existing settlements will minimize the energy consumed by residents commuting and will reduce the energy required to deliver essential services to residents and businesses. Decisions concerning

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<sup>1</sup> Vermont Air Pollution Regulation, section 5-204, Outdoor Waterstoves (September 1997).

capital expenditures on roads and other municipal infrastructure should be mindful of energy conservation.

As noted in Figure 2 of the Community Profile, 87% of Windham’s residents who work travel out of town for work. Table 11 indicates that between 1990 and 2000, there was an increase in residents who drove alone to work and a decrease in those that carpooled. Car-pooling is beneficial for these residents not only because it conserves fuel, but also because it reduces wear and tear and maintenance costs on individual vehicles.

**Table 11: Commuting to Work: aged 16 and older** (Source: 2000 US Census)

<i>Method</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>
Drive Alone	65%	74%
Carpool	19%	11%
Public Transportation	0%	0%
Work at Home or Walk	13%	14%
Other Means	3%	1%
Average travel time (minutes)	22.5	24.2

Energy savings can be realized by retrofitting existing buildings with insulation, more efficient doors and windows, weather-stripping, compact fluorescent lights, and energy efficient appliances. The following programs are available to resident of Windham:

- Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA). SEVCA is the service provider in Windham County that runs the Weatherization Assistance Program. Weatherization services, which include an energy audit, diagnostic tests, analysis, and installing measures, are available at no cost to income-eligible homeowners and renters. SEVCA is also available to help in the event of a heating emergency. They can help purchase oil, kerosene, propane, or wood. In addition, they also work with electric companies in order to prevent disconnection and help negotiate payment plans.
- Efficiency Vermont. Efficiency Vermont is the State’s provider of energy efficiency services. They provide technical and financial assistance to electrical consumers for the purpose of improving the efficiency of existing and new facilities.
- ENERGY STAR Home Rebates. Energy Star Homes meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Energy. Efficiency Vermont provides free financial, design, and technical to help build an ENERGY STAR qualified home. Benefits of being an ENERGY STAR home include financial incentives such as product rebates; utility savings; higher resale value; increased comfort and air quality; and other environmental benefits.
- Refer to Energy Coordinator.

**Policy 1: The placement of utility line extensions above ground and roadside must be conditional to the protection of Windham’s scenic resources.**

*Actions*

1. Require that electric poles that have been abandoned due to relocation or consolidation are removed from the landscape.
2. When relocating, upgrading, or establishing electric distribution lines, a review of operational maintenance, engineering design, direct cost, and visual impact should be undertaken to determine the appropriateness of the existing or proposed utility line location.

**Policy 2: Support the use of individual on-site energy sources.**

*Actions*

1. Cordwood for domestic use is an important by-product of better forest management. Encourage landowners with woodlots to participate in sustainable management programs that emphasize full utilization of fuel wood resources as well as the production of high grade saw timber.
2. Update the zoning bylaw to add specific standards for residential wind energy systems that address limitations on height, separation of structures, minimum lot size, setbacks, aesthetics, operational noise, environmental impacts and other items as deemed necessary.
3. Residential connection of individual wind energy and photovoltaic systems to the electric power grid under “net-metering” shall not be considered commercial use.
4. Study the issue of whether outdoor wood furnaces should be regulated and, if recommended, propose either an ordinance or performance standards for adoption.

**Policy 3: With the exception of net-metered residential wind energy systems, prohibit commercial wind energy projects in the Town of Windham.**

*Actions*

1. Amend the zoning bylaw to add additional use classifications of commercial wind systems and individual wind energy systems. Expressly prohibit commercial wind systems.
2. Participate in, or designate an expert agent to represent its interests in any regulatory hearings for any potential commercial-scale wind energy development in and around Windham

**Policy 4: Reduce energy consumption and increase energy efficiency.**

*Actions*

1. Support carpooling, public transit, and infrastructure that can support telecommuting.
2. Provide information in the Town Office about energy assistance programs such as SEVCA and Efficiency Vermont.
3. When new residential construction is undertaken, provide informational materials provided to owners or builders at the time the Zoning Permit is issued to inform property owners about Efficiency Vermont and Energy Star Homes.
4. Evaluate, and as appropriate, propose amendments to the zoning bylaws to regulate the siting of systems that make use of renewable energy, such as solar panels and wind energy systems. Such regulations may allow for flexibility in the application of setback,

height, and other requirements, and they should also allow for building design and placement that maximize passive solar energy use.

## **CHAPTER VI HISTORIC, RECREATIONAL, AND SCENIC RESOURCES**

The cultural resources of Windham include, but are not limited to the important historical structures and archeological sites; outdoor recreational resources; and significant scenic lands, vistas, and viewsheds. These attributes are considered to be the very essence of Vermont and the reason why many people find Windham to be a desirable place to live. The loss of these special areas will diminish the community's identity and ignore the needs of future generations. Therefore, the protection and enhancement of these cultural resources is an important community goal.

### **A. HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Windham has an abundance of historic resources which contribute to the Town character and quality of life (see Utilities and Community Resources Map). Places of historic interest located in Windham include:

Windham Village Historic District - The Windham Village Historic District received National Register designation in 1984.

South Windham Village Historic District - The Village Historic District received National Register designation in 1988.

Windham Meetinghouse – The Windham Congregation Church was built in 1802. This clapboard building with a slate roof is a dominant visual landmark in Windham Village. Uses of the structure include the Congregational Church, Town Hall, the Windham Library, and the Windham Summer Day Camp program. The Meetinghouse is located in the Windham Village Historic District.

South Windham Church – The South Windham Church (presently occupied by the Valley Bible Church) was built in 1825. This church is an example of vernacular Greek Revival architecture that uses both brick and clapboard on the exterior. The recessed arcaded wall treatment is found in many domestic building types throughout Eastern Vermont as far north as Chester between the years of 1814 and 1830. This church is in the South Windham Village Historic District.

Town Cemeteries – There are four known cemeteries in Windham that are maintained by private and public funds. They are Center Cemetery, North Windham Cemetery, West Windham Cemetery, and Woodburn Cemetery.

Existing stone walls – Stone walls are the part of the fabric that ties Windham's landscape to its past. They are remnants of the agricultural society and were most commonly used for the purpose of subdividing property (boundary markers, field subdivisions, and livestock enclosures). Windham's stone walls are a part of the town's heritage and sense of place. Most walls lie on private property.

As noted above, both South Windham Village and Windham Village are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This is the official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation in the United States. While listing on the National Register honors the property by recognizing its importance to the community, there are few restrictions on private property owners in place that help to preserve these important structures. The State of Vermont has authorized the creation of locally designated Design Review District and Historic Districts as regulatory tools in the zoning bylaw. The creation of an overlay district would help protect the neighborhood and community character by encouraging sensitivity to the architectural and historic resources that exist.

**Policy 1: Promote historic preservation and development that enhances the historic resources of Windham.**

*Actions*

1. Amend the zoning bylaw to incorporate incentives for historic preservation in the zoning bylaw by including provisions for adaptive reuse and considering the creation of a historic district or design review district in the villages of Windham and South Windham.
2. Promote grant opportunities, in cooperation with community organizations, to continue to protect and preserve Windham's historic resources.
3. Amend the zoning bylaw to require that stonewalls and cellar holes be shown on a site plan so that they can be considered during development review.

**B. OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL RESOURCES**

The natural recreational resources of Windham are its waterways and forests. These areas provide fishing, hunting, hiking, cross-country skiing, wildlife viewing, and other activities. VAST (Vermont Association of Snow Travelers) maintains a network of trails that run through town. The town recognizes the importance of the variety of recreational resources, natural and manmade that currently co-exists in town.

The two largest tracts of forest in Windham are in private ownership. The Styles Brook Tract, located on the eastern edge of Windham, has numerous snowmobile and biking trails running throughout it. The lands surrounding Cobb Brook are designated as a Class A1 Watershed by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. Special attention must be given to the unpaved rural road system, wildlife habitats, and water features.

The focus for Windham's recreational resources must be on the preservation of the Town's natural environment.

**Policy 1: Preserve Windham's natural environment for outdoor recreation.**

*Actions*

1. Retain all existing town roads in order to provide rights-of-way for public access to recreational activities.
2. Continue to provide for natural and community resource benefits by protecting large contiguous parcels of land in the Forest District.

3. Investigate ways to ensure continued public access to significant holdings of land that are private ownership.

## **C. SCENIC RESOURCES**

The scenic resources of Windham are numerous and varied. Together, they form the pattern that has come to be associated with Windham's landscape. The following is a list of the scenic landscapes and views that contribute to the cultural resources of Windham (see Utilities and Community Resources Map):

- From Route 121 four corners looking south toward the Village encompassing the wetlands east of Windham Hill Road (TH #1) and the west facing ridge.
- The view from the center village down the Valley toward the south.
- The view of the Village.
- The view of Burbee Pond and the undeveloped, naturally appearing ridgeline and east face of Glebe Mountain from the vicinity of Burbee Pond Road (TH #24) and West Windham Road (TH #20) looking west and north.
- The view looking south from Golding Road (TH #19) encompassing the West Windham Valley and distant ski areas.
- The view of the West Windham Valley including Cobb Brook from near the intersection of West Windham Road (TH #20) and Toad Road (TH #22) looking in any direction.
- The view across the same valley as above from Toad Road (TH #22) looking east over Turkey Mountain Ridge.
- The view of South Windham Village from Windham Hill Road (TH #1).
- The view of South Windham Village and surrounding farm land from Old Cheney Road (TH #25) looking east.
- The view from Center Cemetery looking east to the Styles Brook Ridge.
- View from Tater Hill Country Club.

Windham's wetlands and water bodies, as well as ridgelines and hilltops and their upper slopes are visible for great distances and give the landscape form and coherence. Open meadowlands provide contrast with the predominant forests, reminding one of the agricultural productivity of the past. Many structures such as utility poles and telecommunication towers are visually incongruous with the scenic landscape.

Light pollution or "sky glow" is a problem that is facing many rural towns. The overuse of lighting can be harmful to the character of a town. It can also be detrimental to road safety (through distraction and glare), energy conservation, and wildlife interests. Development in Windham has been overwhelmingly residential in nature. Nonetheless, appropriate lighting can prevent private and public nuisances and protect property value.

### **Policy 1: Protect and enhance Windham's scenic landscape.**

#### *Actions*

1. Prominent ridgelines and shall be left in their natural condition, free from all development, including roads, building structures, utilities, and wireless broadcast and telecommunications facilities.
2. Enact a telecommunications ordinance to minimize the visual impacts of communication towers through co-location, design siting, and color choice.
3. Encourage the donation or sale of easements to public and private natural resource/conservation agencies and organizations.

**Policy 2: Protect scenic landscapes from sky-glow.**

*Actions*

1. Reduce light pollution by using fixtures that direct light below the horizontal plane, utilizing energy efficient lamps, and using light levels appropriate for the use of the property.
2. Design and site communication and other high elevation towers so that they do not require night-time lighting.
3. Illuminate structures and exterior areas only at levels necessary to ensure safety and security of persons and property.

## CHAPTER VII TRANSPORTATION

The public road network in Windham consists of town highways and roads (see Transportation System Map). Windham can be reached from Windham Hill Road which connects with Route 30 in West Townshend; Route 121 which runs east/west through Town and connects Windham with its neighbors Grafton and Londonderry; and from a small section of State Highway 11 which runs through the northwest corner of Town. Several smaller roads also enter Windham from neighboring towns.

The State of Vermont has developed a classification for Town Highway Mapping and Inventories, maintenance schedules, and State aid. Class 1 roads are those highways that are the responsibility of the town, but are also extensions of the state highway system. Class 2 roads serve as main corridors between Windham and other towns. Most Class 2 roads are paved. Class 3 roads are comprised of secondary town highways that are passable year round by standard vehicles. Class 4 roads are all other town highways. Typically Class 4 roads are seasonally functional for normal vehicular traffic and have a dirt surface.

The State of Vermont Highway Map classifies Windham’s public roads as follows:

**Table 12: Mileage Summary of Town Highway/Roadway** (Source: State of VT Highway Map, 2003)

<i>Class</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>Total Mileage</i>
Town Roadways	0	9.2	22.79	2.78	34.77
State Highways					.356
Total					35.126

The Windham Highway Department maintains the roads within Town. There are two people employed by the Highway Department, including the Road Foreman. The section of State Route 11 that runs through Windham is the responsibility of the of the State’s District #2 personnel.

Many residents and visitors use the existing street system for walking and bicycling. The existing use of narrow shoulders on these roads, particularly on Windham Hill Road, is a safety concern to many. Where feasible, the road shoulders should be expanded to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles.

### A. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

The Town stores its road equipment at the Town Garage located on Windham Hill Road. A covered salt and sand shed, built in 2000, is located on site. At this time, the Town Garage is not need of any improvements and none are anticipated in the coming years. There is a reserve fund for equipment replacement to assist in the purchasing of new equipment for the Highway Department.

## **B. ROAD AND BRIDGE INFRASTRUCTURE**

In 2003 heavy flooding devastated a number of roads in Windham. The reconstruction of Route 121 and White Road, as well as other roads, were substantially funded using Federal and State money. Roads and bridges are maintained as required to provide safe and efficient travel.

## **C. LOCAL ROAD POLICIES**

The Selectboard is responsible for the maintenance and repair of public roads in Windham. It is the policy of the Selectboard to not take over new roads. In order for private roads or driveways to access town or village roads the Selectboard must issue an access permit. Applicants must adhere to driveway design standards which follow the State's recommended standards.

Windham also has adopted local policies on road and bridge design specifications. These serve to ensure replacement of facilities will be up to current design standards and consistent throughout the Town. Using these specifications also helps to reduce Town matching requirements in some highway grant programs. Windham does not enforce design standards for private roads.

The Selectboard grades Class IV roads on a yearly basis and takes care of culverts as needed. The Selectboard has opened up some town roads for use by snowmobiles. None of the roads in Windham have been designated for use by ATVs.

## **D. RSMS/CULVERT INVENTORY**

In 2002, the State Highway Department assisted the Town with a culvert inventory and an associated map. The locations are based on mile markers, not by Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment. This inventory can serve as a helpful management tool to keep track of additions or deletions to the infrastructure.

Windham has does not have an inventory of road surface conditions. Inventories of this type are excellent tools to help plan for roadway projects and culvert replacement programs. Road Surface Management System, or RSMS is specific software that can be used to inventory and prioritize roadway surface improvement projects. It is most useful for tracking construction needs on paved roads.

Regardless of the level of technical commitment to these efforts, an inventory should be kept and updated as often as possible and it should be used to manage these important pieces of transportation system infrastructure.

## **E. PUBLIC TRANSIT**

Windham, being a rural town, does not have any mass transportation systems, however, transit service is provided by CT River Transit. The Town contributes towards CT River Transit's operational costs. Based in Springfield, CT River Transit offers the following services to

Windham residents: transportation for Medicaid recipients; non-Medicaid medical transportation for life threatening conditions,

**Policy 1: Maintain a safe and functional public road system that respects the integrity of the natural environment.**

*Actions*

1. Enforce existing specifications for road construction and maintenance. Continue to review sight distance when issuing access permits.
2. Shoulders should be widened when upgrading or reconstructing Windham Hill Road (TH #1).
3. New subdivisions shall not be permitted to have individual driveway access for each unit on a town highway. Collector roads or common driveways shall be constructed in order to prevent strip development.
4. Continue budgeting for highway department needs.
5. Periodically update the culvert inventory and conduct a road inventory.
6. The Town shall not take over private roads.

**Policy 2: The Town shall not discontinue any roads without first consulting the Planning Commission and Conservation Commission to make a finding that no public benefit exists.**

*Action*

1. Research town roads and make a list of those roads which should be retained because a public benefit has been determined.

**Policy 3: Protect the physical features that contribute to the scenic character of roads in Town.**

*Action*

1. Conduct an inventory of scenic roads in Windham and establish management guidelines to protect the distinctive features located in the right-of-way, such as road surface and width, canopy trees, and stone walls.

**Policy 4: Support CT River Transit in providing transportation options that meet the mobility needs of all of Windham's residents, as well as people who come to Windham for work.**

*Action*

1. Publicize public transit options available to Windham residents.

## CHAPTER XIII HOUSING

An adequate supply of year-round housing that offers varieties of size, cost, and location is essential to the economic and social health of Windham. Communities benefit when employees are able to live close to their workplace, young adults are able to buy or rent in their hometowns, and elderly residents are able to remain in the community where they have family, friends, and history.

### A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Windham is a quiet rural community. The 2000 Census reported that there were 354 housing units. Town Lister's data indicated that there were 369 units by the end of 2004. While the Census reported 15 mobile homes in 2000, the Lister's reported 16 in 2004. Most new development has occurred along road frontage and has been built on a lot-by-lot basis as opposed to a large subdivision. Trends since 1990 include the conversion of seasonal housing to year-round units and an increase in the number of owner and renter-occupied units.

The rate of new housing construction has varied. Town records indicate that 4 zoning permits were issued for new houses in 2005. This compared to 9 zoning permits in 2004; 13 in 2003; and 3 in 2002.

The town has a minimal supply of rental housing. Information from the 2000 Census showed that there were 24 occupied rental housing units at that time and 3 vacant rental units. Based on a sample of 20 occupied rental housing units, all 20 units were single family homes. Forty-five (45) percent of the units were built prior to 1950 with none of the occupied rental units being constructed in the last 10 years. The Town's Zoning Regulations does provide for accessory units (also known as in-law apartments) to be constructed within or attached to a primary single family residence. Prior to 2005, these units were restricted to family members only; however, state law was revised to take away this requirement.

#### Special Needs Housing

The special needs population for the purposes of this plan includes single parent households, physically and mentally impaired persons, and the elderly. In addition to requiring certain services that differ from a typical single-family household (i.e. physical accessibility, assisted living), these groups tend to fall into a lower income category.

The 2000 Census indicated that Windham had 150 households. Fifty (50) households were comprised of someone living alone, of which 18 householders were over the age of 65. The Census also indicated that there were 5 female householders whom had no husband present and had children under the age of 18 living with them. Comparing Census data, the percentage of single person households in which the person is over the age of 65 increased from 9% of households in 1990 to 12% of households in 2000. However, the percentage of households headed by a female with no husband present and children under the age of 18 decreased from 6% of the households in 1990 to 3% in 2000.

There is no project based rent-subsidized housing available in Windham. This is housing in which the subsidy is attached to a particular unit. The neighboring towns of Londonderry and Chester both have subsidized elderly and disabled housing units.

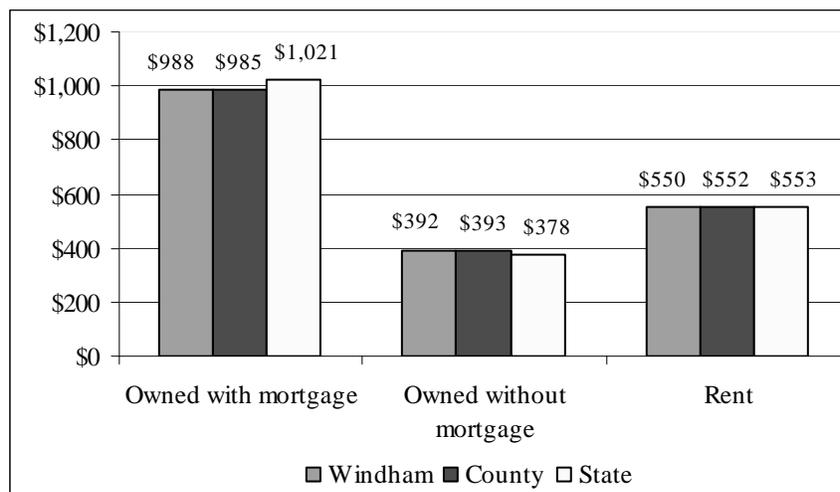
### Housing Affordability

Affordable housing is defined as housing that is owned or rented by its inhabitants whose gross annual income does not exceed 80% of the county median income and housing costs should be no more than 30% of a household's income. For rental housing this includes rent and utilities. For homeownership this includes mortgage (principal and interest), taxes, and property insurance.

The 2000 Census indicated that while 23% of all homeowners spent more than 30% of their household income on their housing, no renters spent more than 30% of their household income on rent. At the other end of the spectrum, 6% of all renters and 24% of all owners spent less than 20% of their household income on housing costs. Household costs for renters tend to consume a larger percentage of household income, as renters generally have lower incomes than homeowners and have a larger representation of individuals over the age of 65 living on a fixed income and under the age of 25 whose salaries, if they are not students, are proportionate to length of time in the workforce.

The median monthly housing cost for renters and homeowners in Windham is illustrated in Figure 1. Interestingly, Windham generally follows the trends that are occurring at both the state and county level.

**Figure 3: Median Monthly Housing Costs in 2000** (Source: US Census)



Housing values and prices have been increasing in Windham as in the rest of Vermont. According to Vermont Housing Data, the median price of primary residences that were sold rose by nearly 200% from 2000 to 2004. The Vermont Department of Taxes Property Transfer Return Report lists the median sales price in 2004 for a residential home on less than six acres in Windham as \$239,000. Needless to say, household income has not kept pace with the increases in median sales prices.

Housing trends are cyclical in nature. In the third quarter of 2004, the Vermont Housing Price Index, which tracks percentage increases in homes, reached a record level, accelerating faster than the real estate market boom of the last 1980s.<sup>2</sup> According to the Vermont Housing Awareness Campaign, in order for housing to become more affordable, home prices would need to fall significantly, interest rates would need to stay low, and Vermonters would need to see increases in their income.<sup>3</sup>

Housing affordability is in part addressed through the activities of non-profit agencies in the area. Rockingham Area Community Land Trust provides affordable rental housing to low and moderate income households, including families and individuals, persons with disabilities or special needs, and the elderly. The Land Trust can also provide income-eligible homebuyers with a subsidy towards the purchase of a qualifying home. In addition, homebuyers under this program have access to below market rate mortgages as well as financial assistance with closing costs. The Land Trust is committed to preserving the affordability of housing in perpetuity by conveying parcels of land to individual homeowners through long-term land leases. Southeastern Vermont Community Action Agency (SEVCA) provides referrals to area shelters, landlord lists, and assists individuals in completing applications for affordable housing possibilities.

Windham does have a Housing Rehabilitation Program. The program is designed to benefit elderly, handicapped, and income-eligible homeowners with rehabilitation activities. It is a revolving low-interest loan program. The Citizen's Advisory Committee administers the program and puts all interest and principle back into the fund to keep loans available in perpetuity. Applications are available at the town office.

## **B. LOCATION OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

According to the Vermont Department of Aging and Independent Living, Windham is projected to have 370 people by 2010. There is a sufficient amount of land that is not steep (greater than 25% slope), that likely has soil suitable for on-site wastewater management, and that is located outside of the Forest District to accommodate additional housing growth associated with the projected population growth.

There are certain locations that are more appropriate to handle residential growth than others (see the Future Land Use Section). Higher density residential development should occur in the historic settlement areas of South Windham and Windham Center. The Forest Districts are not appropriate areas for residential development because the purpose of these areas is to provide for forestry uses while protecting large, contiguous areas of timber and wildlife resources. Due to the remote nature of the Forest Districts, residential development may serve to increase municipal expenses and therefore is not desirable.

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<sup>2</sup> *Economic Review and Revenue Forecast Update*, State of Vermont Emergency Board and Legislative Joint Fiscal Committee, January 2005.

<sup>3</sup> *Between a Rock and Hard Place: Housing and Wage in Vermont, 2005 Update*, Vermont Housing Awareness Campaign.

### **C. FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS**

Windham must continue to address the need for affordable housing in the town. As with other towns located near vacation and resort areas, the availability of affordable housing has become a problem for Windham. During the past 20 years, second home construction has boomed in this area, generally increasing the prices of real estate. Even when those second homes become available for year-round resident housing, the eventual sale price is likely to be the seller's offering price, or more, resulting in a cost that is usually higher than a local family can afford. This imbalance makes it very difficult for local families to find adequate, affordable housing or land on which to build.

In addition, the median age of people in 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 people over the age of 75. 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 availability 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 Rockingham Area Community Land 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 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.
  - b. Continue to discourage housing development in the Forest District.
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 can remain active in the town's housing stock.

## **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 has 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 Timberside 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 lies in 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 resources. Appropriate uses in the Forest Districts include agriculture, commercial forestry, other forest uses (i.e. education, research, etc.) and seasonal camps. Uses such as single family dwellings, non-intensive recreation, and land extractions may be allowed after careful review to ensure that the viability of the timber resources or wildlife habitats will not be jeopardized. 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, mixed use development. The principles to be followed in the governing of land use in the Hamlet include:

- Retain the mixed zoning that already is in these areas;
- Remove barriers to multi-family housing development in the Hamlets;
- Encourage community-scale commerce; and
- Provide for a balance of communal open space with structures.
- Preserve the historic character of the hamlets.

Appropriate uses in the Hamlet include residential dwellings, home industries and businesses, personal services, and professional offices. 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, easily accessible from the existing road system, or which appear capable to be 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 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 business, 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.). 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 Timberside Ski Area that were formerly occupied by the original base lodge, accessory structures, and parking areas, as well as the Tater Hill Golf Club 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. 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. In order to sustain 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 environment that currently exists in Windham.

**Policy 1: To preserve the character, scenic landscape and environmental well being of Windham through the designation of distinct zoning districts, and to regulate land use activities to ensure compatibility with the purposes of those respective 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 District 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 boundary are required.
  - b. Maintain a mix of the following or like uses in the Hamlet District: residential, personal service, professional offices, bed and breakfasts and inns, government/community services.
  - 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.
  - c. 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 if deemed necessary.
4. Maintain the Recreation Commercial District to promote development of commercial recreational facilities and supporting uses around the Tater Hill Golf Course and the former Timberside 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 2: 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. earth and mineral extraction, 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 3: 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, 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 the center of open fields.
2. 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.
3. Educate landowners on various ways to preserve scenic resources and open space.

## **CHAPTER X 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.

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 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 Enhancement Grants, and Vermont Recreational Trails Grants. In addition, there are several private foundations and federal government entities that finance projects.

## **CHAPTER XI 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. As such, 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. There should be no conflicts with the designated land uses in both towns.

#### **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 however, the boundaries are well defined, and no conflicts are anticipated.

#### **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 with the purpose of the area being the protection of the significant forest and scenic resources, headwater streams and wildlife habitat at higher elevations and 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. There should be no conflicts with the designated land uses in both towns.

## **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. Windham has designated a portion of the land surrounding the golf course as Recreation-Commercial with the remaining lands as Rural Residential. The Andover Town Plan does not provide detail as to the desires for the various land use designations, making it difficult to discern compatibility. However, the Existing Land Use text does recognize that commercial development has occurred in the Tater Hill recreational area of both Andover and Windham. Windham, in this area, is proposing to allow the development of commercial recreation facilities and commercial enterprises that are ancillary to recreational uses while at the same time advocating for compact development to protect open spaces and prevent a linear pattern of development. The towns of Andover and Windham should further discuss this area.

## **6. Chester**

A small area in the northeastern corner of Windham borders the Town of Chester. Popple Dungeon Road links the two towns. In Windham, this small area is designated as Rural Residential along Popple Dungeon Road with a small area designated as Forest. Chester has designated this area as Forest, describing the area as already having small residential parcels, but recognizing the importance of contiguous forest areas for wildlife habitat as well as recreational use and encouraging development to be clustered to maximize forest preservation. Conflicting uses do not appear to be an issue between the towns' proposed land use areas.

## **B. COMPATIBILITY WITH THE WINDHAM REGIONAL PLAN**

The Regional Plan is intended to provide guidelines for the planning and coordination of change and development which will, in accordance with present and future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the Region. The Windham Town Plan supports and complements the land use and development goals of the Regional Plan.

The 2006 Regional Plan identifies the Villages of South Windham and Windham as Hamlets, with the remaining "valley" lands as Productive Rural and Rural Residential lands. The Regional Plan categorizes the lands on the eastern slopes of Glebe Mountain, West Windham, Turkey Mountain, and along the eastern boundary of the Town as Resource lands. The Town's proposed land uses are compatible with the Regional Plan.

## **CHAPTER XII TOWN PLAN MAPS**

A series of maps has been prepared to assist planners, public officials and citizens to understand Windham and to assist in the planning process, governmental and business decisions. These maps are for planning purposes only. The policies and actions, and associated narrative discussions in the body of the Town Plan prevail as the guidelines for the Town's future growth.

- Map 1. Utilities and Community Resources
- Map 2. Earth Resource
- Map 3. Watersheds
- Map 4. Natural Resources
- Map 5. Transportation System
- Map 6. Existing Land Use/Land Cover
- Map 7. Future Land Use