

# **CHELSEA MUNICIPAL PLAN**

*Adopted by the Chelsea Selectboard*  
May 7, 2002

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**The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission, Woodstock, Vermont 05091,  
supplied staff support in the preparation of this Plan.**

## ***FOREWORD***

This is Chelsea's fifth Municipal Plan. In 1973, the Chelsea Selectmen appointed the Town's first Planning Commission. Five years later (1978), a Plan authored by the Commission was duly adopted. The Plan was reviewed and again adopted five years later in 1983, then revised and adopted in 1996. This Plan (as well as the preceding ones) is authorized in Title 24, Chapter 117, Sections 4381 and 4383 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated, allowing a town to carry out a planning program and adopt a plan.

Based on the recommendations of preceding Municipal Plans, Chelsea has adopted three land use tools to safeguard the town's rural character, its historic heritage, and to promote wise land use:

- Flood Hazard Bylaw - adopted in 1972; *revised in 1990*
- Zoning Bylaws - adopted in 1978, amended in 1987 *and again in 1998*
- Design Control District Ordinance - *adopted in 1986 then revised and incorporated as Article 7 of the 1998 Zoning Bylaw*

This Plan does not recommend additional local regulations at this time. However, possible new regulations are recommended for study where the Planning Commission determined it to be appropriate. The Plan's objectives continue to be consistent with the preferences of the Town residents as expressed in the 1992 survey, which is appended to this Plan, *and subsequent expression of preferences in various formal and informal meetings related to the operation of the Town and its facilities*. The Planning Commission and the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission have focused their energies on building a base of information upon which planning decisions over the next five years can be made. You will see from some of the recommendations in the Plan that more information remains to be gathered and analyzed.

Important progress has been made during this latest planning effort in preparing accurate resource maps for the Town - a problem identified by previous Planning Commissions. Reduced versions of larger working maps are included in the Plan. In addition, data on the current and future trends in populations, landownership, and taxes has been gathered. High priority issues as perceived by the community are identified in the Plan with recommendations on how these issues might be addressed.

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## I. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

It is the intent and purpose of this Plan to guide development and use of land and buildings in the Town of Chelsea in a manner consistent and compatible with the needs and desires of the residents of the Town. In addition, the Plan is designed to promote the public health, safety, efficiency, economy, and general welfare. It is hoped that the development and implementation of this Plan will help the residents of the Town to realize all the benefits of rural life including clean air, clean water and open spaces for recreation, and will promote physical development that will foster a spirit of community among the residents of this Town.

### A. PLAN DEFINITIONS

Goals, objectives, policies and recommendations of a plan must be viewed as an integrated system of statements that have clear relationships to each other and to the body of the plan. The definitions of these terms must be made clear for the understanding of each plan section as well as the coordination of the plan sections with each other. The terms defined below are used throughout the plan:

**Goals** are long-range town aspirations, which establish the directions that a town will take. The "goal" describes the end condition that is sought;

**Objectives** are attainable targets, which are action oriented and designed to address outstanding town problems. An objective is a measurable component of a goal. Objectives are achieved in part by implementing planning policies;

**Policies** are guidelines for action, which direct objectives.

**Recommendations** are courses of action designed to achieve objectives and are suggested courses of action that may be used to solve existing problems and to avoid their recurrence. These may include performance criteria, specific strategies, changes in administrative procedures, or suggestions for further study.

The following items have been identified as objectives of the Town Plan.

### B. OBJECTIVES

1. To preserve sufficient space in appropriate locations for forests and agriculture, for residential, recreational, commercial, and industrial development and for public and semi-public facilities.
2. To protect soil, forests, water and natural resources.

3. To protect the historic features of Chelsea, to preserve open space and to provide a sound economic basis for its maintenance, to allow the growth of the Town in a manner that will continue the rural and village environment, to encourage a rational and convenient pattern of settlement, and to encourage and enhance the attractiveness of the Town.
4. To provide adequate and efficient transportation facilities, schools, parks, and other public facilities and to encourage the appropriate and efficient expenditure of public funds.
5. To encourage and give first priority to agricultural and forest uses of suitable lands.
6. To ensure that the Town can adapt to the growth rate in order to be able to provide facilities and services.

### **C. OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The goals and objectives listed in this and preceding Municipal Plans speak directly to protecting those special qualities which Chelsea residents have treasured for over 215 years: its historic village area, rolling farm and forest lands, steep mountain ridges, and clean brooks and rivers. Each of us has a special place in town, which we like to visit or just set our eyes upon.

The townspeople have repeatedly endorsed the concept of protecting the landscape and rural character of the Town. The survey of residents conducted in 1992 also indicated a consensus for preserving Chelsea's rural character. Subsequent surveys conducted by ad-hoc committees such as the Chelsea Facilities Study Committee in 1998 have reinforced this consensus.

The Town has likewise spoken and acted to preserve the historic character of the village through enactment of the Design Control District Ordinance, which was incorporated into the Revised Chelsea Zoning Bylaw adopted at Town Meeting in 1998.

### **D. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Planning Commission recommends that specific actions be implemented over the next five years to promote a balanced approach to growth - supporting both land conservation and sensitive development. The Planning Commission is firmly convinced that such a balance can and must occur through the cooperative efforts of Town leaders, landowners and residents. Careful site planning with effective standards should promote responsible development appropriate to both the community and the property owner, not only for structures and land use, but for modern utility needs, such as communication towers. At the same time, regulation must not be so restrictive as to cause undue hardship to the property owner. Without such action, the Commission envisions a slow but steady erosion of the beauty and very essence of our community through haphazard subdivision and

exploitation of our land - not by its current stewards, but by uncontrolled market forces.

2. The Plan highlights the need in Town for housing that the sons and daughters of traditional Town residents can afford. Methods for providing affordable housing for all residents need to be studied on the town and regional level. The Town should cooperate and participate in any regional efforts addressing this problem. A plan of action should be adopted before housing is permanently out of reach of our children.
3. The local property tax has always been a concern of frugal Vermonters, and Chelsea is no exception. An ever-expanding school and Town budget continues to place increasing burdens on local taxpayers. Clearly, part of the answer lies outside of the Town with state and federal government. The Commission recommends, however, that the Town consider developing a Capital Budget and a five-year Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) as a means to forecast expenses and anticipated tax revenue requirements. By incorporating all of the major entities, which require significant local support (school, fire department, roads), the townspeople can see what lies down the road in terms of taxes and be better informed in their annual budgetary decisions. Further, this action will provide more time for the Selectmen, the Planning Commission, and others in the community to draft proposals for low-cost loans or grants or to set aside money to meet future large expenditures.
4. It is recommended that the Town continue to evaluate the feasibility of hiring a Town Manager.

## II. TOWN SETTING AND HISTORY

### A. SETTING

The Town of Chelsea has an area of approximately 23,818 acres or approximately 37 square miles. The Town is characterized as a rural community. It is located some 35 miles northwest of the intersection of Interstate Routes 89 and 91. Vermont Route 110 is the main artery, which nearly bisects the Town.

Chelsea has a village area of 330 acres, which serves as the focal point for most commercial uses, public buildings, and higher density residential uses.

### B. HISTORY

In 1781, the town that is now Chelsea was granted a charter under the name of Turnersburg by the General Assembly of the independent Republic of Vermont.

Settlement was commenced in 1784 and by 1800 there was a listed population of 897 people. Town government was organized in 1788 and in the fall of that year the town's name was changed to "Chelsea" by petition to the General Assembly. Most of the early settlers here were of English descent and came here from lower New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. It is thought the name Chelsea was promoted by former residents of Norwich, Connecticut.

A unique feature of Chelsea village is the two commons, or "greens", as they were called in the early history of the Town. North Common dates to 1795 when the Town purchased "a piece of land for a public parade", paying five pounds, English money. In 1802, a prominent early citizen of the Town gave land to erect a courthouse and jail and for a "new common" which when cleared became the South Common.

From the early settlement on, the town has had a farm-based economy, evolving through subsistence farming, grain farming, sheep raising and eventually to dairy farming. In 1880, there were 200 farms in Town. Various changes and pressures have reduced the number of working dairy farms in Chelsea to about *eight in 2001*.

Chelsea is located near the center of Orange County and in 1795, it was designated as the seat of county government, thus becoming the "Shire Town" to use an old English term. The courthouse that stands at the head of the South Common was built in 1847, on nearly the same site as the 1801 structure. In 1796, a first jail was erected on nearly the same site as the present one which was built in 1864. Several offices pertinent to county government are located at the courthouse and at other locations around the village.

A Congregational Society was organized in Chelsea in 1789 and in 1989 celebrated its 200th year. In 1813, the group completed construction of their church that stands at the head of the North Common. In 1833, six different religious denominations joined forces to

build a Union meetinghouse on the West Hill. This church, now the West Hill Methodist Church, recently celebrated their 150th anniversary. A Methodist Church was built in 1837 on North Main Street where the Chelsea fire station now stands. In 1929, the two village churches united their congregations. Unable to maintain both church buildings, the Methodist Church was taken down in 1955.

Education was an early priority for New England towns, and Chelsea was no exception. Within ten years of settlement, the Town had erected a schoolhouse in the village. In the early 1800's, when the local population reached its peak of nearly 2,000 inhabitants, the town was divided into 18 school districts and had 17 district schools. There was a Chelsea Academy (1851-1870), from which evolved the Chelsea High School. For the past thirty years, all students K-12 have been taught at the village school location near the South Common.

Chelsea has received considerable positive recognition for its twin commons and its fine old buildings some dating prior to 1800. Most of the brick buildings were built in the period 1820-1835 with the exception of the Town Hall, which was dedicated in 1894. The local Historical Society was instrumental in establishing a Chelsea Village Historical District. In 1982, several village buildings were nominated for their historical significance, and in late 1983, the Society was notified that the local Historic District, encompassing nearly all of the central part of the village, had been officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places in Washington, D.C.

### **III. PROFILE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

#### **A. POPULATION**

The following quote typifies the Town's sentiments on growth in the Town:

*“I like Vermont because it is quiet, because you have a population that is solid and not driven mad by American mania - the mania which considers a town of 4000 twice as good as a town of 2000...”*

*Sinclair Lewis, 1929*

Projecting population changes accurately over the long-term are difficult because of likely changes in key assumptions used in predictive models. For instance, a drop in interest rates or the introduction of tax investment credits for business could spur new development in an area above and beyond “typical” rates. In spite of this, it is fair to assume for the 1990-2000 period that Orange County towns will experience increases in population, however, at rates less than the 1980-1990 period.

Population projections only serve as a guide. Many things can change a projection dramatically. With the completion of a road, addition of a school or the development of a major employment opportunity, populations can dramatically increase. Very soon, Chelsea may also be affected by the continuing out-migration to rural areas from

employment centers like Montpelier and Hanover with very high housing and land costs relative to this community. Using the best-case scenario, a low to moderate growth is expected in Chelsea.

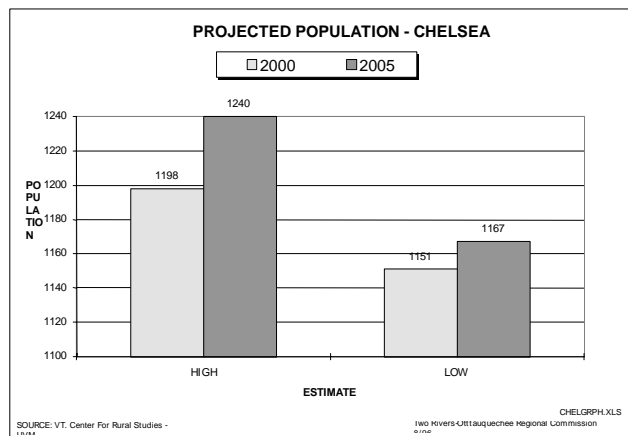
	Census	Estimates		Percent Change	Group Quarters <sup>1</sup>
	April 1, 1990	July 1, 1998	July 1, 1999	1990-1999	1999
<b>ORANGE COUNTY</b>	26149	26994	27054	3.5	633
BRADFORD	2522	2581	2539	0.7	109
BROOKFIELD	1089	1144	1084	-0.5	0
<b>CHELSEA</b>	<b>1166</b>	<b>1171</b>	<b>1264</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>18</b>
CORINTH	1244	1327	1376	10.6	0
FAIRLEE	883	915	888	0.6	4
ORANGE	915	1013	1039	13.6	5
RANDOLPH	4764	4822	4605	-3.3	485
STRAFFORD	902	868	875	-3.0	0
THETFORD	2438	2541	2477	1.6	0
TUNBRIDGE	1154	1118	1204	4.3	0
VERSHIRE	560	645	652	16.4	0
WASHINGTON	937	960	940	0.3	0
WEST FAIRLEE	633	619	681	7.6	0
WILLIAMSTOWN	2839	2922	3127	10.1	0

<sup>1</sup> Represents the non-household population (i.e., dormitories, nursing homes, prisons, convents, etc.) with the average length of stay of six or more months.

<sup>2</sup> Values for villages are subsets of town totals. "ND" indicates no data were available for village.

<sup>3</sup> Unorganized township

**Figure 1 - Chelsea population 1990-1999**



**Figure 2 - Projected Population Chelsea**

	Chelsea	US Avg
<b>Education Levels:</b>		
Less than Grade 9	7%	8%
Grade 9-12	8%	10%
High School	46%	34%
Some College	9%	17%
Associates Degree	8%	7%
Baccalaureate Degree	12%	16%
Graduate Degree	9%	8%
<b>Family Structure:</b>		
Family Households	74%	69%
Non-Family Households	26%	31%
<b>Household Information:</b>		
Median Income	\$36,943	\$36,746
Median Age	47	48
# Vehicles	1.94	
% of work done @ home	7.37%	
Avg. Commute time	22.76 minutes	
<b>Housing:</b>		
Median Home Value	\$128,900	\$125,643
Home Appreciation	9.50%	7.47%
Owner Occupied	80%	75%
Renters	20%	25%
<b>Economics:</b>		
Job Growth	1.70%	1.60%
Projected to 2010	14.40%	15.30%
Property Tax/1,000	2.02	1.49
<b>Cost of Living vs. US Average:</b>		
Transportation	103.40%	
Housing	129.99%	
Utilities	129.60%	
Groceries	104.90%	
Health	117.30%	
Miscellaneous	105.30%	
Overall	112.57%	

**Figure 3 - Comparative Demographics**

**Recommendation:**

1. The Planning Commission and School Board should work with state and local officials to estimate the age breakdown of the expected population increase to determine what demands will be placed on the school system and other public services, housing needs, and on the tax base.

## **B. HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Within the Village of Chelsea, most of the historic buildings are well described and there are pictures of them filed in the Town Clerk's office as result of the nomination of the entire central part of the Village to the National Register of Historic Places. This was done late in 1983. Chelsea's historic resources include many early 19th century frame and brick residences and several imposing religious structures.

Historic structures outside the Village include the West Hill Church (1833), the Moxley covered bridge (1883) and certainly some old homes (both frame and brick) that represent certain eras of building in Town.

Other notable historic sites are: the lead mine off the so-called Hall Road; the small granite quarry near the Tunbridge Town line; the Justin Morgan Memorial; all of the old cemeteries; early mill remains and sites that backed up water to furnish power to all our early industries until the coming of the gasoline engine. Roadside water tubs, the sites of the early brickyards, evidence of the early turnpike roads and relocated roads are all of historic interest, and should be worthy of recording on paper and in perhaps some instances be worthy of on-the-site markers.

Details on seven historic Chelsea sites can be found on file with the Town and the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation, along with sources of information on the Town's history.

### **Chelsea Historical Society**

The Chelsea Historical Society, Inc. was organized in August 1960 to gather, preserve and maintain all available manuscripts, photos, documents and artifacts relating to the Town's history. In 1965, the Society purchased the Lewis house on Main Street for storage. The house was kept open daily for one summer, but interest was low and since then is opened on local holidays and by appointment.

The Society has played an active role in local historical observances, such as old Home Days, reenactment of the granting of the Town's Charter (1981), and the celebration of the Town's bicentennial of settlement (1984). In conjunction with the bicentennial, a committee of Society members spent five years writing a history of the Town from 1784-1984.

In June 1999 the Society joined thirty-five other Historical Societies in Central and Northeastern Vermont to celebrate Vermont Heritage Weekend. The Historical House was open Saturday and Sunday, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. As well, a hike to Devil's Den was planned for Saturday. Due to the success of this weekend, the Vermont Historical Society sponsored the Vermont History Expo 2000 held on the Tunbridge Fairgrounds, June 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, 2000. Approximately 75 local historical societies participated in this event. The Vermont History Expo was held again in 2001 and the Chelsea Historical Society was one of 92 exhibiting. The exhibit for Expo 2000 centered on our two commons, the Church and Court House. The theme in 2001 was "Chelsea Schools thru the Years"

### **National Register of Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation. Established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and administered by the National Park Service, the National Register lists properties of local, state and/or national significance.

In the fall of 1982, the Chelsea Historical Society contracted with the Historic Preservation Division of the Vermont Agency of Development and Community Affairs to examine those properties in Chelsea village that were deemed to have historical significance, and if applicable to nominate them for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. A preliminary survey showed that nearly all the structures in the central part of the village could be included in the nomination. The Chelsea Fish and Game Club assisted the Historical Society in funding this venture. Photographs were taken of all the buildings in the District and written architectural descriptions and special highlights accompanied the pictures.

In November 1983, the local Historical Society was notified that the Chelsea Historic District had been officially entered in the National Register of Historic Places. Letters were sent to each property owner since inclusion in the District could mean grants, low-interest loans, or other financial incentives to the owners under certain circumstances.

### **C. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. As described above, additional properties may be appropriate for National Register landmarking. It is recommended that the Chelsea Historical Society, in conjunction with the Town's residents, investigate the appropriateness of these additional structures for National Register landmarking.
2. It is recommended that additional efforts at publicizing the benefits of being included in the Historic District be initiated by the Chelsea Historical Society.
3. The Town needs to investigate options to establish a standing or revolving fund to provide money at low interest or as a possible gift to assist in the renovation or rehabilitation of some local historical site or structure such as the Town Hall, the

Historical Society house, the Chelsea Mills or the Courthouse in the event that it reverts to the Town at some future date.

## **IV. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

A Facilities committee was appointed by the Selectmen to study facilities options for the town's overcrowded situation. The committee conducted a substantial study, which examined a number of properties as well as the feasibility of converting the town hall basement to offices and meeting rooms. The committee also conducted a survey of town residents, to solicit input to the various options developed from the study. The study and the survey were documented for the selectmen.

The committee is still looking at possibilities to help with the town's shortage of space.

### **A. SCHOOLS**

The Chelsea Public School and the Chelsea Community have very close ties. The burden of funding the school is borne primarily at the local level. In the 1970's, when many small town schools elected to become part of union school districts, the townspeople elected to support their own school. The school continues to be a focal point of the community.

The main Chelsea School building consists of a two-story wooden building constructed in 1912 and a wing added in 1977-1978. The 1912 building houses grades K-6 on a full-time basis. It also includes classrooms for Home Economics, Chapter 1 and Special Education, as well as Elementary Guidance and a Special Language classroom.

The new wing connects the 1912 building to the Industrial Arts facility 40' X 80' completed in 1970. The new wing houses a library, science lab, offices and eight high school classrooms, as well as high school and elementary lavatory facilities. Attached to the southeast end of the building is a classroom 13' X 16' constructed in 1988.

In 1997, the school board formed a building committee to study the building needs of the school district. The voters approved funds to support the study. Based on the building committee's findings, the school board submitted a capital construction proposal to the state department of education, which included renovations and new construction. The department of education approved the proposal for state aid. After a number of community meetings the school district's plan was submitted to the voters at a special town meeting in September 2000. The voters did not approve the plan. In spite of the unfavorable vote, the school board remains committed to develop a plan, which will meet the school's needs at an affordable cost. In the meantime, the board will continue to seek annual funding for necessary maintenance projects.

The gym/auditorium is a separate building constructed in 1951, and expanded in 1984, consists of a stage area of 510 square feet, a coach's office, storage room, music room, and

locker facilities. The gym floor was resurfaced and the gym boiler was replaced in September 2001. A newly acquired floor cover will protect the resurfaced gym floor.

Adjoining the gym is the Roberts-Gould baseball field, which is owned by the Town of Chelsea. On a lower level are the elementary playground and bus and staff parking areas. The school leases from the Brookhaven Episcopal Home For Boys, at no charge, a field 1/2 mile to the north of the school, where varsity soccer and girls lacrosse are played. The school district also has use of the Heath Field, which the town recreation committee make available to the school during the soccer season for a small maintenance charge. In the future, the school district would ideally like to obtain more recreational space.

2001-2002 enrollments for grades K-12 are 265 students. Breakdown by class follows:

K -	10	7 -	21
1 -	9	8 -	11
2 -	6	9 -	48
3 -	12	10 -	29
4 -	13	11 -	37
5 -	15	12 -	<u>34</u>
6 -	<u>20</u>		
	<b>85</b>		<b>180</b>

**85-Elementary, 180-Junior & High School, 265-Total**

The school has approximately 28 full-time instructors, a principal, two guidance counselors, a secretary, and an administrative staff. In the past several years, the school staff has remained more or less stable.

In 1989, total enrollments in Chelsea were estimated at 354, which was an all time high, according to school officials. Since that time, enrollments have ranged between 325 and 265 students. Capacity of the school is about 350 students. .

Overall, the population level in Orange County is expected to remain on the increase but at a much lower rate than during the 1980’s when Vermont’s population increased by approximately 10.4%. In spite of a moderate rate of increase in population for Chelsea, the Chelsea High School receives approximately 50% or 75 of its high school students from surrounding communities on a tuition basis.

The Chelsea School is a community center. As such, it can use its resources to help develop programs that contribute to a safe and supportive community for Chelsea’s children and young adults. This will include programs initiated on its own as well as working together with town organizations and local law enforcement. The school will seek grants to support this effort.

## **B. HEALTH SERVICES**

Chelsea is fortunate to have its own medical care facility in town, The Chelsea Health Center, established in 1953. The Center is a non-profit organization that leases the facility to The Gifford Medical Center. Two practitioners currently provide services at the center, David Pattison, M.D. M.P.H., Internal Medicine and Pediatrics , 1 day per week, and Starr Strong, P.A.C., Monday thru Friday

Other health services available to Chelsea residents include:

- **CHELSEA HOME** - provides residential care primarily for elderly persons not able to be at home, 23-bed capacity.
- **FIRST BRANCH AMBULANCE** - volunteer, 24-hour emergency service, the fee is based on ability to pay.
- **VERMONT-NEW HAMPSHIRE VISITING NURSE ALLIANCE** - provides care for patients in their residences, based in Randolph.
- **HOSPITAL SERVICES** - Central Vermont Hospital, Berlin; Gifford Hospital, Randolph; Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, Lebanon, NH.
- **DENTAL SERVICES** - available in Barre, Montpelier, Randolph and Royalton.
- **SENIOR CITIZEN CENTER** - providing meals twice weekly, monthly Blood Pressure checks and Flu shots.

**Recommendation:** People are living to be older. In order for older people to continue to stay in their homes, it is imperative that all of the services currently available continue to remain in place. With the tightening of “money belts” on state and federal levels, the challenge becomes greater for all of us.

## **C. PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The Chelsea Town Hall and Public Library was built in 1894 with a gift of \$5,000 from Alden Speare and a matching \$5,000 from the Town.

At present, the library houses over 11,000 volumes, employs a part-time librarian and has many volunteers. Circulation for the year 2000 increased more than 50% and totaled approximately 10,700. In addition, patron visits have also dramatically increased to over 4,700 annually. The library is presently open 14 hours per week and will be open 20 hours beginning in November 2001.

Library programs include a bi-weekly story hour attended by children at local day care centers and at home children and their families; a summer youth reading program; book discussion series; topical evening programs; and, outreach services to senior citizens and shut-ins. The Library has 2 computers with high-speed cable Internet access for public use.

The Trustees of the Chelsea Public Library recognize the imminent need for additional space for books, a growing video and audio collection, work and storage space for the librarian and a need to accommodate additional computers. The Trustees, in conjunction

with members of the community and the Chelsea Historical Society are participating in discussions regarding how to address the need for more public space.

The Library recently participated in a program provided by the State of Vermont, Department of Libraries; to estimate the actual amount of square footage space the library would need over the next 10-20 years. The current square footage of the library is less than 1,000 square feet. The estimated space needs for the library over the next 10-20 years would be more than double the current square footage.

The library is open to the public and everyone is welcome to stop in for a visit!

**D. FIRE PROTECTION**

Volunteer personnel and the equipment of the Fire District Number One provide fire protection for the Town. . .

The Fire Station is located near the center of Chelsea Village on Rt. 110. It is fully insulated wood-frame structure with metal siding of 44 by 140 feet with 5 bays, set back 30 ft. from the street. All the fire fighting apparatus is housed within this building along with rented space used by First Branch Ambulance

The department has 28 volunteers. The communication system consists of a two-way radio system hooked up with Bethel Barracks State Police that is being upgraded to allow direct communication with mutual aid departments.

The Fire District has an agreement with the Town of Washington to respond to calls south of the height of land and has a mutual assistance agreement with the Tunbridge Fire District. Further, the District is a member of the Capital Fire Mutual Aid System.

In 1995, the Municipal Water System was completed along with a very adequate fire hydrant system. In 1995, the Department purchased an air compressor for breathable air. This gives the Department the capability to refill the air bottles on the self-contained breathing apparatus used by firefighters. In 2001 the District approved the purchase of a 1,250-gallon tank/ 1,250 GPM pumper with the ability to accommodate 5 firefighters in full gear in the cab to replace a worn out 1966 vehicle

<b>EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>YEAR</b>
300 GPM 288-Gallon Tank Truck	1982
2000-Gallon Tanker Truck	1972
1,250 GPM Pumper 1,250-Gallon Tank Truck	2001
1000 GPM 1000 Gallon: Tank Truck	1993
2 Portable Pumps	
1800 Gallon and 2000-Gallon Portable Tanks	
Air Compressor for Breathable Air	

**Recommendations**

1. Ensure adequate water supplies for fire fighting and protection throughout Chelsea. The Town should carefully evaluate fire flows for developments that will be served by a community water system and, if possible, hydrants and sprinkler systems should be installed. For developments with on-site water, the Planning Commission should require, as a part of subdivision approval, the installation of fire ponds and/or dry hydrants when recommended by the Fire Chief. Construction of new ponds should be coordinated with the Fire District to equip dry hydrants where appropriate.
2. Carefully evaluate road and driveway access to proposed developments for fire trucks and other emergency vehicles. Fire trucks are very large vehicles that travel at high speeds enroute to a fire. The safety of the firemen and the expensive trucks should not be endangered by roads and driveways, which are too steep or narrow, or in poor condition.
3. Require installation of smoke detectors and sprinklers in new construction. Smoke detectors are inexpensive, easy to install and should be required in all new, renovated or enlarged buildings. Sprinkler systems should be required for any new large commercial/industrial buildings and school buildings. Retrofitting existing buildings should be promoted.
4. Fire alarm systems could be tied into the fire dispatch, as has recently been done at Chelsea Court, to improve the response time for fire vehicles.
5. The District should continue to manage its financial affairs, anticipating the need for additional or replacement equipment and planning accordingly. It should monitor the availability of grant money for equipment and training and apply when possible.
6. Identify a new location to store fire-fighting equipment in the West Hill Area.
7. The Zoning Administration process should be modified to assure the District is notified of approvals for new structures or major modifications to existing structures in order for it to update its firefighting plan and, where appropriate, offer advice to the applicant on modification that would improve fire safety.
8. Although the recent implementation of enhanced 911 has had some positive effect on response, the District should continue to monitor improvements in the technology for efficiently responding to unfamiliar locations aided by on-board automated mapping and guidance equipment.

## **E. POLICE PROTECTION**

The Orange County Sheriff, Chief Deputy Sheriff and an Administrative Manager provide police services for Chelsea and 17 other towns. The Orange County Sheriff's Office and adjacent facility are located in Chelsea Village on Route 113 (Jail Street). The police facility consists of a set of four rooms for the office, a block of six cells to accommodate 12 detainees on the ground floor and six cells on the second floor of which only one is used. Detention is limited to 72 hours or to weekend prisoners. A dispatcher is on duty at this location 24 hours a day to accept calls and dispatch a Deputy if one is available.

There are 27 part-time Deputies residing throughout the County. In addition to law enforcement, court security services and transporting prisoners, the Deputy Sheriffs serve all civil processes and, on request, provide traffic control for public occasions. The Department operates 8 motor vehicles with radar; two have video cameras, and two snowmobiles in enforcing the law within the 670 square miles, 17 towns and 3 villages that make up Orange County. The Sheriff and Deputies also conduct the D.A.R.E. program in many of the schools in the County to teach 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> graders how to avoid drugs. Chelsea is not among them at present.

Since State Law does not provide for the County to tax residents for law enforcement expenses, including salaries and equipment, the Sheriff's Department operates under contract to towns desiring their patrolling and response services. Chelsea is among these at the current rate of \$21 per hour. In addition, the Department contracts for traffic control during road paving, utility construction and other projects at a higher rate. The difference allows the Sheriff to provide law enforcement to towns in addition to the contracted amount.

During 2000, the Sheriff's Department recorded 275 responses to incidents in Chelsea ranging from verifying VIN numbers to vandalism, larceny, disorderly conduct and cultivation of marijuana. Youthful individuals have perpetrated much of the criminal activity, and is often drug related.

The Town of Chelsea also elects a Constable who provides such services as requested by the Selectmen. The Constable has the same authority as the State Police.

### **Recommendation**

1. The Town of Chelsea Selectmen should monitor Town growth and assess on a regular basis, the adequacy of police protection. The need for additional equipment or facilities for the elected Constable should be part of the annual assessment.
2. The Town presently receives all but \$10 of traffic fines resulting from citations on town roads. By adopting an amendment to the town traffic ordinance to include the stop signs and speed limits posted on the state roads, the Town can receive a similar return on citations issued on these roads as well, which could be used to increase patrolling if needed.
3. The Selectboard and townspeople should encourage the development of additional activities and facilities, such as a teen center, to provide constructive alternatives for teenagers during evenings and weekends with the objective of reducing criminal incidents.
4. The Town should explore the possibility of combining needs with other adjoining towns to form a "Regional Police", sharing the high equipment and insurance costs of additional, dedicated officers to complement the Sheriff and State Police as the population increases.

5. The school should consider re-instituting the D.A.R.E. program as a preventive measure for teen-age use of drugs.
6. Chelsea has had the benefit of Enhanced 911 for several years but further education of the population is necessary as some still use the former emergency numbers

## **F. RECREATION AND PARKS**

### **Indoor Facilities**

- The Town Hall auditorium houses a full-sized proscenium stage and balcony with limited back stage space. The main floor is often used for dances and private parties. The forced air heating system has recently been changed from a wood fired operation to an oil fired system. This has made preparing the hall for functions much simpler.
- The Chelsea School Gym is used primarily by the school, but is also heavily used in off hours by town recreational teams and informal sport activities and performances.

### **Outdoor Facilities**

- The Robert Gould field - a baseball field located at the school grounds.
- The Brookhaven field - used for baseball and soccer by the school and recreational users. This field is owned by the Brookhaven Home for Boys and rented by the school.
- The Heath Field that serves the town Little League is located south of the village beside the sewage treatment plant. In 1999, this was expanded into two with room for parking and public picnic area. A volleyball court was added in 2001.
- Horseshoe pits, also located by the sewage treatment plant, are used frequently.
- The Atwood lot - directly across from the bank in the village center has an outdoor asphalt basketball court, a swing set and other playground equipment for young children. In the winter, the basketball court is flooded for ice skating and lighted at night. During 1996, through community efforts, the playground was significantly improved.
- School Playground - located on the south end of the school grounds has a slide, swings and various climbing structures.

## **The Commons**

The two Village Commons are important public space used for a variety of activities from picnicking and Frisbee throwing to the weekly summer farmers market and the annual flea market. Within the past year many of the dead trees have been taken down, new trees have been planted. The park commission has made the commons more users friendly with benches and trash barrels.

## **Swimming**

At present, the Town has no public swimming facilities. Private ponds, nearby lakes and the First Branch are currently the only available areas for swimming.

## **Fishing**

Fishing on the First Branch of the White River and its tributaries is a popular activity for residents and visitors alike. There are a number of parking places along Route 110 that provide access to the First Branch. The First Branch is a public water way along the highway and, therefore, available for public use at the points where the highway borders the water. On other river sections, the landowner determines fishing access. Sections of the river have been specifically reserved for Chelsea's young people including:

- A Children's Brook for children under 13 has been designated from the Bobbin Shop bridge to the Brookhaven Dam;
- There is also a fishing access south of the village on the First Branch of the White River, which is owned by the State of Vermont (approx. 1 acre).

## **Hunting**

Many local visiting sportsmen hunt within the Town's boundaries, deer and partridge being the most sought game. At this point, access to land for hunting does not appear to be a concern. Nevertheless, as land becomes divided into smaller parcels for development, and houses and camps press into the back woodland, availability of this land for hunting and other recreational use could be jeopardized. In more populated Vermont communities, this scenario has proven to be the case.

The Chelsea Fish and Game Club own 155 acres on the East Randolph Road where there is a rifle range which doubles as a great sliding hill in the winter. The Club completed a new clubhouse in 2001

## **Trails**

A large network of trails and old roads provides access to most of the Town's backcountry. Designated trails are open to snowmobilers (see transportation map) and are open as well to hikers, skiers, and horse riders. The probability exists of a wider range of recreational trails if proposed legislation to strengthen the law protecting landowners from liability action is passed.

Since Class 4 roads and trails are a valuable resource, the Town is currently working to retain them for public access. Excessive rutting and washing by four-wheel drive vehicles is a problem in some cases.

### **Other Recreational Resources**

- For grade school children, there are active groups of Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts.

### **Policy**

1. It is Town policy not to abandon Class 4 roads if they have recreational and/or historical value.

### **Recommendations**

1. Because the school gym is heavily booked in the winter months, expansion of recreational activities might occur in the Town Hall if supervision is provided and costs are covered.
2. During the warm months, Routes 110 and 113 bring large numbers of bicycle tour groups through Chelsea. It is recommended that any State highway improvements include a bicycle lane to attract cyclers and make the highways safer for both motorists and bikers.
3. The land owned by the Brookhaven Home For Boys is a very important recreational asset to the community. Currently the school signs the lease, for one year at a time. Although discussions have taken place concerning a longer lease, because of the terms of the original bequest to the Episcopal Church, this has not happened.
4. A recent survey done by the Parks and Recreation Committees revealed a desire on the part of many for walking trails, for bicycle trails and for X-country ski trails. These should be part of a long-range plan for the community.

## **G. SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT**

In the fall of 1992, the town closed and capped its landfill site per Act 78. A fenced area was provided on the same site for collection of solid waste in 4 or 5 dumpsters to be transported by a contractor to a disposal site elsewhere. The site is available to residents for disposal of household waste on Saturdays. (Most businesses contract their disposal with private carriers.) The initial fee was \$1.25 per 30-gallon container to support staffing of the site as well as the fee to the contractor for removal and disposal. Due to increasing costs, that fee was raised to \$2.00 in 1995 and to \$2.50 in 1999.

Initially, the only material accepted for recycling was cardboard. During the years between 1992 and 1995 the recycling program was expanded significantly to include

newspaper, magazines, boxboard, green, brown and clear container glass, most plastic containers, cans, and motor oil, all at no charge although the Town must pay for it. Metal, vehicle tires and appliances are also accepted on a regular basis for a nominal charge. Special days are set up during the year for such items as mattresses and other furniture at a nominal charge. As of 2001, the only major item not accepted is HPD plastic.

In 1994, a compactor was installed, replacing the 4-5 dumpsters. Currently about 9 tons of waste is collected per week, not including the recyclables. At present, the program is operating satisfactorily with the Town supplementing the collected fees by an additional \$17,000. Most residents seem to be conscientiously recycling as much as allowed. There are no pressing needs to modify the current program beyond the acceptance of additional recyclable materials. Its capacity is adequate to support population growth in the area for the foreseeable future.

### **Recommendations**

1. Continue to participate in the Central Vermont Solid Waste District.
2. Support regional hazardous waste collection and establish a local means to collect Chelsea's hazardous waste and transport it to a regional location.
3. Encourage its residents to participate in all "Amnesty Days" held in the Central Vermont Solid Waste District.
4. Continue to support the development of a recycling effort to decrease the impact on the existing landfill and reduce the amount of waste that will ultimately need to be transported to a regional site.
5. The Town should prosecute litterers.

### **H. PUBLIC SEWER SYSTEM**

The Chelsea Village operates a sewage treatment plant to which most village properties are connected. The system was constructed in 1974 with a Federal grant and financing by a municipal bond. Operating costs are covered by an assessment of the users.

All other town residents rely on approved on-site treatment systems. The current Zoning By-law requires that sewage disposal be by connection to the municipal system or an approved on-site system.

At the present time, the system is maintained in good repair and is operating at less than 70% of design capacity. The excess capacity is expected to be sufficient to accommodate growth in the village for the foreseeable future. There is no plan to extend the system to serve more rural areas.

## **Recommendation**

1. It is recommended that Town leaders consider the adoption of a sewer capacity allocation ordinance to fairly allocate remaining capacity and to do so in a manner that meets the goals of this Plan.

## **I. PUBLIC WATER SYSTEM**

Since about 1908, privately owned multiple user water systems existed in the village of Chelsea. These were fed by a combination of wells and springs. By 1985, these systems had been consolidated to two, which were then purchased by the town and joined together. Users were charged a flat fee of \$110 per year, as the system lacked meters.

Having been built piecemeal, the system did not provide comparable service to all users, with some suffering low pressure from time to time. Though providing acceptable service to its users, it was operating at or near capacity. This being the case, there was no opportunity to add fire protection to it.

In 1991, the town undertook the effort to upgrade the system by essentially replacing it. Supported by a combination of Federal grant and bond financing, a contract was let for a new system. The specifications included:

Rate of Flow - 27,000 gallons per day  
Storage Tank Capacity - 244,000 gallons  
Main Line Capacity - 90,000 gallons

Construction was begun in the spring of 1995 and essentially completed by year-end. Meters were installed for each user. Fire hydrants were also installed thus improving fire protection for the village. The system user and not the town-at-large are financing these improvements. The Water Commissioners do not foresee any immediate needs for further improvements. Long-term needs do include, however, securing additional water supplies to the system.

Currently there are 142 users, with some residents opting to continue using their own wells or springs instead of hooking up.

When fully operational with adequate well water supply, the system should have about 25% of excess capacity, enough to support expected growth in the area served for the foreseeable future.

The Revised Town Zoning By-laws have provisions to protect the sources of water for this system.

## **Policies**

1. In order to prevent contamination of this vital resource, it is critically important that all Town and other public wells be protected from pollution.
2. The Town Water System capacity should be maintained at approximately its current size (unless future studies show the Town's wells to be inadequate).
3. Should it be determined that the system can withstand a sizable increase in use, any large expansion of this system should be paid for by the parties benefiting from the expansion.

## **Recommendations**

1. The Town's Zoning Bylaws should be modified to ensure protection of the Town's Well Head Areas and aquifer recharge areas as defined by the Town of Chelsea Water System Source Protection Plan. This should include a requirement for the Zoning Administrator to notify the Chief Operator of the water system prior to issuing any permit for projects within close proximity of the wells so that they may identify possible risks to the supply that may result.
2. The Water Commission should consider contracting for a study to determine the effect those new wells would have on the aquifer.
3. The Water Commission should identify future sites for wells for the Town Water System and identify strategies needed to protect these sites.

# **V. HOUSING**

## **A. BACKGROUND AND GENERAL GOALS**

The following housing goals have been established to guide housing development:

- To encourage safe, decent, adequate and suitable housing for all of Chelsea's residents;
- To conserve and protect the quality of existing residential neighborhoods and to renew or rehabilitate obsolete and deteriorating dwelling units and neighborhoods; and
- To encourage private sector development of new dwelling units compatible with existing neighborhoods.

Many towns in New England have experienced rapid economic growth and residential sprawl over the last 30 years. Quite often, their present appearance bears little resemblance to the historical development of the town. While Chelsea has not yet experienced a great deal of dislocated development, the potential pressures for such development are present. A key element in the character of the Town is its housing - the quality, availability and variety of places for its residents to live. Housing has a large influence on the rate and direction of business and industrial growth.

A major function of planning is to meet two important community objectives - first, safe, adequate, and affordable shelter for present and future populations and second, suitable density and distribution of housing throughout the town. Although the provision and maintenance of a town's housing stock is primarily a private sector activity, the growth and development of housing affects the environment of the town and the facilities and services it provides or will provide. Housing constructed in the absence of adequate planning for public facilities can overburden schools, sewage treatment plants, roads, etc. Poorly located housing can pollute a water supply or destroy an important wildlife habitat. Housing that is inadequate to meet the demand in a town or region can strain adjacent towns and prevent people from living close to their jobs.

### **B. NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS**

The 2001 Grand list includes 581 housing units.

### **C. TYPE OF HOUSING AND OWNERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS**

Data from the Grand List for Chelsea indicated that 539 units or 93% of its housing consisted of single-family homes. This was followed by mobile homes (37) at 6%. By comparison, the 1990 census showed 459 single-family units (75%) and 77 mobile homes (13%)

581 homes were listed in Chelsea in 2001 of which 451 or 78% were year-round and 130 or 22% were vacation homes. In 1995, the figures were, respectively, 351 year-round (62%) and 139 vacation (24%) for a total of 569

### **D. HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS**

Chelsea, like many communities in Vermont and the nation, has experienced a trend towards a smaller household size. This trend is not likely to be reversed in the near future. Coupled with the increase in population generally, this results in an increased demand for housing. This trend will also affect the number and type of units required in Chelsea. Several special population and household groups, such as the elderly and single heads of households, can be identified as having particular housing needs.

### **E. HOUSING NEED AND AVAILABILITY**

During the period 1991 - 1995, the average purchase price of a year-round residence on a lot less than six acres in Chelsea was \$71,500. This average is based on 35 sales recorded with the Vermont Tax Department. The minimum income level necessary to purchase a home in this range is around \$25,000. A large portion of Chelsea's tax filers, if they were to purchase housing today, could not maintain the financial commitment needed to purchase a conventional home based upon current values. In conclusion, there continues to be an "affordability gap" in Chelsea's housing, particularly for younger couples with children and the elderly who are oftentimes on fixed incomes.

From a regional perspective, despite the high cost of housing relative to incomes, median housing values in Chelsea (\$81,900) are below the median value for the Region (\$93,800).

There traditionally have been two basic approaches to reducing housing costs for low and moderate-income families the elderly, and other groups. The first approach involves interest subsidies that reduce interest on mortgages to a level below market interest rates, thus reducing the total costs required to cover home ownership or rental costs. The second approach involves direct subsidies through either a housing authority, private developer, or tenant to cover the difference between what is affordable and not. For the present, 30% of a family’s income is considered the maximum amount reasonable for housing.

The Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) manages the Section 8 housing program for Vermont. The program provides rental certificates to families or the elderly who have very low incomes. Qualifying persons receive public assistance in meeting monthly rent. Holders of the certificates are able to select privately owned housing units and pay no more than 30% of their monthly income for housing. As of November 1995, 134 certificates were outstanding for the County, meaning that the holders resided here. Given the portability of these certificates, VSHA has no firm count of the extent of certificate holders actually residing in Chelsea, however, according to the VSHA, it is expected there are several units in Chelsea.

In addition to the certificate program, there are a total of thirty-six (36) publicly assisted housing units in Chelsea (November 1995). These units are funded under the Section 8 program, also. Projects in Chelsea are set forth below:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Units</u>
Chelsea Court	24
Hillside Homes	<u>12</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36</b>

These projects receive or qualify for operating or mortgage subsidies, which provide housing to low-income families or the elderly.

**F. GOALS**

1. To continue to promote sufficient affordable primary housing for Chelsea residents by revitalizing existing housing.
2. To assist the Chelsea community to more closely attain the income of the average Vermont household and encourage primary housing of above average income levels.
3. To encourage innovative planning, design and construction of primary housing which minimizes the cost, energy consumption and environmental impacts of housing.

## **G. POLICIES**

1. The distribution of and associated costs to meet the housing requirements of Vermonters are the responsibilities of all Vermonters. Thus, it is appropriate public policy that Chelsea examines its respective role for housing its citizens and encourages Vermont communities to pursue a similar approach. Chelsea should assume its relative fair share of the Region's low costs housing, but it should not in any case be unduly burdened with uneconomic costs for the provision of such housing. Instead, Chelsea shall be a well-balanced community that offers housing for all income levels.
2. The Town should allow for growth of housing for all incomes levels at a rate consistent with the community's ability to provide services in a fiscally sound manner and consistent with the other goals and policies expressed in this Plan.
3. Use of public funds in the form of subsidies may be necessary to preserve maintenance of or access to affordable housing. Where such projects involve public funds, they should only be encouraged when these investments result in developments that are affordable on a long-term basis and a clear public benefit to the community can be demonstrated. Public investments or subsidies in housing which are short-term are discouraged.
4. Priority should be given to the preservation and improvement of affordable housing already in existence. Conversion of such housing to other uses should be discouraged unless there is a clear public benefit resulting.
5. Concentration of affordable housing into selected areas only is discouraged. The Town and private developers are encouraged to work together toward an affirmative strategy or incentives to locate housing in different areas to meet the needs of the residents within the community. Large individual developments are discouraged.
6. Multiple family housing should be encouraged where adequate public sewer and water services are available and access to schools and other services reasonably are afforded.
7. Conversion of larger homes to two and multiple family units to meet the needs of the community's elderly or disabled is appropriate where the historic character of a building or neighborhood is not unnecessarily destroyed or diminished.
8. The Town should direct residential growth into relatively dense settlement areas to maintain open space and preserve natural areas.

## **VI. ECONOMIC RESOURCES**

### **A. BACKGROUND**

The prosperity of a community depends upon the number and types of jobs available to its residents, as well as the quality of the commercial enterprises in Town. An economically depressed area is characterized by a high unemployment rate, low wages, lack of opportunities for advancement, poor community facilities and services, scarcity of good commercial enterprises and a low standard of living. Conversely, a healthy economy is

characterized by vigor and stability; it is comprised of businesses with a good future and that offer good wages and opportunities for advancement. A strong tax base is the result.

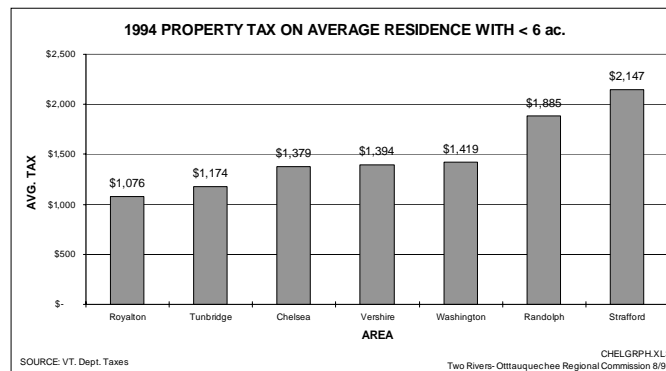
Schools, police and fire departments, water and sewer systems and other community facilities often need to be expanded to accommodate the population growth, which accompanies economic expansion.

It is interesting to note that the towns in the Region with the greatest amount of commercial and industrial development also have the highest tax rates, while the towns with the lowest tax rates tend to be small, residentially-based. It appears that the quality not the quantity of the economic development influences the tax rates. This indicates how important it is to evaluate the secondary impacts of proposed development rather than encouraging indiscriminate business growth in Chelsea.

The following information provides part of the data needed to get an objective picture of the state of Chelsea's economy. More information is required, particularly on employment levels, types of employment and individual \family income distribution.

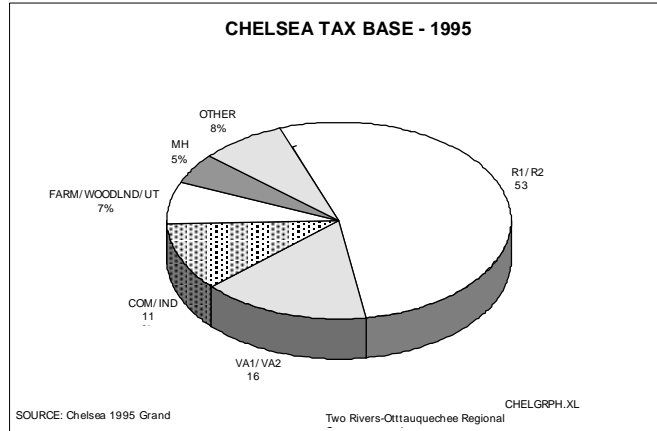
**B. PROPERTY TAX BASE AND BURDEN**

Chelsea has had a low tax rate relative to other communities in the area for the past five years. Figure 6 shows the average taxes paid in 1994 for a year-round residence on a lot situated on a lot six acres or less in size. The average for Chelsea was \$1,379, which was just slightly above the average for the nine towns close by Chelsea. Tax burdens in Strafford were highest at \$2,147 and lowest in Royalton at \$1,076.



**Figure 4 - 1994 Property Tax On Average Residence w/ <6 acres.**

Based on the 2001 Grand List the average for Chelsea was \$1640, an average annual increase of 2.7 % percent per year over the past seven years.



**Figure 5 - Chelsea Tax Base - 1995**

The 2001 tax base is 59% Residential (R1/R2), 14% Vacation (V1V2), 2% Mobile Home, 11% Commercial/Industrial, 8% Farm,Woodland,Utilities and 6% other

**C. WAGES**

The 1990 Census Reports included data on income by town, the Region, and the State. Median family income for the Region in 1989 was \$30,560, compared to Chelsea, which was \$30,238 slightly below the median. Brookfield ranked highest at \$35,592 while Vershire was lowest at \$30,208.

**D. INDEX OF CHELSEA BUSINESSES, 2001**

The information that follows is a partial list of the small and large businesses located in the Town Of Chelsea. The Planning Commission apologizes for any unintentional omissions. It is felt that this list indicates the wide range of business and employment opportunities available to the Town's residents as well as the types of services available to consumers.

**Manufacturing**

HEB Manufacturing - Wire Products

**Building Trades and Construction**

- Carter, Tim
- Courts, Tim
- Dowlin, Tom
- East Hill Design, Charles Crocker
- Flint, Stan
- Hook, Wayne
- Laframboise, Chris
- McCullough, Mike
- Parker, John
- Pepperman, Carl

**Roofing**

Doyle & Sons  
Hatch, Ted  
Iron Horse Roofing  
Shabott, Leon  
Sprague, Al

**Excavating**

McCullough, Maurice  
Pickett, Lawrence  
Whipple, Shannon

**Concrete and Masonry**

Wilcox, Donny - Masonry, Bricklaying

**Woodworking and Cabinetry**

DeFriez, Nick – Cabinetry  
Jacques, Don - Woodworking  
Johnson, Mike  
Royce, Rufus - Cabinetry  
Parker, John – Cabinetry  
Veneziano, James - Cabinetry

**Plumbing and Electrical**

Gallagher, Steven - Plumbing  
Kuban, Edward - Electrical  
Manning, Glenn - Plumbing and Electrical  
Preston, Arnold - Plumbing and Electrical

**Painting**

Lyford, Dick  
Sprague, Al

**Agriculture and Forestry - Related Occupations**

**Dairy Farming**

Allen, Rory & Chris  
Brahman, Howard  
Bradshaw, David  
Doyle, James  
Melvin, William  
Sanford, Donald  
Taylor, Ross and Mike  
Whitney, Merrill

**Miscellaneous Farming**

Braman, Kevin - Hay  
Button, Arthur - Hay, Beef Cattle  
Button, Rich & John  
Hayward, Brian  
Lyon, Leigh – Replacement Heifers  
Maracget, Lou – Replacement Heifers & Beef  
Porter, Jane – Sheep  
Rochat, David – Lamb  
Rogers, Dick & Betty - Vegetables

**Christmas Trees**

Edwards, George  
Rockwood, Walter

**Maple Sugaring**

Ackerman, William  
Braman, Kevin  
Button, Dave  
Button, Richard and John  
Gilman, Nicholas  
Hayward, Gordon  
Johnson, Calvin  
Libby, Terry  
Lyford, Alie  
Mattoon, Hale

**Logging**

Braman, Kevin  
Degrasse, Ken  
Densmore, Doug  
Johnson, Calvin  
Johnson, Jack  
McCullough, Maurice

**Sawmills**

Avery, Richard  
Meadowbrook Lumber, Tenny Johnson

**Miscellaneous**

Fraser, John - Land Clearing  
Button, Richard & John - Custom Silage Bagging  
Amber, Pete – Arborist  
Szeg, Chris – firewood, brushhoging

**Retail Trade**

Button's Store - Feed, Agricultural Supplies, Clothing  
Chelsea Country Store - Groceries, Meat  
Sanborn & Son - Harness Makers, Hardware, Paint, Equine Supplies, Gasoline  
S&L Video  
Upham's Store - Groceries, Meat, Gasoline, VT State Liquor Store  
Wills Store - Convenience Store, Gifts, Ice Cream

**Restaurants and Lodging**

Dixies II Restaurant  
Lori's Pizza  
Shire Inn  
Jane Porter - Cabins  
The Pines - Bar & Restaurant  
Devil's Den Homestay B&B

**Services - Automotive**

A.J.'s - Auto Repair  
Fraser, John – Heavy Equipment & Farm Machinery Repair  
Keenes Garage - Auto Repair, Towing, Used Cars  
Lutz Motorworks - Volvo Repair

**Attorneys**

Bohl, Charlene  
Field, William  
Schall, Gary  
Leonard-Heath, Mary Alice

**Barbers & Hairdressers**

Dave's Barbershop  
First Branch Beauty Salon

**Machine Shops**

Adams, Whitey  
Bullard Welding, Tony Bullard

**Surveyors**

Thomsen, Blake

**Miscellaneous**

Ackerman, Rhoda - Day Care  
Boardway & Cilley - Funeral Services  
Brookhaven School  
Chelsea Animal Hospital - Dr. Anne Carrol  
Chelsea Health Center  
Chelsea Home For The Aged - Nursing Home  
Chelsea Laundromat

Chelsea Play School - Day Care  
 Farm House Furniture Repair  
 King, Bob - Junk, Salvage, Etc.  
 Rita's Rug Rats Day Care  
 Whipple, Mike – Septic Design  
 Wellspring Waldorf School, Grades 1-8

**Utilities, Etc.**

Central Vermont Public Service  
 Charter Communications Cable  
 Verizon  
 Washington Electric Cooperative

**Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Accounting**

Allen, Cindy - Accounting  
 Button's Real Estate  
 Mascoma Savings Bank  
 Rochat, Dave - Financial Management  
 Richardson Insurance Agency

**Public Administration**

Chelsea Public School  
 Chelsea Fire Station  
 Chelsea Town Garage  
 Chelsea Town Offices  
 Orange County District Court  
 Orange County Jail  
 Orange County Diversion Program  
 Probation and Parole Office  
 State's Attorney  
 Superior Court  
 U.S. Post Office

**Mining**

McCullough Crushing - Allenville Quarry - Crushed Stone

**E. ECONOMIC POTENTIAL**

It is unlikely that Chelsea will become a major economic center. Limitations include the lack of municipal services, lack of suitable industrial and commercial areas, and the distance to major transportation facilities such as the Interstate. The Town's natural and historical resources are its greatest assets and should be prudently managed, since tourism is an important element of the regional and local economy.

Agriculture, wire forming, small commercial businesses and light manufacturing are, and should continue to be, a substantial portion of the local economy. Planning should enable home-based businesses and small business, and discourage strip commercial development

along its major highways. Chelsea does not have the resources to compete for large, heavy manufacturing enterprises, nor should it want to. Based on the foregoing discussion, the following recommendations have been offered.

## **F. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Town should restrict traffic generating industrial growth to the southern part of the Town along Route 110.
2. The Town should work with the Regional Planning Commission or the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation to obtain funds to reserve lands in the Industrial Area for small-scale industrial development.
3. The Planning Commission should review applications for industrial development with careful attention to the environmental and fiscal impacts.

# **VII. LAND RESOURCES**

## **A. LAND OWNERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS**

Many Vermont communities have been concerned about the loss of local land control due to out-of-state land purchases. However, as Figure 7 indicates, 68 percent of the land ownership (1995) in Town is titled to residents of Chelsea. This ownership, and the resultant control, means that the townspeople have a greater ability to shape the existing and future land use in Chelsea.

Other towns in Orange County are less fortunate. In Fairlee for example, persons residing outside of the community own more than 55 percent of the land.

## **B. FOREST LANDS**

Approximately 70 percent (16,672 acres) of the Town is forested, providing a multitude of benefits to the community. Chelsea's forests support hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and other recreational opportunities. Vital watersheds are protected by our forests, as are critical wildlife habitats. Lastly, the mix of forest and farmland in Chelsea is a scenic benefit that each of its residents values highly. Planning for the conservation of Chelsea's forests should be considered a high priority.

Our forests provide both a source of income for the landowner and employment for some members of the Town. Seven loggers are currently based out of Chelsea. One saw mill and one secondary mill are operating.

For farm and forestland conservation to be successful, the pressures posed by the market value approach to taxation must be solved for both the landowners and municipality. One means to address this problem has been the Vermont Current Use Program administered by the State and local governments. Under the Program, valuations on qualified farm and forestlands have been set based on their productivity values rather than development values, reducing the overall property tax burden to the owner. In 1994, 90 parcels, totaling 10,807 acres, were enrolled in the Use Value Program, amounting to 45% of the Town's total land base. This amount represented 4,547 acres of farmland and 6260 acres of forestland.

### **Recommendation**

1. The Fish and Game Club in cooperation with the Planning Commission should be asked to review the State's guidelines for forest planning and management and consider them for amendment to the Zoning Bylaw and to gather more information about Chelsea's forests.

### **C. FARMLAND**

"I'm 62 years and I'm ready to go out and if my son who is with me doesn't take that farm, I know where it's going. It is going to go to the guy that pays me the biggest dollar and let me tell you people, that isn't what I want after spending 39 years toiling the soil and building (my property) into a pretty nice little family farm."

Chelsea's quality of life and scenic beauty are directly tied to the working landscape created by the Town's farmers, and this landscape is by no means assured. Like the farmer above, who testified before the Governor's Commission on Vermont's Future, many farms in Chelsea have been "going out" and there are realistic concerns that more will be going out soon. According to the Vermont Department of Agriculture, Food, and Markets, there were eleven farms in Chelsea shipping milk as of August 1995. That has dropped to eight in 2001. This represents a continuing decline. A poor agricultural economy, increasing land values, and the need for retirement income are all factors behind this trend.

Once a major problem, property taxes for Chelsea's farmers have been reduced through either the Current Use Program or the Working Farm Tax Abatement Program. Approximately eight dairy farms are taking advantage of these programs, but reduced taxes are not enough to ensure the viability of Chelsea's farms. The recommendations listed at the end of the "Land Use Plan" section are a first step in promoting discussion and actions designed to protect both the farmer and farmland. One cannot be accomplished without the other.

### **Recommendation**

1. Chelsea's important agricultural lands should be protected from development that would destroy their usefulness for growing crops in the future.

2. Chelsea should examine the effect of a changing the land use plan to determine eligibility based on a means basis, and residency limited to income tax filers to allow more funds to be channeled to working farms in order to reduce their tax burden further.

## **D. WATER RESOURCES**

### **Groundwater Protection**

Groundwater refers to the water found beneath the surface of the earth, in saturated soils or geologic formations. Groundwater is found in useable quantity and quality in geologic formations called aquifers. Recharge is defined as the replenishment of groundwater in an aquifer. The Town of Chelsea has a number of aquifer recharge areas as well as well sites, which should be protected from contamination. Some of these areas and sites have been mapped by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources and are filed with the Agency and the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. A town such as Chelsea, which is dependent on a public water supply, should be concerned with protecting its existing and future well fields from inappropriate land uses and development. To this end, the Town has in place a Source Protection Plan approved by the State

### **Surface Water - Flooding**

The Town of Chelsea maintains a Flood Plain Management and Flood Hazard Bylaw are based on the following facts:

- Because of variations in rainfall and the amount of surface water, flooding is a natural, recurring phenomenon.
- Flooding and lands that are subject to flooding (flood prone lands) serve the following important functions in the regional hydrologic cycle and ecological system.
- Flood prone lands provide natural storage and conveyance of flood waters;
- The water on flooded lands may provide recharge to groundwater and is a basic source of flow to rivers and streams;
- Temporary storage of surface waters on flood prone lands regulates flood elevations and the timing, velocity and rate of flood discharges;
- Flood prone lands maintain water quality by reducing erosion, removing nutrients and other pollutants and allowing sediment to settle; and
- Natural flood prone lands export nutrients and other food sources to open water bodies and are vital habitat for fish, birds, wildlife, and native plant communities.

Uncontrolled development of flood prone lands inconsistent with their natural functions and improper management of flood waters have the following significant adverse impacts on the health, safety and welfare of the town.

- The owners of homes and business structures located in frequently flooded areas and their customers, guests, employees, children and future generations are subjected to unreasonable risk of personal injury and property damage;
- Roads and utilities associated with development are subject to damage from flooding at great expense to taxpayers and rate payers;
- Flooding of developed properties leads to demands for government of construct expensive and environmentally damaging projects to control flood waters;
- Loss of natural water storage capacity leads to reduction in available water supply, and water quality can be degraded;
- The level, velocity, frequency and duration of flooding on other lands are often increased when flood waters are obstructed, diverted, displaced or channelized;
- Property values are lowered and damaging floods disrupts economic activity.

### **Flood Prone Areas**

Flood prone areas are those areas adjacent to rivers, streams, ponds, lakes or wetlands, which are likely to be flooded due to snow melting, severe rainstorms and other saturation of the soil during prolonged periods of rain. Not all floodplains areas, which have alluvial soil, are mapped as federal flood hazard areas; only areas likely to be inundated during a 100-year flood are shown. Other flood-prone areas have not yet been identified.

Building construction in these areas endangered by seasonal flooding should not be permitted except under stringent controls. The Flood Hazard Bylaw restricts development in the flood hazard area. Continued enforcement of these regulations is essential to enable the property owners in the flood hazard area to qualify for subsidized flood insurance.

### **Surface Water – Quality**

Town actively participates on the First Branch Stream Bank Team to monitor activities that may influence the quality of the environment surrounding the First Branch of the White River, then develop appropriate policies and programs to achieve and maintain as high a quality as possible.

#### **Goals:**

1. Maintain or improve ground or surface water quality and quantity for purposes of recreation, aquatic habitat and drinking water by, among other activities, actively supporting the efforts of the First Branch Stream Bank Team.
2. Identify and protect wetlands which exhibit significant functions and value from development.
3. Protect flood prone areas from structure development, except where development is planned so as not to impede floodwaters. Structural developments should not be located in a floodway.

#### **Policies:**

1. Land use activities, which potentially threaten water quality, should be carefully reviewed to prevent undue loss in water quality. Potential harmful activities include underground storage tanks, pesticide and herbicide applications, failed septic systems, old industrial sites, and road salt and landfill leachate.
2. Maintenance or enhancement of recreation, fisheries, necessary wildlife habitats, and water quality are high priorities. Water use decisions should protect these resources.
3. Preservation of the natural state of streams should be encouraged by the protection of adjacent wetlands and natural areas, natural scenic areas, and maintenance of existing stream banks, vegetation, together with wildlife habitat.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The Planning Commission and other interested parties are encouraged to cooperate on a watershed-wide basis in the development of a river basin water quality plan for the First Branch of the White River. This effort should be coordinated with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

### **E. WILDLIFE**

Chelsea's forests, fields, marshes, streams, riverbanks and ponds are home to a variety of species. Every development in Town results in the loss or change of some wildlife habitat. While no single development will decimate Chelsea's wildlife, the cumulative effect of many small decisions might over time. It is in the Town's interest to adopt policies and programs, which will prevent this from occurring.

Nearly all-open space provides habitat for game and non-game species. There are, however, some areas in Chelsea, which provide critical habitat that must remain intact. These areas include wetlands, deer winter yards, and edge (the transition zone between two cover types, such as field and forest). Development or logging in or adjacent to these areas must consider wildlife implications during the planning process.

There comes a point where a species cannot use seemingly adequate habitat because of adjacent development. While certain strategies may lessen the impact on habitat, planners and developers should keep in mind that almost every development will affect the ecological balance. Agriculture and forest practices generally have minimal (or even positive) effects on most native species. The following discussion of white tailed deer winter range considerations when planning human development was written by the Agency of Environmental Conservation.

Wintering areas are an important habitat requirement for deer during the critical winter months when snow depth and climate are limiting factors to survival. Typically these areas consist of mature softwood stands, at low elevations or along streambeds, which

provide cover and limit snow depths. Southerly facing slopes are also beneficial due to good sun exposure and may be utilized even in areas of limited softwood cover. More specific factors such as percent canopy closure, species of softwoods, and stand age also figure into the quality of the winter area.

Housing developments, new highway building or relocation and excessive logging have detrimental effects on deer wintering areas. If an area proposed for development encompasses a deeryard, utilizing certain planning strategies may lessen the impact on the area. Should the entire area of a proposed development be winter cover, clustering of house lots should be a planning requirement. This may minimize negative impacts by reducing area consumed and maintaining a larger continuous area of cover for utilization by deer than if house lots were scattered. When a proposed area is not entirely winter cover, development outside of the softwood cover, or utilized area, is recommended. Planning developments outside of softwood cover that has the potential as a future deer wintering area is also a consideration. It is important to note that attempts to negate the impact of human development on winter deer range do not always accommodate the needs of the deer. As always, a wildlife biologist from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department should be consulted before implementing any proposed plans.

It is recommended that the Planning Commission consider available wildlife habitat information when reviewing subdivision applications, especially in the rural residential zone. Sources of information include: the Conservation Area and Water Resources Maps of Chelsea; site visits to reveal the extent of edge and/or microhabitat; the Department of Fish and Wildlife provides valuable services at no charge.

### **Goals**

1. Maintain or enhance the natural diversity and population of wildlife.
2. Restore stable populations of endangered or threatened wildlife in their appropriate habitat areas.

### **Policies**

1. Development should be designed and sited so as to preserve contiguous areas of active or potential habitat. Fragmentation of significant and necessary wildlife habitat is discouraged.
2. Along waterways landowners are encouraged to preserve or create naturally vegetated riparian buffer zones of a width sufficient to sustain wildlife mobility.
3. Large contiguous tracts of forest should be managed so as to maintain the diversity of ages and species of tree cover necessary for shelter and food supply for deer, black bear, and other large mammals, and songbirds.
4. Preference should be given to developments that utilize existing roads and field lines.
5. It is in the Town's interest to utilize the cluster land use concept as a mechanism for maintaining contiguous areas of forest cover.

## Recommendations

1. With the help of the Chelsea Fish and Game Club, specialists from the Vermont Department of Fisheries and Wildlife and others, the Planning Commission should work to inventory wildlife species, sensitive areas, and critical habitats. This information should be considered in evaluating projects proposed in these areas.
2. The Planning Commission should evaluate the Chelsea Zoning Bylaws to see if they incorporate the proper provisions to maintain the integrity of large forest blocks and preserve wildlife habitat.

## **F. SCENIC RESOURCES**

One of Chelsea's most important assets is the way the Town looks. Its varied terrain and traditional settlement pattern are of high visual quality. Individual landscape elements as well as the overall pattern of structures, open space and vegetation contribute significantly to the quality of life.

Landscape quality is an elusive but important consideration in land use decision-making. There are many benefits to be derived from identifying, retaining and improving key elements of the Town's visual quality:

- A high quality Town landscape is one that can be viewed and appreciated by both residents and visitors;
- Retaining a high quality landscape encourages community pride. Chelsea's desire for thoughtful use of its land is closely linked to the high quality in the Town's landscape;
- When seeking to attract development that will enhance the Town's tax base, a community that has retained a high quality landscape will have an advantage over a Town that has not chosen to do so; and
- The development of tourism and tourist related services in a community having an attractive landscape are often possible if the community preserves its landscape.

Both the positive and negative values of vegetation, landscape, features, waters, buildings and other manmade structures must be evaluated. Entranceways, the sequence of views as one arrives into, or departs from, Chelsea's village areas are critically important to the visual quality of the Town. Entranceways are where first impressions about a place are formed and are often the visual character non-residents associate with the Town. The views of Chelsea's village and recreation areas directly impact the experience of those places. Views to the wooded hillsides and natural skyline add to the historic character of Chelsea's village and the rural character of the roads in Town. Landscapes, which take centuries to develop, can be changed, however, in an afternoon.

During 2001, The Parks Commission completed the Chelsea Village Streetscape Master Plan, taking advantage of a grant from the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program. As stated in the plan, "This plan is based upon the thoughts and ideas expressed

by Chelsea residents in a series of public forums and a town meeting survey about the ways in which Chelsea's green spaces and community focal points could be enhanced to create a more attractive and functional village. The plan identifies the village assets and problems, and makes recommendations for changes that could solve problems, and retain and enhance the existing character of the village. It provides an implementation strategy which defines a five year plan of specific actions including planning, funding, construction and planting, and maintenance."

Prominent landscapes that should be carefully reviewed and evaluated in the context of new development are:

1. Shore lands immediate to the White River and its major tributaries;
2. Land immediately adjacent to Route 110 and other major roads leading to and forming the entryway into the historic area of Chelsea village;
3. Exceptional agricultural and historic areas generally recognized as having outstanding scenic resource values, including Chelsea village; and
4. Prominent ridgelines, mountain tops, or excessively steep slopes that can be readily viewed from public corridors such as major town highways and Routes 110 and 113.

### **Goals**

1. To maintain or enhance the inherent scenic character of the town by promoting a positive visual relationship between buildings, structures, the working landscape, and it's mountains and river valleys.
2. To address the delicate balance of the landscape to preserve the landscape heritage in key areas of town.

### **Policies**

1. Where land development or subdivision are proposed on prominent landscapes design plans should work toward the goal of retaining or enhancing the character of the area. Projects, which are excessive and unduly compete with the existing natural or cultural features, should be discouraged.
2. Certain areas adjacent to major highways are examples of development sprawl. In some cases they can affect the scenic resource values of the traveler. Because strip development lacks focus or orientation, such forms of development are generally contrary to community values and are contrary to the preferred pattern of development. To the extent feasible, plans for development along or within the Route 110 corridor should work to minimize the adverse effects of strip development.
3. Integral scenic elements of Chelsea's landscape are its roads, highways, and bridges. These features can contribute positively or negatively to a visual experience and the awareness of the landscape. It is in the public interest to retain the special character of many of Chelsea's roads, especially Route 110. Use of design standards scaled to a road's function is encouraged.

**Recommendations:**

1. The Planning Commission working with landowners, and interested groups should consider undertaking an inventory of its scenic resources and to develop a process to evaluate the likely impacts of new development on these resources.
2. A provision should be added to the Zoning Bylaw governing the erection of communication towers
3. The Planning Commission and the Select Board should strongly support the implementation of the “Streetscape Master Plan”.

## VIII. LAND USE PLAN

### A. BACKGROUND

The Land Use Plan is the most important section of a Town Plan. It is used as a guide for the Town's decision-makers to evaluate development proposals. The Land Use Plan in conjunction with the Town's Bylaws is used to implement the Town Plan and the wishes of the community.

The foundation of a Land Use Plan is: (1) a detailed analysis of land use capability; (2) the existing transportation network; (3) the existing land use inventory; (4) the goals and objectives of the community. By evaluating these factors simultaneously, it is then possible to determine which areas are appropriate for new or increased development and which ones are unsuitable or should be protected. In addition, this analysis yields specific areas which should be preserved or protected and areas which are inaccessible and unsuitable for any development. The town's goals and objectives are then applied via planning tools like established development densities and land use districts for specific uses.

Six land use categories have been defined and mapped in Chelsea. As development proposals come forth for permits and review, it is the intention of this Plan to be a guide for suggesting modifications which will allow the development to occur in a manner consistent with the policies in the Plan.

### **General Goals**

Chelsea has settled following a land use pattern similar to other small rural New England towns. This consists of a village area compactly settled, surrounded by less dense settlements rural in character with large tracts in natural vegetation or forests. Overall, this pattern has proven itself to be of sociological, economical, and aesthetic benefit to Chelsea's citizens. The village of Chelsea provides a place for the efficient conduct of business enterprise and for the provision of social and community facilities and services. Accordingly, it is the goal of Chelsea to protect and enhance this pattern whenever practical.

Chelsea recognizes and accepts the following land use goals as being in the public interest:

1. To maintain and to improve, where necessary, the economic viability of Chelsea village.
2. To encourage a full range of uses for the village.
3. To provide for development only in areas where public services are readily available and there exists a town financial capacity to reasonably support such development.
4. To protect the character of rural areas and their natural resources by avoiding incompatible land uses or scattered development.

## **B. FUTURE LAND USE**

On the basis of the above, future land use categories are recommended.

### **Village Area**

The existing village area of Chelsea centers around two commons, the Court House, United Church and the majority of Chelsea's commercial establishments. Because the Village District is served by off-site public sewer system with a secondary sewage treatment, higher density and intensity uses are appropriate, providing they are of the same character as the development. Except for the area, which lies in the floodplain, land exists within the Village District, which is suitable for increased development. Commercial development is especially appropriate within this District. Commercial development outside this District could be part of a "commercial node." It is important for the Town to continue to make public infrastructure investments in the Village area to further induce development.

The Village Area should support a mixture of housing types, commercial uses, services, small industry, and community facilities and services. Principal retail establishments should be located in the Village Area or in a designated expansion area adjacent to the Village Area to minimize sprawl and loss of rural character.

### **Historic Village Area**

Within the Village Area is situated a concentration of historic buildings and sites of exceptional architectural merit. On September 29, 1983, most of these buildings and the Village were entered in the National Register of Historic Places. For the purpose of preserving and enhancing most of these unique historic buildings, the Town, in the mid-1980's enacted a Design Control District Ordinance encompassing most of the Village Historic District between, and inclusive of, the Health Center and Creamery Bridges. The ordinance provides that prior to any exterior renovation of a building or structure, design plan approval is granted by the Development Review Board. Its review is based upon specific criteria to ensure compatibility in design.

When new buildings or structures are proposed, they should have a design that fits with the area and is sensitive to the character of the neighborhood. Unnecessary destruction of historic structures is discouraged. Public improvements such as bridge rehabilitation or replacement, roadway reconstruction, signage, and lighting should be designed to avoid unnecessary degradation of this recognized historic area.

### **Rural Residential Area**

The Rural Residential Area primarily encompasses land presently accessible by Class 3 or better town roads. This area is predominantly residential and agricultural. This Area can support moderate residential development provided that on-site effluent disposal systems

can be operated properly. The least developed portion of the Town typically is severe to moderately inaccessible except by trails and roads that are not maintained by the Town (Class 4). Much of the area is steep and has shallow soils with elevations that range from 1500' to 2200' in elevation. Residential density should vary depending upon the limitations found during the detailed land capability analysis and the degree of utilization of cluster housing development. Residential development should occur in a manner that reduces the loss of useable agricultural land. The fragmentation of quality agricultural lands is discouraged.

Non-residential uses, including service businesses, professional offices, and inns, are acceptable land uses for rural areas provided that such uses are planned as relatively small in size or scale are not primary or dominate uses in an area and do not conflict with forestry or agricultural uses. Major retail enterprises or service centers are not recommended for rural areas and are encouraged to locate within the Village Area or specific areas identified per this Plan.

### **Agricultural Area**

The shape of Vermont's agriculture has changed. This trend is reflected in Chelsea. The amount of land devoted to farming has decreased. The number of dairy farms in Chelsea for 2001 was eight. While the overall dairy farm population has decreased, some small and part-time farm pursuits directed at non-dairy and specialty markets has increased.

The agricultural industry is by no means secure. The industry is facing tremendous economic pressures from market forces outside of Vermont. Much of these are beyond the control or influence of the citizens of the town. The continuance of agriculture and its related activities define the character of Chelsea. These activities allow for rural lifestyles and a working landscape. In order for agriculture to be a part of the town's economic community, it must remain viable. Access to strong and stable markets, the availability of productive soils, and equitable taxation are key factors.

It is the fundamental principle of this Plan to enable owners of farmland to receive a fair and real return on their investment. To do this, owners of farmland should be given reasonable incentives and freedoms to care for and manage their lands. It is the goal of this Plan to encourage the conservation of the Town's agricultural resources and to maintain an environment that fosters agricultural entrepreneurship.

The Agricultural Area includes the best agricultural land in Town. This includes the highest productive soils amounting to approximately 700 acres or 3% of the land area of the Town.

Where contiguous farming activities exist, fragmentation of these areas into uses other than those incidental to agriculture should be carefully evaluated and be discouraged.

To minimize the loss of existing or potential agricultural land within the Agricultural Area, use of cluster housing concepts for non-agricultural activities is the preferred alternative to

traditional land subdivision. Through the use of this concept limited development may be provided for as well as the bulk of the resource conserved. When land development is proposed, the construction of utilities, roads, and other physical modifications should skirt tracts of farmland rather than divide them. Recommended uses in this Area are limited to agriculture, low density residential, open space and recreation and conservation.

### **Flood Hazard Area**

The Flood Hazard Area comprises areas along major streams subject to flooding as defined by Federal Emergency Management Agency. Floodplains (flood hazard areas) are that low area adjacent to rivers and streams that periodically become inundated with water during times of high rainfall and spring runoff. They serve to retain water preventing damage elsewhere. Some Flood Hazard Area lands comprise the best agricultural land because of their thick glacial deposits, minimum slope and proximity to surface water.

Development in this Area should be limited in accordance with the Chelsea Flood Hazard Bylaw administered by the Town. Structural developments within the limits of the 100 year floodplain is discouraged. Where such development is to occur, the development should be designed and located so as not to impede floodwaters. No structural development should be located within the actual limits of a floodway.

### **Industrial Area**

The Town recognizes the importance of promoting appropriate industry and providing sound and gainful employment opportunities for its residents. While evidence shows that a vast majority of Chelsea's industrial job workers have jobs outside of Chelsea, there is a need to provide an area to support industrial activity locally. The Industrial Area has been chosen because of its relative ease of transportation access, power availability, and opportunity to obtain sewer and water services off-site. The preferred uses for this Area include manufacturing and service establishments, corporate offices, and assembly firms. Businesses that are generally classified as clean and non-polluting are encouraged to locate here. Where residential development needs to be accommodated, special considerations for buffering this use from non-residential uses needs to be employed.

During the previous Plan period, the Town took advantage of a grant to develop a land capability analysis as recommended in the prior plan. Titled "Site Feasibility Analysis for Industrial Development", dated May 1999. In the process, three Town wide Community Forums were held to learn more about how the townspeople felt about economic development and what Chelsea might consider to attract or retain jobs.

### **C. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The findings of this “Site Feasibility Analysis” of 1999 should be used by the Planning Commission to update the Zoning Bylaw accordingly.
2. The Town should review the minimum standards for participation by Chelsea in the National Flood Insurance Program and make any changes to the Flood Hazard Bylaw as required.
3. The Town should request that the federal government update and complete the mapping of floodplains in Chelsea and check the accuracy of existing floodplain designations.

### **D. GENERAL DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL LANDS**

Settlement in the rural areas outside the Village has been historically associated with farming and other agricultural uses. Generally, homes have been located in areas that are suitable for building and the subsurface disposal of sewage effluent. However, because of the decline in agriculture in the Town, future development in rural areas may not be related to farming, but rather the construction of single-family homes as permanent or vacation residences. Access to public sewer facilities is not available in these rural areas, and for economic reasons will not be in the foreseeable future. Therefore, new households will probably continue to be serviced predominantly by individual septic tank-leaching field systems to treat and recycle sewage effluent.

Despite the expressed community consensus that conservation of open space is paramount for maintenance of rural character, the Planning Commission has not identified, as part of a public planning process, specific open space requirements important to the future well being of Chelsea. Notwithstanding this, outlined below are findings and policy statements broadly identifying those features or characteristics of the countryside, which contribute materially to the Town. It is the intent of these sections that, until such time as further studies are completed, these policy statements should be utilized in the evaluation of all applicable future development in Chelsea.

One of the most distinctive features of the landscape in Chelsea is its steep narrow valleys, extending from ridge top to ridge top. The floor of these valleys consist of a mix of forestland and fields with small groupings of buildings, many are agricultural in function. Trees often mark the course of streams and stonewalls the boundaries of fields. Surrounding hillside provide a varied pattern of fields and woodlots. Evidence of old fields reverting back to woodland is a predominant characteristic in some areas.

While natural features like ridgelines, forests, and streams contribute to rural ambiance, the cultural landscape contributes an equally important role. Special features of the townscape are a major resource, characterized by its compactness and small scale of intensively developed areas surrounded marked delineations of open spaces and passive uses.

The future planning and development of the rural lands in Chelsea should positively contribute to maintaining or creating scenic corridors, vistas, and landscapes. Without such a positive approach, visual quality and loss of key open space and forestland will occur.

### **Policies**

1. Based upon the experience of the Planning Commission, the opinions expressed by the residents and non-residents of the community, and the other policies as formulated in this Town Plan, future rural development of all types in the Town should be planned so as not to materially degrade rural character or create undue adverse impacts on scenic quality or necessary wildlife habitats. In furtherance of this policy, future development should be directed to occur in the following locations or areas:
  - Within or adjacent to built-up or planned growth areas;
  - Fields where scenic and agricultural resource values are low; and
  - Forest lands, not critical or necessary to wildlife habitats, water supply or public recreation, including fringe areas or low lying areas immediate to open fields;
  - Lands where development on the tract is clustered or otherwise allocated in such a manner and intensity so as to maintain the balance of the parcel for productive use and necessary wildlife habitat.
2. In rural areas, the lot size and density of development should be largely determined by the suitability of the land to provide for the proper installation and functioning of subsurface sewage disposal systems.
3. Development in Town should be guided by the land's ability to support it.
4. Slopes greater than 35 percent should be left as open space because of high erosion potential and difficulty for development.

### **Recommendation**

1. The Planning Commission with the advice and assistance of property owners should develop an Open Space and Scenic Resources Plan. The purpose of the Plan would be to identify those areas in Chelsea ranked highest as a resource based upon soil quality, shape, location, existing use, and other relevant criteria. Based upon the Open Space and Scenic Resources Plan findings, the Commission should consider refinement of the Town Plan to assure that such areas are provided with an equitable and workable method of protection. Special financial or planning incentives within these areas should be made available for the continuance of these key lands for conservation purposes.

## **IX. TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Chelsea's transportation system is principally a system of town roads and Routes 110 and 113. The automobile is the primary means of transport. There is no rail service to Chelsea or bus service. Residents and tourist use both state and town roads for biking. This Plan will focus on the network of roads in Chelsea. This system needs to provide for network that enables efficient and safe through traffic as well as providing access to and from individual properties. This is particularly important given that the costs of road construction and maintenance are one of the larger items in the Town budget.

This Plan is presented in three parts. First is a listing of existing highways, followed next by a functional classification of highways, and last are policies to direct future transportation planning.

### **B. EXISTING ROADS**

Currently, the Town of Chelsea owns and maintains 73 miles of roads. Use and function vary from local access to minor regional collectors. In addition, the Agency of Transportation controls 10.4 miles of state roads (Route 110 and 113) within the Town. In sum, there are a total of 83.4 miles of roads in Chelsea (1990). This includes Class 4 town highways (12 miles), which are not maintained but are still open to the public for limited travel. Approximately 4.5 miles of Chelsea's roads have paved surfaces and the balance (56.3 miles) is gravel based, excluding class 4 roads. Conditions for these roads range from excellent to fair.

Changes in traffic volumes are dependent on a number of factors, but primarily by the type, size and location of various land uses. Actions to improve the carrying capacity of a road typically include building new roads and improving existing roads (e.g. resurfacing and widening). Depending on the extent of the improvement and method of financing, such actions can be costly and place an undue financial burden on the taxpayers of the Town.

To avoid conflicts between the use of highways and future development, the Town has established policies to evaluate and control how growth affects town roads. These include concentrating future development into areas where major roads already exist, limiting multiple access drives onto town roads, supporting efforts to reduce reliance on the personal automobile, and working cooperatively with the Vermont Agency of Transportation and neighboring towns to improve regional land use and transportation planning.

### **C. TOWN HIGHWAY CLASSIFICATIONS**

The State uses four town highway classifications formulas to distribute financial aid to towns for road repair and maintenance. The Vermont Agency of Transportation and the

Selectboard jointly determine classifications. Criteria used for the classifications include traffic volumes, road conditions, and function. State-aid to the Town decreases on a per mile basis from Class 1 to Class 3. No state aid is available for Class 4 roads. Total aid, therefore, depends on the number of miles of road a town has in each class. In 1993 Chelsea received approximately \$144,000 from the State for all roads.

Class 1 includes the most heavily traveled town roads usually located in densely settled areas. Class 1 are extensions of State Highways and are usually assigned a State number. There are no Class 1 roads in Chelsea.

Class 2 includes those major town highways selected as the most important highways in town. Class 2 roads serve the purpose of linking towns and high traffic areas such as village settlements and state highways. Class 2 roads are generally paved. For Chelsea, Class 2 roads include the East Randolph Road and the Upper Village Road.

Class 3 includes all town roads not Class 1 or 2 that can be driven under normal conditions all seasons of the year by a standard car.

Class 4 highways represent the lowest order of importance to the Town. Public use is limited and as such the Town receives no financial aid from the State. Approximately 12 miles of Class 4 roads exist in Chelsea.

The Town is not interested in expending tax dollars in improvements to Class 4 roads. These roads are usually in the poorest state and would require expensive reconstruction to their surfaces, base, drainage and width to bring them to Class 3 standards. Because of the great expense and relatively small public benefit accruing from Class 4 roads, current policy in Chelsea is that no tax dollars be expended on Class 4 roads.

Route 110 - Route 110 extends from South Royalton at the intersection with Route 14 north through Tunbridge, Chelsea, Washington, Orange, and Barre Town ending at the intersection of Route 302. Total length is approximately 27 miles. The road is owned and maintained by the Agency of Transportation. Route 110 is classed by the Agency as a minor arterial road as it is a key-connecting link to major state roads. Accordingly, Route 110 has significance for Chelsea and neighboring communities' transportation.

Presently, there are no plans for reconstruction of Route 110 in Chelsea, excepting plans to rehabilitate or reconstruct the two bridges in Chelsea village. Plans do exist for replacement of the bridge in Tunbridge, which prompted an extended debate between the Selectboard, residents, and the Agency as to the type, and design of these improvements. The Agency plans for the replacement were felt by many local citizens to be overbuilt prompting unnecessary expenditures for a large bridge out of scale with its environment.

This debate has prompted the larger concern over the future of Route 110 and how plans should be developed and coordinated between the Agency, towns, and landowners. Given the exemplary scenic quality of the Route 110 valley and the present contributions provided by the character of the road itself to scenic quality, it is firmly in Chelsea's

interest that local concerns and values be reflected in any long-range improvements for the road. Road and bridge designs, which unnecessarily diminish the character of the roadway, should actively be discouraged.

Route 113 - Route 113 runs more or less in an easterly direction from Chelsea village at the intersection with Route 110 to East Thetford on Route 5. Route 113 serves as an important link to I-91 and serves as a major collector road for the towns of Chelsea, Vershire, West Fairlee, and Thetford. No reconstruction plans for Route 113 are contemplated at this time.

#### **D PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES**

As a result of the replacement of the municipal water system in the village area of the Town in 1995, the vast majority of the existing but rapidly degrading sidewalk overlying the old system along Vermont Route 110 was replaced. Two years later the Town allocated funds to replace the remaining portion.

In 1998, the town was awarded a grant under the AOT Enhancement Program to develop a pedestrian path along Route 110 in a rural setting to connect the residential area to the Town recreation field to the south. A further grant was awarded in 1999 to connect this path within the urban setting to the existing sidewalk.

The Town is making further application for funds in the 2002 Enhancement Program to extend the sidewalk north of the village to a heavily residential area known as the “Upper Village”. When completed, pedestrians will be able to pass safely along the heavily traveled Route 110 between the residential Jenkins Brook Road and the town recreation facilities south of the village, all the way to the Upper Village.

#### **E. GOALS AND POLICIES**

##### **Goals**

1. To maintain a transportation system that is safe and efficient for motor vehicles and pedestrians alike, and complements the other goals and policies of this Plan.
2. To ensure that future development does not unnecessarily or unreasonably endanger the public investment in town and regional transportation systems or facilities, including highways, bikeways, trails, and rail.
3. To support local, regional and statewide efforts to provide transportation systems that meet the needs of all population segments and not just those who use automobiles.
4. To minimize transportation energy consumption.

## Policies

1. Prior to a final decision to proceed with a major capital transportation project, policymakers should first analyze the project against reasonable alternatives
2. It is in the public interest to maintain the Town's current highways, bridges, and related facilities as is necessary to ensure the current level of service.
3. The Town does not maintain Class 4 Highways, excepting bridges and culverts. Large-scale development in conservation areas or areas remote from Class 2 or Class 3 Town highways and State Highways is generally discouraged. It is the policy of the Town that before it considers adopting a new road or upgrading an existing Highway, the abutting property owners are responsible for the costs of improving and/or building the road to Town specifications. Final decisions regarding the nature of the improvements rest with the Selectboard.
4. Given the interest in and benefits of biking, hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and similar outdoor recreational activities, the Town should, as an alternative to complete discontinuance of a highway, give full consideration to preserving Class 4 roads for recreational use, or downgrading their status to a legal trail thus retaining the public's interest in them.
5. An integral scenic element of the rural countryside is the network of back roads comprising the Town's highway system. These byways are both visually and economically important to the Town. If improvements are needed to accommodate increased traffic, it is important to consider the relationship of the road to the surrounding features of the landscape.
6. Strip development is not encouraged as a land use pattern. Such development occurs in a linear path along a right-of-way, which often restricts visual and physical access to interior lands.
7. Given the significance of Route 110 as a scenic road, no plans for improvement of the road should be approved unless they are sensitive to the character of roadway, historic resources, village settings, and land uses adjacent to it. Large-scale out of context and off-alignment improvements are discouraged.
8. Road improvements should only be conducted on roads leading into areas where the Town desires to encourage development. By keeping remote areas less accessible, the Town can direct future residential and non-residential development into areas deemed more appropriate and consistent with the land use goals and policies of this Plan.
9. Reviewers of prospective developments should not only evaluate traffic impacts but impacts on other modes of transportation as well. For example, proposed developments within the village or adjacent to it should seriously evaluate plans for sidewalks or paths.
10. Institutional and civic land uses should remain in or adjacent to the village to reduce travel. These uses include: post office facilities, public schools, civic buildings, Town offices, Town Hall, senior centers, and retail stores.
11. Plans for curb cuts or access points onto town and state highways should be reviewed by the Town and Vermont Agency of Transportation to ensure the proper mobility, function, and performance to a roadway. Concepts that need to be employed in evaluating access for new developments are:

- Limit the number of access points per parcel or per linear foot of roadway;
  - Rule out direct access onto a primary road, if a reasonable alternative access exists via a secondary road or shared driveway;
  - Provide for the separation between curb cuts and public road intersections to ensure the efficiency and safety of a roadway;
  - Consolidate or reconfigure existing access roads to improve or maintain efficiency, safety, and the function of a roadway;
  - Require shared access and parking, wherever feasible;
  - Require connecting roads between parcels, particularly for non-residential projects;
  - Encourage use of municipal parking, shared parking, or flexible parking standards to reduce the amount of land needed for individual developments and to use land more efficiently; and
  - Require sidewalks or reserve land for sidewalks along roads or streets in the village, and between buildings and parking areas.
12. The Selectboard, in consultation with the Planning Commission, should evaluate the Chelsea Highway Ordinance to ensure that the access management goals and policies discussed in this Plan are consistent with the standards in the ordinance. In addition, the Planning Commission should evaluate the Chelsea Zoning Regulations and develop an access management review standard for larger development projects.
13. The Town, in conjunction with the Regional Planning Commission, should continue to avail itself of opportunities to obtain grants for the improvement of pedestrian facilities for safety and recreation uses
14. The Town should enforce the driveway guidelines, made available to all residents at the Town Clerk's office

## X. ENERGY

### A. BACKGROUND

Vermont planning law provides that municipal plans include an energy program for the community. Such a program is intended to promote efficient and economic utilization of energy. Pragmatic energy planning and implementation results in positive environmental and economic returns to the community and energy providers. Conservation of energy lessens the demand for expensive new sources. Utilities are able to postpone capital investments necessary to provide for additional capacity. Such a practice has benefits to residents, businesses, and ratepayers.

While it is recognized that energy supply and demand are directed largely by economic forces at the state, federal, and international levels, the manner in which the Town plans for future growth can have an impact on energy. For example, a highly dispersed and unplanned pattern of land use can waste both land and energy resources. By planning the location of jobs, public services and housing in close proximity to growth centers, the consumption of fuel and needs for additional roads can be reduced. The siting and design of buildings and the selection of energy systems can influence the efficiency and conservation of energy.

Historically, energy has been taken largely for granted because it is relatively abundant and cheap. Society at large becomes “energy conscious” only when supplies are threatened and prices are up. The Town must not be paralyzed by the belief that many of the energy related issues are beyond its control and can only be solved at the national and international levels. Local governments and individuals are in key positions to influence energy policies and use.

**Energy Demands** - According to the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan (1991), the major fuels consumed in Vermont are oil (65%), electric (17%), wood (8%), LPG and gas (6%) and other (3%). Per capita energy consumption for residential and transportation purposes is about the same as in the northeast. About 76% of all energy used is for these purposes. Almost 80% of residential energy is dedicated to space heating and domestic hot water. State energy officials estimate that simple conservation measures incorporated in new housing can result in a 20% to 30% reduction of energy usage.

About half of all energy used in Vermont (hence, most likely in Chelsea) is for transportation. Over 50% of this is used for residential users who use private cars. Public transportation in Chelsea is nearly non-existent and as a result there are few alternatives, if any, to the automobile.

**Renewable Energy** - Approximately 40% of Vermont’s households use wood as a fuel source for heating. About 23% use wood as their primary source of heat and 17% use wood as supplemental heat. The Department of Public Service estimates that the average household uses between 3 & 4 cords of wood each year during the heating season. Given

the total number of homes in Chelsea (451 year-round in 2001), it is estimated that between 495 and 660 cords of wood are consumed annually.

Increased reliance on wood as a heating source can offset some demand for expensive alternative sources. Recently, prices of fuel oil have dropped causing many homeowners to shift from wood to oil. Chelsea has thousands of acres of timberland that are underutilized and its own forests could supply all of its homes and other buildings without difficulty for heating. There is a potential side effect to this, however, as significant use of wood could contribute to increased air pollution. Modern catalytic converters installed on wood burning stoves could be a partial solution.

## **B. GOALS**

1. To encourage a pattern of settlement and land use that uses energy efficiently.
2. To promote the design and construction of buildings and structures that are energy efficient and postpone the need for costly sources of energy.
3. To encourage the development of local renewable energy sources and to reduce dependence on outside foreign energy sources.
4. To increase public awareness and use of energy conservation practices through educational efforts.

## **C. POLICIES**

1. Planning which reduces the dependency and demand for new sources of energy is a matter of public good. Likewise, conservation of energy usage is encouraged. To meet this policy, the following practices are recommended:
  - a. Development of existing and current transportation routes and highways needs to reflect design and location principles that complement the recommended land use and settlement patterns set forth in this Plan. Major public investments, such as schools, public recreational areas, and municipal facilities need to be situated within or in close proximity to the village of Chelsea;
  - b. The rehabilitation or the development of new buildings and equipment should be encouraged where use of proven design principles and practices demonstrates the lowest life cycle costs;
  - c. Where land development or subdivisions are proposed, design plans should work towards the goal of locating structures and buildings on the site which reflect sound energy conservation principles, such as solar and slope orientation and protective wind barriers. Use of the cluster planning concept, where buildings are concentrated in one area of a site with a complementing off-set of open space, is an approach that encourages energy conservation and efficiency; and
  - d. Given that electrical generation, transmission, and distribution facilities are significant visual contributors of the landscape, it is the policy of the Town to encourage efforts to monitor the negative effects of these facilities on the landscape and adjacent uses. Accordingly, where such facilities are

proposed, design plans should uphold recognized standards and practices to minimize any adverse visual impacts.

2. Where generation, transmission, and distribution facilities or service areas are proposed, such facilities or areas should be encouraged only when they complement the recommended land use patterns set forth in this Plan.
3. As alternatives to the automobile, the acquisition of land or rights to land by the Town or other qualified entities for the future development of bikeways and footpaths is encouraged in the village areas or other areas of concentrated settlement.
4. To reduce the demand for commuter transportation facilities and energy, the development of energy efficient home occupations and small-scale home business is encouraged.
5. To ensure a sustainable source of fuel wood production and improvement of Chelsea's forests at a reasonable rate of return, such lands should be taxed at use value and not at development value.
6. Given the state and local significance of the White River in Chelsea as a recreational and fisheries resource, no new dams or similar impoundments for power generation should be permitted without full consideration of their social, economic, and environmental impacts, conformity with this Plan, and a finding that the public is clearly benefited thereby.

#### **D. FUTURE ACTIONS**

1. Public education on the need for sustainable energy practices is lacking. The community should develop an education program on energy efficiency and distribute guidelines to builders planning renovations to or construction of new buildings. This effort could be coordinated with the Vermont Department of Energy.

## **XI. RELATIONSHIP OF CHELSEA'S PLANNING ACTIVITIES TO ITS NEIGHBORS**

### **A. KEEPING THE PLAN REALISTIC AND RELEVANT**

In developing this Plan, it was agreed at the outset that statements of goals and policies for guiding future growth in Chelsea must come from the wishes and needs expressed by the people of Chelsea. This Plan must be clear in articulating their vision for the future. The public bears the responsibility to remain involved in implementing the many goals and planning options that this Plan identifies. Likewise, the Planning Commission and other Town officials must see to it that the Plan is dynamic and remains realistic in responding accurately to the community on what it wants to be.

While individuality is recognized, neither the Town nor its citizens have total control over the forces that will affect growth in Chelsea. Chelsea is part of a very complicated global network of social and economic factors directing how we each conduct our lives. For example, this Plan assumes that public policy on land use and property taxation will remain basically unchanged. Property taxes are, however, strong economic forces and, oftentimes, counter our efforts to promote rural character and living.

Towns rely heavily on local real estate taxes to finance public services. Thus, towns have a natural tendency to encourage those types of development that bring in net revenues. Furthermore, this Plan assumes that economic growth in the Upper Valley will remain relatively slow during the 1990's.

### **B. NEIGHBORING TOWN PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

Because of these inter-town relationships, this section evaluates the trends and plans of adjacent municipalities. This evaluation discusses how development proposals and planning activities, and adopted plans in neighboring towns could affect Chelsea. Where there are plans that are incompatible with this Plan, it is important to identify them, and to seek ways to mitigate conflicts. Chelsea is bounded by five towns. They are the Towns of Williamstown, Washington, Brookfield, Tunbridge and Vershire. All of these municipalities have planning programs and planning commissions.

Williamstown has a plan in effect adopted in 1998. The Plan has been reviewed and approved by the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, which Williamstown is a member. The Plan identifies a growth center within its downtown area and retains rural areas outside of the village area. Williamstown has no zoning or subdivision regulations in effect. Growth in Williamstown continues to increase, as it is a bedroom community for the Barre-Montpelier Area.

Washington borders Chelsea on its northwestern border. It has a plan in effect adopted in 1998 and approved by the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission. The plan is a

comprehensive plan and supports the goals set forth in this Plan and the Vermont Planning and Development Act (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117). Washington has a zoning regulation in effect to regulate new development in the community.

Brookfield and Tunbridge have duly adopted municipal plans. These plans were formally reviewed and approved by the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission in late 1995. They were found at this time to be compatible with neighboring community plans, including Chelsea's expired but most current Plan. Vershire recently readopted its plan which although somewhat general provides policies for future growth.

Determining the extent of compatibility or conflicts between these plans and Chelsea's plan has been difficult due to the general and non-specific nature of these plans. In spite of this, it would be fair to conclude that the neighboring community planning relates positively with Chelsea's.

### **C. REGIONAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

Chelsea is within the Two Rivers - Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. It is one of twenty-six (26) municipalities that comprise the Region. The Region covers northern Windsor County, most of Orange County and the Towns of Pittsfield, Hancock and Granville. The Commission was chartered in 1970 by the acts of its constituent towns. All towns are members of the Regional Commission, and town representatives govern its affairs. One of the Regional Commission's primary purposes is to provide technical services to town officials and to undertake a regional planning program. As is the case in many areas of the State, the extent of local planning throughout the Region is varied. Some municipalities are more active than others. Thus, the level of services to each of the towns changes with time.

The Regional Commission adopted a Regional Plan in June 1999. This Plan will remain in effect for a period of five years. The Plan consists of two volumes; Volume 1 relates mainly to land use, housing, natural resources, historic resources, public utilities and facilities, and energy. Volume 2 relates to transportation. Goals and policies for land use settlement are identified. These areas are Town Centers, Village Settlements, Hamlet Areas, Rural Areas, Conservation and Resource Areas and Interchange Areas. The Plan consists of several hundred policies to guide future private and public development and conservation within the Region. Policies for management of growth are substantially similar to those set forth in the Chelsea Plan. Accordingly, given the general nature of these Plans, it is reasonable to conclude that this Plan and the Regional Plan are compatible.

The entire text of the Regional Plan is posted on the Regional Commission website located at [www.trorc.org](http://www.trorc.org).

## XII. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

### A. PUBLIC TECHNIQUES

The Town Plan for Chelsea sets forth certain recommendations and policies for accomplishing its stated purposes and objectives. These purposes and objectives can only be realized by following the provisions for adopting, maintaining and implementing the Town Plan as provided for in the Vermont Planning and Development Act.

Adoption of the Town Plan represents acceptance of its recommendations and policies for guiding the proper development of the Town. Initially, only land development activities requiring permits under the state environmental laws protected the Town from disorderly improper development.

The Town Plan is used to provide input into the state's regulation of land development through Act 250, Vermont's Land Use and Development Law (Chapter 151, 10 VSA). By law, both the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Commission have full party status in all Act 250 proceedings involving Chelsea; they may testify on each of the ten criteria, offer witnesses to present evidence and appeal decisions in which they disagree. The Town Plan is especially important in that it provides a standard for review and comment on Act 250 applications. In a broad sense, it establishes a basis for Town testimony on the first nine criteria relating to specific subject areas. Specifically under criterion 10, a proposed project must be found to be in conformance with the Town Plan in order for a Land Use Permit to be issued. In this manner, the Town Plan has the potential to become a major factor in the regulation of land development that falls under the jurisdiction of Act 250.

In addition to Act 250, Chelsea may implement the Town Plan by adopting, amending and enforcing any or all of the following bylaws:

**Zoning Regulations:** to permit, prohibit, restrict, regulate and determine land development, including specifically, without limitation, the following:

- Specific uses of land, water courses and other bodies of water;
- Dimensions, location, erection, construction, repair, maintenance, alteration, razing, removal, and use of structures;
- Areas and dimensions of land and bodies of water to be occupied by uses and structures, as well as areas, courts, yards and other open spaces and distances to be left unoccupied by uses and structures; and
- Density of population and intensity of use.

**Subdivision Regulations:** authorizing the *Development Review Board* to approve, modify or disapprove the division of all plats of land into two or more parcels, whether or not showing new streets or highways, and approve the development of such plats previously filed in the office of the clerk of such municipality if such plats are entirely or partially undeveloped, under the subdivision regulations of the town. Subdivision Regulations may

also set forth the procedures, requirements and specifications for the submission, processing and design of plats. Such subdivision regulations must be adopted prior to the exercise of any authority by the *Development Review Board*.

**Official Land Use Map:** showing the location where each category of land use is allowed.

**Capital Budget and Program:** listing and describing the annual capital projects and those projects expected to be undertaken for a period of not less than five years. No capital project shall be authorized or undertaken unless it is included in the Capital Budget or the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) as adopted or amended.

**Historic District Ordinance:** an ordinance safeguarding the heritage of Chelsea and preserving the natural beauty and history of the Village. The district acknowledges "the public interest in preserving the general architectural and landscape features within the area and will indicate the desire of the Town to maintain the appearance and use of the area."

**Flood Hazard District Bylaw:** to promote the public health, safety and general welfare, to prevent increases in flooding caused by the uncontrolled development of lands in flood hazard areas, and to minimize losses due to floods.

## **B. PRIVATE TECHNIQUES**

### **Land Trusts**

While local government has an important role in conserving open land, private groups and individuals have much of the control over the future of this resource. Increasingly the private sector is driving the conservation process. Land trusts - non-profit organizations dedicated to the protection of land resources - have developed several techniques for helping individuals to conserve their land. The process begins with the identification of the landowner's conservation objectives and financial needs. The final plan will be a balance of these factors.

Because of their non-profit status, most land trusts can receive contributions that are deductible from federal income taxes. This tax incentive has been a major attraction of the land trust process. Donations of land or conservation easements have improved the overall financial picture for some landowners. Cash contributions (which are also tax deductible) equip the land trust to manage the lands it receives.

Besides being advisors to land owners and recipients of donations, land trusts have become financial packagers, organizing conservation-minded individuals to finance or to pledge their credit to secure an important property. Often this is a holding action while the trust seeks a permanent solution for the property. The trust may create a land use plan for the property, and seek to protect important resource lands and provide for limited development

of the portions of the property that have low resource value. The revenues generated by the limited development offset the conservation costs.

An individual operating alone can achieve the long-term conservation of land through deed restrictions or covenants. However, such restrictions may prove difficult to monitor and enforce over time. The original titleholder's control of the covenant may also diminish as the property changes hands.

### **Tax Implications**

Because Vermont municipalities obtain most of their revenue from property taxation, reducing the development potential of property in the town will eventually reduce the town's tax base. Land with conservation restrictions often is assessed at a lower value, and so the owner pays less in taxes.

However, there are two countervailing factors here. First, protected land often enhances the market value - and, therefore, may increase the tax value - of surrounding property. Second, conservation restrictions prohibit the type of development that may stimulate demand for roads, road maintenance, schools, emergency services and recreation facilities and therefore, may increase the town budget. The disadvantage of reduced property tax revenues may be offset by the advantage of avoiding these costs.

### **Community Land Trusts**

In the same way that conservation land trusts respond to protection of precious natural resources, community land trusts now actively work to protect housing for traditional Vermont residents. As non-profit organizations, community land trusts obtain private and public funds to purchase land and sometimes buildings. Normally, land ownership is retained by the trust - thus reducing the cost of existing or new housing. Long-term leases of the land are made to individual homeowners.

Unlike normal subsidized housing, which remains affordable only as long as the subsidies continue, the community land trust approach ensures long-term affordability by limiting the resale price of a house to the original construction or purchase price, improvements and sometimes a factor for inflation. Thus, the original homeowner recovers his/her investment and new buyers whether they be a young couple, elderly persons on fixed incomes, or persons with limited finances can obtain housing within their price range.

In the Chelsea area, the Central Community Vermont Land Trust is presently working on housing efforts in eight small towns, including Orange and Washington.

## **Recommendation**

1. Interested Chelsea citizens could form a "Housing and Land Conservation Working Group" to promote one or two land conservation and affordable housing projects in Town.

## **C. FUNDING**

Public forums, surveys, land inventories, improvements in services; new land conservation and housing programs all require funding. Further, any new land use regulations will require increased review and enforcement by the Town and, hence, increased costs. Both the benefits and costs of new initiatives need to be investigated before implementation.

State funding for planning is available from a variety of state sources. The Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) has historically made available planning grants to municipalities to undertake projects designed to benefit low and moderate-income families; address community infrastructure needs and related needs. The Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund (HCTF) grants towns and non-profit groups funds for housing and conservation related projects. Monies are available for both planning and implementation. The Agency of Natural Resources has in past years administered the Land, Water, and Conservation Fund (LWCF) which funds recreation and conservation projects benefiting the public.

Public funds for planning and implementation activities have been decreasing since the 1990's. The Vermont Agency of Development and Community Affairs has in past years made planning grants available directly to towns or on a competitive basis from a dedicated fund (Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning Fund), however, no funds have been appropriated to it since 1991.

Chelsea needs also to look towards the outstanding wealth of human resources that it has at its disposal - its citizens. The breadth of experience and knowledge within the community needs to be further tapped. Citizen involvement is a fundamental element in generating the financial and political support required for successful locally based projects.

## **APPENDICES**

### **A. Partial List of Historic Sites, Sources of Information**

### **B. *Site Feasibility Analysis for Industrial Development – May 1999***

### **C. Maps**

1. Future Land Use
2. Current Land Use/Land Use Cover (1992)
3. Primary Agricultural Areas
4. Utilities, Facilities and Education
5. Transportation
6. Special Areas (Conservation Resources)
7. Village Historic District
8. Potential Sites for Commercial/Industrial Uses

## Appendix A

### Partial List of Historical Sites

1. The Chelsea Mills building, (1827) the last mill building standing in anywhere near its original form. This mill alone remains to represent three to four gristmills, 16 sawmills, shingle mills, woolen mills, trip hammer shops, blacksmith shops and all other commercial buildings of our early history.
2. The Congregational Church (1813) gracing the head or east end of the North Common, being a historic building itself besides being usually associated with the North Common as part of the Chelsea Townscape.
3. The Orange County Courthouse (1847) on the site of the earlier 1801 courthouse. A formidable building besides being a symbol and reminder that the Orange County Court system has had its home in Chelsea since 1795. It heads the South Common and with the church and school has generally been accepted as the focal point of the village landscape.
4. The twin brick stores (circa 1820) among the earlier brick buildings in Town, both built by successful merchants of that period. Joshua Dickinson and Harry Hale built the South Store. Amplus Blake built the North Store. It is probably generally known that the South Store burned in April 1926, but fortunately a local son, Fred Atwood, was interested enough to have the store rebuilt with old bricks so that it still looked much like its companion to the north.
5. The Martin house, located on the north side of Highland Avenue represented early low-posted 1-1/2 story house with attached ell, shed and horse barn. It is representative of many houses still standing in Town being built anywhere from 1800 to 1880. The house clearly shows the original 1-1/2 story, the attached 1-story ell, the attached shed which was originally a horse barn as shown by the cupola and the door for pitching hay into the loft and also has the attached one-car garage of more modern times.
6. The Forbes house, representative of an early, large, two-story house. It has a very early 1-1/2 story ell dating perhaps to 1800 and a large 2-story addition with several fireplaces. The house has fancy woodwork and other status symbols favored by our early builders who had the finances to indulge themselves - in this case merchant, inn owner and clock-maker Nathan Hale. The 2-story part of the house probably was built about 1830. In addition, the property has all the outbuildings common to a village farm including horse barn, cow barn, farm storage buildings, and a brick ash house. Noted in 1873, "the finest farm in Chelsea Village".
7. The Moxley covered bridge represents a time, a style of building, a living connection to our past and makes a statement about the people who planned, built, and maintained it. Built in 1883, at a cost to the town of \$420, it is of "queen post" construction, about 55 feet long, and is the only covered bridge on a public road that Chelsea ever had.

### Sources of Information

- Town records, including but not limited to land records, road records, reports of the annual town and school meetings;
- Old newspapers published in the area;
- "Orange County Gazetteer", 1888;
- Early Chelseans by J.A. Keyes, 1885;
- "Proceedings of the Centennial Celebration", 1884;
- Comstock's History of Chelsea, 1944;
- The Chelsea Album, 1979; and,
- History of Chelsea, Vermont, 1784-1984.

## **Appendix B**

–(Site Feasibility Analysis – See Town Clerk)

## **Appendix C**

(Maps -- see Chelsea Town Clerk)