

# HANCOCK TOWN PLAN

Adopted  
October 28, 2008

Prepared By The Hancock Planning Commission

Judy Olsen  
Larry Olsen  
Paula Roth

With Assistance From the  
Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission,  
Woodstock, Vermont

# Table of Contents

<b>I. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
A. TOWN HISTORY.....	1
B. THE NEED FOR PLANNING.....	1
C. PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN.....	2
D. ONGOING PLANNING.....	2
<b>II. POPULATION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
A. POPULATION PATTERNS.....	3
B. AGE OF POPULATION.....	4
C. INCOME OF POPULATION.....	4
<b>III. ECONOMIC BASE.....</b>	<b>5</b>
A. CHILD CARE.....	6
Goals.....	6
Planning Principles.....	6
Recommendations.....	6
<b>IV. HOUSING.....</b>	<b>8</b>
A. INTRODUCTION.....	8
B. NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS.....	8
C. TYPE OF HOUSING AND OWNERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS.....	9
D. HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS.....	10
E. AFFORDABLE HOUSING.....	10
Goals.....	10
Planning Principles.....	10
<b>V. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.....</b>	<b>12</b>
A. BACKGROUND.....	12
B. COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS.....	12
C. FUNDING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES.....	12
Goals.....	13
Planning Principles.....	13
<b>VI. UTILITIES &amp; FACILITIES.....</b>	<b>14</b>
A. TOWN OFFICES.....	14
B. LIBRARY.....	14
C. TOWN HALL.....	14
D. SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT.....	15
E. WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES.....	15
Goals.....	15
Planning Principles.....	15
<b>VII. EMERGENCY SERVICES SECTION.....</b>	<b>16</b>
A. FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES.....	16
B. POLICE PROTECTION SERVICES.....	17
C. EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES.....	17
Goals.....	17
Planning Principles.....	17
<b>VIII. EDUCATION.....</b>	<b>18</b>
A. STUDENT ENROLLMENT.....	18
B. SCHOOL BUILDING & SERVICES.....	18

Hancock Town Plan – Adopted October 28, 2008

---

C. VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL.....	19
<i>Goals</i> .....	19
<i>Planning Principles</i> .....	19
<b>IX. TRANSPORTATION .....</b>	<b>20</b>
A. INTRODUCTION .....	20
B. TOWN ROADS .....	20
C. TOWN HIGHWAY CLASSIFICATIONS .....	21
D. TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES .....	22
E. PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES .....	22
F. ACCESS MANAGEMENT .....	22
G. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION .....	23
<i>Goals</i> .....	23
<i>Planning Principles</i> .....	23
<b>X. CURRENT AND FUTURE LAND USE.....</b>	<b>25</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	25
A. OVERALL LAND USE GOALS .....	25
<i>Goals:</i> .....	25
B. CURRENT LAND USE .....	25
C. PROPOSED LAND USE.....	26
D. VILLAGE CENTER.....	26
<i>Background and Purpose</i> .....	26
<i>Goals</i> .....	27
<i>Planning Principles</i> .....	27
E. RURAL RESIDENTIAL AREA .....	28
<i>Background and Purpose</i> .....	28
<i>Goal</i> .....	28
<i>Planning Principles</i> .....	28
F. SMALL ENTERPRISE AREA .....	29
<i>Background and Purpose</i> .....	29
<i>Goals</i> .....	29
<i>Planning Principles</i> .....	29
G. HANCOCK INDUSTRIAL AREA .....	30
<i>Background and Purpose</i> .....	30
<i>Planning Principles</i> .....	31
H. RECREATION AREA .....	31
<i>Taylor Meadow</i> .....	32
<i>Goal</i> .....	32
<i>Planning Principles</i> .....	32
I. TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE PLANNING.....	32
<i>Goals</i> .....	33
<b>XI. NATURAL RESOURCES.....</b>	<b>34</b>
A. WETLANDS.....	34
<i>Background</i> .....	34
<i>Goals</i> .....	35
<i>Planning Principles</i> .....	35
B. FLOOD HAZARD AREAS AND FLOODPLAINS .....	35
<i>Background</i> .....	35
<i>National Flood Insurance Program</i> .....	35
<i>Hancock Flood Hazard Zoning</i> .....	36
<i>Goals</i> .....	36
<i>Planning Principles</i> .....	37
C. WATER RESOURCES .....	37
<i>Background</i> .....	37

Hancock Town Plan – Adopted October 28, 2008

---

Goals.....	38
Planning Principles.....	38
D. RIPARIAN BUFFERS .....	39
Background.....	39
Benefits of Riparian Buffers.....	39
Goals.....	40
Planning Principles.....	40
E. WILDLIFE RESOURCES.....	41
Background.....	41
Goals.....	41
Planning Principles.....	41
F. MINERAL RESOURCES.....	42
Background.....	42
Goals.....	42
Planning Principles.....	42
<b>XII. ENERGY .....</b>	<b>43</b>
A. BACKGROUND.....	43
B. ENERGY DEMANDS.....	43
C. RENEWABLE ENERGY.....	43
Goals.....	44
Planning Principles.....	44
Future Actions.....	45
<b>XIII. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS.....</b>	<b>46</b>
Recommendations:.....	46
<b>XIV. IMPLEMENTATION.....</b>	<b>47</b>
A. PUTTING THE PLAN INTO ACTION .....	47
B. ADOPTION OF THE PLAN.....	47
C. ONGOING PLANNING .....	47
D. IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS.....	48
E. GUIDELINES FOR GROWTH .....	51

**TABLE OF FIGURES**

FIGURE 1: POPULATION CHANGE, HANCOCK, VT.....	3
FIGURE 2: HANCOCK POPULATION BY DISTRIBUTION 1990-2000 .....	4
FIGURE 3: OCCUPATIONS OF HANCOCK RESIDENTS - 2000.....	5
FIGURE 4: TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (1940-2000).....	8
FIGURE 5: TYPES OF HOUSING UNITS .....	9

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Town History**

Hancock was granted November 7, 1780 and chartered July 31, 1781 by our first governor, Governor Chittenden, to Samuel Wilcox and 129 associates. Hancock grew as Pioneers seeking new land after the Revolutionary War moved into Hancock. In 1791, there were 56 people. The population reached its peak of 472 residents in 1830. After the Civil War, the opening of the west brought on a movement of people westward to better farming lands and opportunities. This affected most of Vermont and Hancock was not immune to the departures. The small farms and mills that made up much of the town were gradually phased out and only the larger farms survived. Today, farms have all but disappeared from Hancock's landscape. Since its peak, the population of Hancock has been slowly rebounding, however, it has never made it back to the population that it once held.

At present, Hancock has been only very lightly touched by the changes that are taking place in the State of Vermont. During the past four decades, Vermont has been a location of choice for many newcomers. At the same time, there has been a natural increase of the population, resulting from more births than deaths. Altogether, Vermont's population grew from 414,000 in 1966 to 608,000 in 2000. This increased population has put greater pressures on towns throughout Vermont.

### **B. The Need for Planning**

At first glance, Hancock is a small, rural town that has remained relatively untouched by the changes that have occurred in surrounding towns. In Hancock, for example, there is not a shortage of affordable housing as you might find in a town like Woodstock. Hancock has not suffered from the stresses that a growing population can put on public utilities and services. But we understand that there are changes happening statewide that will eventually reach our Town. The building of expensive second homes has become commonplace along the Route 100 corridor. Businesses that were once the cornerstone of our town's economy are consolidating their facilities elsewhere and moving out of town. It is clear for us to see that Hancock will not remain immune to change.

Change stimulates the need for the community to examine its current condition and to evaluate its prospects for the future. Change can be beneficial, but in order to ascertain this, people must understand the problems and opportunities facing the community and identify goals for the future. Communities with little or no planning are more likely to experience problems of over development, high property taxes and increased demands for community services. We, like every town, have choices in the way we provide for orderly growth and in the way we balance our natural and built environments.

**C. Purpose of this Plan**

A well-grounded municipal plan, prepared by the town with the involvement of its citizens, is the foundation for ensuring appropriate development in the future. A municipal plan with a defined set of goals and policies can reduce conflicts that may otherwise arise in connection with development, especially in towns like Hancock that have no zoning bylaws, with the exception of the town's flood hazard zoning bylaw (see Chapter XIV, Section D, Implementation Tools). The primary purpose of this plan is to help our citizens direct the future growth of the town. The Plan includes a comprehensive analysis of Hancock's residents, jobs, economy, schools, roads, housing, natural resources, and land use. This analysis of current conditions in the context of goals for our community, leads to policies and recommendations that can help our community make wise choices in directing the patterns of its future growth.

**D. Ongoing Planning**

Planning for change is a continual process for the Town and will require the involvement of the Planning Commission and the public to ensure that the goals and policies of the Plan are integrated into the decisions affecting land use, taxation, and public investments in Hancock.

The Hancock Town Plan is not a permanent document on community desires or values. Its life is limited by statute (24 V.S.A., Section 4387). The Planning Commission is responsible for the maintenance and amendment of the Plan. Within the next five years following adoption of the Plan, the Planning Commission will need to evaluate the Plan in light of new conditions and needs. Re-adoption of an updated Plan will require notice to the townspeople and finally action by the Selectboard.

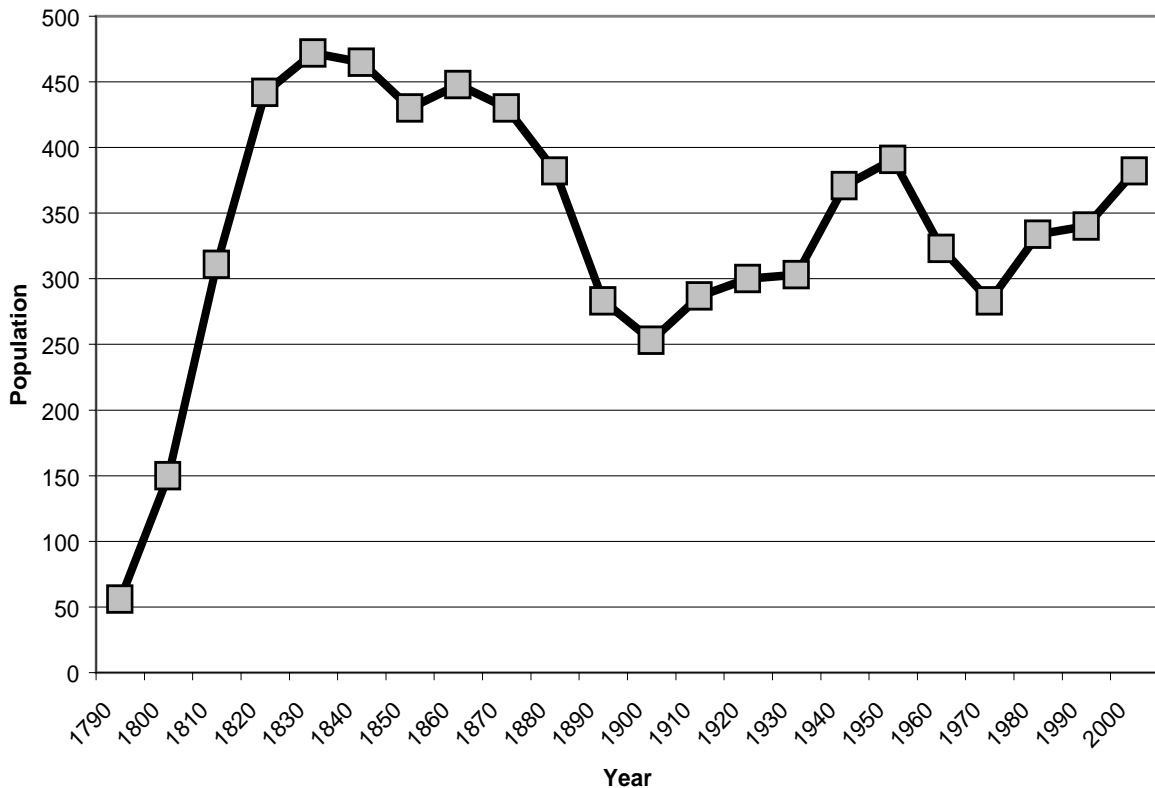
## II. POPULATION

### A. Population Patterns

Population, when considered in terms of past, present, and future statistics, represents an important factor in the overall development of Hancock. Rapid and unanticipated population increases can create a demand for new and expanded municipal services and can strain the financial ability of a town to provide public services economically. This is especially true in instances where new residents are of public school age and the public schools are at or near capacity. Through wise planning and programming for population change, the services and facilities that a growing population will demand can be delivered more efficiently and equitably.

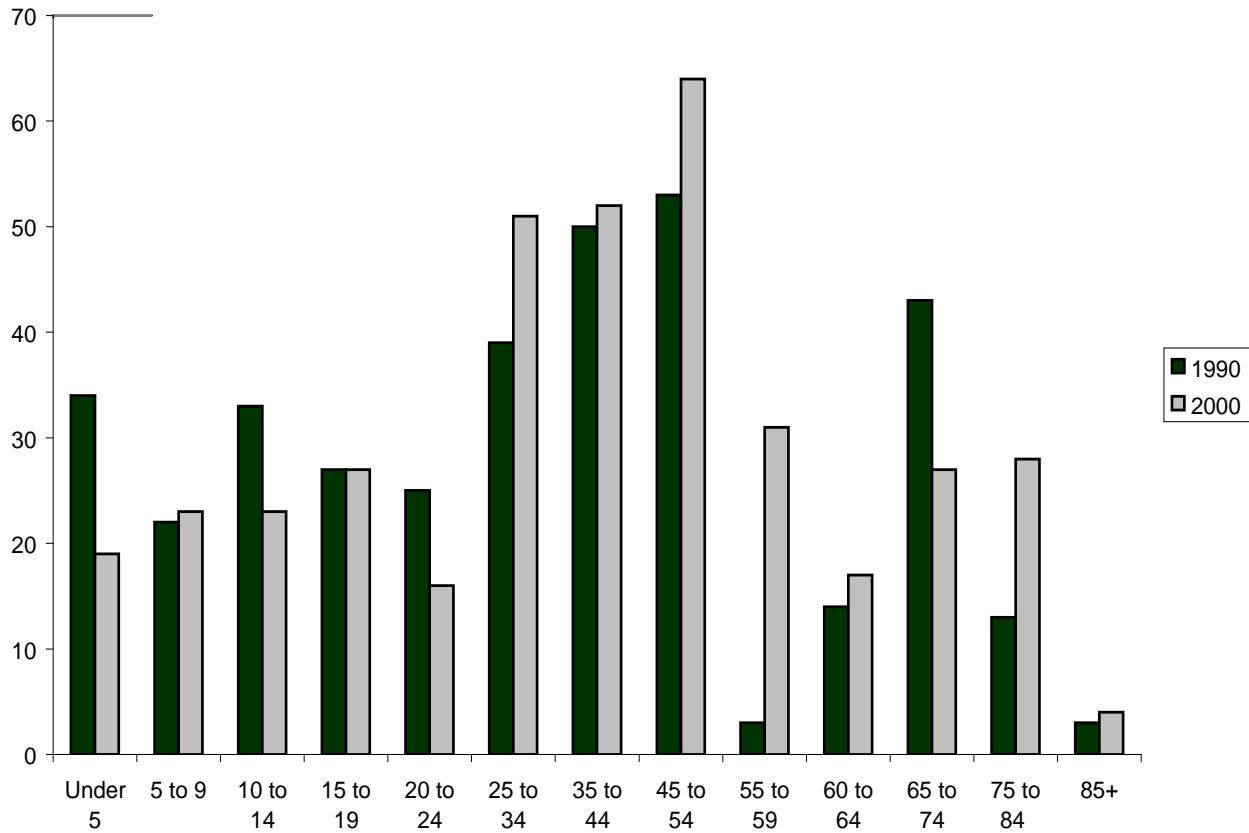
Shown below are population statistics for the Town of Hancock taken from the U.S. Census Bureau. According to the US Census, Hancock's year 2000 population was 382, compared to a population of 340 in 1990, resulting in a 1990s growth rate of 12.3%. Hancock's growth rate of 12.3% was higher than the 8% rate of growth achieved by the State of Vermont and the Two Rivers–Ottawaquechee Region. The primary factor influencing population growth was new residents moving into Hancock, rather than unusual rates of birth or death.

Figure 1: Population Change, Hancock, VT



Source: Center for Rural Studies

Figure 2: Hancock Population by Distribution 1990-2000



Source: Center for Rural Studies, 2000 US Census

### B. Age of Population

Between 1990 and 2000, the most dramatic increase in the age profile of Hancock came in the 45 – 59 age group. Ten years ago the Census reported that 15% of Hancock’s population was aged between 45 and 59 years old; the 2000 Census showed that that age group had grown to become 25% of the town’s total population. As a town, we should look closely at the implications of our aging population. Such changes in the overall age of our residents may have effects on elderly care, the accessibility of town services and access to public facilities.

### C. Income of Population

The Vermont Department of Taxes annually publishes *Vermont Tax Statistics* which includes a summary of personal income tax returns filed with the State. In 2000, 160 personal income tax returns were filed from residents in Hancock. Two hundred eighty-six (286) exemptions were claimed. Total adjusted personal income reported for Hancock residents was \$4,167,095 million dollars.

For 2000, 46.8% of the total personal income generated in Hancock was by filers earning \$40,000 or more and 16.4% were earning less than \$20,000.

### III. ECONOMIC BASE

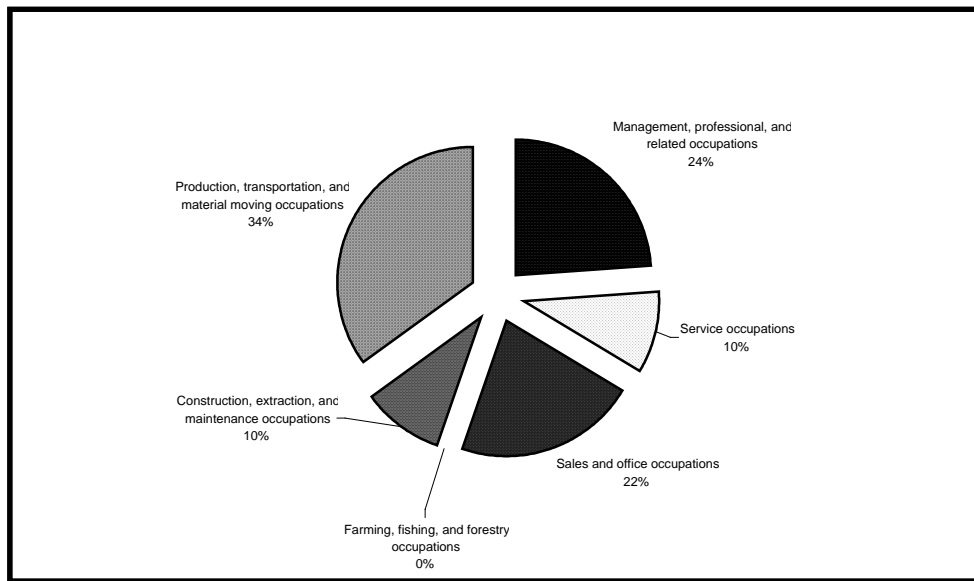
Chesapeake Hardwood Products, Inc., manufactured all varieties of hardwood plywood and was the largest employer in the three valley towns of Hancock, Granville and Rochester until 2003, when the plant was closed. At its peak, the company employed about 170 people, though when it was closed approximately 50 jobs were lost. After Chesapeake closed, the plant resumed operations as Vermont Plywood through Community Development funds that were loaned by the Town, as well as two other loans. The plant was closed again for several reasons in 2007, and was sold in 2008 for reuse in processing of locally-produced marble.

In Addison County, unemployment in May 2008 stood at 3.8% according to the Vermont Department of Labor, up from 3.5% at the end of 2007. The State unemployment rate was 4.6%.

Other smaller businesses include: gas station with auto mechanics, general store, bakery/restaurant/gift shop, Vermont products gift shop, summer camp for girls and boys, used car dealer, general contractors, building supply yard, loggers, small engine repair, plumbing and heating contractors, architects, bird carver, and bed and breakfast. The Middlebury College Snow Bowl located in Hancock and other ski areas located in neighboring Waitsfield and Warren provide seasonal employment.

Hancock does not serve as an economic hub for commercial and industrial activity. Residents drive to Randolph, Middlebury, Waitsfield, Rochester, Montpelier and Rutland for banking, medical, professional and related services. Ninety percent (276) of Hancock’s resident work force 16 years and older reported their occupations as part of the 2000 Census. The chart below breaks out their occupations as reported.

**Figure 3: Occupations of Hancock Residents - 2000**



Source: US Census 2000

## Hancock Town Plan – Adopted October 28, 2008

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Many of the occupations listed in Figure 3 are not based in town, requiring residents to commute. Hancock residents want to see more jobs brought to their town. There is particular interest in so-called “clean” businesses, such as light manufacturing, software sales, outdoor recreation and Internet commerce.

### **A. Child Care**

As of 2008, there are no licensed day care centers or registered day care homes in Hancock, though there are three facilities in nearby Rochester according to state data. In order to meet the child care needs of its working families, Hancock supports the private development of child care facilities in Town and may assist providers with seeking funding to develop these facilities.

#### **Goals**

1. Increase the availability of locally based jobs while maintaining the rural character of Hancock.
2. Encourage and attract businesses to settle in Hancock by offering incentives, thus increasing the tax base and creating jobs.
3. Reinstate local manufacturing jobs through the sale and re-use of the plywood plant.
4. Expand child care services in Hancock

#### **Planning Principles**

1. It is the policy of the Town to cooperate with neighboring towns, regional planning commissions and economic development groups, to plan for and maintain a balance between the type and number of jobs created and natural population growth in the region.
2. It is the policy of the Town to support the development of local enterprises that create markets for locally produced goods and services
3. It is the policy of the Town to encourage new business development in appropriate locations where services such as roads, fire protections and power supply are available or planned.
4. It is the policy of the Town to encourage conversion of structures and older buildings to enable new and more economical uses of property and to avoid obsolescence.
5. Residents are encouraged to conduct an occupation in their homes provided that the nature of the occupation is customary or appropriate in rural residential areas.
6. It is a policy of the Town to support private sector efforts to seek funding to develop child care infrastructure.

#### **Recommendations**

1. The town should consider the implications of an aging population and the impact it will have on the services and infrastructure that is in place.
2. The town should actively pursue “clean businesses” that are interested in purchasing property within the designated “Small Enterprise Area” (see Land Use section of this plan).

3. The town should support efforts and encourage studies, plans or Brownfield redevelopment initiatives that will ensure the re-use of the Chesapeake facility.

## IV. HOUSING

### A. Introduction

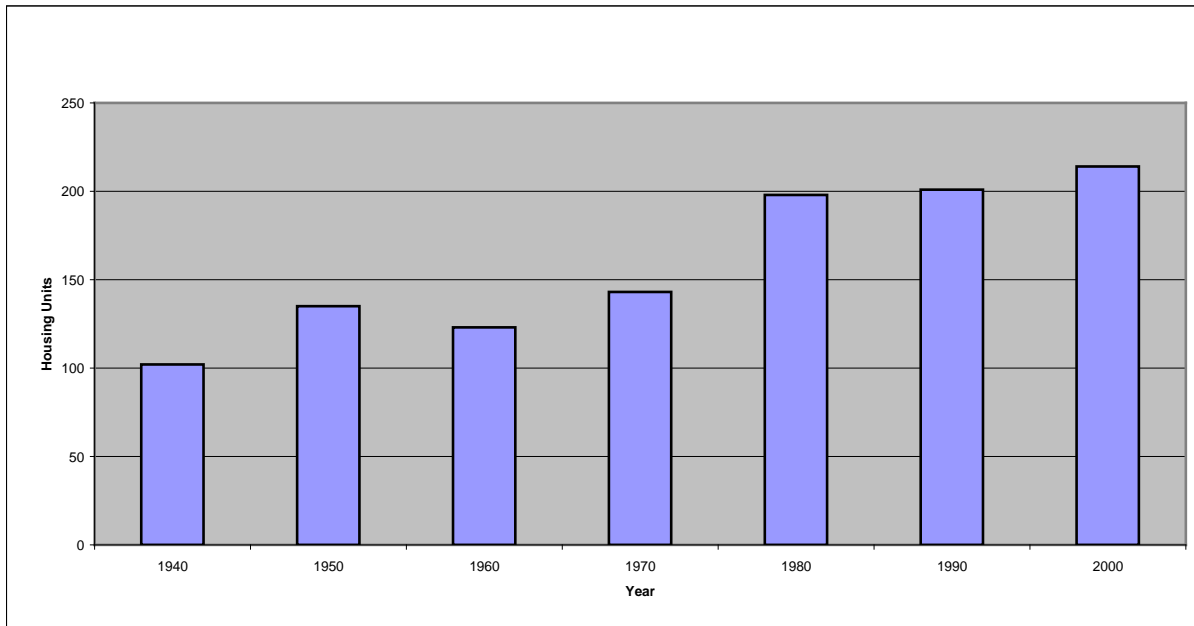
A major function of local housing planning is to meet two community objectives - first, safe and affordable housing for its present and future population and second, suitable density and distribution of housing throughout the community. Growth in housing affects the Town's capacity to provide facilities and services to our town and the character of the area. Housing built without adequate planning for schools, roads, and other public services can overburden the ability of the taxpayers to pay for these services, and also can lower adjacent property values and negatively affect the rural character of the town.

This section discusses the amount, type, location, and affordability of existing housing and the needs for future housing. Other sections of this Plan also include information on housing. The data presented in this section are extracted from two sources - U.S. Census and Town Grand List Records (Form 411). Data collected from these sources do not match exactly due to variations in record-keeping and classifications. Notwithstanding, they are considered relevant and reliable data sets for analysis.

### B. Number of Housing Units

There were 214 housing units in Hancock in 2000 according to the Census; in 1990 there were 201, yielding a growth rate of 6%. None of the housing stocks, (the State's, the Region's, or the Town's), grew at the rates experienced over the 1980s.

Figure 4: Total Housing Units (1940-2000)



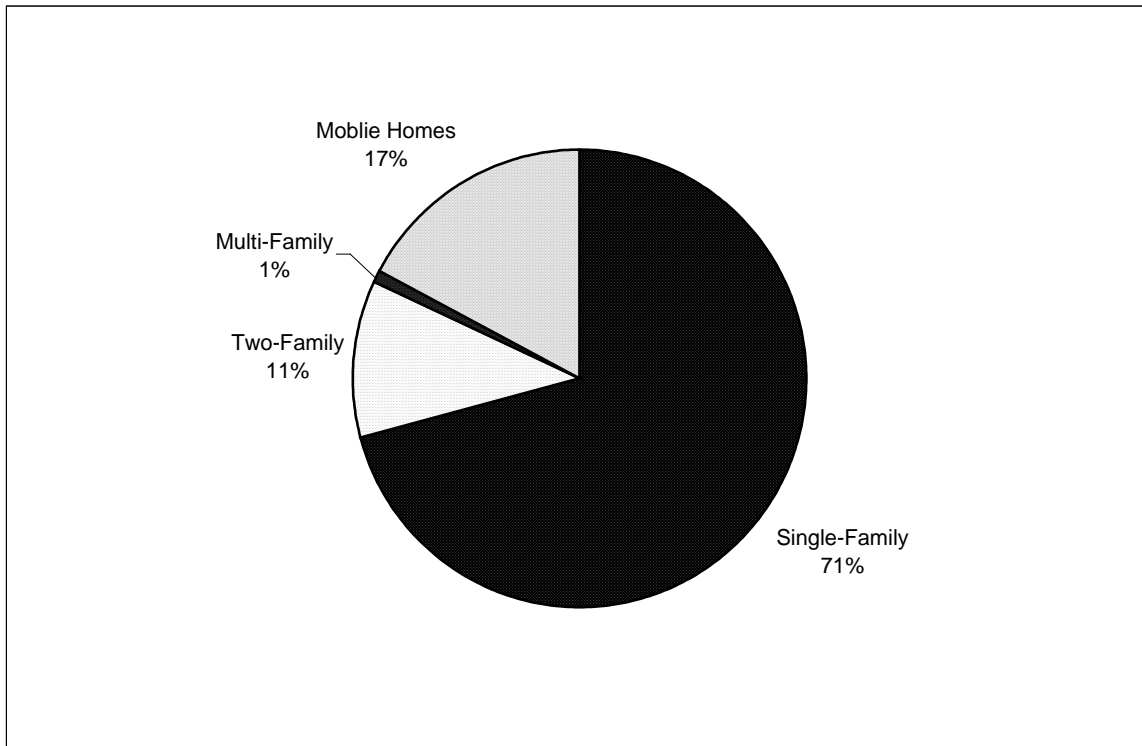
Source: 2000 Census

**C. Type of Housing and Ownership Characteristics**

The U.S. Census defines a “housing unit” to include: conventional houses, apartments, mobile homes, and rooms for occupancy. The 2000 Census reports that nearly three-quarters of the housing units in Hancock were single-family residences (71%); the second largest percentage of housing units were mobile homes (17%).

The average price of primary residences sold in Hancock rose to \$147,000 in 2007, appreciating by more than 150% since 1998, according to state housing data. In Addison County during the same period, prices rose by about 93%, and state-wide they rose by 85%. The average price of a primary residence sold in the County was about \$245,000, while state-wide it was approximately \$234,000.

**Figure 5: Types of Housing Units**



Source: US Census 2000

Of the housing units that were occupied in Hancock in 2000, 75% were owner-occupied and 25% were renter-occupied. Of the total number of homes in Hancock, approximately 23% were vacant, unoccupied. Most of these vacant units are for seasonal or recreational use and if you subtract those units from the total supply of vacant units, Hancock is left with a 3% vacancy rate. Vacancy rates below 5% are considered to be “functional zeros,” the units that are available are usually uninhabited for reasons like sub-standard conditions.

#### **D. Household Characteristics**

Hancock, like many communities in Vermont and the nation, has experienced a trend towards a smaller household size. This trend, coupled with the increase in population generally, results in an increased demand for housing and will also affect the number and type of unit demanded. Several special population/household groups, such as the elderly and female heads of household can be identified as having particular housing needs.

#### **E. Affordable Housing**

Affordable housing is defined as that which a household making the county's median income could afford if no more than 30% of its income were spent on housing costs. For homeowners, housing costs include payments for principal and interest on a mortgage, taxes, etc. For renters, housing costs include rent and utilities.

A 2-acre section of the town property, Taylor Meadow, has deed restrictions that reserve it for affordable housing. The town is has been working with the Addison County Community Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to develop this property into housing that will be affordably priced for residents of Hancock and surrounding towns. Five affordably priced units are located on this property.

#### **Goals**

1. To provide the opportunity for Hancock residents to have access to decent and affordable housing.
2. To encourage the retention of existing housing and construction of new housing to meet natural population growth.
3. To encourage the preservation of historic structures in ways that appropriately serve the need for housing.

#### **Planning Principles**

1. It is the policy of the town to ensure that the timing and rate of new housing construction or rehabilitation does not exceed the community's ability to provide adequate public facilities (e.g. schools and municipal services).
2. It is the policy of the town to keep housing affordable by planning for:
  - Appropriately sized lots;
  - Accessory apartments; and
  - Clustered developments.
3. It is the policy of the town to encourage and direct the location of future housing so as to complement existing or planned employment patterns, travel times, and energy requirements.
4. It is the policy of the town that the location of housing, related amenities and land uses should be planned with due regard to the physical limitations of the site and location to current or planned public and private services such as roads and commercial/service centers.

## Hancock Town Plan – Adopted October 28, 2008

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5. On July 1, 2007, the State's on-site wastewater & potable water supply system program went into effect, superseding the Town's septic ordinance. Property owners must now obtain a state permit for most repairs, upgrades, and new construction of on-site wastewater treatment and disposal facilities, on-site potable water supplies, and connections to municipal water distribution and wastewater collection systems.

## **V. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

### **A. Background**

In order to promote a healthy and thriving Town, Hancock needs to make sound investments in its community. This investment should not focus solely on the economics of the Town, but also on the *people* that make the Town what it is. Hancock should support the needs of its growing elderly population, the disabled and those who face financial challenges.

### **B. Community Investments**

#### **The Needs of the Elderly and Disabled**

As reported by the 2000 US Census, the portion of Hancock's population that is between 45 and 59 years old has grown to 25% of the town's total population. Such changes in the overall age of the Town's residents may have effects on elderly care, the accessibility of town services and access to public facilities. The Town should study this demographic change more closely.

#### **Job Growth**

The closing of the Chesapeake facility resulted in a loss of jobs for Hancock and its surrounding neighbors. The Town should encourage studies, plans or Brownfield redevelopment initiatives that will promote the re-use of the Chesapeake facility to reinstate the jobs lost, to welcome the facility's new owner, and to secure the future of this employer in Hancock. Additionally, investments should be made in the infrastructure within the area designated as a "Small Enterprise Area" in Taylor Meadow to accommodate the location of a new fire house.

#### **Business Incentives**

The loss of Hancock's largest single employer puts pressure on the Town Government to entice new businesses to settle in this area. The Town should consider any incentives that are feasible, financial or otherwise. For example, Hancock is currently levying an inventory tax on businesses located in town. The Town may want to consider altering or removing this tax in an effort to bring more businesses to town.

### **C. Funding Community Development Initiatives**

Because Hancock is not a wealthy town, creative ways to fund the types of investments needed in the community must be found. There are options for a town such as Hancock; one that is worth consideration is the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP). This program, and others like it, offer grant opportunities and low interest loans in an effort to promote initiatives that:

- Principally benefit persons of low and moderate-income households;
- Aid in the prevention and elimination of slums and blight;

## Hancock Town Plan – Adopted October 28, 2008

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- Meet community development needs of a particular urgency;
- Conserve, expand and improve housing;
- Create and retain employment; and
- Improve public facilities and services in support of local government, housing or economic development activities and where there is a threat to public safety.

Clearly, Hancock needs to make the most of such programs.

### **Goals**

1. Promote investments that encourage improved accessibility and enhance elderly care.
2. Encourage the use of state or federal funds or programs designed to assist with community development projects as noted in this section or elsewhere in this plan.
3. Strengthen and diversify the local economy

### **Planning Principles**

1. It is the policy of the Town to support initiatives that seek to improve community development, provided that they do not put an undue financial burden on the town.
2. It is the policy of the Town to assist regional organizations, such as the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission, with any community development initiatives that are undertaken within Hancock.

## **VI. UTILITIES & FACILITIES**

### **A. Town Offices**

The Town Clerk's office is located on Route 125 in the center of town. It was built in 1930 and is designed to provide office and record storage space. The original building has been improved by the addition of a vault where records are safely kept. In addition, all town records up to 1985 have been microfilmed and stored by the State.

At present, the office is open part-time and the Selectboard and Planning Commission hold meetings there.

This building is currently meeting the town's needs, but it is likely that more storage space will be needed in the future.

### **B. Library**

The Hancock Library was built in 1920. It is located in the village at the junction of Routes 125 and 100. The library contains about 3,750 volumes owned by the town and additional books are borrowed from the state library system. It is staffed by one librarian and is open three days a week for a total of fourteen hours.

The library is owned and supported by the Town of Hancock. It receives approximately \$12,800 yearly from the Town in addition to proceeds from any grants, fundraisers and donations.

The Hancock Library is very small, and space is at a premium. The building has no basement for additional storage. Due to the limited space, there is no room for a designated children's reading area.

### **C. Town Hall**

The Town Hall is a large, two story wooden structure located on Route 100 just south of the center of Town. Anecdotal records indicate that it was built in the early 1900's. The first floor contains a large meeting hall and a well-equipped kitchen that is used many times throughout the year for fundraising public suppers. In addition, it is used by the Quin-Town Senior Citizens Center, for town meetings and other public meetings, and for school uses such as physical education classes and concerts. The second floor is a non-denominational church and is used by the Hancock-Granville Community Church. The capacity of the Town Hall would make it a reasonable choice as a shelter in case of emergency. Both floors of the building meet Vermont State requirements for handicap accessibility. It is an extremely important structure in Hancock and any needed structural repairs should be completed.

A larger, 134-foot by 105-foot, parking lot has recently been built behind the Town Hall to provide parking for events and church services. The area in front of the hall is for handicapped parking only.

#### **D. Solid Waste Management**

The Town is a member of the White River Solid Waste Alliance. Its goal is to plan for and manage solid waste generated within its member communities in an environmentally sound manner. Presently, seven municipalities are included in the district. Vermont statute requires municipalities and solid waste management districts to adopt a solid waste implementation plan (SWIP) that conforms with the State Solid Waste Management Plan. Since SWIPs were to be submitted to the State in 2003 and revised every five years thereafter, the White River Solid Waste Alliance is proceeding with the necessary changes to the SWIP.

The Bethel/Royalton landfill serves as the designated disposal site for Hancock. All recyclables, demolition wastes and household hazardous wastes are collected or processed at the same location. The Alliance continues to conduct an educational program.

Waste collection is provided by a number of private firms and paid for by homeowners. All recycling services are provided Benson's Rubbish Removal for which the town pays about \$7,500. Residents and businesses are also free to transport their own trash or recyclables, or special wastes to their designated facilities.

#### **E. Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment Facilities**

The Town of Hancock does not own or operate any public water supply or wastewater disposal systems. All residences and non-residential uses are dependent on individual on-site water supply and disposal facilities. The Town does not plan to engineer or construct either of these facilities in the next five years.

The Chesapeake factory invested in its own water system, which includes drilled wells for drinking water and a spring-fed reservoir for their fire suppression system.

#### **Goals**

1. To plan for and finance utilities and municipal facilities to meet the future needs of the citizens of Hancock.

#### **Planning Principles**

1. Growth and development should not exceed the capacities of local utilities and municipal facilities.

## **VII. EMERGENCY SERVICES SECTION**

### **A. Fire Protection Services**

Fire protection services are provided by the Hancock Fire Department (HFD), an 18 person all-volunteer department that provides twenty-four hour coverage for the Town and surrounding areas. Neighboring community's fire departments are called on in large fires requiring outside resources. The Fire Department participates in informal agreements with the towns of Rochester and Granville for mutual aid services, and has a formal mutual aid agreement with Ripton for the Middlebury Snow Bowl.

#### **Fire Station**

Fire equipment and vehicles are housed in a four-bay fire station located on Route 100 south of the village center. The building is over 65 years old and was owned in part by Chesapeake. Two hydrants are still served by this property. Although it is in reasonably good condition, it lacks some important elements that are essential to fire protection services. There is no source of backup power in the building, but the department does own a 6500KW portable generator. There are no on-site restrooms, no space for meetings and no place to create a command center in the event of a major hazard event. These deficiencies will be fixed with the construction of a new fire station.

#### **Vehicles**

The Hancock Fire Department has the following vehicles:

- 2002 Sterling Pumper
- 2003 Sterling Tanker
- 1977 Chevrolet Support Vehicle
- 1974 International Tanker

It is the intent of the HFD to upgrade one tanker, after the construction of a new fire house.

Although these vehicles are adequate for use on structural fires within town, they are limited in their ability to travel into wilderness areas. Considering that 80% of Hancock is part of the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF), owned by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the Hancock Fire Department should have at least one vehicle capable of working deep into the forest. The Town is developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the USFS regarding prevention of and response to wildfires.

The fire department gets fire suppression water from the White river and connecting streams. The Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force has administered the Dry Hydrant Grant Program since 1998, providing funds to assist communities with the installation of dry hydrants to improve fire protection in the rural areas of Vermont. Between 1998 and 2005, Hancock received two dry hydrant grants, covering up to 75% of the total cost of the project. In the

future, a dry hydrant could be installed on Killoleet Road since the fire pond that has always been used was destroyed by an August 6, 2008 rainstorm.

### **Capabilities**

Hancock's fire department is suited to working within the Town of Hancock. They are qualified for rescue. In the event of a wildfire, however, the HFD would be short-handed and under-equipped. In addition to the off-road vehicle mentioned previously, Firemen should receive training in how to handle a forest fire, and the proper personal protective equipment and tools for such an event should be purchased, through grant funds if possible.

### **Funding**

The department is funded by a yearly budget of \$8,000 from the town, with occasional capital investments for equipment, such as new vehicles. Any additional expenses are covered through fund-raising and grants.

### **B. Police Protection Services**

The Town of Hancock does not need a full time police force and none is contemplated in the next five years. A constable is elected to conduct administrative functions in service to the Selectboard. Additionally, the town pays \$11,100 for a special officer to enforce laws, perform investigations, and conduct traffic stops. Residents may also call the Vermont State Police for assistance.

### **C. Emergency Medical Services**

Medical emergencies are handled by Valley Rescue Squad (VRS), which is located in Hancock. They have one rescue vehicle. The Fire Department has extraction equipment, and therefore handles any situations that call for it. The closest hospital is Gifford Medical Center in Randolph. Medivac services are available by the DHART helicopter when necessary. The town has appointed a Public Health Officer that is empowered, along with the Selectboard, to protect public health in town.

### **Goals**

1. To plan for, finance, and provide an efficient system of emergency facilities and services to meet the future needs of the citizens of Hancock.

### **Planning Principles**

1. Growth and development should not exceed the capacities of local emergency facilities and services.
2. Provisions for emergency services must be considered in all development.
3. Development must be coordinated with the Town's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan, Emergency Operations Plan, and Rapid Response Plan.

## VIII. EDUCATION

The Village School has served the Granville and Hancock Joint District since 2004 and consists of two buildings, one in each town. The Hancock school building is located on Route 100 south of the village center and was built in 1901. In 2008, the District employed eight full-time classroom teachers, assistants, cooks, and aides plus part-time music, art, P.E., math, Spanish and Special Education teachers to teach students in grades K-6. Part-time custodial, health, library and technology staff also are employed by the District.

Vermont State Public School Approval has been awarded to the school. The school is handicapped accessible.

The Town formerly had a cooperative relationship with Middlebury College, through which student interns taught Hancock students in class. An exchange program also provided inexpensive ski instructions for Hancock students. The Town should consider re-establishing this relationship.

### A. Student Enrollment

Enrollments of the Village School are reported annually to the Vermont Department of Education. Based upon annual student resident counts from the Department, average daily membership (ADM) at the school from both towns for grades (K-6) in the past four years has been as follows:

	<u>Hancock</u>	<u>Granville</u>
2004-5	33	21
2005-6	33	19
2006-7	27	22
2007-8	25	16

It is important to note that these State data show that enrollment at the school is much higher than what municipal officials believe it actually stands. In fact, since enrollment from both towns has decreased dramatically in recent years, Hancock has considered closing the school. Given current trends and a leveling off of the childbearing age group, student enrollments for the elementary age group are likely to decrease over the next five years.

According to state data, 25 students in grades 7-12 are tuitioned to Rochester on a per pupil basis. Some students also go to Bethel, Warren, or Ripton, though Rochester is the only school to which students are offered transportation.

### B. School Building & Services

Considering its age, the Hancock school building is in good condition. Recent renovations include a new kitchen, roof and the alteration of the front parking lot to safely accommodate school busses. Through several technology grants, the school has been outfitted with new

computers, a digital camera and video. They have also been able to hire a part time technical consultant.

The School's library and tutorial rooms are located in the upper level of the building and are not handicapped accessible. Physical Education classes are currently being held in the Town Hall in the event of inclement weather. Because of schedule conflicts with the Senior Center, the Town Hall is only available 2 two days a week. Parking is limited around the school. There are no flashing lights located along route 100 to warn drivers that they are entering a school zone.

An all-purpose room may be worth considering. It would provide space for an accessible library, computer lab, and indoor physical education classes.

### **C. Vocational and Technical**

The Randolph Technical Career Center provides technical career preparation and offers opportunities for academic and social growth to area youth and adults. Located in Randolph, RTCC serves Rochester High School students and offers programs in business, automotive and building trades, computer technology, media and communications, among others.

#### **Goals**

1. To provide a safe and secure learning environment where quality educational opportunities are provided to all students.
2. To enable the best opportunity to educate our students at the most equitable cost to the Town's taxpayers.
3. To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities.

#### **Planning Principles**

1. Land development that is likely to result in large numbers of school children should be phased or planned as to not place an undue financial burden on the capacity of town to provide educational services.
2. It is the policy of the town to provide sufficient and appropriate physical space to meet current and projected enrollments.
3. The Town supports development of technical and vocational education programs for adults and students in Hancock.
4. The Town supports community educational workshops, technical and vocational programs, and agricultural education through partnerships between schools, such as the Randolph Technical Career Center and Rochester High School, and local businesses.

## IX. TRANSPORTATION

### A. Introduction

Hancock's transportation system is principally a system of town roads, with the automobile as the primary means of transport. Hancock has no airports or rail services in town. Local residents and tourists utilize town and state roads for walking and biking but use in some areas is limited due to a lack of adequate shoulders or bike lanes.

### B. Town Roads

According to the Vermont Agency of Transportation, the Town of Hancock owns and maintains 8.8 miles of Class 3 Town Highways and 2.2 miles of Class 4 Town Highways. The State of Vermont controls 9.7 miles of roads (Route 100 & Route 125) within the Town. In addition, the US Forest Service maintains 8.7 miles of roads. Only thirty-three percent (33%) of all highway mileage in Hancock is part of the local road system, which is substantially less than most rural communities. And Hancock's mileage is substantially less than in the average town.

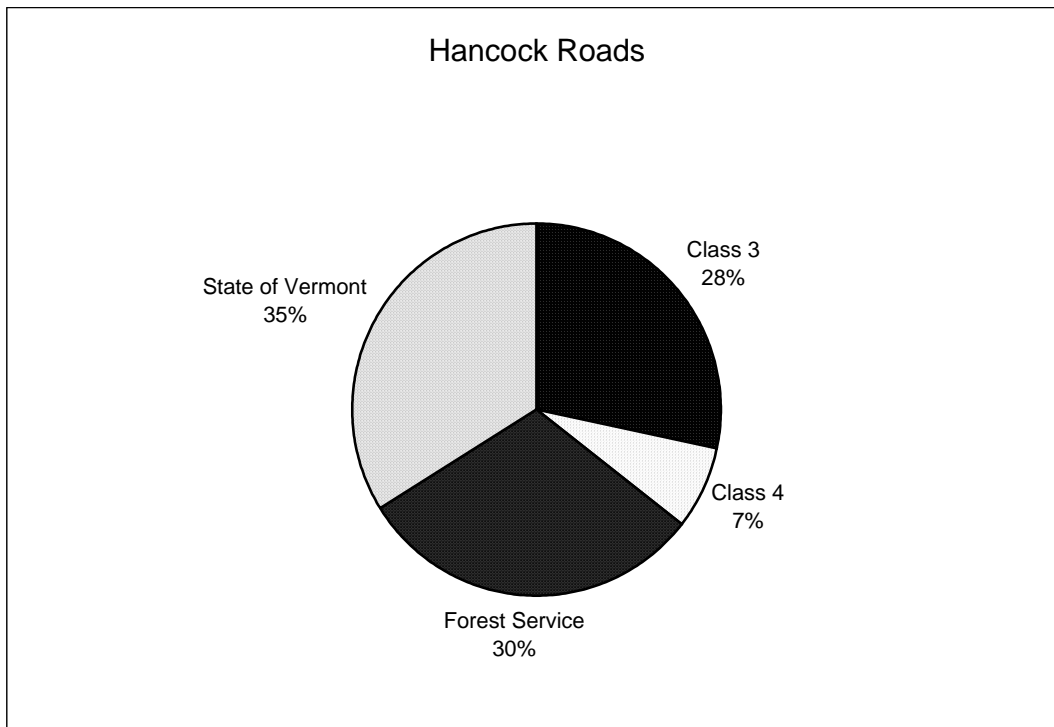


Figure 7 – Source: Vermont Agency of Transportation

Approximately 2 miles of Hancock's roads have paved surfaces and the balance (about 7 miles) are gravel based. Conditions for these local 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 and increase 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 improvements and the 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, and working cooperatively with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and neighboring towns to improve regional land use and transportation planning.

The State uses four classifications formulas to distribute financial aid to towns for road repair and maintenance. Classifications are jointly determined by VTrans and the Selectboard. 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 2007, Hancock received \$12,903 from the State for all roads.

### **C. Town Highway Classifications**

Class 1 includes the most heavily traveled town roads and are 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 Hancock.

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. There are no Class 2 roads in Hancock.

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. In Hancock, Class 3 roads include all town roads. Class 3 roads amount to a total of 8 miles.

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 2 miles of Class 4 roads exist in Hancock.

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 practice in Hancock is for the Selectboard and Road Commissioner to review necessary upgrades to Class 4 roads and to consider the available funds on a case-by-case basis before making improvements.

#### **D. Transportation Facilities**

The town of Hancock does not have a town garage. Currently the Town rents any equipment needed locally. Snow removal is contracted out on a yearly basis. This system suits the town, which has little space or funding to build storage for the types of equipment needed to maintain roads.

#### **E. Pedestrian Facilities**

In 2002, the Town hired a consultant to study the pedestrian circulation patterns and related issues within the village area. The primary area for pedestrian activity in Hancock exists between the intersection of Routes 100 and 125 and as far as the mill complex, with the most traffic between the Town Hall/Post Office area and the Town Clerk's office and general store on Route 125. The consultant's study recommends developing intersection crosswalks at Route 100/125, in addition to two that already exist along Route 100. The study also recommends sidewalks in Hancock, as part of a Village Enhancement Plan.

Currently, there are still no sidewalks in Hancock. Pedestrians are forced to walk on the shoulders of the highway routes. The shoulders do not provide adequate space for pedestrian travel. They are used because there is no other alternative, and in winter, snow constrains walking on all but the plowed highway surfaces. Citizens who use the shoulders for walking, including those involved in the study, have found that walking along shoulders under these conditions is uncomfortable and potentially unsafe. This fact discourages pedestrian circulation within the village, particularly for our children.

#### **F. Access Management**

Regulatory authority for access management rests with VTrans for state highways, which are 100 and 125 in Hancock, and with the Town Selectboard for town highways.

Access management planning for major land uses or traffic generators means more than merely obtaining a "curb cut" for access to a public road, one driveway at a time. In a broader context, access management is concerned with preserving the function of the highways, including safety, and with preventing congestion and hazardous situations. This type of access management strategy links transportation access with the overall land use patterns recommended in the Plan.

Access management planning by the town and the State can prevent costly repairs to roads and bridges, promote desirable land use patterns, and improve the safety of all residents. Crash data show a direct relationship between curb cuts and accidents: the greater the number of access points onto a highway, the higher the number of accidents. Access management techniques can minimize curb cuts, improve sight distances, and reduce vehicular congestion and conflicts with bicycles and pedestrians.

Currently, Hancock requires that anyone who intends to access a town road must apply for a permit. The purpose of this ordinance is to ensure that the design of a new driveway will not cause damage to the town road or create a public hazard.

### **G. Public Transportation**

The Town of Hancock does not provide any public transportation, but services are offered by Stagecoach, Inc. Stagecoach is a private non-profit organization that provides public transportation services to the elderly, persons with disabilities, and the general public. Stagecoach offers fixed routes from Hancock to Randolph, West Lebanon, NH and Rutland for shopping and medical appointments. Stagecoach also offers Elderly and Disabled service for residents who call and schedule rides and provides any elderly attending the Quin-Town senior center's daily lunch program with transportation. The Central Vermont Council on Aging (CVCOA) is another non-profit organization that provides transportation services to Hancock and is dedicated to the planning, development and coordination of a comprehensive service system that supports elders. These E&D services provided through Stagecoach and CVCOA continue to be a growing need. The community should continue to support public transportation in the future, consistent with resident's desire to 'age in place.' There is also a bus from Middlebury that runs to Hancock and the top of Middlebury Mountain on a daily basis.

The closest airports offering regularly scheduled service are in Rutland, VT and Lebanon, NH both about an hour drive from Hancock. Burlington International Airport is about one and a half hours north. Many travelers use the Manchester, NH airport, as an alternative to driving to Logan International Airport in Boston, which is located about 3 hours away.

#### **Goals**

1. To maintain a transportation system that is safe, efficient 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.
5. To provide pedestrians with safe areas to travel within the Hancock village.

#### **Planning Principles**

1. Prior to a final decision to proceed with a major capital transportation project, policy makers should first analyze the project against reasonable alternatives. In examining the alternatives, investigation should focus on the environmental, energy, social and investment costs and the extent to which each meets the goals and policies of this Plan.
2. It is in the public interest to maintain the town's current highways, bridges, and related facilities, as necessary to ensure the current level of service.
3. The town as written in V.S.A. Title 19 Section 310 does not maintain Class IV Highways, excepting bridges and culverts. The policy of the Selectboard is that before the town would consider adopting a new road or upgrading an existing highway, the abutting property owners shall be responsible for the cost of improving and/or building the road to town specifications. Final decision regarding the nature of the improvement rests with the Selectboard.

## Hancock Town Plan – Adopted October 28, 2008

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4. Given the interest in and benefits from 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 by downgrading their status to a legal trail and 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 supported 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. It is the policy of the town to minimize curb cuts to insure the proper function and performance of a town highway.
8. It is the policy of the town that the design of access roads and related facilities provide for proper alignment of new or relocated driveways along a roadway.
9. Because of the nature of traffic patterns and the speed at which they travel, traffic-calming enhancements are a priority for the town through the village along both Routes 100 and 125.
10. It is a policy of the Town to encourage ride sharing for commuters to neighboring employment areas.
11. It is a policy of the Town to support transportation of the Elderly & Disabled.
12. It is a policy of the Town to support access management initiatives to preserve the safe flow of traffic.

## **X. CURRENT AND FUTURE LAND USE**

### **Introduction**

Hancock has the unique distinction of having 85% of its land in the federally owned Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). The rest of the land that is privately owned largely borders Routes 100 and 125. The lack of developable land in Hancock makes land use a very important issue.

This section of the Plan describes the types and patterns of Hancock's current land use and discusses how the land should be used in the future. As more and more people discover the pleasures of living in Central Vermont, Hancock's rural character will be threatened. Although population in Hancock has remained relatively level in the past two decades (approx. 350 people), there is a noticeable northward growth in population statewide. The Town believes it is inevitable that in the future population pressures will begin to affect Hancock. These changes and the limitations created by the location of the GMNF in Hancock underscore the need to identify and develop effective growth and land use development policies that will serve the long-term interests of our community and maintain Hancock as a small rural Vermont town.

### **A. Overall Land Use Goals**

As the Town looks at the use of our land in Hancock, a land use pattern that complements the existing settlement pattern of the Hancock village area, surrounding low-density rural and agricultural areas, and large open spaces and forests needs to be considered. This type of land use pattern is considered to be attractive, desired, and understood by the residents of Hancock. This is the style and character of land use that the community-at-large wishes to promote in the future.

#### **Goals:**

1. To maintain an identity for Hancock as a distinct community.
2. To retain clear evidence of the community's history while giving consideration for future needs.
3. To respect the community's identity and share qualities of scale and form with existing development.
4. To be adaptable to change which inevitably must occur if the community is to be vital.
5. To not deprive a landowner from realizing a reasonable and customary return from his or her land.
6. To balance the rights of landowners against the overall vision for the town.

### **B. Current Land Use**

The Town of Hancock is a small, rural town with a population of under 400. Because of the dominance of the GMNF, most development has occurred near the Town's two major roads – Route 100 and 125. Areas that are privately owned include the village center, residential and agricultural land, public recreational areas, and industrial site and the White River flood plain

and agricultural terraces make up the level land along Route 100. Some level land occurs along the Hancock Branch, but most of the town is hilly and wooded.

The Village Center is the focal point of the community, where its residents can conduct their civic, economic, and social interaction. It is the variety of uses currently existing that promotes the Village Center as the center for Hancock. These types of uses provide for the pleasant experience of visiting with a neighbor at the stores, the Post Office, the Town Office, the Town Hall, and the School. Although there are houses in the village, most residents live in houses located just beyond the village, off of Routes 100 & 125. In addition to residences, small businesses, such as Hancock Building Supply (which is now owned by Bethel Mills) and Deering's Service Center are located outside of the village as well. Until it closed, Chesapeake Hardwood Products operated out of the largest building in town and was the only "industrial" business. Of Hancock's approximate 24,000 acres, 20,000 is owned and operated as part of the GMNF. There is some logging within the Hancock portion of the GMNF, but it has been on a limited basis in the past decade. Four-season recreational opportunities exist for both tourists and residents within the Forest including: camping, hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, snowmobiling, hunting, horseback riding, fishing and cross-country skiing.

### **C. Proposed Land Use**

The Town Plan recognizes that not all land is equally suited for all types and intensities of development. It is the basic premise of this Plan that future land uses be sensitive to the physical limitations of a site and that in planning for the development of a parcel, more than market value of property be recognized. Accordingly, separate geographical areas have been defined in this section and the physical boundaries of each are defined (for planning purposes, only) on a proposed Land Use Map. For each area below, the purpose is stated and policies are offered in terms of the compatible types of development, intensity of use, and the conservation of natural resources. See Chapter XI, Section B for information about development in flood hazard areas and flood plains.

Furthermore, while it is recognized that existing use of land and structures may not be entirely consistent with these proposals, it is the goal of this Plan that all future land development be in conformance with these policies.

### **D. Village Center**

#### **Background and Purpose**

Many towns in Vermont no longer have functional villages due to changes in highways, establishment of competing commercial centers or poorly conceived community planning. Our town cannot consider itself immune to these types of influences. It is a fundamental premise of the Plan to make every reasonable effort to ensure the continued use and enjoyment of the Village Center as a dynamic community center.

The Town of Hancock has been fortunate to receive state grant funding to study pedestrian traffic throughout town. One of the findings of this study indicated a need for safer foot travel within the village and recommended the installation of sidewalks and additional crosswalks.

Currently, residents wishing to walk in the village must travel on the inadequate shoulders of Route 100 to get to the Town Hall, Post Office or the Village School. The study notes, “The high speeds and volume of traffic (despite speed limit signs and the settled nature of the village area) warrant a safer walking environment”. Pedestrian safety is a concern to residents. In 2002, the Town built a paved path that extends from the Town Hall to the Village School in an effort to make traveling safer for our children, but they still have to cross Route 100 to reach the rest of the village.

In meetings with residents to discuss possible uses for town owned property, it was determined that there is a strong desire for a town green in the village area. There is an unofficial green next to Route 100 about 1200 feet from the town center that is part of the town’s Taylor Meadow Property, but there is no formal access to it. Its use should be considered when making any pedestrian enhancements within the village.

**Goals**

1. It is a goal of the town to provide pedestrians with safe access to village services.
2. It is a goal of the town to maintain a viable village center through good planning and development.

**Planning Principles**

1. The density of development in this area should reflect existing settlement patterns, land capability, and the availability of utilities for expansion.
2. Shops and services, tourist businesses, lodging and public facilities, at a scale and design appropriate to the existing characteristics, are encouraged.
3. Pedestrian access to local services and facilities should be supported and invested in whenever possible.
4. Conversion of structures and older buildings of historic merit is encouraged to enable new and more economical uses of property and to avoid obsolescence.
5. Where new development is being planned, efforts should be directed to ensure that such development is reasonably complementary and compatible to the configuration of existing buildings and streetscape, and respects traditional scales, proportions, and shapes of the surrounding neighborhoods.
6. Single, two, and multiple family housing at medium to high densities is encouraged.
7. Major public investments, such as improvements to Routes 100 and 125, should be encouraged and endorsed only on finding that they will not unreasonably or unnecessarily jeopardize or endanger the character of the Village Center. Planners are encouraged, prior to the commencement of plans, to consult with the town and affected property owners regarding these types of activities.

8. The Plan supports pedestrian enhancements that will promote safety, provided that they do not put an undo financial burden on the town.

## **E. Rural Residential Area**

### **Background and Purpose**

Lands outside of the Village Center Area are predominately part of the Green Mountain National Forest. Historically, much of this outlying area was associated with agricultural in the valley and forestry uses on the steeper slopes.

Similar to the Village Center Area, future development will depend heavily on the availability of land to support on-site wastewater disposal systems and private water supply systems. Despite these technical limitations, as demand for new building sites increases, new technologies for innovative systems will emerge, making rural land once considered undevelopable desirable for residential subdivision.

Areas relatively free from site limitations (such as poor soils, steep slopes, and high elevations) have been utilized more for residential and agricultural uses. The less desirable areas have remained as or reverted back to forests. Land adjacent to town and state highways has been subjected to more active land use changes due to the relative ease of access. The more remote areas, being those distant from the town's primary services and main roads, have developed more slowly due to the relatively higher cost of development (e.g. power, telephone and driveways).

We believe that favorable conditions for construction of buildings and wastewater disposal facilities should not be the sole determinant for development in Rural Residential Areas. New development needs to occur at a reasonable rate of growth so as not to unduly burden the ability of the Town to provide services. Special or unique resources, including critical wildlife habitats (e.g. deer wintering areas), historic sites, archeological sites and wetlands should be evaluated and planned for when developing projects in the Rural Residential Area.

### **Goal**

1. To ensure that the development of housing does not adversely affect the rural character of our town.

### **Planning Principles**

1. Maintenance of a rural living environment is the primary goal for the Rural Residential Area. Projects which adversely affect the rural setting and conflict with existing rural land uses should not be located in this area.
2. Residential and agricultural uses are to be the primary and dominant land uses in the Rural Residential Area. Commercial or industrial projects are considered less desirable in this area.
3. The establishment and operation of small entrepreneurial enterprises are consistent with the general purpose of this area provided that their size, type, appearance, and setting do

not significantly or unnecessarily detract from rural character. These enterprises should not cause an undue burden on the ability of the town to provide services, such as highways and fire protection.

4. Residents are free to conduct an occupation in their homes provided that the nature of the occupation is customary or appropriate in rural residential areas.
5. The use of planned residential development or the cluster development concept, where intensive settlement is balanced by compensating land for open space, is encouraged. It is a means of providing an environment more amenable to the land use goals of this Plan.

## **F. Small Enterprise Area**

### **Background and Purpose**

To provide opportunities for business expansion and relocation in an area close to the village and adjacent to a major highway, a Small Enterprise Area should be established within the town property known as Taylor Meadow. Although deed restrictions exist on a portion of the parcel, there are approximately 7+- acres of this property that are unrestricted and therefore very valuable to the town. Through designation of this area for business, it is our intention that small enterprises will benefit from favorable access and higher traffic volumes afforded by Route 100.

Soil and slope conditions in this area are excellent. Conditions are favorable for on-site sewage disposal and water supply.

The Small Business Enterprise Area is dedicated primarily for commercial use, but not without some limitations. This area is central to the community and is scenic. Given its high visibility and immediate proximity to the White River, a well-recognized recreational resource, future development needs to be sensitive to the preservation of its many scenic qualities. Commercial development must be designed to promote traffic and pedestrian safety, and to provide an attractive and convenient place for residents to conduct business and seek employment.

Because Taylor Meadow represents the only developable town owned property, the Town is planning to utilize a portion of the acreage for a new fire station.

### **Goals**

1. It is the goal of the town to encourage “clean” businesses to locate within Hancock, provided that they do not adversely affect community health, quality of life or the rural character of the town.
2. It is the goal of the town to provide its citizens with the opportunity for local employment.

### **Planning Principles**

1. Business uses are intended to be the dominant uses in this area. Residential uses are to be considered secondary. Given that the principal land use objective is that the area be

intensively developed for businesses purposes, future residential development is not encouraged to locate here.

2. Recommended design considerations for planning new projects include:
  - A compact and densely developed project which utilizes land efficiently;
  - Reducing the impact of parking areas by breaking up lots into smaller lots, placing them to the rear and integrating landscaping;
  - Providing pedestrian and vehicular links between projects;
  - Green space between the project and the street, including use of large trees; and
  - Signage that effectively communicates the desired message without being garish.
  - Plant trees to partially screen and reduce the apparent scale of buildings and storage areas behind existing residential development
  - Underground utilities
3. The creation of curb cuts to access new development should be minimized to reduce traffic congestion, and safety problems.
4. Consideration should be given to offering incentives to encourage business development in our town. These incentives might include:
  - Removal of the inventory tax
  - Town land sold to developers at a reduced rate

## **G. Hancock Industrial Area**

### **Background and Purpose**

The Town recognizes that business and industry offer potential benefits to the town including tax revenue and local jobs. The Town also recognizes that businesses can create fiscal and environmental costs that outweigh potential benefits. Such costs might include the creation of safety or health risks to residents, or the need to create, maintain, or repair town infrastructure used by the businesses. It is the policy of the Town of Hancock to limit business and industry to uses that would not adversely affect the quality of life, the rural residential nature of the Town, or the unique character and historic nature of the village area.

The area designated as industrial runs from the southernmost point of the parcel that was occupied by Chesapeake Hardwood Products, Inc. to the Hancock Post Office. This area offers access to Route 100, proximity to the Village and to infrastructure that was installed by Chesapeake (industrial water supply, sprinkler system and three phase power).

## Hancock Town Plan – Adopted October 28, 2008

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Since Chesapeake has closed their Hancock manufacturing plant, the only industrial facility in town, our town will need to take steps to attract interested parties to the designated industrial area.

### **Goal**

1. It is a goal of the town to attract industry to the area designated as Industrial, provided that they do not adversely affect community health, quality of life or the rural character of the town.

### **Planning Principles**

1. The Town of Hancock acknowledges the need for industry as source of jobs and taxes for its citizens, but not at the expense of community health, quality of life or the rural character of the town.
2. The preferred uses for the Hancock Industrial Area include small-scale light to heavy manufacturing or assembly, truck-based transfer/distribution, service businesses and corporate offices. Any businesses should be classified as clean and non-polluting. Businesses that are considered inappropriate include: hazardous or toxic material production, storage or transfer, or any other types of business that are not considered clean, safe or non-polluting, including noise pollution.
3. Guidelines to be utilized in keeping this Area attractive and compatible with its surroundings are:
  - Minimize exposed equipment;
  - Organize buildings and outside use areas compactly and efficiently;
  - Plant trees to partially screen and reduce the apparent scale of buildings and storage areas;
  - Screen storage or parking areas, through fences or the buildings themselves; and
  - Use lighting types and levels consistent with surrounding areas and minimize glare;

### **H. Recreation Area**

This area contains the two privately owned recreational facilities in the Town of Hancock, and town property known as Taylor Meadow. Middlebury College Snow Bowl and Camp Killoleet have been classified recreational because of their use as commercial recreational areas designed to serve the needs of both residents and non-residents for organized forms of outdoor recreation.

In 2000, The Vermont Land Trust deeded three parcels of property to the town; each of these properties has potential recreational uses.

### **Taylor Meadow**

The recreational portion of Taylor Meadow includes an undeveloped 8-acre parcel that abuts the White River. Deed restrictions on this parcel state that it is to be used for “public outdoor recreation, open space, agricultural, and educational purposes in perpetuity”. Until this property was acquired, the Town had no official recreation area. Our ownership of it presents an excellent opportunity to provide residents with the recreational services they desire.

Potential uses for the Taylor Meadow property include:

- Athletic Course
- Baseball field
- Basketball Court
- Tennis Court
- Walking Path
- Community Garden
- Community Center

### **Goal**

1. It is the goal of the town to provide residents with clean, safe, public locations for recreation.

### **Planning Principles**

1. Recreational or educational uses should be the primary or dominant uses of these areas.
2. The town will support investment in the infrastructure associated with recreation, provided that it does not put an undo burden on the town financially.
3. Recreation enhancement projects that adversely affect the rural setting and conflict with existing rural land uses should not be considered.
4. It is the policy of the town to continue to work to preserve recreational opportunities and an open space system which will reinforce Hancock’s attractiveness as a community.

## **I. Transportation and Land Use Planning**

Vermont planning law provides a mechanism to address the inherent problems posed by transportation in relation to land use. Public investment priorities for state and town roads can be managed to minimize land use impacts that are not in accord with policies set forth in this plan. The Town of Hancock is rural, with a compact village, whose residents value and cherish its small-town appeal. The Town has no public transportation.

**Goals**

1. Support land use policies and development projects which complement existing transportation investments;
2. Only projects of a size and scale which do not materially interfere with the function, safety, and efficiency of town and state highways should be permitted;
3. Increases in traffic should not create unreasonable congestion or unsafe conditions; developments which generate considerable round-trip truck travel should be limited.
4. Developments which would increase traffic through the village merit special scrutiny.

## **XI. NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **A. Wetlands**

#### **Background**

Wetlands are ecologically fragile areas and how these lands are managed have a direct bearing on the quality and quantity of water resources.

The Vermont Water Resources Board estimates that wetlands comprise less than 5 percent of the surface area of Vermont. In addition to being Vermont's most productive ecosystem, wetlands serve a wide variety of functions beneficial to the health, safety and welfare of the general public, including the following:

1. Retaining storm water run-off, reducing flood peaks and thereby reducing flooding;
2. Improving surface water quality through storage of organic materials, chemical decomposition and filtration of sediments and other matter from surface water;
3. Providing spawning, feeding and general habitat for fish;
4. Providing habitat for a wide diversity of wildlife and rare, threatened or endangered plants; and
5. Contributing to the open space character and the overall beauty of the rural landscape.

In 1986, Vermont adopted legislation for the protection and management of wetlands (10 V.S.A., Chapter 37). Determination of whether a wetland merits protection is based on an evaluation of the extent to which it serves the general functions outlined in items 1-5 above.

Under the Rules, if land development can be expected to impact a protected wetland, such activity cannot commence unless the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources first grants a Conditional Use Determination (CUD). A CUD will be granted when it is determined that the proposed use will not have an undue adverse impact on the function of the wetland. In many cases, such approvals are granted with conditions to mitigate impacts and to more readily serve the purposes of wetlands protection.

For Hancock, as well as the State, the most significant wetlands have been mapped and are included as part of the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These wetlands have been delineated on USGS topographic maps, and by reference are made a part of this Plan. Other smaller wetlands often do not show on these maps, so a field determination by a qualified biologist is needed for most activities that involve state permits.

## Hancock Town Plan – Adopted October 28, 2008

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In those towns that have zoning or subdivision regulations, final approvals cannot be granted for projects involving wetlands unless the Agency of Natural Resources first has had an opportunity to evaluate the effect of the project on the wetland (24 V.S.A., Section 4409). It is important to note that future investigations of wetlands within Hancock may result in additional areas being determined as significant or important for conservation.

### Goals

1. To identify and protect significant wetlands and the values and functions which they serve and to minimize loss of such wetlands.
2. To identify and encourage land use development practices that avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on significant wetlands.

### Planning Principles

1. Structural development or intensive land uses are discouraged from locating in significant wetlands or within buffer zones to significant wetlands.
2. Developments adjacent to wetlands should be planned so as not to result in undue disturbance to wetland areas or their function. Mitigating measures to protect the function of a wetland are an acceptable measure.

## B. Flood Hazard Areas and Floodplains

### Background

Floods are inevitable and uncontrollable natural events which occur sporadically and affect lands adjacent to watercourses (flood plains). It is therefore in the public interest to plan to mitigate flood damages, and to implement land use strategies which will protect these areas and minimize the risks to public health, safety, and property.

Floodplains are periodically inundated by heavy rains or during spring thaws. They are porous and can absorb considerable water before reaching flood stage. Floodplains make excellent agricultural land but are poorly suited for development, both because of their propensity for flooding and because of their proximity to watercourses, which creates the potential for pollution.

Vermont has experienced at least 13 statewide and regional floods since 1972 that were declared federal disasters, and economic losses were significant. Damage was not limited to designated floodplains, but often occurred along unstable river systems and steep streams. In some cases, recovery costs to the public sector alone amounted to several million dollars per flooding event. Public interest dictates that every reasonable attempt should be made to avoid or reduce exposure to flood damage.

### National Flood Insurance Program

Under the provisions of the National Flood Insurance Act (1968), the Federal Emergency

Management Agency (FEMA) has conducted a series of evaluations and hydrologic engineering studies to determine the limits of flood hazard areas along streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds expected to be inundated during the 100-year base flood, meaning that the flood level has a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The calculations do not take into account the impact of ice dams or debris, and may, therefore, actually underestimate the areas which are subject to flooding damage.

FEMA has prepared a Flood Hazard Boundary Map (FHBM) for the Town of Hancock, which includes flood hazard areas for the White River and for major streams and ponds. This map is on file at the Town Office.

FEMA also administers the National Flood Insurance Program, which provides flood hazard insurance for property owners in affected areas. In order to qualify for federal insurance, towns must adopt and retain a by-law to control land development within these areas. Minimum standards must be included and approved by FEMA.

### **Hancock Flood Hazard Zoning**

The Town of Hancock adopted a permanent Flood Hazard Bylaw in 1991, and it is recognized as a participating community in the National Flood Insurance Program. Flood insurance coverage is available to any landowner in town as long as the Town continues to participate. Pursuant to the Bylaw, permits from the town are required prior to any substantial improvement to an existing structure, or to any new construction in the designated floodplain. In granting approval, the Town must find that the proposal meets or exceeds minimum development standards for flood hazard areas.

Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission has determined that approximately twenty buildings in Hancock are presently located within the mapped flood hazard areas. Mortgage lending institutions now require as a prerequisite to financing that flood insurance be purchased on property subject to flooding.

The town believes that it is a realistic goal to re-evaluate the present Flood Hazard Bylaw and to develop new provisions prohibiting construction of permanent buildings or structures within the flood hazard areas. By amending the Bylaw to reflect this general principle, flood losses will be reduced, the natural functions of the watercourses will be protected, and costly flood recovery programs will be minimized. For further information on zoning bylaws, see Chapter XIV, Section D.

### **Goals**

1. To enhance and maintain wise use of flood hazard areas as open space, greenways, non-commercial recreation and/or agricultural land.
2. To ensure no net loss of flood storage capacity in order to minimize the loss of life and property, disruption of commerce, and demand for extraordinary public services and expenditures which result from flood damage.

3. To retain the town's eligibility for and participation in the National Flood Insurance Program.
4. To maintain maps which reflect as accurately as possible the flood hazard areas, to assist in appropriate land use decisions.
5. To recognize that upland areas adjacent to unstable rivers and to steep streams may be at risk of erosion during floods.

### **Planning Principles**

1. It is the policy of the town that the preferred uses for flood hazard areas shall be for open space, greenbelts, and non-commercial recreational or agricultural uses.
2. Any land use activity (filling, or removal of earth or rock) within flood hazard areas which would result in net loss of flood storage or increased or diverted flood levels or increased risk to adjacent or other riparian areas shall be prohibited.
3. Utilities or facilities serving existing development (e.g. water lines, electrical service, waste disposal systems, roads, and bridges) may be located within these areas only when off-site options are not feasible and provided that their placement is deemed to be relatively protected from flooding damage.
4. Flood hazard regulations should be extended to areas identified as at risk to flood erosion.

## **C. Water Resources**

### **Background**

Hancock's water resources include aquifers (groundwater) and surface waters. Sustainable yields of quality water is necessary for the lives and livelihood of citizens of Hancock. The high value associated with the White River has an economic benefit to the residents and businesses in Hancock.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, in cooperation with federal and other state agencies, has evaluated aquifer recharge areas serving systems involving 10 or more connections or 25 or more people. These recharge areas are acknowledged and are recognized as important for protection. Land developments that are potential threats to water quality and significant aquifers are discouraged from locating in these areas.

In recent years, underground fuel storage tanks have been identified as major threats to water quality. Studies conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have shown that the average fuel tank is likely to leak within 15 years from installation. To lessen the risk of contamination, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has promulgated rules to monitor underground tanks with a capacity of 1,100 gallons or more. Tanks in excess of this capacity must be registered with the town. In addition, replacement of underground tanks are subject to rigid standards.

**Goals**

1. To maintain or enhance the quality and quantity of drinking quality groundwater resources.
2. To allow use of groundwater resources by new development in such a manner to protect the public right to adequate quality and quantity of the resource.
3. To consider surface water and groundwater impacts and effects related to proposed or existing uses of land.
4. To maintain or improve surface water quality and quantity.

**Planning Principles**

1. Water withdrawal from underground sources should ensure that existing groundwater users are not adversely affected.
2. Aquifers and surface waters should not be significantly depleted and water should be properly allocated between actual and potential uses.
3. Land use activities which potentially threaten groundwater quality should be carefully reviewed and monitored to prevent undue loss of quality to groundwater.
4. Maintenance or enhancement of water resources for recreation, fisheries, necessary wildlife habitats and quality aesthetics are high priorities. Water resource policy and practices should protect these uses.
5. Efforts to abate pollution in the White River and its tributaries are encouraged and supported by the town. Priorities for abatement should include direct discharges, failing or inadequate on-site sewage disposal systems, and non-point source run-off of chemicals and other pollutants.
6. Given the public's interest in the use and enjoyment of the White River for recreation and fishing and relevant goals and policies expressed in this plan, establishment of waste management discharge zones (B3) in Hancock by the Agency of Natural Resources is inconsistent with this section.
7. The location, sizing and density of on-site sewage disposal facilities should be determined by the capacity of the soil, the natural limitations of the site, and underlying substrata conditions, such as depth to bedrock and seasonal high water tables.
8. Preservation of the natural state of streams should be encouraged by:
  - Protection of adjacent wetlands and natural areas;
  - Protection of natural scenic qualities; and
  - Maintenance of existing stream bank and buffer vegetation including trees, together with wildlife habitat.

## D. Riparian Buffers

### Background

Riparian buffers are strips of trees, shrubs, or vegetative grasses along the banks of rivers or streams that provide a transition zone between water and land use. Buffers are also complex ecosystems that provide wildlife habitat, filter polluted runoff, and improve the stream communities which they shelter.

This section of the plan addresses concerns caused by construction or development along shorelines, or removal or disruption of vegetation within these areas. These concerns include increased runoff of pollutants, higher water temperatures, destabilization of banks, higher soil erosion rates, loss of fish or wildlife habitats, and loss of recreational opportunities and property.

It is the purpose of this plan to provide guidance for the town, private landowners, and other entities in the planning and regulation of development. In the implementation of this section of the plan, the town seeks to incorporate and utilize these principles to preserve, restore, and manage streamside resources.

### Benefits of Riparian Buffers

1. Buffers maintain shading along streams, which ensures cooler water temperatures. Cool water retains more oxygen than warm water; higher dissolved oxygen levels result in a healthier and biologically diverse river ecosystem.
2. Buffers improve wastewater assimilative capacity; the higher oxygen levels of cool water increase the water's capacity to assimilate potential sources of pollution, resulting in better water quality.
3. A vegetated buffer with plant trunks and stems, leaf litter, and uneven ground topography slows overland runoff. This permits the buffer to filter out sediments, nutrients, pathogens, and toxins and break them down so that they can be incorporated into plants, soil, and microorganisms before reaching surface water.
4. Buffers maintain stable, well-vegetated shorelines, decreasing erosion by holding soils in place. Streams and rivers naturally meander, eroding banks and depositing soils on opposite sides of their channels. Buffer vegetation helps to stabilize the banks.
5. Buffers improve habitats for fish and other aquatic life forms, providing insects for food and overhanging vegetation for protective cover and water cooling.
6. Buffers also provide habitat for wildlife species which are part of the food web between riverine plants and animals. Diverse and productive communities of amphibians, reptiles, waterfowl, raptors, birds, and mammals thrive in well-vegetated buffers.
7. Buffers preserve riparian archeological and historic sites. Land along major streams and rivers, including the White River, served as sites for hunting and fishing camps and villages for Native Americans and early settlers. In stabilizing stream banks, buffers

protect these sites from being eroded away or subjected to other physical disturbances.

8. Buffers enhance recreational and aesthetic qualities along rivers and streams. Vegetative buffers contribute positively to a river environment with clear water, free of noxious plant growth and pollutants, and attractive to swimmers, fishermen, boaters and hikers. Natural streamside vegetation also provides visual contrast and screening.
9. Buffers are also a protection from flood hazards. It is well documented that riparian areas are high-risk locations for development, even at elevations above flood level. Public and private investments in roads, bridges, and real estate are at risk of damage or destruction when stream dynamics are not considered. Maintenance of vegetated buffers preserves the natural functions of rivers and streams without conflicting land uses.

### **Goals**

1. To develop planning principles for the maintenance and enhancement of streamside resources consistent with the purposes and benefits stated above.
2. To apply these principles in consideration and evaluation of riparian land use.

### **Planning Principles**

1. Riparian buffers be provided or maintained, of sufficient width to sustain a healthy growth of woody vegetation and to develop an effective duff layer on the water's edge. In some cases, if banks are unstable or waters more active, the width of the buffer should be greater.
2. Cutting of trees and other vegetation for views, vegetation management, recreational access, and silvicultural purposes should be limited and should include plans which ensure that trees are allowed to regenerate, stumps are left with root zones intact, and a duff layer and tree canopy are maintained.
3. Streambanks, including riprapped areas, should be vegetated with native shrubs, trees, and grasses. For stream bank stabilization, re-vegetation should cover as much of the vertical profile as is practicable. Riprap and similar retaining structures should be used only to cover the lower portion of the profile, and only when bioengineering techniques may not adequately prevent significant loss of land and/or property.
4. Human access points to the White River and its tributaries should be managed in such a manner as to prevent soil erosion, loss of vegetative cover, and unnecessary disruption of riparian habitats. Foot access paths should not be excessively wide, or steep (greater than 15% slope), and frequency of use should be controlled.

## **E. Wildlife Resources**

### **Background**

Wildlife is one of the primary attractions to the area and provides many citizens of Hancock with direct and indirect livelihoods from sports, tourism and direct harvest of wildlife.

Wildlife management requires management of human activities around animals as much as management of animals around human activities. Managing for specific species is not as desirable as managing for the entire ecosystem supporting the species

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

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 stream beds, 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 wintering area.

### **Goals**

1. To maintain or enhance the natural diversity and population of wildlife, including natural predators in proper balance.
2. To restore stable populations of endangered or threatened wildlife in appropriate habitat areas.
3. To maintain or improve the natural diversity, population, and migratory routes of fish.
4. To allow sport and subsistence hunting of ecologically sound intensities to provide continued success of the species.

### **Planning Principles**

1. Wildlife populations and natural diversity should be maintained or enhanced.
2. Long-term protection of major habitats through conservation easements, land purchases, leases and other incentives is encouraged.
3. It is the policy of the town to protect deer wintering areas from developments and other uses that adversely impact the resources.

## **F. Mineral Resources**

### **Background**

The use and management of Hancock's earth and mineral resources are matters of public good. Maintenance of sustainable quantities of gravel, sand, crushed rock, and other materials are essential for the development industry as well as state and local highways. In spite of this, public and private interests are oftentimes in conflict over utilization of the resource. It is in the interest of the Hancock business owners and residents to enable utilization of these resources when such uses do not significantly inhibit or conflict with other existing or planned land uses, or are in conflict with other stated goals in this plan.

### **Goals**

1. To enable appropriate utilization of mineral resources.
2. To encourage extraction and processing of the resource where such activities are appropriately managed and the public interest is clearly benefited thereby.

### **Planning Principles**

1. Existing and proposed mineral extraction and processing facilities should be planned, constructed, and managed:
  - So as not to adversely impact existing or planned uses within the vicinity of the project site;
  - To not significantly interfere with the function and safety of existing road systems serving the project site; and
  - To minimize any adverse affects on water quality, fish and wildlife habitats, and adjacent land uses.
  - To reclaim and re-vegetate sites after their useful life.

## **XII. ENERGY**

### **A. Background**

Practical 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. This has benefits for 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 need 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.

### **B. Energy Demands**

According to the 2000 US Census, the major fuels consumed in Vermont are oil (58%), electric (5%), wood (9%) and LPG and gas (14%). 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. Home heating for the elderly is a concern in Hancock, as fuel costs have more than doubled in recent years. State weatherization and fuel assistance for those in need is critically important.

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

### **C. Renewable Energy**

The 2000 Census reports that 10.4% of Hancock's households use wood as a fuel source for heating, 55.2% use fuel oil, and 34.4% use LP gas. The Vermont Department of Public Service estimates that the average household burns between 3 to 4 cords of wood each year during the heating season. Given that the total number of homes in Hancock heating with wood was 16, it is estimated that between 48 and 64 cords of wood were burned in 2000.

Increased reliance on wood as a heating source can offset some demand for expensive alternative sources. Hancock 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.

### 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.

### Planning Principles

1. 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 Hancock;
2. The rehabilitation or the development of new buildings and equipment should use proven design principles and practices with the lowest life cycle costs;
  - a. 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
  - b. Visual effects of electrical generation, transmission, and distribution facilities should be minimized whenever feasible.
3. 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.
4. To promote 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.
5. To reduce the demand for commuter transportation facilities and energy, the development of broadband services, energy efficient home occupations and small-scale home business is encouraged.
6. To promote energy efficient commuting, the community supports state and regional transportation programs serving Hancock.

**Future Actions**

1. The Town should be fully involved with the current revision of the Green Mountain National Forest plan. Such involvement could enable the town to directly utilize some of the resources available within the GMNF.
2. The Town should consider enacting development ordinances with provisions that encourage energy conservation and concentrate development in the best locations (e.g., grant density bonuses to projects that employ advanced energy design and efficiency).

### **XIII. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS**

Hancock is bounded by four towns. The four principal adjacent towns are Rochester, Goshen, Granville and Ripton. All have municipal plans in effect.

Those nearby towns along the Route 100 corridor (Pittsfield, Stockbridge, Rochester, Granville) all have expressed the intent of their town plans that Route 100's scenic value be preserved and that widening of the road be vigorously opposed; that the river ways and flood plain be protected; that compatible commercial development be clustered in the higher-density village areas; and that each town's rural character be preserved. Our plan is in agreement and compatible with these goals, and Hancock plans to cooperate with adjoining towns to promote development that preserves our shared rural character.

Hancock shares numerous activities and services with surrounding towns, including school services, rescue squad, fire protection and a residential community care program. The town is also a member of the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC). The town also has an obvious interest in the GMNF. Because it owns a large portion of all property in town the GMNF has potential to significantly impact Hancock, so communication among all of the agencies and services is encouraged to insure compatibility of development along town borders and with larger planning efforts.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. To encourage continued communication and cooperation between Hancock and it's neighboring towns;
2. To continue participation in regional bodies, such as TRORC, The White River Partnership and the GMNF; and
3. To exchange planning information and development data with neighboring communities.

## **XIV. IMPLEMENTATION**

### **A. Putting the Plan Into Action**

The character of Hancock, its people, and landscape has been created over the years through the individual and collective decisions of its citizens and public officials. The efficiency, attractiveness, and well-being of the community is determined, in part, by the ability of the town to plan for its needs and to find a mechanism to put planning goals into action.

Previous elements of this Plan have been centered on existing conditions, probable trends and policy development which, when combined, represent a vision for the kind of town Hancock desires for the future. One thing is certain - the community will change. The opportunity is that citizens and town officials together can direct this change consistent with their desires, using a variety of mechanisms.

The following sections describe the tools and techniques desirable to implement the Hancock Town Plan.

### **B. Adoption of the Plan**

Adoption of the Hancock Town Plan by the Selectboard, in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Vermont Planning and Development Act (24 V.S.A., Chapter 117), is the first step in putting this Plan into action. Through its adoption, the town accepts the principles and policies as set forth in this Plan as in the public interest and as a guide for the future growth and development decision affecting Hancock.

### **C. Ongoing Planning**

Planning for change is a continual process for the town and will require the involvement of the Planning Commission and the public to ensure that the goals and policies of the Plan are integrated into the decisions affecting land use, taxation, and public investments in Hancock.

The Hancock Town Plan is not a permanent document on community desires or values. Its life is limited by statute (24 V.S.A., Section 4387). The Planning Commission is responsible for the maintenance and amendment of the plan. Within the next five years following adoption of the plan, the Planning Commission will need to evaluate the plan in light of new conditions and needs. Readoption of an updated plan will require notice to the townspeople and finally action by the Selectboard.

At any time following adoption of the plan, the Selectboard may request the Regional Commission to approve the Plan or amendments to a plan. Before approving a plan, the Regional Commission shall find that the plan meets four basic tests [24 V.S.A., Section 4350(b)].

Under Criterion 10 of Act 250, any proposed project must conform to all duly adopted local and regional plans. This criterion seeks to ensure that new development respects the wishes of Vermont citizens about the future of their town and region. Approval of this Plan provides improved legal standing for the town to influence Act 250 decisions.

### **D. Implementation Tools**

Vermont law enables the town to implement the adopted Hancock Town Plan through a variety of ways. Regulation of land use and development through rules adopted by the voters is one method. Because these regulations are susceptible to legal challenge and must clearly benefit the public, discretion must be used. Well-recognized and utilized means include zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations.

**Zoning Bylaws** - Zoning bylaws are a commonly used method for guiding development at the local level. Zoning may regulate:

- Uses of land
- The placement of buildings on lots
- The relationship of buildings to open space, and
- The provision of parking, signs, landscaping and open space

Zoning generally involves partitioning the town into districts or zones that have a different set of uses, densities, and other standards for development. Zoning districts must be reasonably consistent with the Town Plan. As an alternative to conventional methods, the town may opt to implement a set of measurable performance standards for specific uses as opposed to dividing the Town into districts. This technique, referred to as "performance zoning", is designed to be more flexible and to recognize the specific conditions of each site proposed for development.

Given that zoning bylaws are oftentimes controversial and difficult to administer, the town should give due consideration to this implementation technique prior to taking the time necessary to develop a proposal for the Hancock voters.

**Subdivision Regulations** - The town does not currently have subdivision regulations. These regulations, if adopted, would be administered by the Planning Commission. Such regulations govern the division of parcels of land and the creation of roads and other public improvements. Furthermore, subdivision regulations can ensure that land development reflects land capability, that critical open spaces and resources are protected from poor design or layout.

**Flood Hazard Bylaws** - Under Vermont law (24 V.S.A., Section 4412), the Town of Hancock may regulate the use of land in a defined flood hazard area adjacent to streams and ponds. These bylaws can be established to ensure that design and construction activities within the limits of the 100 Year Flood Plain are designed so as to minimize potential for flood damage and to maintain use of agricultural land in flood-prone areas. As noted in the Natural Resources section of this Plan, property owners are eligible for federal flood insurance on buildings and

## Hancock Town Plan – Adopted October 28, 2008

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structures at relatively low federally subsidized premium rates. A Flood Hazard Bylaw was adopted in July 1991 by the Selectboard regulating development in flood hazard areas. This bylaw should be periodically updated to make sure that it adequately protects the floodplain from unwise development.

**Sewage Ordinance** - In addition to zoning, subdivision, and flood hazard bylaws, the Town may, through its Selectboard, adopt an ordinance to track installation of on-site sewage systems permitted by the State. This ordinance would act as a backup to the state's new septic regulations.

**Highway Ordinances** - The town has in effect a Highway Ordinance setting forth the standards and conditions for the maintenance, improvement, discontinuance, laying out and acceptance of Town highways. In addition, the ordinance includes provisions related to the reclassification of town highways (Classes 2, 3 and 4).

Lastly, the town does have, through its Selectboard, the ability to regulate private access to municipal roads through the issuance of "curb cut" permits to landowners. "Curb cuts" are places where a private driveway or road connects to a town highway. In granting a cut onto town roads, the Selectboard can give consideration to safety issues such as adequacy of sight distance and proximity to intersections as well as conformance with this plan. It is necessary to obtain a state curb cut permit for access onto state highways.

**Capital Budget** – A capital budget and program is a financing approach that benefits the town greatly in the selection, prioritization and costing of capital projects. Under the capital budget, a project is selected (i.e. bridge refurbishment), a funding source determined (i.e. general taxes, and general obligation bond) and priority year given for each activity (i.e. construction in 2004). Collectively these capital projects make clear when public facilities will be placed to accommodate projected growth. When used in conjunction with the Town Plan and local bylaws, it can be a powerful mechanism for limiting the rate of growth in accordance with the fiscal capacity of taxpayers and other funding sources.

In addition, it is noted that under Vermont's Act 250 law, in granting a Land Use Permit for a major development or subdivision, the District Environmental Commission must first find that the project is in conformance with the town's capital budget. [See 10 V.S.A., Section 6086(a)(10).] Accordingly, this mechanism gives the town an indirect method of implementing its policies and priorities as set forth in the plan.

While both the town and school district have an informal system of capital programming, it is recommended that a Capital Budget Committee be established to work with the Select Board and School Directors in the development of a list of capital needs and expenditures and to formally present a Capital Budget and Program for adoption.

**Vermont Community Development Program** - Since the mid-1970's, the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) has made grant funds available to towns for community projects. Historically, the major focus of the program has been on housing rehabilitation and affordable housing projects benefiting low and moderate-income families.

## Hancock Town Plan – Adopted October 28, 2008

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The town should investigate the Vermont Community Development Program and its potential to assist the community in addressing its housing needs. The Regional Commission and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development are resources available to assist.

**Act 250** - Since 1970, Vermont has had in place a statewide review system for major developments and subdivisions of land. Exactly what constitutes a "development" or "subdivision" is subject to a rather large and involved set of definitions. However, generally, commercial and industrial projects on more than one acre of land; construction of 10 or more units of housing; subdivision of land into 6 or more lots; construction of a telecommunication tower over 20 feet in height; and development over 2,500 feet in elevation qualifies.

Prior to these activities being commenced, a permit must first be granted by the District Environmental Commission. In determining whether or not to grant a permit, the Commission shall evaluate the project in relation to ten specific review criteria.

These criteria relate to the environmental, economic, and social impacts of the proposed project on the community and region. Parties to Act 250 proceedings include the town, through the Planning Commission and Selectboard, the State, and the Regional Commission. One criterion that needs to be addressed is whether the project is in conformance with the Hancock Town Plan. If a project were determined not to be in conformance with the plan, the District Environmental Commission would have a basis to deny a permit. As such, Act 250 reviews can take into consideration protection of those types of resources considered important to the well-being of the community. Accordingly, it is in the interest of the town to evaluate Act 250 projects affecting Hancock and to offer testimony, as appropriate.

**Coordination of Private Actions** - Citizens and private enterprise have a vested interest in the well being of the town. The actions of the private sector being the construction of homes and businesses, land conservation, and the use of land for recreation and agriculture should relate positively to the goals and policies as set forth in this Plan.

It is in the interest of the town, through the Planning Commission and Selectboard, to develop a cooperative relationship with private investment activities that may have a significant impact on the community values and policies set forth in the plan. By working together in a cooperative venture early in the process of planning for a project, an adversarial relationship can be avoided.

Contacts that should be maintained include:

- Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation
- Vermont Land Trust and Upper Valley Land Trust
- Twin State Housing Trust
- Owners of significant properties of high resource or development value, and
- Major employers in Hancock

**Conservation Activities** - Conservation programs are an effective means of securing protection of valuable farm and forestland or significant natural resources. The community-wide

## Hancock Town Plan – Adopted October 28, 2008

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survey conducted as part of this Plan update requested public input regarding the appropriateness of private conservation efforts. The response was overwhelmingly positive.

Techniques available involve voluntary direct work between non-profit conservation organizations and affected landowners such as donation of conservation easements, bargain-sales of land, and limited development schemes.

The land trust movement has grown immensely during the past twenty years, particularly in Vermont. Land trusts offer viable means of bringing together the needs of property owners with the community interests. The Vermont Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy are particularly well-recognized organizations. Several organizations are also involved in water quality protection. It is the intent of this plan to implement its policies through coordination and the involvement of these organizations and others dedicated to public purposes.

### **E. Guidelines for Growth**

The following guidelines are intended to help town officials, residents and developers work together to plan and design developments consistent with the goals and policies of this plan. These guidelines are suggested ways to implement the plan. They are not mandatory and are not intended to be strictly adhered to in every case. They are offered to give landowners and officials a common, but flexible framework for preparing plans and making decisions.

**Siting New Development** - New development should be sited to:

1. Be compatible with the historic settlement pattern;
2. Maintain functional integrity of deer wintering areas;
3. Be cost efficient for municipal services; and
4. Conserve the agricultural potential of primary agricultural soils by:
  - Keeping primary agricultural soils available for agricultural production unless the only economically viable use of the land would be from incompatible uses;
  - And utilizing creative planning and design to minimize the reduction of agricultural potential.

**Designing New Development** - Landowners should design and phase new development, particularly large residential development to:

1. Avoid overloading public facilities and services;
2. Protect and promote the harmonious balance between buildings and useful, well-defined open space, and a human-scaled character of structures and settlements;
3. Be compatible with desired habitat conditions, public outdoor recreation;

## Hancock Town Plan – Adopted October 28, 2008

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4. Take advantage of opportunities to enhance and/or restore habitats by establishing native vegetative diversity or provide other wildlife benefits;
5. Mitigate the effects of proposed actions on identified archeological sites;
6. Be compatible with the qualities that make historic areas, structures or sites significant;
7. Protect the community trail system from activities which would unduly compromise desired trail experiences and uses; and
8. Incorporate the following visual elements:
  - Unobtrusive heights of buildings;
  - Vegetative screening;
  - Preservation of native vegetation;
  - Unobtrusive location of utilities; and
  - Minimal alterations to topography.

**Public Facilities and Services** - Major new developments should pay a proportionate fair share of the increased cost of providing public facilities or services to the development.

**Roads** - New roads, private or public, should be designed and constructed to:

- Minimize impacts to large woodlands and wildlife corridors (if roads and trails are desired, locate them along the outer edge of the areas and limit trail use to low-impact activities compatible with the habitat objectives);
- Meet town road standards; and
- Minimize impacts on desired habitat conditions, water quality and other ecological functions.

Landowners requesting upgrades of Class 4 roads to Class 3 should pay the costs of the necessary improvements. (19 V.S.A., Section 711).

New private development roads should remain the responsibility of the residents.

If stream crossings are necessary for new development, efforts should be made to minimize their impacts on aquatic life.

**Water and Sewer Systems** - Prospective developers should demonstrate the ability to provide an adequate supply of potable water for their developments without impairing the quality or quantity of existing water supplies.

Developers should protect the quality and yield of groundwater by limiting land use activities within recharge areas.

## Hancock Town Plan – Adopted October 28, 2008

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**Vegetation Management** - Timber harvesting should be consistent with the Vermont Forest, Parks and Recreation's Acceptable Management Practices.

Deer wintering areas should be managed according to the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife's *Management Guide for Deer Wintering Areas in Vermont*, (1990).

When managing timber along streams designated as important wildlife corridors, avoid harvesting trees within 100 feet of a stream.

**Energy** - New development should reduce energy used for transportation by:

- Minimizing unnecessary lengths and widths of new roads in order to reduce energy used for trips, materials, construction, and maintenance;
- Laying out new roads to allow clustering of structures, unit orientation for optimum solar gain, and location of structures in wind shadows;
- Locating development to facilitate creation of public and pooled transportation and promote pedestrian access to activities and facilities within and among settlements;
- Using local materials and labor in construction to reduce transportation energy costs; and
- Providing appropriate opportunities for jobs, retail goods and services within villages and neighborhoods in order to reduce the need for travel.

**Involvement with the Regional Economy** - Ideally, a new or expanding business affecting Hancock should:

- Create community pride and have a positive effect on the community's image;
- Strengthen and preserve the community's assets, particularly those identified in the Town Plan as important;
- Provide fiscal revenues that exceed direct and indirect costs;
- Invest in the community (e.g., sponsor groups and activities, allow community use of land and buildings, build affordable housing, provide day care);
- Help keep money circulating in the community (e.g., be owned by local residents; hire local people; use local resources or products; provide services or products presently obtained from outside community);
- Produce products or services that meet community needs and will benefit the community;
- Add value to a local renewable resource or product (e.g., dairy, cheese factory, furniture manufacturer);
- Be committed to reducing negative environmental impacts; and
- Minimize traffic impacts.