

power generation facilities have been replaced by massive hydro facilities, such as those owned by Hydro Quebec. There are no sites in Sharon that are “in-service” hydropower facilities, actively producing power. The basic infrastructure to produce hydropower does exist in Sharon, however. Retrofitting such sites presents the most effective means of adding potential hydropower while keeping environmental impacts low.

## **E. Permitting Considerations**

Energy generation in Vermont is subject to a number of different permitting requirements, most of which are limited to state level permitting. State statute protects residential renewable energy generation systems from regulations that will completely prohibit their development.

### **Section 248**

Distributed power generation facilities, such as hydropower dams, fossil fuel plants, and wind power or solar systems owned by utilities, are subject to review and approval by the Vermont Public Service Board (30 VSA §248). Under this law, prior to the construction of a generation facility, the Board must issue a Certificate of Public Good. A Section 248 review addresses environmental, economic, and social impacts associated with a particular project, similar to Act 250. In making its determination, the Board must give due consideration to the recommendations of municipal and regional planning commissions and their respective plans. Accordingly, it is appropriate that this Town Plan address these land uses and provide guidance to town officials, regulators, and utilities.

For all commercial energy generation facilities, the following policies shall be considered:

- 1. Preferred Locations:** New generation and transmission facilities shall be sited in locations that reinforce Sharon’s traditional patterns of growth, of compact village center surrounded by a rural countryside, including farm and forest land.
- 2. Prohibited Locations:** Because of their distinctive natural, historic or scenic value, energy facility development shall be excluded from the following areas:
  - Floodways shown on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps;
  - Fluvial erosion hazard areas shown on Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area maps;
  - Wetlands as indicated on Vermont State Wetlands Inventory maps or identified through site analysis; and
  - Rare, threatened or endangered species habitat or communities.
  - The Sharon Town Forest
- 3. Significant Areas:** All new generation, transmission, and distribution facilities shall be sited and designed to avoid or, if no other reasonable alternative exists, to otherwise minimize and mitigate adverse impacts to the following:

- Historic districts, landmarks, sites and structures listed, or eligible for listing, on state or national registers.
  - Primary agricultural soils mapped by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service.
  - Public parks and recreation areas, including state and municipal parks, forests and trail networks.
  - Municipally designated scenic roads and viewsheds.
  - Special flood hazard areas identified by National Flood Insurance Program maps.
  - Public and private drinking water supplies, including mapped source protection areas.
  - Necessary wildlife habitat identified by the state or through analysis, including core habitat areas, migration and travel corridors.
4. **Natural Resource Protection:** New generation and transmission facilities must be sited to avoid the fragmentation of, and undue adverse impacts to, the town’s working landscape, including large tracts of undeveloped forestland and core forest habitat areas, open farm land, and primary agricultural soils mapped by the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service.
5. **Protection of Wildlife:** Designers must gather information about natural and wildlife habitats that exist in the project area and take measures to avoid any undue adverse impact on the resource. Consideration shall be given to the effects of the project on: natural communities, wildlife residing in the area and their migratory routes; the impacts of human activities at or near habitat areas; and any loss of vegetative cover or food sources for critical habitats.
6. **Site Selection:** Site selection should not be limited to generation facilities alone; other elements of the facility need to be considered as well. These include access roads, site clearing, onsite power lines, substations, lighting, and off-site power lines. Development of these elements shall be done in such a way as to minimize any negative impacts. Site clearing and roadways can have greater visual impacts than the energy generation facility itself. In planning for facilities, designers should take steps to mitigate the project’s impact on natural, scenic and historic resources and improve its harmony with the surroundings.

## F. Residential Energy Efficiency

There are a number of ways that the Town of Sharon can meet its local energy demand, first by lowering that demand, and then by working to meet the remaining need with local energy resources.

### Decreasing Energy Use by Changing Behavior

Raising awareness to replace wasteful energy behaviors with energy saving ones can reduce energy use and help residents and businesses save money.

Examples include:

- Turn off lights when you leave a room.