Halifax Town Plan

Town of Halifax, Vermont

Prepared by
Halifax Planning Commission

Adopted by
the Voters of the Town of Halifax
March 5, 2019

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This update of the Halifax Town Plan was developed with technical assistance from Windham Regional Commission, and was funded in part by a Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development.

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE TOWN PLAN

The Halifax Town Plan identifies the means by which the Town proposes to guide its growth and development. The official adoption of the Town Plan represents a conscious community decision about the town's future character, priorities for land use and conservation of natural resources.

The goals, policies and recommendations in this Town Plan reflect the wishes of Halifax residents and should be used along with the Town Plan Maps to provide guidelines to the Planning Commission and Selectboard in developing local regulations and ordinances. The Town Plan should also guide the regional planning commission and state agencies in their planning efforts, assist the District Environmental Commission in judging applications submitted under Act 250 (10 V.S.A. Chapter 151: State Land Use And Development Plans), assist the Public Utilities Commission in evaluating petitions for Certificates of Public Good under Section 248 (30 V.S.A. § 248: State Policy; Plans; Jurisdiction And Regulatory Authority of Commission and Department), and guide those persons interested in subdividing and developing land in the town.

The Halifax Town Plan has been prepared under Subchapter 5 of the Vermont Planning and Development Act (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117: Municipal And Regional Planning And Development) as amended. This Town Plan becomes effective after the required public hearings, upon adoption by the voters of Halifax. Under Vermont law, a Town Plan expires eight years from the date of adoption. Upon expiration of a Town Plan, all zoning bylaws then in effect remain in effect, but no amendments can be made. The town must revise the Town Plan where necessary, and readopt or replace its Town Plan every eight years.

Planning is an ongoing process. Once adopted, the Town Plan continues to be revised every few years to account for new information about the Town, new public needs and desires as expressed by the citizens of Halifax and new or modified requirements of the state. This review is one of the main responsibilities of the Halifax Planning Commission. A Town Plan can be modified and formally amended through public hearings and adoption by the voters at any time during the eight-year period. The Halifax Planning Commission therefore should convene a subcommittee of volunteers who are Halifax residents, and may or may not include members of the Planning Commission, to continue the work of researching, revising, and rewriting the Town Plan in preparation for ongoing periodic reviews and updates to ensure the plan remains responsive, relevant and effective.

INTERPRETATION OF THE TOWN PLAN

In situations where the interpretation of the Town Plan is needed or required, it shall be the task of the Halifax Planning Commission, in cooperation with the Halifax Selectboard, to conduct a review and issue an interpretive judgment. Throughout the text of this Town Plan many of the policy statements include imperative verbs. "Must" or "shall" means that the Town

has strong intentions of ensuring that a policy is implemented, whereas "should" or "may" means that a policy is encouraged but not mandated**.**

STATEMENT OF GOALS

The statements listed below represent the overall goals of the town and further establish a foundation upon which specific Town Plan policies and recommendations will be based. Policies are statements which define a course to be followed to achieve the town's goals. Recommendations are suggestions for further work to be conducted by the town, as well as regional, state, and federal entities, and the general public.

It is the goal of the town of Halifax to accomplish the following in the best interests of the community as a whole:

1. To accommodate the changing needs of the town through a continuous planning process;
2. To maintain the town's settlement patterns that are typified by a small village with school, church, and post office, surrounded by rural countryside as a means of containing sprawl;
3. To ensure that decisions and policies made at the local, regional and state levels are implemented in harmony with the needs and concerns of the town and the financial constraints of its citizens;
4. To ensure that the health and safety of the town's residents will be maintained at satisfactory levels;
5. To plan and support an efficient and affordable system of public facilities and services to meet existing and future needs;
6. To provide access to quality educational opportunities for the town's citizens;
7. To support the availability of safe and affordable housing for all town residents;
8. To encourage environmental awareness and protect the community's natural resources, including its air, water, plants and wildlife and their habitat, and land resources;
9. To preserve and enhance the community's cultural, historical, architectural, recreational and scenic resources;
10. To encourage the continued availability and good management of lands for agriculture, forestry, and earth/mineral extraction;
11. To encourage the local production of food and participation in the local food economy;
12. To encourage local appropriately-scaled renewable energy development;
13. To foster the reduction and recycling of waste materials and the conservation of energy resources;
14. To ensure that any land development proceeds in an orderly fashion;

15. To accommodate development that will strengthen the local economy and provide employment opportunities which will meet the needs of the town's residents;

16. To discourage uncoordinated or incompatible development that may jeopardize or overburden public or private investment, or damage the town's resources, rural character, and overall quality of life.

17. To provide a safe, convenient and scenic road network capable of accommodating local traffic and pedestrians.

MANAGING GROWTH

Over the years, the demography of Halifax has changed from a small rural farming community to largely a residential one comprised of permanent and part-time residents. The town has increasingly become a bedroom community for Brattleboro, Vermont and Greenfield, Massachusetts, as well as nearby ski resort areas in Wilmington and Dover. Both growth and contraction in these neighboring communities are felt in Halifax, which will need to adapt. For example, the closure of Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant is impacting the region by reducing average salaries in the county. Halifax will need to prepare for and manage either economic contraction such as has been the case in the early part of the millennium, or possible growth such as what was seen in the 1980's and 1990's.

Managing growth is a conscious process of directing appropriate development to appropriate locations. Success in this endeavor requires a commitment on the part of a community to set a course for its future and to employ all available tools to stay that course. To date, the Town Plan and Zoning Bylaws, including the Flood Hazard Area Regulations (Article 8), are the only land use management tools Halifax has used. This Town Plan should provide the framework for managing Halifax's future growth.

To preserve public health and prevent pollution of surface and ground waters, Halifax complies with the state septic regulations. Halifax has adopted a Highway Ordinance which regulates new highways, driveways, snowplowing, logging, and parking. The town also has a Waste Disposal Ordinance regulating the dumping, spreading and/or application of byproducts from sewage treatment plants, septic sewerage, nuclear waste, asbestos and other toxic wastes. Additionally, Halifax has adopted a Junkyard Ordinance to manage and regulate outdoor storage of junk and junk motor vehicles within its boundaries. The town has also adopted a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

RELATION TO ADJACENT AND REGIONAL PLANS

Halifax is but one town in a region of diverse and changing communities. It is linked to these communities via roadways, waterways, contiguous forest and agricultural lands, and through sharing important community facilities and services. In addition, many of Halifax's residents have strong social and economic ties to the region's important employment and cultural centers.

Act 200 sets forth general guidelines to encourage communities, regional planning commissions, and state agencies to coordinate planning activities in an effort to achieve a unified vision for Vermont's future. In order to help realize that vision, a community's town plan must be consistent with 14 specified planning goals and compatible with the regional plan and approved plans of other municipalities in the region. Such consistency and compatibility affords communities special status because all state agency actions and programs that affect land use must be based on agency plans developed in consultation with communities and regions which have prepared "consistent and compatible plans."

At the time of the adoption of this Plan, the neighboring towns of Brattleboro, Marlboro, Guilford, Whitingham, and Wilmington have adopted town plans, which have received Windham Regional Commission (WRC) approval. The current Regional Plan was adopted in 2014. The Region has 27 towns; 24 now have town plans reviewed and approved by the WRC. Towns submit their plans to the Commission for review and approval at their own discretion.

During the period of time when a town's plan is approved and the municipal planning process is confirmed:

(1) The municipality's plan will not be subject to review by the Commissioner of Housing and Community Development under section 4351 of this title.

(2) State agency plans adopted under 3 V.S.A. chapter 67 shall be compatible with the municipality's approved plan.

(3) The municipality may levy impact fees on new development within its borders, according to the provisions of chapter 131 of this title.

(4) The municipality shall be eligible to receive additional funds from the municipal and regional planning fund.

This means, among other things, that the town is eligible to apply for Municipal Planning Grants, Community Development Block Grants, Better Connections (transportation) grants, and official Village Center designation by the state.

Each plan of these abutting towns has been considered. From this consideration came an understanding of the strong similarities and subtle differences between area communities. The importance of maintaining rural character and protecting natural resources, while accommodating housing and home-based economic development, is a recurring land use theme. The Community Profile section of this Town Plan offers special insight into how Halifax relates to its neighbors and the region as a whole.

Overall, the goals, policies and recommended land use patterns outlined in the Town Plan are compatible with those of neighboring Vermont communities. In addition, this Town Plan is generally compatible with the Windham Regional Plan, both in terms of overall Regional Policies and general recommendations for Regional Land Use.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

A BRIEF TOWN HISTORY

Halifax, named after George Montague Dunk, Earl of Halifax, is the second oldest chartered town in Vermont, having received its charter in 1750 from George II upon the advice of Benning Wentworth, Governor and Commander in Chief of the province of New Hampshire. The town, over six miles square, originally was divided into 64 equal shares of 360 acres each with a six-sided tract in the center for public use. The original charter spells Halifax with two l's.

Settled in 1761, the first town meeting was held in 1778. The first recorded census was in 1771, with 55 heads of families and a total population of 329. The original settlers lived in log cabins, while clearing the land and building permanent homes.

Agriculture was king, consisting of animal husbandry and production of crops such as potatoes, hay, oats, wheat, apples and, of course, maple sugar. Sheep raising, once prominent in Halifax and Vermont, declined in the late 19th century. It was replaced by dairying which has suffered a similar decline in recent years.

Potash, leached from wood ashes, was produced for British woolen mills prior to 1800. Saw and gristmills harnessed the abundant energy of falling water in the town's several streams. During the 19th century there were seven sawmills producing chairstock, shingles and baby carriage components, while other mills ground grain and made cider jelly. Steam power augmented waterpower in some of the mills. The A. J. Tucker Tannery established in 1836, employed 14 men and tanned 400 hides a week. School districts were established in the little settlements around the mills and tanneries. Several of the one-room schoolhouses survive, adapted to other uses.

There were once five post offices in town. West Halifax is the sole survivor. The first church in town was organized in 1778. A Congregational Meeting House, no longer extant, was erected in 1782. Another Congregational Church was built in West Halifax in 1844, and sold to the Universalists in 1872. It is now the Community Hall. The First Baptist Church, built in the Whitneyville section of town is now gone. A Greek Revival style building was erected in West Halifax in 1853, the same year another Baptist edifice was built in Halifax Center.

The Center Church was disbanded in 1883, and in 1891 its building passed to the Halifax Union Society. Meanwhile the Baptist Church continued in West Halifax. By the end of the 19th century, 22 ministers had served Halifax. Prominent among them was Hosea Ballou II, one of the founders and first President of Tufts University.

From the French and Indian Wars to the present, Halifax residents have served in all of our nation's conflicts. On January 4, 1776, during the Revolution, a Halifax company was formed. The drill field still exists and is so named. A Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Hall once stood in West Halifax, where it also served as an Odd Fellows Hall, and the political headquarters of the "Know Nothings," a nativist political party of the mid-19th century. The Guiding Star Grange was organized in 1875 and erected its building in 1904. In 2017 the building was purchased and sensitively renovated by a private citizen.

According to a 2004 state publication there were 26 cemeteries in Halifax. According to a Cemetery Commissioner only 21 cemeteries have been located and there are currently only seven cemeteries with available space. The ages of the deceased attest to the fragility of life in the early years of the town. The Spotted Fever (probably typhus) epidemic in 1812-1813 claimed 60 victims in 50 days. Perhaps as a result of low survival rates, families were far larger than today. Thus, while Halifax's population reached its maximum in 1810, it had a limited number of households. Due to westward migration, Halifax, like many Vermont towns, steadily lost population until 1960.

The earliest public road in Vermont, known as "The Old Post Road", passes through the northwest corner of Halifax. It connected Fort Dummer in Brattleboro with Albany, NY. By 1796, two other significant roads were in existence: "The Great Road," also known as County Road, running from Colrain, Massachusetts through Halifax Center to Newfane, and Jacksonville Stage Road, running from the northeastern to the northwestern corners of Halifax, dipping south between them and passing through Halifax Center.

Several hotels were built in Halifax at the turn of this century. Dr. Edward Niles built a summer hotel in Halifax Center, the chimney of which still stands though the hotel was torn down. The "Beehive" in West Halifax, also known as the "Old Hotel", originally the GAR Hall, was torn down in the 1960s. An inn at Reid Hollow was later used briefly by a summer stock company in the 1930s. The State Line House on Route 112, a remarkable tavern with a spring-floor dance hall, was a meeting place for generations of Halifax citizens.

Two of Halifax's most famous sons were Elisha Otis, inventor of the safety elevator, and Norman Fish, inventor of the porcelain shade lamp.

The Halifax Historical Society published the first volume of the town's history in 2008 and the second volume at the end of 2013.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Halifax, a southern Vermont town, is bounded on the north by Marlboro, on the east by Guilford and Brattleboro, on the south by Heath and Colrain in Massachusetts, and on the west by Whitingham and Wilmington. The town is characterized by gently rounded hills and steep-sided stream and river valleys.

The Green River flows southeast through the northern part of town and the East Branch of the North River drains most of the southern part of the town. The East Branch of the North River flows through a deep scenic gorge which enhances the beauty of this area. In Halifax, the most important tributary of the East Branch is Branch Brook, which rises just north of town and flows south through West Halifax. Both the Green River and North River ultimately flow into the Connecticut River via the Deerfield River.

The walls of these river valleys are rather rugged, but they give way to a moderate, rolling landscape once settled by farm families. Many of these farms are now overgrown with second and third growth forests. They were once connected by a network of roads, many of which were abandoned when automobiles replaced horses. Halifax currently has nearly 73 miles of roads, consisting of approximately 13 miles of blacktop and 55 miles of gravel roads maintained by the

town, and slightly less than 6 miles of paved State Highway (VT-112), as well as numerous town trails.

The eastern two-thirds of the town contains Tunbridge-Marlow-Lyman soils of glacial till in the foothills of the Green Mountains. The western one-third of the town contains Houghtonville-Rawsonville-Mundal soils, which are mountain soils of deep loamy glacial till. Both soil associations support a forest predominantly of northern hardwoods.

There are two prominent summits in Halifax: Ballou Mountain (elevation 2,001 feet), which slopes rather steeply toward Green River on the north and Branch Brook on the west, and Jolly Mountain, the highest peak (elevation 2,020 feet) located in the central part of town. Several other hills, nearly as high, are scattered throughout the town.

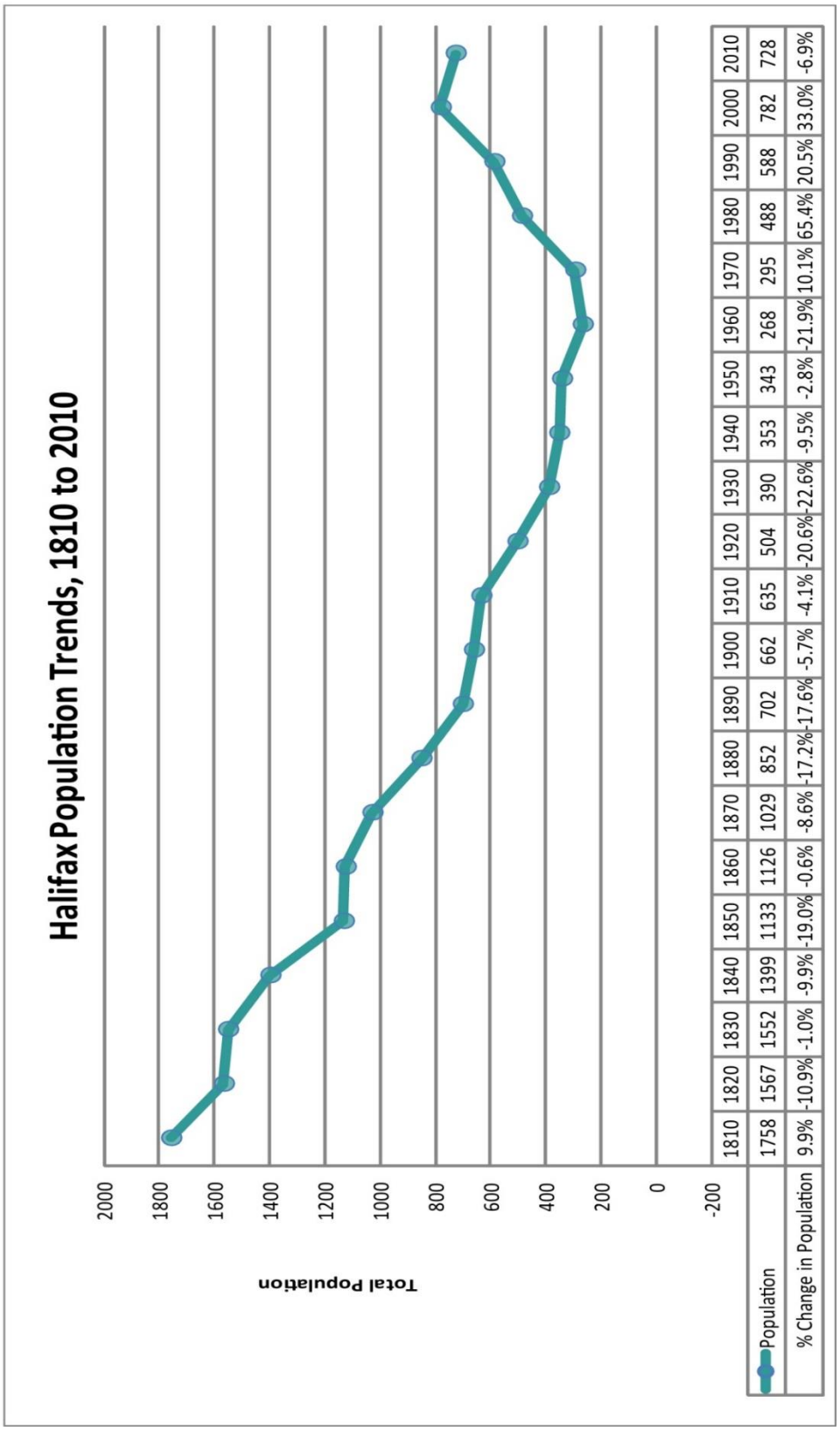
Halifax supports one dairy farm located in the western part of town and a few small sheep and beef operations. These farming activities are on a small amount of open land in the lower elevations which supports them. The most dominant land type, however, is forested land.

Almost the entire town is developed in a rural pattern, with most dwellings widely scattered across the landscape. The only cluster of development is in the Village of West Halifax.

POPULATION

Halifax has experienced varying rates of change in year-round population since 1940, as shown in Table 1. From 1810 to 1960 the population gradually decreased from 1,758 to 268. Halifax began to experience an increase in population after 1960. The most significant change occurred between 1970 and 1980 when Halifax's population increased 65.4%, an actual net increase of 193. The period between 1990 and 2000 accounted for the largest population gain since 1940, a net of 194 amounting to a 33% increase. During this time period, Halifax had the third highest rate of growth of all towns in Windham County. The period between 2000 and 2010 again reflected a decrease in the population.

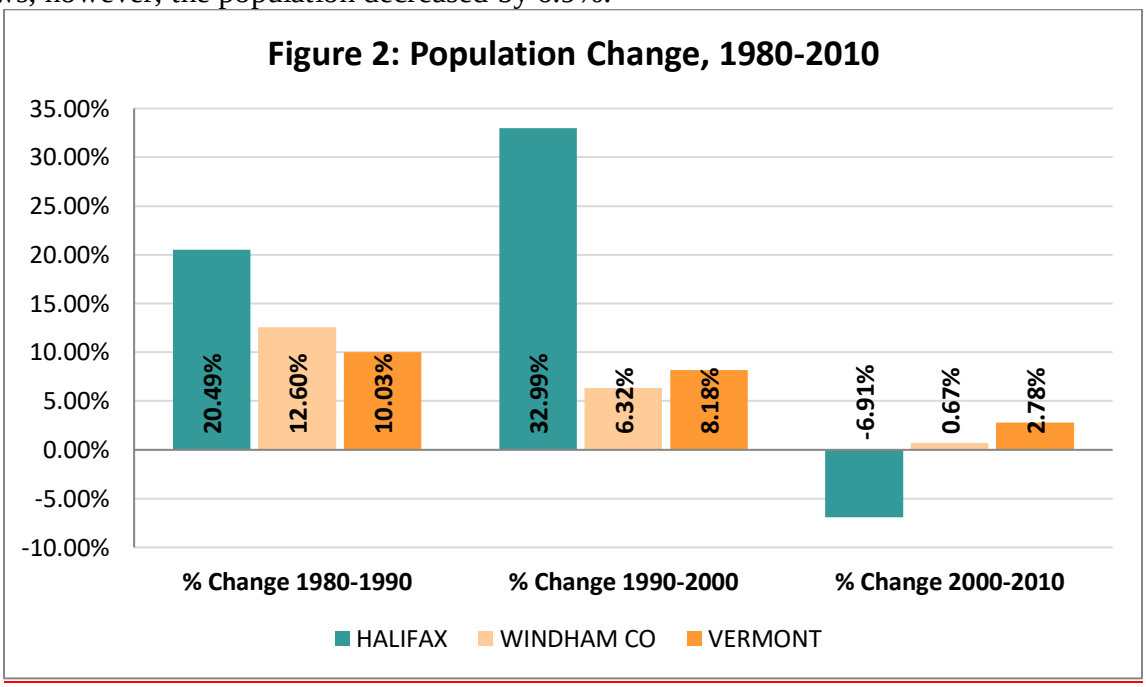
FIGURE 1: HALIFAX POPULATION TRENDS, 1810 TO 2010



	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Population	1758	1567	1552	1399	1133	1126	1029	852	702	662	635	504	390	353	343	268	295	488	588	782	728
% Change in Population	9.9%	-10.9%	-1.0%	-9.9%	-19.0%	-0.6%	-8.6%	-17.2%	-17.6%	-5.7%	-4.1%	-20.6%	-22.6%	-9.5%	-2.8%	-21.9%	10.1%	65.4%	20.5%	33.0%	-6.9%

Source: US Census

The rate of year-round population growth in Halifax slowed during the 1980s compared to the previous decade. Halifax's growth rate from 1980 to 1990, however, was double that of the State of Vermont as a whole (10%) and significantly higher than Windham County (12.6%). Halifax's growth rate from 1990 to 2000 (33%) shown in Figure 1 far exceeded that of Windham County (6.32 percent) and State (8.19%). Viewing the growth rates from the decades of 1970, 1980 and 1990, it appeared that Halifax's population could exceed 1,000 by the 2010 census. As Figure 2 shows, however, the population decreased by 6.9%.



Source: US Bureau of Census, 1980 – 2010 Census

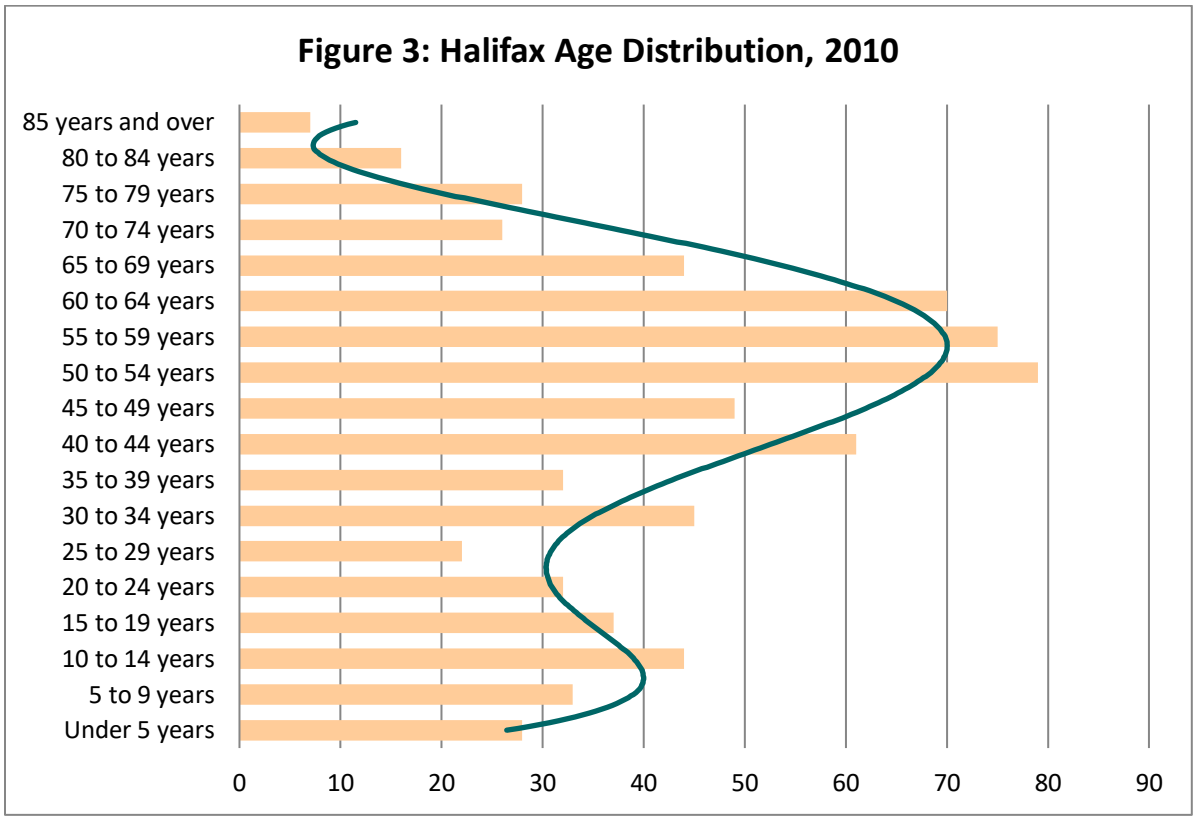
Increased growth in Halifax during the decades of 1970, 1980 and 1990 can be attributed to overall growth in commercial and recreational development that occurred throughout the region, particularly in Brattleboro and the ski resort towns. Increased job opportunities in these economic centers brought an increasing number of families to the southern Vermont region, many of whom settled in the more rural, outlying towns including Halifax.

Age Distribution

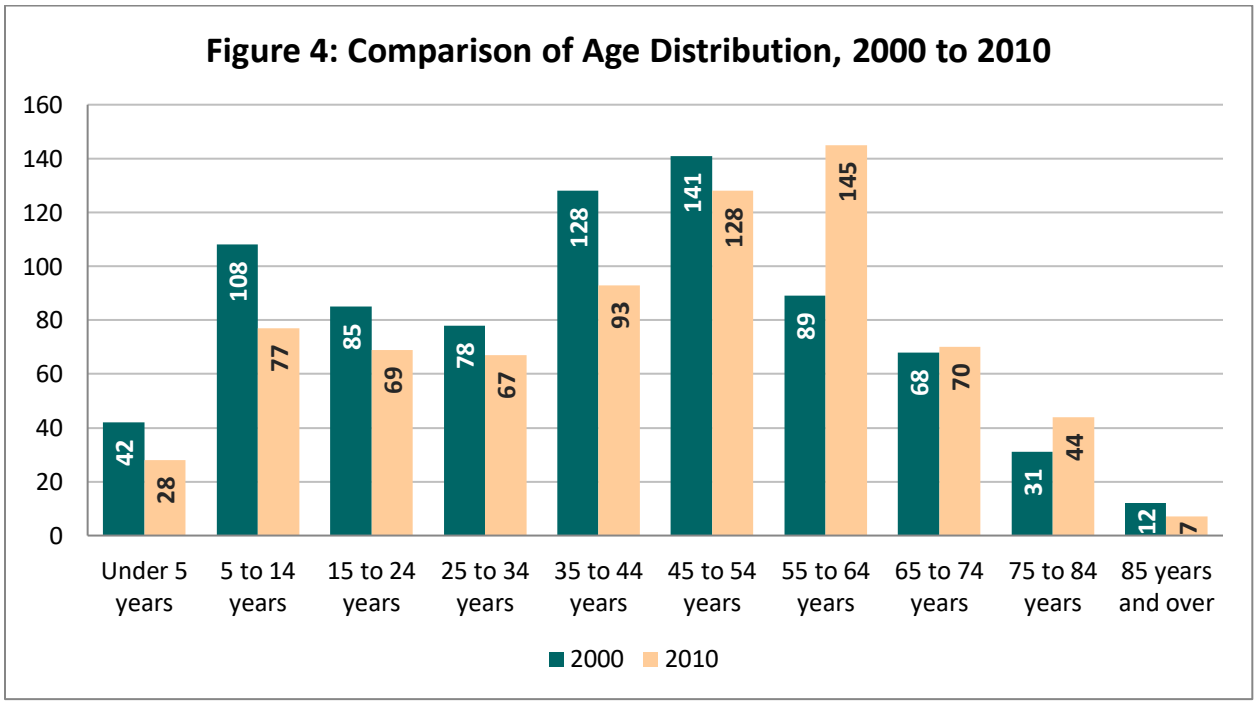
A comparison of age cohort data derived from the 2010 Census reveals that the age distribution of Halifax's residents varies little from that found in Windham County or the State of Vermont as a whole. The median age in Halifax is 47.9 years while Windham County is 40.0 years and the State is 37.7 years.

A closer look at Halifax's 2000 population distribution compared to its 2010 distribution in Figure 4, however, shows distinct changes in certain age groups. Most notable are the differences in the age groups of <5 year olds, and all age groups up to 54 year olds which all showed decreases in percentages. A significantly higher percentage (almost 10%) of 55 to 74 year old

residents comprised Halifax's population in 2010 and 75-85+ year olds grew by about 2%. Along with the State and the County, Halifax, overall, is aging.



Source: US Bureau of Census, 2010 Census



Source: US Bureau of Census, 2000 & 2010 Census

Population Projections

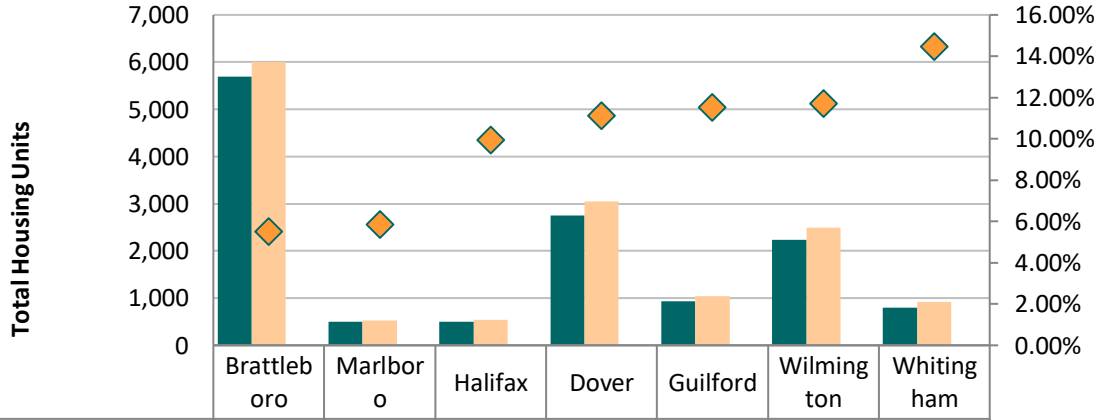
Population trends are of interest in projecting future housing, facility, and service needs, as well as the town's fiscal outlook and well-being. Predicting future population, however, is necessarily a guessing game, as many forces from outside the community impact changes in local and regional population.

Fluctuations in the state and national economies will continue to affect the rate of population growth in Halifax. Considering strong trends in population increases over the past three decades and the cyclical nature of the economy, it is probable that Halifax will continue to grow. Population projections based on growth trends established from the 1980 to 1990 decade suggested that Halifax's year-round population could reach 832 persons by the year 2005 (sources: VT Department of Health and VT Population Projections 1990-2015; VT Health Care Authority, Center for Rural Studies, 1993). According to the 2000 Census it had reached 782 year-round residents, but by the 2010 Census this number had decreased to 728. As of 2018, it had increased to 755.

HOUSING

A comparison of Census data indicates that the total number of housing units in Halifax, including year-round, seasonal, and vacant units, increased to 542 from 493, or 9.9% between 2000 and 2010. Housing growth for Windham County was a comparable 10% in this same period, while the statewide increase was 9.6%. Halifax's neighboring communities except for Brattleboro and Marlboro, also experienced higher rates of overall housing growth, particularly the towns of Wilmington, Whitingham, Dover and Guilford.

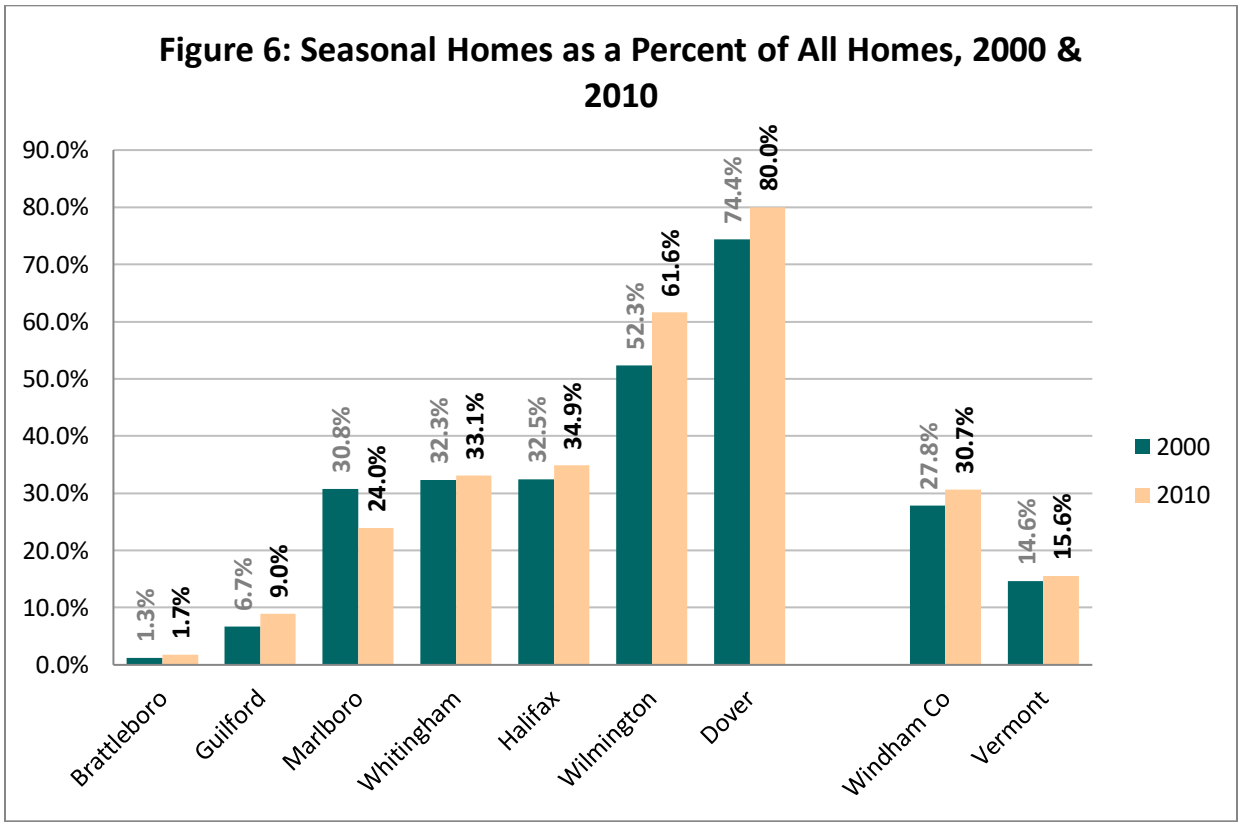
Figure 5: Change in Housing Units, 2000-2010



	Brattleboro	Marlboro	Halifax	Dover	Guilford	Wilmington	Whitingham
2000	5,686	497	493	2,749	931	2,232	802
2010	5,998	526	542	3,054	1,038	2,493	918
Actual Change 2000-2010	312	29	49	305	107	261	116
% Change 2000-2010	5.49%	5.84%	9.94%	11.09%	11.49%	11.69%	14.46%

Source: US Bureau of Census, 2000 & 2010 Census

Figure 6 shows that seasonal (vacation) housing continues to be a large contributor to Halifax's total housing stock in 2010. This table also shows how Halifax compares to other neighboring towns, the County, and the State.



Source: US Bureau of Census, 2000 & 2010 Census

A closer look at historic housing data reveals that over the past four decades Halifax has increasingly become a more "year-round housing town". In 1970, 60% of Halifax's housing units were seasonal compared to 32.5% in 2000 and 34.9% in 2010. Conversely, year-round housing comprised only 32% of the local housing stock in 1970, but jumped to 63.3% in 2000. Much of this shift in housing took place during the 1970s, yet the trend clearly continued into the 1980s and 1990s.

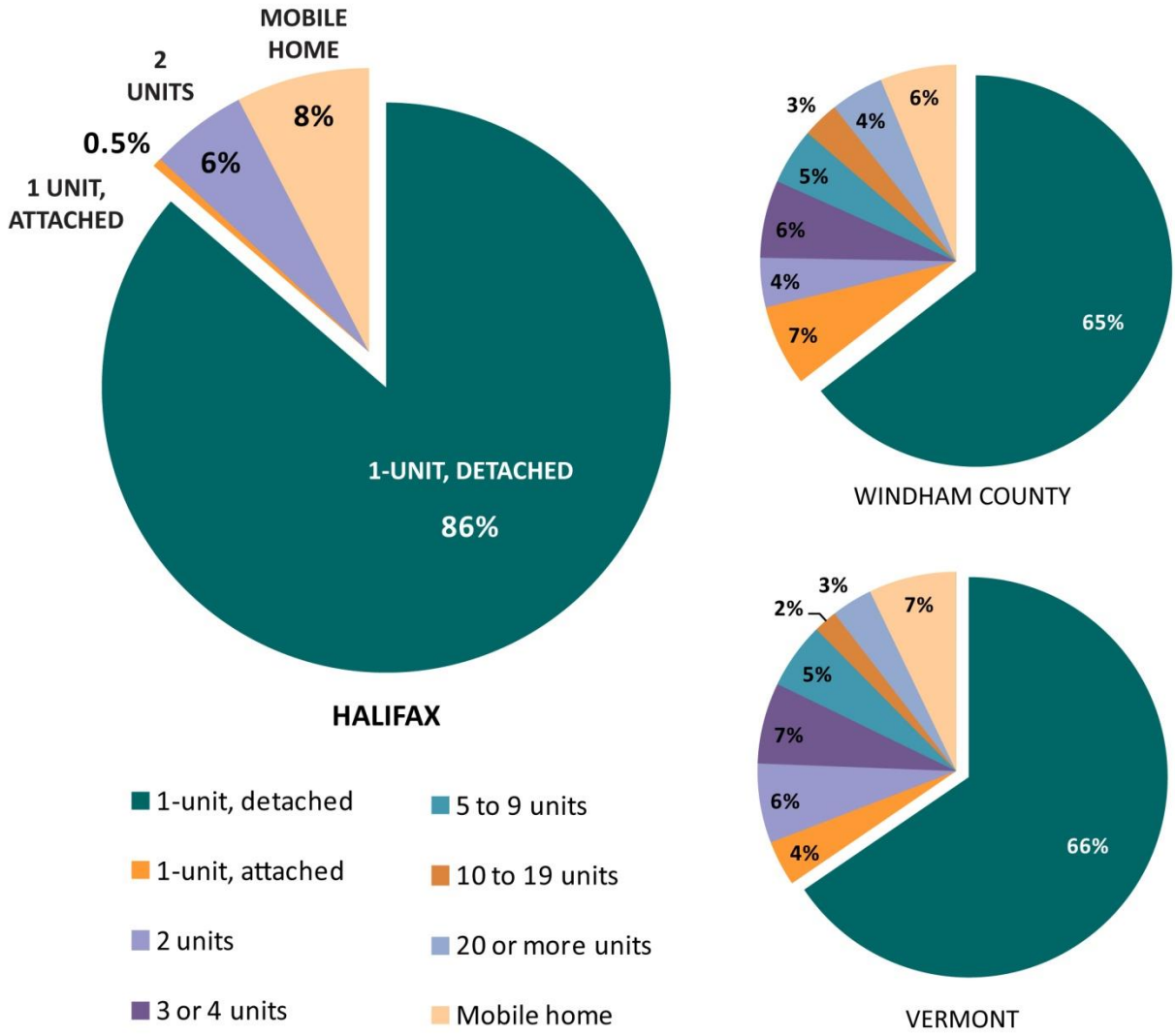
As Figure 7 reveals, Halifax is a community dominated by single-family homes. Compared to Windham County and the state, Halifax has a significantly higher proportion of detached single-family homes (86%).

Understanding the American Community Survey Data

While much data used in the plan are from the decennial US Census others are from the American Community Survey (ACS). Data published in the ACS are five- year estimates and do not reflect actual counts like population, age, or sex. These estimates are useful when analyzing trends in small populations, but should be used cautiously when making direct comparisons with decennial Census data. ACS data are estimates over a five year period and have a relatively large

margin of error. The ACS is conducted year round to gather "period" data, unlike the decennial Census which is only conducted every ten years and collects actual "point-in-time" data.

FIGURE 7: TYPES OF HOUSING IN HALIFAX



Source: 2006-2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Halifax's housing stock is of varied age. 2010 US Census data reveals that 49 new homes have been built in Halifax between 2000 and 2010, or 9.94% of total town housing. Between 1980 and 1990, 19% of total existing housing units in Halifax were built, while 45.5% date from between 1940 and 1979, and 25.9% were constructed prior to 1939.

Like most communities in Vermont, the cost of housing in Halifax has climbed steadily over the past decade.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

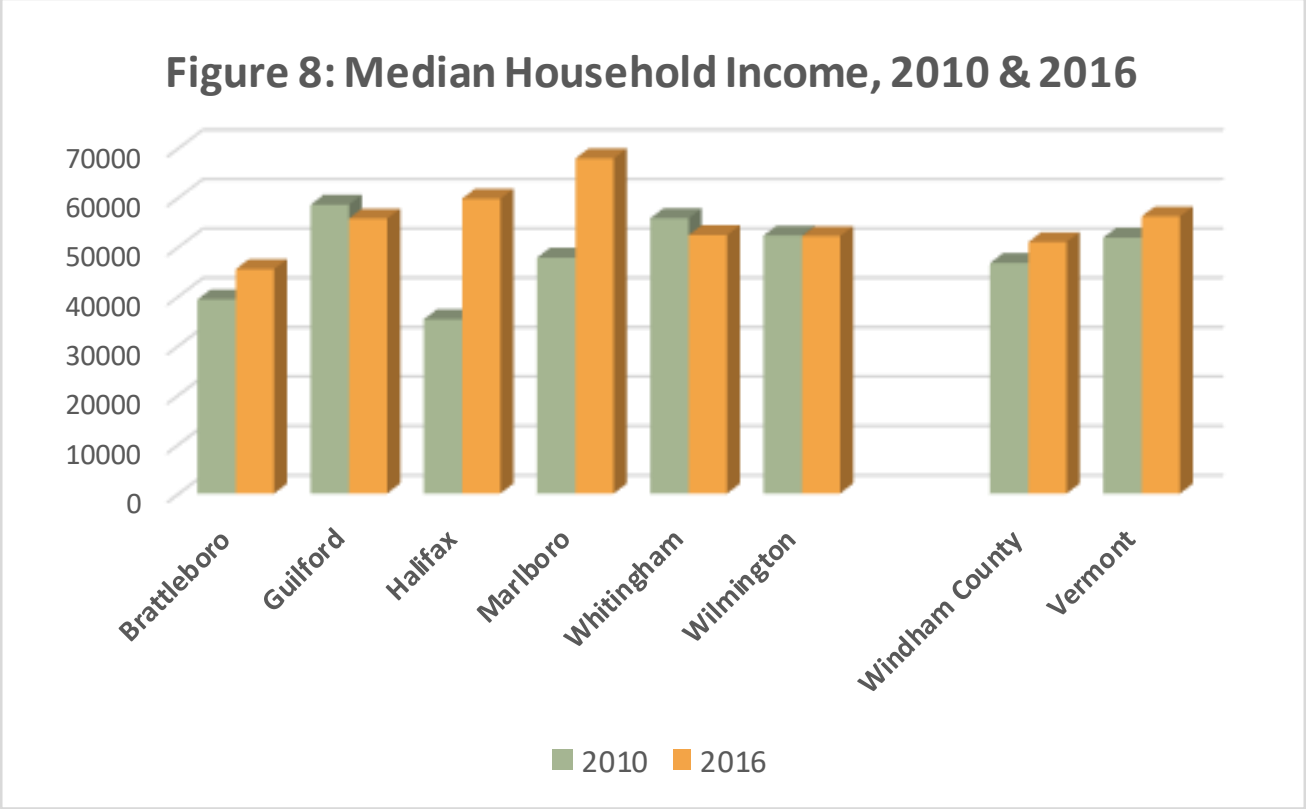
Student enrollment in the kindergarten through eighth grade Halifax system has fluctuated from 60 students in 1980, to 67 students in 1990, and 62 students in 2000. As of March, 2018 the

enrollment had decreased to 53 students. The total number of students attending Secondary schools as of March, 2018 was 18. (Source: Windham Southwest Supervisory Union).

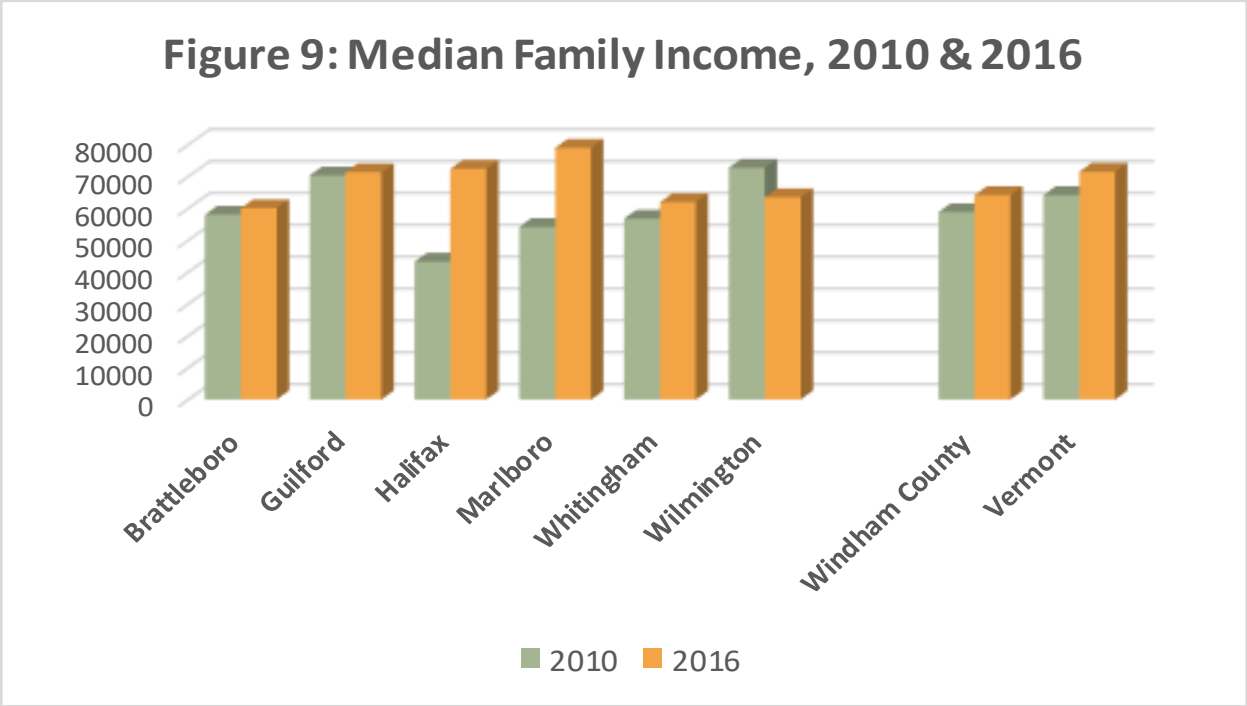
INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

2010 Census data offers detailed information regarding the income characteristics of Halifax's residents. This information provides an important framework for understanding the social, economic and housing needs of various segments of Halifax's population. Household income includes the income of the householder and all other persons 15 years old and over living in the household, whether related or not. Family income includes the income of all members 15 years old and over in the family.

As reported in the 2010 Census, the median household income in Halifax was $35,313; median family income was $43,281. Both of these income figures were lower than State or County averages, and lower than neighboring towns. According to 2016 estimates, the median household income for Halifax increased to $59,712, while the median family income increased to $72,411. These figures are higher than all surrounding towns except Marlboro and are higher than County and State. It is important to note that *median* denotes the midpoint, below and above which there are an equal number of values, not the average.



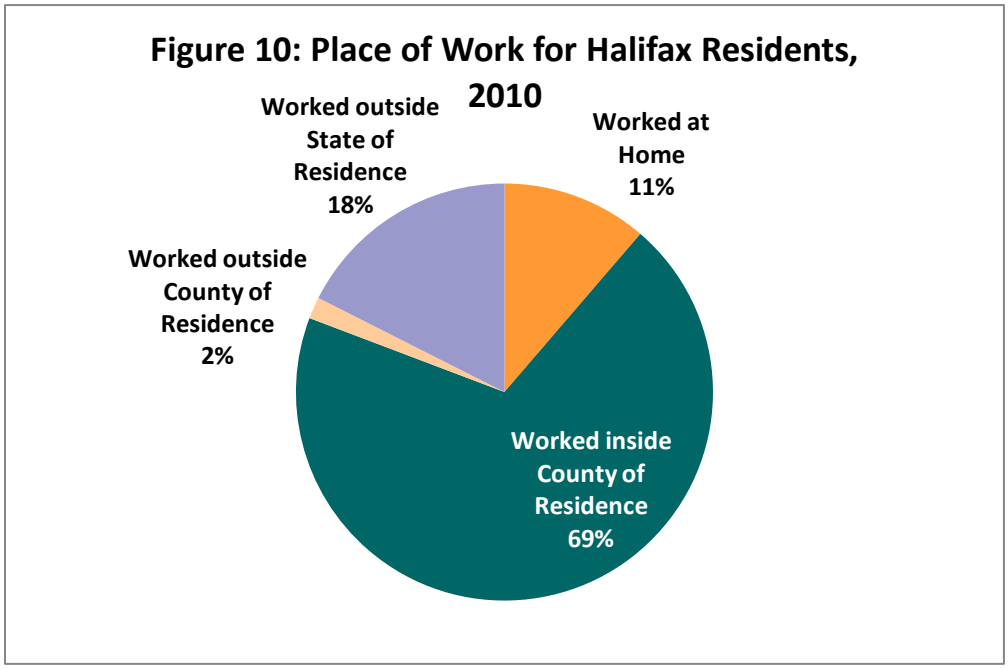
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 and 2012-2016 American Community Survey



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 and 2012-2016 American Community Survey

EMPLOYMENT

Halifax's residents rely heavily on neighboring communities for employment opportunities. According to Census findings, 88 percent of all local workers were employed in jobs located outside of Halifax in 1990. As Figure 10 demonstrates, in 2010 89% of Halifax's working population was employed outside of Halifax.



Source: 2006-2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Regional job opportunities for Halifax's workers are varied. Management, professional and related occupations comprise the largest employment segment. Sales and office occupations comprise the next largest segment, followed by production, transportation and material moving occupations. Service occupations and construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations provide additional opportunities. Jobs in agriculture declined dramatically over the last twenty years and continue to decrease as a percentage of total jobs in town.

TRAFFIC

The Vermont Agency of Transportation regularly conducts traffic counts throughout the State of Vermont. Recent counts along Route 112 in Halifax indicate that the average annual daily traffic (AADT) has remained relatively constant since 2010 at approximately 1,200, with some areas reporting a growth of 1-2%. Some local roads show a decrease in AADT between counts in 2007 and 2013, such as Brook Road at -2% and Green River Road at -4%.

In the most recent ACS estimates, 2012-2016, of the 376 workers 16 years and over, 280 (74.5%) drove alone. Of those driving to work, 18 people carpooled (4.8%). Sixty people (16%) walked to work, used other means, or worked at home. ACS estimates indicate that 18 people used public transportation, but to local residents' knowledge no people used public transportation. Limited services for seniors are available in the area, however, via the MOOver from Deerfield Valley Transit. The mean travel time to work was 37.9 minutes (Sources: US Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey,).

POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

LAND USE

This portion of the Town Plan describes goals, land use policies, and the land use classification system for the town. These goals and policies are intended to recognize existing land use patterns, physical and geographic limitations to development, and flood hazards, and to protect wetlands, surface waters, shorelands, forests, and agricultural resources. Also taken into consideration are the present and probable road systems within the town, other existing town infrastructure, and the goals and policies stated in other portions of the Plan. Public investment and infrastructure exert a major influence on where development occurs and should be compatible with maintaining the historic development patterns of the town. Recent severe storm damage from natural disasters and predictions of increasing severity of storms should also be considered for land use planning, in order to limit the economic and personal toll of potential damage, as should other risks identified in the Town's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

The capability of land in the town to support various activities is limited. There are areas of shallow soils, hardpan soils, and steep slopes that are not conducive to on-site septic systems. Because of underlying rock formations, other portions of the town have limited water supplies, which are already being tapped by a number of drilled wells. Uses in floodplains, river corridors, and shorelands should be limited to those that will not damage these fragile and

valuable areas, nor be damaged by occasional flash flooding, channel shifting or fluvial erosion, or recurring localized flooding. Consideration should also be given to protecting large blocks of contiguous forest and the habitat connectors between them, as discussed in more detail in Natural Resources. The town should encourage activities that embrace the historic settlement patterns of the town, have a minimal impact on the finite natural and fiscal resources of the community, promote resiliency in the face of natural disaster, and do not put the lives and possessions of property owners, and the lives of our emergency responders, at risk.

The following policies, in conjunction with the proposed land use classification system and the Proposed Land Use Map, provide a generalized view of land use in the town. They form the basis for most of Halifax's Zoning Bylaw, which is a regulatory plan implementation mechanism for ensuring that more specific aspects of land use are consistent with sound planning practice and the goals of the Town Plan. Zoning regulations should be reviewed frequently to ensure that they promote sustainable land use practices, and implement the goals and policies of the Plan.

Land Use Policies

1. Discourage strip development on roads by requiring appropriate frontage and land use requirements as described in Land Use Classification and District Recommendations.

2. Establish liaison with counterparts in abutting communities to assess the impact on Halifax of any proposed development in those communities and to take whatever steps necessary to ensure that such developments do not have an undue adverse effect on the town, and that development within Halifax will not have an undue adverse effect on its neighbors. Among these effects are development within watersheds that will likely result in increased flood hazard risk.

3. Protect the health and safety of home owners as well as the natural beauty and rural character of the town by directing appropriate new development that is outside the Village District along currently maintained roads.

4. Encourage the continued use of town trails for recreational and resource management purposes.

5. Prohibit development on slopes of more than 25% to preserve the scenic, recreational and natural resource management benefits of rugged and poorly accessible areas, as well as preventing stormwater runoff and erosion, and assuring properly functioning wastewater systems.

6. Encourage the use of innovative land saving techniques such as cluster development, planned unit developments, and fixed area density allocation to protect agriculture, forest, and mineral resource lands from development and fragmentation.

7. Require a maximum area that structures can cover on a lot in keeping with impervious coverage regulations in each zoning district.

8. Encourage home occupations in the town. Implementation requirements for home occupations will be accomplished through zoning by-laws.

9. Require that a potable water supply and a wastewater system, including toilets, are accessible to the employees of a home occupation.

10. (A) Prohibit the initiation of construction under a zoning permit unless and until a wastewater and potable water supply permit is issued under 10 V.S.A. Chapter 64;

    (B) Establish an application process for a zoning or subdivision permit under which an applicant may submit a permit application for town review and the town may condition the issuance of a final permit upon issuance of a wastewater and potable water supply permit under 10 V.S.A. Chapter 64.

11. Encourage the preservation or adaptive reuse of existing historic structures in the town.

12. Establish a town capital improvement plan and budget that relates to the overall goals of the Town Plan. Target federal, state or private funding to support infrastructure improvements, bridge and highway repairs, installation of sidewalks and lighting, housing, recreation or any other identified town need.

13. Work with the Agency of Natural Resources and the Windham Regional Commission to develop stream geomorphic assessments for all significant streams and rivers to determine the presence and extent of floodplains and fluvial erosion hazard zones.

Land Use Recommendations

1. Evaluate mechanisms for the transfer of development rights as a method of preserving significant agricultural, forest, and scenic areas.

2. Evaluate areas appropriate for industrial and commercial development.

3. Evaluate the current Village District Zoning requirements to ensure that they permit future commercial and residential growth while maintaining a traditional village center. The town should consider whether lowering frontage and acreage requirements in the Village District might foster in-fill development and encourage a village pattern of development.

LAND USE CLASSIFICATION

The classification of Halifax lands into Conservation, Rural Residential and Village districts has been formulated to be generally consistent with the maps and should be used together with the maps. It is the clear intent of this Town Plan that when more accurate or detailed information becomes available, it should take precedence over general descriptions or maps. Land Use classification descriptions and related Zoning Regulations should be modified when found to be inconsistent with the stated Land Use Policies.

A brief explanation of the criteria, purposes, and suggested development intensities for each land use area follows.

Conservation District

The purpose of the Conservation District is to protect the natural resource value of lands that are essentially undeveloped; lack direct access to arterial or collector roads; are important upland wildlife habitat or corridors, particularly for large game animals such as deer, moose and bear; have high forestry value; are unsuitable for land development; or include irreplaceable, limited, or significant natural, recreational or scenic resources.

The Conservation District shall be used for agriculture, forestry, open space conservation, strict resource management, recreation, hunting and residential one/two-family dwellings, which may, where approved, be in the form of carefully and strictly controlled planned residential development retaining the requisite preserved open space and overall low density of the district.

Conservation District Recommendations

1. These lands are appropriate for low-intensity recreation, forestry, wildlife habitat, agriculture, hunting and other open space uses. Development, which creates significant amounts of traffic or noise, or which otherwise has an adverse impact on the environment, is undesirable.

2. Residential uses and accessory uses should be permitted only at very low densities. The recommended minimum lot size is 15 acres. The minimum road frontage should be 500 feet. In response to a 2001 Community Survey, the town should carefully explore the possibility of increasing frontage and acreage requirements in this district to better meet the goal of low-density development.

3. Strictly and carefully controlled residential planned unit development (PUDs) may provide an appropriate means for conserving open space in this district. Any residential PUD or cluster housing development will be approved at no higher density than that which could be permitted if the land consisted of separate lots conforming with regulations in the conservation district, giving due consideration to conditions limiting development such as shallow soil, wetness and steep slope. No subsequent development of the remaining land in such a development will be allowed.

Rural Residential District

These are lands which appear capable of accommodating a major proportion of the expected growth of Halifax. Lands in this district generally have slight or moderate physical limitations to development, are readily accessible by improved public highways, and generally appear suitable for residential development and compatible light industrial or light commercial uses.

There are lands within the Rural Residential District that have critical or serious limitations for development or which have high resource value. These should be considered when these lands are developed. The development of Rural Residential Areas shall not damage resource values as shown on the Resource Areas map and shall not ignore physical limitations to

development. Agriculture, forestry, open space and recreational uses within these areas shall be maintained and encouraged.

Planned unit residential developments (cluster housing) provide an appropriate means for conserving open space and natural resources in such rural areas. Random location of commercial or industrial uses in the Rural Residential area must be discouraged; where these uses are allowed, they shall be carefully controlled to avoid strip development, unreasonable burdens on town roads and services, and other adverse impacts.

The suggested lot area minimum for each single or two family dwelling or nonresidential use is 3 acres with road frontage of 300 feet.

Rural Residential District Recommendations

1. These lands are appropriate for residential uses, light commercial and light industrial uses, agriculture, forestry, hunting, and low-intensity recreational and open space uses.

2. Residential uses should be developed at densities low enough to protect resource values and to perpetuate the traditional settlement pattern of this area. The recommended minimum lot size is 3 acres. The minimum road frontage should be 300 feet. The town should consider the possibility of expanding acreage and frontage requirements to more adequately conform to traditional settlement patterns.

3. Agriculture, forestry, and open space and recreational uses should be maintained and encouraged.

4. Development proposals on agricultural lands, particularly in the five areas specified on the Physical Limitations to Development and Resource maps, should be subject to special consideration aimed at conserving the agricultural production of the land.

5. Planned unit development or cluster housing may provide an appropriate means for conserving open space and natural resources in this area. Any such development should be strictly and carefully controlled to avoid unreasonable burdens on town roads and services, and adverse impacts on neighborhoods and natural resources.

6. Commercial and industrial uses should be compatible with the existing land uses and carefully controlled to avoid strip development, unreasonable burdens on town roads and services, and other adverse impacts. Site plan review and conditional use review standards in zoning should, at a minimum, apply to access, circulation and parking, landscaping and appropriate buffers between properties.

7. Consider providing a density bonus for preservation of open space, e.g., a 20% bonus for conserving 60% of the land.

Village District

The Village District is defined as the existing Village (West Halifax) and additional adjacent lands which appear suitable for future growth. These lands are convenient to the existing Village, some offer few or slight limitations for development, and can be further developed for Village uses without causing undue damage to resource values.

The suggested lot area for each dwelling or nonresidential use is 2 acres, unless limitations to development exist, in which case it should be greater.

Village District Recommendations

1. This area should continue to support the traditional role of the village as a focus of economic, cultural, and social activities.

2. Preserving the historic, aesthetic and rural character of West Halifax is of critical importance. New construction, alterations and reconstruction should proceed in a manner which protects and enhances the integrity of the village. Development standards and site plan review are necessary to ensure that different uses will be compatible.

3. These lands are appropriate for a mixture of residential uses, small businesses, and public and government facilities. Recommended minimum lot size for residential uses is 2 acres. The minimum road frontage should be 200 feet. To encourage a traditional village pattern, the town should consider whether lowering frontage and acreage requirements in this district would be appropriate and acceptable. The town may wish to consider expanding the district or creating another such district.

4. Commercial and industrial uses should be compatible with the existing land uses and carefully controlled to avoid strip development, unreasonable burdens on town roads and services, and other adverse impacts. Site plan review and conditional use review standards in zoning should, at a minimum, apply to access, circulation and parking, landscaping, signs, and appropriate buffers between properties.

FLOOD HAZARD AREAS

National Flood Insurance Program FEMA-mapped flood hazard areas are limited, found along the East Branch of the North River as noted on the Water Resources Map. Development within these flood hazard areas could affect the ability of watercourses to carry runoff, and the safety of buildings and their occupants. As witnessed during and in the aftermath of Hurricane Irene, there are numerous additional areas that should be considered as flood hazard areas due to the potential for fluvial erosion. Development in these areas should be considered under the same zoning bylaws (Article 8) as those that are currently on the FEMA Federal Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) adopted by the Town on March 6, 2012.

In 2013 Vermont enacted Act 16, "An act relating to municipal and regional planning and flood resilience," which requires that all municipal plans effective after July 1, 2014 include a flood resilience element pursuant to the purposes of and consistent with the state planning goals specified in 24 V.S.A. § 4302:

(14) To encourage flood resilient communities.

(A) New development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas should be avoided. If new development is to be built in such areas, it should not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.

(B) The protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion should be encouraged.
(C) Flood emergency preparedness and response planning should be encouraged.

Fluvial Erosion

By statutory definition, "fluvial erosion" means the erosion or scouring of riverbeds and banks during high flow conditions of a river. Much of the flooding damage experienced in Vermont is from the power of moving water causing the erosion of stream banks supporting roads and buildings and the sudden destruction of under-sized culverts and bridges. Providing a river the room it needs to slow its flow can, over time, allow it to function as a responsive system and avoid repeated losses to public infrastructure and investments.

Rivers, streams, and their channels are changing constantly in response to the inputs of water, energy, sediment and debris that pass along them. Erosion (and deposition) along a stream or river is natural. Sometimes, efforts to stop this process in one place can make it worse in others. Every few years a stream fills to bankfull and the shape of the channel responds to this force by cutting deeper into some streambanks and also by depositing sediments in the quiet inside bends. This process is visible as an "S" shaped form that slowly changes position.

If the stream cannot spill out of its banks, the power of the trapped water increases and the channel either digs down or cuts out further to the sides. Where there are roads and buildings nearby these adjustments to the channel's shape can become dramatic and costly.

A river is in geomorphic equilibrium when its inputs of water, energy, sediment, and debris are in balance. In this condition a river is neither building up sediment in the channel nor losing sediment from its bed. Importantly, a river in equilibrium has not become overly deep and can continue to overflow onto its floodplains. The water that spills onto the floodplain slows down, and the velocity of the water still in the channel does not become excessively powerful.

In order to protect roads and buildings it is important to be sure that the river is able to function as well as possible upstream and downstream. We need functional streams and rivers with room to adjust (river corridors) and intact floodplains to moderate the impact of high water events.

River corridors and floodplains

River corridors and floodplains are different but frequently closely related. The river corridor is the area that provides the physical space that a river needs to express its energy and meander without it having to dig down or out. The state-designated river corridor includes a 50-foot buffer on either side of the fluvial erosion hazard area to prevent disturbance in this area and allow for bank stabilization. Statute defines it as: "River corridor" means the land area adjacent to a river that is required to accommodate the dimensions, slope, planform, and buffer of the naturally stable channel and that is necessary for the natural maintenance or natural restoration of a

dynamic equilibrium condition and for minimization of fluvial erosion hazards, as delineated by the Agency of Natural Resources in accordance with river corridor protection procedures.

A floodplain is the area where water flowing out over a river bank can spread out and slow down. The floodplain as defined by FEMA is the area that will be inundated by the flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The 1-percent annual chance flood is also referred to as the base flood or, most commonly, the 100-year flood.

River corridors and floodplains overlap a great deal. One on top of the other there might be 60 – 90% overlap. However, there are areas in the river corridor that will be eventually shaped by the activities of the channel--although they may be high and dry--and other areas in the floodplain that will be under water during a large flood, but which the river channel may not need to access to maintain its geomorphic equilibrium.

The extent of a river corridor is based on calculations including such things as the meander belt of the stream, soils, watershed size and gradient, and channel width. The extent of floodplains is based on calculations such as a stream's peak flow history and frequency.

Regulatory Flood Hazard Designations

There are two types of regulatory flood hazard designations and two sets of official maps that identify those flood hazards in Vermont: inundation hazard areas that are identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) and fluvial erosion hazard areas that are identified by the VT Agency of Natural Resources on river corridor maps.

Halifax has land, homes and businesses that are susceptible to the two types of flooding impacts: inundation and fluvial erosion. Inundation flooding occurs during high water events on the North River. Fluvial erosion occurs in areas both in and out of the flood hazard area (floodplain) as mapped by the FEMA. Both inundation flooding and fluvial erosion are potential hazards along the North River, Green River and Branch Brook, as well as along streams that drain watersheds extending to our borders with Marlboro and Whitingham.

<u>Inundation Hazard</u>

Towns participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) must regulate development in areas designated on the FIRMs that show the floodplain that FEMA has calculated would be covered by water in a 1% chance annual inundation event, also referred to as the "100 year flood" or base flood. This area of inundation is called the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). FIRMs may also show expected base flood elevations (BFEs) and floodways (smaller areas that carry more current). FIRMS are only prepared for larger streams and rivers. The Town of Halifax has areas of inundation hazard flood risk mapped by FEMA.

<u>Fluvial Erosion Hazard</u>

A significant portion of flood damage in Vermont occurs outside of the FEMA-mapped floodplain areas and along smaller upland streams, as well as along road drainage systems that fail to convey the amount of water they are receiving. Vermont ANR's river corridor maps show

the area needed to address the fluvial erosion hazards, which may be inside of FEMA-mapped areas, but often extends outside of them. River corridor maps delineate areas where the lateral movement of the river and the associated erosion may be more of the threat than inundation by floodwaters. Elevation or floodproofing alone may not be protective of structures in these areas, as erosion can undermine structures. ANR released statewide river corridor maps in January 2015. The Town of Halifax has areas of river corridor mapped by ANR.

Flood Hazard Regulation

Inundation

For federal flood insurance to be available to property owners though the NFIP, a municipality must adopt and administer flood hazard area regulations. These can be within local zoning regulations or adopted as a free-standing bylaw. A community's flood hazard regulations must apply to at least the Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) identified by FEMA. They regulate new structures and place restrictions on other types of activities, such as placing fill within the floodplain. They specify land, area, and structural requirements to be adhered to within the SFHA.

Erosion

To address Act 16, to protect citizens, infrastructure, and the environment, and to qualify for maximum Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund state match in the event of a disaster, a town must adopt and administer river corridor protection standards as part of its flood hazard area regulations. These can be within local zoning regulations or adopted as a free-standing bylaw.

Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund

The Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) provides state funding to match Federal Public Assistance after federally-declared disasters. Eligible public costs are reimbursed by federal taxpayers at 75%. For disasters after October 23, 2014, the State of Vermont will contribute an additional 7.5% toward the costs. For communities that take specific steps to reduce flood damage the State will contribute 12.5% or 17.5% of the total cost. Towns that participate in the NFIP and regulate SFHAs, and also meet several other state requirements, can achieve a 12.5% state share of the required 25% state/local match for federal disaster relief funds. Towns that regulate river corridors can obtain an additional 5% ERAF state match (for a total state match of 17.5%), reducing the town's required local match to 7.5%. As of 2017, Halifax qualified for the 17.5% state match.

Addressing flood resilience

This plan identifies flood hazards as the Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) shown on the NFIP FIRMs and identifies fluvial erosion hazard areas as those shown on the ANR river corridor maps. Further, this Plan designates both those identified areas as areas to be protected, including floodplains, river corridors, and land adjacent to streams, wetlands, and upland forests, to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and improved property. In addition, this plan incorporates by reference the town's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan approved under 44 C.F.R. §

201.6. Finally, this plan recommends the following policies and strategies to protect the designated areas to mitigate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and municipal investments.

Flood Resilience Policies

1. It is the policy of the town to foster the protection and restoration of river corridors, floodplains, wetlands, and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.

2. It is the policy of the town to protect floodplains, river corridors, land adjacent to streams, wetlands, and upland forests through adoption and administration of flood hazard area regulations governing development in designated Special Flood Hazard Areas and River Corridors, in order to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure, improved property, people, and the environment.

3. New development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas should be avoided. If new development is to be built in such areas, it should not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.

4. The protection and restoration of stream geomorphic equilibrium, floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion should be encouraged.

5. Flood emergency preparedness and response planning are encouraged.

6. Reserve flood hazard areas for agriculture, recreation, or other purposes, which do not significantly impair the land's ability to handle floodwaters.

7. Deny any development within a flood hazard area that restricts or diverts the flow of floodwaters.

8. Ensure the health, safety and welfare of the public during flooding by discouraging all construction within flood hazard areas.

9. Ensure that any property improvements within or in close proximity to a designated flood hazard area are in full compliance with the duly adopted zoning and flood hazard bylaws.

10. Work with the Agency of Natural Resources and the Windham Regional Commission to conduct stream geomorphic assessments, determine what areas are at risk of fluvial erosion, and develop fluvial erosion hazard maps. This information shall form the basis for the establishment of a fluvial erosion hazard zone and related bylaw amendments.

11. The Halifax Zoning Administrator shall refer all zoning applications involving the use of flood hazard areas to the Agency of Natural Resources as required under Chapter 117, 24 V.S.A., for review prior to issuing a zoning permit.

Flood Resilience Strategy Recommendations

1. The town will be familiar with Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) that delineate areas that could be inundated by water during flooding. (Selectboard, Development Review Board, Zoning Administrator)

2. The town will be familiar with ANR River Corridor maps that delineate the land area adjacent to streams and rivers that are required to accommodate a stable channel. (Selectboard, Development Review Board, Zoning Administrator)

3. The town will pursue a flood resilience management approach whose essential components are to identify and map flood and fluvial erosion hazard areas based on studies and maps provided by the Vermont ANR Rivers Program, and designate those areas for protection to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and private property.

4. The town will update the Flood Hazard Areas Regulations to include regulation of river corridors, and include provisions for advance notification of and specific limits on new development activities in identified flood hazard areas, fluvial erosion areas, and/or River Corridors, based on regulatory templates developed by the ANR DEC Rivers Program.

5. The town will regulate any new development in identified flood hazard areas, fluvial erosion hazard areas, and/or River Corridors to ensure that development does not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion, and extend these provisions to development activities that might increase the amount and/or rate of runoff and soil erosion from upland areas.

6. The town will further pursue a flood resilience management approach by implementing its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and other strategies for restoring the stream geomorphic equilibrium conditions and enhancing the emergency preparedness that will mitigate the risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and municipal investments.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is a process through which a municipality plans for and takes action to improve the standard of living within the Town. The local economy has a direct influence on the well-being of a community's residents, its facilities and services, and its environment.

Sound economic development planning can provide jobs commensurate with the skills and aims of residents, build the skills of its workforce, provide a balanced and economically resilient tax base to meet the needs of the community, and build upon the human, natural and cultural assets of the Town. Conversely, a poorly planned local economy can degrade the Town's quality of life, standard of living, and fiscal health. Clearly, economic development planning and implementation activity initiated in Halifax should lead to improvement in the overall quality of life for all segments of the local population.

As a small rural community, the Town of Halifax has a local economy based primarily on employment outside the town, and to a lesser degree within the town on small business, forestry, sand and gravel operations, construction, education, home industries, and services to local and regional residents and second-home owners. There are few commercial or tourist-oriented uses in Halifax. Halifax's "off the beaten path" location is generally not conducive to such uses. Local residents and travelers passing through the region rely instead on Brattleboro, Greenfield and Wilmington for most of their major purchases such as groceries, apparel, home furnishings, and hardware and department store products.

Like many Vermont rural communities, home-based work in Halifax is becoming an increasingly important sector of the local economy, providing in-town jobs to local residents, with minimal impact on community facilities and services or the environment. Home-based work is often particularly important to young families with children, where a second income is possible without major disruption to family life.

With ongoing technological advances in Vermont's electronic communication systems, it is likely that increasing numbers of people will be attracted to or dependent upon home-based employment in rural areas like Halifax, "commuting" electronically to work via the so-called information super highway. While the availability of high-speed internet could help the town to retain current and attract new residents and businesses, its absence could result in the loss of residents and businesses, and impair communications within and beyond the town as more people rely on the internet and wireless communication technologies.

One issue that can affect economic development is affordable child care and with the aging population in Halifax, (121 between the ages of 65 and 85+ according to 2010 census) elder care could also impact development. In 2000 there were 42 Halifax children under the age of 5. That number decreased to 28 by 2010. Those Halifax children between the ages of 5 and 14 also decreased from 108 in 2000 to 77 in 2010.

Some surrounding towns have child care facilities, but there are currently no state "licensed provider" or "registered home" child care facilities in Halifax.

Economic Development Policies

1. Support economic development, which provides diversified and stable local employment opportunities, enhances Halifax's small-town rural character, and protects the community's important natural resources.

2. Require that economic development take into account the burden and/or expansion of existing town services and facilities. Ensure that growth is in balance with the provision of services and taxes. Ensure that housing and Town taxes in Halifax remain affordable to all residents.

3. Require that all commercial and industrial development adequately controls its wastes, relates satisfactorily to existing land uses, and does not result in traffic congestion.

4. Encourage the development of cottage industries, home-based work and entrepreneurial ventures which preserve and revitalize Halifax's rural character and have minimal impact on the community's environment and infrastructure.

5. Consider Halifax's capacity to provide quality child care for its youngest population when the town responds to new development, and support town and regional efforts to increase the availability and affordability of child care.

6. Pursue economic development that does not cause excessive noise, large volumes of traffic, noxious or hazardous wastes, radioactive materials, and/or electromagnetic emissions.

7. Require that adequate vegetative buffers be maintained between commercial and industrial development and noncommercial/industrial lots.

8. Require that all commercial and industrial development provide adequate landscaping and safe pedestrian and vehicular access.

Economic Development Recommendations

1. The town should consider adopting a capital budget and plan in order to better gauge the capacity and affordability of community facilities and services relative to new economic development proposals in Halifax.

2. The Halifax Zoning Bylaw permits a variety of business uses within residential areas. Provisions which require adequate landscaping, screening and buffering should be monitored for overall effectiveness and impact on the community.

3. The town should consider coordinating a meeting to discuss child care needs of residents as well as issues related to child care financing and infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development.

4. The town should actively seek the acquisition of high speed internet to serve all citizens in order to promote entrepreneurial endeavors and to facilitate the flow of information and communication within and beyond the town.

Surface Waters

The largest body of water in Halifax is the impounded Deer Park Pond. In addition, there are numerous beaver ponds, wetlands, farm ponds and fish ponds. These waters serve as a valuable resource for fish and wildlife habitat, flood mitigation, fire safety, recreation, and aesthetic value.

The predominant riverine surface waters in Halifax include the Green River and the East Branch of the North River and their tributaries which are classified as Class B waters. This classification is suitable for bathing and recreation, irrigation and agricultural uses; it is good fish habitat, has good aesthetic value and is acceptable for public water supply with filtration and disinfection.

Major tributaries include the following:

Green River Tributaries	*East Branch Tributaries*
Harrisville Brook	Hagar Brook
Pond Brook	Pease Brook
Hinesburg Brook (Hale Brook)	Fowler Brook
Borden Brook	Randall Brook
Roaring Brook	Vaughn Brook
	Branch Brook
	Sperry Brook

Overall, Halifax has maintained good surface water quality by avoiding the erosion and sedimentation problems often associated with land development. Potential threats to surface water quality in Halifax exist, however, and include septic system failures, nutrient loading, use of pesticides and herbicides, and road salting.

Surface Water Policies

1. Ensure that the natural course, condition, and function of watercourses and stream banks not be changed permanently except for necessary crossings by bridges or culverts that are engineered and designed to Agency of Natural Resources standards and policies or greater.

2. Require that undisturbed vegetation buffers be maintained along the banks of surface waters.

3. Require that any development or modification around natural ponds be done with the consultation and permitting of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources and the Vermont Department of Transportation.

4. Ensure that effective sediment and erosion measures are used along roadways and where soil is disturbed by land use activity in order to prevent sedimentation and siltation of rivers, streams, ponds, and wetlands.

5. Require that Significant Wetlands as identified on the Vermont Significant Wetlands Inventory Maps be protected from development by maintaining an undisturbed, naturally vegetated buffer strip around the wetland edge sufficient to ensure the integrity of the wetland.

6. Ensure that drainage, or raising of water levels by dam or berm, be permitted only after the town is satisfied that it is justified and not harmful and in accordance with all requisite state and/or federal permits.

7. Require that every effort be made to utilize natural drainages. Deny the rerouting or enclosure of small upland streams and swales in culverts.

8. Require that hydroelectric power be considered only if the scenic beauty of watersheds, and water and geological conditions allow for its practical economic implementation.

9. Require that hydroelectric facilities be limited as to height, width and number so as to provide the least conflict with the scenic beauty, and fish and wildlife habitat of the river.

10. Ensure that drainage pathways created to protect maintained roadways from erosion do not result in emptying stormwater and silt directly into waterways.

Surface Water Recommendations

1. The town should participate in regional planning efforts to protect the quality of the Green River and the East Branch of the North River, as well as their tributaries.

2. Implement priority river corridor protection projects identified in the Green River and East Branch North River Corridor Plans.

3. The town should participate in any planning efforts regarding future use and development of nearby Mount Olga in order to assess and minimize future impact on Halifax's surface waters.

Groundwater

Groundwater provides the primary supply of drinking water in Halifax. Bedrock fractures, saturated sand and gravel deposits, and springs are the most common sources of groundwater. Groundwater in rock fractures is highly susceptible to contamination because the organic pollution contained in water does not get a chance to be filtered. Major potential sources of groundwater contamination include landfills, abandoned dumps, and leaking underground petroleum storage tanks. Other potential sources include salt storage piles, manure storage areas,

onsite sewage disposal systems, fertilizer and pesticide applications, and uncontrolled dumping of waste, homeowner products, and petroleum.

Once contamination occurs, control and abatement are extremely difficult. Therefore, prevention of contamination of groundwater is essential. Designation of aquifer protection areas through mapping is one method the State has employed to protect groundwater. An aquifer protection area is a land surface area that encompasses the recharge, collection, transmission, and storage zones for a particular community well or spring. The state requires designation and protection of Source Protection Areas (SPAs) and Wellhead Protection Areas (WHPAs) for public water supplies.

Another concern is the potential for commercial extraction of groundwater for sale (e.g., "bottled water") to significantly diminish the resource. Although the state recently decreed groundwater to be a "public trust" of the people of Vermont, current regulations may not adequately protect the resource. Given the limited resource and the small watersheds resupplying Halifax's groundwater, the town strongly opposes commercial extraction and export of groundwater from Halifax.

Groundwater Policies

1. Require that an adequate supply of potable water will meet the anticipated needs of any new development.

2. Require that new wells and new wastewater systems have no adverse effect on any previously existing well or water system.

3. Apply water conservation measures to all new construction.

4. Protect aquifer areas identified by State mapping from contamination by surface activities.

5. Ensure development within the town does not outstrip the Town's supply of adequate, clean groundwater.

6. Require soil and erosion control best management practices during and after construction.

7. Design and construct onsite septic systems in consultation with a licensed engineer or technician certified to meet all local and State regulations.

8. Require that road salt storage areas be sited outside the 100-year flood hazard area; the Class 1 or Class II groundwater zones; SPAs and WHPAs; and other areas designated by the Town as important groundwater protection areas and shoreland areas of surface waters.

9. Ensure the provision of adequate drainage as related to proper functioning of sewage disposal or water supply systems.

10. Require that salt and salted sand storage piles be stored on impervious surfaces and be kept covered.

11. Require that chemical treatment of roads in Halifax be kept to a minimum**,** especially in areas where roads are adjacent to streams, wetlands, other bodies of water, and existing wellhead areas.

Groundwater Recommendations

1. The Town should work with the Agency of Natural Resources as needed to identify and map important groundwater sources, and should develop a strategy for their protection.

2. The Town should obtain a map and database from the State that lists all Town wells and indicates the depth of these wells, if available.

Air Quality

Halifax's air quality is generally good because of low population density. It is one of the community's most attractive and valuable assets. Even so, the town recognizes the continuing potential for air pollution. Local threats to air quality include combustion by-products from wood, coal, and oil stoves, fireplaces, vehicular exhaust, and poor forest practices or waste management practices. Air quality is also affected by pollutants from distant sources, including acid precipitation originating in other states.

Air Quality Policies

1. Discourage any development or activity which degrades air quality in any part of the Town.

Air Quality Recommendations

1. The Town should monitor the effectiveness of existing performance standards in controlling air emissions as contained in the Halifax Zoning Regulations.

Forests

The forests of Halifax are similar to those in much of the northern Berkshires of Massachusetts and the Green Mountains of southern Vermont. The present forests of Halifax are of three types. The most common forest stands are those that have grown back on land that was severely logged during the 1950s. These woodlots have a large amount of very poor quality timber of low commercial value, with red maple, beech and hemlock comprising as much as 75 percent of the total timber volume. This forest type represents about half of all the land in town.

The second forest in Halifax is the young "first generation" forest found scattered around town growing into pastures and farms that have been abandoned since the Depression. In some instances these have become valuable pure pine forests with much of the timber commercial size. More common though, are the gray birch, red maple and aspen stands that can be found on or around every farm in town. Good examples occur near Harrisville and near the Gates farm in south Halifax. These woodlots often have excellent potential if managed properly, but the period

of waiting for a financial return is very long. They are often some of the first forestlands to be subdivided or developed. The first generation forest represents approximately twenty percent of the town.

The third type of forest is the older mature forest. This is the rarest type and is only found in scattered locations and in individual private ownerships. These woodlots are often over 100 years old and represent what the forest of Halifax would have looked like if timbering in the 1950s had never occurred. The timber on these lands is generally very high in quality and extremely valuable.

There is one permanent sawmill (Stone's) in Halifax. The potential for employment in the forests is excellent. Management of woodlots is on the increase and tree farming can be an important part of the future of the town, providing local employment and encouraging a profitable long-term alternative to subdivision and development. Forest lands also provide effective natural systems that stabilize soils and purify air while providing natural habitats for wildlife; areas for outdoor recreation, education and ecological research; natural buffers between incompatible land uses; and scenic views.

Although forests cover 74% of the state today, at the time of European settlement, forests covered almost all of Vermont. Wide-scale clearing began in the early 1800s and reached its peak in the mid to late 1800s and reduced forest cover to about 35% of the state. Over the last century westward expansion, the decline of the sheep industry, and reduced timber harvesting have contributed to the steady regrowth of Vermont's forests. Today's forests are the result of a major reforestation.

At present, reforestation is slowing as commercial and residential development increases. For the first time in a century, Vermont is experiencing an overall loss of forest cover. While it is hard to pin down the exact amount of acreage, a US Forest Service report indicates Vermont may have lost up to 69,000 acres of forest land between 2010 and 2015.

Forest Blocks

Forest block definition: a contiguous area of forest in any stage of succession and not currently developed for non-forest use. A forest block may include recreational trails, wetlands, or other natural features that do not themselves possess tree cover, and uses exempt from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of this title (V.S.A. Title 24).

Forest fragmentation definition: the division or conversion of a forest block by land development other than by a recreational trail or use exempt from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of this title (V.S.A. Title 24).

A look at the larger pattern shows our forests are being fragmented by rural sprawl. It occurs incrementally, beginning with cleared swaths or pockets of non-forest within an otherwise unbroken expanse of tree cover. Over time, non-forest pockets tend to multiply and expand. Fragmentation occurs when development physically breaks up continuous forest and often happens during low-density, uncoordinated residential development. This pattern of development

compromises many of the ecological and economic benefits of forests, including native fish and wildlife habitat, forest health, water quality, outdoor recreation, and forest management. Much of this type of development never triggers Act 250 review. Eventually the forest is fragmented and reduced to scattered, disconnected forest islands.

The remnant forest islands resulting from this fragmentation are surrounded by land uses that threaten the health, function, and value of them for animal and plant habitat, and for human use. As forest fragments become smaller, practicing forestry can become operationally impractical, economically nonviable, and culturally unacceptable. In turn, we lose the corresponding and significant contributions that forestry makes to our economy and culture.

Forests provide enormous benefits and a range of critical goods and services. A thriving forest economy, functioning natural systems, and quality of life rely on maintaining healthy forests across our landscape. Forests benefits include water supply and water quality protection, flood control and protection, wildlife habitat and biodiversity, clean air, carbon sequestration, outdoor recreation, and scenic beauty. Forests also provide cultural, spiritual, and intellectual enrichment benefits. All of these benefits are known as ecosystem services because of the value they provide. Without forests, these services would need to be replaced and potentially at a great expense.

Forest pattern addresses the configuration of forest blocks and habitat connectors. The pattern is the degree to which forest blocks and habitat connectors connect across the landscape or within a particular town. A healthy forest pattern is one where a town's largest forest blocks connect to one another via smaller forest blocks and riparian areas. These large blocks also connect to large forest blocks beyond the town boundaries. This healthy forest pattern is a network of contiguous streams and forest blocks that extends across town, interrupted only by a few roads or non-forest land cover.

Habitat Connectors

Habitat connector definition: land or water, or both, that links patches of wildlife habitat within a landscape, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants and the functioning of ecological processes. A habitat connector may include recreational trails and uses exempt from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of this title (V.S.A. Title 24). In a plan or other document issued pursuant to this chapter (V.S.A. Title 24, Chapter 117), a municipality or regional plan commission may use the phrase "wildlife corridor" in lieu of "habitat connector."

Habitat connectors can be a forest block, riparian area, or a specific road crossing that wildlife repeatedly use. Examples include small habitat blocks that serve as stepping stones between core forest, riparian habitat along streams and rivers, strips of forest cover between developed areas, hedgerows, or fencerows. Sizes can range from a fraction of an acre to one or two hundred acres.

Movement of animals from one habitat patch to another is the most common function attributed to habitat connectors. This is true for both wide- and small- ranged animals. Bobcats and black bears might use connections quite frequently, whereas spotted salamanders might use them only a few nights each spring to move from hibernation sites to breeding pools.

Habitat connectors should be considered at two scales: landscape and local. Landscape scale connectivity is important for connecting populations of wildlife over large areas or within a region. This allows for genetic variability and ensures migration. Examples of a large forest pattern that includes forest blocks and habitat connectors are the connections between the Green Mountains of Vermont and the White Mountains of New Hampshire. The habitat connectors between both mountain ranges allow for diverse and abundant wildlife populations that are able to withstand the effects of disease or other significant impacts. At this large scale, there is some overlap between forest blocks and habitat connectors. Very small forest blocks of minimal habitat or forestry value can function as connecting habitat. These smaller blocks serve an important connectivity role at a large landscape scale.

Habitat connectivity at the local scale occurs where roads overlap with the network of connected habitat. In some cases, fish and wildlife movement associated with specific road crossing areas is seasonal, as evidenced by salamander spawning migrations in early spring. In other cases, movement could be simple happenstance of an animal curious for new food sources on the other side of the road. Many species of wildlife are selective to specific habitat conditions along roads and are faithful to crossing them in the same place as long as those habitat conditions persist.

Forest Blocks and Habitat Connectors Working Together

The effects of forest fragmentation are minimized by maintaining an ecologically functional landscape. In Vermont, an ecologically functional landscape is one with large areas of connected forest, riparian areas, wildlife habitat and natural communities. A high degree of diversity and connectivity is needed to be resilient to shifts in ecological processes and to allow species to access required habitat.

The degree of ecological functionality and connectivity varies with landscape condition. Conservation of only narrow threads of vegetative cover within a developing landscape will not maintain an area's ecological values, biological diversity, or plant and animal habitat needs. However, vegetative corridors can serve as habitat connectors. Conservation of vegetative corridors in conjunction with the maintenance of forest blocks with diverse habitat conditions will assist in supporting ecosystem functions and related public benefits.

An ecologically functional landscape is especially important in the context of climate change. Populations of species are already adjusting their home ranges to adapt to new conditions. Northward migration is occurring in response to warming temperatures, as well as in response to more complex changes in soil moisture and micro-climates. Movement resulting from climate change may also occur in more than one direction. Therefore, the overall network of connected lands and waters made up of forest blocks and habitat connectors in Vermont and throughout the northeast region is instrumental in allowing for migration of both plants and animals as our climate changes.

Forest Resources Policies

1. Discourage development that will restrict the potential for forest productivity.

2. Encourage proper forest management practices. Require that timber-harvesting practices minimize all adverse environmental impacts, particularly unnecessary damage to young forests, surface waters, and important wildlife habitats. Require that commercial harvesting follow a professionally prepared management plan.

3. Discourage timber-harvesting activity that will degrade any of Halifax's prominent views.

4. Encourage efficient forest management of smaller private forest parcels through cooperative associations.

5. Encourage participation in programs to conserve lands, e.g., conservation easements, Use Value Appraisal program, and conservation deed restrictions to protect lands from development pressures and discourage fragmentation.

Forest Resources Recommendations

1. As of 2016, Halifax had about 21,000 acres of land in parcels greater than 27 acres. Such parcels could qualify for the state's Use Value Appraisal Program. Of this potentially qualifying land, 104 parcels (contiguous land under one ownership) totaling 13,214acres, or about 63% of the potential total, is currently enrolled in the use value program. Approximately 93% of enrolled acres are forest. Increased enrollment in this Program is encouraged to ease the pressure on Halifax landowners to sell forestlands for housing development.

2. The Town should consider acquiring land as a Town Forest.

Scenic Resources

Abundant views and vistas are important scenic features of Halifax. They offer aesthetic pleasure to residents and visitors alike and are part of the community's identity. An inventory of Halifax found the following features of scenic importance: Green River Valley corridor, East Branch of the North River corridor, and Halifax Gorge. The Halifax Gorge is privately owned. Route 112 provides an important scenic corridor through Halifax as it winds along the East Branch of the North River. Other roads throughout the town provide enjoyment of the landscape, whether rolling farmland, historic village, or river ravines.

Scenic Resources Policies

1. Ensure that the use and development of lands and waters in Halifax will not diminish the quality of recognized scenic resources including scenic roadways, historic village areas, river corridors, ridgelines mountaintops, and other scenic views.

2. Protect the Village appearance through careful siting of all development, so that the sense of a Vermont rural community is maintained.

3. Require that the visual impact of development be considered in relation to the exterior design of buildings, landscaping, and parking.

4. Require that special consideration be given to highly vulnerable landscapes and scenic corridors.

5. Encourage the protection of the Green River Valley as one of the few remaining undeveloped scenic river corridors in Vermont.

6. Encourage that all land lying between the East Branch of the North River and Route 112 be used in a manner that provides unobstructed views of the river and access to its banks for recreational fishing purposes.

Scenic Resources Recommendations

1. The Town should work with local citizens to identify, define and map significant scenic resources in Halifax.

Natural Areas

A natural area is described as an area of land or water that, in contrast to the normally encountered landscape, retains or has re-established its natural character and has unusual or significant flora, fauna, geological, or similar features of scientific or educational interest. There are essentially three types of natural areas: geological, hydrological and biological. Natural areas identified in Halifax include the Halifax Gorge, the summit of Jolly Mountain, and the Trust for Wildlife lands.

In addition, the Vermont Nongame and Natural Heritage Program (NNHP) has identified a rare aquatic plant, Farwell's water milfoil (*Myriopyllum farwellii*) in Deer Park Pond. This species occurs as a submerged aquatic around the entire margin of the pond. Rare plants and animals which are tracked by NNFW are all native to the state, are considered rare either because they have very particular habitat requirements, are on the edges of their ranges, and/or are vulnerable to disturbance or collection.

Although only one rare plant species has yet been identified in Halifax, there is a rich diversity of habitats, including ponds, wetlands, rock outcrops, abandoned gravel pits, old fields and roadsides from which additional rare or endangered plant and animal species may one day be identified.

The NNHP has also identified a Significant Natural Community, an interacting assemblage of plants and animals, their physical environment, and the natural processes that affect them, on and near a portion of Vaughn Brook.

It is important to be aware that invasive species can alter ecological functions and/or economic land uses.

Natural Area Policies

1. Encourage the acquisition of significant natural areas by either gift or purchase.

2. Prevent any development that dredges, fills, drains, floods or otherwise alters any wetland.

3. Encourage the maintenance of all the natural areas identified above and allow public access to all natural areas where appropriate.

4. Require that an adequate vegetated buffer strip be maintained between any development and a natural area.

5. Protect any identified rare, threatened or endangered plant or animal species and Significant Natural Communities.

Natural Area Recommendations

1. The 115-acre Trust for Wildlife land, donated by Patricia Johnson, should be recognized as a valuable asset, particularly as a local resource for science and nature study programs in the Halifax School.

2. The Town should work with area residents and the State to identify and map special natural areas in Halifax.

Fish and Wildlife

The presence of abundant and diversified animal species enhances the overall quality of life in Halifax by serving important ecological, educational, scenic and recreational functions. Fish, wildlife and many plant populations also provide a practical barometer to the quality of Halifax's environment.

Perhaps the greatest threat to Halifax's significant upland wildlife species is the gradual process of dividing large parcels in rural areas of the community into many smaller housing lots. As land becomes fragmented, populations of large predators and herbivores, such as bear, bobcat, fisher, coyotes, deer, moose, and many valued songbirds that are normally found in wooded habitats characterized by less intense human use, are diminished.

Planning so that large portions of the town and adjoining communities are left forested minimizes many of the detrimental effects of parcelization on wildlife without sacrificing all the benefits to people that development often brings. Forests do not have to be untouched wilderness, but are often better if left to natural processes. Low-density development, clustering of land uses, and buffer strips along waterways will help protect important wildlife habitat and corridors.

Fisheries Each spring the Green River and the East Branch of the North River are stocked with Brook Trout. This annual stocking is supplemented by natural reproduction in the fall when the Brook Trout move upstream to spawn. Brown Trout and Rainbow Trout are not

stocked, but are encountered occasionally in the lower reaches of the Green and North Rivers.

Deer Wintering Areas The deer herd in Vermont is critically dependent upon the availability of sufficient winter browse in undisturbed areas which are commonly known as deeryards or deer wintering areas. Deer wintering areas provide relief from harsh climatic conditions by providing protection from deep snow, cold temperatures and wind chill.
Deer wintering areas can be completely destroyed, or their carrying capacity greatly reduced by human activity. Of primary concern are housing, recreational and industrial development, highway construction, all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles, and logging operations.

The Halifax Natural Resources Map identifies deer wintering areas (deer yards) within the Town of Halifax. Approximately one-fifth of Halifax's land area is designated as important deer winter range, with the greatest concentration of lands located in the southwestern areas of the community, particularly along the East Branch of the North River and its tributaries.

Bear Habitat Halifax is part of a core area that contains a viable breeding population of black bear (see areas on Natural Resources Map). Because this animal has a very large home range, habitat protection efforts are often best addressed on a regional rather than local level. Towns, however, can help to preserve bear habitat by discouraging the fragmentation of large tracts of land, protecting wetlands, and protecting critical fall feeding areas (beech stands).

Fish and Wildlife Policies

1. Protect habitats of rare, threatened, endangered, and economically significant fish and wildlife species.

2. Require that any disturbance on deer wintering areas and bear range receive State and local review.

3. Encourage the maintenance of contiguous tracts of forestland and/or open land. Encourage cluster development as an important concept to land use planning efforts.

4. Require that proposals for development in the North River area are given due consideration to possible adverse impact upon the deer yards which surround or are close to Route 112 throughout its entire length in Halifax.

Fish and Wildlife Recommendations

1. The Town should work with local citizens with specific knowledge of the community and wildlife habitat needs and characteristics, and with the district wildlife biologist, to identify and map locally significant wildlife habitat in Halifax.

2. Owners of large tracts of land should explore opportunities to enroll their properties in the Vermont Land Trust and/or the state's Use Value Appraisal (Current Use) Program, and

should consider implementing land management strategies, which enhance wildlife habitat and promote the conservation of contiguous forest and open lands in Halifax.

Agricultural Resources

Lands in Halifax were cleared for subsistence farming in the late 1700s and have passed through various stages of agricultural use. Subsistence farming gave way to sheep farming which yielded to dairy farming. 50 dairy farms once operated in Halifax. In 2002, two dairy farms were in operation and in 2018 only one dairy farm remained in operation. Sheep and goat farming, llama farming, maple sugaring, poultry farming, and several home-scale beef operations account for the other agricultural activities in Halifax.

Approximately 800 acres, or 3%, of the land area of the town, is currently in agricultural use. Additional acreage with high agricultural potential exists which is currently unused. The most notable plots include the (115 +/-) acres of prime agricultural soil across from the Gates Farmstead, and the (120 +/-) acres of prime agricultural soil on Thomas Hill Road.

In an effort to better identify locally important farmland resources in Halifax, the community participated in a pilot project in 1988 in which the Halifax Land Evaluation Site Assessment (LESA) System was developed. Parcels of farmland throughout the town were inventoried and ranked using this special LESA scoring system in order to determine their relative value for agricultural use.

Halifax's agricultural lands are valuable, irreplaceable natural resources. In addition to the direct economic opportunities farms present for both current and future production, working farms and open spaces enhance the aesthetics of the town, contribute to the rural quality of life, and provide important wildlife habitats.

Pressure to develop Halifax's agricultural lands for nonfarm uses is ever-present. These cleared areas, usually with well-drained soils, often provide opportunities for less costly development of roads, septic systems and housing.

Agricultural Resources Policies

1. Require the strict application of agricultural resource policies in this Section in all Act 250 proceedings.

2. Encourage that development utilize nonagricultural or marginal agricultural land to the extent possible prior to or instead of utilizing active farmland or locally important agricultural land as identified by the Halifax LESA.

3. Devote locally important agricultural lands to agricultural uses or to uses that will not diminish their potential for agriculture.

4. Keep development limited in scale and location so as to minimize conflicts with activities normally associated with agriculture.

5. Strive to help maintain the farms, agricultural land and related agricultural services required to ensure a viable agricultural community.

6. Require that adequate buffer lands be established between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses.

7. Encourage the establishment of farm stands.

Agricultural Resources Recommendations

1. The Town should explore various agricultural resource protection strategies, which may be applicable to Halifax including, but not limited to, incentive programs such as local tax stabilization and land use controls.

2. The Town should periodically update its Land Evaluation Site Assessment scoring of farmland parcels in Halifax.

3. The Town should encourage the production of local food for local consumption.

Earth and Minerals

Many natural outcroppings of bedrock occur throughout Halifax, and bedrock is further exposed in roadcuts, particularly along the Green River. Nevertheless, little commercial use has been made of this resource. A small slate quarry near Whitneyville was worked during the 1800s. Also, in the early days "copperas rock" was powdered and mixed with a solution of tannin to make ink. "Copperas rock" is exposed along the Green River Road about one quarter mile east of Harrisville.

Rough building stone is currently being quarried from schist in the southeast corner of Wilmington. This same formation runs through the northwest part of Halifax. Amphibolite, which can be crushed to make aggregate of high quality for road construction and other purposes, might be quarried on a commercial scale.

The Windham County Soil Survey shows 30 gravel pits located in Halifax. All of the commercially important sources of sand and gravel in Halifax are in Colton soil areas:

Town landfill and Bartlett gravel pit area. A cluster of pits lies in the triangle bounded by Branch Brook Road, Route 112, and Hubbard Hill Road. This area is important both as a source of sand and gravel for the Halifax Highway Department and as the former landfill site. It also contains the privately owned Bartlett gravel pit.

Rowan Gravel Products area. Two pits at the end of Aldrich Road about 4,000 feet southwest of the junction of Fowler Road and Route 112.

Harrisville area. Five pits in all, the two to the north of the Green River between Moss Hollow Road and Thurber Road being the most important.

While Halifax's earth and mineral extraction operations are economically important to the town and region, they clearly present potential land use problems which must be adequately addressed in order to protect the health, safety and welfare of the general public. By their very nature, extraction operations are often considered unsightly intrusions on the landscape. They can also have significant adverse impacts on neighboring properties through air and noise pollution and traffic congestion, and can degrade the quality and quantity of area water supplies, and wildlife habitats. Clearly, adequate planning for and review of development proposals involving earth and mineral extraction are the best defenses against such impacts.

Earth and Mineral Extraction Policies

1. Require that earth and mineral resources and their removal be regulated so as to encourage responsible use of the town's resources over time while minimizing damage to Halifax's natural and scenic resources.

2. Minimize noise and adverse impacts on public highways, aesthetics, surface water, air quality, adjacent properties and the character of the area.

3. Require that all proposals for extraction include a site rehabilitation plan, and a bond or escrow account to assure restoration of mineral, stone, sand and gravel extraction areas.

Earth and Mineral Extraction Recommendations

1. The Town should work with Agency of Natural Resources to identify, locate and map important earth and mineral deposits. Should a source of sand and gravel be found, the Town should consider public acquisition.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Town Government

Town government provides record keeping, tax collection, property assessment, auditing, planning and zoning, road, bridge and building maintenance, and other general administrative services to the residents of Halifax. Halifax Town Offices and Elementary School building provide modern and spacious areas for Town employees, officials and the public.

Halifax is governed by a three member Selectboard which is elected by local voters at the annual Town Meeting. Also elected at Town Meeting are the Town Treasurer, Town Clerk, Trustees of Public Funds, Delinquent Tax Collector, Listers, Auditors, Moderator, Grand Juror, Town Agent, and Justices of the Peace. The Selectboard appoints the Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator, Zoning Board of Adjustment, Constable, Dog Control Officer, Road Commissioner, and WRC representatives (Commissioners). The Fire Warden and Health Officer are appointed by the state upon recommendation of the Selectboard.

Town Government Policies

1. Provide efficient, effective and convenient governmental services in keeping with the financial capabilities of the town.

2. Maintain the current tax burden (factored by the annual Bureau of Labor Statistics Cost of Living Adjustment) at a constant level.

3. Ensure the adequate administration and enforcement of the provisions of this Town Plan, Zoning Bylaws, Health Ordinance, Landfill Ordinance, Highway Ordinance, Highway Codes and Standards, Waste Disposal Ordinance, and any other future adopted regulations by appropriations to the budget and by adequate permit fees.

4. Refuse to take over privately owned facilities such as roads, water systems or sewage systems, unless it is in the public interest, does not significantly burden the municipal budget, and comports with town codes and standards.

Town Government Recommendations

1. The Selectboard should prepare a capital improvement plan and budget which outlines capital expenditures anticipated within a minimum of a five-year period with an estimate of the potential expenditures.

2. The Town should evaluate current methods of municipal financial accounting and budgeting and should implement measures, where needed, to update and improve the town's accounting system.

3. The Selectboard should establish a Conservation Commission to advise the Town about matters related to conservation of natural resources, particularly during consideration of proposals for development in Halifax.

4. The Selectboard, Planning Commission, School Board, town constables, fire chief, and road commissioner should work together in identifying and evaluating municipal impacts of development proposals.

Solid Waste

The Town of Halifax became a full voting member of the Windham Solid Waste Management District (WSWMD) in 1993, having closed its local sanitary landfill after more than 20 years of operation. Halifax pays annual dues to the WSWMD and is a member, without recycling.

The purpose of the WSWMD is to provide for the effective and efficient management of solid waste generated by member communities and their residents and businesses. The WSWMD is run by a Board of Supervisors. Each year the Selectboard appoints two representatives to serve on the Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors is assisted by a professional staff that handles the day-to-day administration of the District.

The WSWMD operates a transfer station on Old Ferry Road in Brattleboro, which is approximately fifteen miles east of Halifax. Local residents currently have the option of taking their trash to the transfer station themselves, which requires purchase of a yearly sticker and a per-bag fee, or contracting with a private hauler; both methods are currently being used.
As of June 30, 2017, WSWMD no longer provides recycling collection points in its member towns, although citizens can deliver recyclables, and also composting materials, free of charge at the Ferry Road location. Halifax contracts with TAM, Inc., a private facility based in Shaftsbury, Vermont, for recycling services. Bins on loan from WSWMD are situated on Brook Road at the site of the old Town Garage. The Town should continue to work with the Windham Solid Waste Management District to develop methods for reducing the overall quantity of waste generated in Halifax, such as a community composting facility, and to enhance opportunities for the convenient recycling of a wider variety of materials.

Other solid waste issues important to the local community include the overland disposal of sewage sludge in Halifax. This practice has occurred in the past. Issues of concern include runoff into water bodies, contamination of ground water, and the accumulation of heavy metals and other hazardous materials in soils. In response to these concerns, the Selectboard adopted a Waste Disposal Ordinance in 1989, which permits sewage sludge disposal only with the Board's permission.

Solid Waste Policies

1. Discourage any development that produces hazardous or large amounts of solid waste. All development must include adequate provision for the disposal of waste in a manner that has no adverse environmental impact.

2. Discourage any development that produces hazardous or large amounts of sludge. All sites proposed for sludge disposal shall meet state regulations and shall secure approval of the Selectboard under the town's Waste Disposal Ordinance.

3. Require that the use of agricultural fields for sludge disposal not adversely affect the town's natural or aesthetic resources and not endanger the health, safety and welfare of the public or conflict with existing land uses.

Solid Waste Recommendations

1. The Town will continue to monitor the capped landfill as required by the State.

2. The town should promote citizen awareness of correct recycling procedures to ensure the taxpayer-funded process is as efficient and cost-effective as possible, and explore the feasibility of a community composting facility.

Emergency Planning

The protection of the Town from natural and man-made disasters is vested primarily in so-called "first responders" such as local fire departments, search and rescue, Vermont Agency of Transportation, Vermont Emergency Management and Homeland Security, and the State Police. These are strong organizations and as responders they continue to provide excellent service. However, preparedness also requires adequate planning by the Town for emergencies, the ability to recover quickly from emergencies, and finding ways to successfully mitigate against the impact of future emergencies and disasters including land use policies and road codes and standards that reflect the potential hazards the town might face. The Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, final-approved by FEMA November 14, 2016 and subsequently adopted by the town, identifies these hazards, and should be continuously updated to reflect the town's hazard mitigation strategies.

The Town of Halifax has in place a Local Emergency Operations Plan (adopted in 2018 and updated annually) that includes information regarding resources and personnel available in an emergency. The Selectboard appoints an Emergency Management Director on an annual basis to plan for, oversee and coordinate emergency response activity in the community.

Emergency Planning Policies

1. Require that all new public and private roads and driveways are properly constructed in compliance with the adopted Town Road and Bridge standards so that they do not contribute to the damage of Town roads from run-off. Driveway permits are required.

2. Encourage the improvement of existing roads, and design culverts and bridges to carry a 100-year flood event without damage.

3. Encourage the updating and improvement of emergency evacuation plans and the Local Emergency Operations Plan filed annually with Windham Regional Commission by Town officials and the Emergency Management Directors.

Emergency Planning Recommendations

1. Work to identify and update at-risk populations.

2. Work to mitigate at-risk areas.

3. Encourage informing the public of local disaster resources available in Halifax through all available local avenues.

4. Annually fill the position of Emergency Management Director in Halifax per VSA Title 20.

5. Review the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan annually for progress on mitigation projects.

6. When updating the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, incorporate East Branch North River Corridor Plan priority projects (it already includes Green River Corridor Plan projects).

Police and Fire Protection

The primary police protection in Halifax is provided by a Town Constable and the Vermont State Police. As Halifax experiences more growth, increased traffic and criminal activity follow. Adequate police protection could become a major concern for residents.

Fire protection demands presently are met by Halifax's Volunteer Fire Company. Halifax is a member of both Southwest New Hampshire Mutual Aid Association and Deerfield Valley Mutual Aid Association. Local fundraising and private donations are the major source of funding supplemented by an annual appropriation by the Town.

Police and Fire Protection Policies

1. Provide the facilities and effective equipment for police and fire protection that is within the financial capabilities of the Town.

2. Require that all development be designed and sited so as to minimize the risks of fire and to maximize the fire department's ability to combat fires. Necessary common fire protection features, such as fire ponds and/or dry or charged hydrants, should be installed where practicable by developers and subdividers to ensure public safety.

3. Encourage that smoke detectors be installed in all residential units and commercial establishments.

4. Require that proposals for development include a statement of immediate and long-term impact on police and fire protection services and identify measures to be taken to mitigate any additional burden, including reasonable contributions to the budgets that support those services.

Police and Fire Protection Recommendations

1. The Town should continue to support police and fire protection services that directly serve Halifax's residents, businesses and visitors.

2. The Town has an appropriate local address identification system, linked to the enhanced 911 system, in order to aid police and fire services for local residents.

3. Work with the Windham Regional Commission and state 911 data and mapping services to keep the town's 911 maps up to date.

Education

Education is the single most important community service provided by the Town of Halifax. The town voted in 2017 to merge schools with the Town of Readsboro. Beginning in July of

2018, the schools in both towns are the property of the Southern Valley Unified Union School District. This new district remains a member of the Windham Southwest Supervisory Union. Students from Halifax have the opportunity to attend either of the Southern Valley campuses—the Halifax location which provides education to students in grades K-8 or the Readsboro location which provides education to students in grades Pre-K-8. Students in grades 9-12 are allowed to choose which approved secondary school they wish to attend. Regional secondary schools include, but are not limited to, Twin Valley High School, Brattleboro Union High School, Mohawk Trail Regional School, and Franklin County Technical School, as well as approved private schools in Vermont and Massachusetts. Currently, local bus service is provided to students who attended the Halifax Elementary campus or the Twin Valley High School.

The Halifax campus is designed for a maximum capacity of 125 students. Enrollment in 2016 was 47 students, in 2017 54 students and in 2018 57 students. The school contains six classrooms, a library, a multi-purpose room (used as a gymnasium, auditorium, and cafeteria), various staff offices, and storage rooms. The Town Clerk offices are connected to the school, as well. Parking and playfields are conveniently located on the school grounds. The building is of wood construction set on a concrete slab with a forced hot water heating system.

Vocational and adult educational opportunities are available to Halifax residents through a number of school and agencies in nearby towns. These include Marlboro College, offering graduate degrees, certificate programs, and continuing education classes; the Community College of Vermont, which has a location in Brattleboro and offers an extensive online course selection, as well as degrees and certificates; the School for International Training in Brattleboro; UVM Extension, with locations in Bennington and Brattleboro; and Vermont Adult Learning in Brattleboro which provides adults with transitional employment and post-secondary education skills. There are also opportunities nearby in Massachusetts, such as Greenfield Community College in Greenfield and the Franklin County Technical School in Montague.

The Town should continue to provide financial support to the Whitingham Free Library and encourage Halifax residents to get library cards. In addition to the physical resources in the library, a library card will enable people to use many on-line library resources, including on-line courses. The library also holds short courses on topics such as health and cooking.

Education Policies

1. As long as financially possible, the Town shall continue to maintain its local public school with the goal of meeting the needs of individual students all along the learning continuum.

2. Ensure affordable education for all Halifax children.

3. Explore cost containment measures which will control the local education budget.

4. Encourage the integration of school and community and support the use of the Southern Valley Unified Union School in Halifax for community activities that are compatible with the principal educational function of the facility.

5. Require that any new development that directly or indirectly results in increases in the number of school age children does not exceed the capacity of the Halifax Elementary School.

Education Recommendations

1. The School Board should work jointly with the Planning Commission and Selectboard to monitor the pace of growth and to monitor and make sure the District is meeting the Town's needs for educational facilities in Halifax. This evaluation should include planning for alternatives for the children of Halifax if at some point in the future it is deemed necessary or desirable to discontinue the use of the educational facilities in the Town. Note that the School Board will consist of three Halifax members and three Readsboro members.

2. The School Board should work jointly with the Selectboard to prepare and subsequently update on an annual basis a 5-year capital improvement plan and budget program for the Town in order to adequately budget and schedule necessary school expenditures.

3. Applicants for housing development should be required to disclose their best estimates of growth in school-age population relative to the impact of their development proposals.

4. The School Board should explore opportunities for enhancing energy conservation within the school facility.

5. The Town should encourage its citizens to avail themselves of the educational and vocational training opportunities in neighboring towns.

6. Encourage the School Board to develop and publish a long-term strategy in case the school has to be closed due to low enrollment.

Health and Emergency Services

Health care services do not exist directly in Halifax. Medical care is available at a number of hospitals and clinics located in nearby communities and throughout the region. These include: the Brattleboro Memorial Hospital; the Cheshire Medical Center/Dartmouth-Hitchcock Keene (NH); the Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC) in Bennington; the Deerfield Valley Medical Center in Wilmington (now part of SVMC); the Baystate Franklin Medical Center in Greenfield, MA; and the North Adams Regional Hospital in North Adams, MA.

Other health services available to Halifax's residents include the Brattleboro Retreat for psychiatric and addictive illnesses, the Vermont Department of Mental Health, and the Southern Vermont Home Health Agency, which provides skilled nursing and home health aide services as well as periodic flu, foot care and blood pressure clinics.

Emergency rescue services in Halifax are currently provided by Deerfield Valley Rescue, Whitingham Rescue, and Rescue, Inc., which is located in Brattleboro. Halifax Volunteer Fire Company members are trained in CPR and First Aid, and provide first responder services and assist whichever ambulance service is called to respond.

The relatively small population of Halifax suggests that it will continue to rely on outside medical, hospital and rescue facilities. Halifax makes annual contributions to various health services and organizations in the region.

Health and Emergency Services Policies

1. Support and use regional health facilities, services, and organizations.

2. Evaluate the ongoing needs of the town's health care facilities, services and staffing, including encouraging ongoing volunteerism.

Health and Emergency Services Recommendation

1. If there is a Do Not Resuscitate order in effect for an occupant of a structure, it should be posted on the refrigerator.

Communication Towers

Communication towers are one of the most visible indicators of the technological age. These metal towers can stand 300 feet tall and the footprint can encompass two acres depending on road access.

30 V.S.A. § 248a, Certificate of Public Good for communications facilities states that an applicant using the procedures provided in that section shall not be required to obtain a permit or permit amendment or other approval under the provisions of 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117 or 10 V.S.A. Chapter 151 for the facilities subject to the application or to a certificate of public good issued pursuant to that section. Ordinances adopted pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 2291(19) or a municipal charter that would otherwise apply to the construction or installation of facilities subject to that section are preempted. The statute also states that unless there is good cause to find otherwise, substantial deference should been given to the land conservation measures in the plans of the affected municipalities and the recommendations of the municipal legislative bodies and the municipal and regional planning commissions regarding the municipal and regional plans, respectively. A municipal body can base its recommendations on an ordinance adopted under 24 V.S.A. § 2291(19) or bylaw adopted under 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117 by the municipality in which the facility is located. A rebuttable presumption respecting compliance with the applicable plan shall be created by a letter from an affected municipal legislative body or municipal planning commission concerning compliance with the municipal plan and by a letter from a regional planning commission concerning compliance with the regional plan.

The following policies, and the policies contained within the town's zoning bylaws, establish the basis for the town's recommendations before the Public Service Board as related to communications tower applications. It should be noted that project proponents may choose to proceed under Act 250 and local zoning regulation (Article 6: Wireless Telecommunications Facilities) rather than under 30 V.S.A. § 248a. In such a case, the provisions of local regulations are fully applicable and enforceable.

Communication Tower Policies

1. Require that all applicants comply with all Federal, State and Town ordinances, bylaws and or regulations.

2. Communications towers shall preserve the character and appearance of the Town while allowing adequate wireless telecommunications services to be developed.

3. The scenic, historic, environmental, and natural resources of the Town referenced in this plan shall be protected.

4. Tower and antenna proliferation shall be minimized through the sharing of existing communications facilities, towers and sites where possible and feasible.

5. Adverse visual effects of towers and other facilities shall be mitigated through careful design and siting standards created in consultation with the town.

6. Towers and antennas shall be located only in nonresidential areas and away from other sensitive areas including, but not limited to, schools. These facilities shall not be located within 300 feet of adjoining property lines, with the exception of facilities located within the village district in a location that is supported by a majority vote of the Selectboard.

7. Once conditions 1 through 6 are met, towers shall provide the maximum possible coverage within the town.

Cell Phone / Internet Broadband Access

As a small, rural, and mountainous community, Halifax has struggled to obtain adequate, consistent, cell phone and internet services. In 2010, the Town formed a Broadband Committee to promote enhancement of available services; the Committee explored connectivity needs and available grants, worked to educate citizens, and pursued numerous options for expanding local coverage before disbanding in 2015. Some gains were made. VTel's telecommunications tower in Halifax Center went live in the summer of 2015 and provides satisfactory service to some residents, but others found terrain would not permit them to receive a signal.

The Broadband Committee induced the Vermont Telecommunications Authority to establish a Wi-Fi hotspot at the Halifax Town Garage and provide a connection for users to work from their vehicles on a laptop or other mobile device. Fairpoint (now Consolidated Communications) has expanded its DSL lines in Halifax to a limited extent, although that option is still not available to many residents. The Halifax School has obtained fiber-optic internet access through a state initiative; an attempt to obtain like service for the Halifax town offices proved prohibitively expensive.

A number of residents still find their only viable choice for internet connectivity is through a satellite service. The Town remains hopeful that, with time, all members of the community will have access to cell phone and internet coverage at an affordable cost.

Cell Phone / Internet Broadband Policies

1. Facilitate bringing broadband and cell phone services to all residents and businesses that wish to have the services.

2. Strengthen town-wide communications through town website expansion and improvements.

3. Educate the community in the use of these devices.

Cell Phone / Internet Broadband Recommendation

1. Halifax should investigate any and all grants that may lead to improved service.

Historic Resources, Sites, and Buildings

Historic sites and structures are an integral part of Halifax's scenic landscape, providing a visual chronicle of its social and economic history. Such important signposts of town history include village settlements, cemeteries, old buildings, farm complexes, schoolhouses, mill sites and old roadbeds. As of 2004, a total of 86 historic homes and sites have been identified in Halifax. The Halifax Historical Society has created a map showing the location of these historic resources.

Halifax's two major village centers--West Halifax and Halifax Center--both contain buildings which have been informally identified by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation as having historical significance. To date, however, these structures have not been included in any official historic district designation.

Halifax also contains areas of known archaeological sensitivity where prehistoric settlement sites were located along the shores of waterways and ponds. Historic resources are of educational value and contribute to the town's aesthetic identity.

Historic Resources Policies

1. Preserve the remaining signs of Halifax's history for future generations as a valuable record of the town's cultural identity.

2. Protect the original historic and architectural character of the village centers and rural landscapes from the adverse effects of incompatible or insensitive development.

3. Protect historic sites and structures which are eligible for inclusion in the Vermont or National Register of Historic Places.

4. Encourage the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic resources and discourage the destruction or alteration of historic resources or their surroundings.

5. Encourage citizen involvement in the identification of historic resources.

6. Encourage the documentation of historic homes by private and public property owners and preserve those structures or districts eligible for the Vermont or National Register of Historic Places.

7. Encourage the study of local history and architecture in the Town school.

Historic Resources Recommendation

1. The Town should make use of the Halifax Historical Society as a source of information and as a repository for old town records and any other materials relating to the history of the town.

Recreation

The only town-owned recreational area in Halifax is the playground located at the Halifax Elementary School in West Halifax which is used by area residents during and after school hours. Opportunities for outdoor recreation abound throughout the private lands of rural Halifax. A multitude of important recreational opportunities are made available to the public by private landowners, with their permission.

Historic resources and scenic areas also contribute to the recreation enjoyment of residents and visitors. In addition to these areas, there are privately owned churches and halls for public use.

Recreation Policies

1. Encourage the provision of varied and accessible opportunities for public and private recreation, which maintain high environmental quality and are compatible with surrounding land uses.

2. Maintain the existing physical condition of town trails to promote their use for recreational purposes. Existing town trails provide essentially the town's only opportunities for public outdoor recreation. They also serve as important corridors through backcountry areas for hiking, biking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, snowmobiling and hunting.

Recreation Recommendation

1. The Town should consider expanding recreation facilities to include more trails, nature preserves, and areas open to the landowners and residents of Halifax.

2. Appoint a committee to explore policies regarding off-road vehicles on town trails and how these affect water quality, conservation, trail quality, and public maintenance expenses.

Meeting Places

There are a number of community facilities that offer places for the public to gather.

Halifax Town Office: Located in the Village of West Halifax, the Halifax Town Office serves as the principal location for town government activity. It is located in what was formerly the Halifax Elementary School. In 1992, the elementary school was relocated into a new, attached wing, while the former school was renovated for use as the new Town Office. The Town Clerk's office is located within this building as is space for the Treasurer, Listers and the Zoning Administrator. A meeting space accommodates many local meetings, particularly those of the Selectboard, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Adjustment. Given recent mandated security updates to the attached elementary school, the Halifax Town Office may no longer be ADA compliant.

Guiding Star Grange: Built in 1904, this building was owned and managed by the Guiding Star Grange #163 and was available for community meetings and functions. Due to decreasing membership the Guiding Star Grange #163 was disbanded. In 2017, the building was purchased and sensitively renovated by a private citizen.

Halifax Elementary School: The Halifax Elementary School, in addition to its educational function, serves as an important meeting place for various community development activities. Local voting and the community's annual town meeting take place in the multi-purpose room, as do some public hearings for town planning and zoning issues. Various sporting events, both inside and out, are held on the school's playground and in the multi-purpose room/gymnasium. This building is attached to the Town Office building and meets current ADA standards.

Halifax Community Hall: The historic Halifax Community Hall, a church built circa 1844, is located in the village of West Halifax at the intersection of Brook Road and Branch Road. The Hall is owned by the Halifax Community Club, Inc. and managed by a board of trustees and members. The purpose of the Halifax Community Club is to foster and support the sense of community, education, health, and well-being of the town. Once a Congregational Church and later a Universalist Church, the Halifax Community Hall now serves as an important local gathering place for public and private functions, including suppers, weddings, public and political meetings, the monthly Senior Meal, and other events. Over the past few years, Club members have invested much time, money and energy into maintaining the building, enhancing accessibility, and increasing energy efficiency. It is available for year-round use.

Historical Society Building: Built in 1846 for use as one of many local schoolhouses in Halifax, the Historical Society Building is currently owned and managed by the Halifax Historical Society. A variety of local artifacts and historic photographs are on display for public viewing.

Meeting Places Policies

1. Encourage community support, and use of, existing Town Meeting places.

Meeting Places Recommendations:

1. Pursue grants and other opportunities to update ADA compliance
2. Encourage community gatherings

ENERGY

Energy resources are necessary for transportation, heating, and electrical generation. Sufficient energy supplies at affordable costs are essential to a town's growth and economic development. Currently, Halifax's energy needs are attained from a combination of resources including oil, propane gas, electricity through public utilities derived from a number of sources, coal, wood, and solar. The town's principal supplier of electricity is Green Mountain Power.

Regional, local and individual efforts can play an important role in energy conservation and development of renewable and sustainable energy resources. Targeting new development towards areas located close to the community's roadways, existing settlements, schools and other public facilities, and encouraging cluster development will help to minimize energy expended by residents in commuting and in the delivery of goods and services to residents and businesses.

Solid waste management efforts implemented at the local and regional levels offer Halifax opportunities to collectively conserve energy through ongoing recycling operations. Using recycled rather than raw materials typically provides a 50% energy savings, with most of this benefit coming from reduced solid waste production.

Energy Analysis

In 2018, Halifax submitted a letter of interest to WRC requesting assistance in developing an Act 174-compliant enhanced energy plan should grant monies become available.

Like most towns in Vermont, Halifax predominately relies on oil for home heating, but the town also has a higher percentage of residents using wood as a primary and secondary source of heat than the state average. According to the 2000 Census Housing Characteristics, 50.5% of residents heat their homes with fuel oil while 35.9% heat with wood. The remaining residents heat their homes with kerosene, propane or electricity.

Helping area residents and business owners to understand how they can effectively reduce and recycle waste, conserve energy resources and implement alternative renewable energy sources will, undoubtedly, require an organized local and regional public education effort.

Energy Resources Policies

1. Explore ways to assist area residents and business owners to understand how they can effectively reduce and recycle waste, conserve energy resources and implement alternative energy resources. Encourage the use of on-site or locally obtainable renewable energy resources such as hydroelectric, solar, wood, biomass, and wind as long as such use is consistent with policies of the Town Plan.

2. Encourage maximum conservation of electricity and only promote its use in applications where it functions most efficiently, such as lighting, motor operation, and certain industrial processes.

3. Encourage construction that is designed and built to be energy efficient.

4. Encourage development that includes characteristics most suitable for maximum energy conservation, including southern orientation and slope, and protective wind barriers.

5. Encourage development that takes into account the full life-cycle costs and benefits of energy creation, including waste products, safe production of power, and impact on natural resources.

6. Develop and implement an energy plan for Halifax to transition the town towards decreased use of fossil fuels and greater energy efficiency in all Town operations.

Energy Resources Recommendations

1. The Town should monitor municipal energy use and should, where feasible, implement energy conservation measures and promote the use of renewable energy sources at the Halifax Elementary School and Town Office Building, and Town Highway Garage.

2. The Town should participate in all Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings and promote energy conservation.

3. The Town should continue to work with interested local and regional interest groups and the Windham Solid Waste Management District to explore and implement ways in which to encourage residents and businesses to reduce the quantity of solid waste generated, and to increase opportunities for recycling a wider variety of materials.

4. Town citizens should participate in Public Service Board hearings on matters relating to rates, financing, service, and consumer issues affecting Halifax residents.

TRANSPORTATION

The population and development growth trends described in the Community Profile of this Town Plan carry with them a demand for local facilities and services. As a small rural community, Halifax does not have public transportation outside of limited MOOver service from Deerfield Valley Transit for Seniors.

Halifax's network of roads, described in Table 1, includes Town roads and State highways but lacks any Federal highways - the closest being Interstate 91 in Brattleboro. State Route 112, the town's arterial highway, provides a route between northwestern Massachusetts and Vermont, and joins the VT Route 100 Scenic Byway in neighboring Whitingham.

Table 1. Classification of Roads in Halifax

Road Type	Miles In Halifax
Class 1	0
Class 2	16.8
Class 3	47.5
Class 4	5.4
State Highway	5.8
Legal Trail	10.3

Source: Selectboard Certificate of Highway Mileage for year ending February 2017

Road improvements have been made to Route 112 so that more visitor traffic is using this road as a bypass to Route 9, the major east-west route in the southern part of the Windham Region. As noted in the Community Profile, the average daily traffic on Route 112 has significantly increased since the 1980s, a time when housing, population, and recreation facilities increased significantly throughout the region.

Other town roads which accommodate much of the locally generated traffic include connectors to Branch, Brook and Green River Roads. Branch and Brook Roads provide a north-south route connecting Route 112 and the Green River Road while serving the largest hamlet in town, West Halifax. Jacksonville Stage Road is the east-west route between Green River in Guilford and Jacksonville in Whitingham. Green River Road is the major east-west route connecting West Guilford and West Halifax. This road is considered an important local thoroughfare for commuters and shoppers traveling to Brattleboro from Halifax, Readsboro and Whitingham. The eastern and central parts of Halifax have a less developed network of local roads, but they appear to serve the community adequately.

According to the State Bridge Inventory, there are 37 bridges in Halifax. These include state and town structures both short (under 20 feet) and long (20 feet and over). There are 10 state bridges and 27 town bridges. The only Town owned or maintained public parking facility is located at the Elementary School and Halifax Town Office.

There is a strong link between town transportation facilities and local land use patterns. The capacity of Halifax's roads and bridges will continue to play an important role in defining potential opportunities and limitations for growth throughout the community. Steep, narrow, rural roads, for example, are less likely to be targeted by developers for extensive housing or commercial development due to access difficulties. Keeping such development away from these more remote areas has the distinct advantage of helping the community to avoid higher costs of road maintenance. Conversely, development along more accessible roads with better capacity to accommodate traffic will likely be more attractive to developers and potentially less costly to the community.

Changes in land use throughout the region will also impact Halifax's transportation system. New housing and commercial and recreational development in and around Halifax can be expected to bring an increasing number of automobiles and trucks to local roadways and bridges.

Decisions made by local and regional officials regarding road and bridge improvements will undoubtedly affect future land use activity in Halifax. Even so, future land use activity in and around Halifax will obligate Halifax's decision makers to target improvements to certain growth areas. Understanding local growth trends, identifying ways to reduce vehicular traffic, scheduling necessary road and bridge improvements to maintain adequate capacity, and establishing an equitable and affordable means of paying for these improvements are fundamental elements in meeting Halifax's long-term transportation needs.

As demonstrated during and in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Irene, Halifax's transportation system is subject to flooding and erosion. The costs associated with recovery from such disasters can significantly impact the town's financial viability.

Transportation Policies

1. Require that the town's road network provide convenience and service commensurate with need, while respecting the integrity of the natural environment and maintaining the rural character of Halifax.

2. Require that paving a gravel road only take place when there is a definite need for paving that serves the public interest.

3. Require that new development not result in an undue financial burden on the Town by necessitating highway expenditures which are in excess of those anticipated within the budget for roads, bridges, and equipment.

4. Coordinate planned road improvements along Route 112 between the Town and Agency of Transportation to ensure adequate road capacities without damage to the rural character or environment of Halifax.

5. Ensure that improvements to roads and the construction of new roads are carried out in strict conformance with adopted Road and Bridge Standards.

6. The town should adopt an expanded highway policy that specifically addresses class 4 roads and legal trails. This policy should require a permit for limited changes in the physical condition of these rights of way. All costs and liabilities associated with alterations should be borne by the petitioner, while standards are established for width, grade and erosion prevention. The policy should focus on retaining as much of a trail's original character and recreational value as possible.

7. The town will, in general, resist efforts to upgrade unmaintained rights of way to a higher classification, but may consider exceptions when a landowner is unable to acquire a building permit, or an upgrade would result in town eligibility for State financial assistance with maintenance costs.

Transportation Recommendations

1. The Town should prepare and implement a capital improvement plan and budget for road and bridge improvements and for replacement of highway equipment.

2. The Town should work with surrounding communities and the regional planning commission to identify and implement alternative means of transportation which would reduce the level of traffic on local and regional roads.

HOUSING

The Community Profile section of this Town Plan identifies important trends in Halifax and presents data regarding overall growth and changes in Halifax's housing stock. This section addresses the community's broad housing needs, the issue of housing affordability, and local land use planning concerns.

Housing Issues

Historically, housing in Halifax was concentrated in limited village settlements and located in a dispersed pattern in the surrounding countryside. It is this dispersed pattern that has become prevalent in the past 20 years; village settlements have remained relatively unchanged. While this dispersed pattern has offered many residents a desirable rural lifestyle, it has limited the establishment of residential neighborhoods and the location of housing convenient to services and major transportation corridors. This has also resulted in greater maintenance needs on the town's unpaved roads. With relatively small village lots and no municipal sewage treatment or water supply facilities, opportunities for new residential development in Halifax's village areas are limited. Most new residential development will most likely occur in the rural areas of the community where onsite septic systems and drilled wells are more feasible.

Anticipated rural housing development trends in Halifax raise important land use issues and concerns which need to be addressed through the town planning process. These issues include:

- The impact of dispersed development on the cost and effective delivery of municipal and community services, including: road and bridge maintenance, fire and police protection, and essential homeowner services such as fuel delivery and emergency/rescue services.

- The impact of dispersed, large-lot development on the cost of local housing and the ability of Halifax's low and moderate-income residents to purchase affordable housing in the community.

- The impact of land development on Halifax's rural character and natural resource base, including wildlife habitat, groundwater, forests, and agricultural lands.

- The capability of Halifax's vacation homes to be converted to year-round housing and to support onsite septic facilities, and the potential impact of such conversion on municipal services, particularly Halifax's school system and roads.

In addition to the above housing concerns, special issues face the community regarding the future development of additional residential uses within the village areas. These issues include:

- The preservation of the residential and historic character of West Halifax.
- Residential development or infill development (meaning more concentrated development) in village areas, and how to reduce the potential adverse impacts of such growth.

Affordable Housing

A special challenge to all communities throughout Vermont, particularly for smaller, rural communities like Halifax, is the task of adequately meeting the housing needs of low and moderate-income citizens. The importance of meeting these needs stems from the desire to maintain a healthy and diverse community, one with residents of all ages, professions, and economic and social backgrounds.

Housing is considered affordable when households with incomes at or below the County median (based on HUD) pay no more than 30 percent of their gross income on housing costs. Housing costs for renters include rent, heat and other utilities, while housing costs for homeowners include mortgage payments, insurance and property taxes. These affordability guidelines are widely used by various state and regional housing organizations, as well as banks.

According to the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA), a household in Windham County earning the median income of $50,917 (2012-2016 ACS) could afford to purchase a house selling for around $167,000[1]. The median value of a single-family home in Halifax was $204,100 as reported by the 2012-2016 ACS. Households would have to earn at least $61,997 in order for this housing to be considered affordable.

The median household income from the 2012-2016 Census American Community Survey estimate for Halifax was $59,712; local family income [2] was considerably higher at $72,411. Local family income is above the $61,997 minimum income to purchase a median value single-family home in Halifax, while median household income is slightly below the minimum. While Halifax's median home value is lower than the median home value for Windham County, housing is still not affordable to purchase for the median non-family household and the costs associated with commuting and travel for basic services and products has risen with the rising price of gasoline.

Housing affordability issues do not just affect homeowners. Affordable rental housing must also be in adequate supply to meet the needs of Halifax's year-round residents who rent their homes, rather than own them. In Halifax, an estimated 10.9 percent of all year-round housing units are occupied by renters. In order to be considered affordable, monthly rent (including heat and utilities) should not exceed 30% of the yearly income, which is $1,493 for a Halifax median income household or $1,810 for a Halifax median income family. Based on the 2012-2016 ACS, median gross rent for Halifax is $788 (not including heat and utilities), which places it in the affordable range for both income categories.

[1] Assumes a 5 percent down payment, an estimated average interest rate based on Freddie Mac's Primary Mortgage Market Survey, a 30-year mortgage term, and estimated average taxes and insurance.

The town can establish conditions that will encourage the production of affordable housing. A key factor in housing production is density. With higher densities, land and development costs per unit can be held down, thereby enhancing affordability. With no municipal sewer or water facilities in Halifax, however, there are distinct limits on how small building lots can feasibly be developed and still support necessary onsite facilities.

By ensuring that adequate land is zoned for higher density residential use, that cluster development and multifamily dwellings are encouraged uses, and that development standards promote and allow for feasible development of affordable housing, the town will make a significant contribution to meeting its responsibilities to encourage locally available affordable housing.

It is worthwhile noting that, in addition to the measures described above, the town's current zoning bylaw includes several innovative provisions which enhance housing affordability. These include the permitted siting and occupancy of a temporary trailer or mobile home on a lot simultaneously with the construction or reconstruction of housing on the same lot. In addition, accessory rental apartments attached to single-family homes are allowed. Moreover, there are no dimensional standards regulating the minimum size or dimensions of housing, which enables homeowners to build small affordable housing that can be enlarged through future additions as funds become available to the homeowners. Collectively, these provisions clearly help to promote housing affordability in Halifax.

Besides promoting affordability through zoning, Halifax has helped local families to upgrade their homes by providing very low interest loans to low and moderate-income homeowners through the town's 1993-1994 housing rehabilitation program. Funded through the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs, funds from this program have helped numerous Halifax homeowners to complete a wide variety of essential repairs at very affordable prices and loans continue to be available. As reported at Town Meeting in 2018, the program still retains the original $300,000 in funding, as it is a revolving loan fund. Applications can be obtained from the Town Clerk or any Loan Review Committee member. A single individual handles income eligibility assessment; the process and results are not public knowledge. Halifax encourages this type of program in its effort to enhance the quality and affordability of local housing.

Housing Policies

1. Encourage the provision of safe, sanitary, energy-efficient, and attractive housing which meets the varied needs of Halifax's existing and future residents and which respects the physical limitations of the land.

2. Coordinate the development of housing with the town's ability to provide adequate public utilities, facilities and services.

3. Require that seasonal and permanent homes be built to the same standards.

4. Encourage the development of cluster planning in areas designed for residential housing wherever appropriate to the capability of the land.

5. Require that new housing be situated in such a way as to preserve and protect the natural aspects and resources of the site.

6. Require that new housing development in and adjacent to Halifax's villages be compatible with the existing historic and residential character of the villages.

7. Encourage the reuse of older buildings within villages as an alternative to new construction, when feasible.

8. Establish affordable housing in locations convenient to services for local families and the elderly.

9. Encourage the identification and implementation of solutions to address affordable housing needs.

10. Encourage design solutions that provide perpetually affordable housing units.

11. Encourage the development of low and moderate income housing in order to ensure that the residents of Halifax have adequate opportunities to remain in Halifax.

Housing Recommendations

1. The Town should continue to monitor its zoning bylaw to ensure that existing provisions enhance housing affordability; the Town should explore and evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of other zoning tools to further enhance affordability.

2. The Town should support housing development activities which result in the creation of perpetually affordable housing for Halifax's low and moderate income residents in conformance with other housing policies noted above.

3. The Town should discourage large-scale speculative development which does not conform to the various policies contained throughout this Town Plan.

IMPLEMENTING THE TOWN PLAN

The Town Plan provides guidance for elected and appointed officials and citizens charged with decision making for Halifax. Effective implementation of the Town Plan requires careful consideration and action by the townspeople, Selectboard, Planning Commission and other organizations. The first steps in putting the Plan into effect are to follow the Policies and pursue the Recommendations for action contained in the Plan. Among the many additional available methods for successfully implementing the Town Plan are the following:

Participation in Act 250 and Section 248: In support of the role the Plan itself plays in these regulatory proceedings, the Selectboard and Planning Commission should participate to advocate for the town's interests as articulated in the Plan.

Land Use Regulation: Land use regulation at the local level is most effective when it is specifically directed to public health and safety, the prohibition of unsuitable uses, and the protection of water and air quality and highly valuable natural resources. The Vermont Planning and Development Act (Chapter 117) specifies three mechanisms for implementing the goals and policies of the Town Plan: zoning bylaws (including flood hazard area regulations), subdivision regulations, and an official map

Capital Budgeting: Providing public services and facilities according to projected need and the town's ability to fund improvements can help control of development pressure. Capital budgeting also increases the efficiency and economy of town government by foreseeing and planning needed capital expenditures well in advance. A capital budget and program as outlined in Chapter 117 lists and describes capital projects to be undertaken during the next five (5) fiscal years, their estimated costs and proposed methods of financing. Capital budgeting also serves as the foundation for locally imposed impact fees.

Land Acquisition: The most certain methods for protecting and assuring controlled public use of valuable recreational resource and scenic lands are by gift, purchase in fee simple, lease, or by acquisition of easements or development rights.

Taxation: Vermont's Use Value Appraisal Program enables landowners who choose agriculture or forestry as long term uses of their property to have that land taxed accordingly. The Program encourages the maintenance of undeveloped land for farming, forestry and public recreation. Towns are directly reimbursed by the State for lost tax revenues. Towns may also provide property tax relief for qualifying farm, forest and open space landowners by adopting tax stabilization programs to reduce local property tax burden. Tax stabilization laws (24 V.S.A. S. 2741 and 32 V.S.A. S. 3846) permit Vermont towns to have contracts with farmers and owners of open space land to keep taxes at a fixed rate or land assessments at a fixed valuation. The other property owners of the town pay the difference for lost tax revenues.

Voluntary Action: The following methods would help to ensure Town Plan implementation: 1) privately-agreed covenants binding on purchasers of land; 2) special attention and consideration given by private landowners to the objectives of the Town Plan and its policies when they decide to build or subdivide; 3) formation of nonprofit conservation land trusts to acquire resource lands; 4) participation in the Act 250 review process by abutting landowners; 5) participation in the town planning process by organizations and citizens concerned with the future of Halifax; 6) the establishment of an ongoing process for plan review and update.

Community Development Programs: Halifax participates in a variety of community development programs offered by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. Special grant funds and low interest loans are offered on a competitive basis to assist communities in carrying out local planning efforts, improving the condition and affordability of housing for local residents, expanding local job opportunities, and providing local public facilities and services. Halifax has received funding in the past to help update this Town Plan, the Zoning Bylaws, and rehabilitate the homes of low and moderate income Halifax residents.

TOWN RESPONSE TO VERMONT'S PLANNING GOALS

Halifax's response to the Vermont Planning Goals can be found throughout this document. Our specific responses to these goals are listed in the following references to sections of the Town Plan or actions we can take (i.e., public meetings).

Goal 1: To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.

- Results of Public Meetings
- Town Plan Goals – 2, 9 and 14
- Land Use Policies – 1, 5, and 7
- Land Use Recommendations – 1
- Village District Recommendations – 1, 2 and 4
- Economic Development Policies – 1 and 4
- Transportation Policies – 1 and 4
- Scenic Resources Policies – 1, 2 and 3
- Natural Area Polices – 4 and 6
- Agricultural Resources Policies – 1
- Historic Resources Policies – 2 and 3
- Housing Policies – 5 and 6
- Communications Tower Policies – 2 and 3

Goal 2: To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.

- Town Plan Goals 3, 5 and 13
- Village District Recommendations – 1
- Economic Development Policies – 1, 2 and 4

Goal 3: To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.

- Town Plan Goals – 6
- Educational Policies – 1 and 2
- Educational Recommendations – 5
- Historic Resources Policies – 7

Goal 4: To provide for safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems that respects the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.

- Results of Public Meetings
- Town Plan Goals – 1 and 5
- Village District Recommendations – 1
- Economic Development Recommendations – 3 and 7
- Transportation Policies – 1
- Transportation Recommendations – 2
- Recreation Policies – 2
- Recreation Recommendations – 1

Goal 5: To identify, protect and preserve important natural and historic features of the Vermont landscape, including significant natural and fragile areas; outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands, and wetlands; significant scenic roads, waterways and views; important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites and archaeologically sensitive areas.

- Town Plan Goals – 9
- Land Use Policies – 8
- Village District Recommendations – 2
- Economic Development Policies – 1
- Surface Water Policies – 5
- Surface Water Recommendations – 1 and 3
- Scenic Resources Policies – 1, 5 and 6
- Scenic Resources Recommendations – 1 and 2
- Natural Area Policies – 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6
- Fish and Wildlife Policies – 1
- Housing Policies – 5 and 6
- Telecommunications Towers Policies – 3

Goal 6: To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, and land resources.

- Town Plan Goals – 8
- Land Use Policies – 8
- Conservation District Recommendations – 1 and 4
- Rural Residential District Recommendations – 5
- Economic Development Policies – 1
- Natural Area Policies – 3 and 4
- Forest Resources Policies – 2
- Air Quality Policies – 1
- Air Quality Recommendations – 1
- Surface Water Policies – 1, 2 and 7
- Fish and Wildlife Policies – 3
- Housing Policies – 5 and 6

Goal 7: To encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources.

- Town Plan Goals – 11
- Energy Policies – 1, 2 and 3
- Energy Recommendations – 1 and 2

Goal 8: To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors.

- Town Plan Goals – 9
- Land Use Policies – 9
- Recreation Policies – 1 and 2
- Recreation Recommendations – 1
- Natural Area Policies – 3

Goal 9: To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries.

- Results of Public Meetings
- Town Plan Goals – 10
- Land Use Policies – 8
- Conservation District Recommendations – 1
- Rural Residential District Recommendations – 1
- Economic Development Policies – 1
- Agricultural Resources Policies – 3, 4, 5 and 6
- Forest Resources Policies – 2 and 4

Goal 10: To provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.

- Town Plan Goals – 8 and 10
- Land Use Policies – 6
- Natural Area Policies – 2, 3 and 5
- Earth and Mineral Extraction Resources Policies – 1, 2, 3 and 4
- Earth and Mineral Extraction Resources Recommendations – 1

Goal 11: To ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters.

- Town Plan Goals – 5 and 7
- Land Use Policies – 9
- Energy Policies – 3 and 4
- Housing Policies – 1, 8, 9, 10 and 11
- Housing Recommendations – 1 and 2

Goal 12: To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.

- Result of Public Meetings
- Town Plan Goals – 5
- Land Use Policies – 12
- Town Government Administration Policies – 1 and 4
- Town Government Administration Recommendations – 1 and 2
- Transportation Policies – 1, 3, 4 and 5

Goal 13: To ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and to integrate child care issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development.

- Economic Development Policy – 5
- Economic Development Recommendation – 3

Goal 14: To encourage flood resilient communities

- Flood Resilience Policies – 1-11
- Flood Resilience Strategy Recommendations – 1-6

Process Goal 1: To establish a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework that shall guide decisions by municipalities, regional planning commissions, and state agencies.

- Results of Public Meetings
- Town Plan Goals – 1
- Transportation Policies – 4
- Transportation Recommendations – 2
- Surface Water Recommendations – 1, 2, 3 and 4
- Groundwater Recommendations – 1
- Scenic Resources Recommendations – 2
- Earth and Mineral Extraction Recommendations – 1

Process Goal 2: To encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process, and to assure that decisions shall be made at the most local level possible commensurate with their impact.

- Results of Public Meetings
- Implementing the Town Plan – Voluntary Action

Process Goal 3: To consider the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development for the region and the state, as well as the community in which it takes place.

- Results of Public Meetings
- Town Plan Goals – 3

Process Goal 4: To encourage and assist municipalities to work creatively together to develop and implement plans.

- Results of Public Meetings
- Land Use Policies – 5

TOWN PLAN MAPS & DESCRIPTIONS

Introduction

A portfolio of land capability and resource maps was prepared for the Halifax Planning Commission and the Windham Regional Commission, after study and analysis of available information about the town. Large versions of these maps will be available for examination at the Halifax Town Office after final approval. Reduced versions are attached to this Plan. They include the following:

GIS Maps

- Natural Resources Map
- Town Facilities and Transportation Map
- Existing Land Use Map
- Proposed Land Use Map
- Physical Limitations to Development Map
- Agricultural Lands Map

The maps show where and how Town Plan policies should influence future land use and development in Halifax. They act as an important guideline for assisting the Planning Commission's implementation of the Town Plan.

In some cases available information is neither detailed nor accurate enough to characterize every potential building lot. Use of these maps, whether by the Planning Commission, Selectboard, other authorities, or private individuals must take into account their general level of accuracy, and must allow for refinement of data and interpretation based on more detailed information. The maps are most useful for evaluating major developments and subdivisions that may have a significant effect upon the town's rural character and its extensive natural, scenic and recreational resources as well as its community services and facilities.

Knowledge of the capability of the land provides a foundation for judging how the lands of the Town of Halifax should be used. In addition to the above-mentioned maps, available federal, state, regional and local land capability and natural resource information may be considered by the Town of Halifax. Information not yet mapped by the town or which has not been specifically referenced herein, may be used to judge land use proposals relative to the goals and policies stated in this Plan.

Keeping these limitations in mind, landowners may find Town Plan maps and others available at the Town Office useful when making preliminary decisions about the use of their land, its potential for development, and problems that call for more detailed site surveys and studies. These maps, however, cannot serve as the only basis for land use decisions.

Physical Limitations to Development Map

This map shows onsite sewage disposal classes for each soil mapping unit in the Windham County Soil Survey, it also shows Special Flood Hazard areas.

Onsite sewage disposal ratings are based on Vermont Environmental Protection Rules, August 16, 2002, based on 20% maximum slope, for lots created on or after June 14, 2002. It doesn't replace onsite investigation. There are five major classes: well suited, moderately suited, marginally suited, not suited, and not rated.

Special Flood Hazard Areas are from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) Flood Insurance Rate Maps, effective July 27, 2007. They do not show all areas in town with flooding potential, only those identified as "Special Flood Hazard Areas" by FEMA.

Agricultural Lands Map

This map indicates the location of primary and secondary agricultural soils (Soil Conservation Service's agricultural value groups 14). The approximate location of each of the 58 parcels is shown with the parcel number and the LESA score.

The map reveals five important agricultural areas. Starting in the northwest corner, the Gear and Sumner properties suggest one area. The Thomas Hill area forms another. The Gerdes, Stone, and Reed properties along Jacksonville Stage Road form a third area. A fourth area is along Route 112 from the Stone Farm to the Whitingham border. The fifth area appears in the southeast comer along Amidon Road.

Natural Resources Map

This map identifies resource areas and sites in Halifax which should be protected from development which degrades or diminishes the natural function or value of the resource. The following resources are mapped:

Streams, Lakes and Ponds: Halifax's surface water areas are important for maintaining water quality and providing wildlife habitat; they are valuable in reducing soil erosion and excessive siltation, and tend to be highly vulnerable to excessive and poorly planned development.

Wetlands: Halifax's wetlands include marshy or swampy areas which serve to store and gradually release surface run-off after heavy rains. Wetlands help to maintain surface and groundwater flow and quality, and are valuable as wildlife habitat. Mapped wetlands include areas identified as part of the Vermont Significant Wetlands Inventory (Class One and Class Two Wetlands) These maps provide important land use planning information and are incorporated herein by reference.

Natural Areas: Natural areas include lands, which have retained or have re-established their natural character. They are significant lands with rare or unusual flora, fauna, geological or similar features of scientific or educational interest. These areas include Halifax Gorge, the Jolly Mountain area, and the Nature Preserve owned by the Trust for Wildlife, Inc. In addition, the Vermont Nongame and Natural Heritage Program has identified a rare aquatic plant, Farwell's water-milfoil (*Myriopyllum farwellii*) in the Deer Park Pond.

Deer Wintering Areas (Deeryards): These habitats have been identified by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and are characterized by a high degree of softwood cover, a favorable slope, south or westerly aspects, generally moderate elevations and low levels of human disturbances in the winter.

Bear Habitat: Includes areas identified by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife as substantial bear production habitat. These areas are characterized as contiguous, remote forestlands.

Gravel Pits: These include existing gravel pit areas, not all of which are currently operating.

Riverine Corridors: Within the Rural-Residential Area, 500-foot wide corridors have been mapped on each side of the centerline of the roads along the Green River and the East Branch of the North River. These corridors are intended to recognize the scenic and environmental quality of Halifax's major rivers and adjacent lands.

Special Flood Hazard Area: Includes those areas identified as "Special Flood Hazard Areas" on FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) Flood Insurance Rate Maps, effective July 27, 2007. They do not show all areas in town with flooding potential. These areas to be shown on separate Flood Hazard Areas map, along with ANR River Corridors.

Rare Plant Occurrence: The Vermont Nongame and Natural Heritage Program has identified a rare aquatic plant, Farwell's water-milfoil (*Myriopyllum farwellis*) in the Deer Park Pond.

Habitat Connectors / Wildlife Corridors: (either on this map or on Proposed Land Use map)

Inappropriate or careless development of these lands may have an adverse impact on scenic beauty, water quality and/or special riverine habitat. All proposed development within the

Riverine Corridor areas should be carried out so as to maintain the agricultural use, residential character and rural beauty of these corridors and to protect the quality of Halifax's major riverine environments.

Town Facilities and Transportation Map

This map identifies the transportation network, location of educational facilities, and other important community facilities and services in Halifax.

Community Facilities: These include the West Halifax Elementary School and Town Office Building and playground area, the Halifax Community Hall, the Historical Society Building, the Town Garage, the Halifax Volunteer Fire Department, the West Halifax Bible Church, and the Union Society.

Historic Sites and Structures: This includes a partial list of historic sites and structures identified by the Halifax Historic Resources Subcommittee and Division of Historical Preservation as having significant local historical value, and as deserving protection, maintenance, or renovation.

Historic Centers: West Halifax and Halifax Center have been identified as unique village centers of significant economic and historic value to the town as a whole. Consideration should be given to nominating sites, structures, or districts within Historic Centers to the State and/or National Register of Historic Places.

Existing Land Use Map

Existing land use within the Town of Halifax is depicted on this map. This map provides a generalized snapshot of land use throughout the Town By showing how the land is divided up into parcels, where structures are, what parcels are under a conservation easement, and what parcels are enrolled in the state's Use Value Appraisal (UVA) program (lands enrolled in UVA are working lands with a long-term management plan; not all working lands are enrolled in UVA, however).

Proposed Land Use Map

This map sets forth a land classification system for the Town of Halifax which reflects information on the other maps and recognizes existing land use patterns. The Proposed Land Use Map represents a generalized picture of the Town as it should develop according to the goals and policies of this Plan.

The classification of Halifax lands into Conservation, Rural Residential, and Village has been formulated to be generally consistent with the other maps, and should be used together with those maps. The Proposed Land Use Map is not a regulatory map; its implementation will require further definition and clarification through Halifax's Zoning Regulations.

In order to encourage a pattern of residential and commercial development that conforms to the goals, policies and recommendations outlined in this Town Plan, specific guidelines have been formulated taking into account the existence of current land uses and structures which cannot be changed. Recommended land uses have been specified for each class. It should be noted, however, that some of the listed uses may require more review and may be appropriate only if special measures are taken to minimize potential adverse impacts.

The recommended densities indicated apply to residential units only. Because of potential variations in size, intensity and type of commercial and industrial uses, densities for these non-residential uses have not been specified, but should be studied for future consideration.

The town should also consider making districts more closely conform to resource areas and limitations to development as identified on the included maps. As part of this process, it may be appropriate to explore overlay areas that establish protective criteria conforming to landform and resource areas that are discontinuous and scattered throughout several districts.

Conservation District

The lands in this district are predominantly forested and essentially undeveloped. Because of serious site limitations and their value for strict natural resource management, recreation and limited agriculture, the interior of this district should remain in its natural condition. In general, this area contains few roads and is therefore important upland wildlife habitat, particularly for large game animals. The area contains steep slopes rising from the Green River to the plateau above the river valley, the summits of Jolly and Ballou Mountains, lands surrounding Deer Park Pond, some agricultural areas. The boundary of the conservation district begins at the edge of abutting town roads that make up its border. The district runs along the Green River beginning at the Guilford border, then west to the intersection of Brook Road, then south along the east side of Brook to the intersection of Whitneyville Road. The district continues along the northern boundary of Whitneyville Road, then Tucker Road after they intersect, then across Old County Road to the eastern edge of the town right of way. The boundary then continues south to the intersection of Jacksonville Stage Road, east along the Stage Road to the Guilford line, then north along the Guilford/Halifax border to the place of beginning.

The town should explore whether expanding the Conservation District north of the Green River Road and east of Moss Hollow Road, as well as south of Jacksonville Stage and east of Stark Mountain Road might better meet the stated goals of the district.

Rural Residential District

The lands in this area generally have high natural, recreational, historic, scenic, or other special resource values. They include upland watershed areas associated with many of the community's major brooks, streams and rivers. The Rural Residential District contains working farms, prime agricultural soils, open fields maintained for agriculture, and forestlands. Residential dwellings are interspersed throughout in a rural, low- density settlement pattern. Halifax Center, an historic hamlet is located in this area. Lands along Route 112 and Branch

Brook Road are presently more developed than other lands in the Rural Residential District. Overall, the Rural Residential District appears capable of accommodating a significant proportion of Halifax's expected residential growth. Special care should be taken to protect the rural-residential character of this area and to locate proposed development off of productive agricultural lands.

Village District

This area includes West Halifax, the small village area that serves as the center for the town. It also includes additional lands which appear suitable for future village growth. The town offices, town garage, post office, fire station, elementary school, church community center, Historical Society, and a number of residences are currently located here.

Habitat Connectors / Wildlife Corridors (either on this map or on Natural Resources map)

Flood Hazard Areas Map

NFIP Special Flood Hazard Areas and ANR River Corridors. For details, see Flood Hazard Areas chapter.