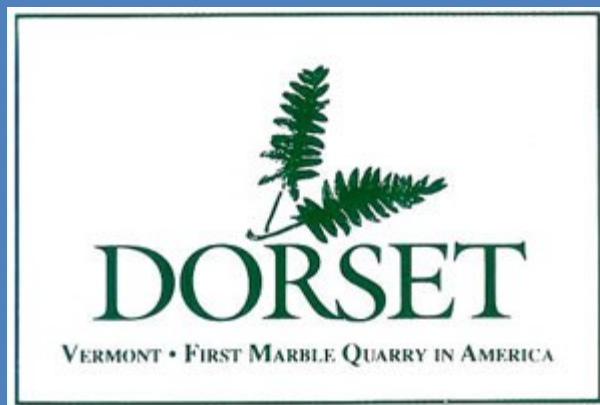


DORSET TOWN PLAN

**Adopted by the Dorset
Selectboard:**

December 16, 2014



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SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

What is the Dorset Town Plan?

The Dorset Town Plan is a comprehensive long-range plan for the Town of Dorset. It states goals, objectives, and policies to guide the growth and development of the Town. It is intended as a framework upon which to base specific future actions, regulations and bylaws.

The Dorset Town Plan has been prepared by the Town of Dorset Planning Commission, under the authority of 24 VSA, Chapter 117, The Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act. In particular, it addresses Subsection 4382 of that Act which lists the elements to be included in a municipal plan. It also addresses the intent and purposes of the State legislature to ensure that the thirteen general State planning goals are met. These general planning goals are to be followed by municipalities, the Regional Planning Commissions, and State agencies so that all may plan in coordination with the other. An index relating the Dorset Town Plan to these general planning goals is included as Appendix A to this Plan.



***Dorset Union Store
(Peltier's) opened in
1816***

1.2 The Municipal Plan Process in Dorset

The Town of Dorset has had a municipal plan since 1970 which has been periodically updated. This new plan updates and supersedes the 2009 Dorset Town Plan. Updates are required at least once every five years in order to revise bylaws. Updates are desirable to enable the Town to direct growth based on current data, research, and citizen input.

The Planning Commission has reviewed the factual bases for planning in Dorset. Many of the planning factors are discussed in this Plan, either in Section 2, General Planning Background, or in the later Sections dealing with specific issues.

In order to involve the public in the planning process for Dorset, the Planning Commission conducted a number of meetings to elicit input about the future of the Town. The Planning Commission also solicited direct input from Town boards and commissions, and municipal employees. Public and private town and region wide interest groups were invited to provide information and address drafts of the Plan. Information was also derived from public meeting minutes, and meetings held for special purposes.

Dorset is in Bennington County, and is a part of the planning area of the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC). The BCRC has had a Regional Plan since 1970, which was last

updated in 2009. The Town has reviewed the data presented in the Regional Plan, and has worked with the Regional Commission to develop a Plan which is compatible.

This Dorset Town Plan leads the Town in a direction which builds upon factual bases, takes into consideration the expressed opinions of the local citizens, is compatible with the Regional Plan, and addresses the State legislative general planning goals.

In 2013, the Planning Commission was aided in its update of the Dorset Town Plan by a resident Build – Out Survey made available by a grant through the Department of Housing and Community Affairs. The results are included as Appendix C and gave a baseline picture of residents’ land use-goals and needs and how they envision their Town.

1.3 How This Plan is Used

Framework

This Plan provides a Statement of Objectives (Section 3) and the Town’s policies for growth and development by land use designation (Section 4). Specific topics and areas of special concern are addressed in subsequent sections. For example, natural resources are discussed in Section 5, housing in Section 6, and so forth. Also contained in this Plan are Maps; other maps and studies are included in this Plan by reference.

In preparing or reviewing development plans, reference shall be made to all sections of the Plan having a bearing on the proposal.

Use by the Planning Commission

This Plan and these policies will be used by the Town of Dorset Planning Commission in many ways, including:

- preparing bylaws and regulations;
- responding to proposals of the Region and various State agencies; and
- reviewing development applications in the Town, in particular when such applications are involved in review proceedings under Act 250.

Use by Other Town, Regional, and State Boards and Commissions

This Plan may be used by the Town Selectboard in determining their priorities for capital improvements. The Plan will be used by the State Environmental Board and the District 8 Environmental Commission in making decisions on Act 250 applications.

Use by Residents, Businesses and Others Interested in Dorset

The Plan and policies should be of interest to all residents of Dorset who have an interest in its future.

1.4 Interpretation of this Plan

This Plan serves as a statement of intent and policy. At the local level, the Planning Commission has the task of interpreting the policies of this Plan. At the State level, the Environmental Board, and its District Commission must decide whether development

proposals conform with this Plan. Judgments are to be made while considering and weighing all of the planning policies which have a bearing on any particular proposal.

The boundaries between the land use designations shown on Map 1 are intended to be general, except where they coincide with defined physical features such as roadways or watercourses. The Zoning Bylaw may zone lands more precisely, and with slight alterations from these boundaries, as long as the intent of this Plan is respected. Natural Resources, Water Resources and Community Facilities locations as shown on Maps 2, 3 and 5 are also recognized as general, and subject to amendment based on more detailed site-specific data. It is intended that all Town Plan figures and quantities shall also be considered as approximate only, and not absolute.

SECTION 2 GENERAL PLANNING BACKGROUND

2.1 Physiography

The Town of Dorset has an area of 30,656 acres or 46.04 square miles, made up of many types of land and waterways: flat valley land, swamps, rolling hills, steep mountains, streams and rivers. 14,228 acres contain slopes in excess of 20%, and 2,880 acres have elevations above 2500 feet.¹

The physiography of the Town may be described as two roughly north-south valleys, which contain most of Dorset's development, together with parts of three north-south mountainous areas, which define the valleys.

The eastern edge of the Town runs along the western slope of the Green Mountains. The southwestern corner of the Town occupies the northeastern slope of Mother Myrick Mountain, in the Taconic Mountain Range. Thrusting into Dorset from the north is a mountainous area, also part of the Taconic Range, extending south from Dorset Mountain, whose summit, close to the northern town line, is over 3800 feet above sea level. A spine, between 2000' and 2500' high lies between Dorset Mountain and Mount Aeolus (also called Green Peak) about five miles to the south. Land falls southerly from Mount Aeolus to become rolling land extending south to the town line.

Between the Green Mountains and the Taconics lies the well defined and rather narrow Vermont Valley, which is Dorset's eastern valley, and is known in transportation terms as the "Route 7 corridor." The southern portion of this valley is drained by the Batten Kill, which flows mostly west to the Hudson River. The northern portion of the valley is drained by the Otter Creek, which flows northerly to Lake Champlain. The divide between the two watersheds lies a short distance north of the village of East Dorset. The easterly valley contains the villages of East Dorset, South Village of East Dorset, and the cluster of houses known as North Dorset.

¹

US Census Bureau 2010 & Bennington County Regional Plan 2002

The westerly valley extends diagonally from approximately the midpoint of the southern town line to the midpoint of the western town line. This is the “Route 30 corridor.” This valley also drains in two directions, with the watershed divide constituting a Class I wetland, known as the Dorset Marsh, southwest of Dorset Village. Towards the southeast, this drains into a branch of the Batten Kill; towards the northwest the flow is into the Mettawee River, which, like the Otter, flows into Lake Champlain. This westerly valley contains the villages of Dorset and South Dorset.

A subordinate valley, known as Dorset Hollow, is located east of Dorset Village. This valley contains considerable acreage of rolling land, and also the headwaters of the Mettawee River.

The geography of the Town divides it roughly into two development axes, both of which radiate out from the larger urban center of Manchester to the south. Only one public road within the Town links the two valleys – Morse Hill Road – which climbs over the lower southern side of Mount Aeolus.

2.2 Population

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the population of Dorset is 2,031 persons. These are mostly year-round residents, but the figures do include some seasonal residents who maintain residency here even though they are not year-round residents.

The population of Dorset remained almost constant from 1930 to 1960. According to the 1930 U.S. Census there were 1,120 residents in the Town, while in 1960 there were 1,150 residents, an increase of only 30 persons in thirty years.

From 1970 to 2000, the Town experienced more substantial growth. The following table presents the Dorset population figures since 1970, in comparison with those of its immediate neighbors in Bennington County, the Bennington Region², Bennington County, and with the State.

TABLE 1
Population, Dorset and Neighbors, Region, County, State 1970 – 2010

<u>Town</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>1970-1980</u> <u>% Change</u>	<u>1980-1990</u> <u>% Change</u>	<u>1990-2000</u> <u>% Change</u>	<u>2000-2010</u> <u>% Change</u>
Dorset	1,293	1,648	1,918	2,036	2,031	27.5	16.4	6.1	-0.3
Manchester	2,919	3,261	3,622	4,180	4,391	11.7	11.1	15.4	5.0
Peru	243	312	324	416	375	28.4	3.8	28.4	-10.0
Rupert	582	605	654	704	714	4.0	8.1	7.6	1.0
Sandgate	127	234	278	353	405	84.3	18.8	27.0	13.9

Bennington

² The Bennington Region includes all municipalities in Bennington County except Readsboro, Searsburg, and Winhall. These towns are part of the Windham Region.

County	29,282	33,345	35,845	36,994	37,125	13.9	7.5	3.2	1.4
Bennington Reg.	28,279	32,308	34,516	35,387	34,951	14.3	6.8	2.5	-1.3
State of Vermont	444,330	511,456	562,758	608,827	625,731	15.1	10.0	8.2	2.8

*Sources: 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010 U.S. Census

These figures show that the decade of the 1970's had the highest rate of growth in Dorset in recent history. During the 1980's, the rate of growth in Dorset exceeded that of its larger neighbor Manchester to the south, as well as the Region, County and State. However, in the 1990's, Dorset had the lowest growth rate of any of its neighbors, as well as the State, but had a slightly higher growth rate than the Region and County. In the 2000's Dorset again had the lowest growth rate of any of its neighbors, the growth rate was also lower than the County and State growth rates as well.

Using a straight-line projection method based on current population trends, it is possible to forecast a population range for Dorset in the year 2020. The straight-line projection method yields a population of 2,026 for the year 2020, at a projected growth rate of -.0245% per decade (similar to 2000-2010 growth patterns) and 2,154 at a projected growth rate of 6.1% per decade (similar to 1990-2000 growth patterns).

The Town should continue to keep an eye on population growth, and research how possible demographic changes could affect planning and services in Dorset. For instance the most recent census information shows that the majority, 63% of homeowners are 55 years of age or older, and 19.3% of homeowners are 75 years of age or older.

2.3 Housing

Housing in Dorset is primarily owner-occupied single family units, although there are some rental units and two family dwelling units.

Seasonal residences comprise a significant proportion of Dorset's housing (see Table 2). Therefore, the number of housing units is larger than one would expect for a Town with a resident population of 2,031 persons.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, there are 1,450 housing units in Dorset, of which 468 are vacation/seasonal units. This refers to units, not properties, and includes, for example, units which comprise a part of a structure. The following Table presents housing data from the 2010 U.S. Census for Dorset, its immediate neighbors, the Region, Bennington County, and the State.

TABLE 2
Seasonal/Vacation and Year-Round Housing Units (Source: 2010 US Census)

<u>Town</u>	<u>Total Housing</u>	<u>Seasonal/Vacatio</u>	<u>Yr-Round</u>	<u>% Seasonal</u>
	<u>Units</u>	<u>n Units</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Units</u>
Dorset	1,450	468	982	32.3
Manchester	2,864	615	2,249	21.5

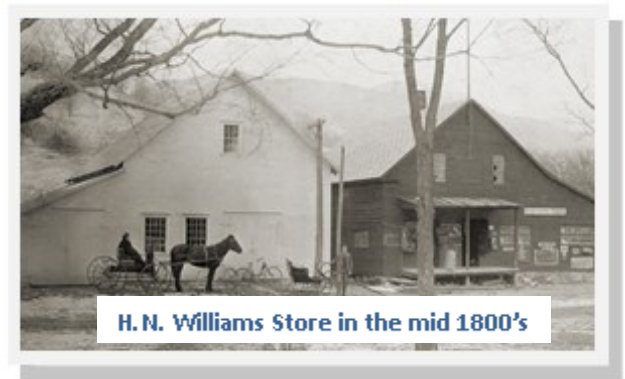
Peru	697	508	189	72.9
Rupert	482	151	331	31.3
Sandgate	287	105	182	36.6
Bennington County	20,922	4,294	15,730	20.5
State of Vermont	294,382	50,198	256,442	15.6

Using the 2010 population figure of 2,031 and the 2010 figure for number of year-round units of 982, there is an average number of persons per unit in Dorset of 2.07 (reasonable when compared with the Bennington County figure of 2.23 persons per unit). 2010 Census housing units in Dorset total 1,450 units. At 2.07 persons per unit, the housing units could, if they were all year-round units, accommodate 3,233 persons.

The prices and affordability of housing in Dorset are discussed in Section 6 of this Plan, together with policies to address affordability and growth management.

2.4 Economic Development (Sec. 10 of this Plan)

Dorset is largely a residential community, serving both year-round and seasonal residents. Its economic activity includes primary industries such as real estate sales, agriculture, forestry, and mineral extraction; secondary industries such as wood processing; and a range of tertiary services such as financial services, restaurant and tourist accommodation facilities, and so forth. Dorset does not have a large retail component, nor does it have a large industrial/manufacturing component. Dorset is envisioned as a nice, clean, quiet place to live, within commuting distance from the larger urban service areas and employment centers of Manchester, Rutland and Bennington



2.5 Dorset's Relationship with the Region and with Adjacent Municipalities

Dorset residents would like to maintain their town as a clean, quiet place to live, recognizing the importance of nearby larger neighbors as retail and employment centers. Dorset aims to maintain its existing agricultural and forestry businesses as viable activities, to encourage clean secondary industries, and promote service uses compatible with its rural environs. It does not wish to encourage large scale retail growth, nor large scale tourist developments, such as those seen in Manchester and Rutland. Dorset does seek to:

- Maintain and enhance the existing villages as places of economic and community activity compatible with its residential uses which comprise the majority of land use in the villages;
- Encourage appropriate new commercial and industrial activity in selected areas of the Town.

Dorset recognizes that the adjacent Town of Manchester provides and will continue to provide jobs and certain educational, recreational, and cultural facilities to residents of Dorset and the region. The Town will continue to cooperate with the Town of Manchester where Manchester's services are appropriately provided to the people of Dorset. In addition, the Town will work to maintain and enhance the level of service of community facilities appropriate to the Town level – elementary education, library services, fire fighting, and so forth.

In addition to the Town of Manchester, the Town also shares boundaries with the Towns of Peru, Rupert, and Winhall in Bennington County, and with the Towns of Danby and Mt. Tabor in Rutland County. Dorset will continue to cooperate with these municipalities with respect to issues of mutual interest.

The Town also recognizes roles of the various regional organizations and State agencies in providing regional level facilities and services. The Town will cooperate with the appropriate regional and State agencies to further its objectives in areas such as waste management, housing, conservation, pollution control, economic development, transportation planning, and coordination of land use planning.

SECTION 3 STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The Plan of the Town is designed to guide development towards the achievement of certain objectives in the community. These are the Town's general objectives. They are listed in the same order as the State's general planning goals (24 VSA #4302) in order to facilitate comparison. For each sub-heading of objectives, references are provided to both the State's goals, and to the Section(s) of this Plan where more detailed policies to achieve these objectives are to be found.

3.1 Land Use and Economy (State Goals 1 & 2; Sec. 4 of this Plan)

1. Provide for a variety of land uses which will not detract from the rural, residential, scenic, agricultural and forested character of the Town.
2. Encourage a pattern of development which can reasonably be provided with needed public facilities and services.
3. Work towards a low level of tax burden on homeowners by creating a community which is efficient and economical to serve.
4. Recognize the importance of the existing village centers as traditional foci for residential development and community activity, and limited commercial development. Strengthen the importance of the villages by permitting and encouraging controlled growth within the village areas.
5. Provide appropriate locations and sufficient acreage for the limited expansion of

commercial and industrial activities. Provide strong controls on uses and site design within the areas designated for commercial and industrial uses.

6. Limit development to areas along or near existing public roads, thus avoiding unnecessary new road mileage and costly servicing. This applies equally to second homes which may, in the future, be occupied by year-round residents. Access roads will remain private with recorded maintenance agreements.
7. Provide for review of subdivisions of land to ensure proper design of roads, proper site development, and protection of agricultural and forestry lands, natural resource and natural hazard areas, and water resources.
8. Accommodate the changing needs of the Town through a continuous and comprehensive planning program.
9. Encourage agricultural and forest uses of the land which will contribute to a stable local economy, balanced land use, and public benefit.

3.2 Education (State Goal 3, Sec. 8 of this Plan)

1. Develop long range plans for education, in cooperation with other towns and the region. Acquire land in anticipation of future needs for schools and related facilities at the earliest possible time.
2. Ensure that the rate of new residential development is in keeping with the ability of the school system to serve the increased number of students.
3. Support The Dorset School District in its effort to ensure all of its students have every reasonable opportunity to become healthy, self-directed, self-fulfilled individuals and active, civic-minded citizens.

3.3 Transportation (State Goal 4; Sec. 7 of this Plan)

1. Provide for safe, convenient, economic, and energy efficient transportation systems within the Town.
2. Control development along Route 7/7A, with the aim being to maintain the present alignment, avoiding duplication of this road through the Town by extension of limited access Route 7.
3. Encourage the State in its various transportation planning studies to carry out all highway improvements and reconstructions in the Town in a safe manner, and with sufficient width to provide for bicycle use.
4. Encourage State and federal implementation of traffic calming measures along major

corridors through the village areas in addition to law enforcement.

3.4 Natural, Scenic, Historic Resources (State Goals 5 & 6, Sec. 5 of this Plan)

1. Achieve the best possible quality of environment for the Town's residents.
2. Protect aquifers and recharge areas, groundwater and our Class A and B streams, so that the Town may have a continuing supply of pure water for domestic (which includes drinking water) and recreational use.
3. Protect wildlife habitats and corridors.
4. Keep the rugged and poorly accessible mountain and forest areas free from development, reserved for forestry and other uses appropriate to their character.
5. Maintain profiles and ridge lines of mountains and hills in their natural state to preserve their scenic beauty.
6. Promote the continued use of high value agricultural and forestry lands as identified by LESA and FLESA, both as part of the economic base of the Town, and to preserve the scenic and environmental quality of the Town.
7. Retain as much permanent open space as possible through cluster development, preservation of natural resource lands and natural hazard areas, and encouragement of agricultural and forest practices.
8. Protect areas of special educational and scientific value, and conserve sites and structures of historic and architectural significance.
9. Count as developable land, whether for cluster or traditional subdivision, only the net developable area after removing wetlands, flood hazard areas, steep slopes 20% or greater, public water aquifers, spring recharge areas, and other similar resource lands.
10. Common land in a subdivision shall remain as permanent open space.
11. Consider land or easement acquisition in some cases and work with other organizations such as land trusts to acquire an interest in lands important to the implementation of this section. Consider creation of a land acquisition fund.

3.5 Energy Conservation (State Goal 7, Sec. 9 of this Plan)

1. Promote energy conservation, and the use of renewable and/or alternative energy resources.

3.6 Recreation (State Goal 8, Sec. 8 of this Plan)

1. Develop long range plans for recreation, including the development of trail systems, in cooperation with other towns and the region. Acquire land, sites and easements for these at the earliest possible time.
2. Protect the Town's amenities, and the Dorset Marsh, which make it such an attractive place for outdoor recreational pursuits for local residents and visitors alike.
3. Maintain public access to recreational resources, and the Dorset Marsh, where possible.

3.7 Agriculture and Forestry (State Goal 9, Sec. 5 of this Plan)

1. Encourage the preservation of high quality agricultural lands as identified by LESA for agricultural uses.
2. Encourage the maintenance and strengthening of the forest industry and related secondary industries within the Town.
3. Provide for evaluation of lands, using LESA and FLESA techniques, in the Town's development review processes.
4. In reviewing development proposals, discourage the creation of land use conflicts with existing agricultural or forest industries.
5. Encourage sound agricultural and forestry practices within the Town.
6. Seek and support changes in property value taxation which would favor the continuation of agricultural and forestry uses.

3.8 Wise Use of Natural Resources and Efficient Use of Extractive Resources (State Goal 10, Sec. 5 of this Plan)

1. Allow reasonable and responsible use of the Town's underground extractive resources, in a manner which minimizes negative impacts on the surrounding area.
2. Require rehabilitation and redevelopment of extractive sites as they are completed.
3. Protect natural resources including agricultural and forest lands, wetlands, water resources, wildlife habitats, fragile areas, and rare plant habitats.

3.9 Housing (State Goal 11, Sec. 6 of this Plan)

1. Provide good sites for residences of the diverse types and prices needed to house the projected population within the 5 year planning period.
2. Encourage the development of housing that will be safe, sanitary, and conveniently located, and will not impact negatively on neighboring development in terms of health

and safety.

3. Seek practical solutions to the gap between house prices and housing affordability.
4. Encourage housing density to reduce energy use for transportation and to preserve open land.
5. Encourage efficiency and conservation of energy in housing new and old.

3.10 Public Facilities and Services (State Goal 12, Sec. 8 of this Plan)

1. Provide for public facilities and services needed to serve the Town.
2. Allow for the expansion of public and/or private community water supply where practical, and protect current and future water supply sources.
3. Control the rate of development of residential units so that public facilities and services such as emergency services, schools, water systems, and local government are not overburdened by sudden increases in demand, thus allowing for planned capital budgeting for those facilities and services.

3.11 Child Care Services (State Goal 13, Section 8 of this Plan)

1. Ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care for residents of the Town.

SECTION 4 LAND USE PLAN

Dorset is predominantly a rural town. The Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act, which establishes the basis for local land use planning, defines a rural community as a municipality consisting of 2,500 or fewer persons as evidenced by the most recent U.S. Census. In addition to its definition by population numbers, Dorset is primarily rural due to its topographical characteristics and development suitabilities.

4.1 Existing Land Use Patterns

4.1.1 Mountainous Areas

The mountainous areas are typified by forests, forestry uses, absence of improved roads, and a very low intensity of residential uses. These areas are consistent with the lands known as Upland Forests in the Regional Plan. More than 80 percent of the land area of Dorset is in forest. Some of this forested area is also included in the rural areas described below.

4.1.2 Valley Lands and Rural Areas

The valley lands, outside of the villages, contain a variety of low density uses – predominantly agricultural and related uses, and rural housing. Valley lands include the lands known as rural areas in the Bennington Regional Plan. Rural areas are characterized by slopes and suitable soils which allow carefully planned development that considers ridge line protection, open space, agricultural, and forestry values.

4.1.3 Villages

Within the valleys are the built-up areas, with concentrations of development within the villages; Dorset Village and East Dorset are the largest. Each of these contains a collection of residential uses together with non-residential uses such as village scale commercial uses, churches, post offices, and similar uses. Settlements at South Dorset and South Village also represent significant residential groupings, with some non-residential uses in South Dorset.

Villages represent historic settlement areas. Historic settlement areas in Dorset have detached buildings with surrounding open space. The setting is dominated by its rural backdrop; in Dorset by the surrounding mountainous areas. Village scale is a scale with residential buildings at 1 to 2 stories high, and adjacent open spaces in proportion. Streets are just wide enough to accommodate no more than two-lanes of traffic. Maintaining existing road widths is desirable. Sidewalks are available for pedestrian use and further define village scale. Some public buildings such as churches and inns are a bit taller at 3 stories, and dominated by spires or towers. Commercial uses are limited and consist of a general store, and other small shops, some in converted residential buildings. Facilities such as warehouses, major automotive service facilities, large equipment operations, and vehicle oriented uses are not allowed in the villages. Any such existing facilities pre-exist this Town Plan and should not be considered desirable uses nor village scale uses. There are clearly defined edges at the boundary limits of village areas at which point open space is noticeable as a vista.³

Dorset and East Dorset Villages

The Town of Dorset is developing applications to designate Dorset and East Dorset as village centers through a program of the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. Dorset and East Dorset represent the two core commercial and cultural centers in the Town of Dorset. Dorset Village includes The Dorset Post Office, The Dorset Historical Society, The United Church of Dorset & East Rupert, The Dorset Theatre, The Dorset Public Library, The Union Store, a bank and several inns and restaurants. East Dorset includes the East Dorset Post Office, The Dorset Town Office, The East Dorset Fire Department, The Bill Wilson House and Library, the East Dorset Congregational Church and some existing stores.

³ This paragraph is based on information from the book, Vermont Townscape by N. Williams, Jr., E. Kellogg, and P. Lavigne.

Dorset and East Dorset are within walking distance of numerous residences. There should be an effort to maintain or increase the shopping, dining and entertainment in these village centers.

The Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development has a Village Designation Program that could assist with tax credits and other incentives that might spur redevelopment. Designated villages and town centers are also prioritized for other state funding opportunities.

Designation of these two centers would support the economic development goals of this plan by encouraging commercial development that would provide goods, services and employment opportunities located in appropriate areas and reinforcing historical development patterns. Designation would also support the land use goals by helping maintain the rural character of the town. Designation would help improve the ability of these historic villages to attract residents and businesses, enhance their livability and unique sense of place and expand access to employment, housing, and public services. These villages would also promote healthy, safe and walkable centers for people of all ages and incomes and reduce the combined costs of housing and transportation.

An overview of the land use character of the Town is provided in the following table, reproduced from the 1986 report of the USDA Soil Conservation Service, entitled Dorset Agricultural Soil Potential and Land Use. In 2008 there was 7,128 acres in the VT Current Use Program and in 2013 the total acreage is 7,988.

TABLE 3
Potential Dorset Land Use in Acres and Percents – Based on Soil Types

<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Cropland	1,011	3.3
Pasture	582	1.9
Open land	1,103	3.6
Woodland	26,394	86.1
Wetland	582	1.9
Farmstead	30	.1
Built-up	919	3.0
Water	35	.1
Totals	<u>30,656</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Source: USDA, Soil Survey data, 2014: <http://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov>

4.1.4 Development Along Transportation Corridors

Apart from the villages, the major transportation corridors serve as the other focus for existing development. The Route 30 corridor accommodates a variety of small scale commercial uses, plus some commercial-industrial uses related to the Town's rural economy

– for example two wood products industries, a nursery, a farm products outlet, - and a campground and various antique and craft businesses serving the tourist population. The Route 7/7A corridor has attracted a variety of uses serving tourists – including restaurants, tourist accommodation facilities, and campgrounds, - and commercial/industrial operations.

A purpose of this Plan is to allow development along these transportation corridors in areas so that strip-type development is prohibited.

Morse Hill Road, which links villages in the two valleys, has attracted mostly residential development. Its western flank contains a major community facility, the Dorset Elementary School, which serves school children throughout Dorset.

Additional residential development is found primarily along the Town’s public road network. Dorset Hollow is one such concentration of rural residential development, and roads such as West Road, Mad Tom Road, and Kirby Hollow Road also accommodate significant numbers of housing units.

4.2 Land Use Plan and Policies

The Land Use Plan reflects and builds upon the pattern of existing development and specific zoning districts.

The Land Use Plan requires that all development plans consider natural resource opportunities and constraints first, and then design appropriate plans with these in mind. Development must be carefully planned in areas where natural slopes exceed 15%, and residential development shall not be permitted where slopes are 20% or greater except if allowed in bylaw variance procedures.

In addition, there are in Dorset a number of “overlay” policies, such as LESA, FLESA, Ridgeline and Mountainside Conservation and floodplain protection, related to specific issues or land types which are described elsewhere in this Plan. In reading this Plan, therefore, for any specific location, the land use policies will be found in this Section, but reference must be made to other sections of the Plan to determine additional relevant policies of the Town.

4.2.1 Urban Designations

“Urban” is a relative term, and in Dorset the urban areas would be considered rural in many other localities. In Dorset, the “urban” areas are defined as the Village Residential, Village Commercial, and the Commercial-Industrial Designations.

The lands designated in these categories are intended to accommodate a large proportion of Dorset’s growth during the 5 year planning period. The concentration of development in these areas is an efficient use of public investment in infrastructure, and of maintenance services. As well, it helps to relieve growth pressure in the outlying areas. In these areas of urban designation, appropriate natural resource and natural hazard policies will apply.

4.2.1.1 Village Residential

a) Location:

Village Residential areas are designated in the settlement areas of Dorset Village, East Dorset, South Dorset, and South Village of East Dorset. The designated areas approximately represent the existing area of concentration of village residential development, but with some room for infilling.

b) Purpose:

The Village Residential areas are designated to recognize concentrations of existing development, provide for maintenance of the village communities as desirable places to live, and also to encourage new village residential development of a scale and type appropriate to the village environment.

c) Uses:

Uses in the Village Residential areas shall be housing with additional uses compatible with residential uses.

d) Policies:

1. Maintain the attractive residential environment of the village areas, by requiring new development to be compatible with appropriate existing development as defined in this Plan, and by safeguarding the villages as attractive and desirable places to live.
2. Recognize the existing villages as the original form of “cluster development” in which houses are “clustered” together to share community facilities, and also thereby avoid development in important natural resource areas.
3. Encourage the efficient use of infrastructure facilities in the villages, including village roads, existing water systems, and public facilities such as the post offices, library, emergency services, and so forth.
4. Encourage a mix of housing types and affordability levels within the village residential areas. To be compatible with existing development, residential types will include single family and two family houses, and homes may include an apartment within the primary structure, or within an accessory building. In an effort to address the problem of lack of affordable housing, review the Zoning Bylaw to consider an amendment to permit more than two units in a structure.
5. Ensure safe and adequate water supply and sewage disposal systems for both existing

and new housing in the villages.

6. Encourage the expansion of the Dorset Village water supply in the short term.
7. Recognize that the potential future water supply area of the East Dorset water supply system exceeds the area of the existing water service area. Undertake a future study to determine whether (and how) the boundaries of the designated village residential area could be expanded.
8. Encourage pedestrian access and orientation.

4.2.1.2 Village Commercial

a) Location:

Village Commercial areas are designated within the settlement areas of Dorset Village, East Dorset, and South Dorset. The indicated areas approximately represent existing concentrations of village commercial uses, but with some room for infilling.

b) Purpose:

Village Commercial areas provide space for suitable business and service establishments to provide employment opportunities for local residents, and to provide such commercial and service facilities needed by residents. Maintaining commercial activities in these areas should be consistent with the character of the historic settlement pattern.

c) Uses:

Uses in the Village Commercial areas shall be small scale retail and service commercial uses compatible with the village surroundings, that is, the historic settlement pattern and village scale defined earlier. In addition, residential uses, small scale offices, tourist accommodation facilities, restaurants, and home occupations shall be permitted and encouraged.

d) Policies:

1. Encourage Village Commercial uses within the designated areas.
2. Support uses, building types and styles, and scale of development compatible with village scale.
3. Follow the defined limits of the Village Commercial areas, and adhere to detailed performance standards.
4. Permit and encourage the combination of commercial and residential uses in the Village Commercial areas. Permit commercial business and professional uses of a service nature compatible with residential use.

5. Encourage conservation of open land between village commercial designations to prevent strip development.
6. At recent public hearings the Planning Commission and public discussed the distinct differences between the four (4) Village Commercial zones in Dorset. The Town should develop and implement a strategy that allows each of these unique areas to reach its potential.

4.2.1.3 Commercial-Industrial

a) Location:

Four Commercial-Industrial areas are designated in the Town Plan. All four of these have been designated in previous Town Plans, and zoned for Commercial-Industrial uses since the Town's first zoning bylaw in 1973. Three of the Commercial-Industrial areas are located along the Route 7/7A corridor. One of the Commercial-Industrial areas is located along the Route 30 corridor.

b) Purpose:

The Commercial-Industrial areas are designated in order to recognize existing commercial-industrial uses and to provide for suitable locations of adequate size to attract new light commercial-industrial development in the Town, and new employment opportunities for local residents.

c) Uses:

Uses in the Commercial-Industrial areas shall be light manufacturing or assembly of goods, offices, distribution centers, and similar light industries, subject to strict performance standards, as well as agriculture, forestry, and other rural uses. Additional uses, including public uses, recreational uses, home occupations, and residential uses, may be permitted.

d) Policies:

1. Maintain a high sufficiency rating of Route 7/7A by requiring controls on the number of and design of commercial-industrial access points to Route 7/7A.
2. Encourage new light commercial-industrial uses within these areas, and in accordance with high standards of performance and site design.
3. Permit a mixture of uses within these areas, designed in a way to minimize land use conflicts.

4. Uses to be particularly encouraged are those which provide employment opportunities for the local residents, such as clean, light industry.
5. As the East Dorset industrial park located at Tennis Way/ Hills Court reaches capacity the Town should research siting of future similar commercial establishments.

4.2.2 Rural Designations

“Rural” designations refer to the Agricultural and Rural Residential, Forest I and Forest II designations. These apply to most of the Town.

4.2.2.1 Agricultural and Rural Residential

a) Location:

Agricultural and Rural Residential areas are designated in the Town’s valley areas, in areas below elevation 1600 feet, and outside of the areas designated for Village Residential, Village Commercial, or Commercial-Industrial.

b) Purpose:

The Agricultural and Rural Residential areas are designated to recognize and permit a range of rural and residential uses, while protecting resources of open space, views, agricultural and forest lands, natural areas, and wildlife habitats. The Agricultural and Rural Residential areas are the areas of the Town which have recently experienced the most development pressure, and also which contain many areas deserving special consideration for resource protection. The policies for this land use category are intended to permit reasonable types and quantities of rural development, while giving full consideration for all of the resource policies of this Plan.

c) Uses:

Uses in the Agricultural and Rural Residential areas shall be agriculture, forestry and related uses, low density residential uses, and other rural or open space uses. Additional compatible uses such as recreational uses, “bed and breakfasts,” and home occupations, may be permitted.

d) Policies:

1. Allow a limited amount of rural residential development in a fashion which will protect the Town’s natural and scenic resources.
2. Encourage the conservation of important agricultural soils for current and future use, and existing agricultural uses. (Refer to Sec. 5.1 of this Plan.)

3. Encourage the conservation of the Town's forestry resources. (Refer to Sec. 5.2 of this Plan.)
4. Where warranted, require new residential subdivisions to be of a cluster form, designed to preserve open space, natural resources, and natural hazard lands. This is based on: LESA or FLESA ratings, Conservation Commission recommendations as agreed upon by the Planning Commission, State agency recommendations not in conflict with the Town Plan or other Dorset regulations and written policies, and other areas identified in the Town Plan.
5. Count as developable land, whether for a cluster or a traditional subdivision, only the net developable area after removing wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes of 20% or greater, public water aquifers, important spring recharge areas, and other similar resource lands. Land not included in building lots in a residential subdivision should remain permanent open space.
6. Ensure that new residential development can be provided with safe and adequate water supply and sewage disposal facilities.
7. Ensure that new residential development will not adversely impact existing residential development with respect to the provision of a safe and adequate water supply. This will be accomplished through following regulatory means provided by the State and the Town. In the event of a conflict, the more restrictive regulation or policy applies.
8. Require that new development be served either by existing public or private roads, or by new private roads. Require that all new roads be constructed to proper standards to allow easy access by emergency and other service vehicles.
9. Require that access roads will remain private, with recorded maintenance agreements. Encourage development of recorded road maintenance agreements when new development is proposed along existing access roads.
10. Avoid creation of land-locked parcels.
11. Avoid driveways or roads crossing steep slopes.
12. When new development is proposed on existing substandard private roads, require where possible, upgrading of such existing substandard roads.
13. Require that new development provide water to fight fires as per specifications provided by the fire districts.
14. Encourage a mix of housing types and affordability in the rural housing supply.

15. Favor compact forms of development, using short lengths of roadway, over more extensive development scattered along long distances of roadway. Encourage infilling of development in existing development clusters along existing roadways.

4.2.2.2 Forest I

a) Location:

All lands in the Town above 2000 feet elevation are designated Forest I lands. Most of the Forest I lands are not suitable for normal development due to limitations related to topography, soil conditions, high elevation, and inaccessibility.

b) Purpose:

Forest I lands are designated to recognize the importance of the Town's forest resources and forest industry, and to preserve the rugged forest areas and high mountainous lands for continued forestry uses and open spaces, and associated public benefits.

c) Uses:

Uses in the Forest I lands shall be forestry and related uses, and public recreational uses. Other uses which may be permitted include temporary hunting or fishing camps, public uses, and extractive industries.

d) Policies:

1. The Town's Forest I lands are considered a valuable natural resource to the Town. Policies specific to forest resource lands, both within and outside of this designation, are discussed in Section 5.2 of this Plan. Reference must also be made to the balance of Section 5 for resource policies affecting the Forest I lands.

4.2.2.3 Forest II

a) Location:

All lands in the Town above 1600 feet elevation and below 2000 feet elevation are designated Forest II lands. Most of the Forest II lands are not suitable for normal development due to limitations related to topography, soil conditions, high elevation, and inaccessibility.

b) Purpose:

Forest II lands are designated to recognize the importance of the Town's forest resources and

forest industry, and to preserve the rugged forest areas and high mountain lands for continued forestry uses and open spaces and associated public benefits.

c) Uses:

Uses in the Forest II lands shall be forestry and related uses, and public recreational uses, and other uses permitted in the Forest I lands. In addition, some very low density residential development, or low density cluster subdivision, may be permitted subject to detailed regulations. Also, customary home occupations, certain wood processing operations such as logging and firewood and similar uses may be permitted.

d) Policies:

1. The Town's Forest II lands are considered a valuable resource to the Town. Reference must be made to policies specific to the forest resources (Section 5.2) and to the other natural resource policies (Section 5) affecting these lands.
2. Permitted residential development in the Forest II areas will be strictly reviewed and controlled with respect to water and sanitary sewage disposal systems, erosion concerns, avoidance of steep slopes, maintenance of natural drainageways, maintenance of forest resources, and maintenance of views from the Town's roadways and settlement areas.
3. Permitted residential development shall be designed to minimize conflict with the functioning of forestry operations.
4. Permitted residential development shall either be of a very low density (minimum lot size of 10 acres) or shall be clustered with a density not to exceed 1 unit per 10 acres of net developable land.
5. The Planning Commission may require that subdivisions in the Forest II areas are in a cluster form.



Aerial view of Owls Head & Green Peak, part of the Taconic Mountain range running through the center of town from the north.

SECTION 5 NATURAL, SCENIC, AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Town of Dorset is fortunate to have extensive natural resources which combine to make Dorset such an attractive place to live. Each of these requires special care and consideration so that these resources continue to be recognized, and be available to future generations of Dorset residents.

These resource policies must be read in conjunction with the land use policies. The objective of these policies is to consider natural, scenic, and historic resource opportunities before designing appropriate development. Appropriate development appraises these resources with positive values. Proper environmental due diligence must take place before becoming involved in any permit process. Careful consideration will provide an easier and quicker path towards the desired land use. Previous actions affecting agricultural lands, forest lands, natural resource areas, and natural hazard lands may create non-complying situations. Any such non-compliance will have to be corrected to be in conformance with permits.

5.1 Agricultural Land, Land Uses, and Policies

Dorset contains a considerable amount of farmland, some of which is actively farmed, and some of which has historically been farmed but is now inactive. Since the conservation of open space is a major objective of the Plan, as well as the maintenance of the agricultural sector of the economy, the Town should encourage the continuation of farming where it is most suitable.

The Town has completed a LESA (Land Evaluation and Site Assessment) study with the assistance of the Soil Conservation Service. That study provides quantitative methodology for identifying important agricultural lands within the Town and is incorporated into the Town Plan.

Policies:

1. Consider that agricultural lands having a LESA rating of 225 or greater are lands of high evaluation, thereby having particular agricultural significance.
2. Update LESA policies and administer the LESA program.
3. Refer to the October 7, 1986 LESA study, and where appropriate, update LESA evaluations, in considering development applications.
4. Give particular consideration to high LESA evaluations in the Town's rural designations. Consider relaxation of agricultural preservation policies in the Town's commercial districts.
5. The Planning Commission may require cluster development where clustering will allow the conservation of land for agricultural uses.
6. Educate and encourage landowners to take advantage of the State Use Value Appraisal

tax program.

7. Promote programs for farm tax stabilization in Dorset.
8. Work with private conservation organizations to protect agricultural resources by other means, including participation in purchase.
9. Work with the State in its consideration of “growth center legislation.” The Town may monitor the progress of any such legislation with the intent to ensure that it is practical for Dorset.
10. Where new development is proposed adjacent to existing agricultural operations, the Town shall, when possible, seek to avoid conflicts between the proposed development and the agricultural operation.

5.2 Forest Lands, Forestry Uses, and Forest Policies

More than 70 percent of the land area of Dorset is in steep and rugged forest and mountain land, generally located away from existing roads and development. Most of this land is not suitable for development.

The studies of potential land use, made in conjunction with the Regional Plan, show that the demand for land for building development in these forest areas of the whole region cannot be large enough in the foreseeable future to use any substantial portion of the 250,000 acres of such land in private ownership in the region, and the same applies to the nearly 21,000 acres of forest and mountain land in Dorset. According to the 1986 Dorset Agricultural Soil Potential and Land Use report, nearly 26,000 acres in Dorset are actually forested, or have forest potential, but these areas would include both high and low lands. The bulk of this land is destined to remain in timberland. Therefore, encouragement of good forest management, through land use taxation and other means, becomes essential.

The Town has designated lands above 2000 feet elevation for forest use since 1972. In 1984, it was determined that lands of elevations between 1600 and 2000 feet also had severe limitations to development, and the Town adopted the Forest II designation.

The Town does recognize that important forest resources exist outside the areas designated Forest I or Forest II, and the Town promotes the conservation of forest resources throughout the Town through the use of the “FLESA” program. A special Forest LESA Committee was formed to undertake a Forest LESA (or “FLESA”, Forest Land Evaluation and Site Assessment) Study for Dorset. That study was completed in 1990 and is now available as a planning tool to be used in Dorset. FLESA is considered a part of this Plan.

The National Forest Proclamation Boundary has been expanded to include the Taconic Range, and the Regional Commission has performed a study to help identify land to be acquired by the National Forest Service, such as the Land Vest, Inc. property on Dorset Mt. which has already been acquired.

Policies:

1. To review and update FLESA policies and administer the FLESA program.
2. Refer to the FLESA study, and require FLESA evaluations in considering development applications having an impact on forested parcels of 25 acres or more.
3. The Planning Commission may require cluster development where clustering will allow the conservation of highly valued forestry lands as defined by FLESA.
6. Educate and encourage landowners to take advantage of the State Use Value Appraisal tax program.
7. Work with private conservation organizations to protect the forest resources by other means, including participation in purchase.
8. The Town supports the concept of a National Forest in the Taconic Range, provided that the acquisition program is based upon sound resource analysis, and provided that the fiscal impacts of any additional National Forests within the Town are satisfactory to the Town.
9. In considering development applications involving forested parcels of 25 acres or more, the Planning Commission may require the preparation and approval of a forest management plan.
10. Logging operations shall adhere to Vermont Acceptable Management Practices, and other State and local requirements as applicable (e.g. Act 250 permit if logging over 2,500 ft. elevation, Vermont Wetlands Rules and so forth).

5.3 Natural Resource Areas, and Natural Resource Area Policies

In addition to agricultural and forestry resource lands discussed above, natural resource areas in Dorset include:

- public water system aquifer areas
- spring recharge areas
- wetlands
- water resources: streams, lakes and ponds
- wildlife habitat areas
- natural/fragile areas, and rare/ endangered plant and animal communities

5.3.1 Public Water System Aquifer Areas

Both Dorset Village and East Dorset have public water supply systems, and in each case, the primary aquifer area has been estimated and mapped. These were added to the Town Plan map in 1984. These are shown on Map 3 Water Resources Map, as “Public Water Aquifer Areas. These aquifer protection areas and associated mapping need further refinement.

5.3.2 Springs and Seeps⁴

In a study of the Town in 1984, the State Agency of Environmental Conservation carried out a study to identify springs and recharge areas. After consideration of that study, ten such areas were added to the Town Plan map. A more recent study 'Geology of Dorset Springs' (6/6/2008-09 DeSimone/Gale) has been prepared to refine and expand on the original inventory of springs and seeps. The Water Resources Map #3 incorporates this new information, identifying 13 high to moderate flow springs, and 12 low flow springs and seeps.

The recharge areas shown in the prior 1984 map are not included on the updated map #3 since their accuracy is questionable.

General recharge considerations apply to all these springs, however further study needs to be done, especially for each major spring, to establish a better understanding of its potential recharge delineation and the protection necessary. It is of critical concern to the Town of Dorset that these areas be protected from pollution.

5.3.3 Wetlands

Wetlands are another important natural resource. Wetlands serve a variety of functions beneficial to the public, including retention of stormwater run-off and therefore flood reduction, protection of ground water, and provision of habitat for fish and wildlife and for rare plant communities. The Dorset Marsh is a wetland of statewide significance; it is classified as a Class 1 Wetland. There are also important wetlands at the base of the Green Mountains in East Dorset, along courses of the Otter Creek and the Batten Kill, and elsewhere.

Since the preparation of the 1987 Town Plan, progress has been made in identifying and regulating wetlands. In 1988, a study of wetlands in Dorset was completed by the State Department of Environmental Conservation, and in 1990 the Vermont Wetland Rules came into effect.

According to the Vermont Wetland Rules, Section 7, the State Water Resources Board can be petitioned to reclassify wetlands, determine significant functions, determine buffer sizes or the final boundaries of any significant wetland. The Town, the Planning Commission, the Conservation Commission, an affected landowner, or 15 or more persons are among the eligible people or organizations that can so petition. The State Wetland Division has identified Class I status for the Dorset Marsh and its boundaries have been established.

Wetlands in the Dorset area provide considerable benefits. Vermont Wetland Rules identify ten functions of wetlands and buffer zones which further define their significance. These are:

- water storage for flood water and storm runoff;
- surface and groundwater protection;
- fisheries habitat;

⁴ "GEOLOGY OF DORSET SPINGS" By David DeSimone & Marjorie Gale, June 2009.

- wildlife and migratory bird habitat;
- hydrophytic vegetation habitat;
- threatened and endangered species habitat;
- education and research in natural sciences;
- recreational value and economic benefits;
- open space and aesthetics; and
- erosion control through binding and stabilizing the soil.

Wetlands in Dorset are shown on Map 3, Water Resources Map, and are shown on the National Wetlands Inventory maps, which are included by reference as part of this Plan.

In addition, during review of development applications, the Town may require more detailed mapping of wetlands as well as an explanation of their significance on a particular site being considered for development.

5.3.4 Water Resources

Dorset's lakes, ponds, and streams are important natural resources as wildlife habitat, sources of water for domestic and recreational use, and for agricultural operations. The Town contains headwaters of three important watersheds – those of the Batten Kill, the Otter Creek, and the Mettawee River. Emerald Lake (28 acres), Prentiss Pond (5 acres), and South Village Pond (5 acres) are the major bodies of open water in the Town. In addition there are smaller water bodies and many streams which are important. These water resources are shown on Map 3.

Dorset values groundwater as a vital resource, and it is a critical concern that these areas be protected from pollution and degradation. It has been established through Act 199 that groundwater is a public trust resource that must be managed by the State in the best interest of all Vermonters. Vermont's new permitting program for large withdrawals requires that withdrawals be consistent with Town, Regional, and State Plans and 10 V.S.A. §1418I (3). Accordingly, under Act 199, the Town has the authority to affect the permitting of large water withdrawals within the community.

The State has adopted legislation governing water quality in streams. (10 VSA Section 1260 et. Seq.). Streams in Dorset are now mostly classified as Class B streams. However, a number of those streams may be eligible for reclassification to Class A status. In order for that to occur, the Town must petition the Vermont Department of Water Resources to study and reclassify the eligible streams.

5.3.5 Wildlife Habitat Areas

Wildlife habitat areas are also important to Dorset. The Dorset Marsh was recognized as an important habitat area in the 1980 Plan. In addition, the Town contains several winter deeryard areas, as identified by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Dorset Sportsmen's Club has also identified wintering areas and corridors which link those wintering areas with their winter feed areas.

The deeryard areas are shown on Map 2, as “Winter Deer Range, which represent the most recent mapping by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Town will use this mapping of deeryards as the basis for determining impacts, but will consider modifying those maps based on site inspections and testimony by the District Biologist of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, or other expert recognized by the Planning Commission.

The State is involved in study and mapping of bear habitats and bear corridors. The Town recognizes that there may be important bear habitats in Dorset, and will incorporate future bear mapping into this Plan if appropriate.

The Planning Commission may require an applicant for development to prepare and have approved a wildlife management plan where there is concern that the proposed development will negatively impact the wildlife resources.

5.3.6 Natural/Fragile Areas, and Rare Plant/Animal Habitats

The Nature Conservancy and the Vermont Natural Heritage Program have identified some natural/fragile areas, and some rare plant/animal communities. These are shown on Map 2, Natural Resources Map, as Rare Plant Species, Rare Animal Species, or Natural Communities. Also included by reference are Rare and Endangered Species as referenced in State and federal lists, i.e. Endangered Species Act of 1973 P.L. 93-205 and 10 V.S.A. Subsections 5401 – 5408.

5.3.7 Policies for Natural Resource Areas

The following policies apply to all development in the Town, in relation to potential impact on public water system aquifer areas; spring recharge areas; wetlands; water resources – streams, lakes, and ponds; wildlife habitat areas; natural/fragile areas; and rare plant/animal communities as discussed in this sub-section:

1. Natural Resource areas have been mapped based upon the best available information at present. However, in each case, it is recognized that the boundaries of the Natural Resource areas may change based upon actual changes over time, or based upon new information or more site-specific detailed information. Any such new or more detailed information will be used in reviewing development applications.
2. Development proposals will be reviewed with the intent of protecting the natural resources identified.
3. Where residential development is permitted, a cluster form of development may be required by the Planning Commission in order to preserve and protect the natural resources identified.

4. The Town will, when possible, work with private conservation organizations to protect identified resources through donation, easements, acquisitions, or other methods.
5. Recognize reduced values of lands with conservation easements when establishing Grand List values after all other tax advantages have been investigated and utilized.
6. Research and pursue changes to the taxation system which would result in a system of Use Value Assessment.
7. Enact appropriate regulations to protect quality of streams and groundwater which serve as domestic water supply (which includes drinking water) or flow into aquifers which have potential for future water supply.
8. Investigate stream reclassification to upgrade eligible streams from Class B to Class A waters.
9. Consider brooks and streams permanent Natural Resources unless proven contrary by the applicant through expert investigation and testimony.
10. Work with the State to classify as significant, wetlands in Dorset including wetlands associated with the Batten Kill in East Dorset, particularly the Batten Kill Rise Springs and Otter Creek.
11. Require adherence to the State and federal wetlands regulations.
12. Require adherence to the State and federal wetlands determinations and permits. In case of conflicts with Dorset Town policies and regulations, such policies and regulations supersede where more restrictive than State and federal decisions.
13. Require a 50' minimum buffer area adjacent to wetlands and water resources, or such greater buffer as may be required by Town, State, or federal regulations, or as a result of evidence introduced during the review process of a development proposal. In case of conflicts among Town, State, and federal policies and regulations, Dorset Town policies and regulations supersede where more restrictive than State and federal decisions.
14. Erosion control measures will be required in any new development which has a potential of impacting Natural Resources.
15. Require buffer zones along streams to provide cover for wildlife, maintain ambient temperatures for fish, and protect water quality.
16. Wetlands and their buffer zones are to be excluded from total acreage when net developable acreage is being calculated

17. The Town will work with the State, when possible, to update studies or perform new studies critical to protecting the public water supplies in the Town.
18. Investigate wetland classifications to upgrade certain wetlands from Class II to Class I.
19. It is the policy of the Town to protect all Natural/Fragile Areas, Rare Plant/Animal Habitats, and Rare/Endangered Species as referenced in Section 5.3.6 above.

5.4 Natural Hazard Areas and Hazard Area Policies

Natural Hazard Areas are those areas which, if developed, would be hazardous to the development, such as landslide areas, or those areas which, if developed, would cause negative impacts on the site or adjacent sites, such as erosion on steep slopes and other similar conditions. This Plan provides policies for three types of natural hazard areas – Flood Hazard Areas, Steeply Sloped Lands and Fluvial Erosion Hazard areas.

5.4.1 Flood Hazard Areas

Flood Hazard Areas represent the location of lands which are defined as having a 1% probability of being flooded in any year, also known as the 100 year flood. These areas have been mapped by the federal government, and are shown on the Federal Flood Insurance Rate Maps, which are on file in the municipal office, and are included by reference as a part of this Town Plan.

Flood regulations are included as part of the Town's Zoning Bylaw. The Town will keep its flood regulations in conformance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's current Flood Insurance Program requirements.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) developed the first flood hazard map for Dorset in 1974. These maps identified properties that could be threatened by flooding. The National Flood Insurance Program provides insurance to those property owners within flood hazard zones to protect owners from financial loss as private insurers will not provide such coverage. Dorset joined the National Flood Insurance Program in 1975. The current map was adopted on August 1, 1986.

FEMA has developed revised flood hazard maps based on a more accurate measure of topography using LIDAR, a method using lasers to determine elevations within a few centimeters. FEMA has produced new flood hazard zone maps that are currently under review and have a projected adoption date of 2015. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, the Bennington County Regional Commission and the Bennington County Conservation District have cooperatively completed a series of studies of the Batten Kill and Mettawee resulting in the mapping of river corridors, formally known as Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zones. Map # 7 shows the following flood hazard zones and the Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zones:

Zone A: these areas are subject to inundation by a one percent annual chance event. This is also known as the 100-year flood zone as the area could potentially flood once in 100 years or as the “base flood.” Zone A constitutes the Special Flood Hazard Area.

Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zones: these are areas where vertical and horizontal adjustments of rivers and streams occur as they meander to disperse energy and sediment to maintain stable slope and dimensions over time. Stability is determined at the watershed scale as the amount of water, sediments and woody debris moving in and through the stream cause the stream to alter course to adjust to these materials. These areas subject to fluvial erosion hazards, from gradual stream bank erosion to catastrophic channel enlargement, bank failure, and change in course, due to naturally occurring stream channel adjustments, have been identified and mapped by The Vermont River Management Program based on studies completed in accordance with accepted state fluvial geomorphic assessment and mapping protocols.

The Special Flood Hazard Areas address hazards from flooding due to inundations. However, most flood damage in Vermont streams is the result of erosion. Development in the Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zone will not be sustainable over the long term as the river meanders and will decrease the functions of the corridor for protection of water quality and movement and habitat of organisms.

The table below shows the number of structures by type from E911 data that are in the Special Flood Hazard Areas or within a Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zone. These numbers are really estimates as the E911 points are not always located exactly where structures are.

As of March of 2011, there were 28 structures located within the Special Flood Hazard Area. Only 21 % of those properties in the Special Flood Hazard Area were insured indicating that there are properties that are vulnerable to flooding or to erosion that are not currently protected through the National Flood Insurance Program.

TABLE 4

Structures in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) and/or Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zone (FEH) in Dorset. Source: BCRC GIS analyses		
Type	SFHA	FEH
Single family	17	8
Mobile home	1	1
Other Residential	4	
Commercial	4	1
Lodging	1	0
Government	1	0

Surface Water Flood Resiliency Policies and Actions

Surface Waters Policy: The ecological and hydrological integrity of rivers, streams and wetlands should be maintained to provide key ecosystem services such as water purification, pollutant abatement, nutrient dispersal and cycling and flood water retention. Rivers, streams and wetlands should also be protected to allow for continued recreational use and to provide valuable scenic resources. Development within identified Special Flood Hazard Areas and Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zones should be avoided. The Town, BCRC and Vermont ANR should work cooperatively to complete and maintain updated flood hazard and fluvial erosion hazard maps and identify specific areas of concern.

Actions:

1. The Town and organizations including the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, BCRC, the Batten Kill Watershed Alliance, the Bennington County Conservation District and others should work together to maintain and enhance the ecological integrity of rivers, streams, wetlands and upland forests.
2. An undisturbed buffer of natural vegetation should be established between rivers, streams and other water bodies to reduce nutrient input and attenuate overland flow. This buffer should be at least 50 feet for streams such as Gilbert Brook with minimal potential for lateral or vertical adjustment or 100 feet for streams such as The Mettawee with significant potential for such adjustment.
3. Developments or activities that would adversely affect the quality of the Town's surface waters shall be prohibited.

Flood Resiliency Policy: To protect the public health, safety and welfare, new development should be avoided in identified Special Flood Hazard Areas and Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zones.

Flood Resiliency Actions:

1. The Town should maintain current flood hazard regulations to control and limit development in flood hazard areas. These regulations are designed to protect property and the health and safety of the population against the hazards of flood water inundation, and to protect the community against the costs which may be incurred when unsuitable development occurs in areas prone to flooding. Development in flood hazard areas must be carefully controlled in accordance with the Town's flood hazard regulations.
2. New development in Special Flood Hazard Areas and the Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zones should be avoided where possible. Any new development that does occur should be designed and sited so as to avoid any increase in flooding or erosion.

3. Support acquisition by public entities or conservation organizations of buffers and Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zones, especially those identified in hazard mitigation and river corridor plans.
4. Dorset should adopt the most recent Town Road and Bridge Standards from the current 2014-2016 Vtrans Orange Book: Handbook for Local Officials and updates as they are developed. Bridge and culvert repairs and replacements should be designed following hydraulic studies to avoid constrictions that would accelerate flow and to allow for passage by aquatic organisms.
5. Existing and local bridges and culverts that would impede flow during flooding events should be reconstructed or replaced.
6. Forested lands should be protected to assure that precipitation can be absorbed by forest soils and litter and the peak flow attenuated. Acquisition of land or easements or Current Use assessment should be used to protect these areas, especially along the tributaries.
7. The Town should collaborate with other municipalities, the BCRC, and the States of Vermont and New York in planning for the use and protection of regional water resources such as the Batten Kill and Mettawee. This could involve an inter-municipal agreement between these towns and communities in New York State for the long-term protection of these resources and to address flood hazards.
8. The Town should provide outreach to property owners within the flood zones to support flood proofing or buy-outs of structures subject to repeated flooding and eligible for funding under the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.
9. The Town should participate in the FEMA Community Rating System program by implementing projects that would ultimately lead to rate reductions in flood insurance premiums for residents and businesses.
10. The Town should encourage owners in flood hazard zones to secure propane tanks, fire wood, boats and other items that could float away in a flood, thereby creating hazards for those downstream.
11. The Town should maintain a current Local Emergency Operations Plan that provides for emergency response and flood preparedness.
12. The Town should adopt a hazard mitigation plan that fulfills FEMA requirements.

5.4.2 Steeply Sloped Lands

In the Town of Dorset, “steeply sloped lands” refers to lands having a slope of 20 percent grade or greater. These areas may be determined in a general sense from the U.S.G.S. maps for Dorset, or for specific sites from more detailed site investigation and survey work. These areas are not mapped in this Plan document, but any lands having slopes of 20 percent grade or greater, by the best available information, are considered to be Natural Hazard Lands.

5.4.3 Fluvial Erosion Hazards – FEH

Fluvial Erosion Hazard areas include streams and rivers and bordering land that have the potential for fluvial erosion and can cause a rapid or gradual change of the stream channel size and location. There is a growing science that shows that rivers seek a natural equilibrium over-time and steps should be taken to allow this natural condition to occur. River corridors can be mapped indicating FEH sensitivity to change and the identification of pre-disaster mitigation measures to avoid costly property damage. Potential FEH areas in the Town should be identified and mapped and policies developed to carefully site development and/or avoid development in high risk FEH areas. Once additional mapped information is collected and area’s are identified, policies and implementing measures should be developed.

5.4.3 Policies for Natural Hazard Lands

1. Continue to update floodplain regulations, as required and in a timely fashion so that the Town remains in continuing compliance with the requirements of the Federal Flood Insurance Program.
2. Where residential development is permitted, the Planning Commission may require the use of a cluster form of development for lands containing or affecting Natural Hazard Lands.
3. Natural Hazard Lands are to be excluded from total acreage when net developable acreage is being calculated.
4. New development, including the construction of new buildings, public or private roads, or driveways, may not be permitted in Natural Hazard Areas, except where allowed through variances procedures.
5. Erosion control measures will be required in any new development which has a potential of impacting Natural Hazard Lands or Natural Resource Areas.
6. Lands with slopes of 20% grade and greater are not considered developable except if allowed through variance procedures.

5.5 Scenic Resources and Policies

The Town of Dorset is very scenic, and the residents of the Town would like to maintain its scenic quality. Also, it is recognized that the scenic character of the Town is an important economic factor in that the scenic resources enhance property values and enhance the value of

the area as a tourist destination.

Important components of the scenic quality include large tracts of open lands, interesting topography, a mix of open agricultural lands and forests, broad vistas of valley lands, and unspoiled forested mountainous areas. Also, the relatively small scale of Dorset's urban uses, and the historic and traditional nature of the Town's villages, add to the scenic quality, and also combine to form some particularly scenic routes.

5.5.1 Policies to Address Scenic Resources

1. Protect views of the Town's ridge lines and hilltops from the public roads and major settlement areas by a) denying approval of new lots for development which would damage the integrity of those views, and by b) controlling the siting of structures and the location of areas where clearing is allowed in new subdivisions so that aesthetic impacts will be minimized.
2. Perform a study to better define the Town's most important scenic resources, and to identify additional measures to protect them.
3. Require high performance standards with respect to site design, landscaping, and operations, for new commercial and industrial development.
4. Review new development regarding outdoor lighting and limit such lighting to that which is necessary for safety and convenience. Prevent excessive lighting of the night sky.
5. Study and possibly update existing sign regulations.
6. Study the impact of the designation of Mad Tom Road, Dorset West Road, Dorset Hollow Road, Morse Hill Road, and possibly others, as Scenic Roads under the State's Scenic Highway Law. Certain stretches of road, such as those addressed in the Bennington County Regional Plan, may also be considered (e.g. part of Route 7A).

5.6 Historic Resources

The Town of Dorset is rich in historic resources. These include important old marble quarries on both the east and west sides of Town, the Dorset Village Historic District, the Dorset Village Historic District ~ West, the Kent Neighborhood Historic District, cemeteries, and many individual structures which are of historic importance.

Table 4 provides a partial list of historic sites in the Town.

The National Register of Historic Places has identified two historic districts in Dorset – Dorset Village and the Kent Neighborhood District (West Road/Nichols Hill Road/Lane Road area). The Dorset Village Historic District and the Dorset Village Historic District ~ West, have been adopted as a design review area, in which development proposals are reviewed by a Design Review Board. The Dorset Village Historic District has received State and national approval for an expansion of the district.

The State also maintains a register of historic sites. Table 4 indicates the sites included in the State Register. The State inventory was done some time ago and needs to be updated.

Many other historic sites exist in Dorset, and a number of these were identified in 1976 for the Bicentennial. These are also listed in Table 4.

An objective of this Plan is to preserve sites of historic value. At present there are no protective regulations other than in the Dorset Village Historic Districts, but there are opportunities to further historic preservation through both regulatory and non-regulatory approaches.

5.6.1 Policies to Encourage Historic Preservation

1. Work with the Dorset Historical Society and the State to correctly map historic and pre-historic resources. Such map, when completed, will be included in the Town Plan by reference.
2. Establish Design Review regulations for Historic Districts upon receipt of required petition.
3. Work with the residents and the Dorset Historical Society to establish additional historic districts if warranted.
4. Consider use of cluster design development as a means of preserving historic resources not in historic districts.
5. Work with the Historical Society and private conservation organizations to acquire rights, easements and/or ownership of historic resources as appropriate. In particular, consider the incorporation of abandoned quarries and other outdoor historic resources as potential components in a future open space network or in recreation plans.
6. Encourage developers to incorporate historic structures into their project planning.
7. Include the Dorset Marble Quarries as part of the Town Plan Natural Resources Map.

TABLE 5

List of Important Historic Sites in Dorset

Included in the National Register of Historic Places:

Dorset Village Historic District, the district itself, and including over 60 individual historic buildings/properties.

Kent Neighborhood Historic District, the district itself, and including 19 individual historic buildings/properties.

B. Listed in the State Register of Historic Sites:

Warren Homestead	Coach Road Marker
Lincoln-Isham House	Cephas Kent Tavern Historic District
Ethan Allen Spring	Lefevre House
Norcross-West Quarry	H.N. Williams Store
Dorset Public Library	Prentiss Residence
Dorset Village Green Historic District	Dorset Inn
August Residence	North District Schoolhouse
Iron Foundry	St. James Church
Freedley Quarry	Freedleyville Marble Mill
Connor's Filling Station	Wilson House

C. Listed on Dorset Bicentennial Map (and not listed above):

Buildings

John Farwell House (1769)	Viall House
Ichabod Dimmock House (1780)	Toll Road Gate House
Harvey Holley House (ca. 1790)	Williams' Store (1820)
Geo. Manley House (1802)	Underhill House (ca. 1773)
John Kent House (1773)	Edgerton Saw Mill
Amos Field House (1776)	Hodge House (1791)
Titus Sykes House (1790's)	John Manley House (1773)
Asa Baldwin House (ca. 1774)	E. Baldwin House (ca. 1780)

Cemeteries

Armstrong Family	Maple Hill
Hazelton Family	Green Peak
East Dorset (Catholic)	East Dorset (Community)

Sites

Farwell Tavern	Cephas Kent Inn (1773)
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Quarries

Norcross-West (1785-1913)	Gettysburg (ca. 1800-1897)
Freedley (1808-ca. 1900)	Fulsom (1854-1885)
Cave (1812-1820)	

5.7 Extractive Resources and Policies

Historically, Dorset was important as a source of marble, as evidenced by the important historic marble quarries included in the list of Historic sites. However, marble is no longer quarried in Dorset, although it is in Danby to the north.

Extraction of natural resources is permitted with conditions in the rural and forest designations, and also permitted in the commercial-industrial designations. Special standards for proposed new or enlarged extractive sites are to be applied. Mineral, gas and oil extraction uses, in the commercial-industrial areas are subject to detailed review and performance standards.

5.7.1 Policies for Resource Extraction:

1. Permit rock, sand, and gravel resource extraction uses incidental to commercial-industrial uses, and permit mineral, gas, and oil extraction uses, all subject to rigorous review and performance standards.
2. Consider new or expanded resource extractive uses in the rural areas, as conditional uses, also subject to rigorous review and performance standards.
3. In the review of proposals for resource extractive uses, require suitable plans for drainage, protection of natural resources, protection of nearby water supplies, and site rehabilitation. Consider the aesthetic impact of any such proposals, and require designs which minimize negative aesthetic impacts.
4. Encourage redevelopment where appropriate of resource extractive sites for alternate uses, when resource extraction is completed.
5. Require rehabilitation and reclamation of resource extractive sites at completion of appropriate phases of operation.

(Left) Upper Prince or Gettysburg Quarry located in Dorset is a fine example of a quarry that shows how historic quarrying techniques were enhanced by steam power.

(Right) Freedleyville Quarry in East Dorset, is another example of in ground mining techniques used in the late 1800's to early 1900's





SECTION 6 HOUSING SUPPLY, HOUSING AFFORDABILITY, AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

10.2 Housing Supply

The most recent (2010 U.S. Census) supply of housing units in Dorset is presented in Table 2, in SECTION 2 of this Plan. There are about 1,450 housing units, of which, 468 are seasonal units.

A review of the recent Grand Lists for Dorset provides a further and quite detailed look at housing properties in Dorset. (The overall number of housing properties is lower than the number of units, as in some cases a housing property contains more than one unit. Also, the Grand List data below does not reflect housing units in commercial establishments, for example, in inns.)

Grand List data shown in Table 6 and referred to in the text below are as of April 1 of the year referenced. For example, the 2013 Grand List shows that there was a total of 1,214 housing properties on April 1, 2013.

According to Census data, the population of Dorset decreased 0.245% from 2000 to 2010. Census data showed an increase in total housing units of 16.4% between 2000 and 2010. Dorset Grand List data showed an increase of 5.5% in housing properties between 2000 and 2010. Grand List data indicate an average annual increase in housing properties of 1.56% for the ten year period from 2010 to 2020. It is clear from all accounts that housing units are increasing at a greater rate than the population. This is due in part to trends to having fewer persons in a household, and likely in part to the increasing significance of vacation/seasonal residences.

The rate of growth in housing properties has not been even. Based on the Grand Lists, the rate of growth since 1990 in housing properties has ranged from a low of -1.4% (1997-98), to a high of 11.7% (1989-90). As indicated by averaging the percent change data in Table 6, the average annual growth rate for the years from 1990 to 2000 has been .5%. From 2000 to 2009 units increased by 94 (8.48%) for an annual average growth rate slightly less than 1% at .94%.

The Grand List classifies housing properties as permanent if they are the primary residence of the owners. The 2010 U.S. Census indicates that 32.3% of Dorset housing units were for seasonal use. The trend towards greater numbers of seasonal units has been steadily climbing upward for the past ten years. The Grand List shows a significant drop in vacation units between 2003 and 2004 because of a change in definition as noted for Table 6. The change reflects more the condition of the housing units vs. nature of occupancy. The term "vacation" in the Grand List changed to "seasonal" under the state classification but will still be counted under the "Permanent" residential category. For this reason the former permanent vs. vacation units cannot be broken out until the next Census or an estimate is provided by the Town Listers.

TABLE 6
Housing Properties in Dorset by Category – 1990 to 2014

Category	1990	2000	2002	2004*	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Permanent Residential									
Res. <6 Acres	526	504	544	786	798	808	817	847	820
Res. >6 Acres	185	189	203	323	333	333	348	347	351
Subtotal Res.	711	693	747	1109	1131	1141	1165	1172	1171
% of Total	67.7	62.5	66.3	96	96.5	96.6	96.6	96.7	97.0
Manufact. Homes									
MH no Land	27	16	14	16	12	11	11	10	8
MH with Land	13	12	13	12	11	11	11	11	10
Subtotal MH	40	28	27	28	22	22	22	21	18
% of Total	3.8	2.5	2.4	2.4	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.4
Vacation Residential									
Vac. <6 Acres	207	266	241	12	11	10	12	11	11
Vac. >6 Acres	92	121	112	6	7	7	6	7	7
Subtotal Vac.	299	387	353	18	18	17	18	18	18
% of Total	28.5	34.9	31.3	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Totals	1050	1108	1127	1166	1172	1180	1205	1211	1207
% Change	11.7	0.8	1.1						

* State Definition of Vacation/Permanent Residential Changed
Source: Dorset Grand Lists, 1990 – 2009 (Note: 2007 data not available)

In 2009, 813 (69.9%) permanent residential properties are under 6 acres in size. Similarly, most (67.9%) vacation/seasonal properties are also under 6 acres.

There were 18 mobile homes in 2014, or 1.49% of the housing properties. In 1993, there were 34 mobile homes, or 3.1% of the housing properties. Although mobile homes have not been a significant portion of Dorset's housing stock, their numbers continue to decrease as a percentage of total housing.⁵

10.2 Housing & Affordability Policies

⁵ The Dorset Grand List refers to mobile homes. *[The Dorset Zoning Bylaw defines and refers to Mobile Home as Mobile Home/Manufact. Home. Consult the Dorset ZBL for the exact definition.]*

The 2010 U.S. Census provides some data on housing values and gross rents in Dorset:

TABLE 7

Dorset Housing Unit Values and Gross Rents

<u>Housing Unit Value</u>	<u>Percent of Total Units</u>
Less than \$50,000	14.29%
\$50,000 to \$149,999	0.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	13.39%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	23.21%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	10.71%
\$500,000 to \$1,000,000	38.39%
\$1,000,000 or more	0.1%
Median (dollars)	\$291,700

<u>Gross Rent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Less than \$200	N/A
\$200 to \$299	4.9%
\$300 to \$499	20.73%
\$500 to \$699	14.63%
\$700 to \$999	24.39%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	17.07%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	23.17%
\$2,000 or more	N/A
Median (dollars)	\$820

Source: 2010 Census, www.usa.com/dorset-vt-housing

TABLE 8⁶

Dorset Average Assessed Values

Category	# in 2004 *	Average Assessed Value	# in 2006	Average Assessed Value	# in 2008	Average Assessed Value	# in 2010	Average Assessed Value	# in 2012	Average Assessed Value	# in 2014	Average Assessed Value
Permanent Residential												
Res <6 Acres	786	\$269,317	798	\$425,579	808	\$426,869	817	\$430,730	825	\$428,169	820	\$424,633
Res >6 Acres	323	\$602,992	333	\$886,334	333	\$887,298	348	\$918,494	347	\$916,653	351	\$900,576
Subtotal	1109		1131		1141		1165		1172		1171	
Mobile Homes												
MH no Land	16	\$11,300	12	\$11,600	11	\$15,272	11	\$15,436	10	\$16,360	8	\$17,575
MH w/ Land	12	\$90,433	11	\$139,545	11	\$153,581	11	\$140,881	11	\$140,881	10	\$132,900
Subtotal	28		25		25		22		21		18	
Vacation Residential												
Vac <6 Acres	12	\$73,425	12	\$130,645	10	\$119,360	12	\$177,291	11	\$133,963	11	\$133,963
Vac >6 Acres	6	\$47,066	6	\$163,271	7	\$149,180	6	\$118,754	7	\$263,900	7	\$263,900
Subtotal	18		18		17		18		18		18	

⁶ * State Definition of Vacation/Permanent Residential Changed

Source: Grand List

Additional housing property value data can be gleaned from the Grand Lists which provide assessed values by category, which are averaged in the above Table:

It is generally accepted that housing can be considered “affordable” when a family pays no more than 30% of their gross income on housing costs. Based on 2011 Vermont Department of Labor data, the median household income in Bennington County is \$37,401. Such a family could afford to purchase a house selling for roughly \$93,502 or 2.5 times their annual income.⁷ This figure is well below the value of a median priced home in Dorset. A family would need a household income of nearly \$115,500 per year to be able to afford the average value residence in Dorset, \$385,000. The median household income in Dorset is \$63,857 as per the 2013 Department of Labor Report.

Clearly it is difficult for persons of moderate means to find affordable housing in Dorset. Owner-occupied housing is not affordable for many. Rentals are an option, but they are limited in number, and may be limited in size. Some are single-family houses; others are apartments within houses or accessory buildings. Seasonal residents, who can often afford to pay more for housing, are often in direct competition for available units.

An effort should be made to promote home weatherization to make maintaining a home more affordable. It would be useful to introduce the concept of “cost of ownership” – not just purchase price, noting how energy efficiency can make a home more affordable.

The following have helped to relieve the discrepancy between income and housing and land costs: (1) mobile homes are permitted in all districts, except design districts, and except where prohibited by private deed restrictions. There is, however, only a small inventory of mobile homes; (2) building sites on one-half acre parcels are allowed in the village areas served by off-premise water supply; and (3) two-family houses are permitted in both the rural and village residential areas, subject to density reduction based upon water, soil, and septic considerations.

To be compatible with existing development, residential types will include single family and two family houses, and homes may include an apartment within the primary structure or within an accessory building. Presently, no more than two dwelling units are allowed within a structure. It is a policy of this Plan to consider allowing more than two units in a structure, in an effort to address the problem of lack of affordable housing.

10.2.3 Policies Regarding Housing Affordability:

1. Find and utilize available funding sources to encourage rehabilitation of older houses through the resources of the Regional Affordable Housing Corporation and other non-profit housing organizations and land trusts.

⁷ Annual gross median household income per month multiplied by 30% then by 100.

2. Investigate allowing a density bonus of up to 25%, where such bonus will be used to provide a cost break, thus allowing moderate cost lots and housing.
3. Encourage the provision of additional rental housing by permitting, where appropriate, new dwelling units within existing homes or accessory buildings. Provision for such units must be subject to requirements for proper sewage disposal and adequate water supply.
4. Permit and encourage “infill” housing in village areas, where Town water services are, or can be made available. Infill housing needs to be compatible with existing development, such that residential types will include single family and two family houses, and homes may include an apartment within the primary structure or within an accessory building.
5. Work with local, regional, and state organizations to study ways which can be implemented to allow affordable housing.
6. Ensure that all construction, new & renovation, complies with the Vermont Residential Building Energy Standards (VTRBES) & Commercial Building Energy Standards (VTCBES).

10.2 Growth Management and Policies

Until recently, population growth in Dorset has continued to be higher than that of the Region, County, and State as shown in Section 2 and in Table 1 of this Plan. For the previous ten years, the growth in housing *units* has increased-16.4%.

The Town has been concerned for some time about the rate of growth and its possible impact on the rural character of the Town, and also on the Town’s ability to provide needed services.

In 1988, the Town adopted a Permit Allocation system as part of the Subdivision Regulations, which limits the number of building permits in any given year in any specific subdivision. This system was initiated to promote an orderly rate of growth of about 2.5% annually, as identified in earlier Town Plans. The strategy appears to be working well, and may account for the slight decrease in the annual growth rate, although the length of time since its passage is short. Growth should continue to be monitored, so that appropriate measures can be taken, if necessary.

10.2.3 Growth Management Policies:

1. The rate of growth shall be limited to a manageable rate consistent with the Town’s

ability to provide services.

2. Continue to promote an orderly rate of growth of residential units in the Town of Dorset consistent with the average annual growth rate since 1986, less than 2.5%.
3. Monitor growth rates of both population and housing to determine the effectiveness of the growth allocation regulations, and make amendments to these regulations if necessary.
4. Consider preferential review of development applications in “urban” designations in this Plan, thus alleviating pressure on the rural areas and facilitating the provision of Town services.
5. Adopt policies and practices intended to assist the Town and other service providers in the smooth delivery of services. (Refer to the “Community Facility and Service Policies” included in Section 8 of this Plan.)
6. Explore Limits to growth in the Villages – Explore the limits of water and sewage treatment in the villages. A Committee could be established to study water and possible sewer needs in Villages for residential and commercial areas.

10.2.3 Growth & Energy

Most buildings currently in Dorset, and most that are likely to be built in the future, are private residential structures. Consequently, strategies that lead to greater energy conservation and effective utilization of renewable energy systems in these buildings will have a substantial impact on total energy usage in the community. Those strategies should include space heating, water heating, lighting/ electric, and transportation opportunities.

Dorset’s plan for future development allows and encourages higher densities of development in village centers and along existing highways adjacent to those areas. On its face, such development plans support energy conservation objectives by limiting sprawl and thus reducing energy used for transportation and energy required for the delivery of essential services to residents. While appropriate, the effectiveness of this plan is somewhat limited by the fact that Dorset is a rural community with relatively few local job sites or stores and a high school (used by most students) located in an adjacent town. Furthermore, most recent residential development has not occurred as “infill” in village or village residential districts, but rather on large lots in outlying rural districts. The most effective strategies for siting new residential development in Dorset, therefore, may be those that focus on the location and solar orientation of new developments and buildings.⁸

⁸ “Dorset Energy Report 2013” by Jim Sullivan, Director, Bennington County Regional Commission

The East Dorset Congregational Church in late winter of 2011. The Church is a focal point for East Dorset Village which is largely a residential village.



SECTION 7 TRANSPORTATION

Safe, convenient, energy efficient and economical transportation is essential to the residents of Dorset. The transportation system is made up of a variety of components, roads being chief among them, but also including the railroad, bus and facilities for bicycle and pedestrian transportation.

7.1 Roads

The existing road system is shown on Map 4, Transportation Map. According to the State Agency of Transportation, Dorset has the following mileages of public roads *as of 2/10/14*

	<u>Miles</u>
Town Class 1	0
Town Class 2	13.85
Town Class 3	24.65
State Highway	<u>13.671</u>
Total	53.091

In addition, there are several miles (8.07) of Class 4 Town “Highways” and/or Legal Trails, which are owned but not maintained by the Town, and substantial mileage of private roads (18 miles & 70 roads) and right-of-ways serving mostly residential development.

7.1.1 State Highways

The Route 7 Limited Access Highway is located near the base of the Green Mountain front in the southeastern part of Dorset. It serves as a direct travel route from Bennington to its end in East Dorset. It is important to the Town that an extension of the Limited Access Highway not be built beyond its current terminus in East Dorset. An extension would result in disruption of residential neighborhoods and wetland areas.

Route 7/7A is the main transportation artery through Dorset’s easterly valley. It connects

the settlement areas of South Village, East Dorset, and North Dorset, with Manchester and other destinations to the south, and with Rutland and other localities to the north. It also provides direct access to some properties along its route. Route 7A becomes Route 7 where the Route 7 Limited Access Highway interchange ends. Route 7 through Dorset has a fair highway sufficiency rating. Sufficiency ratings consider the type of road, its functional classification⁹, and traffic volume. The Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT) gives points based on structural condition (50), safety (25) and movement efficiency (25). A good rating is 80 -100, a fair rating is 60-80, a poor rating is 40-60, and a bad rating is 0-40 points. The Route 7 sufficiency rating for Dorset has increased since 1987 due primarily to the opening of the Route 7 Limited Access Highway.

Route 30 is a State Highway, and is the connecting link between Manchester, Dorset, Rupert, and other towns further north. It also provides direct access to properties along its route. Increased traffic can be expected with population growth in Dorset or in areas to the north. It is also a well-traveled tourist route for drivers and bicyclists alike. Soft shoulders on this road make bicycling difficult and unsafe.

Route 30 and Route 7 have conflicts in through movement due to access cuts for commercial development. Route 30 also has many residential curb cuts. Strip development must be avoided, and the number of access roads and curb cuts should be carefully controlled. Strip development is characterized by multiple curbcuts, non-pedestrian access, and a cluttered appearance. Parking areas which are largely noticeable from the highway is another characteristic. The State AOT Route 7 Transportation Management Plan recommends safety and operational improvements, and access control and right-of-way acquisition to protect the existing Route 7 corridor in East Dorset as it is part of the economic link between Bennington and Rutland.

TABLE 9

Dorset Road Sufficiency Ratings, 2008 & 2012¹⁰

Route	Range
Route 30	49.0 – 70.9
Route 7	94.5 – 96.8
Route 7A	88.3 – 92.3

7.1.2 Local Arterials

⁹ Functional classification of roads is based on movement (mobility) or access. Through movement requires roads with high capacity, allowing a greater number of vehicles moving at a higher speed as there are fewer conflicts (e.g. curb cuts). Access roads allow ingress and egress to properties adjacent to the road, resulting in slower speeds.

¹⁰ Vermont AOT, Road sufficiency rating: [/vtransplanning.vermont.gov/research/highway/publications](http://vtransplanning.vermont.gov/research/highway/publications)

Local arterials are the more heavily traveled routes between Village centers. Morse Hill Road, from South Village to Route 30 in South Dorset, is an important local arterial, providing access to Routes 7 and 7A, and linking the easterly and westerly areas of the Town. This is also the route traveled by school busses from both sides of Town to reach the elementary school.

The existing local arterials have several dangerous intersections. The most critical are:

- the intersection of Church Street and Route 30;
- the intersection of Morse Hill Road and Route 30;
- the intersection of Peace Street and Route 30; and
- the intersection of Mad Tom Road and Route 7.

As traffic increases in the area, hazardous situations at these intersections will also increase, and improvements will be required. Improvements may include the addition of left turn lanes, the installation of traffic signals, regrading for better visibility, or other measures designed to reduce the hazard. The Town and the State should, when possible, jointly study the situations and determine if, when, and what corrective measures are necessary. Work with the Agency of Transportation to implement the traffic calming plan, designed with the use of a municipal planning grant for the intersection of Mad Tom Road and Route 7.

7.1.3 Local Collector and Access Roads

Collectors are secondary roads which provide access between arterials and local roads. These minor thoroughfares should be gradually improved to handle the added traffic of the future.

Local roads are low speed, access roads providing direct access to property. The majority of curb cuts for a community should be along these roads. This is a basic transportation planning principle. However, most of the local roads are rural in nature, and are unsuitable for large increases in traffic loads.

7.2 Parking

Parking for the library, churches, stores, inns, etc., particularly in Dorset Village around the Village Green and on Route 30, remains a problem. There is currently inadequate parking and further growth will increase this problem which may significantly limit future development. The Dorset Green has been reconstructed to alleviate some of the parking problems.

In addition, parking lot standards should be adopted so that these lots are properly laid out to be functional and not hazardous. The required number of parking spaces for various uses should be reviewed and revised as necessary to provide adequate off-street parking for all uses.

7.3 Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation

7.3.1 Bicycle Travel on the Town's Roadways

Many of the Town's roads and State Highways are well traveled routes for bicyclists, both local residents and tourists. Many of the local roads can accommodate bicyclists without tremendous danger, but conflict opportunities increase on the larger traffic arteries, in particular the State and federal highways.

The State has an on-going program of road repaving and reconstruction. Every effort should be made to accommodate the safe use of the State Highways by bicyclists in the State's re-paving and reconstruction program.

7.3.2 Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation, Off Roadways

There is an increasing interest in walking, running, and bicycling, both as a means of getting to local destinations, and as a form of fitness and recreation. As well, there is substantial local interest in maintenance and use of trails for snowshoe, cross-country skiing, and snowmobile use.

In certain areas, the Town may have an opportunity to develop off-road routes to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel. There are already many local trails in Dorset which the local public use for recreational purposes. The Town owns lengths of Class 4 Trails, some of which may have potential for development of a trails system. The Town of Manchester has taken some initiative to explore the development of a recreational path linking Manchester and Dorset along the old route of the Manchester-Dorset-Granville Railway.

The United States Forest Service has recently completed the Dorset – Peru Assessment, a guidance procedure for federal land owned in the Towns of Dorset and Peru. Under future efforts the Forest Service will establish additional recreational venues located on and around Dorset Peak. The diverse uses encouraged will include mountain biking, and there is great potential for partnered efforts between the federal, state, and local entities to enhance the mountain biking experience in Dorset.¹¹

7.4 Railways

About 6.25 miles of railroad track runs through the Town of Dorset. This is a portion of the

¹¹ “Dorset – Peru Assessment” by USDA – United States Forest Service 2013

main line between Burlington and North Bennington. Track mileage is owned by the State of Vermont, and is operated by Vermont Railways, Inc. Although some area businesses do ship and receive freight by rail, the railways are not currently used as a major means of transport in the area. Changed circumstances in the future could alter this, and bring an increased interest in use of rail transportation.

This Plan designates three Commercial-Industrial areas in the Route 7/7A corridor which are alongside and encompass portions of the railway in Dorset. The Town should seek to keep the rail option open in Dorset, and should encourage commercial-industrial developers to make use of rail service when feasible.

7.5 Transportation Policies:

1. Work to improve the “sufficiency rating” of Routes 7/7A and Route 30 through Dorset by controlling access points and avoiding strip development.
2. Commercial and industrial developments should provide adequate parking, and include provisions for safe and efficient vehicular ingress and egress. To the extent possible, adjacent commercial or industrial uses should make use of common parking and access drives.
3. Work with the State to find and provide solutions to problems related to dangerous intersections, in particular those noted above (and shown on the Transportation Plan Map).
4. Favor compact forms of development which do not require long lengths of roadway. Require that new development roadways be private, and that maintenance agreements be provided to ensure that new private roadways are adequately maintained without burden to the Town.
5. Require that all new lots be provided with adequate access by public or private rights-of-way to the public road system.
6. Require that new public or private roads be carefully located with respect to topography, reasonable grades, and safe intersections, be designed to Town standards, and be accessible to emergency vehicles in all weather.
7. Where new development is proposed on an existing private road, or on a Class 4 Public Highway or Town Trail, the Planning Commission may require that the existing private road or Class 4 Highway or Town Trail, be brought up to Town standards.

8. Review parking standards for various types of uses. In addition, parking lot standards should be adopted to ensure that parking lots are properly laid out to be functional, safe, and landscaped to conform with the requirements of the zoning district in which they are located.
9. Seek, in cooperation with the businesses and residents of Dorset Village, a solution to problems of inadequate parking in the Village area. Encourage carpooling whenever possible.
10. Encourage the development and maintenance of safe pedestrian routes within villages and other areas of concentrated residential development. Traffic calming measures – in addition to law enforcement – along major corridors through the village areas need to be planned and implemented to ensure village character.
11. Work with the State to provide adequate width and design standards for the safe transportation of bicyclists along State Highways. Whenever feasible, bicycle lanes should be provided in the State's repaving and reconstruction plans.
12. Undertake a future study regarding a comprehensive trails system, to be marked and open to the public, for recreational use, and possibly linking the western and eastern valleys of the Town.
13. Work with the Town of Manchester, other Towns, and other organizations involved in the development of multi-purpose recreation paths, such as that being considered between Manchester and Dorset on an old rail-bed.
14. Keep Class 4 Town Highways and Town Trails in public ownership, so that they might be available in the future for part of the transportation system, either for vehicles or for pedestrians/bicycles. Prospective land purchasers should be made aware that existing Town Trails will remain in public ownership.
15. Identify and list local arterials, collectors, and access roads by name, Town Highway number, and Enhanced 911 number for assistance in site plan and other development reviews.
16. Start and maintain a working Town transportation plan map listing known traffic volumes by road, and add traffic volumes as they become evident through public studies and accepted private studies as per development review testimony.
17. To increase use of bicycles in the downtowns by encouraging the installation of bicycle racks outside commercial establishments.



Road Work on Upper Hollow Rd

18. Encourage and support installation of plug-in stations for electric vehicles and interpret zoning bylaws accordingly.

19. Encourage carpooling by establishing Park & Ride locations through the Vtrans Local Transportation Facilities program.

SECTION 8 EDUCATION & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Town of Dorset offers a variety of educational facilities, public services, and community facilities. This Section of the Plan provides information on the existing facilities and services, and where possible, policies for the future.

8.1 Educational Facilities and Services

The Dorset School serves children from Kindergarten through Grade 8. It is administered by the Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union (BRSU). It is located near the western end of Morse Hill Road, and is well located for convenience in bus transportation between the east and west sides of town. The school was built in 1960 and was expanded in 1988. Enrollment as of May 2014 was 184 students.

Secondary school students in Dorset have historically been educated at Burr and Burton Academy in Manchester, or other public or private secondary schools, on a tuition basis paid by the Town.

On Kirby Hollow Road is the Long Trail School, a private secondary school serving grades 7 through 12. Its 2013-2014 enrollment is 158 students.

8.1.1 Educational Facility Policies

1. Work with the School Board and the BRSU to provide information to allow the school to better project enrollments, and associated capital improvements.
2. Consider various options for school expansion or consolidation including the option of co-operating with nearby towns to provide for anticipated future needs.
3. If additional lands are required at the existing elementary school site, or if a new school site is required, encourage the School Board to acquire such lands as soon as possible, and to assist them in so doing if possible.
4. Require that any new or expanded school site be safely and conveniently accessed by the population it serves.
5. Consider utilizing energy saving environmentally sound conservation & operational practices

8.2 Water Supply Service

Two areas of the Town are served with public communal water supply systems: Dorset

Village and East Dorset, in each case under the jurisdiction of a fire district, governed by a Prudential Committee. Elsewhere in the Town, the dispersed nature of development generally makes it uneconomical to install a public water supply system. Otherwise, private supplies from wells or springs are the main source of water.

The Dorset Village water system is managed by the Dorset Fire District No. 1 and underwent renovations in 2011. The system obtains its water from the "Dorset Springs," west of the Village. In the mid-1980's an engineering study concluded that no further connections should be made until additional water sources are available. In addition, expansion of the system would need improvements in the transmission lines, and a reservoir. The Prudential Committee for the Dorset Fire District No. 1 is in the process of studying the options for adding additional water sources to this system, and other possible improvements. There are 182 connections to this system.

The East Dorset Village Water System is managed by the East Dorset Prudential Committee and the East Dorset Fire District #1 Fire Department. Several upgrades to the Water System were undertaken during 2008 and 2009. Although four springs continue to supply the system, a well was drilled and provides system backup for the first time in the system's history. A chemical feed and control building was constructed on the water storage site. It contains new chlorinating equipment that also automatically diverts water when it is not needed and does so prior to chlorination. Corrosion control treatment has begun. A new system monitoring/ alarm control system was implemented and uses multi-media paging controlled by an online system. The entire water main on Pleasant Street Extension was replaced. The water main on South Village Street was extended from the Fire Station to the south end of the road, providing two new fire hydrants and future water service connections for current non-users. The water system currently serves 81 properties.

Both of these systems rely on springs for supply. The Town has identified the aquifers (recharge areas) for those springs, and has placed a protective Natural Resource Area overlay over those aquifers. These are the Public Water (Aquifer) Protection Areas. Due to the extreme importance of these water supplies to the Town of Dorset, applicants for proposed development within the vicinity of the aquifer protection areas, especially up gradient, will be required to demonstrate through expert testimony that such proposed development will not pollute the water supplies.

As one of the needs in the community is moderate cost housing, and one of the ways to cut cost of individual units is to have smaller lots which require a community water system to meet requirements for on-site sewage disposal, some consideration should be given to potential for increased public water supply, particularly in Dorset Village, and for better utilization of the existing capacity in the East Dorset area, including extensions to serve the entire village area.

Quality of water is excellent and it is critical that it be maintained. Public water supplies are tested for bacteria only. However, Dorset needs to be concerned about pollution related to more exotic contaminants such as seepage from underground tanks, old disposal sites,

pesticides, and other such potential pollutants. Potential water sources must be protected when surrounding land is developed to ensure future water supplies for the Town and its residents.

A Town study has identified the recharge areas for ten springs in the Town which should be protected for possible future water supply use. These are identified on Map 3 as Spring Recharge Areas, and are discussed in Section 5 of this Plan. The quality of these water sources must be protected. In addition, measures must be taken to protect the availability of these potential water supplies.

8.2.1 Water Supply Policies

1. Public Water Supply Aquifers as identified on the Water Resources Map will be protected from pollution.
2. Spring Recharge Areas as identified on the Water Resources Map will be protected from pollution, and access to and availability of these important springs will be protected for future water supply use.
3. The Town encourages efforts to improve the water supply system in Dorset Village, both to ensure a long-term, reliable source of water supply, and as a method to allow a reasonable amount of new infill housing within the Village.
4. Work with both Prudential Committees and the State to encourage testing of water supplies for nitrates, chemical and other pollutants, in addition to bacteria.
5. Continue to refine aquifer protection areas and their mapping.

8.3 Sanitary Sewage Disposal

As mentioned previously, Dorset lies at the headwaters of the Mettawee River, the Batten Kill, and the Otter Creek. None of these rivers contains sufficient flow within Town boundaries to allow it to receive effluent from a public sewer system which provides the usual levels of treatment. Any public sewer system in Dorset would, therefore, require a high level of treatment of the waste in order for the effluent to be suitable for discharge, and would involve the associated high costs of that level of discharge. Dorset must continue to rely on individual sewage disposal systems. Adequate control is to be provided over these systems to prevent contamination of groundwater and existing wells.

8.3.1 Sanitary Sewage Disposal Policies

1. Dorset will continue to rely for the foreseeable future on private systems for the disposal of sanitary wastes, and will work to ensure that individual sewage disposal systems are properly sited and installed to prevent contamination of wells and

groundwater.

2. Dorset will cooperate with the State, when possible, to ensure that new sewage disposal systems are constructed to State standards.

8.4 Solid Waste Disposal

The Dorset Select Board has adopted the Regional Solid Waste Implementation Plan written by the BCRC on behalf of eight municipalities in the region. This plan was approved by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources in January 2008.

Dorset is currently working with the Towns in Bennington County and the Bennington County Regional Commission to develop a new Materials Management Plan to replace the past Solid Waste Implementation Plan and conform with the new State requirements under Act 148. The towns are reviewing the best manner in which to comply with Act 148 and create solid waste system efficiencies.

8.4.1 Solid Waste Disposal Policies

1. The Town will cooperate, when possible, with the Region and with its neighbors in seeking a rational system for regional waste management.
2. The Town *does* support, when possible, recycling programs as a method to reduce the quantities of solid waste.

8.5 Emergency Services

Fire protection is provided by the Dorset Fire District #1 (for the west side of Town), and the East Dorset District #1 (for the east side of Town), with reciprocal back-up agreements with surrounding Towns. Medical emergency service is provided by the Manchester Rescue Squad. These agencies are staffed by volunteers. As the area grows, additional volunteers will be necessary. The Rescue Squad sometimes has difficulty finding enough volunteers, and volunteers are not usually residents of the newer residential developments. Service users are increasing at a faster rate than service providers. The Manchester Rescue Squad has notified developers of proposed major residential projects that, due to increased demand for services, the Rescue Squad can no longer guarantee service to proposed developments. Options have been identified by the Rescue Squad as ways to resolve the problem. A second factor in providing these emergency services is physical access to the properties to be served. This is particularly important on private roads which may not be as well maintained as Town roads, especially in winter. A third factor is availability of adequate water to fight fires, either on site or in close proximity.

Police protection is presently provided by the State Police, with back-up by elected constables. As the Town grows, particularly with the development of expensive properties, there may be a demand for increased police protection. The Town is currently evaluating

and will continue to evaluate the best method for providing the best possible police protection for the least possible cost. Work with the Bennington County Regional Commission and the Local Emergency Planning Committee to maintain a high level of disaster/response preparedness.

8.5.1 Policies Related to Emergency Services

1. Work with the Manchester Rescue Squad to explore limitations and methods for cooperation so the Town can continue to rely on this volunteer emergency service.
2. Ensure that new developments are designed to facilitate emergency access, and adequate water supplies for firefighting.
3. Continue to evaluate the best methods of providing adequate police protection for a reasonable cost to the Town.

8.6 Local Government

As the Town grows, needs may arise in the areas of management, administration, planning, engineering, law enforcement, parcel and other mapping, and technological advances to make administration more efficient. The Town should plan for budget fluctuations to try to keep taxes at reasonable levels. Also, application fees should be in an amount commensurate with the cost of reviewing the applications, including warning costs and costs of outside consultants.

8.6.1 Policies Related to Local Government

1. Budget planning should reflect an estimate of projected needs in the area of providing local government services.
2. Fees for filing of land development applications should be in proportion to the costs of processing time and professional services required to provide proper review of these applications.
3. The Select Board is encouraged to investigate the establishment of an impact fee to be levied against developers to help defray additional incurred costs.

8.7 Public Buildings

The Town of Dorset has a number of public or quasi-public buildings which play an important role in the community life of its residents. Most of these, but not all, are located in the Town's village areas. Included are:

In East Dorset Village:

East Dorset Post Office

Town Hall
East Dorset Congregational Church
East Dorset Fire Hall
The Wilson House

In Dorset Village and surrounds:

Dorset Post Office
Dorset Historical Society Museum
Dorset Village Library
The United Church of Dorset and East Rupert
Dorset Fire Hall
The Dorset School
The Long Trail School
The Dorset Playhouse

These uses represent an important ingredient of maintaining and strengthening the social fabric of the villages, and their locations in the village areas is appropriate.

The Town of Dorset maintains two Town sheds used primarily for road maintenance, one along Route 30 at the south end of Dorset Village, and one along Village Street, in the southern portion of East Dorset. The State of Vermont maintains a State Highway maintenance shed, also accessible off Village Street, at the south end of East Dorset.

As per State enabling legislation (24 VSA, Subsection 4409), facilities such as those listed here are allowed in any land use district, unless there is specific provision made to accommodate the public or quasi-public use. Thus, the existing location of these facilities should not be considered the determinant factor in characterizing one area of the Town as different from another area, if the zoning is the same. The zoning district and allowable uses of the district dictates the uses desired by the community of Dorset.

8.7.1 Policies Related to Public Buildings

The public and quasi-public buildings serve community functions and are recognized as important to the Town. Generally, uses such as churches, town offices, libraries, and post offices should be located within the villages. Uses such as fire halls, works yards and schools need to be located for ease and safety of access and convenience of the resident population.

8.8 Recreation

Dorset's most important local need in recreation and open space is to take steps to protect its environment. The mountain and valley landscape is especially picturesque here.

Recreational facilities are also a necessary part of the social and cultural environment of the

Town, as well as providing for the physical well being of residents. Existing recreational resources are listed on Table 9, and include both public and private resources.

There are many old trails and unused roads which could be incorporated into a trail system, both for hiking and cross-country skiing. For example, a good connection between the trail that runs across a shoulder of Green Peak and a trail from Dorset Hollow to the old quarry above East Dorset would link Green Peak with the Dorset Mountain Trail and, through East Dorset, to the Mad Tom Notch trail and the Long Trail. There may have been such a link in the past years, but it is not now marked or used.

Maps of the entire trail system, for hiking, riding, ski touring, and snowmobiling should be locally available for residents not familiar with them and for visitors. Maps and descriptions of some hiking trails are available at the Dorset Historical Society Museum.

In most cases, old trails lie on private land. Legal easements to these trails should be secured wherever possible, since active land development could make them inaccessible almost overnight. The Town or a local or regional conservation or trails association could hold title to such easements.

The Town owns 34 acres of land along the Mettawee River north of Peace Street. This land was a gift to the Town from Mrs. Gerald Cutler in 1976. Dorset Fire District No. 1 owns 10.4 acres of land which includes Prentiss Pond. This land was a gift of Mrs. Robert Beyers to the Nature Conservancy, who transferred title to the Sportsmen's Club, which in turn transferred title to the Fire District. The Town should work with landowners and private conservation organizations to see if other recreational and open space lands of importance to the Town could be transferred to public or quasi-public ownership as gifts.

The Town owns 28 acres of Town Forest. This is forested land at the peak of Owl's Head, this is forested land at the peak of Owls Head and the Town has the desire to expand this forest. It is accessible by various foot trails. The Town also owns 115 acres on Dorset Hill which includes the Freedley Quarry.

The Nature Conservancy owns the site of the Mt. Aeolus Bat Cave. The cave area is open to hikers from May through August. The Conservancy hosts field trips on an occasional basis. The Nature Conservancy, in partnership with the Vermont Land Trust, obtained 686 acres on the summit and northeast slopes of Mother Myrick Mountain from Betteridge Jewelers, Inc. A right-of-way access to the parcel was also negotiated. This is the first transaction in what is hoped to be a long term plan for protection of the Taconic crestal trail from Equinox Mountain to the Merck Forest area in Rupert.

The State owns land at Emerald Lake State Forest, and at Emerald Lake State Park.

8.8.1 Recreation Policies

1. Recognize that as the population increases, so will the demands for recreational facilities.
2. Map the existing trail system. Work with landowners and private groups to plan and provide an improved trail system utilizing existing trails and roads, and such connections as may be necessary. Amend trail maps as trails are added to the system.
3. Work with the Sportsmen's Club and affected landowners to protect deeryards and other wildlife habitat areas to provide recreation for sportsmen.
4. Work with V.A.S.T. (Vermont Association of Snowmobile Travelers) and affected landowners to maintain access to trails for snowmobile purposes.
5. Work with Trout Unlimited, the Batten Kill Conservancy, and other conservation groups and affected landowners, to protect fishing access and water quality along the Batten Kill, the Mettawee River, and Otter Creek to provide recreation for fishermen.
6. Work with the State and affected landowners to acquire additional land west of Emerald Lake as part of the trail system, and to provide protection for the slopes above the lake.
7. Continue partnerships with nearby towns to allow joint use of recreational facilities and recreational programming for residents of Dorset.
8. Consider the use of impact fees, or of a special park levy on new development, which could be used to obtain and develop recreation lands.
9. Maintain wherever possible, public access to the recreational resources of the Town. Provision for public access may be required for projects involving significant natural areas, paths, trails, or hunting grounds commonly used by area residents.
10. Maintain ownership of Town Trails, for possible future use either as part of the transportation system, or as part of a recreational trail system.
11. Incorporate where possible some of the Town's historic resources into the open space planning of the Town.
12. Work with the State to determine bear habitat areas and corridors.

TABLE 10
LIST OF RECREATIONAL FEATURES AND PROJECTS

Regional

Dorset Field Club, 18 hole golf course, and related facilities, private.
Dorset Town Forest

Mt. Aeolus (caves, old quarries)
Mt. Aeolus Bat Cave
Emerald Lake State Park (beach, picnic area, campground)
Emerald Lake State Forest
Dorset Marsh
Dorset R.V. Campground, private commercial campground
Maryville Campground, private commercial campground
Nichols Memorial Forest

Local

Trails:

- to Dorset Peak
- from Dorset Hollow to East Dorset
- from Dorset Village to Green Peak and back to Dorset Hollow
- from Dorset Quarry around Owl's Head over Green Peak to Squirrel Hollow Road
- Mad Tom Notch Trail corridor

Oldest marble quarry in the U.S.
Jonathan Fenton pottery
Natural Bridge, Emerald Lake area
Village

Dorset Village Green
Old Iron Furnace, South Village
Cutler property, Peace Street, Dorset

Aerial view of Mt. Aeolus from the northwest. The area in the foreground is Dorset Hollow.



8.9 Child Care

The availability of safe and affordable child care services is important both to local residents and to the region's economy. According to Vermont statute and the Dorset Zoning Bylaw, child day care facilities serving six or fewer children are currently permitted in residential and commercial districts where single family homes are permitted. Facilities serving seven or more children are allowed as conditionally permitted uses in most of those districts. There is sufficient land zoned for these uses given the Town's population and number of families requiring such services. There are many additional child care facilities available in Manchester, the major employment center for northern Bennington County. It may be more convenient for some residents of Dorset who commute to work in Manchester – or some other town – to find suitable child care services in those towns.

Existing registered facilities in Dorset include:

- One registered in-home child care facility
- Lawrence School for Young Children
 - Center Capacity = 26 Ages: 6 Weeks - 12 Yrs
 - Hours: 7:00am-6:00pm M-F

Additional information on child care facilities in the area, and services for families, providers, employers, and people interested in opening a new facility can be found through the Child Development Division of the Vermont Department for Children and Families (Agency of Human Services) and the Bennington County Child Care Association (located in Bennington).

8.9.1 Child Care Policy

1. The Town supports the development of a variety of quality child care services, in Dorset and nearby communities, that meet the needs of residents and employers and which are compatible with the residential and commercial neighborhoods in which they are located.
2. The Town supports the expansion of Early Education being provided by The Dorset School, and consistent with State directed expansion of Early Education programs.

SECTION 9: ENERGY AND UTILITY PLANS

Energy Plan Overview

The Town of Dorset resolves to take actions to create a sustainable energy future for the town: one that minimizes environmental impacts, supports our local economy, emphasizes energy conservation and efficiency and increases the use of local and regional renewable energy.

This plan has five goals:

- Reduce our dependence on non-renewable and imported energy sources.
- Promote energy conservation and efficiency in residential, commercial and industrial structures and operations.
- Reduce energy consumption in all taxpayer funded buildings and operations.
- Develop sustainable, local renewable energy resources.
- Comply with 24 VSA section 4382(a)(9).

9.1.1 Energy Conservation Plan to be developed by 2015 will include:

- Compliance with the Vermont Energy Code (21 V.S.A. s.266)
- Educating, encouraging and facilitating, implementation of best available recycling techniques on all construction projects.

9.1.2 Assessment of Energy resources, needs, scarcities, costs, and energy related challenges within the municipality:

- Assess all available town energy resources.
- Assess current and future energy demand in Dorset.
- A Calculation of the current and future energy costs for different energy sources for the town and residents has been prepared as the Energy Report and Assessment dated February 2013, by the BCRC.

9.1.3 Development of renewable energy resources. The Town of Dorset promotes encourages the development of local renewable energy sources such as:

- Biomass (wood and other sources). The town will encourage sustainable forest management to perpetuate the availability of solid fuel and other biomass. Sustainable forestry captures carbon and conserves clean water, clean air and native biodiversity; all of which sustain the forested ecosystem in the face of changing climate and pollution.
- Hydro-power: Dorset's hydro-power resources will be inventoried and evaluated and a plan developed to protect and develop them in an ecological and sustainable way.
- Solar
- >Passive: Solar siting of homes and passive solar design will be encouraged.
- >Solar thermal has proven to be a cost effective energy source for heating domestic hot water. The town will promote encourage the use of Solar thermal.

- >Photovoltaic (PV) Solar for generating electricity will be encouraged on buildings after they have exhausted all cost effective efficiency measures. Design Review Boards will be encouraged to consider solar's societal contribution
- Wind: Dorset does not appear to have appropriate wind sites for large scale wind farms. Residential scale wind generators/turbines will be encouraged on-site after they have exhausted all cost effective efficiency measures. Design Review Boards will be encouraged to consider small wind generator's societal contribution.
- Other: Other sources of local energy will be encouraged.
- Transportation: In addition to the transportation policies in Section 7, this section recognizes the effect that transportation has on energy use and consumption. Dorset will promote encourage energy efficient transportation and will actively discourage idling vehicles.
- Public Transportation: The town will analyze the options for offering public transportation, coordinating with towns in the region, especially those on the Route 7 and Route 30 corridors. This transportation network will connect village centers, cluster development and regional shopping and work centers such as Manchester.
- Patterns and densities of land use. Dorset will encourage compact patterns of land use that will result in conservation of resources and energy.
- Conservation of working forest lands by maintaining larger forested parcels will be encouraged.

9.2 Utilities

Recent changes in and rules of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) preempts some local government authority, where discrimination is possible, such as the installation of satellite receive-only antennas. But, the law still leaves local government the authority to enact regulations which protect the concerns of the public regarding health, safety and aesthetic issues.

The State of Vermont Act 248a process excludes certain utility and telecommunications projects from local zoning review. Town planners should remain aware of the status of projects before the Public Service Board, and have the Town intervene as a third party when it is deemed necessary.

Some of these issues involve electromagnetic interference, radiation impacts, ridge line protection, and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations for lighting.

The advent of new advances in communications is outpacing the ability of local, small

communities such as Dorset to digest and understand the technological needs of the utility involved. At the same time, the needs and concerns of Dorset citizens for their health, safety and welfare is of paramount importance. It is imperative that the Town of Dorset be prepared for the inevitable development review of these type applications, such as the location of cellular towers. Implementation of any scenic ridge line protection measures must also consider the potential for conflict presented here.

Section 10: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Dorset is largely a residential community, serving both year-round and seasonal residents. Its economic activity includes primary industries such as agriculture, forestry, and mineral extraction; secondary industries such as wood processing and construction; and a range of tertiary sector industries such as real estate sales, financial services, restaurants and tourist accommodations. Dorset recognizes its role within its geographic setting and realizes that its adjacency to the Town of Manchester means that some employment and certain educational, recreational and cultural opportunities for Dorset residents will be provided in Manchester. The Town will continue to cooperate with the Town of Manchester and continue to evaluate avenues to enhance cooperation and the sharing of services, facilities and opportunities of mutual benefit, including those related to economic development.

10.1 Employment by Occupation and Industry

Employment in Dorset reflects the diversity of the local economy. This is not unexpected as the community is home to few large employers. The greatest percentage of residents is employed in occupations related to management, business, science and the arts. Employment by industry sector shows a very even distribution across six of the eleven sector categories (see table 11).

TABLE 11

Total number of Dorset residents employed (over the age of 16): 1,049

Employment % by Occupation	
Management, business, science and arts	45.5%
Service occupations	13.3%
Sales and office occupations	25.5%
Natural resources, construction and maintenance	10.3%
Production, transportation and materials moving	5.4%
Employment % by Industry	
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries, hunting, mining	2.6%
Construction	11.5%
Manufacturing	9.2%
Retail trade	13.1%

Transportation, warehousing, utilities	2.6%
Finance, insurance and real estate	12.7%
Professional, scientific, management, administration	12.8%
Education, health and social services	15.3%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations, food	11.9%
Other services (except public administration)	3.5%
Public administration	0.6%

Source: American Community Survey (2012)

10.2 Wages and Household Income

TABLE 12

Average Annual Wages: 1990-2012					
	1990	2000	2012	% Change since 1990	% Change since 2000
Dorset	\$17,130	\$26,188	\$37,847	120.94%	44.52%
Bennington Co.	\$18,924	\$25,532	\$37,298	97.09%	46.08%
% County	90.52%	102.60%	101.50%		

Source: American Community Survey (2012)

Median Household Income	
Dorset	\$ 63,857
Bennington County	\$ 48,938
Vermont	\$ 54,168

Source: American Community Survey (2012)

Travel Time to Work

In Dorset 74% of the workforce spends less than 30 minutes traveling to work. This means that the majority of the population works close to or in the town of residence. Just 5.0% spend 60 minutes or more traveling to their place of employment.

TABLE 13

< 10 Minutes	25.7%
10-14 Minutes	17.4%
15-19 Minutes	21.3%
20-24 Minutes	8.6%
25-29 Minutes	1.2%
30-34 Minutes	8.1%
35-44 Minutes	4.7%
45-59 Minutes	8.1%

> 60 Minutes 5.0%

Mean Travel Time To Work: 19.7
Minutes

Source: American Community Survey (2012)

10.3 Economic Development Goals & Policies:

Dorset seeks to maintain its current economic base, while also encouraging new economic development in certain sectors and in areas consistent with the maintenance of the Town's historic development patterns. As such, the Town has identified the following goals, policies and actions.

Goals

- Dorset will have a diverse and resilient economy based on agriculture, natural resources, small businesses, recreation, tourism and light industry and which is compatible with the Town's natural environment.
- Dorset will maintain and enhance its existing villages as places of economic and community activity.

Policies

- Dorset will make adequate provisions for infrastructure, including broadband, vital to economic growth.
- Dorset will pursue targeted opportunities for job creation at wage levels which allow people to live and work in Town.
- Dorset will support industries that utilize local resources to produce value added products.
- Dorset will seek to build partnerships with public and private stakeholder groups to capitalize on development opportunities.
- Dorset will seek development opportunities which utilized the skills of the local labor force.

Actions

- Dorset should pursue Village Center Designations through the Vermont Downtown Program for both Dorset and East Dorset Villages.
- The Town should establish a program for regular communication with representatives from the Vermont Telecommunications Authority and key service

providers, such as Comcast, Fairpoint, VTel and Sovernet to stay abreast of possible broadband or cellular communication project plans and rollouts in order to ensure input can be provided as to how such projects might best serve Dorset.

- Dorset should undertake a comprehensive economic development planning effort to help identify appropriate business expansion and addition opportunities, as well as avenues to increase the success of existing local businesses.
- As the East Dorset Industrial Park nears capacity, the Town should investigate future opportunities for siting appropriate commercial and industrial facilities.
- Dorset should support regional economic development planning, marketing and workforce education activities.

SECTION 11 IMPLEMENTATION

The Town has available to it a number of tools with which to implement the policies of this Plan. Some of these are in place, some are suggested to be put into place, and others are contemplated but require further study prior to taking definite action.

11.1 The Town Plan

Dorset has had a Town Plan since 1970, and should keep its plan both up-to-date and in effect. It is intended that this Plan be reviewed and adopted as a guide to growth and development within the Town, that it be amended from time to time as warranted by changing circumstances, and that it be reviewed at least every five years as required by Vermont law.

11.2 The Zoning Bylaw

A zoning bylaw is the most commonly used bylaw for guiding development at the local level. Dorset has had a zoning bylaw in place since 1973. The Zoning Bylaw has been amended from time to time to bring it up to date. Once this updated Town Plan has been adopted, the Zoning Bylaw should be thoroughly reviewed in the context of this Plan.

11.3 Subdivision Development Regulations

The Town's Subdivision Development Regulations govern the procedure for, and review guidelines for, subdivision proposals within the Town. Dorset has had Subdivision Development Regulations since 1987, and in 1988 amended those regulations to include a growth allocation regulation.

The Subdivision Development Regulations have been found to be an effective tool in Dorset. There are, however, a number of items of detail within the regulations which required clarification, and in some cases, revision. Changes to the Dorset Subdivision Development Regulations were approved at Town Meeting in March 1997.

11.4 Additional Regulations

- a) Signs: The Town presently has a sign ordinance which was passed many years ago. The current sign ordinance needs to be studied and updated.

11.5 Mapping Program

The Town can facilitate its future planning activities by improving its map resources, in particular by pursuing a program to have both physical data and parcel data mapped in a Geographic Information System (G.I.S.). It is recommended that the Town work with the BCRC and appropriate State agency.

11.6 Coordination with Local Boards, Commissions, Committees

Conservation issues are important to the Town of Dorset, and the Dorset Conservation Commission is an appropriate body to share the load of the Planning Commission in its pursuit of good land and water conservation practices. The Conservation Commission could:

- a) administer the LESA and FLESA evaluations; and
- b) research and work with the Planning Commission to find workable procedures for implementing policies such as clustering and taxation strategies to encourage open land preservation.

The Conservation Commission could also work with the Planning Commission to pursue certain policies of this Plan such as the planning and establishment of a public system of trails and open spaces within the Town.

There is a large number of organizations, working with the Select Board, Planning Commission and Conservation Commission, involving many citizens of Dorset. Their aim is to keep Dorset a desirable place to live, and to provide the services desired by the Town's residents. These include the Prudential Committees, the Fire Districts, the School Board, the Zoning Board of Adjustment, the Design Review Board, the Historical Society, the Chamber of Commerce and numerous church and other community groups. This Plan is intended to facilitate planning and cooperation among these groups. Further planning initiatives and discussions should involve these groups as appropriate on individual issues. It will take the efforts of many to accomplish the goals of this Plan.

11.7 New Citizen Boards, Commissions, and Committees

There is presently a Design Review Board which reviews the design aspects of development proposals within the Dorset Village Historical Districts. The recently approved expansion of

the Dorset Village Historical District, the Kent Neighborhood Historical District and historic districts approved in the future should be brought under design review. If further areas are brought under design review, this board should be expanded, or an additional board established, to deal with additional areas.

A LESA Committee was established to prepare a LESA report which has been incorporated into and included as a part of this Town Plan. It is dated October 7, 1986 and is addressed to the Dorset Planning Commission. It contains agricultural value groups for Bennington County soils (an interim report) as performed by the USDA, Winooski, Vermont, dated November, 1985. As noted in Section 5 of this Plan, an "Agricultural Advisory Committee" is needed to advise on planning issues related to agriculture and agricultural land, to review and update LESA policies, to update LESA data, and to perform LESA reviews. Alternatively, this function could be performed by the Dorset Conservation Commission.

Similarly, a FLESA Committee was formed to prepare a FLESA report. The final FLESA report is titled Draft V, January, 1991 and contains a User's Guide to the Forest LESA. This committee could be formalized as a "Forest Advisory Committee", or alternatively, this function too could be handled by the Conservation Commission. The FLESA document is also incorporated into this Town Plan by reference.

In either event, a consistent group of people knowledgeable with the content and purpose of the LESA/FLESA documents is needed to review development applications that come before the Planning Commission.

The Town may wish to consider additional organizations, to deal with special issues within the Town. For example a Housing Advisory Committee could be established to assist the Planning Commission and the Town to pursue the Town's Housing Objectives.

11.8 Coordination with Regional and State Authorities

The Town is in Bennington County, and therefore within the planning area of the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC). The Town should work with the BCRC, when possible, to develop plans and programs which are mutually supportive.

The Town is profoundly affected by State initiatives dealing with State Highways, and with other State programs including land use regulation, land taxation, State owned lands, etc. The Town will work, when possible, with the relevant State agencies to pursue the planning policies identified in this Plan.

The State's Environmental Board, and District Commissions, review certain development proposals under Act 250. Developments required to obtain a permit under Act 250 must conform to the policies of the Town's adopted Plan. The Town will review Act 250 development proposals in the context of this Plan, and will participate in Act 250 hearings

when necessary to pursue Plan policies.

11.9 Fiscal Management

A Capital Improvement Program is an important tool for town planning. The Town has adopted a Capital Improvement Plan for roadways and general infrastructure, public buildings, and highway equipment to help maintain the level of the property tax, to avoid peaks and valleys in spending, to contribute toward an orderly program of land acquisition, road maintenance, and other Town services, and to enable the collection of impact fees for new development.

Use Value Appraisal: The State presently has a Use Value Appraisal program which subsidizes a portion of the property taxes for actively used agricultural land, agricultural land owned by a farmer, and managed forest lands. This does not, however, give any tax relief to owners of open land whose lands may be affected by factors such as important recharge areas, deeryard, and the like. As the preservation of large amounts of open space is a key ingredient of the Town's planning policy, every effort should be made to pursue land taxation formulas which do not penalize the owners of open land.

New revenue sources: Certain Plan policies would be greatly facilitated by new revenue sources. For example, levies or "impact fees" on new developments could contribute to the costs of expanding the Town's infrastructure. A special park levy on new development could be used to buy public parkland. These options and others need to be researched and considered by the Town.

Land Acquisition

Sometimes, land acquisition is needed to implement policies of a town plan. Land may be acquired by fee simple acquisitions by a government authority or by private individuals. Increasingly, however, the acquisition of easements is becoming a common means to acquire an interest in land, either for conservation or for other purposes. The Town of Dorset may wish to consider land or easement acquisition in some cases, or may wish to work with other organizations such as the Vermont Land Trust and any other land trusts, to acquire an interest in lands important to the implementation of this plan.

