

13. Implementation



In too many communities town plans are set aside and ignored soon after adoption. This may be due to several factors, including ambiguous plan goals and policies, a lack of local support for long range planning, and/or a lack of resources and money, people and time to accomplish everything called for in the plan. In Waitsfield, however, the Town Plan has traditionally been viewed as a living document which outlines a path for the community. This chapter summarizes many of the mechanisms that are available to make sure the plan remains current and relevant.

PLAN ADOPTION

Adoption by the Waitsfield Selectboard, pursuant to the procedures established in 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117 §4384 and §4385, is the first step in putting the plan into action. Through adoption, the Selectboard accepts this document as the guide for future physical growth and change in the Town.

REGIONAL APPROVAL

Approval by the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) allows for greater regional planning and cooperation among towns in addressing mutual problems and challenges, maintains the town's eligibility for municipal planning funds as well as its authority to enact certain programs (e.g., impact fees). Once the plan is approved by the Selectboard, it should be submitted to CVRPC for regional approval.

ONGOING PLANNING & PLAN AMENDMENTS

One of the key differences between this plan and the plan adopted in 1998 (and largely drafted in 1992-93) is that this Plan incorporates the findings and conclusions of a wide range of special studies, public processes and related planning projects that have taken place over the intervening years. Thus, rather than relying on a planning process that lies dormant for four years only to re-emerge for the purpose of updating the Town Plan, Waitsfield has been actively engaged in an ongoing planning process. Such an ongoing effort—which should involve periodic evaluation of the plan against changing community conditions and needs—is critical for keeping the plan current and relevant.

As conditions in the community change and new information becomes available, amendments may be needed to keep the plan current. In addition to special studies and public forums to consider specific issues, regular meetings between local boards are an effective way to sustain an ongoing planning process. The plan automatically expires five years from adoption. Before the plan expires, it should be thoroughly reviewed, and information on which the plan is based should be updated.

STATE PERMIT PROCEDURES

Presently, any commercial development in Waitsfield

involving 10 or more acres of land, and any residential development or subdivision resulting in the creation of 10 or more dwelling units or lots, requires Act 250 approval. One of the 10 criteria that projects must meet to comply with Act 250 is that the development be in conformance with the Town Plan. In the case of Waitsfield, conformance should be determined by whether the proposed development is consistent with specific policies listed at the end of Chapters 3-12. If a project is not consistent with a specific policy, it should be determined to be not in conformance with the plan.

Both the Planning Commission and Selectboard have party status to participate in all Act 250 review processes. Both bodies should monitor project applications, which are reported to the town by the District 5 Environmental Commission, and participate in those processes whenever appropriate. Other state and federal regulatory processes, for example Section 248 (related to public energy facilities) and the National Environmental Policy Act (related to federally funded projects) also provide opportunity for local participation and review against the policies set forth in this plan.

LOCAL LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

This plan should serve as the blueprint and policy guide for future revisions to local land use regulations, including both zoning and subdivision regulations. Several suggestions for revisions, or for additional study, are described throughout the plan, especially in Chapter 3 (Natural Resources); Chapter 4 (Historic & Cultural Resources); Chapter 6 (Housing); and Chapter 12 (Land Use). In addition, certain provisions of the existing zoning, such as conditional use review, require that projects be consistent with the policies of this plan. To ensure that future development is consistent with the plan, the Board of Adjustment shall refer to it during the review process.

In addition to zoning and subdivision regulations, an official map is a form of a “bylaw” that the town may use to lay out future road and infrastructure improvements and provide a legal mechanism for the community to acquire necessary land for those improvements prior to its being lost to development. Features to depict on an official map are described in Chapter 8 (Transportation).

OTHER MUNICIPAL POLICIES & PROGRAMS

Local land use regulations are not the only means with which Waitsfield can implement various sections of this plan. Other ordinances and policies can also serve to carry out policies and strategies described in previous chapters. For example, a road ordinance or policy can further many of the policies included in Chapter 8. Transportation, and water and sewer allocation policies can not only ensure the efficient operation of these municipal facilities, should they be created, but can help to further policies set forth in Chapter 6. Housing and Chapter 7. Economic Development. Maintaining a special events permitting program can help to address peak demands for services and facilities caused by peak populations. And, perhaps most importantly, coordinating all municipal policies and programs with the land use policies established in Chapter 12 is a critical strategy for implementing the town's future land use plan.

PROPERTY TAX POLICY

Although a municipality's authority to use local property tax dollars to implement a town plan was limited with the passage of Act 60 (and subsequent passage of Act 68), there are still opportunities to use the property tax to achieve several of the policies included in the preceding chapters. Waitsfield maintains an agricultural property tax abatement program for eligible farmers, and has worked with local businesses to abate a portion of the property tax on new facilities and to help secure tax incentives available through the Vermont Economic Progress Council (see Chapter 7). In addition, there are opportunities to pursue special taxing districts, and to establish Tax Increment Finance Districts, to help fund local infrastructure improvements. Consideration of tax policy related to specific plan policies is addressed in Chapter 3 (Natural Resources); Chapter 7 (Economic Development); Chapter 9 (Community Facilities & Services); and Chapter 12 (Land Use).

PUBLIC SPENDING

Waitsfield has a history of making strategic investments in the town's infra-

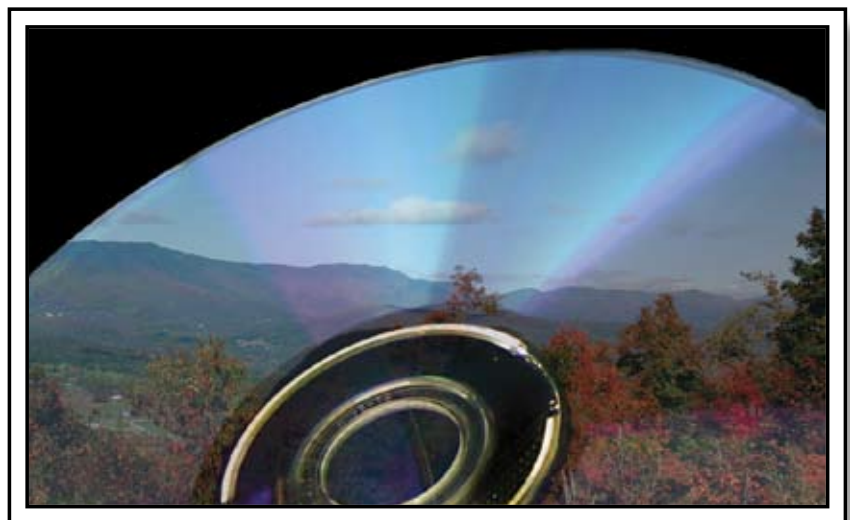
structure, public services, and for special projects. Over the past 10-15 years, the town has:

- ◆ Acquired and developed parkland and assisted with the creation and maintenance of other recreation facilities,
- ◆ Supported private non-profits to expand needed facilities (e.g., Mad River Valley Ambulance),
- ◆ Acquired the General Wait House and created an information center and public restrooms,
- ◆ Contributed toward the acquisition of development rights on scenic and productive land,
- ◆ Funded sidewalk improvements,
- ◆ Developed plans for municipal water and sewer facilities,
- ◆ Acquired grant funds to develop senior housing and to acquire the Verd-Mont Trailer Park to ensure perpetual affordability, and
- ◆ Maintained the local road network and public buildings in excellent condition

Many of these projects were supported by state and federal grants. Consequently, local tax dollars have helped to leverage millions of dollars of supplemental revenue for the town. Through the capital budget and program, continued emphasis on securing state and federal grants, and policies for the disbursement of community development loan funds that will become available in coming years (see Chapter 7. Economic Development), many of the policies of this plan may be directly supported.

LAND CONSERVATION

Land conservation is a common mechanism for implementing a variety of local policies related to farmland and forest preservation, natural resource protection, economic development and land use planning. One reason for the growing use of these tools is the availability of statewide funding sources—such as the



Vermont Housing & Conservation Fund and several private foundations—and the presence of active land conservation organizations. In the Mad River Valley, there is, in addition to statewide resources, a local partnership made up of state and regional organizations dedicated to protecting natural resources and open space within the Mad River Watershed. Coordination with these efforts could help the town achieve many of the policies described in the plan, especially in Chapter 3 (Natural Resources); Chapter 4 (Historic & Cultural Resources); and Chapter 12 (Land Use).

**IMPLEMENTATION
TASKS**

Most of the tools summarized above are described in greater detail elsewhere in the plan. At the end of each preceding chapter, goals and policies are provided to address the relevant topics addressed in the preceding chapter. In addition, implementation tasks—specific actions that can be undertaken by one or more specified body—are also listed. These tasks form the basis of the Planning Commission’s action plan in the coming years, and should be periodically reviewed as a measure of the Commission’s success implementing the plan.

