

**PLYMOUTH TOWN PLAN**

**PROPOSED FOR ADOPTION**

**March 12, 2012**

**DRAFT**

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Town Plan serves as a guide for the future growth and development of the land, public services and facilities of the community. This Plan is designed to assist town officials in exercising their duties while ensuring that the desires of Plymouth residents are considered when decisions are made.

Planning is a continuing effort and local planning is a vital and necessary function. It is through local planning that the individual needs of the community are met.

This Plan represents how the citizens of Plymouth feel about growth in their town. It also acts to influence, by means of the goals and recommendations set forth, what forms future growth will take.

The following are objectives of the Plan:

1. To preserve and enhance the special qualities and atmosphere of Plymouth as a traditional small rural community.
2. To provide a pleasant and convenient environment for the people of the town, including residential areas suited to their varied needs, business and consumer services to meet their wants, increased opportunities for employment within the town, and the proper level of public services such as fire protection, utilities, and recreation.
3. To protect the town's environmentally sensitive areas such as the lakes, rivers, streams, ponds, marshes, floodplains, slopes, ridgelines, wildlife habitat, and forests and to preserve open space.

Within the framework of these objectives the following planning policies are guides for general proposals for future growth in the town of Plymouth:

1. To protect and enhance the natural resources of the town for their best use for recreation, forestry, and agriculture.
2. To encourage the concentration of new residential development in areas served by existing town services.
3. To encourage, through multi-family and cluster development, the conservation of energy and the preservation of open space.
4. To encourage development of new service and commercial enterprises in appropriate locations to maintain the character of the town.
5. To encourage clean, small-scale commercial businesses.

## II. LAND USE

**Town Setting:** The Town of Plymouth comprises an area of 29,861 acres or almost 46 square miles (Listers' figure, 1/2/00). It consists of two physiographic areas separated by the north-south running valley formed by the Black River. To the west of this valley is a section of the Green Mountains, characterized by steep slopes and rugged terrain. To the east are intermountain valleys and low foothills, containing only a few peaks above 2000 feet.

**Land Use:** Table 1 and the attached Plymouth Land-Use Map indicate land use characteristics in the last several years. Table 2 shows the growth in the number of residences in Plymouth since 1987, based on data from the Plymouth Listers.

**TABLE 1**  
**LAND USE CHARACTERISTICS**

	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
<b>Residential 1 (on – 6 acres)</b>	407	408	409	409
<b>Residential 2 (on + 6 acres)</b>	191	192	194	193
<b>Mobile Homes on rented land</b>	2	2	2	2
<b>Mobile Homes on owned land</b>	19	18	17	17
<b>Vacation Homes 1 (on &lt; 6 acres)</b>	49	49	47	47
<b>Vacation Homes 2 (on &gt; 6 acres)</b>	16	16	16	16
<b>Other (including condos)</b>	112	112	112	112
<b>Total Residences</b>	796	797	797	796
	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
<b>Commercial Establishments</b>	41	41	41	41
<b>Industry</b>	1	1	1	1
<b>Public Utilities</b>	2	2	2	2

SOURCE: Vermont Department of Taxes.

**TABLE 2**  
**CHANGES IN NUMBER OF RESIDENCES**

	<b>1987</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
<b>Total Residences</b>	594	740	776	796	797	797	796

SOURCES: Listers Form 411, Town of Plymouth, 1987, 1999, and 2000; Vermont Department of Taxes.

Beginning in 2004, all real property in the local grand list books was reclassified as either homestead or nonresidential for tax purposes. Owners of homesteads are assessed at different rate than nonresidents by their towns or cities. A statewide education tax is applied to the two

classes of property and adjusted for the common level of appraisal for each school district. According to the Department of Taxes, in 2008, 17.2% of the Plymouth Education Grand list was paid by residents (homesteads), while 82.8% was paid by non-residents. The total equalized education listed value for the 2008 tax year increased by 117 percent over the 2001 tax year, according to according state Tax Department figures.

Between 1987 and 1999 the number of second homes increased by 23% from 427 to 529. The number of year-round residences increased between 1987 and 1999 by 63%, a figure that in many cases represents retired people who are now using their second homes as year-round residences. This situation appears to have leveled off since 1999. However, the ratio of second homes to year-round residences remains almost 4:1, which is supported by the tax data cited above. Many unimproved lots are privately held by persons residing outside of Plymouth who intend to build at some future time.

There are four areas of relatively intensive settlement in the town. These are the village of Plymouth Union, the hamlets of Plymouth Notch and Tyson, and the Hawk Inn and Mountain Resort. These areas contain relatively high densities of single family residences as well as most of the town's commercial enterprises. Another large concentration of single family residences is in the southern part of the town around or near Lake Amherst and Echo Lake. The remaining residences are unevenly spaced along the town's road network.

Most of the town's commercial/retail establishments are local or tourist in nature and are located on or near the state highways. The town's two industries are the Plymouth Quarry (Markowski) and Plymouth Cheese. The latter is a year-round employer, which ships its products worldwide. Bear Creek ski area (formerly Round Top) has begun to operate after a few years of closure. Farm and Wilderness and Bethany Birches camps are also located within Plymouth.

More than 90% of the land in Plymouth is devoted to forest use. The largest single owner of forestland is the State of Vermont. Table 3 summarizes ownership by State Agencies of lands which are predominantly forested. In addition to these public lands, a total of 5,681 acres of privately held land are enrolled in the state's Current Use program, as of 2008. The Current Use program, also known as the Vermont Use Value Appraisal Program, allows landowners to pay taxes on open land based on the value of the land for farming or forestry. In Plymouth, Current Use saves these landowners nearly \$100,000 in taxes. The Nature Conservancy owns the 13 acre "Plymouth Caves" property, one of the state's foremost caves for hibernating bats, and has been involved in several other land conservation projects in Plymouth.

The Town of Plymouth has been negatively impacted by Vermont legislation on education funding. Property owners have seen taxes increase substantially during the last 10 years, without an increase in the level of services they receive. The Town of Plymouth has historically taken a very fiscally responsible approach to its education and municipal spending, striving for maximum value for every tax dollar collected. The enactment of Act 60 and Act 68 have required that the Town of Plymouth contribute to the education funds of other towns. Townspeople have supported efforts to send a message to State Government that the current methods for funding education are grossly inequitable.

**TABLE 3**  
**LAND OWNERSHIP BY STATE OF VERMONT**

**Agency of Natural Resources, Forest, Parks, and Recreation:**

Coolidge State Forest	6782.6 Acres	
Camp Plymouth State Park	295.0 Acres	
Miscellaneous Lots	<u>252.4 Acres</u>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,330.00 Acres</b>

**Agency of Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife:**

Amherst Lake Access	.18 Acres	
Echo Lake Access	.03 Acres	
Colby Pond Access	32.49 Acres	
Woodward Reservoir Access	1.47 Acres	
Arthur Davis Wildlife	2562.22 Acres	
Plymbsbury W.M.A.	288.00 Acres	
Tiny Pond Area	174.3 Acres	
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,058.69 Acres</b>

**Agency of Commerce and Community Development  
Division for Historic Preservation**

East Mountain/Wilder Meadow Tracts	386.00 Acres	
Johnson Farm	138.00 Acres	
Blanchard Farm	41.8 Acres	
Smaller lots	<u>32.66 Acres</u>	
<b>Total</b>		<b><u>598.46 Acres</u></b>
<b>Total all lands</b>		<b>10,987.25 Acres</b>

SOURCES: Agency of Natural Resources & Agency of Commerce and Community Development

The total State-owned acreage (10,987.25 acres) constitutes more than one-third of the area of the town of Plymouth. The Agency of Natural Resources plans to continue to manage its lands for their current uses of forestry, recreation, and wildlife management. The Division for Historic Preservation's management objectives for the Plymouth Notch Historic Site include ongoing operation as a State Historic Site, preservation of lands surrounding the village to maintain the rural character typical of Plymouth Notch during Calvin Coolidge's era, and the long-range possibility of reviving a small dairy operation.

Little land in Plymouth is now used for agricultural purposes. Isolated hayfields and pastures are found along the two State highways and Hale Hollow Road, around Plymouth Notch and Colby Pond, and in some upland areas.

The majority of land in Plymouth remains undeveloped. As such, the citizens and policy makers of the town have the opportunity to manage future growth to protect and enhance what we most value about our town.

### **Future Land Use**

Plymouth's year-round population has increased substantially between the last two Censuses, from 440 in 1990 to 555 in 2000, a 26% increase. Furthermore, according to U.S. Census estimates, the town's population is estimated to have grown to 566 in 2008. The number of vacation homes almost doubled between 1980 and 1990, indicating a significant increase in seasonal population. As the regional ski industry continues to expand and the town's natural and recreational resources continue to attract summer visitors, we need to carefully manage increased second home development.

Traditionally, Plymouth's land use pattern has consisted of small village settlements, including Hawk Inn and Mountain Resort, with high densities of residential and commercial uses, surrounded by sparsely settled forest and agricultural lands and pristine natural areas. This pattern of development is what we define as our town's rural character. In the past, this pattern has answered social and economic needs and allowed for the efficient provision of community services. We continue to appreciate the beauty of clustered village houses, isolated farms, and scenic mountain vistas resulting from these traditional land uses, and this Plan seeks to maintain its rural character and this pattern of development.

Many of Plymouth's residents are spread throughout the town, living along the network of mostly unpaved "back roads." It is the small, compact villages, the open fields and forest lands, the historic structures, and the many trails and ancient roads that define Plymouth's rural character. Maintaining the balance between Plymouth's villages and the residential development of the areas surrounding them is essential to maintaining the town's rural character. According to a 2009 survey of Plymouth residents, one of the biggest issues facing Plymouth in the next five years is preserving the town's rural character (62% in favor). About half of the survey respondents feel the recent rate of residential growth has been just right. Home businesses and small commercial enterprises that can contribute to the town's rural character are not only welcome, but encouraged.

As our economy has shifted away from agriculture, increasing numbers of residents have entered the service sector or have gone beyond the town's borders to find work. The Town of Plymouth

supports local employment and economic growth, particularly the growth of clean, small commercial uses in areas designated in this Plan.

Commercial operations catering to the public and light commercial enterprises are planned for existing village areas only. “Strip development” along roadsides outside these village areas shall not be permitted. Home occupations and small businesses may fit in rural residential areas with conditions that limit their impact on the surrounding areas. High density development is not possible in town at this time due to a lack of public sewer and water.

Residential development may be located in the Village, Vacation-Resort, Mountain- Recreational Areas, and the 2-, 5-, and 10-Acre Rural Residential Areas where topography and soils will allow, and shall avoid steep slopes and high elevations. Development on ridgelines shall not break the silhouette of the hill. The development of the largest, contiguous agricultural and forest areas is discouraged, while some small patches of current agricultural areas may be suitable for low density development. The 10-Acre Rural Residential Areas proposed in this Plan are suitable for very low-density development and follow the existing Class 1, 2, and 3 roadways so no new public roads need to be built.

The very rural, essentially undeveloped areas designated in this Plan as the Conservation Areas are proposed to be maintained in their undeveloped state, hosting only small camps (defined as buildings that do not exceed 1,000 square feet in size and are not connected to the electrical grid), and any pre-existing housing units. Other significant natural and fragile areas in Plymouth (see Chapter 6) are not conducive to development due to the presence of steep slopes, soils not well suited for septic systems, or that have very limited highway access are planned to have little development. These areas should instead be conserved for forest or watershed resources or should be used for recreational purposes.

A Future Land Use Map has been produced and is part of this Plan to illustrate the desired future land uses in Plymouth. The map can be found at the end of the Plan. To ensure that Plymouth’s landscape is protected for future generations, seven Future Land Use Areas and three Overlay areas are proposed to be established:

#### Future Land Use Areas

- ❖ Village Areas
- ❖ Vacation-resort Area (VR1)
- ❖ Mountain- recreation Area (MR1)
- ❖ 2 Acre Rural Residential Areas (RR2)
- ❖ 5 Acre Rural Residential Areas (RR5)
- ❖ 10 Acre Rural Residential Areas (RR10)
- ❖ Conservation Areas (CON25)

#### Overlay Areas

- ❖ Shoreland Overlay
- ❖ Coolidge Homestead Historic Overlay
- ❖ Flood Hazard Overlay

**Overall Land Use Policies**

1. It is a policy of the town to locate higher density mixed use development in the Village Areas.
2. It is a policy of the town to encourage both residential and non-residential development only in areas where adequate public services are available.
3. It is a policy of the town to protect and conserve rural areas and their natural resources by promoting conservation and sustainable resource management.
4. It is a policy of the town to preserve undeveloped farmlands and forest lands. Such tracts are intended to remain predominately as undeveloped or limited development areas for the purposes of conserving existing resource values.
5. It is a policy of the town to insure the future of and protect the following: forestry under sound silvicultural guidelines, wildlife habitat, unique plant or animal habitats, clean air, and the ability to see the night sky without the interference of bright lights. Wetlands and watercourses in general are afforded protection under Federal and State rules but should be given special consideration in the town's regulations.
6. It is a policy of the town to permit development in a way that sustains the town's rural character.
7. It is a policy of the town to consider scenic values in development and land use decisions.
8. It is a policy of the town to support existing forest and conservation programs.
9. It is a policy of the town that development will not have any negative effects on public or private water supplies.

**Land Use Regulations and Act 250**

Under Criterion 10 of Act 250, any proposed project must conform to all duly adopted local and regional plans. The law seeks to ensure that new development respects the wishes of Vermont citizens about the future of their town and region.

The following is a list of standards that the Town of Plymouth requires developers to meet for all land use proposals. All projects requiring an Act 250 permit shall conform to the following Standards. Conformance with these Standards is required for compliance with the Plymouth Town Plan under Criterion 10 of Act 250.

**Lot Layout Standards – All Uses**

1. Monotonous lot layout of equally sized and shaped lots, especially along a road frontage is discouraged.
2. The amount of frontage and building position shall be varied from lot to lot to avoid a suburban pattern of repeated houses or other buildings situated at or near the middle of adjacent lots one after another.
3. Creating more than one adjacent lot with a depth greater than four times its frontage (“spaghetti lots”) is discouraged.
4. Buildings shall be located at the edges of fields, relatively close to roads, along hedgerows, etc., in an effort to preserve agricultural land and tillable units, whether or not in the same ownership.
5. Lot layouts shall take advantage of, and preserve, desirable features, such as stone walls, hedgerows, fields, natural clearings, and land contours.

6. Lot layouts should maintain trees and existing vegetation adjacent to State or town roads. A landscaped buffer (using native plants and trees) shall be part of any new construction adjacent to State or town roads.
7. Locating buildings at the top of ridgelines or at the brows of hills where land is open and sites would be highly visible from nearby public roads is prohibited.
8. Locate buildings and other construction such that they will preserve natural or scenic features, such as bodies of water or historic resources.
9. In the case of multiple unit projects, the developer is encouraged to have buildings be clustered.
10. On developments involving adjacent buildings or lots, on public roads driveways must be shared.
11. Locate commercial uses where they will be screened from neighboring properties.
12. Locate any noisy, toxic, or noxious uses away from public roads or neighboring properties (especially housing), and/or take all reasonable means to screen or lessen any detrimental impacts of such uses. This provision does not apply to agricultural uses.

**Commercial Development Standards**

1. Construct buildings that are of the size, scale, and character of other buildings in the Area in which they are located.
2. Development shall be located in clusters set back from State or town roads.
3. Existing buildings or parts thereof should be reused for commercial development where feasible.
4. Large parking areas shall be located at the sides or rear of such buildings. Where feasible, share parking areas between adjacent uses.
5. Commercial signs shall be illuminated from above.
6. Maintain trees and existing vegetation adjacent to State or town roads. A landscaped buffer (using native plants and trees) shall be part of any new construction adjacent to State or town roads.
7. Share all curb cuts to State or town roads. Minimize paved or impermeable areas.

**Overall Land Use Recommendations**

1. For larger subdivisions, encourage allowing a rural version of cluster development, with shared access to open spaces.
2. Encourage burial of all new utility lines.
3. Encourage the preservation of stone walls and stone foundations.
4. Ask the State to monitor water quality in lakes, ponds and rivers for coliform pollution and to identify the source.
5. Allow future growth at a rate not greater than the town's ability to assume additional costs brought on either directly or indirectly as a result of that growth, and that is compatible with the town's character. Particular attention should be paid to road frontage for individual lots and to subdivision proposals.
6. The Planning Commission or Conservation Commission should investigate ways to preserve farm land and productive forest lands.

**Village Areas (R1)**

Areas of concentrated development -- Plymouth Union and Tyson -- are the focal points of the town, providing a sense of place or identity, a center for community interaction, and a contrast to the surrounding rural countryside. As the town grows, this system of villages must continue to fulfill these important functions.

The purpose of the Village of Plymouth Union is to serve as the town center, with the Town Building, inn (the Salt Ash), and commercial/retail establishments, allowing the highest density development of all land use areas in this Plan. As the town develops, intensive land uses should enable it to continue to function as the town's social center, protecting other lands in the town from unwarranted scattered development and helping prevent strip development along Route 100 and 100A. Tyson village is a smaller village than Plymouth Union and should continue to be composed of single family dwellings and a locally oriented store. The Echo Lake Inn and the Inn at Waters Edge are both located in Tyson village. Tyson contains an historic church as does the Coolidge Homestead Historic Overlay portion of Plymouth, which, it is hoped, will continue to serve an important community function.

High-density housing is encouraged in these villages, both traditional single-family dwellings and multi-family units. These areas are especially appropriate for multi-family workforce housing and senior housing.

**Goal**

1. To strengthen the existing 'sense of place' in Plymouth Union and Tyson villages by encouraging development as described above in these town centers.

**Policies**

1. It is a policy of the town to consider historical land use patterns and buildings in Plymouth's villages when evaluating proposals for new construction.
2. It is a policy of the town to encourage high density in village centers consistent with those in traditional Vermont villages.
3. It is a policy of the town to allow for a diversity of uses within the town and encourage an increase in clean small-scale commercial.
4. It is a policy of the town to maintain set backs in this Area.

**Standards**

1. Construct buildings that are of the size, scale, and character of other buildings in the Village Area.
2. Alterations of architecturally or culturally significant structures in an historic district shall maintain the original character.

3. Any development within Village Areas may have an impact on existing water supplies due to the limited space. Developers must prove that their development will not have any negative effects on public or private water supplies within this area.

**Recommendations**

1. Create zoning regulations that establishes Plymouth Union and Tyson villages as distinct districts.
2. Allow mixed uses, home occupations, home businesses, limited commercial uses and residential uses in village areas.
3. Establish higher density in village centers.
4. Institutional and civic land uses should remain in or adjacent to Village Areas. These uses include: post offices, public schools, banks, civic buildings, the Town Hall, town offices, and community centers.
5. Develop a town committee for economic development.

**1 Acre Vacation-Resort Area (VR1)**

Hawk Inn and Mountain Resort (HIMR) is the largest residential community in Plymouth. Situated half way between the two Villages, Tyson and Plymouth Union, it comprises nearly 300 lots, between 50 and 60 condominium units, the largest Inn in Plymouth, a restaurant, spa and numerous recreational amenities. Nearly all of the individual single family residential lots are between one and two acres in size. Most of the lots on the East side of Route 100, including the residential condominium units are served by one of the largest soil based community wastewater disposal systems in Vermont.

The purpose of a distinct land use district for Hawk Inn and Mountain Resort is to ensure that both the improved lots and those which currently do not yet have homes constructed are guaranteed to make improvements consistent with the conditions of existing Town and State permits. HIMR includes approximately 100 approved but not yet constructed home sites which provide an opportunity for planned residential growth. This potential for growth is supportive of protecting other more remote areas of the town from development.

High density housing is encouraged in the 1 Acre Vacation–Resort Area because the infrastructure for this use is already in place. This area is especially appropriate for residential and commercial uses which cater to vacation and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

**Goal**

1. To insure the density and established use patterns at Hawk Inn and Mountain Resort are consistent with the development as it has previously been approved and is currently being managed.

**Policies**

1. It is the policy of the town to consider the previously permitted density and land use patterns in the 1 Acre Vacation-Resort area when evaluating proposals for renovations, additions and new construction.
2. It is the policy of the town to encourage the ~~resort ownership management~~ and owners of lots at Hawk Inn and Mountain Resort to develop those properties consistent with their own planning and development regulations, as **long as** those regulations conform to Plymouth zoning regulations.
3. It is the policy of the town to maintain setbacks in this Area which are consistent with those required in the **resorts published covenants, architectural design policies and the** planning and development regulations administered by Hawk Inn and Mountain Resort.

**Standards**

1. Construct buildings that are of the size, scale and character of other building in the HIMR area and consistent with their own architectural review committee administered by their planning and development regulations.

**Recommendations**

1. Create zoning regulations that establish Hawk Inn and Mountain Resort as a distinct district.
2. Allow limited commercial uses, residential uses, recreational uses, business and private functions and other uses consistent with the current management of this resort.
3. Continue to allow high density uses consistent with existing permits.

**1 Acre Mountain-Recreation Area (MR1)**

The ski area in Plymouth Union formerly operated for many years as Round Top is now owned by Plymouth Notch, LLC and called “Plymouth Notch”. The previous owner, Plymouth Properties, LLC operated this ski area most recently and obtained State and local permits to expand the snow-making capability and to construct some residential units in the base area. These have not yet been constructed. Much of the lower portion of the ski area surrounding the base lodge has previously been designated in the Plymouth Union village land use area.

The purpose of establishing a distinct land use district for a portion of the ski area, much of which previously has been within the designated village district of Plymouth Union, is to provide for uses which are unique to a ski area and other uses dedicated to recreation.

Higher density housing is encouraged in the 1 Acre Mountain-Recreation area to concentrate building to the area close to the existing base lodge and the cluster housing already approved. The buildings and infrastructure can in that manner be sited on the flatter portion of the land and

close to existing vehicular access and utilities. This leaves the higher ski terrain and steepest slopes, which are not easily accessed, to be used for skiing and other recreational uses.

### **Goal**

1. To insure the density and established use patterns of Plymouth Notch will remain consistent with the development as it has previously been approved and managed to promote this area as a viable recreational facility, primarily for skiing, which will be beneficial to the Town of Plymouth.

### **Policies**

1. It is the policy of the town to consider the previously permitted density and land use patterns in the 1 Acre Mountain-Recreation area when evaluating proposals for renovations, additions and new construction.

2. It is the policy of the town to encourage the management and owners of the property and those with interests vested in the property to develop consistent with their own planning and development regulations, as those regulations conform to the Plymouth zoning regulations.

3. It is the policy of the town to maintain setbacks in this area which are consistent with those necessary for a higher density area and conform to the Plymouth zoning regulations.

### **Standards**

1. Construct buildings that are of the size, scale and character of other buildings existing and approved in the Plymouth Notch Area.

2. Provide landscaping which will enhance the appearance of the high density development where buildings are clustered closely together.

### **Recommendations**

1. Create zoning regulations that establish Plymouth Notch as a distinct Mountain- Recreation district.

2. Allow limited commercial uses, residential uses, business and private functions and other uses consistent with the management of the Mountain-Recreation district as a recreational use with a concentration of residential buildings.

3. Continue to allow higher density uses consistent with existing permits and current land uses.

### **2 Acre Rural Areas (R2)**

The 2 Acre Rural Areas border existing State and town highways and are primarily located around Plymouth's two Village Areas. The 2 Acre Rural Areas include only that portion of the

ski area lands in common ownership known as Round Top west of the Mountain –Recreation Area, the former gravel pit area north of Plymouth Union Village, a small portion of the Farm and Wilderness land north of Woodward Reservoir and two hamlet areas near Tyson Village. The purpose of the 2 Acre Rural Area is to allow for higher density development than can be accommodated in the other Rural Residential Land Use Areas in town. Land uses allowed in 2 Acre Rural Areas should only include residential, small commercial enterprises, home occupations, and light commercial, scaled to the Area. Much of the land in these Areas feature soil and slope conditions which will provide for easier installation of on-site wastewater facilities. Development in 2 Acre Rural areas will be limited by the capacity to accommodate safe septic systems.

### **Goal**

1. To accommodate medium density development of a rural nature while maintaining the high quality rural character of Plymouth.

### **Policies**

1. It is a policy of the town to allow medium density residential and commercial uses that do not adversely impact the environment in the 2 Acre Rural Areas because they are nearer to Village Areas and existing areas of medium density residential and commercial uses such as Farm and Wilderness, the ski area formerly known as Round Top and Hawk Inn and Mountain Resort.
2. It is a policy of the town to maintain a pace of development that town institutions and our road system can sustain.
3. It is a policy of the town to require that density and placement of new buildings in subdivisions be compatible with desired land use patterns.
4. It is a policy of the town to deter "sprawl" by evaluating subdivision of land.
5. It is a policy of the town to promote creative land use which does not sacrifice value for landowners.
6. It is a policy of the town to maintain set backs in this Area.

### **Recommendations**

1. Provide for medium density residential development with small commercial enterprises whose impacts are limited so that they do not detract from the rural nature of the area and are in keeping with residential development.
2. The town should consider adopting regulations that limit the impact of development on neighboring parcels.

### **5 Acre Rural Residential Areas (RR5)**

The 5 Acre Rural Residential Areas are comprised of lands bordering existing Class 1, 2 and 3 roads that are not designated as Village, 2 Acre Rural Residential, or 10 Acre Rural Residential, and are located outside of Conservation Areas. The purpose of the 5 Acre Rural Residential Area is to preserve the rural residential character of the town and allow for low density development. Land uses allowed in 5 Acre Rural Residential Areas should only include

residential, home occupations, agriculture, forestry, and outdoor recreation. Occasional small rural enterprises shall be allowed, provided they do not have an adverse impact on neighboring properties. Much of the land in these Areas feature soil and slope conditions which will provide for easier installation of on-site wastewater facilities. Development in 5 Acre Rural Residential areas may be limited by the capacity to accommodate safe septic systems.

**Goal**

1. To maintain the high quality rural character of Plymouth, preserving exceptional scenic beauty and the many natural resources of the town while allowing for moderate growth.

**Policies**

1. It is a policy of the town to allow lower density residential uses in the 5 Acre Rural Residential Areas that do not adversely impact the environment and to discourage commercial uses.
2. It is a policy of the town to maintain a pace of development that town institutions and our road system can sustain.
3. It is a policy of the town to require that density and placement of new buildings in subdivisions be compatible with agricultural and silvicultural use and desired land use patterns.
4. It is a policy of the town to preserve wildlife habitats and the corridors between them.
5. It is a policy of the town to deter "sprawl" by evaluating subdivision of land.
6. It is a policy of the town to promote creative land use which does not sacrifice value for landowners.
7. It is a policy of the town to maintain set backs in this Area that are greater than those found in the Village and 2 Acre Rural Areas.

**Recommendation**

1. Encourage access for recreational activities on all land.

**10 Acre Rural Residential Areas (RR10)**

Plymouth's landscape is defined by the contrast between steep wooded mountains and narrow open valleys. Planning Commission surveys (1986, 1999, and 2009) found overwhelming consensus among residents on the importance of preserving Plymouth's open spaces and undeveloped slopes. The town's scenic rural character is prized by residents and visitors alike and is an important component of our tourist industry. The preservation of large forest tracts and of key agricultural lands is also important to the future of forestry and farming in our town.

The 10 Acre Rural Residential Areas are the groupings of larger undeveloped contiguous parcels of land in Plymouth that are located farther away from Villages and 2 and 5 Acre Rural Residential areas. The purpose of this Area is to allow for the development of single rural residences while maintaining open space, wildlife habitat, and timberland.

**Goals**

1. To maintain our rural character as defined in this Plan.
2. To protect the environmental integrity of forests, fields, wildlife habitat, wetlands, flood plains, and surface waters.
3. To protect productive forest and farmland.

**Policies**

1. It is a policy of the town to allow residential uses in the 10 Acre Rural Residential Areas that do not adversely impact the environment and to discourage commercial uses.
2. It is a policy of the town to conserve the large undeveloped areas in Plymouth.
3. It is a policy of the town to protect water quality, wetlands, and watersheds.
4. It is a policy of the town to encourage recreational opportunities that will not impact or affect the environmental and scenic quality of these areas.
5. It is a policy of the town to conserve contiguous forestland and wildlife habitat.
6. It is a policy of the town to encourage sound silvicultural practices.
7. It is a policy of the town to encourage the use of small scale non-commercial renewable energy options in remote areas a great distance from existing utilities to power the scarce residences within this area in order to avoid the impacts of power lines.
8. It is a policy of the town to promote creative land use which does not sacrifice value for landowners.
9. It is a policy of the town to maintain set backs in this Area that are proportionally larger than those found in the 5 Acre Rural Residential Areas.

**Conservation Areas (CON25)**

This area consists of the publicly owned conservation lands and all lands exceeding 2,200 feet in elevation. The purpose of the Conservation Areas is to maintain land in its natural, undeveloped state. This area is proposed for 25 acre lots, and the Class IV roads that serve these Areas shall not be upgraded by the town.

Plymouth's Conservation Areas are those that are relatively undisturbed, consisting of large tracts of quality timber and serving as home for a variety of wildlife. Such areas of the community are currently not serviced and intentionally lack such facilities as maintained roads and utilities. For these reasons, the land in these Areas must be protected from development.

**Goals**

1. To maintain our rural landscape.
2. To protect the environmental integrity of forests, fields, wildlife habitat, wetlands, flood plains, and surface waters.
3. To protect productive forest and farmland.

**Policies**

1. It is a policy of the town to discourage development in the Conservation Areas.

2. It is a policy of the town to conserve the large undeveloped areas in Plymouth.
3. It is a policy of the town to protect water quality, wetlands, and watersheds.
4. It is a policy of the town to encourage recreational opportunities that will not impact or affect the environmental and scenic quality of these areas.
5. It is a policy of the town to conserve contiguous forestland and wildlife habitat.
6. It is a policy of the town to encourage sound silvicultural practices.
7. It is a policy of the town to encourage the use of small scale non-commercial renewable energy options to power the scarce residences within this area in order to avoid the impacts of power lines.
8. It is a policy of the town to allow only those recreational land uses that will not impact or affect the environmental and scenic quality of these areas.

### **Shoreland Overlay**

The many lakes and ponds in Plymouth contribute greatly to the aesthetic and economic value of the town, making it a special place. Since preserving healthy and beautiful lakes and ponds is in the interest of Plymouth citizens and visitors, a Shoreland Overlay area is proposed that incorporates a 1,000 foot buffer from all shorelands. The only exception to this is the area surrounding Grass Pond where a 300 foot buffer is proposed.

### **Goal**

1. To protect the beauty and environmental integrity of Plymouth's lakes and ponds while encouraging their safe and responsible enjoyment.

### **Policies**

1. It is a policy of the town to minimize lake-side development and retain a naturally vegetated shoreline.
2. It is a policy of the town to abide by Vermont's Clean Water Standards.

### **Recommendations**

1. Initiate a public education campaign to inform people who fish, boat owners, and owners of lake cottages about the dangers of milfoil and other invasive aquatic plant and animal species, as well as best management for lawns to reduce nutrients.
2. Ensure that lakeside conversions of dwellings are having septic systems permitted properly.
3. Consider requiring stream buffers in the overlay to ensure clean runoff into the lake.
4. Form a lakefront property owners association to monitor water quality in Plymouth's lakes.

### **Coolidge Homestead Historic Overlay**

The Coolidge Homestead Historic Overlay area consists of those buildings and the land at Plymouth Notch, and includes the Coolidge Birthplace and Homestead, Cilley Store, Wilder House Restaurant, Wilder Barn, and other structures.

**Goal**

1. To ensure the preservation of land and buildings within the Coolidge Homestead Historic Overlay area.

**Policy**

1. It is a policy of the town that any development in the Historic Overlay Area shall compliment the traditional configuration, design, scale, proportions, and streetscape that currently define this historic area.

**Flood Hazard Overlay**

In Plymouth there are lands adjacent to streams and brooks which are subject to occasional flooding. These flood-prone areas are natural extensions of these water bodies. They retain excessive amounts of water occurring as runoff during heavy rains and spring thaws, control the velocity of water flow during floods, and serve to trap sediment.

Flood-prone areas are unsuitable for development for many reasons: there is a potential for danger to life and property, floods may cause the stream channel to move within the floodplain, and subsurface sewage disposal systems do not function properly when influenced by high water. Plymouth's flood hazard areas have been mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), but with only limited information and are only approximate in location. The Town of Plymouth regulates flood hazard areas through use of an Overlay district.

**Goal**

1. To prevent flood damage and retain flood storage.

**Policies**

1. It is a policy of the town to preserve floodplains and associated risk areas in a state where they can handle flood flows without damage to property.
2. It is a policy of the town that only compatible land uses of recreation and open space should be permitted in flood hazard areas.

**Recommendations**

1. The town should update its regulations for the management and protection of flood-prone areas for a 100-year flood.
2. The town should work with FEMA to do a more detailed study of its flood areas.
3. The town should determine areas subject to streambank erosion hazards in consultation with the state's River Management Program and consider regulations for these areas.

### III. TRANSPORTATION

To discuss transportation in Plymouth is to discuss roadways, for location, topography, and the whims of history have worked against the development of railroads, airports, and other forms of transportation here.

Our roadways perform two distinct roles. They allow us to get where we are going. They also provide us with scenic pleasure, giving us a perspective on the unique rural character of the town. The following plan aims to satisfy both of these functions.

Given the location of existing development, Plymouth's roads are essentially adequate to meet present needs. Traffic congestion is not an issue in Plymouth. Traffic safety is.

Outlined below is a breakdown of 2009 State and town highway mileage in Plymouth, followed by an explanation of the classification system. See also the attached highways map.

<b>Class I</b>	<b>State Highways</b>	
	Route 100A	4.76
	Route 100	9.73
<b>Class 2</b>	<b>Town Highways</b>	3.72
<b>Class 3</b>	<b>Town Highways</b>	37.13
<b>Class 4</b>	<b>Town Highways</b>	<u>13.42</u>
	<b>Total Mileage</b>	<b>68.91</b>

**Class 1** state highways are under the jurisdiction of the Vermont Agency of Transportation. They serve to connect larger population areas outside the town (such as Ludlow and Killington).

**Class 2** town highways serve as inter-town arterial roadways providing for through traffic. The Selectmen with the approval of the State Highway Board determine all Class 2 highways. Plymouth's Class 2 highways are the Kingdom Road, Buswell Road (Crossroads to the Ludlow line), and the road that connects Plymouth Notch to 100A (Coolidge Memorial Road).

**Class 3** town highways are the many collector roads which serve to provide year-round public access. The Selectmen determine these highways after conference with the State Board. Class 3 highways must be negotiable, under normal circumstances, all seasons of the year by a pleasure car of standard manufacture. Minimum standards, as set by the state, include sufficient surface and base, adequate drainage, and sufficient width to permit winter maintenance.

**Class 4** town highways are all other town highways. These are all determined by the Board of Selectmen. Class 4 highways are not maintained during the winter months. Summer maintenance is based strictly upon the availability of funds. This maintenance may include an annual grading, removal of fallen trees, and repair of washouts.

It is desirable to keep Class 4 roads open to four-wheel drive vehicles, horseback riding, logging vehicles, and fire-fighting equipment. An example of a Class 4 town highway is the Reading Pond Road across from Colby Pond.

The majority of the town's roads are Class 3 highways, which have been steadily improved to keep pace with the rapid increase in residential development over the last decade. Some residents have expressed their wish to keep the degree of improvements consistent with the level of traffic. There is concern with the high speeds that some people drive on the town's Class 2 and 3 highways, which are not posted. There is great appreciation of the scenic quality of our Class 3 roadsides, and the town should seek to encourage preservation of roadside trees, etc., where they do not interfere with maintenance and public safety. There is a high level of satisfaction with the present quality of town road maintenance--snow plowing, grading, etc.

Both Route 100 and 100A have been the sites of serious accidents in recent years. Seasonally hazardous driving conditions are compounded by the high speeds at which many through drivers travel, particularly at peak periods during skiing season. In the warmer months, these same State highways are frequented by bicyclists, whose safety is also endangered because the roads are not designed for bicycle use.

People who live in Plymouth rely heavily on Routes 100 and 100A to commute to work and to shop. Those who live in the north end of town generally shop in Woodstock, West Lebanon, and Rutland; those in the south end of town are oriented towards Ludlow, Springfield, and Rutland. Because public transportation is lacking, older citizens who do not have their own cars are dependent on neighbors and agencies such as the senior centers, Hospice, and the Visiting Nurses Association. Transportation to Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center can be particularly burdensome to the elderly and those undergoing long-term treatment.

Emergency transportation is provided by ambulance services in Woodstock and Ludlow. At present there is not enough manpower for the First Response Team to provide the 24-hour coverage that would have to be provided if Plymouth had its own ambulance.

Public transportation is provided in Plymouth by a bus to Ludlow that leaves from the Tyson Library and Plymouth State Park.

### **Goals**

1. To improve the quality of Plymouth's transportation and road systems in order to promote safety and maintain the scenic quality of roads wherever possible.
2. To encourage vehicles using Plymouth's roadways to travel at safe speeds, so as not to endanger children, adult pedestrians, and animals, as well as other motorists. To encourage respect for speed limits, as posted.
3. To assure that all residents, whether they have personal transportation or not, have access to shopping, medical facilities, etc., as needed.
4. To encourage the Agency of Transportation to improve State Highways 100 and 100A to create safer driving and recreational biking conditions.

5. To ensure that future development does not unnecessarily or unreasonably endanger the public investment in the town and regional transportation systems, including highways, bridges, rail, bike and pedestrian facilities, public transit, and trails.
6. To minimize transportation energy consumption.

### **Policies**

1. It is the policy of the town that prior to a final decision to proceed with a major capital transportation project, policy makers first analyze the project against reasonable alternatives. In examining the alternatives, investigation shall focus on the environmental, energy, social, and investment costs and the extent to which each meets the goals and policies of this Plan.
2. It is in the policy of the town to maintain the town's current highways, bridges, and related facilities as necessary to ensure the current level of service.
3. The town, as written in 19 V.S.A. Section 310, is not obligated to maintain Class IV Highways, excepting bridges and culverts. It is the policy of the town that before it adopts a new road or upgrades an existing highway, the developers be responsible for the cost of improving and/or building the road to town specifications. Final decision regarding the nature of the improvement rests with the Selectboard.
4. Given the interest in and benefits from biking, hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and similar outdoor recreational activities, it is the policy of the town that, as an alternative to complete discontinuance of a highway, full consideration be given to retaining Class 4 roads for recreational use, or downgrading their status to a legal trail, thus retaining the public's interest in them.
5. An integral scenic element of the rural countryside is the network of backroads comprising the town's highway system. These byways are both visually and economically important to the town. It is the policy of the town that if improvements are needed to accommodate increased traffic, the relationship of the road to the surrounding features of the landscape be fully evaluated.
6. It is the policy of the town to minimize new trips and to support existing transportation facilities. Institutional and civic land uses should remain in or adjacent to the village area or designated areas adjacent to it. These uses include: post offices, public schools, banks, civic buildings, town offices, senior centers, and retail stores.
7. It is a policy of the town to support public transportation networks and facilities to serve residents, such as Park and Ride lots and ride sharing programs.

### **Standards**

1. In remote areas not planned for development, no upgrades to roads leading into these areas shall be planned, unless an unsafe situation exists. Road improvements to local roads shall only be conducted on roads leading into areas where the town desires to encourage development. By keeping remote areas less conveniently accessed, the town is establishing a clear standard on where future residential development is more appropriate.
2. The town shall control curb cuts to ensure the proper function and performance of a roadway. Concepts that shall be employed in evaluating developments are:
  - restricting or limiting the number of curb cuts per parcel or per linear feet of roadway;

- ruling out direct access onto a primary road, if a reasonable alternative access exists via a secondary road or shared driveway;
  - provide for separation between curb cuts and public road intersections to ensure efficiency and safety of a roadway; and
  - consolidating or reconfiguring existing curb cuts or access roads to improve or maintain efficiency, safety, and the function of a roadway.
3. Where multiple site development is being planned, access management decisions shall:
- require shared access and parking, whenever feasible;
  - require connecting roads between parcels or prohibit direct parking access from a parking space to an arterial or collector road;
  - encourage use of municipal parking areas or flexible parking standards (i.e. shared parking) to reduce the amount of parking required for individual developments;
  - require pedestrian sidewalks or reserve land for future sidewalks along roads in concentrated areas or between buildings and parking areas to ensure pedestrian safety, provide for pedestrian crosswalks and bicycle connections at regular intervals; and
  - make provisions for transit stops or facilities at reasonable intervals, where applicable.

### **Recommendations**

1. Continue to support the Visiting Nurses Association, area senior centers, and other organizations that provide transportation and much-needed services for seniors without individual means of transportation.
2. The state should conduct more frequent and rational maintenance activities on Route 100A due to the increased use of the State Park. Paving, crack sealing, ditching, all contribute to the longevity of a highway.
3. Continue participation in the Regional Transportation Planning Program through the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission.
4. Revisit and tighten access management policies and standards in the Plymouth Zoning Regulations according to authority granted under 19 V.S.A. § 1111, Permitted Use of the Right-Of-Way, to ensure better control over developments potentially impacting the function and character of Plymouth's roadways.
5. The Town should identify funding opportunities and programs to ensure safe bicycle riding in Plymouth.

## IV. UTILITY AND FACILITY PLAN

### Recreational Facilities

1. Coolidge State Park Campgrounds offer camping sites, motor and trailer sites, hiking, fishing and hunting on surrounding lands, both State-owned and private property. On-site water and sewage disposal are available for campers, also shower and toilet facilities.
2. Camp Plymouth on Lake Echo in Tyson is a recreation site offering rental cabins, boats, a swimming area, playground equipment, and picnic areas. A kitchen and large dining room may be rented for group use.
3. Woodward Reservoir has a limited access beach, available for Plymouth residents to use at hours specified by the Farm and Wilderness Camps (usually after 3:30 p.m. on summer weekdays). The State of Vermont maintains a public access for boats near the dam.
4. There are also boat launching/fishing access areas on Lake Amherst, Lake Echo, Lake Rescue, and Colby Pond offered by the State of Vermont.
5. Hawk Inn and Resort offers hayrides, sleigh rides, horseback riding, boating, swimming, and health club facilities to guests and the general public. Various forms of free entertainment are offered in the summer months at their bandstand.
6. The Farm and Wilderness non-profit corporation offers five different camps for children aged 5-17, serving 550 residential campers and 150 day campers each summer. Three of the overnight camps and the day camp are located at Woodward Reservoir; Flying Cloud camp offers a Native American experience for boys on leased land in southwestern Plymouth; a fifth camp is in Mt. Holly. Farm and Wilderness offers outdoor education programs in the spring and fall. Facilities such as their ropes course are available to school groups, alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs, battered women's programs, etc. It also offers retreats in the winter. The Farm and Wilderness trails are open year round for hiking and cross-country skiing.
7. Bethany Birches Camp Association operates a summer camp on Lynds Hill serving a total of  $\pm$  275 local children in six one-week overnight sessions ( $\pm$  45 children per session). It also offers winter snow camps attended by many Plymouth residents. The Association's land is open to Plymouth residents for hiking and skiing.
8. Gold panning remains a small but viable recreational activity available to residents and non-residents. A stream alteration permit is required from the State for this activity, as well as permission from the property owner.
9. Round Top Ski area (Bear Creek) has previously provided area residents with ski opportunities. The ski area is in the process of rehabilitating its facilities and is open on a limited basis.

10. VAST snowmobile trails, biking on roadways, and the Catamount back country ski trail are other recreational activities available to residents.
11. Just over half the 155 respondents to a 2009 town-wide survey noted that it is important for the town to protect or preserve Ancient and Class IV roads

### **Medical Facilities**

The Town of Plymouth has no in-town medical facilities, and respondents to a 2009 town-wide survey did not express a need for such facilities. There are health clinics in Woodstock and Ludlow and major hospitals in Springfield, Rutland, Windsor, and Lebanon, N.H. Ambulance service and advanced medical treatment by Emergency Medical Technicians is available from Ludlow and Woodstock. Several members of the Fire Department and private citizens have been trained to perform first aid, CPR, and other techniques to help stabilize a patient until medical assistance arrives.

### **Utilities**

1. Electrical facilities (See chapter on Energy, page 41). Plymouth has no local electrical generation, present or foreseen. Power needs are supplied by CVPS from generating plants in surrounding communities. Various power transmission lines feed necessary power requirements to both residences and businesses. A three phase electric distribution line runs through Plymouth Union from Killington to Hawk Mountain. Power from this line feeds to Plymouth Notch and Pinney Hollow. Sections of Tyson are powered by Ludlow Electric and portions of Pinney Hollow and Plymouth Five Corners are fed through Woodstock. Clearing and the upgrading of distribution lines in recent years has resulted in fewer power outages and more dependable power. However, some areas of the Town of Plymouth have poor power reliability.
2. VTEL and Ludlow Telephone Company provide telephone service. VTEL now offers digital subscriber line service in Plymouth. The upgrading of lines in recent years to cable has improved service and dependability tremendously.
3. Cable television is presently available to homes along Route 100 from Ludlow to Plymouth Union and midway on Route 100A. Service is provided by ComCast, which offers a wide selection of both standard and pay-to-watch channels.
4. The Town of Plymouth does not have at present nor does it foresee a need in the future for any storm drainage, public sewer system, charged public hydrant system, or public water system. The rural nature of the town and the population density coupled with the town's topography and geology make it neither economically feasible nor reasonable to attempt such undertakings.
5. The Town of Plymouth has poor cellular phone service and seeks increased tower placement consistent with aesthetic considerations and local placement input. The need for better cellular phone service was noted by more than 75% of respondents to the 2009 town-wide survey.

**Public Services**

1. Refuse Disposal: Plymouth belongs to the NH/VT Solid Waste Project for incineration of its refuse. The town sends two representatives to project meetings. Refuse pick-up is provided by an independent contractor. The contractor charges hauling fees according to the volume of each household's refuse. Private contractors provide dumpsters to various businesses and facilities in town for a fee. Plymouth operates a recycling station at the Plymouth Town Hall every Saturday. Solid waste facilities are deemed to be adequate to meet local needs.
2. The Fire Department is a volunteer organization funded in part by town taxes and by fund raising activities which include annual solicitations for donations from tax payers, barbecues, coin-drops, and by donations received for services performed. No members are paid for any time rendered. Fire response services are adequate to meet the town's needs. The Fire Department Station, located in the Town Offices Building on Route 100, contains the following equipment:

<b><u>Description</u></b>	<b><u>Year</u></b>	<b><u>Condition</u></b>
Pumper GMC 750 G.P.M.	1980	Good
Tanker Freightliner 4,000 Gal.	2003	Excellent
GMC Utility vehicle	1978	Good
Pumper 1000 G.P.M.	1980	Good

8 Scott Air Packs with 8 spare tanks Portatank - 1,500 Gal.

Three portable pumps - 250 G.P.M.

Full turnout gear for 20 men

Miscellaneous items

3. The Plymouth First Response Team is composed of volunteers who respond to vehicle accidents and other emergencies requiring first aid prior to the arrival of an ambulance and EMTs. Both the Fire Department and the First Response Team in Plymouth are benefiting greatly by completion and implementation of an Enhanced 911 system in Vermont.
4. Plymouth Press is the town's newsletter. It is published 2-3 times a year by volunteers.
5. Tyson Ladies Aid sponsors **the Tyson Library**, bazaars, rummage sales, and food sales to collect funds that are used to aid ~~in~~ **the** various projects such as aid for fire victims, college scholarships, and aid to needy families.
6. Plymouth Historical Society holds meetings and field trips open to all who are interested in the town's history.
7. Respondents to the town-wide survey in 2009 said they were strongly in favor of maintaining the town's "moderate tax rate" (82% in favor). This speaks to the fact that residents view town services as being adequate for the taxes they pay. Any growth in the town will need to be done with an eye toward maintaining the currently acceptable level of service.

**Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Response**

The town has completed a Rapid Response Plan (RRP) that covers the procedures for Plymouth's response to a disaster. In brief, the Selectboard will formally declare a state of emergency in the event of a disaster that the Selectboard feels is beyond the town's scope. This declaration will be faxed to Vermont Emergency Management and a local emergency operation center will be set up in the Town Office. The Town Office should be equipped with backup power so that it can function during an emergency. The town has an Emergency Management Coordinator and would be assisted by several people who have been identified in the RRP in coordinating the town's response to a disaster.

In the event that emergency shelters are needed, the town has identified the elementary school building for such use. The school building does not currently have backup power and this is needed to properly function during an emergency.

Plymouth also has a Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Plan that identifies the hazards to which the town is vulnerable and measures to mitigate them. In the short term, the town should ensure that all new private roads and driveways are properly constructed so that they do not contribute to damage on town roads from runoff. The Selectboard should also review their codes and standards policy for improvements to transportation infrastructure to ensure that it is appropriate for the town and will serve the town well when applied by the Federal Emergency Management Agency following the next disaster. The proposed density, type and location of future land uses set forth elsewhere in this plan should take into account the predictable consequences of any additional buildings in the floodplain, on steep slopes or on inadequate roads that could further aggravate flooding or require increased efforts and expenditures by the town for emergency response.

**Buildings and Other Facilities Open to the Public**

1. Town Offices Building: The town building contains the town offices, a large public meeting hall, and the meeting room and garage bays of the fire department and road department. The structure was completed in 1988 and is in sound condition and provided with adequate parking. All town property should be open and available to the citizens of Plymouth with appropriate rules governing its use in place.
2. Post Office: The post office in Plymouth Notch serves the northern two-thirds of the town. People living in the southern part of town receive their mail through the Ludlow post office. People in the Hale Hollow area get mail through Bridgewater Corners. All roads in Plymouth have now been officially named for E-911 purposes.
3. Library: The Tyson Public Library is operated by the Tyson Ladies Aid Members. It is open **seasonally** on Saturdays and other days as scheduled. It provides a good cross-section of reading and educational material for all ages. Libraries in surrounding towns are also available for residents' use.
4. Churches: The Union Christian Church in Plymouth Notch has historical significance as the former church of President Calvin Coolidge. Services are held on the first Sunday of each month, June through October, with visiting clergy. A Christmas Service is held

each year. Tyson Congregational Church is open to the public and church services and pastoral care is available year-round.

5. Cemeteries: The town has four cemeteries: Plymouth Notch, Tyson-Pollard, Plymouth Kingdom, and Five Corners. There is also the small Archer family cemetery and a Revolutionary Soldier's cairn, both in Tyson. All are maintained without tax money.
6. Historic Sites: The Plymouth Historic District is operated May through October by the State of Vermont, Division for Historic Preservation, and includes the Coolidge Birthplace and Homestead, Cilley Store, Wilder House Restaurant, Wilder Barn, and other structures. The Coolidge Foundation maintains the Union Christian Church and has offices and an archive in the Church basement. The Plymouth Cheese Factory is owned by the State of Vermont and leased to a business making curd cheese and also functions as a year-round tourist attraction adjacent to the Historic District.
7. Motels, Hotels, and Bed & Breakfasts:
  - Echo Lake Inn and Restaurant in Tyson
  - Farmbrook Motel on Route 100A
  - Good Commons at junction of Routes 100 and 100A
  - Hawk Inn and Resort on Route 100
  - Salt Ash Inn at junction of Routes 100 and 100A
  - Inn at Water's Edge, Tyson

### **Child Care**

In 2003, the Vermont Legislature added a thirteenth goal to Chapter 117. "To ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and to integrate child care issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development."

Plymouth supports the private development of additional facilities to meet the needs of its residents. State data indicate that the most critical challenge facing the demand for child care infrastructure are the shortages in infant/toddler care, school age care, care for children with special needs, and care during non-traditional hours. According to the Vermont Department for Children and Families, the overall capacity in regulated child care can meet only 50% - 60% of the estimated need in Vermont. The population of residents under the age of 10 years in Plymouth (US Census 2000) was 29.

Currently there are no registered day care homes or licensed day care centers in Plymouth, although numerous such facilities exist in the surrounding towns of Shrewsbury, Mount Holly, Ludlow, Killington, and Woodstock.

### **Goals**

1. Buildings: In general, all buildings, utilities, and facilities should be maintained on a regular schedule with energy conservation measures instituted to ensure that we are not postponing repairs today that will be more costly in the future.

2. Equipment: Continue efforts to maintain and replace equipment to ensure that all equipment and vehicles are in safe operable condition. Maintain procedures to purchase equipment and vehicles in the most economical manner.
3. Public Utilities: Maintain close communication with public utilities that provide electric power, telephone service, and television cable to coordinate projects including tree cutting, underground cable laying and installation of new utility poles and lights, to ensure that duplication of efforts and expenditures is avoided.

**Policies**

1. The town supports the expansion of 3-phase power in all appropriate areas of the town to ensure that economic development opportunities are fully exploited.
2. The town supports the expansion of high-speed fiber optic telecommunication lines throughout town so as to allow home occupations and businesses to grow and prosper.
3. The town supports the placement of utility lines under ground when costs are borne privately, or when supported by a town vote, with local public funding.
4. To encourage public investments in governmental facilities, services, and lands which support existing and future development within the village area and other designated growth areas.
5. To foster a partnership between public investment planning and implementation activities and the private sector in a manner that advances the goals and policies of this Plan.
6. To promote effective, efficient, and accessible public services, including school, highways, and recreational facilities.
7. To ensure that the expansion or construction of new utilities and facilities do not impose an undue financial burden on governmental resources.

**Recommendations**

1. Given the large amount of trail land in the town, Plymouth should seek funding to conduct an inventory and to map all trails open to the public and shall publish the information for townspeople.
2. The town should work with the local State Park staff on recreation programs for all residents.
3. The town should create buffers around historic structures and properties, and Ancient and Class IV roads, and create voluntary guidelines for developers and landowners to protect these areas.
4. The town supports the transfer facility in Plymouth as an option for residents and shall look toward more convenient and affordable solutions for waste disposal so as to encourage recycling and minimize illegal dumping.
5. The town seeks and supports last line identity for all residents of Plymouth as a result of E-911 work conducted in recent years.
6. The town should explore expanded mutual aid arrangements for additional services such as paving, plowing, mowing, and fire response.
7. Capital improvement plans and budgets are effective planning and fiscal management tools. The town and School District are encouraged to use this tool. Periodic consultation with the Planning Commission on the land use implications of major capital investments is recommended.
8. The town should work with cell phone service providers in the region to improve cell phone reception.
9. Work with the Regional Planning Commission to conduct a needs assessment of child care facilities in Plymouth.
10. Review zoning regulations and revise as necessary to address barriers to increasing child care capacity in Plymouth.
11. Consider seeking grant funds to assist with the development of childcare infrastructure.

## V. TELECOMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES

Telecommunications have become increasingly important to the security and economic needs of residents and businesses in central Vermont. This trend will continue. It will play a key role in our region's economic future, creating new opportunities for the relocation and growth of decentralized business operations and reducing demands for travel by conventional modes. With an improved telecommunications infrastructure, large amounts of information can be conveniently moved over long distances at competitive rates.

The field of telecommunications is undergoing rapid change. Advancements in this technology have and will continue to impact growth in Plymouth. The implications for land use are significant, as this technology has enabled people to move into rural areas of the town and to "telecommute" to other remote or central offices more readily.

Under present standards, transmission towers are the dominant telecommunications facilities. As land uses, these towers have emerged as planning concerns. Towers may emit electromagnetic radiation, which may affect human health, can conflict with other forms of development, and raise issues of aesthetic impact. To ensure adequate transmission of signals in mountainous areas, towers and related facilities often times need to be confined to hilltops or high elevation points. Thus, due to their higher visibility from multiple vantage points, conflict with scenic landscapes has become an issue.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) retains jurisdiction over public airwaves and the telecommunications industry in general. Additionally, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) exercises control over the location and height of towers and similar structures to prevent interference with airport operations. Under Vermont law (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117), municipalities may require that certain standards be met prior to the erection of telecommunication facilities. Local bylaws may regulate the use, dimension, location, and density of towers, however, FCC rules are preemptive of local and State law where conflicts exist. In 1997, Act 250 jurisdiction was conferred by the State requiring a permit prior to the construction of a communications tower or similar structure over 20 feet in height.

According to respondents to the town's 2009 survey, the town should locate new cell phone towers, to improve local reception, at the Town Hall and on selected hilltops, as long as they are camouflaged. Cell towers should not be allowed on church steeples, according to respondents. Although farm silos were favored as a location for cell towers, respondents do not believe there are any structures to allow this kind of development.

### Goals

1. To preserve the rural character and appearance of the Town of Plymouth.

2. To protect the scenic, historic, environmental, and natural resources of the Town of Plymouth.
3. To provide standards and requirements for the operation, siting, design, appearance, construction, monitoring, modification, and removal of telecommunication facilities and towers.
4. To minimize tower and antenna proliferation by requiring sharing of existing communications facilities, towers and sites, where possible and appropriate.
5. To facilitate the provision of telecommunication services to the residences and businesses of the Town of Plymouth.
6. To minimize the adverse visual affects of towers and related facilities through careful design and siting standards.
7. To encourage the location of towers and antennas in non-residential areas and away from visually sensitive areas, prominent scenic areas, and historic areas.

### **Policies**

1. The town encourages economic growth through adding new home-based businesses in town, possible primarily through expansion of high speed telecommunications services throughout town.
2. It is a policy of the Town to encourage the co-location of new telecommunications facilities on existing public structures such as the Town Hall, or on private structures such as silos with permission of the landowner. Other areas may be considered.

### **Recommendations**

1. In order to minimize tower proliferation, it is the recommendation of the town that applicants exhaust all reasonable options for sharing space on existing towers prior to proposing new towers and related facilities. The principle of co-location is the favored alternative. In making such a determination on the feasibility of co-location, prospective developers shall make every effort to evaluate space available on existing towers, the tower owner's ability to lease space, geographic service area requirements, mechanical or electrical incompatibilities, the comparative costs of co-location and new construction, and regulatory limitations.
2. Existing wireless service providers shall be required to allow other providers to co-locate on existing facilities, subject to reasonable terms and conditions.
3. Some of the town's principal scenic resources are its ridgelines and mountainsides. These areas are significant contributors to the maintenance and enjoyment of rural character. These ridges are predominately undeveloped and provide an unbroken skyline viewed from the valley floor. It is the recommendation of the town that use of ridges for telecommunication towers and related facilities needs to be undertaken in a manner that will not detract or adversely affect these scenic values. Accordingly, protection of these areas from insensitive developments is a matter of public good. To minimize conflict with scenic values, facility design and construction shall employ the following principles:
  - a. be sited in areas minimally visible to the traveling public, from residential areas, historic buildings or sites, public use areas, and public outdoor recreation areas such as hiking trails;

- b. be located in forested areas or be sufficiently landscaped to screen the lower sections of towers and related ground fixtures from public vantage points, such as trails, roads, or water bodies;
  - c. utilize materials, architectural styles, color schemes, mass, and other design elements to promote aesthetic compatibility with surrounding uses and to avoid adverse visual impacts;
  - d. where construction of access roads is involved, they shall be situated to follow the contour of the land and to avoid open fields or meadows to minimize their visibility;
  - e. avoid peaks and ridges that are locally significant or regional focal points; and
  - f. use state-of-the-art camouflage techniques to mask the appearance of these towers.
4. Towers shall not be illuminated by artificial means and not display strobe lights, except when required by the FAA.
5. The height for towers, antennae and tower-related fixtures shall not exceed twenty (20) feet above the average height of the tree line within the immediate vicinity of a wireless communication facility.
6. In planning for telecommunication facilities, due consideration shall be given to the environmental limitations of any given site. Impacts of the use on wildlife habitats, soil erosion, forestry and agricultural lands, and similar resources shall be carefully addressed. Projects that materially impact these resources are discouraged.
7. The design plans for telecommunication projects situated on lands owned by the State shall be compatible with current Management Plans for Public Lands adopted by the Agency of Natural Resources.
8. Towers, antennae, and related fixtures that fall into disuse, or are discontinued shall be removed to retain the values set forth above. Local and State land use permits shall incorporate removal of inactive fixtures as a condition of approval.
9. The recommendations of this section serve as a clear written community standard intended to preserve the aesthetics or scenic beauty of the Town of Plymouth. Accordingly, it is the intent that this section be utilized by the District Environmental Commission or the Vermont Natural Resources Board as part of an aesthetics analysis for all wireless communications facilities. These recommendations shall be used, however, not exclusively, to determine whether or not a project fits the context in which it will be located, is highly visible, and results in an adverse impact on scenic resources.

## VI. NATURAL, SCENIC, AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

The following inventory of natural, scenic, and historic areas is included as part of this Town Plan because these particular resources have been singled out by the Planning Commission and townspeople as being of special significance. Careful consideration should be given toward preservation of all these "special places" in the overall planning program.

### Natural Areas

The Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife has mapped significant natural habitat in Plymouth. The attached map shows winter deer range and rare plant, animal and natural communities and state natural/fragile areas (for example, the Plymouth Caves near Tinker Brook). Their statewide map of bear habitat (1989) is posted at the Town Clerk's office. With the exception of the Tyson area, the entire town of Plymouth contains the type of continuous and relatively remote forestlands that support cub-producing female bears. The southeastern corner of the town provides important year-round bear habitat.

The State of Vermont has wetlands maps that identify Plymouth's water-related features and rank them, indicating which areas are protected by State wetlands regulations. These wetlands are important to a variety of wildlife, including our growing moose population.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has systematically mapped soils in Windsor County including Plymouth. Digital soil maps are certified (in final format no longer subject to change) and are also compatible with GIS projects. The town's narrow valleys provide little bottomland for farming. Some of our richest farmland is now occupied by Hawk Mountain Inn and Resort. There is no large-scale commercial farming in Plymouth today, but small-scale commercial crops include maple syrup, blueberries and other small fruits, fiddleheads, Christmas trees, and honey. Several people keep horses, poultry, etc. Many have substantial home gardens and orchards.

Plymouth has an abundance of limestone and gravel and has many historic lime kilns and quarries. Today the town has one active rock quarry and one gravel pit. The granite quarry in the Coolidge State Forest is currently inactive. People still pan for gold in Plymouth's streams.

Most harvestable timber is on State lands. Logging opportunities are not as widespread as one might think. Logging practices are generally conservative in order to encourage regeneration of timber resources.

Agriculture has had an important role in shaping Plymouth's history and its landscape. The USDA's 2007 Census of Agriculture lists four operating farms in Plymouth. This plan recognizes the economic and social benefits of farming, local food production, and open space preservation, and therefore would like to see agriculture, at any scale, continue as an important part of the way of life in Plymouth. Since agricultural land use is limited in Plymouth, active management of forests is all the more important to maintaining our town's rural character.

**Significant Natural and Fragile Areas**

An inventory of the natural features which comprise Plymouth that takes into account their value to the town is an important part of this town Plan. These are Areas that, because of their fragile nature, irreplaceable value, and vital function of maintaining the environmental and ecological health and quality of the town, require special conservation and protective measures. The nature and importance of these significant natural and fragile areas are described below, and in combination with the goals, policies, standards, and recommendations, constitute an environmental conservation policy for the town.

**High Elevations:** Areas above approximately 2500 feet in elevation are governed by unique environmental conditions. Rainfall is greater, air and soil temperatures are lower, soils are shallower, poorly drained, and nutrient poor, slopes are usually steeper, and there are fewer plant species. Steep slopes and increased rainfall make these areas vulnerable to erosion, and the few plant species regenerate slowly once disturbed. In the shallow, ledgy mountain soils, road and building construction are especially detrimental to natural water drainage and sewage disposal is especially difficult. The highest land use and greatest benefit of high elevation lands is as a source of abundant clean water. Mountain soils absorb large quantities of water which come from the high rainfall and fog moisture collections from forest trees. The water filters through the thin soil and adds to stream flows, springs, and eventually ground water supplies in the valleys.

**Steep Slopes:** On slopes greater than 25%, water runoff and erosion are accelerated. These processes hinder soils formation. When steep slopes are cleared for construction severe environmental damage can occur. The proper functioning of septic systems is hindered on slopes greater than 15%. In addition, development on steep slopes can be costly to the town in the maintenance of roads and construction of utilities, or when erosion causes increased sedimentation of streams and lakes.

**Shallow and Wet Soils:** In areas where the depth of bedrock or other impervious strata are shallow and wet, environmental limitations may apply. Shallow soils are also very susceptible to erosion and are slow to regenerate.

**Shorelines and Streambanks:** Our streams, ponds, and lakes play an important part in our recreational economy and are a potential source of water supply. The continued use of surface water is directly related to its quality.

Development must be set back sufficiently from shorelines and stream banks to avoid pollution from effluent seeping from septic systems directly into the water. Also, streams above 1,500 feet in elevation are considered to be "pristine waters" by the Water Resources Board and pollution of such streams is prohibited.

**Wetlands:** Wetlands are important as the spawning, breeding, and feeding grounds of a wide range of wildlife. They also absorb runoff during periods of flooding and provide a more constant supply of water. Plymouth's many types of

wetlands are identified on the wetlands map filed at the Town Offices, and are protected by State law.

**Floodplains:** These lands retain excess water during heavy rains and spring thaws, thus impeding the speed of water flow. They are unsuitable for development for many reasons: potential danger to life and property, harmful effects on channel capacity, and the failure of septic systems to function properly when influenced by high water tables. In addition, floodplains are usually locations of good agricultural land. In Plymouth, floodplains are found adjacent to the Black River, Broad Brook, and Pinney Hollow Brook (see Floodplain map) and are protected by special flood hazard area zoning regulations.

### **Goals**

1. To provide for the long term management of the natural areas and wildlife described in this plan.
2. To protect significant natural and fragile areas from environmental damage.
3. To ensure the town and the public do not incur costs associated with development in unsuitable areas.

### **Policies**

1. It is a policy of the town to support the growth of agricultural businesses in Plymouth, such as the manufacture and marketing of agricultural products, and the use of locally-grown products.
2. It is a policy of the town to support the active use and management of forest lands by private landowners in Plymouth.
3. It is a policy of the town to encourage forest-based businesses in town.
4. It is a policy of the town to protect steep slopes and ridgelines from inappropriately sited development.
5. It is a policy of the town to protect scenic resources.
6. It is a policy of the town to support the use of its natural resources in a manner that does not have an adverse impact on the environment.

### **Standards**

1. Steep slopes shall remain predominantly in forest cover. Development on these areas should be permitted only if it can be demonstrated that development will not be detrimental to the environment.
2. In areas where shallow or wet soils exist, State and Federal regulations shall apply.

### **Recommendations**

1. Create a town Conservation Commission, as enabled under 24 V.S.A., Chapter 118, to assist the Planning Commission in the inventory of significant natural and fragile areas, including high elevation areas over 2,200 feet, key open spaces and forest areas. In addition, a Conservation Commission could identify the unique qualities of Plymouth Union and Tyson villages and develop programs to better manage new development in

- these areas. It could explore other conservation planning mechanisms and institute educational programs to acquaint citizens with the benefits of conservation planning.
2. Support the Vermont Nature Conservancy in their protection of the Plymouth Caves' bat population.
  3. The town should support farmers markets, arts and craft fairs, and other events that promote Vermont made and/or produced products.
  4. The town should protect the long-term viability of agricultural and forestry operations by maintaining low overall density through a change in the town's Zoning Regulations.
  5. The Planning Commission or Conservation Commission should encourage the voluntary conservation of undeveloped lands.
  6. The Planning Commission or Conservation Commission should advise the Selectboard about regulatory and non-regulatory ways to protect the special qualities of significant natural and fragile areas.
  7. The town's zoning bylaw should be revised to ensure that development avoids building in significant natural and fragile areas or outstanding natural communities.
  8. Develop an Open Space and Scenic Resources Plan to identify and prioritize key landscapes, corridors, and vistas. This plan could form the basis of an incentives program which would take advantage of some of the following zoning bylaw provisions:

**Planned Residential Development (PRD):** This provides for greater flexibility in the placement of structures on large parcels of land, provided that development respects certain important features of the landscape (see Plymouth Zoning Regulations).

**Cluster Construction:** A cluster concept could be used where the scale of planned development will have a significant impact on forestry resources, significant wildlife habitats, recreation trails, etc.

### **Scenic Areas**

When townspeople were asked what they find most scenic about Plymouth, their first response was most often, "everything." Indeed, Plymouth's scenic quality is one of its richest and most widely appreciated resources.

Personal definitions of scenic beauty vary, but most of us feel that beautiful landscapes are created by nature and man in concert. The automobile has shaped our vision of the landscape -- many of our favorite views are seen from roads. Residents particularly enjoy driving on Plymouth's back roads. We also enjoy the presence of wildlife -- moose, deer, bear, foxes, turkeys, and hawks -- within the landscape. Many of us, including the youngest person polled (age 8), enjoy seeing the large tracts of trees on Plymouth's steep undeveloped slopes.

Favorite scenic areas follow, listed in the order of their popularity:

1. Plymouth Notch Historic District - Most often mentioned were the beauty of this cluster of historic buildings and the views of East Mountain and the other slopes that surround it.
2. Route 100A corridor - Between Bridgewater Corners and Plymouth Union, this state highway follows a narrow valley that occasionally broadens out into pockets of farmland.

The highway's many curves may be dangerous but they are also scenic -- people enjoy passing through the stretches of sunshine and shadow cast by the mountains. A favorite section is the steep portion that descends through the "Notch" into Plymouth Union.

3. Amherst and Echo Lakes - Long recognized for their beauty, these lakes are enjoyed by motorists, boaters, bikers, pedestrians, and the many people who take advantage of the facilities at the State Park and Hawk Mountain Resort.
4. Lynds Hill Road - There are several long vistas from this steep winding road, which extends to the southeast of the Historic District. Other favorite spots include the cemetery at its base and the Five Corners area.
5. Colby Pond - Located in Plymouth Kingdom, this pond and its surrounding fields seem like they are at the top of the world.
6. Kingdom Road - This road is a mixture of woods and fields leading from Tyson Village. It runs along Kingdom Brook and up through a ravine.
7. Messer Hill Road - This dirt road has views of woodlands, farmlands, and, at the upper elevations, long-distance views of mountains as far away as New Hampshire.
8. Woodward Reservoir and Black Pond - Bordering Route 100, these bodies of water, surrounded by mountains, are less developed than Amherst and Echo Lakes. Rustic buildings of the Farm and Wilderness Camps on Woodward Reservoir complement their natural settings.
9. CCC Road (Whetstone Brook Road) - Built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps, this seasonal dirt road ascends a steep valley to the west of Route 100A. It is a favorite place of some of Plymouth's older residents as well as its snowmobilers.
10. Chapman Road - leading south from the Kingdom and coinciding in places with the Crown Point Military Road, this rural road is bordered by large maples and old farmsteads.

Again, this listing does not cover all the places that people find scenic in Plymouth, but it does describe the ones most commonly enjoyed.

### **Goals**

1. To preserve the town's scenic character, to be enjoyed in the present and in the future.
2. Recognize and encourage the many residents who voluntarily pick up roadside litter. Support annual "Green-up" days.
3. Take scenic areas into account when road improvements and new signage are planned. Where safety permits, choose wood and other unobtrusive materials for guard rail construction.
4. Recognize and encourage property owners who maintain lawns and fields, to perpetuate the pattern of alternating open spaces and forest that so many people find pleasing. Encourage timber management practices that create and maintain long-range vistas. Avoid clear-cutting and other unsightly timber management practices along scenic corridors.

5. Locate telecommunications and other types of towers so as to minimize their negative impact on the scenic character of the town as well as on the health and safety of Plymouth's residents. Encourage the shared use of each tower by several antennae, to minimize the number of towers constructed.

### **Historic Areas**

Some four hundred years before Columbus "discovered" America, Native American people occupied agricultural villages in the Connecticut River Valley, including sites at Springfield and Windsor, Vermont. During hunting seasons they traveled up the Black River to traditional hunting grounds in Plymouth. Remains of their encampments are buried along the river and around old river headland areas such as Black Pond.

The first Europeans to see Plymouth were probably the men who constructed the Crown Point Military Road (1759-60), which crosses the southern part of Plymouth at the head of Lake Amherst. After the Revolution, settlers followed this same route. The archeological remains of Plymouth's first homes are along this corridor, in Plymouth Kingdom, Frog City, and the Four Corners area.

Because of its isolation and steep terrain, Plymouth's early growth was slow. Although the town had been chartered in 1761, by 1790 there were only 106 people living here. Most of the early settlers cleared land and established small diversified farms. Small mills were built along Plymouth's many waterways. Plentiful local limestone was burned in kilns to produce lime on a commercial scale.

As the 19th century wore on, many farmers specialized in raising sheep. A marble works was operating on Lake Amherst by 1834. A blast furnace and iron ore mining operation opened in Tyson in 1837. Plymouth's population peaked in the 1840s at 1497, almost four times what it is today. The town contained 17 school districts, each with its own schoolhouse. A local gold rush in the 1850s saw the opening of several mines.

As in many Vermont towns, Plymouth's population began to decline after the Civil War. Many of the more remote farms were abandoned. Sheep pastures reverted to woods. Photographs from the decades around the turn of the century show deteriorated buildings that today are only cellar holes. By August 3, 1923, when Calvin Coolidge was sworn in at the family homestead by his father as the 30th president of the United States, Plymouth appeared to many as a small rural town that had been by-passed by progress. A New York Times article in 1926 noted that half of Calvin Coolidge's hometown visited him at the White House and then amazingly commented that the total Plymouth Notch population was 29.

As the birthplace of a president, Plymouth Notch became a popular tourist attraction. Over the years, the numbers of visitors have increased until today the Plymouth Notch Historic District is the second most visited State Historic Site in Vermont (after the Bennington Battle Monument). Tourism began here before the turn of the century, as summer visitors were attracted to Plymouth's scenic lakes and mountains. Many built lakeside cottages or converted old farmhouses to summer homes. Children came here to summer camp. Farmers took in summer guests to supplement income from what was, until well into the 20th century, essentially an agricultural economy.

Today Plymouth's economic base has shifted away from agriculture, small manufacturing, and extractive industries. According to the 2000 Census, 77% of Plymouth's 265-person workforce commutes to work outside of the town. Most of us no longer look on our village and hamlets as primary social and commercial centers. Yet in the midst of this inevitable change, we understand ourselves, in part, through our past. Our imaginations are sparked by stone walls running through the woods, visions of Native Americans fishing our streams, the old houses many of us live in. Through the planning process, we seek to integrate the physical remnants of our past into the present functioning of the town.

A list of types of resources follows:

1. Prehistoric archeological sites: There are two mapped prehistoric sites and many other areas likely to contain evidence of Native American culture. Particularly sensitive areas are found along the banks of the Black River and adjacent to old upland wetlands and headwaters such as Black Pond.
2. Historic archeological sites: To get an idea of the number of historic archeological sites in Plymouth, one can compare the 1859 map in Beers' Atlas with a current map. All the places -- farms, mills, stores, mines, etc. -- that do not appear on today's maps are archeological sites. Not all are of equal significance, however. Particularly important are sites relating to Plymouth's gold mining era and its industrial and extractive past. This includes Five Corners and parts of Tyson. The State has mapped ten early lime kilns in Plymouth and has listed the former Tyson Iron Company property in the State Historic Sites and Structures Survey. A locally significant site is General Amherst's Revolutionary era encampment north of Lake Amherst.
3. National Historic Landmark: The Plymouth Notch Historic Site was named a National Historic Landmark in 1965. This is the highest status that can be bestowed on an American historic site.
4. Historic districts: Tyson & Plymouth Union are both eligible for listing in the State Historic Sites and Structures Survey.
5. Corridors: The Crown Point Military Road is an important early corridor. A sign at the Kingdom Cemetery points to an easy access point. The Crown Point Road Association sponsors hikes, maintains signs, etc.
6. Individual sites: Four properties, in addition to those already mentioned, have been recorded in the State Historic Sites and Structures Survey. These are the Judge Scott house, the Echo Lake Inn in Tyson, and the Julia Messer house in Plymouth Notch. Many more sites are eligible for individual listing.
7. Cemeteries: Plymouth has four large cemeteries, all of which contain graves dating back to the late 18th century. There is also a small family plot and a Revolutionary soldier's cairn. These have been mapped and described in the publication, Burial Grounds of Vermont (Bradford, Vt.: Arthur A. Hyde, c.1991).

**Goal**

1. To identify sites which are important in our past and to encourage their protection.

**Recommendations**

1. Encourage members of the Plymouth Historical Society and other interested local people to do a comprehensive survey of our historic sites and structures. In addition to mapping and photographing each site, the surveyors might use the survey as a focus for interviews with long-time residents about the sites. Develop a program that would provide well-researched date markers to interested owners of historic structures.
2. Encourage appreciation of prehistoric and historic resources by our children by encouragingencouraging utilization of the Plymouth Historical Society's resources and programsprograms.
3. Promote appreciation of Plymouth history through the publication of interesting, accessible, well-illustrated books and pamphlets (such as A Plymouth Album).
4. Map archeologically sensitive areas, and consider them in the local planning process.
5. Digging of archeological sites is not recommended. The potential of sites to yield information about the past through technologically advanced archeological methods is easily destroyed by "pot hunters" digging around for old bottles and arrowheads. State law prohibits the digging of archeological sites on state lands without state permission (Title 22 V.S.A., section 762 and 764). There are other ways to begin to locate and record sites. Suggestions follow.
6. Conduct interviews with knowledgeable local people to determine where Native American and other significant artifacts have been found or where long-vanished historic sites were located. Record collections of artifacts. Record oral histories about the historic presence of Native Americans, about early industries, farms, etc.
7. Use maps, deeds, probate records, and other documentary evidence to research archeological sites (for example, Plymouth's gold mines).
8. Plymouth strongly discourages dredging for gold in streams and brooks and recommends that the state assist in eliminating this practice.

## VII. EDUCATION

In 2009, the Plymouth School Board voted to close its elementary school. To provide public education in town, Plymouth makes a per pupil tuition payment to public schools in other communities where Plymouth students have chosen to attend. Students from grades 7-12 will continue to be tuitioned to neighboring schools.

The school building, located on Route 100, was built in 1961 and consists of three rooms and one kitchen/storage room. An outside storage shed was added to allow for better use of limited space inside the building. The future use of the building is to be determined.

Of the 155 respondents to a 2009 town-wide survey, 85% do not have school-aged children. Survey respondents with school-aged children are sending them to the local elementary school, regional middle and high schools, colleges, or private schools. Effective September 2010, all students' primary and secondary educational needs are met outside of the community at neighboring elementary schools, and regional high schools.

### **Goal**

1. To provide access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Plymouth residents.

### **Policies**

1. It is a policy of this Town Plan to advocate for the education of Plymouth students to ensure a healthy community.
2. It is a policy of the town that land development which is likely to result in large numbers of school children should be phased or planned so as not to place an undue financial burden on the capacity of the town to provide education services.
3. It is the policy of the town to ensure sufficient and appropriate placement of students to meet their educational requirements.

### **Recommendation**

1. The Plymouth School Committee should create a committee to foster and maintain the ties between the community and school children.

## VIII. ENERGY

The electric utility power, supply, transmission and distribution for the town of Plymouth is franchised to Central Vermont Public Service Corporation (CVPS) of Rutland, Vermont, and Ludlow Power Company of Ludlow, Vermont. CVPS electric power enters Plymouth from three districts. The Ascutney district supplies power to the Colby Pond area and to the east side of Lake Amherst and Echo Lake. This area is serviced from the CVPS Springfield Service Center. The Woodstock district supplies power along Route 100A to Killington Snowmobile Tours garage, and is serviced from the CVPS Royalton Service Center. The Rutland district supplies power from Route 4, south along Route 100 to the south end of Lake Amherst, as well as from the junction of Route 100 and 100A to Killington Snowmobile Tours garage. This area is serviced from the CVPS Rutland Service Center. Ludlow Power Company supplies power to Tyson and north to the southern end of Lake Amherst.

The utilities' electric power is provided by primarily hydro and nuclear generating plants. The demand for electricity is higher in winter than in summer. The Vermont Public Service Board continues to support more efficient use of electricity in residential, commercial, and industrial buildings to delay costly investments in electric distribution and transmission infrastructure. Energy conservation should be a high priority in the Town of Plymouth.

According to the 2000 Federal Census, over 40% of people in Plymouth heat their homes with oil, considered safer than both wood and propane heat. Eighteen percent of those surveyed take advantage of the town's most abundant renewable energy resource by heating with wood, often using another fuel as a backup. Over 36% heat primarily with gas and almost 5% with electricity, which reflects the relative prices of these fuels.

More than 88% of respondents to the town's 2009 survey feel the town should encourage individual residential wind towers for the creation of renewable energy.

### Goals

1. To provide energy resources at reasonable costs while ensuring public health, aesthetic quality, and environmental safety.
2. To encourage the conservation of energy resources, as well as the use of renewable and alternative sources of energy.
3. To encourage building design and orientation to maximize solar exposure.
4. To increase public awareness and use of energy conservation practices through educational efforts.

### Policies

1. Planning which reduces the dependency and demand for new sources of energy is a matter of public good. Likewise, conservation of energy usage is encouraged. To meet this policy, the following practices are recommended:
  - a. Development of existing and current transportation routes and highways needs to reflect design and location principles that complement the recommended land use and settlement patterns set forth in this Plan. Major public investments, such as schools, public recreational areas, and municipal facilities need to be situated within or in close proximity to the villages or primary highways;
  - b. The rehabilitation or development of new buildings and equipment shall be encouraged where use of proven design principles and practices demonstrates the lowest life cycle costs; and
  - c. Where land development or subdivisions are proposed, design plans shall work toward the goal of locating structures and buildings on sites which reflect sound energy conservation principles, such as solar and slope orientation and protective wind barriers. Use of the cluster planning concept, where buildings are concentrated in one area of a site with a complementing off-set of open space, is an approach encouraging energy conservation and efficiency.
2. Where generation, transmission, and distribution facilities or service areas are proposed, such facilities or areas shall be encouraged only when they complement the recommended land use patterns set forth in this Plan.
3. To reduce the demand for commuter transportation facilities and energy, the development of energy efficient home occupations and small-scale home business is encouraged.
4. To support home scale alternative energy resource development.

**Recommendations**

1. Suggest that any new building in the town of Plymouth go through a no-charge Vermont Energy Efficiency Utility (EEU) analysis to guarantee electric energy load is most efficient, within economic reason.
2. Have on record at the Plymouth Town Office an up-to-date copy of all energy conservation programs offered by the State of Vermont EEU.
3. Promote a compact, land-efficient form of development by emphasizing development in Village Areas and discouraging energy-wasting strip development.
4. The town, when undertaking review of its existing bylaws, shall consider enacting provisions that encourage innovation of energy conservation and concentrate development in the best locations (e.g., grant density bonuses to projects that employ advanced energy design and efficiency).
5. The town, over the next five years, should conduct an energy audit on all existing town buildings and implement conservation measures where feasible.

## IX. HOUSING

The character of a rural Vermont town is significantly influenced by the quality, availability, and variety of its residential development. During recent years Plymouth has seen substantial growth in vacation home development. Vacation homes numbered 427 in 1987, or 72% of the housing units and in 1992 they number 591, or 75% of the housing stock. By the time of the 2000 Census, only about 65% of housing stock in town is seasonally or occasionally used. Primary residences account for over 32% of the housing stock in Plymouth, a figure that partially reflects the conversion of vacation homes to permanent residences. Single family homes continue to be the predominant housing type in both the rural areas and village areas. The town also has several condominium dwelling units. Respondents to the town's 2009 survey felt that there is a sufficient diversity of housing types in town.

The overall condition of housing in Plymouth is good. The majority of our houses are of recent construction, and most of our older houses have been renovated or restored and are well-maintained.

Housing affordability is an issue throughout the region. Pressures for vacation home development, while creating jobs and improved tax revenue sources for the town, have driven the prices of housing beyond what many residents can afford. The 2000 U.S. Census found that median gross rent in Plymouth was \$875/month and the median housing value was \$157,500. The census also found that in 1999, nearly 30% of Plymouth households had a total annual income under \$25,000 and 50% of households earned under \$44,000. In spite of these facts, respondents to the town-wide survey felt that there was no need for the town to promote the development of affordable housing.

### **Goals**

1. To encourage safe, adequate, and affordable shelter for present and future populations.
2. To encourage suitable density and distribution of housing throughout the town, compatible with existing neighborhoods.
3. To encourage the preservation of historic structures in ways that appropriately serves the need for housing.

### **Policies**

1. It is the policy of the town to ensure that the timing and rate of new housing construction or rehabilitation does not exceed the community's ability to provide adequate public facilities (e.g., schools and municipal services).
2. It is the policy of the town to keep housing affordable by planning for:
  - appropriately sized lots;
  - accessory apartments; and
  - clustered developments.
3. It is the policy of the town to encourage the provision of housing for special needs population, such as the elderly and the physically handicapped.

4. It is the policy of the town to encourage and direct the location of future housing so as to complement existing or planned employment patterns, travel times, and energy requirements.

**Recommendations**

1. The town should work with other towns in the region and with community land trusts to develop housing that will meet the housing needs of low- and moderate-income residents.
2. The Planning Commission shall review the current zoning bylaws to determine whether or not they hinder the development of affordable housing in Plymouth, and to allow greater housing density in some areas that will allow development of housing affordable to working families.

## **X. ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES AND THE REGION**

Seven towns, two of which share only a small segment of common border (Mendon and Killington), bound Plymouth. The five principal adjacent towns are Bridgewater to the north, Reading to the east, Ludlow to the south, and Shrewsbury and Mount Holly to the west. At this point, each of these towns has an "approved" Town Plan as per 24 V.S.A., Section 4350

Of these, the towns of Shrewsbury, Mendon, Killington, Ludlow, Mount Holly, and Reading implement their town plans using zoning. Bridgewater has no zoning bylaws. There are no incompatibilities between the proposed Plymouth town plan and the town plans of our neighbors. In fact, most neighboring towns have similar goals and policies and similar land uses along our shared borders. Commercial areas in Ludlow are not right on the town line.

### **Regional Planning Activities**

Plymouth is within the Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission. It is one of thirty municipalities that comprise the Region. The Region covers northern Windsor County, most of Orange County, the Town of Pittsfield in Rutland County, and the Towns of Hancock and Granville in Addison County. The Commission was chartered in 1970 by the acts of its constituent towns. All towns are members of the Regional Commission, and town representatives govern its affairs. One of the Regional Commission's primary purposes is to provide technical services to town officials and to undertake a regional planning program. As is the case in many areas of the State, the extent of local planning throughout the Region is varied. Some municipalities are more active than others. Thus, the level of services to each of the towns changes with time.

The Regional Commission has an adopted Regional Plan in place. This Plan was developed to reflect the general planning goals and policies expressed in the local plans. The Regional Plan is an official policy statement on growth and development of the Region. The Plan contains several hundred policies to guide future public and private development in the Region. Policies for land use settlement are identified. These areas are: Regional Centers, Town Centers, Village Settlements, Hamlet Areas, Rural Areas, Conservation and Resource Areas, and Interchange Areas. Although delineation of each land use is not precisely mapped or charted in the Regional Plan, policies for management of new development within these areas are substantially similar to those set forth in detail in the Plymouth Town Plan. The two Plans have similar policy statements regarding the need for development that does not overburden services. The Regional Plan shall be consulted as part of the planning process for the town.

Plymouth participates in the Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission which has a mandate to provide support and guidance for the town as plans are developed and rewritten. A member of the Plymouth Planning Commission serves as a Regional Commissioner, providing a liaison for regional issues. The increasing complexity of state, regional, and local planning makes the support services of the Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission essential.

### **Goals**

1. To plan with neighboring towns to develop solutions to problems that transcend town borders.
2. To plan for harmonious development on a regional scale.

**Recommendations**

1. Continue participating in the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission.
2. Exchange planning information and development trend data with neighboring communities.
3. Continue to send a representative from the Plymouth Planning Commission to act as a regional commissioner on the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission Board.

## XI. IMPLEMENTATION

The Plymouth Town Plan's goals and recommendations can be adopted and implemented through procedures spelled out in the Vermont Planning and Development Act (24 V.S.A., Chapter 117).

1. Town Plan Adoption. Sections 4384 and 4385 of the Act describe the statutory procedures required for adoption of a town plan. In brief, the plan is prepared by the Planning Commission which, as a group, holds a warned public hearing on their proposal. Following this hearing, the Commission may make amendments before submitting the plan to the Board of Selectmen for their review and comment. At this point, the Selectmen are also free to make changes, but within a 30-90 day period, they must hold one or more public hearings, after public notice, on the proposed plan. Following the final public hearing, the Selectmen ~~are then authorized to adopt the plan by resolution.~~ can vote to approve the plan but the plan is not adopted until voted on by Australian ballot. The document becomes effective immediately upon adoption by Australian ballot.
2. Town Plan Maintenance and Amendments. This plan will be effective for five years from the date of adoption, after which time it shall expire. The town may, however, readopt the plan as expired or about to expire and therefore have it remain in effect for the next five years. We may also choose to make amendments at any time before this date, following the same procedure as for adoption by Australian ballot (Reference: 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117, Section 4387).
3. Tools for Implementation. The Planning Commission has several existing tools for implementing the Town Plan. These include the use of Zoning Regulations and the Official Town Map, also Flood Hazard Area Zoning Regulations. The Town Plan also provides important guidance whenever the town participates in Act 250 proceedings.

Continued participation in the regional commission will provide a forum for our input on issues that extend beyond town borders. Education is also an important tool. The more citizens who are informed about and involved in the local planning process, the more likely that our goals for town planning will be achieved.

Respondents to the 2009 town-wide survey indicated that the town's Zoning Regulations should be updated to add clarity and to strengthen them in some areas. They expressed interest in changing the zoning districts to allow more development in villages and along major paved roads, and to allow for larger parcels and conservation districts. Survey respondents and participants in community workshops in 2010 also expressed interest in developing a subdivision bylaw.

### Recommendations

1. TownTown officials should try to ensure maximum citizen input into the adoption and implementation of the Town Plan by consulting residents prior to and during the updating of the plan, providing updates at Town Meeting, and encouraging them to attend public hearings through publication of notices in local newspapers,
2. The Planning Commission should update the town's Zoning Regulations to make them easier to interpret by residents and to ensure proper administration by town officials.
3. Update the town's Flood Hazard Area Zoning Regulations to incorporate changes in 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117, include previously omitted federal regulations and provisions, and make them easier to interpret and apply.
4. The Planning Commission should develop a subdivision bylaw.
5. Evaluate the ability of town services and infrastructure to accommodate growth.
6. The Town of Plymouth should adopt noise and pollution ordinances.