

**Village of Johnson  
Municipal Development Plan  
2013 -2018**

*Adopted by the Village Board of Trustees on June 10, 2013*

This Plan was prepared by:  
**The Johnson Planning Commission**

Maps were created by:  
**The Lamoille County Planning Commission**

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## **VISION**

The Plan's vision is to make Johnson Village one of Lamoille's most attractive and healthy communities. This includes making the Village a desired location for people to live, operate their business, attend higher education, visit, and recreate. The components that will allow this vision to be met are in existence or are attainable. Continuing to work towards this vision takes a commitment of the community and various players. The effective implementation of this Plan will assist in allowing the Village of Johnson to attain the desired future for the community. The Village Development Plan can set the framework for this vision.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Village of Johnson Municipal Development Plan is divided into five parts. The plan opens with a description of a vision for village's future. The second part introduces the municipality and reviews the purpose of the plan. The third part introduces general and specific planning goals. The fourth part contains an overview of policies and implementation tasks through which Johnson Village wishes to accomplish its goals. The fifth part contains data that document the present condition of the community and outline projected development trends. The data is presented in the following chapters: Demographics and housing; Economic development; Natural, scenic and historic resources; Recreation; Education; Transportation; Energy; Utilities and facilities; and Land use. Each chapter closes with a summary of policies and implementation tasks applicable to that particular chapter.

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Part 1. Vision</b>	(2)
<b>Part 2. Introduction</b>	(6)
Introduction to the municipality	
Village governance and administration	
Purpose of the plan	
How this plan relates to the Town Plan	
How this plan relates to plans of neighboring Towns	
How this plan relates to the Regional Plan	
How this plan is consistent with Act 200 planning goals in 24 VSA Section 4302	
<b>Part 3. General and specific planning goals</b>	(12)
General planning goal	
Specific planning goals	
<b>Part 4. Plan, Elements and Data</b>	(15)
<u>Demographics and Housing</u>	(16)
A. Demographics	
Population growth	
Age distribution	
B. Housing	
Housing demographics, housing tenure and housing costs	
Subsidized rental housing	
Real Estate Values	
C. Johnson State College	
Population	
Housing	
Policies	

Economic Development (22)

- Johnson Village workforce
- Village employers
- Income of Johnson residents
- Local economic development efforts
- Policies and implementation tasks

Natural, Scenic and Historic Resources (26)

- A. Land resources
  - Soils, forest and agricultural resources
- B. Water resources
  - Rivers and streams
  - Riparian habitats
  - Significant natural features
  - Water quality
  - Wetlands
  - Groundwater resources
  - Fisheries
- C. Scenic and historic resources
  - Policies and implementation tasks

Recreation (31)

- Municipal recreation facilities, public lands of recreation interest
  - The Old Mill Park
  - Nelson Duba (Checkerberry) Field
  - River Park Skate Park and Bike Track
  - Legion Field
  - Elementary School Facilities – Gymnasium and Playground
  - Former Talc Mill Property
  - Rivers and Trails
  - Johnson State College recreation resources available to the community
- Policies and implementation tasks

Education (36)

- A. Johnson Public Schools
  - Johnson Elementary School
  - Lamoille Union High School
  - Green Mountain Technology and Career Center
- B. Johnson State College
  - Academics
  - Library and Learning Center
- C. Private Educational Facilities
  - Laraway Youth and Family Services
- D. Other Educational Programs
  - Vermont Studio Center

Art House  
Johnson Public Library  
Conservation Commission  
Policies and implementation tasks

Transportation (40)

Sidewalks  
State and local roads  
Bridges and culverts  
Rail and airports  
Regional trails and paths  
Public transportation services  
Policies and implementation tasks

Energy (44)

A. Current energy consumption  
Electricity, heat and transportation  
B. Local and renewable energy sources  
Wood products, solar and wind  
C. Efficiency and conservation  
Policies

Utilities and Facilities (47)

Sewage and septic system  
Water supply  
Solid waste facilities  
Town and Village owned buildings  
Transmission lines, Storm drainage  
Law enforcement  
Rescue services, Fire, Cemeteries  
Health facilities and services, Other facilities  
Policies

Land Use (53)

A. Description of land use districts  
Main Street District  
Main Street West Mixed Use District  
Lower Village District  
College District  
Upper Village District  
Industrial District  
Flood Hazard Overlay District  
Policies and implementation tasks

**Part 5. Program for the Implementation of the Plan** (56)

## **INTRODUCTION**

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE MUNICIPALITY**

Johnson is a town of 3,446 people nestled in the heart of Lamoille County. The town is comprised of approximately 29,492 acres or 46 square miles. Mountains and forest dominate Johnson's landscape and the spine of the Green Mountains winds through the town northeast to southwest. Butternut Mountain is the highest peak that falls entirely within the town. The peak of the 3,715-foot Sterling Mountain (also known as White Face Mountain) is located just south of the Johnson town line.

Johnson, granted in 1782 to Samuel Johnson and others, was chartered as a town in January, 1792. In 1856, Johnson annexed part of the town of Sterling, and in 1894 the Village of Johnson was incorporated. Today, the Village is home to about 43% percent of Johnson's population, or 1,443 people. The Town and Village of Johnson remain separate governmental bodies.

Johnson Village represents the community's cultural, commercial and institutional center. The Village is a compact community that is home to a number of unique businesses, heritage buildings and residential neighborhoods. The Village has long been a center for education and today up to 42% of in-town jobs are in educational services. Johnson State College's roots go back to Johnson Academy School, founded in 1828. Today, Johnson State College has approximately 1,950 students. Founded by artists in 1984, the Vermont Studio Center is the largest international artists and writers' Residency Program in the United States, hosting 50 visual artists and writers each month from across the country and around the world. The Vermont Studio Center, in conjunction with Johnson State College's Fine and Performing Arts Program represent a uniquely gifted and diverse artistic community present in Johnson year round.

The Gihon and Lamoille rivers are a major recreational and scenic resource. In the past, the Gihon provided the foundation for Johnson's water-powered mill economy. The first generating plant in town was located on the falls just north of the Power House Bridge. Johnson Woolen Mills dates back to 1836, when sheep outnumbered cows, and to date remains a core feature of the Johnson Village business district. Around the turn of the century, talc was the prominent industry in Johnson. Today, trees continue to be Johnson's largest crop – for fuel, saw logs, pulp, Christmas trees and maple products. Stowe and Smugglers Notch Ski Resorts located in neighboring communities of Stowe and Cambridge are major contributors to the regional tourism economy.

## **VILLAGE GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

Johnson Village is an incorporated village within the Town of Johnson, established by Charter in 1894. It is governed by an elected Board of five Village Trustees, an elected Clerk and Treasurer and various other officers as established in the Village By-Laws. The Village operations and budgets are divided into several departments: General, Water, Sewer, Electric and Fire.

There is a Municipal Manager (shared with the town) who reports directly to the Trustees and has overall responsibility for these departments. Day to day department operations are overseen by a Superintendent of Public Works. The Fire Department has its own officers, who report to the Trustees. Water and Sewer Departments have Chief and Assistant Operators and the Electric Department has a Head Lineman. There are 7 full time "field" employees.

Office staff is also shared with the town, as is the Municipal Office building and equipment and systems. There is a Clerk/Treasurer, Asst. Clerk/Treasurer, Accounts Receivable/Billing Clerk and Administrative Assistant. A part time Community and Economic Development Coordinator plays an important role in promoting community and economic development activities, planning initiatives, grant research, application and administration of grants and programs, dissemination of information, community liaison and other critical functions.

Overall, these units of village government provide a very high level of service at relatively low cost. Though town and village are separate legal entities, in many ways the town and village have "functionally" merged. There is a great deal of sharing of equipment, personnel, land and buildings and resources. Town and village governing bodies are committed to the policies and practices which benefit their citizens.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE PLAN**

The principal purpose for a municipal development plan is to be a guide for the achievement of a community vision. The plan is not a regulation, rather, it is a document meant to state a desired direction for growth and development. The framework for planning in Vermont has been established by two major pieces of legislation. The first is 24 V.S.A. chapter 117, the Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act, also known as the Vermont Planning and Development Act or Chapter 117. The second is 10 V.S.A. chapter 151, known as Act 250, which regulates land use and development projects. A municipality is not required to plan, but is enabled by statute to develop and adopt a municipal plan. If a community chooses to do so, Chapter 117 sets forth the elements that are required as part of a municipal plan.

An adopted plan has the potential for many uses. The Planning Manual for Vermont Municipalities recognizes the following uses of the plan:

*A long-term guide:* The plan is a long-term guide by which to measure and evaluate public and private proposals that affect the future physical, social, and economic environment of the community.

*A basis for community programs and decision-making:* The plan is a guide to help achieve community goals. Information in the plan is used for developing the recommendations contained in a capital budget and program or an impact fee program, for establishing a community development program, and for providing direction and

content of other public and private local initiatives, such as, farmland protection, recreation development and housing.

*A basis for municipal regulatory actions:* The plan serves as a foundation for the provisions of zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, an official map, shoreland bylaws, and flood hazard area bylaws, and as a guide for the decisions made under these regulations.

*A source of information:* The plan is a valuable source of information for local boards, commissions, citizens and businesses, and other governmental organizations, such as, neighboring towns, state agencies and regional planning commissions.

*A source for planning studies:* Few plans can address every issue in sufficient detail. Therefore, many plans often recommend further studies to develop policies or strategies to meet a specific need.

*A standard for review at the state and regional levels:* Act 250 and other state regulatory processes identify the municipal plan as a standard for review of applications. Municipal plans are important to the development of intermunicipal, regional and state agency plans and programs.

#### **HOW THIS PLAN RELATES TO THE TOWN PLAN**

The Town of Johnson is a separate governmental entity that has its own municipal development plan. The Town Plan addresses issues and strategies pertinent to the Town. The current Town Plan will expire in August 2016. Since the Planning Commission is responsible for drafting both town and village plans, the plans have been drafted to be supportive of each other. In the future, the concept of merging the Village and Town Plan may be explored.

#### **HOW THIS PLAN RELATES TO PLANS OF NEIGHBORING TOWNS**

Per statutory requirements, and with an input from the Regional Planning Commission, copies of the proposed *Village of Johnson Municipal Development Plan* were sent to the Town of Johnson, the Lamoille County Planning Commission and the Department of Economic, Housing and Community Development. As mentioned above, the village plan was reviewed for consistency with the Town of Johnson plan, as the Village is an incorporated Village within the Town of Johnson. The town plan will be reviewed for consistency with plans of adjacent towns at the appropriate time.

#### **HOW THIS PLAN RELATES TO THE REGIONAL PLAN**

Regional Plans now only need to be updated every eight years instead of the every five years required for municipal plans. We believe municipal plans should be accorded the same time frames for plan updates to be consistent with regional planning required effort in this regard. The Regional Plan was reviewed for consistency with the municipal

plan and was found to be consistent with the village plan. Conversely, our review indicates no conflicts between the Village plan and the regional plan.

**HOW THIS PLAN IS CONSISTENT WITH THE ACT 200 PLANNING GOALS  
AS DEFINED IN 24 VSA SECTION 4302**

24 VSA Section 4302 sets forth 4 general planning goals and 13 specific sub-goals. 24 VSA Section 4382 sets forth the specific plan elements which a municipal plan must contain. It states the plan for municipality *may be consistent with the goals of 4302.* 24 VSA Section 4350 sets for the process for obtaining regional approval of the municipal plan. It requires approval if the plan is: (A) Consistent with the goals established in section 4302; (B) Is compatible with the Regional Plan; (C) Is compatible with approved plans of other municipalities in the region; (D) and contains all the elements included in section 4382 (a) (1) – (10) of this title.

Regional Planning Commission staff has indicated this plan cannot receive regional approval unless it contains a “statement” about citizen participation during the planning process, arguing that without such a statement they have no way to measure compliance. We see no statutory requirement for inclusion of “statements” in the plan regarding consistency with the goals. We believe it is the statutory obligation of the Regional Planning Commission to make determinations for consistency with the goals. The Regional Planning Commission could make such a determination by direct consultation with the affected community, for example.

Denial of a request for regional approval has negative consequences for the Town and the Village and while we strongly disagree with the approach for plan review and approval being taken by the regional planning commission, we offer this statement regarding consistency of the village plan with the goals established in section 4302.

We also note that the goals of Act 200 were never envisioned to be used as a specific standard for review. 4302 (b) states ”It is also the intent of the legislature that municipalities, regional planning commissions, and state agencies shall engage in a continuing planning process that will further the goals”. They are goals, and by their nature and definition are broad statements to be used as a guide to the process of planning to be applied to state, regional and local governments as they develop their plans. These goals are intended to provide a generic framework for the diverse levels of planning efforts from large state agencies all the way down to municipal plans. They are not and never were intended to be measurable standards, and review of our plan by the regional planning commission for “consistency” with these goals should be undertaken with an awareness of the purpose of the goals.

Goal 1. The Town and Village have a strong demonstrated record in local planning efforts which have resulted in implementation of several impressive projects, such as the Main St Improvement Project. The Town and Village have employed professional management and community and economic development personnel to assist the elected boards and commissions with preparation and implementation of projects. The

combination of these efforts has enabled the over 15 million dollars worth of projects to be constructed over the last dozen years. This record should speak for itself.

Goal 2. The Town and Village have encouraged citizen participation and decision making at the most local level possible. It should be noted that these goals are more than 20 years old and do not recognize the reality of trying to encourage direct citizen involvement in something as amorphous as planning. The regrettable reality is that despite the laudable goal of 4302, citizen participation is on the decline at all levels of local governance. We are lucky if 8 or 10 people attend Village Annual Meeting where budgets are approved that have the very direct impact of setting tax rates. It is an understatement to say that widespread citizen participation is not something we are likely to achieve.

That said, notices were posted on Front Porch Forum, Friends of Johnson municipal newsletter and the Town webpage seeking involvement and soliciting comment on the plan. Any such comments or feedback will be carefully considered. The required public hearings will be held and citizen input will be considered and incorporated where appropriate. Any member of the public may attend any meetings of any Town or Village board or commission and are encouraged to do so.

Goal 3. This plan has been developed with consideration of the use of resources and the consequences of growth, first and foremost of our community (the town and village) and with consideration of the region and state.

Goal 4. This goal is another dated goal from the late 1980's and while laudable, is also very amorphous and difficult to quantify in any meaningful way. To the extent that we can work creatively together to develop and implement plans we are open to doing so, with the clear understanding that our planning efforts must be directed first and foremost to the needs of our community.

With regard to the specific sub-goals enumerated in section 4302, this plan addresses them in each plan section as deemed appropriate and applicable by the planning commission. These sub-goals are written so broadly as to encompass the planning efforts of large state agencies, to regional plans and down to the level of municipal plans. It should be noted therefore, that both the goals and the specific plan elements refer to things that are not applicable to a plan for an incorporated village within a town. While we may not have listed every exception explicitly, we hope that regional planning commission staff can apply some level of common sense in their review. As an example of plan elements that are not meaningful in our plan are: detailed review of and policies relating to identification and protection of agricultural and forestry resources within the village limits. We think it should be obvious that this level of review is most appropriate for the town level planning efforts. The village also does not own or maintain the highway system in the village (the town does) and therefore the transportation section does not address this.

## **GENERAL AND SPECIFIC PLANNING GOALS**

## GENERAL PLANNING GOAL

The general planning goal is to provide a healthy, clean and safe place for the population to live.

The Plan will make efforts to identify and plan for those uses that contribute to a high quality of life for people that choose to live in the Village. This includes the consideration of links between urban form, the natural environment, the economy, and quality of life.

Quality of life indicators, which can positively affect the health of individuals and the Village of Johnson include: the extent to which basic needs (shelter, food transportation) are met; the level of economic security and the range of employment opportunities for residents; safety and security of residents; opportunities for education and skills development; well-being (social, emotional, physical) of individuals; the extent to which individuals feel part of the community; and, the conservation of cultural and natural heritage features. The Village of Johnson is a compact, attractive and healthy community. Village residents benefit from the diverse opportunities offered by the community's commercial, institutional and recreational uses.

The Johnson Planning Commission has prepared a municipal development plan that intends to build upon some of the existing attributes located in the Village and develop other attributes so that the community attains certain goals. The overall objectives of the Village's planning efforts are directed to the following:

- a) Continuous downtown enhancement and the development of linkages between the downtown and community's recreational, cultural and educational assets.
- b) Support of planning efforts that address the character of future development in the Village
- c) Enhancement of recreation opportunities for the benefit of local community and economy.

## SPECIFIC PLANNING GOALS

*To encourage retail and business (e.g. professional and business offices) as well as appropriately scaled commercial/light industrial and mixed use development in the Village.* The Village's downtown core is a relatively compact area. The downtown is the home for a 30+ retail businesses, financial and local-government institutions and non-profit organizations. Main Street businesses include: Johnson Woolen Mills, Marvin's Country Store, Ebenezer Books, The Hub Pizzeria & Pub, Edelweiss Bakery and Café, and Lovin' Cup Café. Johnson is an attractive community for residents and visitors alike. This Plan envisions making the downtown center even more inviting.

Recent efforts have identified suitable locations for light industrial/commercial development with the possibility of mixed-use residential development at the west end of the Village and along the rte 15 corridor. The area currently is predominantly mixed use, encompassing a re-developed mobile home park, single family residences, a convenience

store service station, the Vermont Electric Coop headquarters and maintenance facility and office space. This area is well served by municipal water, sewer and electric utilities and has good access to Rte 15. It is likely that some existing single family housing will be converted to small business or commercial use, given the access to utilities and transportation, but mixed use should continue to be encouraged in this district. Light industrial/commercial development is also encouraged where there is access to services and transportation and there are not flood zoning issues. This plan amendment recognizes and addresses these changes and modifies the district boundaries. District boundaries attempt to follow property lines so as to eliminate conflicts between districts.

Additionally, the town and village established a Town Sewer Service Area immediately adjacent to this district which allocates 25,000 gpd of sewer capacity for development. Less than half of the capacity has been allocated, so this area should be considered as prime area for future development with commercial/light industrial and mixed use residential development encouraged.

*To establish Johnson Village as a preferred location for compatible commercial, light industrial and residential development in the Town.* There are various residential neighborhoods in the Village of Johnson. The retention and maintenance of the housing stock is largely the responsibility of the landowner. However, planning efforts can help ensure that the neighborhoods are protected from potentially incompatible land uses. It can also help ensure that the landowners are provided with a degree of assurance that their investment in their housing is securely protected.

*To promote the Village of Johnson's diverse cultural, educational and community assets.* The Village of Johnson is fortunate to be the home of Johnson State College and the Vermont Studio Center. The College is a major employer and offers various benefits to Johnson's residents and businesses. However, the College is sometimes the source of conflicts between Village residents and college students, particularly in the residential neighborhoods. The Vermont Studio Center (VSC) is an internationally recognized arts facility that has a significant presence in the Village. The VSC has acquired and renovated a number of buildings, some of which are in high-profile locations. It is also a key employer in the Village.

The Village will promote itself as the educational and cultural 'heart' of Lamoille County. It will develop a strong connection to the Studio Center and the College and will seek to develop a higher profile of both institutions in the Village.

*To conserve and protect the natural and heritage features which contribute to Johnson's unique and attractive character.* The Village of Johnson; the Lamoille and Gihon Rivers; the lands adjacent to the rivers; historic buildings; the orientation of buildings to one another that contributes to the pleasant character and atmosphere of the community; the Lamoille Valley Railroad corridor; surrounding rural lands and hillsides.

*To promote the community's tourism and recreation opportunities.* The location of the Village along Route 15; a number of unique businesses that attract visitors to the Village; the attractive qualities of the Village itself (compact, heritage buildings); location between Stowe and Smuggler's Notch ski areas; proximity to the Long Trail hiking trail; fall foliage.

**PLAN, ELEMENTS AND DATA**

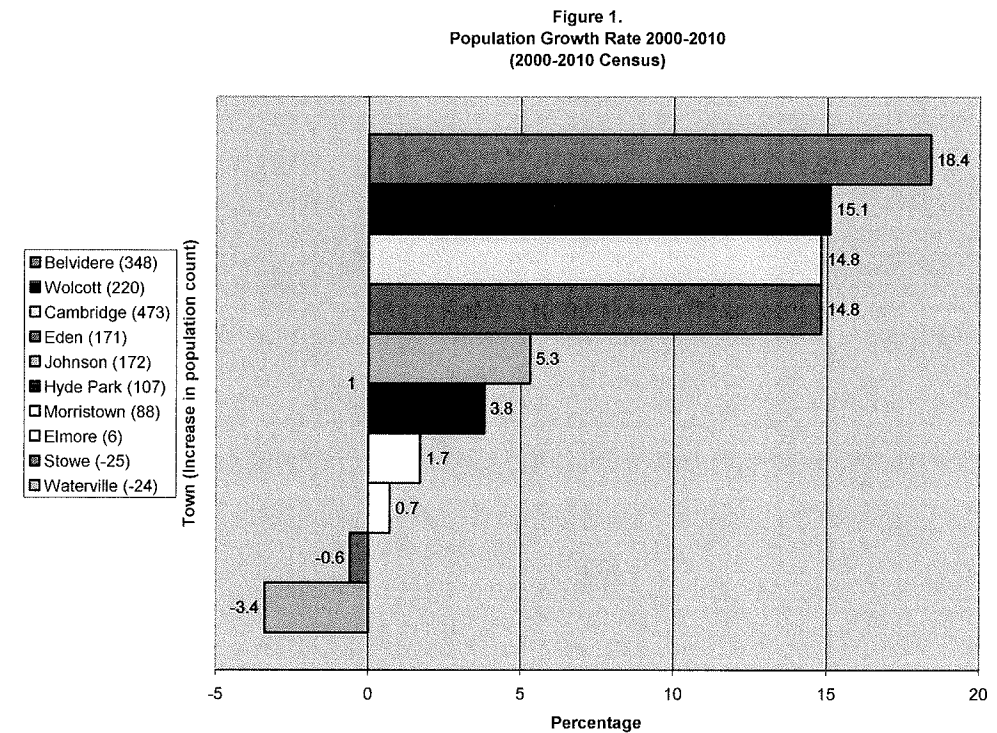
## DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSING

### A. DEMOGRAPHICS

#### Population growth

Johnson is the fourth most populated municipality in Lamoille County. The US Census Bureau counted 3,446 people living in Johnson in 2012. This includes the population of Johnson Village which was 1,443 people at the same time. Since the last population count in 2000, the number of people living in the Village decreased by 24 people. Overall, the Town of Johnson's population grew by 5.3%, or by 172 people.

The overall Lamoille County growth rate was also 5.3%. The fastest growing towns were Belvidere (18.4%), Wolcott (15.3%), and Cambridge and Eden (both at 14.8%). Because of its growth rate, Cambridge surpassed Johnson in its total population number and changed the ranking of Johnson from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> largest Lamoille County municipality. Complete population growth statistics for all towns in Lamoille County are shown in Figure 1 below. The numbers in brackets show increases in total population numbers in different towns.



Between 2000 and 2010 Lamoille County's growth slowed down considerably. While between 1990 and 2000, the County's population grew by 17.7%, between 2000 and 2010, the growth was 5.3%. This trend mirrors the rate of the State' overall

population growth which in the last decade increased only by 2.8%; compared to 8.2% between 1990 and 2000. Vermont's rate of growth in the last decade ranked 44<sup>th</sup> in the nation.

**Age distribution**

Because of the presence of Johnson State College, Johnson is the youngest town in Lamoille County. The median age is 27 years in Johnson and 39 years in the County. This substantial difference places Johnson in a unique situation. The supply of housing, for example, is influenced by the fact that younger individuals require different types of housing than the middle aged or senior households.

**B. HOUSING**

**Housing demographics, housing tenure and housing costs**

According to 2010 US Census Data, Johnson Village had 481 housing units. Table 1 shows changes in the total number of housing units for Johnson from 1990 to 2010.

Table 1. Total Number of Housing Units in Johnson 1990 – 2010

	1990	2000	2010	Percent Change 1990-2000	Percent Change 2000-2010
Johnson	414	494	481	15.9%	-2.7%

Source: US Census Bureau

While the US Census provides official counts of housing units for each US town every ten years, another surveying tool, the American Community Survey (ACS) questions a sample of respondents on an annual basis. The American Community Survey asks a greater range of questions than the Census does. While the Census is limited to the count of population and housing units, the ACS inquires about the type housing structures, monthly housing costs, and ownership of the housing structures. Unlike Census, which surveys every household, the ACS relies on sampling of only a small segment of the community. As such, the ACS data tend to contain a margin of error. For example, according to the ACS 5-year estimate data, the number of housing units in Johnson Village was 662, while the Census counted 481 units. (Note: The estimated margin of error in the ACS data is +/- 129 units.)

- Out of the total number of 662 housing units, 589 housing units were occupied and 73 were vacant.
- Homeowner vacancy rate was 2.2% and rental vacancy rate was 5.5%.
- Of the total housing units, 32 percent was in single-unit structures, 53 percent was in multi-unit structures, and 15 percent was mobile homes.
- Out of the 589 occupied housing units, 220 (37%) were owner occupied and 369 (63%) were renter occupied.
- In 2006-2010, the median monthly housing costs for mortgaged owners was \$1,322, non-mortgaged owners \$484, and renters \$720. Eighty percent of owners with mortgages, 27% of owners without mortgages, and

62% of renters in Johnson spent 30 percent or more of household income on housing.

**Subsidized Rental Housing**

The Affordable Housing Database, supported by the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, includes three projects in Johnson Village. The first one is St. John’s Knoll and is comprised of 20 units dedicated to seniors. The second is Johnson Group home, seven units reserved for the disabled. The third is 5 units (4 2-bedrooms and 1 1-bedroom) on Main Street owned by the Lamoille Housing Partnership. Johnson Community Housing, a new housing development consisting of 24 affordable housing units for families and seniors on School Street, became available for renting in March 2011.

**Real Estate Values**

The Vermont Department of Taxes provides data on all property transactions in the state. The current median sales price of a single family home with less than 6 acres in Johnson is \$103,250. Table 2 also shows the amount of property transfer taxes raised between 2005 and 2011. Median sales prices in other real estate categories are shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Median Price of Single Family home on less than 6 acres in Johnson 2005-2011

Year	Median Price	Property Transfer Tax
2005	\$137,000	\$87,166
2006	\$138,000	\$89,224
2007	\$150,281	\$102,920
2008	\$149,000	\$68,656
2009	\$147,500	\$33,539
2010	\$137,500	\$25,781
2011	\$103,250	\$45,815

Source: VT Department of Taxes

Table 3. 2011 Median Selling Price

Category	Median/Average Price	Number of Valid Sales
Residential <6 acres	\$103,250	20
Residential >6 acres	\$185,000	5
Mobile Home no Land	\$14,800	6
Mobile Home w/Land	\$82,000	2
Commercial	0	0
Commercial Apt	0	0
Open Land	\$114,000	4
Woodland	\$145,000	1
Seasonal <6 acres	0	0
Seasonal >6 acres	\$92,000	1

Source: VT Department of Taxes

Table 4 shows a composition of Johnson's housing structures and units in these structures. Johnson State College on-campus residence halls and apartment buildings fall within the 20 or more unit category. The age of the Johnson housing stock is shown in Table 5.

Table 4. Housing Units per Structure

Units in structure	2006-2010 estimate	%
1 unit (detached + attached)	213	32.2%
2 units	23	3.5%
3 or 4 units	97	14.7%
5 to 9 units	185	27.9%
10 to 19 units	13	2.0%
20 or more units	35	5.3
Mobile home	96	14.5%
Boat, RV, van	0	0
<b>Total</b>	662	100%

Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

The Village of Johnson's housing stock stands out in Lamoille County in that the proportion of one unit housing structures in the village is notably lower than in Lamoille County. While Johnson Village has only 32% of one-unit structures, county communities, on average, have 70% of one unit structures. On the contrary, 53% of the Village's housing stock is in multi-unit developments and 15% mobile homes. In the County, only 19% of housing structures are multi-family units and 11% in mobile homes.

Table 5. Johnson Village and Lamoille County Comparison of housing structures

Type of Structure	Johnson Village	Lamoille County
1 unit (detached + attached)	32%	70%
Multi-unit structures	53%	19%
Mobile homes	15%	11%
<b>TOTAL</b>	100%	100%

Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

Table 5. Housing Structures by Year of Construction

Time period	Number of structures	Percentage
Built 2005 or later	0	0
Built 2000 to 2004	43	6.5%
1980 to 1999	103	15.6%
1960 to 1979	190	28.7%
1940 to 1959	41	6.2%
Built 1939 or earlier	285	43.1%

Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

## **C. JOHNSON STATE COLLEGE**

### **Population**

As of fall 2012, Johnson State College had a student population of approximately 1,800 students. Of this number, roughly 1,250 students attended on-campus undergraduate classes and 575 students were enrolled in external, off campus undergraduate programs.

### **Housing**

The total on-campus housing capacity is about 550 beds in residence halls. Additionally, there are 50 on-campus apartments, providing housing for roughly 100 students, including students with families. The College does not track the distribution of off-campus housing but the majority of them live within Johnson and other nearby communities.

### **POLICIES**

- The Village of Johnson understands that the ability of Johnson residents to affordably rent or purchase a home is directly linked to their income levels. In that regard, the Village will support and implement initiatives that will improve overall economic conditions, increase local employment opportunities and provide workforce investment training opportunities for Johnson residents.
- The Village of Johnson understands that people's desire to locate their home in Johnson is connected to their perceptions of the quality of life in Johnson. The quality of life factors include stable neighborhoods, quality public education, higher education and childcare programs, recreational and cultural opportunities, and services available to Johnson residents (such as town-wide access to broadband), etc. To that end, the Village is committed to supporting initiatives that make Johnson an attractive place to live, work and recreate.
- The Village of Johnson supports businesses and organizations interested in developing safe and sanitary single family homes as well as perpetually affordable owner occupied multi-family housing structures. The efforts to develop multi-family housing that focus on the rehabilitation of the existing housing stock should take priority over the construction of new multi-unit buildings, in an effort to preserve the village of Johnson's historical and architectural character. Housing projects located in proximity to employment and commercial centers are encouraged and so is the coordination with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.
- Accessory apartments within or attached to single family homes are deemed an affordable way of providing housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives, disabled or elderly persons.

- The Village encourages efforts that will address the structural and visual deterioration of Johnson's aging rental housing stock. To that end, the Village's Revolving Loan Fund provides affordable loans for projects that will improve building appearance and address structural issues of village buildings.
- There are employers in Johnson who would like to help their employees find a place to live in Johnson that matches their needs. The Village of Johnson supports these employers in their endeavors. To that end, the Village will support an effort to document the employers' and employees' housing needs and discuss steps that can be taken to address the need.

The Village of Johnson will also:

- Support residential developments that are consistent with land use policies stated in this plan and that enable residents of different ages to live in a broad variety of housing types based on their preferences and what they can afford.
- Encourage Planned Residential Development approaches.
- Support citizen-based initiatives to explore approaches to land use regulation and conduct educational activities to familiarize public the impact of these approaches on future land use and the character of the Village.
- Encourage development efforts that take a regional view on the availability of affordable housing and work towards even availability of affordable housing throughout Lamoille County.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Johnson's local economy cannot be separated from the larger regional economy within which it is part. Reinforcing this notion is Johnson's geographic location at the near center of the region and one of only two municipalities that does not border a neighboring county. Even though a significant portion of Johnson residents work in Johnson, the majority of workers leave town to go to work.

According to the Vermont Department of Labor data, a significant source of jobs in Lamoille County is the Accommodations and Food Services sector. This sector provides 30% of all private jobs in the county. This is nearly three times greater than the State average of jobs in this sector. In only one other sector, Construction, does the county beat the state average, and in this case by only 4%. In all other sectors, the County underperforms compared to the state average. The manufacturing sector in Lamoille County is below the state average by over 300%.

### **Johnson Village Workforce**

According to 2006-2010 American Community Survey estimates, 852 Village residents were employed. Out of the employed residents, 75% commuted to work by car; 20% percent walked to work and 5% worked at home. Approximately 13% percent were unemployed. About 21% of village families lived in poverty.

### **Village Employers**

Among the largest employers located in Johnson Village are Johnson State College (339 employees), Johnson Elementary School (47) and the Vermont Studio Center (26). Private businesses with most employees include Johnson Woolen Mills, Parker & Stearns and Manchester Lumber.

National and state-wide statistics do not provide the overall number of jobs available within the limits of Johnson Village. For the entire Town of Johnson, the number of jobs available within the community in 2010 was 977. According to the Vermont Department of Labor, jobs available in the Town of Johnson pay among the highest average annual wages in Lamoille County. In 2010, the average annual wage was \$35,393.

### **Income of Johnson residents**

While in-town jobs pay among the highest wages in Lamoille County, median income of Johnson families (regardless of whether income earners work in Johnson or elsewhere) are among the lowest in the County. The income gap between Johnson and the rest of the County has been growing for the past 30 years. In 1980, the median income of Johnson families was almost at par with the median income of Lamoille County families. Thirty years later, the income gap is approximately \$22,000.

Table 2. Median Family Income

	1979 (1)	1989 (1)	1999 (1)	2010 (2)
Lamoille County	\$15,766	\$31,772	\$44,620	\$62,364
Johnson Town	\$14,892	\$27,270	\$38,224	\$40,117
Gap	\$874	\$4,502	\$6,396	\$22,247
Johnson Family Income as a % of the County Average	94%	86%	86%	64%

(1) U.S. Census Bureau

(2) American Community Survey 5 year estimate for 2006-2010

The median family income in Johnson Village is \$29,286 or 27% below the Town median.

Another perspective on Johnson residents' wages is provided by the Vermont Department of Taxes that computes median gross adjusted income in all Vermont municipalities. An income comparison table for all Lamoille County towns is provided below.

Table 3. Median Adjusted Gross Income per Income Tax Return in 2010

Geographic Unit	Median Adjusted Income in 2010
Vermont	\$32,501
Belvidere	\$28,826
Cambridge	\$34,165
Eden	\$28,257
Elmore	\$40,078
Hyde Park	\$30,855
<b>Johnson</b>	<b>\$22,772</b>
Morristown	\$28,361
Stowe	\$34,015
Waterville	\$30,755
Wolcott	\$27,218

### Local Economic Development Efforts

Since the adoption of the last Village Plan, the Village, the Town and numerous citizen groups have worked hard on planning and implementing projects to strengthen Johnson's economy.

- In an effort to highlight the prominence of arts in our community represented by Johnson State College and the Vermont Studio Center's art programs, in 2008, Johnson Works Community Organization began organizing annual downtown sculpture shows.
- In 2009, Johnson Farmers Market was reintroduced to Main Street.
- In 2010, the Village expanding lending priorities of the Community Improvement revolving loan Fund. As a result, building improvement loans as well as business loans are now available to entities located in the Village.

- In 2012, Johnson Village completed a \$3.2 million downtown revitalization initiative locally known as the “Main Street Project”. The goals of the Main Street Project were to elevate the role of the downtown as a commercial, social and cultural core of the entire community and increase the safety of all Main Street travelers. As a result, the downtown Johnson features attractive streetscape amenities, an improved sidewalk network, new brick crosswalks, an improved on and off street parking layout, prominent streetlights, bike racks, park benches, sculpture pedestals, new tree alleys and public gathering spaces (Note: information about the Main Street Project is also included in the Transportation section of the plan).
- Recognizing the importance of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and its economic potential, the Village and the Town began looking into improving pathway connections between the LVRT and the downtown. A feasibility study for a path connecting the downtown and the LVRT was completed in 2012. Through the leadership of the Town, grant funding has been obtained to build a trail access facility at the Old Mill Park.
- In 2012, village voters granted to Village Trustees an authority to enter into tax stabilization agreements with business and commercial property owners. (Note: The Selectboard was granted the same authority by Town voters).
- Both the Village and Town have also voted to eliminate the Business and Personal Property Tax as a further incentive to attracting new business and retaining existing one.
- Efforts to identify and develop a parcel suitable for business, commercial or light industrial development have been ongoing. After a suitable parcel has been identified adjacent to Route 15, a conceptual design for the park as well as a market study to determine business demand have been completed. The market study recommended two business clusters with growth potential in Johnson: Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology; and Energy and Environmental Services.
- Throughout the past five years several Main Street businesses closed and new businesses moved in. Among the closed businesses have been Roo’s Natural Foods, The Quilted Lily, Plum & Main Restaurant, Beard’s Hardware, Ryan Books and Sweet Hollow Herbs. The new businesses on Main Street include Ebenezer Books, The Hub Pizzeria and Pub, Wicked Wings Restaurant and The Studio Store.
- In May 2011, Johnson Village was affected by flood waters of the Gihon and Lamoille rivers. Among the properties affected by the flood was the Grand Union supermarket housed in the downtown shopping plaza. Following the flood, Grand Union closed. To date, the former grocery store space remains unoccupied.
- The village business district continues to maintain its Village Center Designation status. Johnson businesses and other buildings not used solely as single-family residences that are located within the designated Village Center District are eligible to apply for tax credits. The tax credits have been created by the Vermont Legislature to support redevelopment of older and historic properties within

- designated districts. The tax credits are targeted at general rehabilitation work, code compliance work and exterior improvements to the façade of buildings.

## POLICIES

In the area of Economic Development the Village of Johnson will:

- Support the expansion and diversification of the town's economic base in a way that respects the scale and character of the community and protects against sprawl.
- Encourage efforts that strengthen Johnson's economic viability through:
  - Establishment of a business/commercial/light industrial park of appropriate scale and design to increase the tax base, improve access to services, and improve employment and economic opportunities for Johnson and area residents.
  - Continued implementation of projects that capitalize on Johnson's artistic and educational assets represented by Johnson State College and the Vermont Studio Center's art programs.
  - Implementation of projects that enhance Johnson's physical infrastructure, tourism and recreation opportunities, visual attractiveness and quality of life. Projects in this category include improvements to pedestrian, bicyclist and river access infrastructure.
  - Implementation of projects that will provide Johnson residents with convenient access to quality grocery shopping.
  - Implementation of projects that will improve access to locally grown and produced foods; support agricultural producers in their efforts to produce and distribute food locally and generally strengthen agricultural and forest industries.
  - Branding and marketing of Johnson;
  - Implementation of last mile broadband initiatives that will bring high-speed internet connection to every household, business and institution in Johnson. Johnson's current broadband coverage is spotty. Reliable high-speed internet connections are limited to Village residents and residents living along major transportation corridors. It is vital that the broadband coverage is expanded and made available to everyone.
  - Establishment of home based businesses
- Support initiatives that provide workforce investment training opportunities.

## IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

- In conjunction with the Town, implement solutions to better interconnect the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and the Village Center.
- Continue the analysis of establishing a business/commercial/light industrial park to promote job and business growth, economic opportunity and expansion of the local tax base.
- Assist citizen committees and groups that strive to enhance Johnson's economic base.

## NATURAL, SCENIC AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

### A. LAND RESOURCES

#### Soils, Forest and Agricultural resources

The dominant land use in both Johnson and Lamoille County today is forest, although limited in the Village of Johnson. Agricultural land is also very limited within the Village limits.

### B. WATER RESOURCES

Water resources take on a variety of forms and functions. They provide rivers and lakes upon which to boat, fish and swim, groundwater to drink, and wetlands to store floodwaters and filter natural and manmade contaminants. Water resources provide numerous habitats for a variety of aquatic and riparian plant and animal communities, and support numerous economic activities such as fishing and boating.

Water resources also serve as repositories for runoff and seepage including pesticides, herbicides, sediments, and leaching landfills, septic systems and underground storage tanks. These contaminants kill fish and plants, destroy existing and potential drinking water supplies and preclude recreational activities.

#### Rivers and streams

The Lamoille River flows westerly through the Johnson landscape for about 7.9 miles. The Lamoille originates at Horse Pond in Greensboro and flows into Lake Champlain at Milton. From its headwaters to the mouth, the river descends approximately 1,200 feet and drains a 706 square mile watershed.

The biggest tributary to the Lamoille in Johnson Village is the Gihon River. The Gihon River played an important role in the history of Johnson. The first generating plant in town was located on the falls just north of the Power House Bridge. Johnson's historic mill economy was literally powered by the Gihon in Johnson Village.

#### Significant natural features

The Gihon and Lamoille Rivers help create the essential character of Johnson Village. The picturesque rivers can be admired from many scenic locations. The 1992 Vermont Swimming Hole study includes the Power House Covered Bridge Falls on the Gihon River. A popular swimming hole is located behind the United Church on the Gihon.

Other significant natural features are located just outside of the Village boundaries. Dog's Head Falls is located about 1 mile southeast of Johnson Village and consist of six-foot high twin falls, two large pools for swimming, rocks and outcrops for jumping, picnicking, and sunbathing. Sloping Falls just downstream is another well-used

recreation area. It consists of a fifty-foot long cascade, sculptured rocks, undercut ledges, swift current, and several pools. The undertow in the upper area makes it too dangerous for swimming but the lower pool is enjoyed by swimmers.

Ithiel Falls is a picturesque section of the Lamoille River located about 2.5 miles west of Johnson Village and can be accessed from Hog Back Road.

#### **Riparian habitats**

Plant life such as trees, shrubs, grasses and herbs along stream banks and river corridors serve to provide both food and shelter for a great many wildlife species. According to a 1986 study on Vermont's rivers, several of Vermont's wildlife groups are highly dependant on riparian areas for their habitat needs.

The Lamoille River and Smith, Foote, Joe, Waterman, Belding Pond and French Hill Brooks were all noted in the 1986 study as important deer habitats.

#### **Water Quality**

Vermont's waters are classified according to established goals to be attained or minimum standards to be maintained, depending upon the present quality of a particular section of water. The Agency of Natural Resources works to implement activities that restore, maintain or protect the management goals. Until recently, the classification system included two classes A and B. Class A waters were divided into two subclasses: A(1) and A(2). As part of the Water Quality Standards revisions in 2000, the system was changed to allow Class B waters to be divided into three management types: B1, B2 and B3.

Presently, in all basins, waters above 2,500 feet in elevation are classified A(1) by Vermont statute. The management objective for A(1) waters is to maintain their natural condition. Waters used as public water supplies are classified A(2). All the remaining waters are class B waters. A simplification of the B1, B2 and B3 designations would be to say that the spectrum from B3 to B2 to B1 is described as representing "good", "better" and "best" aquatic conditions. All Class B waters must still support the designated uses described in the Vermont Water Quality Standards for Class B waters, which include, among other uses, suitability for aquatic life, boating, fishing, swimming, and drinking with treatment.

On August 16, 2004, the Town Select Board passed a resolution requesting that all streams and rivers in Johnson be classified as B1 waters, with the following exceptions: 1) The mainstream of Lamoille; 2) The brook through Paul McLure's farm, which should be classified B2; 3) The Gihon River downstream from School Street Bridge to the confluence with the Lamoille, which should be B2, 4) Smith Brook below Route 15 to the confluence with the Lamoille River should be B2; and 5) Waters currently classified as A1 or A2.

### **Wetlands**

The term wetland is used to refer to areas that are commonly referred to as swamps, marshes, bogs, fens or other such names. Wetlands serve a number of important functions, including storm water retention, erosion control, ground water recharge, and wildlife habitat. Wetlands share three basic characteristics:

1. The presence of water at or near the ground surfaces;
2. The presence of water dependant plants occurring on site; and
3. Common types of soil that have formed as a result of the presence of water.

The U.S. Department of the Interior has mapped wetlands, and each town has a set of National Wetlands Inventory Maps. These maps were made using aerial photos. They are useful for assessing the general character of a particular area, but are not accurate enough to determine the nature of a particular property without a site visit.

Vermont's wetland regulations are based upon the National Wetlands Inventory. They designate all of the wetlands identified by the inventory in Johnson as Class II, meaning the functions they serve – either alone or in conjunction with other wetlands in Vermont are protected by a 50 foot vegetated buffer between the wetland and any adjacent land development. Class I wetlands are those of such high quality and important function that they are considered of statewide significance. In 1992, there were no wetlands in Johnson classified as Class I.

### **Groundwater resources**

Groundwater is the source for over 90% of the drinking water for rural communities in Vermont. It is replenished through rain and surface waters which percolate through the soil. Any activity that introduces contaminants directly into the ground (such as underground storage tanks, septic disposal fields, abandoned wells, junk cars and agricultural activities) can affect groundwater quality. Since surface waters may also travel underground, surface water quality may affect groundwater quality as well.

Groundwater is an important source of drinking water for Johnson residents. For homes outside of the Village Water Company service area, groundwater is the primary source of drinking water. The Village Water Company uses groundwater and surface water but will be abandoning their surface water source in late 2006.

Public groundwater sources in Vermont are assigned a Source Protection Area (SPA). SPAs are defined as the surface and subsurface areas from or through which contaminants are reasonably likely to reach a public water system source. The state Agency for Natural Resources (ANR) Water Supply Division is responsible for the Vermont Source Protection Program. A public water supply is defined as one serving fifteen or more connections or 25 or more people.

There are five Source Protection Areas in Johnson. The first is an area defined by a 3,000-foot radius around the Wescom Trailer Park wells. The second is a hydrogeologically delineated area around the Nadeau Well, which is supposed to be a

back-up supply well for the Village Water Department but is used daily to meet peak demand. The third and fourth protection areas are in the northeast corner of town, and are delineated for the protection of the North Hyde Park Fire District #1 and Mountain View Mobile Home Park. The fifth source protection area surrounds a new well build in 2006 and serving the Johnson Village water system. The well is located just west of Johnson Village off Route 15 below the Highland Heights Mobile Home Park and serves as a permanent and primary source.

### **Fisheries**

The Vermont Guide to Fishing, published by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, lists the Lamoille River as supporting all warm and cold-water sport fish found in state with the exception of lake trout and smelt. The upper reaches of the Gihon River in Johnson support rainbow, brown and brook trout.

## **E. SCENIC AND HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Johnson is blessed with its location, beauty and natural resources. Sense of place, determined by historic features, geography of the land and availability of recreation and cultural opportunities are among key determinants for why people choose to live in or visit Johnson.

The historic architecture and scenic landscapes of Johnson are a product of the town's agricultural and forestry heritage. The town's scenic agricultural and forested landscape continues to change as more land is taken out of resource management use and is used for residential development.

In 1981 the entire town was inventoried by the state Division of Historic Preservation for the Vermont state historic registry. Town-wide, approximately 170 structures were noted for their statewide historic significance. Of these, 125 structures are located within the Johnson Village Historic District. The two remaining covered bridges in Johnson - Power House and Scribner - are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Johnson Historical Society**

The Johnson Historical Society was formed in the fall of 2006. In 2011, Johnson Historical Society created a book titled "Johnson in the Images of America Series". The pictorial history features 234 captioned photographs showing Johnson during the late 19th century through the 20th century. The book uses pictures to tell the story of the people, places, businesses, and events that helped create a sense of community during those days.

## POLICIES

In the area of Natural, Scenic and Historic Resources the Village of Johnson will:

- Provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources and facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.
- Support efforts that protect long-term viability of agricultural and forest lands; implement sound forest and agricultural management practices; and the use of locally grown food products.
- Protect the quality of public drinking water supplies and restrict development in Source Protection Areas.
- Support efforts that monitor the water quality of Johnson's rivers and streams; maintain or improve the quality of water resources; and take actions to ensure that our rivers and streams are classified and developed in accordance with the Select Board's resolution from August 16, 2004.
- Support private and public activities and uses that are oriented to the Lamoille and Gihon riverfronts. This Plan recognizes the importance of the rivers in the Village's history and their continued contribution to the scenic, economic and recreational opportunities in the community. The Village supports development along the riverfronts carried out in a manner that is sensitive to the natural features of the watercourses.
- Encourage a range of land use measures that will ensure long-term access to public waters, preserve undeveloped spaces for recreation, support the viability of agricultural and timber landscapes and protect wilderness areas.
- Protect rare, threatened and endangered species and preserve their habitats through appropriate conservation techniques. Where appropriate a buffer strip will be designed and maintained to ensure protection.
- Protect resources by restricting commercial and residential development in fragile areas, i.e. areas with topography limitations, soil limitations, areas prone to flooding and wetlands.
- Encourage initiatives that restore, preserve and continuously use historic structures in Johnson Village.

## RECREATION

To many residents and visitors alike, Johnson's sense of place is defined by the community's recreation assets. In May 2005, the Recreation Facilities Plan Steering Committee and the Johnson Planning Commission completed the *Recreation Facilities Plan* that maps recreation assets ranging from municipal facilities and public and private recreation lands to organized programs and unstructured recreation activities. The *Plan* also examines the most pertinent recreation issues and outlines future priority actions. This document contains selected sections of the *Recreation Facilities Plan*.

### A. MUNICIPAL RECREATION FACILITIES AND PUBLIC LANDS OF RECREATION INTEREST

#### **The Old Mill Park**

The Old Mill Park is a 22-acre self-contained park located at the end of Railroad Street. It was owned by Luzenac America and formerly served as a talc-processing site. In 1995, after the company ceased its operations, the premises were converted to recreational use. The Town of Johnson acquired the property by donation from Luzenac in 2011.

The athletic park consists of three baseball and softball fields, and three soccer fields. The central part of the park features a small and modestly equipped playground. The original design also envisioned a basketball court. However, that project has not yet been completed. A gravel path circles the outskirts of the entire park.

Primary users of the ball fields are youth sports teams sponsored by the Johnson Recreation Committee. In the future, the park will become an access point for Lamoille Valley Rail Trail users. A trailhead facility with parking, restroom and information displays is being planned for the park.

#### **Nelson Duba (Checkerberry) Field**

The Nelson Duba Field is a beautiful traditional field located in the heart of Johnson Village. The 2.9-acre parcel stretching along the northern bank of the Gihon River was purchased by the Town and School District in 1924 and is home to a baseball field. The Babe Ruth team (13-15 years of age) practices and plays at the Nelson Duba Field.

#### **River Park Skate Park & Bike Track**

River Park is a 10-acre recreation area, a portion of which has been developed into a skateboard park. The land is located on the west end of the Village and is intersected by Wescom Road. The eastern border of the River Park meanders along the Lamoille River. The Old Mill Park recreation fields are located right across the river.

The Town of Johnson purchased this land, previously occupied by the Cubb mobile home park, in 2001. Because the land was subject to frequent floods, an agreement was made with the mobile home park owner to remove the trailers from the flood-prone area and develop new trailer sites on higher ground, in the upper part of the park. The Town purchased the land through a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant. Because of the floods, the grant agreement with FEMA designated the use of the land as solely recreational, thus excluding residential and commercial uses of the property.

#### **Legion Field**

The Legion Field is a 1.6-acre parcel owned by the Town of Johnson. It is located on School Street in proximity to Johnson Elementary School. The *Johnson Pathways Plan* acknowledges the Legion Field as an “extremely important town facility often serving as a town common for special events.” Parking is available along School Street and on a nearby College Hill parking lot.

The central location of the Legion Field in the heart of the Village lends itself to the field’s frequent use. The field is rich in community events and celebrations. In recent years, the field hosted annual events such as the Winter Carnival; the Halloween parade and bonfire; the Tuesday Night Live summer concert series, the Powerhouse Bridge reopening, and the Johnson Millennium Celebration.

The field also serves as a sports and outdoor education facility. Minor League Baseball players (9-11 year olds) and the women’s softball league use the field for their team practices and games. Johnson Elementary and Laraway Schools conduct their physical education classes here. Church Football Days are held here as well. In the winter, the Johnson Fire Department floods the field and converts it into an ice rink. The hillside of the field above the Art House functions as a sledding slope.

When not otherwise in use, the field serves as a general park space for local residents. A member of the Recreation Facilities Plan Steering Committee observed that the Legion Field “is the only field in town where you can see people gather for pick-up games.”

#### **Village Green**

In 2010, the Village, through grant funds raised to implement the Main Street Project, purchased an open parcel in downtown Johnson and redeveloped the parcel into a community green space. The space is home to Johnson Farmers Market, and community events and celebrations.

#### **Elementary School Facilities - Gymnasium and Playground**

The gymnasium and playground are owned by the School District and are integrated into a greater Johnson Elementary School campus located on School Street. The gymnasium was built in 1998 as a part of a larger building addition project. The playground features diverse equipment, a basketball court and a grass-covered play area.

The gymnasium is considered a wonderful addition to Johnson's indoor recreation facilities. The demand for its use is greater than the School's ability to accommodate it. Youth basketball games, adult volleyball and basketball games, youth gymnastics and dance, all sponsored by the Johnson Recreation Committee are held here. Town meeting is held here in the spring. Some community celebrations, such as Winter Carnival, are able to take advantage of this indoor space and organize activities that complement the outdoor activities.

The playground is a quality facility primarily used by school children. Outside of school hours, the playground is open to the greater community. The basketball court is the only place where outdoor basketball can be played and is heavily used for that purpose. Johnson Playground Committee is developing a plan for establishing a toddler playground on JES playground premises.

#### **Former Talc Mill Property**

The former Talc Mill Property consists of approximately 200 acres of land and several buildings. Until 1995, a part of the property served as an industrial site for the Luzenac Corporation's talc-processing operations. The northern border of the property is defined by the Lamoille River (from the end of Railroad Street and along Lendway Lane). From there the property extends south towards Upper French Hill Road. The Town and Village of Johnson jointly purchased the property in two phases. The first purchase of about 15 acres, two large industrial buildings and an office building occurred in 1995. The remaining 185 acres and related physical infrastructure were acquired in 2003.

At present, the two-story office building houses the office of the Public Works Superintendent, Boy Scouts meeting room, storage space for youth sports equipment, and a Food Shelf. One of the large buildings is home to the Village Electric and Village Water and Light Departments. A storage place for salt and sand is located here as well. The property also features a cement pad, which by some is viewed as a good foundation for a potential recreation facility.

To get a better understanding of the most desirable and feasible future uses of the property, the Johnson Planning Commission was charged with a task to commission an evaluation study outlining different use options. During the recreation planning process, the Recreation Facilities Plan Steering Committee and residents participating in public meetings brainstormed their suggestions for the potential recreational utilization of the property. One obvious advantage of developing the property for recreation is its location. Primarily, the property is adjacent to the Old Mill Park athletic fields. Secondly, it is intersected by the Lamoille Valley Railroad Corridor, which, after financial resources have been secured, will be converted to a 98-mile, four-season multipurpose recreation path going from Swanton to St. Johnsbury. And lastly, the property is adjacent to a section of Vermont State Forest land that will eventually site the Long Trail when the trail is fully relocated. This relocation could create an easy link between the trail and the village.

### **Rivers and Trails**

The Gihon and Lamoille Rivers help create the essential character of Johnson. The picturesque rivers can be admired from many scenic locations including the Power House Bridge and an area located near the United Church. Fishermen and swimmers are among the most frequent river users. Kayakers flock to Johnson in the spring. Johnson has an ongoing interest in improving access to its rivers to increase the appreciation and use of these unique natural resources.

Two major state trail systems pass through Johnson. The Long Trail passes within two miles of the village center and a future relocation will bring the trail closer. When completed, The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail will intersect the Old Mill Park and pass through the former Talc Mill Property. This 98-mile trail system will wind throughout the Lamoille Valley bringing a variety of users in different seasons. The Rail Trail will have the added benefit of creating a direct connection between the Long Trail and the village, bypassing VT 15.

### **Johnson State College recreation resources available to the community**

Johnson State College (JSC) has a broad range of recreation facilities that are available to the community. These include the JSC SHAPE Center, which has a state-of-the-art fitness center, weight room, indoor swimming pool, exercise rooms, racketball courts and an indoor climbing wall. There are also four outdoor tennis courts; a network of hiking, biking and running trails; and disc golf course. The Lower Pond is a favorite walking destination. Free campus maps can be picked up at the Admissions Office or may be downloaded from the JSC website.

Throughout the year, the College hosts performances, guest speakers and countless other events at Dibden Center for the Arts and other campus venues. Virtually all of these events are open to the public – many of them free; others for a nominal fee (typically \$5). A list of upcoming events is available online at [www.jsc.edu/events](http://www.jsc.edu/events). In addition, all home varsity games are open to the public and free of charge. JSC competes in NAC Division III and fields 12 athletics teams, including soccer, basketball, volleyball and lacrosse. Area residents also enjoy free access to the Willey Library & Learning Center. The College welcomes and encourages community members to take advantage of the many programs and resources on campus. For more information, visit [www.jsc.edu](http://www.jsc.edu) or call 635-2356.

### **POLICIES**

In the area of Recreation the Village of Johnson will:

- Encourage efforts of Johnson Recreation Committee to revisit and/or implement recommendations of the 2005 Recreation Facilities Plan.
- Encourage the expansion of trail-based infrastructure to improve connectivity and pathway networks expansion.

- In conjunction with the Town and Johnson Recreation Committee, facilitate access to and improve the publicity for recreation programs, facilities and policies governing the use of the facilities.
- Preserve and encourage recreational uses of rivers, streams and ponds.
- Support and actively pursue strategies assuring long-term public access to recreation resources.
- Support efforts that maintain and facilitate access to private lands.

#### IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

- Review recommended implementation tasks outlined in the Recreation Facilities Plan and where applicable, determine which are feasible for implementation. (*Johnson Recreation Committee*).

## EDUCATION

### A. JOHNSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Students in the Town of Johnson attend schools in two locations. Pre-kindergarden through sixth grade attend classes in Johnson, at the Elementary School, while students in seventh through twelfth grades and Johnson's vocational students attend classes at Lamoille Union High School, and the contiguous Green Mountain Technology and Career Center, all located in Hyde Park.

#### **Johnson Elementary School**

The Johnson Elementary School (JES) is owned by the Johnson School District. The Johnson Elementary School Board governs the School District. There are five directors, elected to two and three year terms, at the Annual School District/Town meeting.

#### *Enrollment*

JES underwent a major renovation in 1997 and was expanded by the addition of a gymnasium, 11 classrooms, a library, and kitchen. The school was built for growth, however, following state trends, Johnson's school age population has been slowly dropping over the past decade. As a result of the expansion, the school now has a capacity for approximately 350-360 students. In 2012-2013, there were 259 students enrolled in JES.

#### **Lamoille Union High School**

The Lamoille Union High School is owned by a cooperative agreement among six member towns called the Lamoille Union High School District. These towns are: Belvidere, Cambridge, Eden, Hyde Park, Johnson and Waterville. The Lamoille Union High School Board of School Directors governs the District. There are 12 members on the Board. At present three of the Directors are from Johnson.

When the school was built, it was designed to serve about 800 students, based on the educational standards of the time. Current standards, which came into effect in 2000, reduced the facility capacity to 640 students. The change of standards necessitated the expansion of the facility and in 2002 a new Middle School building, along with expansion and renovation of the High School, was completed.

#### **Green Mountain Technology and Career Center**

The Green Mountain Technology and Career Center (GMTCC) is one of 16 regional technical centers in the state of Vermont that provides career, technical, and vocational programs for high school and adult students in the greater Lamoille Valley. It serves students from Hazen Union High School District, Lamoille Union High School District, Craftsbury Academy, Peoples Academy, and Stowe High School.

GMTCC has a close association with, but is separate from, Lamoille Union High School. It shares the same physical location (attached to but separate from the High School Building), and the same Board of Directors, on matters concerning financial management. The Center provides technical training for self selected 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, as well as certain adult students. The facility has a total capacity of 315 students.

GMTCC provides technical training and develops appropriate work skills for students in 14 program areas. These currently include: Automotive Technology; Business Administration; Computer Design; Construction Technology; Culinary Arts; Digital Arts; Forestry; Health & Human Services; Heating Ventilation Tech; Industrial Mechanics; Marketing & Tourism; Multimedia; Pre-Tech; and Technical Electronics. In the near future, GMTCC is proposing to open the following courses: Horticulture and Landscape Technology; Emergency and Fire Management Services; Emergency Medical Technician; and Management and Entrepreneurship.

## **B. JOHNSON STATE COLLEGE**

### **Academics and community arts**

Johnson State College is one of five colleges belonging to the statewide network of Vermont State Colleges. Johnson State College features a range of programs in Behavioral Sciences; Biology and Environmental Science; Business and Economics; Education; Fine & Performing Arts; Health Sciences and Outdoor Education; Hospitality and Tourism Management; Humanities and Liberal Arts; Mathematics; Wellness & Alternative Medicine; and Writing and Literature.

In conjunction with the Fine & Performing Arts program, Johnson State College offers high quality cultural programming available to the entire community. Dibden Center for the Arts houses theater, music and dance. Events range from local to nationally known performers. Performances are open to the community. About 300 local residents are on Dibden's mailing list. The Center also houses the Julian Scott Memorial Gallery that hosts student, faculty and touring art exhibits. Through the leadership of JSC staff and students an annual outdoor sculpture show is held in downtown Johnson in summer and fall.

As of fall 2012, Johnson State College had a student population of approximately 1,800 students. Of this number, roughly 1,250 students attended on-campus undergraduate and graduate classes and 550 students were enrolled in external, off campus undergraduate programs.

### **Willey Library and Learning Center**

Johnson State College's Willey Library and Learning Center has over 110,000 book titles, 9,000 movies and recordings, an extensive children's collection, internet access and related amenities enabling reading, study and/or research. The Library offers free membership to area residents.

## **C. PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES**

### **Laraway Youth and Family Services**

Johnson is home to Laraway Youth and Family Services (LYFS), a private non-profit organization employing 112 people. LYFS' two main programmatic components include the Laraway School and Substitute Care program.

The Laraway School is licensed in Vermont as an independent school, approved for special education. The School serves 4<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade-students who have special emotional and behavioral circumstances that keep them from being successful in their own schools and who want to return to their own schools once they get their behavior under control.

Laraway Substitute Care is a behavioral treatment program that serves youth who experience problems that make it difficult for them to live in their own communities. Laraway provides services designed to support children, adolescents and their families as they identify effective ways to address those problems.

LYFS is also a Licensed Child Placing Agency administering a statewide Foster Care program that provides daily care, intensive care management, treatment and crisis intervention services.

In 2010, LYFS moved from their location nearby Johnson Elementary School to a new state of the art facility located in the Town of Johnson.

### **Child care**

The Village of Johnson recognizes the importance of high quality childcare and early childhood education with the community and supports the expansion of these services. According to the Lamoille Family Center, in 2013 there were 5 registered in-home child care operations and 1 licenced child care center in Johnson. The Turtles and Tots child care center is the largest child care facility in Johnson licenced for 54 children. The opening of this facility has helped to bridge the gap in child care services after the Child Development Center operated by Johnson State College closed several years ago.

## **D. OTHER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

### **Vermont Studio Center**

The Vermont Studio Center (VSC) is a nonprofit, year-round, international creative community serving artists and writers from across the country and around the world. Each month, 50 artists and writers participate in 4-12 week independent studio residencies. Throughout the year, VSC also offers exhibitions, public lectures and readings to the community.

Since it was founded in 1984, VSC has offered a free summer art program for children, and since 1998, a community arts program for teenagers and adults. In addition, VSC's Community Arts Director teaches art classes at the local Johnson Elementary

School. As part of her teaching program, she is often assisted by VSC residents, and monthly, VSC international residents are invited to participate in special projects with the students.

#### **Art House**

The Art House facility is owned by Johnson Elementary School and is currently used for storage purposes.

#### **Johnson Public Library**

The Johnson Public Library has over 1,000 registered patrons. It is open 31 hours a week and, on average, 250 people visit the library in the course of a week. The Library is fully automated and has approximately 9575 books, 379 videos, 535 audio books, 1604 downloadable e-books and 1883 downloadable audio books. There are five public computers with high-speed Internet access. Story time for young children is held each week, with additional programming in the summer. The library is in need of expansion and the library Trustees are in the process of analyzing potential expansion and/or relocation options.

#### **Conservation Commission**

At 2005 Town Meeting, Johnson voters approved the creation of the Municipal Conservation Commission. As stated in the Vermont Statutes, one of the duties of the Conservation Commission is to conduct educational activities to encourage public understanding of local natural resources and conservation needs.

### **POLICIES**

In the area of Education the Village of Johnson will:

- Encourage efforts that broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities that ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.
- Encourage efforts that strive to provide safe and affordable child care and integrate child care issues into regional and local planning processes.

## TRANSPORTATION

### **Sidewalks**

Johnson Village maintains the network of local sidewalks. The maintenance includes winter plowing, spring sweeping and a general upkeep of the sidewalks. The Village continuously improves the sidewalk network. In 2011 and 2012, sidewalks were improved and extended as part of the Main Street redevelopment Project. In 2013, sidewalk extension and improvement is slated for School Street and College Hill Road. The implementation of sidewalk improvements is governed by pedestrian improvement plans. The most recent pedestrian improvement plan was completed in 2008 and included pedestrian infrastructure along School St, College Hill Road, Clay Hill Road, Pearl Street and Route 100 C.

### **Main Street Project**

In 2012, the Village of Johnson completed a major downtown revitalization project. The total of \$3.2 million was invested in downtown beautification and the enhancement of Route 15 travel infrastructure. As a result, Main Street has an extended and improved network of sidewalks, new brick crosswalks, and reconfigured parking options which include a new public parking area at the Village Green. The street is lined up with new trees and lamp posts. Hanging baskets and banners decorate the lamp posts. Other downtown improvements include community plazas with park benches and bicycle racks. There are outdoor spaces dedicated to year-round sculpture displays. New signage points visitors to key Village destinations. Along with the construction of the streetscape improvements, the Vermont Agency of Transportation rebuilt the State's stormwater drainage system along Route 15.

### **State and local roads**

Local roads in Johnson are owned and maintained by the Town of Johnson Highway Department. Numbered state roads are maintained by the Vermont Department of Transportation. This plan will therefore not provide detailed information regarding existing or proposed streets or highways or their type and character, which is covered in the town plan.

### **Bridges and culverts**

The Town owns and maintains 8 bridges within its boundaries, not including the numerous culverts serving both intermittent streams and larger waterways. Within the past ten years, three major bridges in Johnson Village were reconstructed or rehabilitated: State-owned Route 15/Gihon River Bridge; Town-owned Railroad Street Bridge and Pearl Street Bridge.

### **Rail**

The nearest passenger service available is AMTRAK with a station in Waterbury.

## **Airports**

Johnson residents are provided air transportation service through the Morrisville-Stowe state Airport on Route 100 in Morristown, and through the Burlington International Airport in South Burlington. Long-term expansion plans for the Morrisville-Stowe State airport have been considered although none of those plans are expected to be implemented over the next 20 years.

## **Regional trails and paths**

### *Long Trail*

Johnson's stretch of the 270-mile Long Trail consists of fifteen miles of main trail and 1.5 miles of side trails. The trail descends the north side of Whiteface Mountain, through Bear Hollow, along Smith Brook Basin, crosses Rte 15 and the Lamoille River, ascends to Prospect Rock, up and over Roundtop Mountain, crosses the Plot Rd, wends into Coddington Hollow, then continues its way north to Laraway, Butternut and Bowen Mountains. The trail includes three overnight shelters: Bear Hollow, Roundtop and Corliss Camp.

### *VAST Trails*

The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) maintains a network of snowmobile trails on private and public lands across the state. There are about 47 miles of VAST trails through both public and private lands in Johnson. VAST trails in Johnson are maintained by the Sterling Snow Riders - local VAST chapter in Johnson.

### *Lamoille Valley Rail Trail*

The Lamoille Valley Railroad, a 98-mile corridor between Sheldon Junction and St. Johnsbury, passes through Johnson along the banks of the Lamoille River. The line is owned by the State of Vermont and is not operational at this time. Plans are currently underway to convert the line to a year-round, multi-use recreational trail. The railbanking of the line was completed in 2005.

The conversion of the Lamoille Valley Railroad (LVR) right-of-way into a four-season multi-use trail will provide a continuous connection between all village centers from Hardwick to Jeffersonville. A hard packed gravel surface that will accommodate bicyclists is currently proposed for the LVR multi-use path. The facility will provide a safe alternative for bicyclists not comfortable traveling along Route 15. The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers holds a lease on the right-of-way and, per current agreement with the State, will be responsible for building, operating and maintaining the multi-use trail. The construction of the Johnson segment of the Rail Trail is anticipated in 2013. Johnson has been preparing for the arrival of the Rail Trail to the community by designing trailhead locations and a connector trail that will connect the LVRT with the village business district. We obtained funding to build a trailhead at the Old Mill Park and are in the process of seeking construction funding for the connector trail.

### **Public transportation services**

The closest regional public transit service available to Johnson residents is Lamoille Valley buses operated by Green Mountain Transit Authority in Morrisville. Commuter routes exist that connect to Stowe and Waterbury.

In 2005, a new service, Lamoille Valley Express, was added to the Waterbury-Morrisville line to bring people to school, work or shop in Johnson. This service runs Monday thru Friday. Three days a week, the bus goes all the way to Cambridge. This route is free to all Johnson State College students and staff with JSC ID.

An employee-oriented Smugglers Shuttle service runs between Morrisville and the Smugglers Notch Resort.

Seven human-service organizations in Lamoille County currently provide services that include Johnson residents.

- Rural Community Transportation offers a weekly shopping shuttle from Johnson to Morrisville. RCT created the service in response to the loss of the Grand Union supermarket.
- The Central Vermont Council on Aging (CVCOA) provides transportation to health care, shopping and community programs. They also transport meals to residents that are confined to their homes. In addition, CVCOA operates the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) in central Vermont. RSVP provides transportation to its volunteers in addition to reimbursing self-drive volunteers for mileage.
- Central Vermont Community Action Council (CVCAC) has contracted with Rural Community Transport (RCT) to administer a ride referral/ride match program in Lamoille County. RCT also focuses on developing and coordinating transit services and cultivating awareness of and support for public transportation in the region.
- Lamoille County mental Health (LCMH) provides rides for developmentally disabled clients between their homes and the region's treatment and activity centers.
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provides services to clients with disabilities that create barriers to employment. The VR program works to relocate individuals and provide transportation so they can work in the community. VR also serves as an advocate of local and regional transportation planning.
- Out and About is an adult day care program at Copley Hospital which provides transportation to clients through RCT to gain access to and from their home to the day care.
- The VT Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired offers reimbursement to volunteer drivers and also purchases transportation for clients. There are a couple of private taxis in Johnson available to call, some drive long distances.

### **POLICIES**

In the area of Transportation the Village of Johnson will:

- Support initiatives to improve traffic safety, public parking and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- Encourage opportunities to create a system of pathways providing for better connections between Johnson State College and the rest of the Village; as well as interconnections between residential areas and recreation facilities. The development of pathways will be guided by recommendations generated by the 2003 Pathways Plan and 2008 Pedestrian Improvements Feasibility Study.
- Maintain and improve the existing infrastructure of Village streets and bridges while conserving their aesthetic and recreational qualities.
- Encourage and promote public transportation and ridesharing.

#### IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

- Complete design and construct pedestrian improvements along School Street and College Hill Road.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle connection between the Rail Trail and the downtown.

## ENERGY

### A. CURRENT ENERGY CONSUMPTION

#### Electricity

The Village owns and runs the (Johnson) Village Water and Light Department that serves an area associated with, but slightly larger than, the Village. Since around 1956 the Village Water and Light Department has purchased all of its power supplies from outside generation sources. The Department still owns the old hydro site and land on the Gihon River near the School Street Bridge; however, the water rights to the original dam were sold. The Village is still interested in studying the viability of redeveloping a small hydro generation plant at the old site. Most of the Department's distribution lines are above ground.

The Village serves approximately 950 metered customers ranging from residential, commercial and industrial to Johnson State College, which is the largest user of the system accounting for app 27% of system load. The system has very high reliability records and has historically had some of the lowest rates statewide. Many system improvements have been undertaken since the last Plan update. These include a complete rebuild of the electric substation to National Electric Safety Code, installation of a "back-up" substation transformer, and construction of a "backup" 34.5kv transmission interconnection tie point with Morrisville Water & Light (MW&L). The upgrade greatly improves the system's reliability and quality, as well as the safety of Village of Johnson employees. The substation rebuild was accomplished using village crews and other municipal department crews and at a cost well below average costs to replace. It is very well designed and provides many options for power restoration. The Village obtained ARRA grant funding which covered 50% of the cost of some of the substation improvements including the addition of a fourth circuit breaker, SCADA controls and motor operated switches, reconstruction of distribution lines from Main St bridge to the east end of the town and the MW&L interconnection switch.

The village has also replaced approximately 152 streetlights with LED streetlights. One hundred of these lights were done with a combination of grant and energy efficient incentives that were no cost to the rate payers; 42 lights were changed as part of the Main St project, and 10 lights were replaced on bridges which also received incentive grants.

Eventual upgrade in system voltage from 2400/4160 to 7200/12470 is in the planning and development stages. All new and replacement distribution lines have been built to 12kv standards and dual voltage transformers installed. The substation was built to 12kv standards and can be converted one circuit at a time. Voltage conversion is desirable to decrease "load losses" (electricity paid for but not used) and improved voltage quality and reliability

The Village of Johnson is a member of the Vermont Public Power and Supply Authority (VPPSA) which is a Joint Action Agency serving 12 municipal electric utilities

in Vermont. VPPSA aggregates the Power Supply needs of the members and secures the power from the market on behalf of the members, at a cost savings. With changes in the power supply market, membership in VPPSA has become essential to the continued operation of municipal electric departments all over the state. The increasing costs of purchasing power are of great concern.

### **Heat**

Across Vermont, a vast majority of homes are heated with petroleum based products. Johnson Village follows this pattern as 52% of occupied housing units are heated by fuel oil and 13% of housing units are heated by propane gas. The rest of residential homes are heated with electricity (23%) and wood or utility gas heat (12%). Recent volatility of petroleum prices and the adverse environmental impacts associated with burning fossil fuels, pose serious challenges to the sustainability of this heating profile.

### **Transportation**

Other than walking or biking, all energy for transportation comes from non-renewable fossil fuels. According to 2006-2010 American Community Survey Estimates, 75% of the employed workforce in Johnson Village commuted to work by car. That said, Johnson Village has a relatively sizeable proportion of workers that walk to work (20%) or work at home (5%). In addition, many Johnson State College students, Vermont Studio Center residents and senior residents do not own a car and frequently walk or bike to many village destinations. Johnson Village recognizes the needs of pedestrians and bicycles and to that end has continuously been upgrading the network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

## **B. LOCAL AND RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES**

### **Wood products, solar and wind**

One locally renewable source for heat in Lamoille County is wood. According to American Community Survey data, 12% of village residencies use wood as a primary source of heat. On a larger scale, Johnson Elementary School has a wood-fired system fueled by wood-chips. Given the forested nature of Lamoille County, real potential exists for taking a greater advantage of this local resource for residential and commercial heating.

Other sources of renewable energy that village residents and businesses can consider include solar and wind power. Before implementation, the feasibility of these approaches should be assessed both for cost-effectiveness and site potential. If feasible, this investment is often paid off in several years by cost savings as well as revenue created by selling net energy to a utility for distribution on the Vermont power grid. Recent legislation (H.446, Act 45) has improved the profitability of smaller net systems from the old net metering to what is called "standard offer". This creates a greater incentive to invest locally, in small scale renewable energy generation.

### **C. EFFICIENCY AND CONSERVATION**

At the local level, energy conservation concerns generally fall into three categories. It includes energy efficiency of Village owned facilities, promotion of energy conservation techniques for residents and businesses, and efficient development patterns. Vermont electric ratepayers fund Efficiency Vermont, the State's Energy Efficiency Utility. Efficiency Vermont provides technical assistance and financial incentives to residents and business to identify and pay for energy efficient designs. They are an excellent resource for general information on energy efficiency.

The Village of Johnson and Efficiency Vermont cooperate very closely. Most recently, the Village replaced 100 sodium vapor street lights, 42 Main Street lights and 10 bridge lights with LED energy efficient street lights and qualified for a rebate offered by Efficiency Vermont. The Village improves its energy infrastructure on a continuous basis. The Village also administers a revolving loan fund which provides loans to implement energy conservation measures such as installation of more efficient heating systems, insulation improvements, or replacement of older windows with newer efficient models.

Dispersed settlement pattern that is typical for rural Vermont makes the delivery of essential services, including electricity and heating fuels more expensive. This is perhaps a less of an issue in the Village of Johnson, the prevailing settlement of which is compact and tightly knit. In the absence of local land use regulations, the Village has a limited influence over future development patterns; still, through this plan, the Planning Commission encourages future development approaches that have a potential to result in energy conservation.

#### **POLICIES**

In the area of Utilities and Facilities the Village of Johnson will:

- Support the installation of renewable energy generating systems and promote efficiency and conservation in the design, construction, and use of municipal infrastructure as well as industrial, commercial, and residential structures.
- Support purchases of energy efficient equipment to save tax dollars over the life of the product, conduct regular energy audits of all municipal buildings and upgrading old heating and cooling systems.
- Maintain, improve, support and plan for the development of pedestrian and recreation paths, park and ride lots, public transit services and/or ridesharing programs that reduce transportation energy costs.
- Encourage energy conservation through infill and redevelopment of existing buildings/properties.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION TASKS**

- Upgrade the Village's electric system voltage from 2400/4160V to 7200/12470V over time and as economically viable to do so (Village Water and Light Department).
- Continuously upgrade existing poles and wires outside the substation (Village Water and Light Department).

## UTILITIES AND FACILITIES

### **Sewage and septic system**

Johnson Village owns and operates a municipal wastewater sewage treatment plant built in 1995. The plant was built on the site of the original 1968 plant and has approximately 30% more capacity than its predecessor. It has a design capacity of 270,000 gallons per day and should provide Johnson with the ability to accommodate its needs for the foreseeable future.

The Village has been able to replace some old and dilapidated sewer mains as part of other projects at relatively low cost by combining the projects. Examples include RR St and several sections on Main St. The Village sewer currently encompasses the entire Village (including Johnson State College) plus 13 houses in East Johnson. The Town and Village entered into an inter-municipal agreement to extend sewer service onto specific mapped areas of the Town.

Development in the Village is required to connect to the system, if the development is within 100 feet of a sewer line. Outside of the Village and Town sewer service area, individual on-site sewage disposal permits are required and are regulated by the State of Vermont.

### **Water supply**

Residents within the Village are serviced by a municipal water system, which is managed and maintained by the Village Water Department. Connection to the system is regulated by the Water System Rules and Regulations by the Village Trustees. The Johnson State College campus is also connected to the Village system. Residents outside the Village supply their own water through on-site, private systems (e.g. springs or wells).

There are two sources of public drinking water: The Nadeau Well (backup supply) located southeast of the Village and drilled in 1974, and the new Osgood well just west of Johnson Village off Route 15 drilled in 2004.

Since the last Plan update the Village has completed a major water supply improvement project that implemented the following improvements to the public water system:

- Acquisition of a property where a new water supply well was located, drilled and tested in 2003-2004. Final development of water source, and construction of filtration plant for manganese removal.
- Replacement and construction of water mains and hydrants and new 350,000-gallon storage reservoir for improved domestic water and fire service in the Village.
- Improvements to the existing Nadeau well to serve as a back-up supply.
- Replacement of the two existing water booster pump stations
- Replacement of all customer water meters

- Abandonment of the French Hill impoundment and filtration building. (Note: The original building has been demolished. The land is leased by the Village to VAST that built a storage building on the property)
- Replacement of water mains on Route 100C
- Replacement of water mains on Railroad Street and Lendway Lane, under the Lamoille River back to the pump/filtration building.
- Replacement of mains on Clay Hill

#### **Solid waste facilities**

Johnson is a member of the Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District (LRSWMD), a municipal district formed to serve the towns of Lamoille County as well as Craftsbury and Worcester. Funding for LRSWMD expenses is covered entirely by user fees, local appropriations and service fees.

As required by state law, the LRSWMD has devised a 20-year plan for the management and disposal of all types of solid waste generated in its member communities. Solid waste from Johnson is now brought to the Johnson Drop off site at the former Johnson landfill. From there, waste is hauled to a landfill in Coventry.

#### **Town and Village Owned Buildings**

The Town and the Village own a number of properties jointly, which include the Municipal Offices on Main St. and the Municipal Public Works and Highway complex off Lendway Lane, which is comprised of the Water & Light Dept. garage, the Highway Dept. garage, the old Mill house, and a large building that is used for storage by town and village departments. In addition, the Village owns and operates the Fire Department building on Main St., the wastewater treatment plant at Sewer Plant Rd, a water system booster pump station on Clay Hill, a water treatment and pump building and 11 acres of land off Wescom Rd, a water reservoir off Collins Hill Rd, an electric sub-station within the JSC campus, and a building and property formerly housing the generating plant located off Rte 100c. The Village also owns a 50 acre Village Forest off Reservoir Road.

With the exception the former generating plant, most of these buildings and properties are all relatively new or rehabilitated and should not require significant capital improvements in the near future. The WWTF facility is now 16 years old and will require some level of capital improvements as time goes on. Major investments have been made in sewer and water infrastructure over the last decade and will require modest capital investment for the near term.

#### **Transmission Lines**

There are two 34.5 kV transmission lines that are located in Johnson. One now owned by GMP serves the electric load of the municipal electric department. The other is owned by Morrisville Water & Light Dept. and the village is currently in negotiations with MW&L to acquire part ownership of this line. By doing so the electric department will have a "direct tie" to the VELCO 115 kV line in Stowe and will be able to reduce its costs for transmission service.

**Storm Drainage**

The Village of Johnson is responsible for some of the storm drain system within the village limits. The Town maintains ditches and culverts on the town highway system within the village and the Village maintains the actual catch basin systems.

The state owns and maintains the storm drain systems on Rte. 15 and Rte. 100c. Rte. 15 storm drain system was part of a multi-million dollar Main St Improvement project in 2011 and 2012 and has been completely reconstructed.

The primary storm drain systems owned and maintained by the Village are located on Pearl St and School St and discharge into the Gihon River by the Pearl St Bridge, and on Railroad St. which discharges into the Lamoille River. There are a few other locations where village catch basins empty into the state system.

In general, the age and condition of the Village owned storm drain system is the weakest link in infrastructure. Some of the system was replaced during the various water, sewer and bridge projects undertaken in the last 10 years, but for the most part the system is not in great condition. The village has established a maintenance protocol for annual system cleaning and is part of a 5 town consortium to acquire a trailer mounted vacuor system, which will further enhance annual maintenance practices.

Despite its age and condition, a recent investigation by ANR for illicit discharges from storm-water outfalls revealed no significant water quality issues. Wastewater and storm-water were separated years ago and during the Main St Project careful attention was paid to insuring there were no cross connections to the storm-water system.

**Law enforcement**

There are two levels of police coverage in Johnson: the Lamoille County Sheriff's Department, and the Vermont State Police. Town Constables are appointed by the Selectmen and do not currently have any law enforcement authority.

The Lamoille County Sheriff's Department provides enforcement of all laws that fall within the local jurisdiction, emergency dispatching services and requested back up in emergency situations. A minimum level of service is provided to all ten towns in the county; however, an additional level of service is provided to Johnson (Hyde Park and Wolcott), on a contractual basis for twenty-four hour police protection; response to emergency fire and rescue calls; and to serve in the civil legal process. The Sheriff is elected to the position by Lamoille County voters.

The Vermont State Police provide a second level of police protection and support for Johnson residents. The State Police provide emergency and back-up coverage as requested by the Sheriff's Department, criminal laboratory services, and the service of officers who are trained in special areas (i.e. homicide, arson or drug enforcement).

**Rescue Services**

Rescue services in Johnson are provided by the Northern Emergency Medical Services Division of Newport Ambulance Service, a nonprofit ambulance service that provides immediate response emergency medical care, backup emergency response services (to volunteer rescue squads) and medical transfer services. The ambulance is dispatched either through 911 calls received at the sheriff's department or through direct calls to the service itself. The ambulance service is a not for profit, fee for service organization that is supported, in part, with municipal funds.

**Fire**

The Johnson Fire Department is a volunteer fire department providing twenty-four hour fire, rescue protection and HAZMAT (Hazardous Materials) response to a Community Service Area defined by the Village of Johnson and the towns of Johnson, Waterville and Belvidere. The Johnson Fire Department (JFD) is administratively responsible to the Village Trustees and receives part of its funding from the Village. Service to the towns of Johnson, Belvidere and Waterville is by annual contract for fire protection coverage. Johnson State College typically pays a contribution for services as well.

JFD is dispatched through the County Sheriff's 911 emergency call service. Over the past ten years, the volume of calls has been on a steady increase. While in 2003, the department responded to 91 alarms, in 2011, they had 120 alarms and predicted that 2012 was going to be another record year.

In February 2004, JFD fire station was destroyed by a structural fire. This tragedy resulted in the loss of the fire station, gear and most of the equipment, personal gear and memorabilia, awards and trophies of the firefighters. The construction of the new Fire Station was completed in December 2005.

Johnson Fire department also operates a water rescue team that is on a rapid response team with Vermont Emergency Management.

The Fire Department has developed a Capital Plan for replacement of large equipment and is working on a plan for smaller equipment items as well. While not an approved Capital Budget and Plan, it is nonetheless used by the Trustees and the Department in annual budget decisions.

**Cemeteries**

There are six cemeteries in the Town and Village of Johnson. Three Cemetery Associations, a Cemetery Commissioner and the Johnson Selectboard oversee the care of these cemeteries.

Table 7. Johnson Cemeteries

Cemetery	Size	Capacity Status
Evergreen Ledge	+/- 1.1 acres	+/- 30% of land available
French Hill or Grow Cemetery	+/- .45 acres	Uncertain, but likely at or near capacity

Lamoille View	5-6 acres	At 60% capacity; should not reach full capacity for 10-20 years
Plot Cemetery	1 acre	Uncertain, considered full
Whiting Hill	Unknown	Considered full
Old Catholic Cemetery	Unknown	Considered full

Source: Johnson Utilities and Facilities Report 2000.

**Health facilities & services**

The primary health care facility serving Johnson and the whole Lamoille County is Copley Hospital in Morristown. Copley Hospital is a 53-bed acute care hospital that serves as an emergency care center for local emergency services and provides in patient and out-patient service, long-term care, and family oriented birthing center. Copley’s major tertiary referral hospital is Fletcher Allen Hospital in Burlington. Copley sponsors a Wellness Center for the community. The Wellness Center focuses on proactive prevention versus reactive treatment, offering flu vaccines, birthing classes, diabetes educators, and dietitians, among efforts. Copley Hospital also operates: Mansfield Orthopedics, the Health Center Building, Lamoille Area Housing Coalition, and Copley Terrace and Copley Woodlands (housing for elderly populations).

The Community Health Services of Lamoille Valley (CHSLV) in Morrisville is a federally qualified health center which treats customers regardless of their ability to pay. CHSLV offers medical, dental, and behavioral health services.

Agencies and services not affiliated with Copley include the Department of Health (Morrisville), Lamoille Family Center (Morrisville), the Diabetes Center of Lamoille County (Johnson), Johnson Health Clinic (Johnson) and Lamoille Home Health and Hospice.

In Johnson, there are also two physicians, and several mental health counselors and physical therapists. Johnson State College has a health center for students. There is a need in the community for a better access to health care services. The municipality has made efforts to host a federally qualified health center but so far, those efforts haven’t come to fruition. The community is also in need of a pharmacy. Today, Johnson residents have to drive nine miles to either Morrisville or Cambridge to access a pharmacy.

**Other facilities**

Johnson Public Library and Johnson public schools are included in the Education chapter. Recreation facilities are described in the Recreation chapter.

**POLICIES**

In the area of Utilities and Facilities the Village of Johnson will:

- Continue developing long-term infrastructure maintenance, improvement and

expansion plans, and coordinate these plans with the Select Board and Johnson Planning Commission. Planning will take into consideration infrastructural needs of Johnson's educational institutions (trails, sidewalks, open spaces for recreation and an information booth).

- Encourage efforts that improve access to local health care services, including a local pharmacy.
- Develop management plans for all publicly owned lands and facilities.
- Promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design, construction, and use of municipal, industrial, commercial, and residential structures.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION TASKS**

- Research and evaluate funding sources for a systematic replacement and or repair of existing storm water systems under the control of the village.
- Develop a plan for the prioritization of replacement and or repair to existing storm drain systems under the control of the village.
- Evaluate the benefits of developing a Capital Budget and Plan for departments and for all major equipment owned by the village.

## LAND USE

In an effort to implement goals and policies contained in this plan, this plan establishes six land use districts. These districts, identified on the Village Plan Land Use map, include:

- 1) Main Street District
- 2) Main Street West Mixed Use District
- 3) Lower Village District
- 4) College District
- 5) Upper Village District
- 6) Industrial District

In addition, this plan establishes an overlay district to protect the Village's flood hazard areas. The overlay district will impose an additional layer of regulations upon the affected lands.

### A. DESCRIPTION OF THE LAND USE DISTRICTS

#### *Main Street District*

The purpose of this proposed district is to maintain the historic main street area of the village as a mixed-use residential, commercial, business, and service center. Municipal water and sewage disposal is available, and development on small lots should be encouraged to take advantage of these services, as well as to maintain the traditional pattern of development. Multi-use buildings, such as apartments over retail stores, and multi-use properties, such as a repair shop behind a residential property, should also be encouraged. As a result of the historic significance of the area, preserving and enhancing the aesthetics of Main Street should be a priority.

In determining the appropriateness of new development, its scale and design should be evaluated in relation to the scale and design of existing uses and structures, and the effect of the proposed development on the continued enjoyment of existing and approved uses in the district. For new structures, building location within the lot could be required to be compatible with the location of existing and approved uses in the district. The buildings within this district tend to be primarily historic structures. Any construction or reconstruction should be consistent with the styles and designs of the neighborhood.

#### *Main Street West Mixed Use District*

This district recognizes the existing mixed residential commercial land use patterns and the potential for future light industrial/commercial development and or re-development of existing residential development. The district has good access to transportation, water, sewer and electric services.

Additionally, the district is adjacent to a Town Sewer Service Area (TSSA) established by the town and the village for the purposes of extending sewer service to that

area. The TSSA is also delineated in the Town Plan as its own land use district. The Main Street West Mixed Use District and the Town Sewer Service Area should be treated as one land use district for planning and development purposes, regardless of the town/village boundary and as having mutually compatible land use goals and policies.

#### *Lower Village District*

This proposed district encompasses the downtown areas, which are not within the Main Street, College, or industrial districts. Land uses in these areas are medium density residential, business, professional and institutional uses. Mixed-use buildings are less common but present and mixed-use properties should still be encouraged, provided they are compatible with the neighborhood. Municipal services are available, so development on small lots should be encouraged to take advantage of the services. Where a neighborhood has many historic structures new construction should reflect the style and character.

In determining the appropriateness of new development, its scale and design should be evaluated in relation to the scale and design of existing uses and structures, and the effect of the proposed development on the continued enjoyment of existing and approved uses in the district. For new structures, building location within the lot could be required to be compatible with the location of existing and approved uses in the district.

The Lower Village District is more residential than the Main Street District and, therefore consideration should be given to the impacts on the enjoyment and use of existing properties when new development is proposed. The buildings within this district tend to be primarily historic structures. Any construction or reconstruction should be consistent with the styles and designs of the neighborhood.

#### *Upper Village District*

This proposed district intends to provide opportunities for medium residential development. These areas, in combination with the other village districts, should meet local needs for residential and commercial growth into the near future. Some parcels or portions of parcels, which fall within the designated district, might, upon closer inspection, be limited in their suitability for development. Planned Unit Developments should be highly encouraged in order to cluster development on the developable land without significant loss of development opportunity. Multiuse properties should be allowed.

Where different types of land uses adjoin one another, larger lot sizes, increased setbacks, or landscaping might be required in order to buffer adverse impacts. Development should be planned to minimize the number of access points onto town and state highways in order to maintain smooth traffic flow.

#### *College District*

This proposed district accommodates the special needs of Johnson State College and related uses, while maintaining the character of the Village of Johnson.

### *Industrial District*

The purpose of this proposed district is to permit land on and around the current industrial operations south of the Railroad Street bridge. The area has municipal services and 3-phase power so future development within this district should take advantage of available resources. While the current level and scale of operations should be supported, heavier industrial development should not be permitted due to the proximity to the village, flood hazard areas, and the Lamoille River.

This area has historically been the industrial district for the village with the talc and lumber mills and rail yard. With a closing of the talc mill, the end of rail use, and increased residential development in the area, future land uses should be evaluated in light of this shifting trend. Truck traffic is of primary concern as the only access to the area is via Railroad Street. Conditions should be attached to approvals, which will protect the village as a whole as well as the neighboring properties within the district.

### *Flood Hazard Overlay District*

The purpose of this proposed district is to prevent development that might increase flooding and to reduce losses as a result of damage from flooding. Designation of this district is also required for the Village to be eligible for the National Flood Insurance Program. This district should encompass all areas in the Village of Johnson identified as areas of special flood hazard on the National Flood Insurance Program maps. This district will be an overlay zone and will be superimposed on the other districts proposed in this plan.

## POLICIES

In the area of Land Use the Village of Johnson will:

- Manage growth and development in a manner that is respectful of the Village's character, natural resources and their environmental, recreational and economic functions, and its infrastructural capacity.
- Support efforts that encourage and expand the diversity and vitality of the Village as the cultural, single family residential, commercial-service and economic hub of the Town.

## IMPLEMENTATION TASK

- Utilize existing development controls and state regulatory proceedings in an effort to implement the vision, and address the policies of this plan (*Trustees and Johnson Planning Commission*).

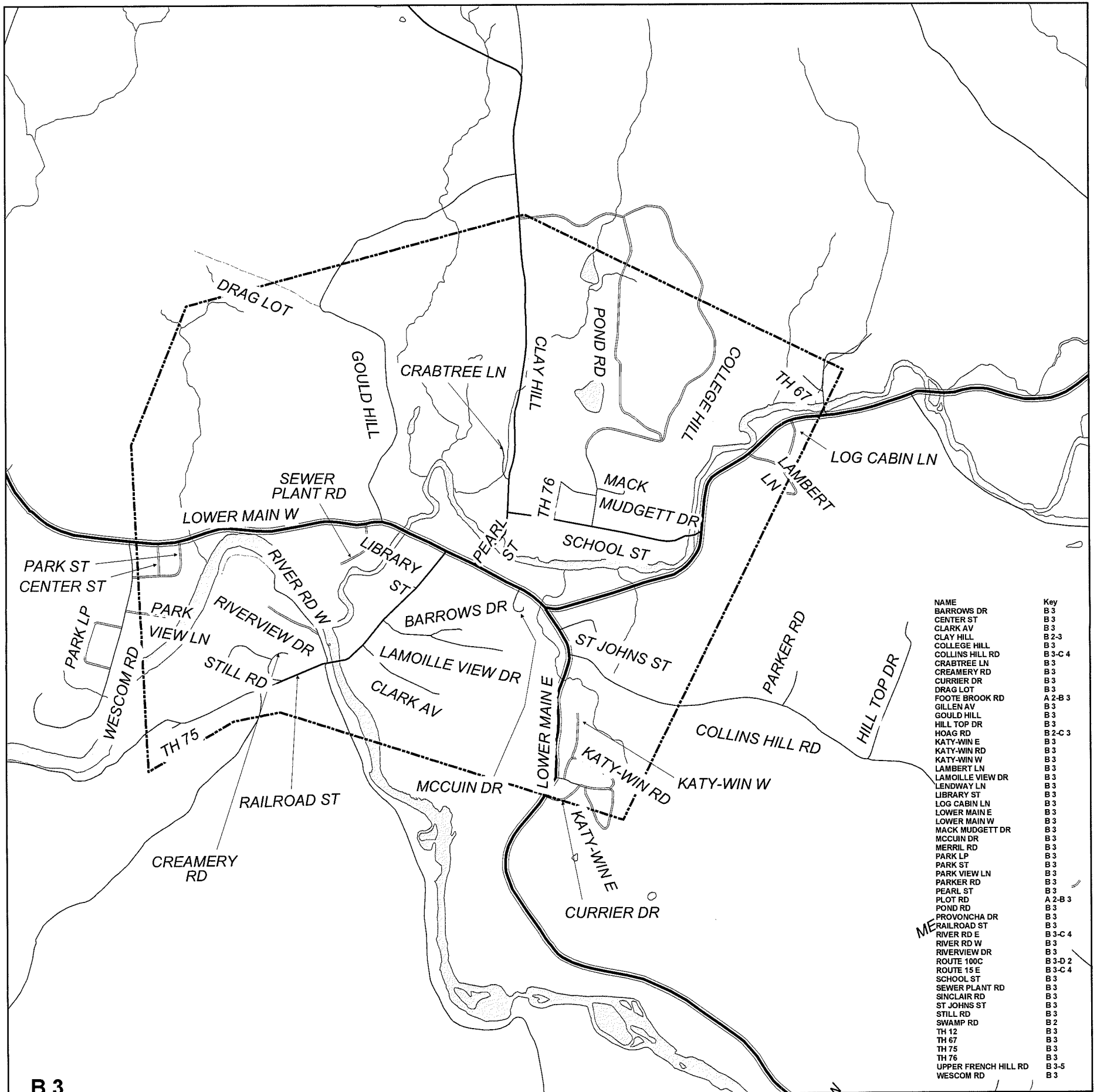
## **PROGRAM FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN**

A plan can provide a vision, but plans are not dynamic in nature and it must be recognized that circumstances can change planning priorities. The Village's goal is to seek out and analyze opportunities that will benefit the community and take greatest advantage of those opportunities that are adjudged appropriate for the community.

The Village and the Town will continue the partnership between its elected boards and appointed commissions as well as staff to explore and implement opportunities, grants and programs that will further the planning and economic and community development needs and goals of the community. This plan is only part of what is required to realize the potential for sustainable growth and development of our community.

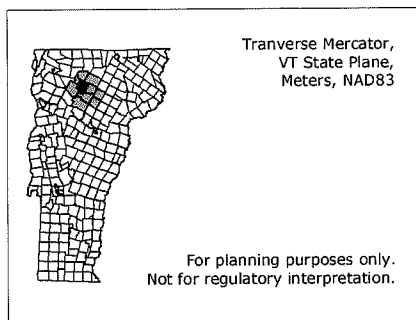
Specific implementation tasks are listed and discussed under the specific plan sections, and are not re-listed here.

# Johnson, Vermont Village Plan Transportation



**B 3**

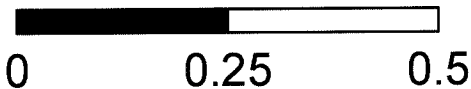
- Stream/River
- Lake/Pond
- Road Class**
- US/State Route
- Class 2 Town Highway
- Class 3 Town Highway
- Class 4 Town Highway
- Private Road



KMF, LCPC, February 28, 2006.



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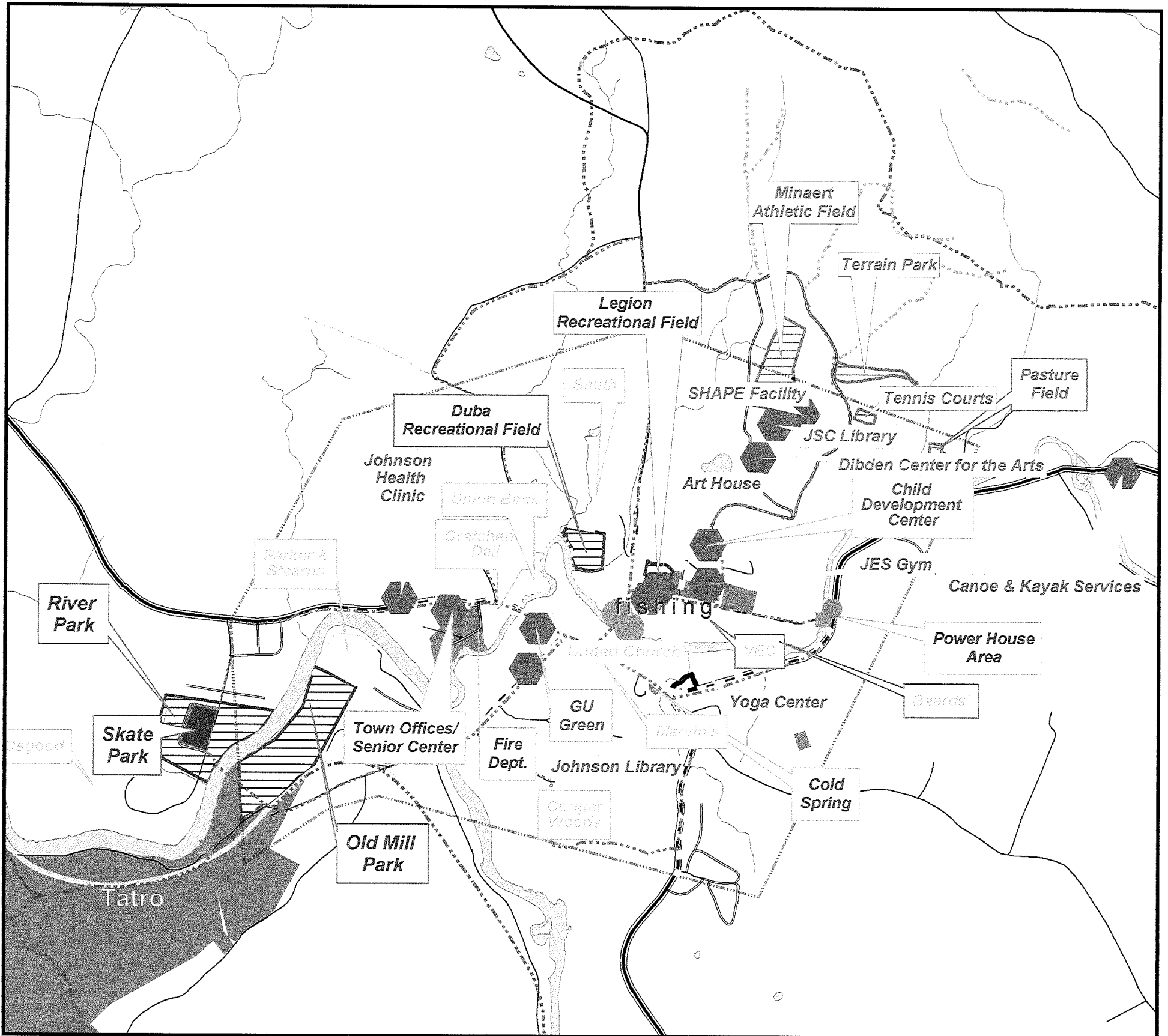
POLITICAL BOUNDARIES: 1:24000 USGS Quadrangles, VCGI, 1991.  
 ROADS: 1:5000 E-911 Road Data, 2004.  
 SURFACE WATER: On-screen digitized from 1:5000 digital orthophoto using USGS 7 1/2 quadrangles and 1:20000 color infrared aerial photography as additional source material, VCGI for VHD-USGS, 2001.  
 SOILS: Optically scanned from 1:20000 USDA-NRCS soil maps, 1981.

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 Municipal Planning**

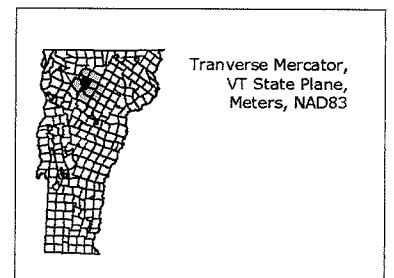
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# Village of Johnson Recreational Resources



- |  |  |                      |
|--|--|----------------------|
| Cemetery   | Proposed Rail Trail  | <b>Road Class</b>    |
| Johnson State College  | Long Trail   | US/State Route       |
| Town/Village Owned   | VAST Trail   | Class 2 Town Highway |
| Municipal Forest   | Existing/Desired Walking Paths**<br><small>**As discussed in Johnson Pathways Plan</small> | Class 3 Town Highway |
| State Owned  | Existing Sidewalk  | Class 4 Town Highway |
| Public Access Area   | Proposed Sidewalk  | Private Road         |
| Private Parcel with Informal Access for Hiking, Swimming and/or Fishing**<br><small>**Check with Landowner**</small> | Riverwalk**<br><small>**As discussed in Johnson Pathways Plan</small>                      | Stream/River         |
|  | Johnson State College Trails   | Pond/Lake            |



Lamoille County  
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Not for regulatory interpretation.

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POLITICAL BOUNDARIES: 1:24000 USGS Quadrangles, VCGI, 1991.

ROADS: 1:5000 E-911 Road Data, 2002.

SURFACE WATER: On-screen digitized from 1:5000 digital orthophotos using USGS 7 1/2' quadrangles and 1:20000 color infrared aerial photography as additional source material, VCGI for VHD-USGS, 2001.

TRAILS: ANR, 1993.

PUBLIC LANDS: Generated by UVM Spatial Data Lab using various sources, 2002.












TOWN LANDS: 1:5,000 LCPC data, 2002.

WATER ACCESS AREAS: LCPC data, 1998.



# Johnson, Vermont Village Plan Overlays



-  Source Protection Area
-  100 Year Floodplain
-  Public Land
-  Conserved Land  
\*\*No Public Access, Private Land\*\*
-  Stream/River
-  Lake/Pond
- Road Class**
-  US/State Route
-  Class 2 Town Highway
-  Class 3 Town Highway
-  Class 4 Town Highway
-  Private Road

POLITICAL BOUNDARIES: 1:24000 USGS Quadrangles, VCGI, 1991.

ROADS: 1:5000 E-911 Road Data, 2004.

SURFACE WATER: On-screen digitized from 1:5000 digital orthophotos using USGS 7 1/2 quadrangles and 1:20000 color infrared aerial photography as additional source material, VCGI for VHD-USGS, 2001.

FLOOD PLAIN: Digitized from FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps, LCPC, 1983. Floodplains for planning purposes only. Refer to the VANR-DEC, Water Quality Division, Floodplain Coordinator for official floodplain determinations. (802) 241-3759.

WELLHEAD PROTECTION AREAS: SPAs for groundwater sources (wells, springs), 1:24000 USGS Quadrangles, VANR-DEC-Water Supply Division and VT Dept. of Health, 1998.

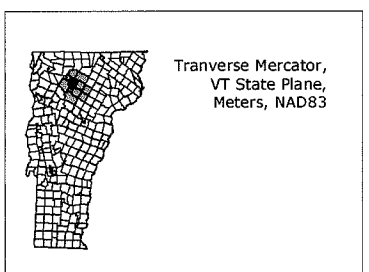
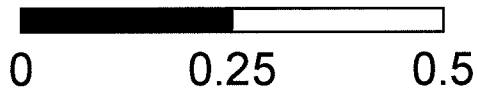
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March 1, 2007.

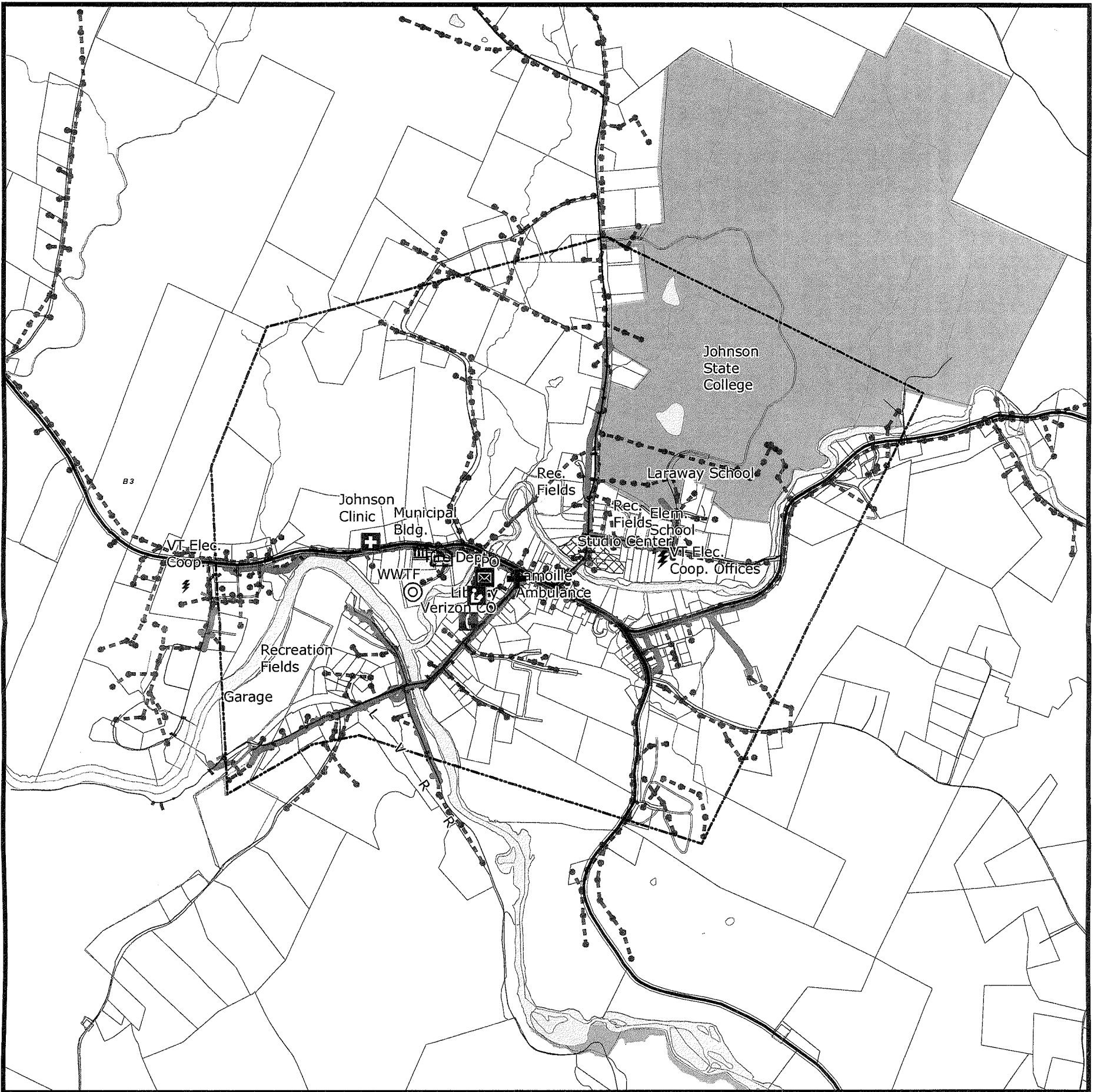


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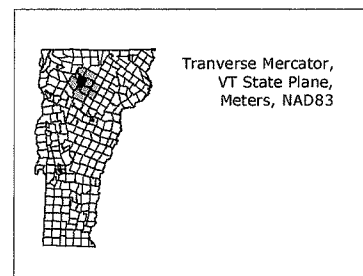




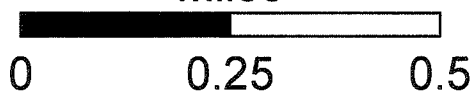
# Johnson, Vermont Village Plan *Utilities and Facilities*



- Utility Pole
- Stormwater Line
- Sewer Line
- Water Line
- - - Electric Line
- Parcel Line
- Public Land
- Town Land



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January 30, 2007

POLITICAL BOUNDARIES: 1:24000 USGS Quadrangles, VCGI, 1991.

ROADS: 1:5000 E-911 Road Data, 2004

SURFACE WATER: On-screen digitized from 1:5000 digital orthophotos using USGS 7 1/2' quadrangles and 1:20000 color infrared aerial photography as additional source material, VCGI for VHD-USGS, 2001.

UTILITIES: Variety of sources, early 1990s.



