

---

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **SECTION ONE**

---

## I. INTRODUCTION

### VISION STATEMENT

Colchester will plan its growth and manage its resources to remain Vermont's most diverse town making strategic investments in our community and its infrastructure that permits us to continue to be a desirable place to live, learn, work and play. Guiding our efforts are the community's beliefs that we will continue to value our children and all citizens and we will continue to offer them the highest quality social, educational, recreational, economic and housing opportunities regardless of a person's economic stature.

Colchester values its quality of life and it will be maintained and enhanced through efforts and investments such as:

- Responsive, planned and affordable public services and facilities provided by municipal government, citizen volunteers, and business;
- Supporting a healthy business climate for the economic vitality of the town;
- Comprehensive and consistent land use planning, zoning regulations, and enforcement;
- Supporting scenic and historic sites and vistas, open green spaces, working agricultural land and the protection of land value as part of a healthy tax base;
- Improved public access to a clean Bay and Lake Champlain;
- Cooperation with neighboring communities and the State of Vermont to create the public infrastructure required to meet our community's long term needs;
- Supporting many lifelong learning opportunities and cultural activities both public and private.

This vision statement was developed through intensive public involvement and scrutiny. This year long process included work sessions with representatives from all Town boards, Town staff, and representatives of the citizenry, well attended public hearings, and Select Board work sessions.

### OPENING STATEMENT

This is the Master Plan for the municipality prepared under the enabling authority of the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act. The authority to prepare and implement this comprehensive plan is granted to the Town through the Vermont Planning and Development Act, Title 24 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated, Chapter 117. It is the purpose of the Act to "... encourage the appropriate development of all lands in this state... in a manner which will promote the public health, safety against fire, floods, explosions and other dangers ... and to provide means and methods for the municipalities and regions of this state to plan for the prevention, minimization and future elimination of such land development problems as may presently exist or which may be foreseen and to implement those plans when and where appropriate.

**PURPOSE**

This is a comprehensive plan for the use of Town boards, commissions, residents and businesses. The plan shall be: the framework for planning the future of Colchester, a guide for decision making in development reviews, a basis for evaluating zoning and subdivision and other bylaws, a tool for coordinating Colchester's activities with those of other municipalities and governmental bodies, a guide for development of capital improvement programs, and a reference for other plans developed by the Town. These recommendations are not mandates but are guidelines to help the Town with its long-range planning. Where conflicts between this plan and the adopted bylaws exist, the Town's bylaws will control. However, the recommendations in this plan should be undertaken by the Town and will help Colchester to realize its vision.

**HISTORY**

The Town of Colchester was chartered on June 7, 1763, by New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth. The Town originally comprised six square miles. The first residents and proprietors in Colchester included Ira and Ethan Allen, Joshua Stanton (an incorporator of the University of Vermont), Robert Mallet, and John Law (for whom Mallet's Bay and Law Island were named).

By 1783 it was Ira Allen's intention to have Colchester become the county's first industrial center "to give value to his landed estate". The first products were stone anchors. Around this time a dam was built, two forges and furnace, and a grist mill.

The economy and land-use in much of Colchester was agricultural while the areas along the Winooski River were industrialized with grist mills and then woolen mills. The divergence of these two economies played a major role in the split between Winooski and Colchester which occurred in 1922.

Recreational uses along the lakefront were established by the late 1800's, with communities such as "the Sand Dunes" being used as weekend retreats. More significant development of the camp communities occurred after the advent of the automobile. The years since the early 1960's have brought rapid change to the community. The population has more than tripled from about 5,000 persons in 1960 to 16,986 in 2000. Most of the land in the south-western portion of the Town has been residentially developed. Business and industrial uses have flourished in the area of Exit 16. Colchester now has the third largest population among Vermont municipalities and continues to grow.

**CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES**

Colchester currently faces a number of interrelated challenges. The demand for new residential development is expected to remain high. The Town must manage residential development and see that it is balanced by commercial development and that the pace of development does not exceed the ability of the Town to provide services, or the ability of the taxpayers to pay for services.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

For the duration of this Plan, the Town is proposing to focus growth efforts on three growth centers (see Section Three for a complete discussion of Colchester's growth centers). Planning and financing infrastructure improvements in designated growth centers will be a challenge. Development in some designated growth centers is now limited by lack of sewage disposal options, inadequate transportation infrastructure and other deficiencies. One of these growth centers is the Exit 17 area. An Environmental Protection Agency grant is currently underway to evaluate decentralized wastewater alternatives for this area to begin to address one of its key development limitations. The Town hopes that this project will identify sufficient wastewater disposal to enable maximum buildout as allowed by the recently completed Exit 17 Growth Center Plan.

Previous Master Plans called for a portion of Lakeshore Drive to be redeveloped to support a higher density of tourist based commercial activity. However focus groups have indicated little apparent community support for this development creating a need for a new plan for this key area of Town. Although the number of agricultural operations in Colchester continues to decline, farms remain important to the economy and benefit the community as a whole. This plan seeks a balance between growth management, open space/farmland preservation and the owner's right to realize the value of their land. Previous Master Plans have designated prime agricultural lands (i.e. Shipman Hill) as growth centers. This plan proposes a new designation designed to realize this balance.

The Town of Colchester has many great assets with the more prominent features being Malletts Bay, the lake and its many streams. Protection of the water's quality has become a community wide goal. A Water Quality Committee has been formed to determine how best to address this goal. The Committee has begun work on a comprehensive water quality plan that will address stormwater management, wastewater solutions, recreational opportunities, and land use planning. Planned future land uses, transportation planning, and utility planning should be evaluated in light of the final recommendations of the Committee

The Circumferential Highway has been completed to Colchester's border with Essex and construction of the segment between I-89 and Severance Road is being planned for by the Agency of Transportation during the life of this plan. There is currently no schedule for construction of the section between I-89 and the Heineberg Bridge, or between Severance Road and Essex. The highway is needed to divert regional commuter traffic from Colchester roads and increase their capacity for local traffic and improve quality of life. Piecemeal construction of the highway may worsen, rather than improve, traffic conditions as Colchester roads fill in the missing sections in a regional highway system. The Town must advocate for completion of the entire Circumferential Highway, especially the section west of I-89.

One of the greatest challenges facing the Town is to deal with the demands for growth and development while not exceeding the ability of taxpayers to support expanded facilities and services. Unfortunately at this time little is certain regarding the real costs and benefits of development. Some speculate that the cost of services to support residential development is

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

relatively high, compared with commercial development and that a proper mix of commercial and residential growth should be maintained. This will be difficult considering the continued high demand for residential development. Others disagree as to the costs and benefits of some of Colchester's newest residential communities.

To ensure that growth benefits the Town, the Town should, as soon as feasible, study and research the effects of all growth on municipal services, taxes, and the quality of life and should document the need for growth management tools and impact fees. Until this study can remove the uncertainties regarding these growth issues funding constraints require that municipal service and facility improvements be limited in scope and carefully targeted. Non-grandlist funding should be a priority for infrastructure extensions. Current infrastructure deficiencies must also be a priority regardless of new development. Developers should be required to pay for facilities which are required to support their projects and the Town should not allow developments to have unmitigated adverse effects on the Town's ability to provide services. However, by the same token, developers and future users should not be required to pay for more than their fair share to remediate existing infrastructure deficiencies.

### **PROCESS**

This Master Plan represents an updated version of the 1996 Master Plan not a complete rewrite. The Planning Commission determined that the structure and main elements of the 1996 Plan were still relevant and an update was all that was necessary. This revision was informed by the public work sessions to draft a vision statement for the Town and public hearings on key regulations on Colchester's Open Space Plan, Exit 17 Plan, and Streambank Protection Ordinance. The Planning Commission formally initiated the process by conducting six random focus groups on major issues in Colchester: infrastructure, seasonal camps, the Village at Malletts Bay concept, affordable housing, Malletts Bay and the Lakeshore, and the future of the Clay Point area. Testimony was taken from a variety of Town departments (Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Police, Fire) and advocacy groups (Conservation Commission, St. Michael's College, Fanny Allen Hospital, Camp Johnson, CCDC). Sub Committees were formed to revise the individual sections of the plan and three public hearings were held by the Planning Commission. Following revisions made by the Planning Commission, the draft plan was forwarded to the Select Board which held four public hearings.

These public hearings were followed by a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and Select Board to identify needed changes. The Planning Commission then held two additional public hearings on the plan before resending it to the Select Board for final approval.

Three documents are referenced in this Master Plan and are assumed to be part of this plan: 1) Colchester's Open Space Plan adopted by the Select Board on February 22, 2000, 2) Exit 17 Growth Center Plan adopted by the Select Board on August 22, 2000, and 3) the 1993 Alternative Transportation Path Plan developed by the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization. When the Select Board adopts the new Alternative Transportation Path Plan currently being developed, the new plan will be referenced instead.

---

**LAND USE**

**SECTION TWO**

---

**II. LAND USE**

**INTRODUCTION**

Colchester has a unique diversity of land types and uses including: seasonal residential, residential, agricultural, recreational, commercial, industrial, institutional, and natural areas. It is important to preserve this diversity to maintain and enhance the character of the Town.

Several categories of land use are discussed below and the Future Land Use Map illustrates the Town's land use objectives.

**TABLE 1  
AMOUNT OF LAND IN EACH ZONING DISTRICT BY YEAR**

District	Acres in 1992	% of Colchester in 1992 (without rivers)	Acres in 2002	% of Colchester in 2002 (without rivers)
Agriculture/Open Land	5,592.8	23.8	4,976	21.2
Commercial	1,012.3	4.3	749	3.2
General Development -1	784.3	3.3	733	3.1
General Development -2	806.6	3.4	794	3.2
General Development -3	n/a	n/a	329	1.4
General Development -4	n/a	n/a	529	2.3
Government	176.2	.7	160	.6
Industrial	1,378.0	5.9	1,154	4.9
Island/Unknown	22.9	.1	n/a	n/a
Low Density Residential -1	5,700.1	24.3	5,526	23.5
Low Density Rural Residential -10	n/a	n/a	305	1.3
Low Density Rural Residential - 5	2,086.3	8.9	2,066	8.8
Medium Density Residential – 2	1,427.9	6.1	1,705	7.3
Medium Density Residential – 3	1,437.2	6.1	1,432	6
Mobile Home Park	311.4	1.3	291	1.2
Wetland/Floodplain	2,736.6	11.7	2,746	11.7

**RESIDENTIAL USES**

Colchester is foremost a residential community. Colchester is now the third most populated jurisdiction in Vermont after Burlington, and Rutland. The majority of the Town's land area has been designated for residential use. The Town is seen by most as a fine place to live and raise families.

**TABLE 2  
HOUSING UNIT GROWTH, COLCHESTER**

	Total Housing Units					Annual % Change		
	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	70-80	80-90	90-00
Total Housing Units	3,098	4,566	5,866	6469	6706	4.0%	2.5%	1.35%
Year Round Units	2348	3990	5386	6018	6278	5.4%	3.0%	1.54%
Seasonal Units	750	576	480	451	428	-2.6%	-1.8%	-1.15%

Sources: Vermont Department of Health Agency of Human Services, 1997, 1998. and Town of Colchester Assessor's Office

**Recent History**

Colchester now has approximately 6,278 year round households, and 428 seasonal housing units and a 2000 population of 16,986. Between 1960 and 1990 Colchester's population tripled, going from about 5,000 to about 15,000 persons. The dramatic change in the character of the community that occurred during this period of rapid growth has been identified as central to many of the challenges facing Colchester today (e.g. capacity of public infrastructure and services and preservation of natural resources).

The tripling of Colchester's population for the period of 1960 to 1990 occurred for many reasons including: overall growth in Chittenden County, extensive areas of soils with good sewage disposal capacity, attractive aesthetic/recreational features and respected schools.

Table 2 shows Housing Unit Growth in Colchester over the past 30 years. A housing unit typically consists of three to four bedrooms but can include two bedroom units in Growth Centers to mansions.

It is important to realize that during a large part of the period when Colchester's population tripled, 1970 through 1990, Colchester was adding an average of 152 year round housing units a year. Without any substantive efforts by the Colchester Planning and Zoning Department or the Planning Commission to moderate Colchester's rate of residential growth, during the period from 1990-2000, the number of average annual new, year-round units declined to 89, a reduction of more than 40%. This was also a period of relatively stable growth with the number of new housing units never exceeding 118 (one of three years when there were a number of multi-family units built).

**Current Situation**

Early on during development of this Master Plan, the Planning Commission raised concerns that this period of moderate growth may be over. At this time, the Planning Commission has approved or given Preliminary Plat approval to applications for 777 housing units that have not yet received building permits. (NOTE: Preliminary Plat is the second stage in the development review process. Usually, if a developer has Preliminary Plat approval, all the developer has to do is meet Planning Commission conditions stipulated as part of that approval and their development will be approved. Approved units require building permits to be built.)

According to the Planning and Zoning Office, historically 74% of approved units receive building permits and are built. Once projects receive approval, typically there are conditions placed on the projects that substantial completion must be reached within two years or the approval is null and void. Most of the projects that have generated the 777 approved housing units have reached substantial completion with the exception of two projects planned for Severance Corners. The two projects at Severance Corners total 390 of the estimated 777 approved housing units in Colchester. While these projects have significantly completed the local approval process, both projects have yet to begin the sometimes-lengthy State permitting process. In addition, these proposed 390 units may be reduced upon completion of the local process due to a lack of municipal sewer capacity to service this area. These projects also differ substantially from projects historically approved by the Commission in their proposed densities as these are proposed to be within one of Colchester's growth centers. The 74% build factor reflects past trends and may or may not be applicable to the residential units we have recently approved.

Absent any concrete information, if 74% of these units (575) were built and occupied by the same number of persons occupying Colchester's other year round housing (2.7 persons per unit), the 1,553 new citizens occupying these units would represent a rate of population growth equal to more than 9%. If these units were to add the same number of students to the Schools as Colchester's other year round housing (0.4 students per housing unit), these units would add 230 new students. It should also be noted that the average household size, as produced by the latest Census, show that the average household size in Colchester has decreased to 2.5 persons. The Census also notes that less than half of the family households in Colchester have children under the age of eighteen. Further analysis needs to be done to evaluate this trend, but it should be recognized that the estimated number of new students could be more or less than those estimated here.

**Potential Impacts of Approved Units & Historical Comparison**

<u>Units Approved</u>	<u># Est. to be Built</u>	<u>New Citizens</u>	<u>New Students</u>
<u>777</u>	<u>575</u>	<u>1,553</u>	<u>230</u>

  

<u>Average Annual Units Built 1970- 1990</u>	<u>Average Annual Units Built 1990- 2000</u>	<u>Current Units Approved W/O Permits</u>	<u>Portion of Approved Units Built (Historical)</u>
<u>152</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>777</u>	<u>575</u>

There is no way to know whether the number of new applications will continue at this new rate in response to increased demand for housing in Chittenden County or if the recent number of applications is an anomaly. At this time, there is no way to even know if the previous trend regarding the number of approved housing units that are typically built will continue in order to determine how many of these approved units will actually be built.

The Planning Commission does believe that this increase is the start of a trend. Even ignoring the applications for approximately 450 residential units in Colchester’s two new Growth Centers, currently there are more than 330 outstanding approvals for the type of three and four bedroom residential units we have been seeing built throughout the Town.

Colchester Zoning Regulations do not explicitly allow the Commission and the Planning and Zoning Department to limit or phase in the number of approved units. The Select Board decided to include language in the Master Plan calling for an investigation of the need for growth management tools but decided not include annual limits on the number of building permits. In other words, for now, if the current surfeit of permits is not an anomaly, our current regulations may provide us little real ability to address any impacts by controlling growth rates.

However, in our current By-laws, the Planning Commission has the authority to deny or approve with conditions projects that place unreasonable burdens on the Town (e.g., jeopardizing public health and safety). The School Superintendent’s office also participates in the review of larger residential projects and comments as to the impact each project is anticipated to have. Should the Superintendent’s Office notify the Planning Commission that the school lacks sufficient facilities to accommodate the students expected from new units the Commission must consider this information as part of its deliberations.

**COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

In looking to whether or not the Town should pursue growth management tools the Town must first define if growth is causing any type of adverse impact. After the completion of the Master Plan, the Commission will begin to study the effect of growth on the Town. To this end, the Commission will be pursuing a dialogue with the Select Board and School Board on growth issues to try to define and address housing needs, population growth, infrastructure planning, etc.

**TABLE 3  
NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS CONSTRUCTED**

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Single Family Residences	23	44	46	76	56	44	50	43	39	52	50
Duplex	28	6	4	6	20	4	6	8	2	4	14
Multi Family Units	0	0	6	36	24	0	0	33	0	0	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>76</b>

Note: Duplex and Multi Family figures are total units, not structures

Note: Discrepancies between table two and table three result from the use of self-reported census data in table two and the possible omission of un-permitted seasonal residences conversions in table three.

Source: Department of Planning and Zoning, October, 2000

Additionally, the rate of residential growth is of potential concern because of the expense of keeping pace with municipal services and facilities. As infrastructure and service improvements lag behind demand, taxpayers at large may be assessed costs directly associated with new residential development. Growth that is too rapid may also put pressure on natural resources (including the Lake and other natural areas, open spaces, and agricultural lands) and may adversely effect the community's character and quality of life. Conversion of land to residential use has, in some cases, displaced desirable land uses, including agriculture, natural areas, and open space. There is continual pressure to rezone land to allow higher densities of residential development. Between 1988 and 1993, 3,370 acres were rezoned to Residential from other zoning classifications, primarily Agricultural.

As noted in Section 3 Local Growth Centers, Colchester is trying to mitigate sprawl by shifting growth to local growth centers. These local growth centers require infrastructure and amenities. Colchester's future population growth rate will depend on a number of factors, some of which could be influenced by the Town. The Town can plan for local economic growth, permitted housing density, the rate of subdivision approvals, sewage disposal options, transportation facilities, and general delivery of services; all of which influence the rate of population growth.

**Goals**

Colchester is foremost a residential community and the attributes that make it a good place to live must be protected and enhanced.

An acceptable level of growth needs to be allowed, and planned for, to accommodate the expansion of resident families, immigration associated with economic growth, and new families who would like to become part of the community. The right of reasonable use of land must be recognized.

**Policies and Implementation**

1. In order to identify an acceptable level of growth the Town should, as soon as feasible, study and research the effects of all types of growth on municipal service, taxes, and the quality of life and should evaluate the need, if any, for growth management tools and impact fees.
2. Colchester should have zoning and other bylaws that protect the quality and integrity of existing residential neighborhoods. Incompatible uses should be excluded from residential areas.
3. New residential development projects should be required to meet high standards for public improvements and to provide amenities to ensure safe and attractive neighborhoods including sidewalks in those areas of Town designated for sidewalks in the revised Alternative Transportation Path Plan and Class I bike paths throughout the Town. Town regulations and the permitting processes should encourage good design, careful siting, and suitable landscaping of developments.
4. As part of the Town's effort to determine the real costs and benefits of residential development it should determine whether the current impact fees are appropriate and if any new or increased fees are required to offset the true costs of development, especially in light of Act 60.
5. There needs to be a balance between allowing sufficient growth, at least within growth centers to facilitate their development, and the growth of the last ten years. Some of the growth that occurred during the earlier Master Plan periods was uncontrolled growth that stressed our municipal services and facilities and changed the character of Colchester.
6. The Town should permit development only where adequate public infrastructure now exists, is provided as a part of the project; or, is funded by the developer although the Town may use its bonding authority or ability to raise low cost capital and bill the entire cost back to landowners and users.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

7. During development review, if the Planning Commission determines that existing conditions currently cause excess runoff or pollution to the detriment of neighboring landowners, development will only be permitted if the applicant takes some reasonable steps to mitigate the problem.
8. Through the Future Land Use Map, zoning designations, and bylaws; residential development should be guided to occur within existing residential neighborhoods, or in mixed use growth centers. This will be in preference to undeveloped areas.
9. The Town should seek to preserve lands needed for public infrastructure, aesthetics, and improvements including, but not limited to: transportation corridors, drainage ways, schools, parks, open space, green space, views, and public buildings.
10. The conversion of seasonal homes should be permitted when standards applicable to new development are sufficiently met, including but not limited to health, sewage disposal, and zoning.

### **BUSINESS USES**

Colchester has a diverse and robust economy which is not dependant on one particular industry or employment sector. We host a number of high-tech firms, produce a significant amount of the county's produce, and the service sector provides the majority of jobs in Town. Tourism and recreation are also important and growing elements of the Town's economy.

Much of the recent growth in the commercial sector has been made possible by infrastructure improvements constructed in the Exit 16 area. The other most active area for business and commercial growth has been around Warner's Corner.

About 17% of the land area of Colchester is currently zoned for commercial, industrial or general business uses, these properties pay about 27% of the property taxes. As with residential growth, it will be important for the Town to accurately assess the real costs and benefits of commercial development.

Land available for new large commercial development in Colchester is limited by the availability of sewage disposal facilities. Many non-residential uses are not compatible with on-site waste disposal. The existing growth center at Exit 16 is expected to be fully built out within the time frame of this plan and opportunities for additional commercial development in Colchester will become increasingly limited.

Tourism is a historically important business sector in Colchester, and one that shows promise for growth in the future. This sector of the economy helps to generate jobs, can help to enhance aesthetics, and is not entirely dependant upon the local or even regional economy.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

Colchester currently has one big box retail store. Big box retail is considered to be retail buildings over 20,000 square feet. Even retail buildings less than that size should require architectural improvements such as those required at Exit 17. Strip development should generally be discouraged. Large scale retail and other formula businesses that create more negative impacts than positive within the community should be discouraged in favor of businesses that contribute to and are well integrated into the local economy. No new big box retail should be allowed in the future. GD-3 zoning at Severance Corners and GD-4 zoning at Exit 17 allows for more appropriately scaled retail development with rigorous design standards.

### **Goals**

The Town will promote a diverse economic base and encourage growth in commercial uses that generate jobs with salaries capable of supporting an individual or family while avoiding unmitigated impacts on the community, the environment, and on the municipal infrastructure. Concentrated commercial growth should be planned to occur in Town designated growth centers where services, including sanitary sewers, municipal water, and adequate roadways are present or can be expanded to keep pace with development.

Locally oriented commercial services should exist within or close to residential neighborhoods.

Tourism and recreation based commercial uses are recognized as desirable types of economic growth. Growth in these industries should be planned for with a focus on the Malletts Bay area and possibly other areas of Town.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. The Town will continue to encourage commercial development that generates jobs with salaries capable of supporting an individual or family within existing growth centers. Plans for each growth center should be developed to ensure that expansion of utilities and facilities keep pace with development and to ensure mitigation of any adverse impacts of development.
2. An increase in tourism should be sought and planned for that complements the character of the Town without an adverse effect on upon its residents.
3. During the next two years the Planning Commission will recommend changes to Colchester's zoning regulations for Select Board consideration, including the prohibition of new big box retail throughout the Town. In order to meet our goal of locally oriented commercial services existing within or close to residential neighborhoods, within the next year, the Planning Commission should propose for Select Board consideration regulations that permit appropriate small office uses in areas where they are currently prohibited providing these uses blend in with the character and aesthetics of the existing neighborhood. Promoting appropriate small office use in areas where currently

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

prohibited should facilitate growth of the type of small businesses that are and can remain a strong component of Colchester's economy.

4. During the duration of this plan any areas within the Severance Corners Growth Center should be allowed to be rezoned to GD 3 or any successor zoning district at any time. Also, applications submitted during this planning process but delayed by the Planning Commission due to uncertainties regarding Lakeshore Drive from Malletts Bay Avenue to Prim Road will be reviewed as soon as a new plan or an enhancement to the new plan is accepted by the Select Board.

### **AGRICULTURAL**

Colchester was primarily an agricultural community through at least the mid-1960's. Agricultural uses and lands remain an integral part of the economy and character of the community. About 20% of the land area in Colchester is currently zoned for Agricultural use. Agricultural lands accounted for about 8% of the Town grand-list value in 2000.

The economic viability of agricultural uses has declined regionally in recent years. This trend, combined with the continued high demand for residential development in Colchester, has resulted in frequent applications for re-zoning of agricultural land to residential districts.

#### **Goals**

Agricultural uses and lands should continue to be an integral part of the economy and community character in Colchester. This should be accomplished without unreasonably restricting the property rights of agricultural land owners. The economic viability of the local agricultural industry is important and should be protected.

#### **Policies and Implementation**

1. The Town's land use regulations should recognize a broad range of agricultural and a forestry activity as permitted uses within the Agricultural and Rural Residential districts in order to support the economic viability of farms.
2. The Town should support existing programs run by the State and land trust groups aimed at preserving farm land and consider implementing additional programs at the local level. Programs to be considered include transfer of development rights, purchase of development rights, soliciting grant funds, and current-use taxation. The Planning Commission should develop and propose specific initiatives during the next five years.
3. In reviewing applications to rezone agricultural land to residential districts the Town should consider whether development will be compatible with neighboring agricultural operations. Zone changes should not be permitted if residential uses are likely to conflict with neighboring agricultural uses.

4. Where proposed new residential developments neighbor existing farms or agricultural lands the new project should be designed to minimize conflicts between the uses. Increased set back distances should apply as well as enhanced landscaping and other mitigation measures.
5. All Town policies should support farming and appropriate agricultural industries.

### **INDIVIDUAL AREAS**

A number of distinct areas in Colchester require specific goals and strategies. These areas are described below. A map indicating the boundaries of the specific areas can be found in the map section.

**CLAY POINT AREA** - This area includes all land west of I-89, south of Route 2 and north of Bay Road (except the Exit 17 Growth Center and Creek Farm area). The Clay Point Area is geographically rugged, with striking lakeshore ledges, thick forests and numerous rock outcrops, beaver ponds and other wet areas. This area is currently zoned and developed for medium density residential use, both seasonal and year round. Due to its natural beauty this area attracts development, but there are a number of limits to development, including: poor roads, lack of public water supply, poor soils for sewage disposal and remoteness from services in general..

Another limit is the land set aside for Niquette Bay State Park.

#### **Goals**

This area should remain at a very low density of residential development.

#### **Policies and Implementation**

1. This area is designated as "Rural" on the Future Land Use Map.
2. Frontage on public roads should continue to be required for any new subdivisions, development on existing lots without frontage should be allowed only with Certificate of Appropriateness. Public roads should meet Public Works Standards before additional development is permitted. It is anticipated that planned revisions to the Public Works Standards, especially new options for narrower and unpaved rural roads, will be implemented by the time this plan is approved. The Planning Commission should not allow road standards to prohibit all development in this area.
3. Allowed development densities should not be increased beyond the levels allowed at the time of adoption of this plan.
4. A new zone designation might be considered to apply to this area as well as other low density residential areas (such as Mallets Head). The designation would permit low density residential uses, similar to the current Rural Residential zone, but would not include agricultural uses.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

**SEVERANCE CORNERS GROWTH CENTER-** This area surrounds the intersections of Severance Road, Rte. 7, Blakely Road and the planned Circumferential Highway. In 1998 the Planning Commission created a new zoning district, General Development 3, specific to this area to promote a dense, mixed use village type development pattern for this area. This is a natural area for a growth center since it is at the intersection of two arterial roadways as well as being an exit point for the proposed Circumferential Highway. The Town intends to take advantage of this superior location by creating a mixed use village type district which meets all the expectations of a "new urbanism", "smart growth", or "neo traditional" growth center. The area is intended to contain dense development, mixed uses, pedestrian amenities and connectivity, community spaces, while surrounded by rural development and open space.

The Town has approved this area as a sewer district. Currently the amount of wastewater capacity is insufficient to meet the build out potential for this district.

### **Goals**

This area is recognized as a gateway to Colchester and also as a future growth-center. A concentration of business/commercial/residential growth in this area supports the Town's economic development, transportation and land use plans. The Town will plan to accommodate additional development in this area in a manner that does not place a burden on the ability of the Town to provide services.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. During the next two years, the Planning Commission shall work with land owners and the Select Board to refine the GD-3 zoning district to possibly include offering higher densities, reduced setbacks, provisions for permanent affordable housing provisions, reduced road width options, and lighting specifications in exchange for increased open spaces, and provisions for permanent affordable housing and mitigating night glow.
2. Buffer areas around the periphery of the district to define the boundaries of the growth center should be maintained or preserved.
3. The Town should work with landowners to bring additional sewer capacity at their expense to this area or pursue alternatives that address the need for additional wastewater disposal.
4. The Town should develop equitable procedures for allocating available sewer capacity.
5. Buffer areas should be required to protect Sunderland Brook as a unique natural area.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

6. Infrastructure improvements should be required to accompany development, to be completed by developers, pursuant to a comprehensive plan for the area. Public funding as a special assessment district or through collection of impact fees may also be considered.
7. This area is designated as a Growth Center on the Future Land Use Map.

**TOWN SERVICES CENTER** - The area from the Town Office building to Bayside Park and including land west to the radio station and Hazelett Strip Casting and east to Smith Creek now serves as a Town center. Public and governmental uses including the Town Offices, Post Office, schools and recreational facilities are grouped in this area, sometimes referred to as "Malletts Bay". The area also has commercial services which help to support the Town center, including professional offices and small stores.

### **Goals**

This area should continue and be expanded to serve as a primary center of community activity in Colchester.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. Any future expansion of Town facilities should take place in this area if possible. The same is recommended for school facilities.
2. This is a high priority area for improvements to public infrastructure, especially transportation systems such as: roadways, intersections, sidewalks, street-lights, bus service and bike paths. Any expansion of this area along East Lakeshore Drive should be preceded by steps to eliminate the use of East Lakeshore Drive as an arterial roadway.
3. Larger pieces of undeveloped land in this area should be considered for re-zoning from residential to other categories that allow for development of governmental facilities, recreation facilities and/or professional and small scale commercial uses.
4. This area is designated as Village Mixed-use on the Future Land Use Map.

**WEST LAKESHORE DRIVE - MALLETTS BAY AVENUE TO PRIM ROAD** - The area of Lakeshore Drive from the corner of Malletts Bay Avenue to the corner of Prim Road is recognized as an important asset for the Town. With the Town beach, several private marinas and boat clubs, and the State of Vermont Fishing access, this is the center of recreational use on Malletts Bay, as well as for a variety of commercial and service uses. A fixture of this area is the Hazelett Stripcasting Company, an existing industrial use.

## COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN

---

Lakeshore Drive through this area carries heavy traffic volumes in excess of 10,000 vehicles/day. This road serves local road functions as well as regional arterial highway functions. The current configuration and condition of the road need significant improvement.

Commercial uses in this area serve recreational activities, local residents and regional commuters. Some commercial structures in this area are in poor condition and, recently have experienced a high turnover rate.

### Goals

This area should continue to be the focus of the community's recreational use of Mallets Bay and serve as a commercial and social center for the Mallets Bay area of Colchester. The neighborhood should be improved to better provide services and recreational access for residents and tourists. The Hazelett Company should remain as an employment center in this area and expand as needed.

### Policies and Implementation

1. Within two years of approval of this plan, the Planning Commission should propose to the Select Board a new plan for this area that meets the expectations of landowners and all citizens, taking advantage of focus groups and work sessions which model various development options to accurately gauge citizen input. This plan should examine and make recommendations on the following:
  - (a) Work with the Water Quality Committee to investigate the need and opportunities for sewage disposal improvements, including the possibility of municipal sewers.
  - (b) Work with the recommendations of the Route 127 Corridor Study and the appropriate bodies to investigate the need and opportunities for providing safe and efficient pedestrian access in this area.
  - (c) Zoning bylaws, especially regarding setbacks and whether changes are recommended.
  - (d) Costs and benefits to the community of transportation, sewage disposal, and other improvements to this neighborhood.
2. This area is designated as Village Mixed Use on the Future Land Use Map and this designation may change during this five-year period depending on the results of the planning work noted above.
3. Once a plan has been accepted by the Town, it is anticipated that this area will undergo development and require new infrastructure including sidewalks. As noted elsewhere in this plan, developers should construct or pay for facilities which are required to support their projects and the Town should not allow development to have unmitigated adverse effects on the Town's ability to provide services. However, by the same token,

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

developers and future users should not be required to pay for more than their fair share to remediate existing infrastructure deficiencies.

**EAST LAKESHORE DRIVE - BAYSIDE TO NORSE'S CORNER** - This is one of the longest section of roads immediately abutting Lake Champlain; there are many fine scenic vistas. The area is currently developed with a high density of camps and year-round residences. A number of physical deficiencies, including non-conforming sewage disposal systems, erosion and slumpage of steep banks, and chronic drainage problems make the narrow strip of land between the road and the shoreline less than an ideal setting for structures. Traffic counts indicate East Lakeshore Drive is used as an arterial roadway (likely as Route 127 bypass). This traffic combined with a substandard road creates safety problems.

**Goals**

In this area, to the extent possible, density of structures between Lakeshore Drive and Malletts Bay in this area should be reduced while respecting the property rights of the owners. Sewage disposal problems need to be addressed for many of these properties. Erosion of steep banks threatens private structures as well as roads, drainage structures and other public facilities; a comprehensive solution is needed. A permanent solution to the traffic safety problem should be developed during the next five years or earlier as part of an expansion of the Town Services Center.

**Policies and Implementation**

1. The Town should encourage the Colchester Land Trust, Lake Champlain Land Trust and similar groups to establish a program to purchase properties from willing sellers.
2. The Town's water quality monitoring program should be continued. An on-site sewage disposal management program should be developed to determine the scope of pollution from this source and to require and assist homeowners to maintain their systems.
3. The Town should develop a plan that provides a long-term solution to the traffic safety problems and to the effects of unstable banks that affect the road and other public infrastructure. If possible, the traffic safety improvements should be implemented before major construction begins at the Severance Corners Growth Center. This plan should be coordinated as closely as possible with private efforts in order to create a uniform and continuous barrier to erosion.
4. The possibility of establishing a Transfer of Development Rights program for this area should be considered, with the land between the road and the shoreline designated as a sending area and the opposite side of the road considered as well as other prime areas for residential development as a receiving areas for development density.
5. This is designated as a Suburban Residential area on the Future Land Use Map.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

**POOR FARM ROAD** - This unpaved road extends from Blakely Road to Route 7. Of the 13 parcels ranging in size from 2.4 AC to 90 AC, 10 are zoned Agricultural (1 dwelling unit per 25 acres) and 2 are zoned R-1 (1 dwelling unit per acre). This area is seen as an outstanding rural setting. There are several areas of road safety concern including the intersections with Rte. 7 and with Blakely Road and parts of Poor Farm Road itself.

### **Goals**

The Poor Farm Road area should remain rural in character.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. Maintain low density Agricultural or Rural Residential zoning designations.
2. The Town should continue its policy of prohibiting connection to the Poor Farm Road sewer line.
3. Even relatively low densities of development may require some improvement to Poor Farm Road and its intersections to be funded by developers. This should be studied and considered in conjunction with any development proposals with new development not allowed unless recommended road improvements are also accomplished. Construction at the Severance Corners Growth Center may increase the use of the Route 7 and Poor Farm Road intersection. If so, the Town should take steps to correct this situation.
4. This area is designated as Rural on the Future Land Use Map.

**PRIM ROAD/WARNER'S CORNER/HEINEBERG DRIVE** - This area includes parcels fronting on all of Prim Road; as well as on Macrae Road, Heineberg Drive and Porters Point Road in the immediate area of Warner's Corner. Warner's Corner is a gateway to the Town from the City of Burlington. It is currently developed with a high density of commercial and professional office uses around Warner's Corner surrounded by medium density residential neighborhoods.

Heineberg Drive and Prim Road function as regional arterial roads and also serve local road functions, with many curb cuts. Porters Point Road functions as an arterial road. Traffic is heavy throughout the area and there are generally no sidewalks.

Land fronting the west side of Prim Road is zoned for Commercial and General Development, but development potential is limited by wetlands and poor sewage disposal capacity. Land on the east side of Prim Road is zoned for residential use but development potential is limited in some areas by low sewage disposal potential and/or steep ledges. Prim Road's function as a regional arterial roadway also makes approval of additional curb-cuts inadvisable.

**Goals**

This area is a gateway to Colchester. Substantial effort needs to be invested to improve the look and feel of this area to create a sense of welcome to those entering the Town. The Warner's Corner and Prim Road areas are appropriate for the existing levels of commercial services surrounded by medium and lower density residential occupancy. More residential and non-residential development is anticipated and will not harm the character of this area. Facilities need to be improved, however, if additional development is to be accommodated; pedestrian and traffic safety are of prime concern and sewage disposal potential is limited.

The Warner's Corner area should continue to serve as a Village Mixed Use area but new development should not be permitted unless the necessary infrastructure is available. A reduction in the amount of regional traffic using Heineberg Drive and Prim Road is desired and would result from the completion of the Circumferential Highway.

This area is a gateway to Colchester. Substantial effort needs to be invested to improve the look and feel of this area to create a sense of welcome to those entering our town.

**Policies and Implementation**

1. The Town will work with the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the State to create a gateway entrance to the Town starting from Heineberg Bridge. This may include a boulevard, center median, lighting improvements, Class 1 bike paths, and sidewalks.
2. In the next year, the Planning Commission should develop design standards that preserve the residential look of the area adjacent to Heineberg Bridge.
3. New curb-cuts to Heineberg Drive and Prim Road are to be discouraged.
4. Developers should construct any new public improvements directly related to their projects, including sidewalks.
5. Planned Unit Developments should be encouraged to integrate uses, coordinate access, and provide for public spaces in the General Development area.
6. Completion of the Circumferential Highway between I-89 and the Northern Connector is important to provide an alternate east/west roadway to relieve traffic congestion on Prim Road and Heineberg Drive and improve traffic safety. The Town should make this the highest priority section of the Circumferential Highway within Colchester and pursue its completion at every opportunity.
7. The development goals for this area should be considered in the Town's comprehensive wastewater facilities plan.

7.8. This area is designated as Village Mixed Use on the Future Land Use Map.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

**SEASONAL CAMP COMMUNITIES** - Several lakeshore areas are developed with seasonal camp communities. These communities were generally constructed in the 1940's and 1950's for seasonal recreational use. Many camps have been owned by successive generations of the same families. The family oriented recreational nature of these areas remains an important part of Colchester's character, although there has been no new development of seasonal camps in recent years.

The camp communities share many of the following characteristics; seasonal occupancy, lake-front locations, high density of structures, individually owned camps on leased land or small subdivided lots.

The larger of these communities are the Sand Dunes, Colchester Point, Mills Point, Spauldings West Shore, Porters Point, Coates Island and Goodsell Point which together account for about 300 units. There are also smaller, similarly configured groups of units, notably along Lakeshore Drive. Although constructed for use as camps, many of the units within these areas are currently occupied year round and used as primary residences. At Mills Point about half of the units are now occupied year round and Goodsell Point and Porters Point have also seen many such conversions.

The infrastructure serving these communities is old and generally privately owned. Substandard conditions often exist for sewage disposal, water supply and roads. The substandard infrastructure is as serious an issue where occupancy is seasonal but conversion of these units to year round occupancy can cause problems because of increased loading of substandard sewage systems, poor winter road conditions, lack of potable water and other factors.

Many of the units within the camp communities are currently defined as "non-conforming" by the zoning bylaw because there are multiple structures on a single lot which is not permitted without prior subdivision approval.

On October 24, 2000 the Select Board adopted the following policy intended to clarify the Town's position regarding seasonal homes in response to recent State legislation. This policy may change if legislative changes occur at the State level:

In all cases where there are conversions from seasonal occupancy to year round occupancy, the Town will seek full compliance with the current regulations and if necessary bring enforcement action to obtain a court order prohibiting occupancy until full compliance with the zoning regulations. In these cases the Zoning Administrator will have the discretion to seek the imposition of fines as well.

In cases where the landowner/homeowner can establish that for a period in excess of 15 years the property has been occupied on a year round basis, the Zoning Administrator, after being satisfied that the property meets the 15 year requirement, will elect to take no action against year round occupancy. Only in the event that the Town can establish that there is a septic system failure will the Zoning Office consider taking any action in these situations.

In cases where there is some question as to whether year round occupancy has continued for a period of 15 years or greater, the Zoning Administrator will require that the landowner/homeowner establish 15 years of continuous occupancy. The decision to pursue an enforcement action will be made by the Zoning Administrator together with the Town Attorney based on the facts and circumstances of the particular case.

**Goals**

Seasonal camp uses are an important part of Colchester's heritage. These should be allowed to continue. However, to the extent possible substandard conditions and non-conformities associated with many of these communities need to be gradually eliminated. This is one of the more difficult areas of Town policy. Improvement and expansion of seasonal units, conversion from seasonal to year-round occupancy and extension of municipal services to seasonal camp communities, should be closely regulated in order to treat the owners fairly while avoiding adverse effects on the environment, public health, the character of the neighborhood or on the ability of the Town to provide municipal services.

**Policies and Implementation**

1. The delivery of municipal services to these areas should be improved, with the participation of camp owners and land owners. The extension of municipal utilities and services, including; water supply, roads, and possibly sewers, to the seasonal camp communities, should occur, but with restrictions that discourage unapproved conversion to year-round occupancy.
2. Municipal facilities extended to camp communities should meet all applicable standards of the subdivision regulations, zoning bylaw, public works standards, and health regulations. Piece-meal extension of utilities, or extension of utilities that do not meet current standards should be prohibited.
3. Conversion of seasonal camps to year-round occupancy is to be permitted only where all applicable zoning, subdivision, health, sewage disposal, and building standards that apply to new developments are met by the proposed conversion. Waiver opportunities within the regulations shall be considered in cases where existing non-complying conditions are improved, however the increase in impacts must also be considered.
4. Within the next three years, the Planning Commission should propose zoning changes that preserve the integrity of current zoning but which reduce the number of non-

conforming properties. Any regulatory change must not reduce the Town's ability to protect the environment, public health and safety, and its ability to provide municipal services.

5. The improvement and/or replacement of pre-existing substandard sewage disposal systems should be encouraged. Health regulations should be complied with, where possible. Where regulations can not be met, improvements should be permitted and encouraged within the guidelines dictated by the State of Vermont.

**FORT ETHAN ALLEN/CAMP JOHNSON** - The predominate land uses within this area are St. Michael's College, Fort Ethan Allen, Fletcher Allen Health Care - Fanny Allen Campus and Camp Johnson. Residential development exists in multi-family housing at Fort Ethan Allen, and a mobile home park near Camp Johnson.

Saint Michael's College is a self-contained facility with a close relationship to the Town. Rescue and fire services are coordinated, as is the use of St. Michael's recreational facilities. The College currently has plans to remove older residences and replace them elsewhere on the campus.

Fort Ethan Allen, a historic complex of buildings presently provides for commercial, industrial, institutional and residential uses in a unique setting on Route 15. The Fort property is under the ownership of St. Michael's College, the University of Vermont and individual private land holders.

Redevelopment of Fort Ethan Allen has proceeded over the past 25 years. Residential housing has been created, businesses have moved into some buildings and the parade grounds have been developed as a park.

Camp Johnson is under Federal ownership. It is currently used for training and administrative activities for the Vermont National Guard and contains considerable vacant land. Due to its proximity to the Rte. 15 and Exit 16 transportation hubs, to sewer service and to other industrial areas it was previously seen as a prime area for industrial development, should it ever be transferred from federal ownership. However, due to its sand plains, other natural resources, and impacts on existing landowners on Route 15, should it ever be transferred from federal ownership, extensive planning will be needed for this area.

To get to this area one must leave Colchester and travel through either Winooski or Essex. A private road through the Camp from Route 7 to Route 15 exists at this time; it is open only at the discretion of the Camp command and is unpaved and poorly maintained.

All of this area is either serviced by sewers or is within the planned expansion area for the municipal sewer system. This is the only area of Town presently served by CCTA and this service should be maintained.

**Goals**

The campus/institutional character of this area is important and should be enhanced. The existing mixed-use character of Fort Ethan Allen is desirable and should continue. The current military use should remain as long as it is necessary from a State and National perspective. To preserve valuable utility resources for other planned growth centers, open spaces, sand plains, and other valuable natural resources, if agreeable to the current owners, Camp Johnson should be down-zoned to prevent unwanted growth should the military use ever be deemed no longer necessary. The various institutions along Rte. 15 should become more interconnected physically and aesthetically.

Upgrading Exit 15 to allow exiting and entrance in both directions, or at least adding a public road connecting from Rte. 15 to Hercules Drive in Colchester, is needed to improve traffic flow between Rte. 15 and the Exit 16 area.

**Policies and Implementation**

1. A full interchange at Exit 15 or a connection road between Exit 16 and Rte. 15 should be aggressively pursued by the Town.
2. A Rte. 15 corridor study and plan should be developed to consider the relationship between the various institutional/campus uses. Future development proposals and plans should include intersection improvements, sidewalks and/or transportation paths and landscaping to enhance the character of the area.
3. This area, with the exception of Camp Johnson which is designated as a Military Use, has been designated as Village Mixed Use on the Future Land Use Map. As noted above this designation may change during the duration of this plan.

**SHIPMAN HILL** – This area consists of the agricultural lands located along Malletts Bay Avenue and Lavigne Road, at the top of Shipman Hill. This area's unique characteristic is the farming community located within its boundaries. Climate, soils, location and property ownership have made this area a center of farming operations which produce vegetables, fruits, eggs, dairy products, flowers and landscape plantings. Several of the farmers are able to capitalize on their location by running very active farm stand operations.

The level topography, well drained soils and proximity to population centers that make this area ideal for truck farms also makes the land very attractive for residential development. At this time several major residential subdivisions are underway nearby (Edgewood, Williams Crossing, Farmington Hills, Blakely Woods, etc.).

The Shipman Hill farms are seen by many residents as an important part of Colchester's community character. As the land becomes increasingly valuable for development, as compared with agriculture, some owners can be expected to request rezoning of their land. Balancing the

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

owner's rights to enjoy the full value of their land and the goal of preserving the farms will be difficult.

The large land areas attractively situated for development could lead to large impacts on the community if detailed planning does not occur prior to approval of any rezoning or development proposals.

### **Goals**

The Shipman Hill farms are an important part of Colchester's economy, community character and heritage. The Town seeks to retain and support these farms. Land owners, however, must be allowed the highest and best use of their land, where such use is compatible with adjoining uses and in conformance with Town standards. Now is the time for Colchester to take steps to try to preserve these farms. During the next five years the Town should develop a plan to encourage the continued agricultural use of this area while preserving landowner value. Transfer of development rights should be considered. However, to be effective, such a plan will likely require extensive financial resources to purchase development rights from landowners at reasonable market values (estimated to be in excess of five million dollars).

Concurrently, during the next five years, the Planning Commission should work with landowners and the Select Board to develop an alternative plan in case efforts to preserve this entire area as working farms are unsuccessful. This plan should facilitate appropriate development of parcels when desired by landowners that allows for continued farming on adjacent properties, is primarily clustered residential development, is connected to resources in the Town Services Center and includes appropriate small scale neighborhood oriented commercial uses. This area is not suitable for a new urbanism growth center but there is an opportunity to develop a new, Colchester specific, appropriately scaled, mixed use neighborhood. This area, including the farm lands along Malletts Bay Avenue should have a special designation on the future land use map to indicate both options.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. The Town should investigate obtaining grants from land preservation organizations and foundations to provide land owners with the market value for their land (e.g. purchasing development rights) in order to preserve the current uses and character of this area. This needs to be a Town priority even if small amounts of local funding are required to match grant funds.
2. Policies aimed at farm-land preservation, possibly to include transfer of development rights with the Shipman Hill farms designated as "sending" areas should be considered.
3. The Town should implement existing regulations and consider new regulations with an objective of protecting the economic viability of the farms. Expansion of farm stand retail operations run in conjunction with active farms should be considered. Bylaw revisions

## COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN

---

should be considered to allow additional structures for housing of farm help and to require increased setbacks for new residential uses which abut farms.

4. Piecemeal rezoning of agricultural land in this area to residential use should be discouraged in order to avoid conflicts between residential and agricultural uses. Over the next five years, the Town should also pursue a new zoning district for the area that encourages farm land preservation while permitting landowners to take advantage of residential cluster development opportunities with provisions for integrated appropriate neighborhood oriented, small scale commercial uses. The zoning should also include provisions to promote connectivity of each new development to the Town Services Center. The Future Land Use Map should create a new designation reflecting the Town's plans for this area.
5. The Town should investigate changing the assessments in this area to reflect their agricultural value during this period in order to facilitate their continued use as farmland.
6. If residential development occurs in this area, it should be accomplished in a way that preserves as much usable agricultural land as possible. All new residential development must include provisions to the right of landowners right to farm. Every effort should be made to ensure that development assists the continued viability of farming in the area and not vice versa.

**MALLETTS BAY AVENUE SOUTH TO WINOOSKI** - This is the area accessed by Malletts Bay Avenue south of Shipman Hill, extending to Winooski, it includes extensive floodplain, active farms and residential areas. Some of the floodplain areas are currently used for agriculture. Residential development extends to the border of Winooski and considerable new home construction has occurred in recent years. The presence of Whitcomb's Quarry to the east of this area affects its potential for residential development. As additional residences have been constructed near the quarry in recent years (Carriage Hill, Farmington Hills, etc.) there have been increasing complaints about the blasting activity. Zone district designations through this area are varied, with adjoining parcels zoned as residential, agricultural, industrial and wetland/floodplain. Malletts Bay Avenue through this area does not meet current design standards. It has several curves that limit sight distance and its cross section and surface conditions are not ideal.

### **Goal**

To see development occur which is compatible with the varied environmental conditions in this area and which does not exceed the capacity of Malletts Bay Avenue or other infrastructure.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. Wetlands and floodplains are not to be developed here, or in other parts of Colchester.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

2. During the development of future Master Plans, rezoning of non-wetland agricultural lands to allow residential use might be considered but only approved if the use is not found to conflict with neighboring uses.
3. As noted earlier, the new zoning designation to be developed for the Shipman Hill area will also include the farmlands along Malletts Bay Avenue.

**COLCHESTER VILLAGE** - Colchester Village is the area extending along Main Street (Rte. 2A) for about 2 miles east from Rte. 7 and including the Creek Farm neighborhood west of Route 7. This area has much of the character expected of New England Towns but not found elsewhere in Colchester, including old homes close to the road, corner stores, churches, small businesses and public buildings all in a compact setting. As the population has grown in the south-western portion of Town, the role of the Village as a Town center has declined but it remains a distinct and important neighborhood.

The Village is accessible to surrounding areas due to its location on Routes 2, 7 and 2A although the intersection of these routes is poorly designed and needs to be improved. There are soils with good potential for on-site sewage disposal indicating that additional development can be accommodated.

Traffic volumes on Rte. 2A through the Village are quite heavy, detracting from its character. The Circumferential Highway has been partially completed and now terminates at Rte. 2A in Essex, just to the east of the Village, greatly increasing traffic volumes through the Village.

### **Goals**

The Town seeks to protect and enhance the historic character of the Village. Additional development should be compatible with the existing scale of the neighborhood.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. The White Church/Meeting House has been improved to meet current standards for public buildings while preserving its historic character. The Town should make every effort to see that this valuable resource is actively used and maintained.
2. The Town should promote the completion of the Circumferential Highway in order to curtail the dumping of regional truck and commuter traffic onto Main Street.
3. The Town should work actively at the Regional and State levels to accelerate improvements made to the intersections along Rte. 7 between Bay Road and Creek Farm Road.
4. The Town has been vigilant in not allowing the Village to expand North or South into rural areas. This policy should continue. This area is designated as Village Mixed Use on the Future Land Use Map.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

5. Although it has not happened during the previous five years, this is an area of Town which would benefit from additional residential and small commercial development and especially redevelopment of the Creek Farm Shopping Plaza. The Planning Commission has unanimously supported mixed use development with design review standards appropriate to the historic nature and scale of the Village.

**MALLETTS HEAD/MARBLE ISLAND** - This is the headland extending into Malletts Bay and defining the boundary between the inner and outer bays. Malletts Head has low density, year round and seasonal residential uses as well as commercial recreational uses at the Marble Island Resort and Brown Ledge Camp. There are also significant natural areas, including three undeveloped hills which are prominent natural landscapes, particularly as seen from the water.

A Master Plan for Marble Island Resort has been approved by both the Town and the State which includes 58 new residential units, modified golf course, expanded marina, and improved infrastructure. The residential uses in this area have also been upgraded, with expansions, renovations and conversions from seasonal to year round use.

Access to this area is by private roads which have been improved in recent years but which still do not meet Town Standards.

### **Goals**

The low density, often high value, homes in this area are a valuable asset to the community. The continued predominance of these uses in the Marble Island area is desired. The Marble Island Resort is recognized as an important business and an asset to the community. The Marble Island Resort is also important both as a recreational resource for residents and as an important part of the tourism sector of the Town's economy and these benefits should be continued if possible. The Town should do whatever it can to mitigate the conflicts which occur between the residential and commercial uses in this area. The Marble Island Resort provides the only public access to Lake Champlain between the State Boat Launch and the Causeway and this is an important function to be protected and enhanced.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. Development applications, both residential and non-residential, in this area need to be carefully evaluated for compatibility with surrounding uses.
2. Revised zoning should be planned to retain as much open "green" area as possible. The land currently zoned RR should be rezoned to continue at a low development. Creation of a new zone designation may be necessary to accomplish this. Such a designation would have application in other areas appropriate for low density residential use.
3. The right of Brown Ledge Camp to keep horses for their camp use should be in no way limited.

4. Land currently associated with the resort should be designated to allow continued commercial/recreational uses but with incompatible uses prohibited. Here again, a new zone district might be needed, one which might apply to other commercial developments on the lakeshore and other particularly sensitive areas.
5. The Town should work with the owners of the resort to help ensure continued public access to the recreational opportunities and the natural resources of the Marble Island area.
6. The natural area, with views, at the crest of Malletts Head should be considered for acquisition by a Land Trust or the Town.
7. The land currently associated with the resort is designated as Village Mixed-use on the Future Land Use Map, residential areas are designated as Suburban Residential.

**EXIT 17** - Exit 17 provides a full interchange with I-89, at Rte. 7 and Rte. 2. This is a transportation hub and has been designated by the Town as a growth center. The area within the growth center is sparsely developed, with a few residences and businesses. Municipal water exists within the Rte. 7 right-of-way. There is currently no municipal sewer and soils are generally not well suited for on-site disposal. While the intersection of Route 2 and 7 has been improved and signalized, the interchange off ramps are functioning poorly and are high accident locations.

**Goal**

The Exit 17 area is designated as a growth-center and should host significant new development. As called for in the 1996 Master Plan, the Planning Commission has developed a comprehensive development plan for this area. The Select Board unanimously adopted the Plan on August 22, 2000. Comprehensive zoning regulations required for this plan's implementation have been developed and adopted.

**Policies and Implementation**

1. All new development in the Growth Center shall be in accordance with the new Exit 17 Growth Center Plan (2000).
2. The Town should work more closely with the Town of Milton on development of related infrastructure issues.
3. The growth center goals for this area should be considered by the Town in formulating a comprehensive wastewater plan, and options for improved sewage disposal capacity should be investigated and pursued within the next two years.
4. This area is designated as a Growth Center on the Future Land Use Map.

**LAKESHORE AREA** - This area is the shoreline of Lake Champlain, Malletts Bay, and the Winooski and Lamoille Rivers. Colchester's most distinct characteristic is Lake Champlain. The Town has about 30 miles of shoreline and almost fully surrounds roughly 10 square miles of Lake Champlain. Lake Champlain strongly influences our economy, land use patterns, and everyday life in the community. Our land use patterns in the proximity of the shoreline have a profound effect on the Lake.

Views of Colchester from the Lake generally belie the developed nature of the Town. The Town generally appears as lightly developed. The areas where development has not been sensitive to the view from the lake appear all the more blighted within the otherwise attractive view.

All developed shoreline areas are currently served by on-site sewage disposal, there are no municipal sewers. Where sewage disposal systems are close to the Lake there is an increased chance of water pollution from system failures.

**Goals**

Colchester's shoreline is among its most valuable natural resources and needs to be protected. The Town seeks to preserve the natural growth and cover of the shorelines adjacent to Lake Champlain and other waterways, to preserve the water quality and prevent pollution and to control and regulate development of the shorelines, to prevent erosion, and to respect the property rights of the shoreline property owners.

**Policies and Implementation**

1. The shoreline should be defined separately in the Zoning Regulations and other bylaws, with special conditions applying to development, as further described below.
2. Public access to the shoreline, both visual and physical, should be protected and, where possible, enhanced.
3. The shoreline area should be considered to begin at the elevation of 95.5 feet above sea level and be measured inland no more than 500 feet.
4. The Town should work towards a long-term solution to the problem of shoreline erosion where it affects public infrastructure. This plan should be coordinated as closely as possible with private efforts in order to create a uniform and continuous barrier to erosion.

**EXIT 16**

Exit 16 is a densely developed commercial and industrial area which includes three large chain hotels, wholesale warehouses, manufacturing facilities, distribution facilities, restaurants, and numerous high end office buildings. This growth center geographically includes all four sides of the interchange exit, extends north to Sunny Hollow, and extends south to the Winooski border. The largest developments include Office Park at Water Tower Hill, Colchester Business Park,

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

and The Meadows Industrial Park. The entire area is served by municipal water and municipal sewer extends south of Rathe Road. The area is largely built out although further development is anticipated at Water Tower Hill, in the area surrounding the former Rathe landfill, as well as infill development throughout the growth center. Currently this area includes very limited mixed use and few pedestrian amenities.

### **Goal**

This growth center shall continue to be the dominant industrial and commercial center in Colchester. This growth center is currently devoid of a residential or mixed use component. The Town and Planning Commission shall encourage mixed use development where appropriate within this growth center. It is expected that this growth center shall be built out in its entirety to maximize the amenities of the area while ensuring that additional industrial and large scale commercial land does not become necessary.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. The Planning Commission shall work with Colchester Community Development Corporation (CCDC) and area landowners to investigate where mixed use development may be appropriate and viable within the growth center. Areas identified as appropriate should be rezoned to accommodate these new uses. These areas should be rezoned immediately without having to wait for the next Master Plan process if using an existing zoning district model such as GD-3 or GD-4.
2. The Planning Commission, landowners, CCDC, the Department of Public Works, and the State Agency of Transportation shall work to solve the traffic problems in this area in order to encourage full build-out of the growth center.
3. During the next five years, the Planning Commission shall adopt design guidelines for this growth center to be used during the development review process.
4. A connection road to Route 15 from Route 7 and/or the construction of a full interchange at Exit 15 should be pursued by the Town in cooperation with Camp Johnson, the City of Winooski, the MPO and the State Agency of Transportation.
5. Residential structures in this area of Town are perhaps best suited to meet our goal of locally oriented commercial services existing within or close to residential neighborhoods. Commercial uses should be permitted within this area when the Planning Commission proposes regulations that permit appropriate small office uses in areas where they are currently prohibited. This should facilitate growth of the type of small businesses that are and can remain a strong component of Colchester's economy.

### **NORTHEAST QUADRANT (EAST OF ROUTE 7 AND NORTH OF THE VILLAGE)**

This area is the most rural area of Colchester and is characterized by small farms, large residential lots, inappropriate soils for on-site septic systems, and difficult terrain to develop.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

The area has two main transportation routes bisecting the area in East Road and Middle Road. East Road is becoming more of a commuter route recently with the development of Husky in Milton. This area is also home to Colchester Pond which is owned and managed by the Winooski Valley Park District.

### **Goal**

The rural and agricultural character of this area shall be preserved. The area should continue to be zoned as low density residential or agricultural in order to limit growth. The soils and transportation network are not sufficient to support large scale development while many important natural features make large scale development here inappropriate.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. The zoning districts shall remain very low density residential or agricultural. Parcels south of the railroad tracks and Austin House Road and east of Middle Road may be rezoned to R-10. Parcels north of the railroad tracks should not be zoned less than R-25 or agricultural.
2. The preservation of additional land surrounding Colchester Pond should be encouraged; however, increased use of the park needs to be fully assessed in regard to the impact on neighbors and the environment.
3. The Town should work to ensure that East Road does not become a viable alternate commuter route to Route 7.
4. That land in this area should be considered as a "sending area" for any transfer of development rights program adopted by the Town. Development rights should be sent from this area to areas in Town where development is encouraged in order to preserve the rural character of this area.
5. This area is designated as Rural on the Future Land Use Map

---

**LOCAL GROWTH CENTERS**

**SECTION THREE**

---

### **NEW SECTION III: LOCAL GROWTH CENTERS**

Local Growth Centers, modeled upon the new urbanism which calls for higher density, compact, well integrated, mixed use development are to be the primary areas for new development in Colchester. Developers (or Local Growth Center residents and businesses) should be required to pay for the extension and upgrade of infrastructure (e.g., municipal water and sewer) required to support these densities and the amenities required to make these areas desirable and livable (common parks, bike paths, walkways, access to public transportation etc.) Uses appropriate for Local Growth Centers include light industrial, office, restaurant, retail and a variety of businesses. There must be a high level of integration between the high density residential development and non-residential uses. Multi-family and high density single family residential are strongly encouraged as permitted uses in Local Growth Centers while R-1 and R-2 zoning do not belong in Local Growth Centers. Building heights (including 3 to 4 story structures) in Local Growth Centers will be higher than other areas of Town providing they can be blended into the topography are visually compatible with the area and include architectural features that mitigate the visual impacts.

Colchester has actively planned for and is encouraging development in three local growth centers which are Exit 16, Exit 17, and Severance Corners. The previous plan indicated two other growth centers; Lakeshore Drive West and Shipman Hill. Based upon input from random focus groups, this plan states that further review and public input is needed to determine the type and extent of additional development along Lakeshore Drive West. In updating this plan, it was agreed upon that the Shipman Hill area was not a suitable area for a growth center and a new plan for the Shipman Hill area of Town should be developed that acknowledges the rights of the property owners in the vicinity and the Towns wish to help preserve farms with fair compensation.

#### **EXIT 16**

Exit 16 is a densely developed commercial and industrial area. Uses existing in this area includes three large chain hotels; wholesale warehouses; heavier industrial such as manufacturing facilities; a working quarry, distribution facilities, restaurants, and numerous high end office buildings. This growth center geographically includes all four sides of the interchange exit, extends north to Sunny Hollow, and extends south to the Winooski border. The largest developments include Office Park at Water Tower Hill, Colchester Business Park, and The Meadows Industrial Park. The entire area is served by municipal water and municipal sewer. The area is largely built out although further development is anticipated at Water Tower Hill, in the area surrounding the former Rathe landfill, as well as infill development throughout the growth center. Currently this area includes very limited mixed use and few pedestrian amenities. Encouraging mixed use development and pedestrian facilities is important for this area.

#### **EXIT 17**

The Exit 17 growth center is largely undeveloped with some storage warehouse uses, other light industrial uses, and limited residential development. The Planning Commission and Select

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

Board adopted a Growth Center Plan for the Exit 17 area in 2000 which calls for a mixed use development that will allow for industrial, commercial and residential development with limited retail opportunities. The area is characterized by poor soils unsuitable for conventional wastewater disposal. The Town has been actively pursuing sewer capacity and decentralized wastewater systems for this area and the Exit 17 Growth Center Plan encourages the Town and property owners to pursue wastewater options to allow this area to develop.

### **SEVERANCE CORNERS**

Severance Corners is currently undeveloped but is located at an important transportation hub at the intersection of Route 7, Blakely/Severance Road, and the future Circumferential Highway. The area is confined to properties around the intersection and future interchange and is surrounded by low and rural density zoning districts. The Town has adopted zoning district for this area (GD-3) which requires mixed use, dense, compact, and pedestrian oriented development. Plans for a number of developments at Severance Corners are already under consideration. The Commission should consider revising the zoning regulations to facilitate, possibly through transfer of development rights, the type of density required for a vibrant Colchester scaled local growth center while preserving the overall character of Colchester. Implementation of transfer of development rights should also be evaluated for the Town's other growth centers. The intention of this area is to be a model of "smart growth, new urbanism". In order for this vision to be reached additional wastewater disposal is necessary. The Town along with developers should pursue every opportunity to acquire additional wastewater disposal and preferably sewer capacity.

### **GROWTH CENTERS**

#### **Goal**

Colchester intends to preserve its rural character by not being subsumed as part of Burlington's urban core and distinguishing its local growth centers from much denser, higher, and larger buildings associated with growth centers with regional impacts. These local growth centers will be defined areas characterized by intensive development within the growth center and rural land uses on the periphery. Colchester intends that most of its residential and commercial growth over the next five years should occur in these local growth centers.

Colchester needs to ensure adequate infrastructure, paid for by developers, is available to support the densities required for growth centers. Additionally, growth at these local growth centers needs to be accomplished within the overall growth plans for the Town so that the demand for services does not exceed Colchester's ability to provide them and that growth does not excessively burden current residents and taxpayers. Colchester will maintain its rural character by not allowing growth centers to expand into rural areas.

**Policies and Implementation**

~~2.1~~ The Planning Commission and staff shall work to ensure that zoning regulations and other Town regulations and standards encourage the type and amount of growth expected within these growth centers. Issues to consider will be density, setbacks, infrastructure allowances and requirements, building height, parking, open space, lighting, natural feature protection, etc.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

~~3.2~~ The Planning and Zoning Department, other Town departments and Select Board should analyze existing policies and processes to ensure that growth is encouraged in growth centers. This may include revisions to fee schedules, zoning and subdivision regulations, etc.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

~~5.3~~ The Planning Commission shall facilitate additional public review of the future of the Lakeshore Drive West area. This review and input should address densities, uses, infrastructure, traffic and other issues deemed to be important by the Commission and public.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

4. During the next 5 years, the Planning Commission, Select Board, and Town staff shall work with interested Shipman Hill landowners to find mutually beneficial means to preserve the working farms in this area while developing a special new and appropriate zoning district for this area (and the adjacent lands along Malletts Bay Avenue).

---

**TRANSPORTATION**

**SECTION FOUR**

---

## IV. TRANSPORTATION

### INTRODUCTION

Transportation systems are among the most important considerations as the Town works to manage its future. Planning should drive infrastructure (as opposed to letting infrastructure determine planning). As soon as the Water Quality Committee makes its recommendations to the Town, Colchester should review its transportation plans to ensure they are compatible and coordinated with any recommendations.

Current deficiencies need to be dealt with and the projected rate of growth and development will increase the demand placed on transportation systems. Maintenance and improvement of transportation infrastructure is the most costly service provided by the Town and has a tremendous effect on public health and safety. One of the biggest challenges facing the Town is to maintain a safe and efficient transportation network as cost effectively as possible.

The automobile is the primary means of transportation in Colchester at this time and is expected to remain so for the foreseeable future. However, Colchester must also provide for safe and connected alternate transportation modes.

Modes of transportation other than the private automobile include walking, bicycling, ride-sharing, buses, and other public transportation. There are benefits associated with alternative transportation modes including reduced traffic, reduced air and water pollution, less land required for parking, energy conservation and more. Safe and efficient transportation alternatives are of limited extent at this time and much improvement is needed.

In 1993, the Town, working with the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization, completed a comprehensive alternative transportation path plan. This document is scheduled to be revised in 2002 to include a comprehensive sidewalk plan for Colchester. The alternative transportation plan should be referred to for additional detail concerning the Town's goals and plans for alternative transportation.

### PUBLIC ROADS

The existing highway network is shown on the transportation map (map one). The Town has 106.7 miles of public roads, 22.9 miles of which are State Highways.

**Arterial Roads.** Arterial roadways carry traffic through an area to destinations outside the immediate neighborhood or community. Direct access to property should not be a function of arterial roadways although in Colchester these roadways also carry local traffic and provide the only means of access to large areas of developed and undeveloped land.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

The conflict between arterial and local road functions is especially pronounced for Rte. 127 which serves as a regional arterial highway although it is not designed or constructed to meet the standards of such a highway. This route also serves as the local road for very densely developed residential and commercial areas. An increase in local road functions would accompany the redevelopment of Severance Corners. The Town has, since at least 1964, recognized the need for a new east-west arterial route and the Circumferential Highway plan has been adopted by the Town to meet that need.

The proposed route for the Circumferential Highway through Colchester is, at the time of this writing, at various levels of definition. Full right-of-way acquisition has occurred for the route east of I-89 to the Essex Line. In 2000 the School Board sold School Land for the Highway west of I-89. Obtaining funding for this portion of the route should be a Colchester priority.

**Collector Roads.** Collector roads provide land access, and movement within neighborhoods, and a link between local and arterial roads.

**Local Roads.** Local roads serve primarily for land access, with links to collector and arterial roadways, including streets within subdivisions as well as roads in more remote areas. Design speeds are typically 25 mph. The existing local streets have been largely developed in conjunction with residential subdivisions. The local road system is not well interconnected, creating problems with maintenance, efficient traffic flow and public safety. Widths of local roads are inconsistent, varying from less than 20 to 30 feet.

A number of local roads are unpaved. Unpaved roads help areas retain their rural character and control growth. However, maintenance expenses for unpaved roads are much greater than those for paved roads. The drainage facilities for local streets are often poor, leading to flooding problems in the spring and accelerated decay of the street.

### **Goals**

The Town shall plan for, provide and maintain a safe and efficient roadway network as cost effectively as possible.

Arterial roadways should be constructed, improved and maintained to carry regional traffic safely and efficiently with a minimum design speed of 35 miles/hr. This should be accomplished while protecting the neighborhoods through which the arterial roadways pass.

The arterial roadway network should be extended or improved as necessary to remove regional traffic from local roads.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. The Town should take a more active role in the planning and siting of roads.

## COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN

---

2. Whenever possible, improvements to arterial roadways will be accomplished with State and Federal funding. The Town will pursue funding through the Metropolitan Planning Organization.
3. The Town should work to implement the recommendations of the Route 127 Corridor Study. It was the findings of this study that improvements to the Route 127 Corridor are necessary regardless of other planned new roads in the vicinity.
4. The entire Circumferential Highway through Colchester, between Essex and the Heineberg Bridge needs to be completed. The Town will pursue and promote this project with the Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Circumferential Highway District and other necessary means. During the next five years, Colchester should work for the purchase of all right of ways required for the route west of I-89.
5. New curb-cuts to arterial roadways will be avoided, with shared curb-cuts and side streets utilized for access wherever possible. Interconnectivity between developments should be encouraged.
6. Traffic studies for development applications will address, at a minimum, the impacts on adjacent roads, neighboring intersections and major corridors in the area that staff identify as potentially being impacted. Additionally, traffic studies will include a project's impact on alternative transportation (pedestrian, bicycle, wheelchair) and its adherence to the Town Alternate Transportation Plan and the goals and objectives identified in this plan. Developments that would result in or contribute to failed roadways (category E or worse) should be denied unless the Commission determines there are sufficient mitigating benefits.
7. Land development projects are to be evaluated for their effect on the capacity of existing roadways and approved only where the level of service of the roadways, considering their functional classification, is currently sufficient and will not be unacceptably reduced by the development.
8. A new arterial roadway connecting between Hercules Drive and Rte. 15 would decrease travel time, increase efficiency, and reduce traffic volumes in the Exit 16 area and in Winooski's central business district. This is a project with regional significance and should be pursued in conjunction with the Regional Planning Commission, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the U.S. Army Administration.
9. Local streets should be interconnected to the greatest extent possible.
10. The Town should ensure that roadways constructed or improved by developers, other private parties and the Town provide for public safety, efficiency and cost effective maintenance.

11. During the next five years, the Planning Commission shall work with the Department of Public Works, Police Department, and both Fire Departments to study and amend the road width standards in the Public Works Standards in order to develop a variety of roadway options if possible including reduced road widths and more varied sidewalk options including the use of Class 1 multi-use paths in place of sidewalks.
12. The creation of cul-de-sacs will be discouraged. New cul-de-sacs will be designed to be temporary and to provide future connections whenever possible. At a minimum, Class 1 multi modal paths shall be provided to link cul-de-sacs with other streets should the Commission decide not to use roads to connect to adjacent streets.

### **PRIVATE ROADS**

Private roads are common in several areas, especially the points of land into the Lake (Colchester Point, Porters Point, Malletts Head, Goodsell Point, Mills Point, Clay Point, etc.). These roads are typically unpaved, of substandard width and have poor drainage. Some private roads serve a significant number of residences. The Town often receives applications to develop new building lots on private roads. The majority of private roads have continued to be plowed by the Town.

Problems associated with private roads include substandard design, unreliable maintenance, lack of emergency access, poor traffic safety, and property disputes among owners. Private owners are often unable or unwilling to fund improvements or maintenance.

As Colchester develops its unique vision of local growth centers, the Town should evaluate the use of new privately maintained roads as a tool to ensure that the benefits of high density new urbanism development in sewer districts does not result in an undue burden on town services.

#### **Goal**

The Town seeks to ensure that existing private roads do not result in decreased public safety or in public expenditures on private facilities. The creation of new private roads is not desirable.

#### **Policies and Implementation**

1. New land development, including subdivisions and new construction, and other activities accessed by existing or new private roads is to be generally discouraged, except possibly in local growth centers dependent on a complete Town analysis, and allowed only where applicable regulations and standards are met, including, but not limited to the Public Works Standards, Zoning Code, Subdivision Code and VSA Title 24.
2. The Zoning and Subdivision Regulations should continue to require minimum public road frontages and prohibit creation of parcels without public frontage.

## INTERSECTIONS

Road intersections must be properly designed and controlled in order to ensure safe and efficient traffic flow and pedestrian crossing. Improvements are needed at a number of intersections including Creek Road/Route 7, Route 2A/ Mill Pond Road, Bay Road/Route 7, Malletts Bay Ave./Blakely Road, Lakeshore Drive/Prim Road and others.

## SIDEWALKS

Sidewalks should provide for safe pedestrian circulation and are especially important in a residential community like Colchester. A sidewalk network is useful for transportation purposes only when it connects between residential, public, and commercial destinations. Sidewalks are important even in remote areas considering the School policy that children may be expected to walk up to 1/2 mile to a bus stop.

With few exceptions, sidewalks are currently located only on local residential streets, having been installed by developers when subdivisions were built. Even in residential areas no continuous network exists. Sidewalks are generally lacking along our collector and arterial roadways.

### Goals

The sidewalk network should be extended and interconnected as necessary to allow for safe pedestrian travel.

### Policies and Implementation

1. New subdivisions and commercial developments shall be designed to provide for access and circulation. Developers should install sidewalks or multi use paths as appropriate within their developments. Developers should install sidewalks or multi use paths on adjacent existing roadways, and also between their projects and neighboring commercial and residential areas when specified by regulations or when appropriate.
2. The Town has adopted a sidewalk improvement plan and a stable source of funding for the design for miles of sidewalks, and seeks additional funding for construction at every opportunity. The Town should continue these efforts.
3. The need for sidewalks is particularly important on roads carrying heavy traffic volumes through developed areas including Prim Road, Lakeshore Drive, Malletts Bay Avenue, Blakely Road, Williams Road, and Creek Farm Road.

### MULTI-MODAL/BICYCLE PATHS

Bicycle paths support an important mode of transportation which is to be encouraged. Roadways are used by bicyclists regardless of whether paths exist; roadway improvements to accommodate bicycle use are important for public safety.

There are several classes of bicycle paths; Class I are fully separated from roads, Class II paths are striped lanes along roads, Class III paths are roadways that are signed but otherwise not improved for bicycle travel.

Construction of a Class I and II bicycle path between Bayside Park and Creek Road was completed in 2001. A Class I bicycle path has been designed as part of the Circumferential Highway between Bayside Park and the Heineberg Bridge. Bay Road, Prim Road, portions of Malletts Bay Avenue, Church Road, Kellogg Road, Hercules Drive and Heineberg Drive have Class II bicycle paths. The extent of Class II paths has been significantly increased through the capital paving program. Sections of Lakeshore Drive and Blakely Road are signed as Class III bicycle paths but are generally unsuitable for bicycle travel. Many arterial and collector roads, including Route 15, Route 2A, Lakeshore Drive, Route 7 at Exit 16, and Malletts Bay Avenue between Blakely Road and Winooski are not uniformly designed or constructed to accommodate bicycle travel. To the extent possible all areas of Colchester should be connected with Class I bike paths and these paths should be connected to those of adjacent Towns.

#### Goals

The Town seeks to extend and improve the bicycle path network with priority given to Class I bicycle paths, and an emphasis on the transportation function of the paths.

#### Policies and Implementation

1. The Alternative Transportation Path Plan is consistent with the comprehensive plan and should serve as a tool for implementation.
2. New subdivisions and other developments should provide for and encourage bicycle access, circulation and parking. Bicycle paths may be required to be built as part of subdivisions. Easements may be required to be dedicated to the Town for future bicycle paths.
3. The Town will consider bicycle path improvements in designing, scheduling and constructing roadway improvement projects. Where possible and practical, at least Class I or fully separated paths that come as close as possible to meeting all Class I standard will be provided along arterial and collector roadways.
4. All roads not served by Class I bike paths should be built with sufficiently wide paved shoulders to facilitate safe bicycle travel.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Existing public transit consists of bus service provided by the Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA) along the Route 15 corridor. The Town is not currently a member of CCTA and voters have rejected proposals that the Town join CCTA on several occasions.

The Special Services Transportation Agency provides accessible and affordable door-to-door transportation for groups and individuals serving senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

### Goals

The Town encourages the development and use of public transportation both locally and regionally, but this must be done in a reasonable and cost-effective manner and meet residents' and employees' real transportation needs.

### Policies and Implementation

1. The Town should continue to work with the CCTA, Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization, and Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission to assess the feasibility of expanding bus service to areas of Town not currently served.
2. In anticipating increased demand and the eventual extension of bus service, development projects may be required to be designed to facilitate bus service even if the area is not currently on a bus route.
3. The Town should support alternative sources to the local property tax for the funding of public transportation.
4. Light-rail solutions should be explored to service growth centers where feasible. If light-rail mass transit solutions are proposed through Colchester, stations or stops within the Town should be encouraged.

**Ridesharing.** There is a park and ride lot at Exit 17 and another designed as part of the Circumferential Highway. CCTA administers a regional ridesharing program which includes Colchester. Demand exists for additional rideshare opportunities. The Town, working with the Metropolitan Planning Organization and a consultant, has assessed current and future needs for ride-share parking lots in Town and the region.

**Policies and Implementation**

1. The Town supports ridesharing as a means of reducing traffic congestion and increasing efficiency in the use of land and energy resources.
2. Bylaw revisions should be considered to allow reduced parking requirements where a business provides ridesharing incentives.
3. The Town will work with the CCTA ridesharing program to promote ridesharing among Town employees, board members, and school employees.
4. The development of commuter lots at appropriate locations will be encouraged by the Town and should be sited and designed to be compatible with their surroundings.

**GENERAL POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION**

1. Substandard drainage conditions result in accelerated road failure and unsafe conditions. Roadway construction and reconstruction projects should include the highest possible level of drainage improvements.
2. Potential highway right-of-way is a limited resource. Future roadway needs should be analyzed and an official map produced showing the location of future roads. Such a map would be considered in reviewing proposed future development projects. Class 4 roads and trails and other public rights-of-ways are public resources. These roads and trails should be continued except when exceptional cases warrant otherwise, in which case the Town should be duly compensated for giving up a right-of-way. The Town shall take a more active role in the future planning and siting of roads.
3. Design plans for the reconstruction of roadways should consider the possibility of sanitary sewer mains and water lines being installed to various areas, including along the Route 127 corridor.
4. Development projects and expanded uses should only be approved where the level of service and function of roadways and intersections is currently sufficient and will not be unacceptably reduced. Improvement to the transportation infrastructure should be required as part of development projects when those projects affect the capacity of the system.
5. When appropriate, the Town should commission capacity studies of roads and intersections, when possible at developer expense, to be used in development applications to review impacts on the transportation system.

6. The long range capital paving and sidewalk program is a significant benefit to the community which should be supported and continued.
7. It is necessary that all improvements to public infrastructure, including those improvements required of applicants as part of the development review process, be completed to the highest reasonable standard in order to ensure safe, efficient and cost effective provision of municipal services. Public Works Standards should be updated to more clearly define how public facilities, including transportation infrastructure, shall be designed and constructed to service the planned future land use areas of Colchester.
8. The Town may impose development impact assessments where private projects are anticipated to necessitate transportation improvements. The Town should evaluate methods for fairly distributing the cost of road improvements and maintenance associated with new development or redevelopment that are in keeping with the policies set forth in this plan.
9. The Town should decide whether to develop a policy on access management within the next five years. Such a policy should include recommended methods and the circumstances when access management is appropriate and should be implemented.

---

**UTILITIES, FACILITIES, AND  
SERVICES**

**SECTION FIVE**

---

## **V. UTILITIES, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Town of Colchester maintains facilities as needed to serve the existing population and seeks to keep existing facilities in the best possible condition. Facilities must be expanded to keep pace with responsible and planned growth. Growth must be managed so that the capacity of municipal facilities is not exceeded.

Planning should drive infrastructure (as opposed to available infrastructure determine planning). As soon as the Water Quality Committee makes its recommendations to the Town, Colchester needs to review its plans for utilities, facilities, and services to ensure they are compatible and coordinated with any recommendations.

Municipal facilities and services in Colchester are provided by the Town and by other governmental and private agencies. Utilities discussed in this section include water supply, sewage disposal and solid waste disposal and drainage. Facilities covered here include Town of Colchester buildings, land and equipment. Services covered here include police, recreation, fire and rescue, public works, and general governmental services. Electric utility and gas are covered in the Energy section, transportation infrastructure in the Transportation section and schools in the Education section.

### **WATER SUPPLY**

Municipal water is distributed by three fire districts. These districts own their distribution systems and purchase water from other companies. The fire districts are each independent municipal organizations; the Town of Colchester does not manage the water utilities but does have some authority and responsibility in water supply matters.

Colchester Fire District #1 encompasses the geographic area traditionally known as Winooski Park. Its boundaries run from the east side of Gorge Road and continues along both sides of Route 15 ending at the Camp Johnson military facility on the west side of Route 15 and the Fanny Allen campus of Fletcher Allen Health Care on the east side of Route 15. The district includes all of the main campus of St. Michael's College.

The District purchases water from Champlain Water District and supplies it to 46 customers of which 36 are residential and 10 are commercial. The largest customers are St. Michael's College and the medical facility at Fanny Allen. The District purchases approximately 55,000,000 gallons of water annually. The District anticipates further development and expansion by its existing customers, primarily St. Michael's College and Fanny Allen.

Fire District No. 2 provides service to nearly 2,200 permanent and 250 seasonal customers in the Mallets Bay section of the Town. The District has experienced a steady increase in demand

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

from its inception in the mid 60's. An example of that was in 1993 nearly 150,000,000 gallons were purchased compared to 1999 where nearly 190,000,000 gallons were purchased from the City of Burlington. The District has a storage tank in service to equalize supply and demand during peak usage. The District has extended water service to the Colchester Point, Sand Dunes and Mills Point areas in order to provide safe and clean drinking water to both the permanent and seasonal residents who live in that area of the District.

Fire District No. 3 is supplied by the Champlain Water District and serves 1633 individual customers, both commercial and residential. Service is provided through 29 miles of water mains distributing 202,534,784 gallons of water in 1999. The District has implemented computer modeling of their entire distribution network. This tool allows prediction of volumes and pressures, and how any future development will affect the network at any point within the system.

Municipal water is also distributed to two water systems owned by the Champlain Water District within the boundaries of Colchester. In 1987, CWD acquired ownership of the Malletts Bay Water Company. This small water system supplies water to 219 residential customers, and is located from the Winooski City line north on Malletts Bay Avenue and includes Young Street, Carriage Hill, Mazza Court, and the Farmington Hill developments. This water system purchased 12.6 million gallons of water in year 2000.

In addition, CWD owns the former Colchester Town Water System that distributes water to 62 commercial customers in and around the Exit 16 area, including Water Tower Hill, Hercules Drive, and the Colchester Business Park. Water purchases for this system in year 2000 totaled 69.9 million gallons.

Some year round homes and camps within the Town are serviced by individual wells or draw water directly from Lake Champlain. There are several private water utilities servicing individual developments including Mills Point, Spalding's West Shore, North Harbor, and the Marble Island area.

### **Goals**

Every residence and business should have a dependable high-quality supply of potable water. Municipal water systems should have adequate water pressure, and volume and fire hydrants should be available for fire fighting purposes. The extension of municipal water should help to support the goals of other sections of this plan, and should be reviewed and permitted accordingly.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. Additional interconnection of the water supply systems should be made in order to provide the most dependable possible supply. This is of primary importance between Districts #2 and #3. The Town should pursue this at every opportunity.

**COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

2. If the opportunity presents itself, the Select Board should consider consolidated management of the water supply system to increase efficiency and consistency.
3. The elimination of small private water utilities, and isolated water systems, should be supported by the Town. Creation of new private water utilities should be discouraged.
4. The Town should continue, as part of its development review process, to regulate all waterline extension projects. Comprehensive water supply standards should remain part of Town codes.
5. Public health is a primary concern in construction of new water supply systems. Water supply projects shall be reviewed and monitored for their proximity to sewage disposal areas and for other health concerns.
6. New subdivisions and uses are to be permitted only where adequate water supply for domestic use and fire fighting is demonstrated.
7. Safe drinking water shall be required as part of the subdivision regulations.
8. In reviewing applications for the extension of water mains the Town should consider the planned future land use areas including growth centers.
10. 9. The Town should continue to provide for the installation and repair of water mains within roadway rights-of-way but ensure that this is done in a manner that does not compromise the integrity of the roads or result in costs to the Town.
10. The Town should require that Fire District capital planning and water line replacement be coordinated with other Town capital improvements. This should apply to all utility projects.
- 12:11. During the period of this plan, the Town will consider whether to require water quality tests prior to changes of ownership. Such a regulation would require that all future development that will not be connected to a public water supply shall be required to drill a sufficient number of test water wells or use some other recognized method prior to the development of such sites to assure the potability of the water supply, similar to percolation requirements for on site septic systems.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

**SEWAGE DISPOSAL**

Off-site sewage disposal is available in the Exit 16, Severance Corners, and Route 15/Fort Ethan Allen areas. The Town system also services the Mobile Home Parks on Route 7 and Creek Farm Plaza. The collection system is owned and maintained by the Town of Colchester. Sewage

## COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN

---

from the municipal system is discharged to the South Burlington treatment plant. Colchester has been allocated 650,000 gallons per day for waste discharged to the plant (the Town controls 340,000 gallons of this allocation with the remaining 310,000 being controlled by Fire District #1). Based on the wastewater allocation and the capacity of the collection system there is currently no longer surplus capacity for sewage disposal.

The majority of properties in Colchester dispose of waste-water on site. The disposal systems range in quality from cesspools to advanced pre-treatment systems. There are more than 5,000 on-site systems in Colchester. These systems are privately owned and maintained but should be considered an important part of the Town's infrastructure in that they provide a cost effective alternative to municipal sewers.

Failures of on-site systems may result in pollution and health hazards and is one of the strongest concerns identified by residents. On-site disposal is currently regulated by the Town under its health regulations and septic permit program, administered by the Building Inspector and Health Officer. The Town currently does not have a comprehensive inspection system to ensure the health and safety of all its citizens. The Town is currently considering the feasibility of a comprehensive inspection system. Implementation will depend on funding commitments. On-site sewage disposal is entirely dependant on soil conditions. Growth and development is limited in some areas by a lack of sewage disposal options. This is a concern in some areas designated for growth and could hinder economic development within the community in the near future.

### Goals

All types of sewage disposal, on-site, community septic, and municipal systems must be managed to protect public health and the environment, to provide for planned and responsible growth and to protect members of the community from excessive costs.

### Policies and Implementation

1. A comprehensive wastewater management plan for the entire Town has been developed which considers environmental sensitivity, problematic areas, planned growth, least cost alternatives and financing options. This plan should be supplemented through the work accomplished by the Water Quality Committee.
2. The Town should continue to maintain a septic management program which regulates new system design, inspects all installations, advises on maintenance and preventative measures, and enforces the health regulations. Information on soil tests and a letter attesting to a septic system's proper functioning from a certified engineer should continued to be required as part of the development review process when a development proposal requires additional septic demand.

4.3. New development, and the subdivision of land for future development, can be allowed only where adequate sewage disposal capacity has been demonstrated and conforming sewage disposal systems have been designed.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

4. Zoning regulations to facilitate desired growth should be reviewed and revised as necessary prior to the extension or construction of new sewer lines.
5. In January 2000 the Town revised its Health Ordinance to completely incorporate the State Environmental Protection Rules. Although the Town has been very active in pursuing alternative wastewater treatment the State Agency of Natural Resources and legislature are unwilling to permit these alternative systems. The Town should pursue adoption of sewage disposal alternatives that have been proven to be effective elsewhere to supplement current septic system requirements and should continue to lobby the ANR and Legislature to adopt new regulations. At the time of publication, new State rules approved by the Legislature toward the close of the 2001-2002 session. These rules will begin to take effect in 2003. It is imperative for the Town to continue its efforts to ensure innovative technologies and other updates are included in these new rules. It is important to understand that the Town cannot adopt regulations permitting alternative wastewater systems without approval from the State.
6. The Town will require that adequate private funds are available to install, operate, and maintain private community sewage disposal systems prior to approving development proposals. The Town will not accept financial responsibility or liability for the installation, operation, and maintenance of private community sewage disposal systems.
7. The Town is currently pursuing decentralized wastewater alternatives at Exit 17 through a study as part of an Environmental Protection Agency grant. Depending on the results of this study, the Town should evaluate implementing municipal sewer or community septic at Exit 17. The Town should also pursue the expansion of the sewer capacity at Severance Corners. Over the useful life of services provided, the developers and the users will be required to fund the complete installation and operational costs although the Town may use its bonding authority or ability to raise low cost capital and bill the entire cost back to landowners and users.

### **SOLID WASTE**

Colchester residents' trash is disposed of by private curb-side pickup or by self-hauling to a drop-off center. Colchester currently belongs to the Chittenden Solid Waste District which disposes of the county's trash and oversees recycling, waste reduction and recently instituted composting program.

Source separation of recyclable materials is required by the Waste District. A permanent household hazardous waste drop-off facility is located in Burlington, and a solid-waste drop-off

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

facility is located at the Colchester municipal complex on Blakely Road. The local drop off facility needs to be upgraded.

### **Goals**

The Town seeks to assure continued efficient and affordable disposal of the solid waste generated in Colchester and to reduce the volume of the waste stream as much as possible.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. The Town should remain an active member of the Chittenden Solid Waste District and participate in the effort to develop a solid waste management plan for Chittenden County.
2. The Town should support community efforts to reduce, reuse, or recycle waste.
3. Town operations and facilities should make maximum use of recycled materials and have effective recycling programs.

## **STORMWATER**

The Town of Colchester has many great assets with the more prominent features being Malletts Bay, the lake and its many streams. Protection of the water's quality has become a prominent goal community wide.

In the Town of Colchester, the wide variety of land uses requires a comprehensive and varied approach to surface water management. This type of approach includes not only treating the runoff from a site prior to its entry into the drainage system but also developing methods to reduce the generation of pollutants.

Due to the great complexity of stormwater issues, a clear and concise direction is required. To ensure all stormwater management strategies are consistent with the goals of the Town of Colchester and the townspeople, a Purpose and Need Statement has been developed based on both municipal and public input.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Stormwater Management Plan is to develop appropriate, multiple methodologies and implementation strategies, including a strong public education component, to reduce and prevent pollution and thus improve and preserve the water quality of Lake Champlain and its watersheds that impact the Town of Colchester.

**Need**

Current stormwater runoff poses a threat to public health, the environment and the economy of the community. The threat is defined by the following:

1. Quantity - Various community land uses can and have resulted in erosion, flooding and a reduction of the time available for adequate treatment of stormwater runoff.
2. Quality - Many years of water quality sampling data for surface water in Colchester have shown periods of unacceptable levels of contamination that may in-part be caused by various community land uses.

**Goals**

The Town seeks to prevent pollutants from entering the waterways of the town and to improve the existing water quality when ever possible.

**Policies and Implementations**

1. A stormwater management plan is in the development stage. The plan will provide recommendations for implementation. These recommendations should be implemented to the extent possible.
2. The Town's stormwater management plan should be continuously reviewed and improved.
3. The Zoning and Planning Regulations and Town Ordinances should be changed as necessary to incorporate sound stormwater management practices.
4. The Town should continue to pursue outside funding for stormwater management and treatment improvements.
5. The Town should continue its efforts to educate the community regarding the effect of stormwater run-off on water quality and methods that the general public could employ to reduce pollutants in the stormwater run-off.
6. The Town should continue to support the Streambank Ordinance.

**EMERGENCY SERVICES**

Fire fighting services are provided entirely by volunteers while rescue service is provided by a combination of volunteers and paid staff. The members of the Fire Departments and Rescue Squad perform critical, demanding and potentially dangerous services from which the entire community benefits, and many do so without direct benefit to themselves.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

Two fire departments serve the Town; the Malletts Bay Fire Department and the Colchester Center Volunteer Fire Company. The departments are politically distinct from the Town of Colchester but are funded as part of the Town budget. They are both 100% volunteer organizations. In addition, St. Michael's Fire Department; part of the Colchester Center Volunteer Fire Company, provides service for the Route 15 corridor.

In 2000 the Malletts Bay Fire Department and Colchester Center Volunteer Fire Company received 302 and 370 service calls respectively. The number of calls to the Fire Departments has almost doubled between 1993 and 2000. In 1993 the Malletts Bay Fire Department and Colchester Center Volunteer Fire Company received 170 and 184 service calls respectively.

The Colchester Rescue Squad (CRS) has primary responsibility for emergency medical care and transportation for the sick and injured in the Town of Colchester, except the Rte. 15 corridor which is served by St. Michael's Fire and Rescue. The CRS is staffed by three full time employees and 40 volunteers, over two-thirds of whom are Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's). The CRS responds to more than 800 emergency calls per year. The CRS has seen a continual increase in call volume over the past 10 years. In addition to its emergency response duties, the CRS maintains a CPR training center, runs the Healthy Homes education outreach program, and makes weekly educational visits to the Colchester School system.

The Colchester Rescue Dive Team operates in cooperation with the Colchester Police Department's Harbormaster and is the Town's primary resource for water, ice, and hazardous terrain rescue operations. The recognized expertise of this team also results in calls to assist with emergencies throughout northern Vermont. The team has educated over 1500 public safety members throughout Vermont, New York, and Canada.

St. Michael's Rescue is the busiest volunteer rescue service in Vermont, answering over 2000 calls per year (including about 325 calls in Colchester). The Town of Colchester is responsible for funding a portion of the budget for the St. Michael's Rescue unit.

The Fire Departments and Rescue Squads each have headquarter facilities and various equipment including vehicles, boats and other items.

As training requirements become more demanding and the percentage of daytime calls increases it becomes more difficult for the volunteer emergency services to retain the necessary number of qualified members.

As residential development spreads to more remote areas an increased burden is placed on emergency services. Many areas have substandard roads, no municipal water supply and are distant from the fire and rescue stations. Response times may become protracted and equipment and personnel may be threatened by site conditions in such areas. No effort has been made to quantify the costs of rural development to the Town's ability to provide emergency services.

**Goals**

The Town seeks to promote health, safety and general welfare by protecting people and property from the threat of fire and other hazardous circumstances and to provide emergency medical services and transportation for residents and visitors of Colchester. These goals should be accomplished without unacceptable risk to personnel and without undue burden on residents to pay for services.

**Policies and Implementation**

1. The capital requirements of the emergency services departments should be included in a Town Capital Budget and Plan, with funding mechanism indicated, to ensure that adequate equipment and facilities are provided in a cost-effective manner.
2. All new residential, industrial and commercial development should be required to meet high standards of fire prevention, suppression design, and emergency access. The Department of Planning & Zoning should work to ensure that Town standards do not conflict with State or Federal Standards. Dry fire hydrants should be encouraged where appropriate.
3. Fire fighting capability shall be considered during site plan and subdivision review.
4. A comprehensive emergency response plan has been adopted to encompass all of the Town of Colchester and volunteer departments. The plan should be implemented.
5. The Fire Departments, when considering purchasing new equipment, should coordinate with Town staff and the Planning Commission to ensure compatibility with planning goals (e.g. narrower streets and more dense development in local growth centers)
7. 6. Use of building sprinklers and smoke alarms should be strongly encouraged.
8. 7. If new development is found to result in capital costs for emergency services then those benefiting directly from the development should pay those costs.
9. 8. As part of any Town effort to quantify the costs and benefits of residential development, consideration should be given to quantifying the costs of rural development to the Town's ability to effectively provide emergency services.
9. A management study should be made of the current volunteer structure. Potential benefits, if any, of combining management, personnel, and/or facilities among the departments should be assessed as well as the advantages and disadvantages of paid staff.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

## POLICE

The responsibilities of the Police Department are best illustrated by the following statement found in its Mission Statement. "The mission for every member of the Town of Colchester Police Department is to seek and find affirmative ways to promote, preserve, and provide an overall feeling of security, safety, and quality services to all members of the community."

The Police Department has a current authorized strength of 24 sworn police officers. The backbone of the department is its patrol force supplemented by officers assigned to investigative, youth services, and administrative duties. Officers can be found patrolling by police car, bicycle, or boat depending upon the season. Sworn officers are supported by a staff of 6 civilian positions providing dispatch and clerical functions.

The National Uniform Crime Report finds that Colchester enjoys a relatively low crime rate when compared to similar size communities in Vermont, the New England region, and nationally. Another comparison to note is that Colchester has an officer to population ratio of approximately 1 to 700. The national average is approximately 1 to 500. It is generally accepted that as population and commercial growth continues, service needs increase and the need for more officers becomes necessary.

In addition to maintaining a force size sufficient to protect the community, the biggest challenge facing the department in the near future is construction of a facility to adequately support the department. The current facility split between two floors in the current municipal building no longer adequately supports the department operations from a functional or space perspective.

### Policies and Implementation

1. The Police Department shall continue community policing concepts.
2. The Police Department shall continue to work with the emergency services departments to coordinate resources.
3. The Police Department will continue to provide input into the review of development projects to assess their impact on public safety.
- 6-4. The Police Department shall seek National Law Enforcement Accreditation.
5. A new police facility shall be planned for and constructed to accommodate the existing and future needs of the department.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

## PARKS AND RECREATION

Mission Statement: To enhance the quality of life of all Colchester residents by: providing a variety of affordable leisure time activities for people of all ages and abilities; maintaining and

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

improving current recreational facilities while developing new facilities; and assisting the Town in the planning of open space, conservation land and alternative transportation corridors.

The Colchester Parks and Recreation Department offers recreational activities to all Colchester residents and non-residents. The Department organizes programs in sports, fitness, arts and crafts, wellness and numerous educational and cultural activities. In addition to four seasons of programming, the department plans and organizes the Winter Carnival, Fair Day, and Colchester Triathlon, with assistance from volunteer committees. All of our programs are accessible to all.

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board provides policy and planning guidance, as well as general oversight of the Department activities. The Department currently has three full time employees, 35-40 instructors, and seasonal staff. Many volunteers donate their time, skills and effort to help accomplish departmental programs.

The recreational facilities below are owned and maintained by the Town of Colchester. It should be noted that many other recreational facilities exist within Colchester that are also available to the public such as, but not limited to, Niquette Bay State Park, Colchester Bog, Delta Park, and Colchester Pond. For further detail on these recreational facilities, natural areas, and open spaces please review the Colchester Open Space Plan.

### **A. Current Public Recreational Facilities**

Airport Park: Airport Park is a 64.5-acre parks located on Colchester Point Road. Facilities include a 1.3 mile jogging/x-c ski trail, parking, restrooms, picnic area, pavilion, playground, 4 ball fields, 2 soccer fields, 2 sand volleyball courts, 6 horseshoe pits, 2 tennis courts, 1 basketball court and lighted ice skating in the winter.

Bayside Park: Bayside Park is located on both sides of Lakeshore Drive at the intersection with Malletts Bay Avenue. 22-acres including parking, restrooms, bathhouse, picnic area, pavilion, playground, swimming beach, Senior Center, 2 shuffleboard courts, 4 tennis courts, 1 basketball court, 2 sand volleyball courts, 1 small baseball field, 1 lighted softball field and 2 horseshoe pits.

Bonanza Park: Bonanza Park is located on Bonanza Park Road off Heineberg Drive. .6 acre neighborhood park with a limited playground and all-purpose field.

Causeway Park & Recreation Path: Causeway Park & Recreation Path is a 4 mile path that connects to the original Rutland Railroad bed and causeway across the lake (constructed during 1897-1900). Renovated gravel path suitable for walking, biking and fishing access. Duck hunting allowed (in season). Parking is available at Airport Park or in the new Mills Point Road lot.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

Colchester Recreational Path: Colchester Recreational Path is a 3.3-mile handicap accessible paved path that starts at Bayside Park and ends at Creek Farm Road. This path was completed in 2001. This path connects the village of Colchester to the Malletts Bay area.

Heineberg/Billado Park: Heineberg/Billado Park is a 4-acre, Town and State access to the Winooski River off Heineberg Drive. Improvements are planned to provide accessible fishing access, non-motorized boat ramp, picnic area, path and additional parking.

Heritage Park: Heritage Park is located off Main Street on Heritage Drive in the Village. 1-acre park with a limited playground, 1 tennis court, 1 basketball court and parking area.

Law Island: Law Island Natural Area is west of the Causeway off Colchester Point. The island is 8.5 acres in size, owned by the State of Vermont, and managed by the Town of Colchester. Camping is permitted and duck hunting is allowed (in season). There is no access by land.

Porter Natural Area: Porter Natural Area is a 56-acre parcel that has no master plan at this time.

Rossetti Natural Area: Rossetti Natural Area is a 47 acre natural area between Lake Champlain and Lakeshore Drive/Holy Cross Road/Church Road intersection. Future plans consist of a boardwalk/trail that will improve access to the lake.

Sunny Hollow Natural Area: Sunny Hollow Natural Area is located off Hercules Drive. This 80-acre diverse area, limited parking and three miles of walking and x-country trails.

Valleyfield Park: Valleyfield Park is a .65 acre park located off Malletts Bay Avenue. This neighborhood park has a limited playground and all-purpose field.

### **B. Park Categories**

Private Park: could include swimming pool, tennis courts, and club houses, generally within a residential area, developed for the exclusive use of residents and all maintained through a neighborhood association. The developer, lending institution and / or homeowners association dictate size and complexity of facilities. The private parks should be located on the project site to minimize intrusion on private residences. (Example: North Harbor Estates and Justin Morgan Drive)

Mini-Park: generally is between 2500 square feet and 1 acre in size. Parking is typically not required. It is mainly for passive use such as picnic areas, plantings and sitting areas. (Example: Bayside-West Lakeshore Drive Corner)

Neighborhood Park: The focus is on informal active and passive recreation. It should be centrally located within its service area encompassing ¼ to 1-mile distance. It should be accessible by way of interconnecting trails, sidewalks, or low volume residential streets. 5 acres

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

is considered the minimum size, 5-10 acres is optimal. Neighborhood Parks are not intended to be used for program activities that result in overuse, noise, parking problems and congestion. It should achieve a balance between active and passive park uses. (Example: Valleyfield Park, Bonanza Park and Heritage Park)

Community Parks: are larger in size and serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. The optimal size for community parks is between 20-50 acres. It should provide for both active and passive recreation uses. It should include play structures, game courts, ball fields, tennis courts, swimming pool, etc. (Example: Airport Park and Bayside Park)

Natural Areas: lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, open spaces, visual aesthetics and buffering. These lands consisting of sites exhibiting natural resources are unsuitable for development but offers natural resources potential. These resources may include geological features, watersheds, and protections of rare threatened or endangered species, forests/woodsheds, and wildlife habitats. (Example: Porter's Point Natural Area, Sunny Hollow Natural Area, Law Island and Rossetti Natural Area)

Regional Parks: these may serve Colchester residents as well as all other residents of some specifically defined region in which the town is located. In the Winooski Valley Park region, the Winooski Valley Park District is an intermunicipal organization charged with land aquisition and management for conservation and recreation purposes. (Example: Colchester Pond, Delta Park and McCrea Park)

Alternative Transportation Paths: the paths serve as an alternative transportation link for the community as well as recreational purposes. The paths will serve Colchester residents and visitors. In the future, we hope to use the paths as a way to link the community and be a destination for recreation enthusiasts. (Example: Causeway Park and Recreation Path and the new Colchester Recreational Path)

### **C. Policies and Implementation**

The Parks and Recreation Department will:

1. Continue to plan and secure a funding mechanism to implement the 10-year capital recreation plan.
2. Continue efforts to secure a parcel of land in the northern part of Colchester for a community park
3. In conjunction with Town and State Agencies, pursue and support alternative transportation opportunities.
4. Expand, develop, improve, maintain, enhance and preserve park facilities and natural areas.
5. Provide activities, programs and facilities to support lifetime skills development to all residents of all ages and abilities.

- 6 . Develop a comprehensive park plan for existing and future facilities in Colchester.

### **LIBRARY**

Library services are provided at the Burnham Memorial Library in Colchester Village. The original library building was built in 1942, and an addition was built in 1989. The library has 7790 square feet of useable space, including study space, facilities for meetings and children's activities, and shelving for up to 40,000 volumes. All areas of the library are accessible to those with physical disabilities. The library was fully automated in 1998, funded in part by a successful fund-raising campaign conducted by the Friends of the Burnham Library

The library is open 54 hours a week year round. There is a full time Director and Children's Librarian, and 6 part-time assistants. Library staff members are employees of the Town of Colchester and the Library Director is a Department Head. In addition to paid staff, there are about 30 hours of volunteer time worked each week. There is a five member Board of Trustees, elected for five-year terms, which set library policy and administer the Burnham Trust.

The library has a collection of 36,000 items, including books, books-on-tape, videotapes, music, and kits for day care centers. Circulation in FY 2000 was 87559, more than twice that of 1990. There are seven computers for public use, providing access to the "card catalog", Internet, and word processing. The library has a frame relay connection, allowing Internet access from 10 workstations. Both the Children's Adult Area offer a variety of programs and special events; in addition, other groups use the library for their own meetings The library participates in Vermont's interlibrary loan program and is a member of the Homecard consortium which allows reciprocal borrowing privileges at most Chittenden County Libraries. Books are delivered to several senior sites and to Colchester day care centers. In June 2000, the library initiated the Burnham Bookmobile to bring books to parks and neighborhoods located a distance from the library.

A five-year plan was recently completed by a committee comprised of two Trustees, three staff members, and four community members, and the following goals and policies are derived from that plan. Copies of the complete plan are available at the library.

#### **Goal**

The Burnham Memorial Library welcomes all ages to enrich their lives through books, audio-visuals materials, and programs. The library will provide materials for life-long learning and assistance in using information resources, with an emphasis on early literacy in children. Colchester residents will look to the library as a place that is attractive and welcoming, with an atmosphere that inspires them to learn, grow, and become better citizens.

#### **Policies and Implementation**

1. Lifelong learners will have the resources they need to support learning and growth.

2. Children, parents, and caregivers will find materials and activities to encourage early literacy and the love of learning.
3. Library users will have the opportunity to learn skills that enable them to use information resources effectively.
4. Library users will use the Burnham Library as a directory of information sources, both within and beyond the library.
5. Residents of the community will be provided with timely, accurate information in response to their questions.
6. Library users will find materials and programs to satisfy their interest in current topics and provide satisfying recreational experiences.
7. Residents of all ages who are unable to come to the library will receive library resources and services in a variety of ways.
8. All members of the community will have access to up-to-date information technology.
9. Colchester citizens will have convenient access to information about local government and issues to enable them to participate in town decisions.

### **PUBLIC WORKS**

The Department of Public Works is responsible for planning, engineering, improvements, maintenance and management of the Town's public infrastructure. This includes highways and all other transportation facilities, stormwater, wastewater, parks, Town facilities, equipment maintenance and acquisition. The Department currently has 17 full time and 4 seasonal positions who work within the divisions of streets, wastewater, equipment maintenance, buildings and grounds, engineering and administration. The infrastructure maintained by the department includes the maintenance of 60 pieces of equipment, 9 wastewater pumping stations, 15 miles of sewer lines, 200 sewer manholes, 10 parks totaling 300 acres of park land, 10 buildings, 100 miles of public and private roadways and 800 stormwater structures. The department also provides all engineering and administrative services for the public works operations, as well as the project management for all capital infrastructure initiatives.

#### **Goal**

To maintain the existing qualities that make Colchester a safe and desirable place to live, learn, work, play and visit, while enhancing its public facilities and services in a cost efficient manner, maintaining the communities investment in public improvements, providing the

**COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

necessary infrastructure to maintain and support a healthy economic climate and responsible planned growth, and protect and preserve the community's natural resources and environment.

**Policies and Implementation**

1. Facilitate rehabilitation programs for all Town roadways to provide safe travel throughout the community and protect the community's investment.
2. Continue to pursue and develop plans for the reconstruction of major transportation corridors throughout the community to address safety, level of service, congestion, air and water quality, aesthetics, alternative modes of transportation including pedestrians, bicycling, park and rides, public transit, and the coordination of transportation facilities with current and future land use patterns.
3. Continue the development of pedestrian and Class 1 bicycle facilities and multi modal paths throughout the entire community to form an alternative transportation network connecting residents with logical destination points.
4. During the next few years work with the Water Quality Committee and Planning Commission to continue the development of a comprehensive water quality plan that addresses stormwater management, wastewater solutions, recreational opportunities, and land use planning. The stormwater management component should address erosion and non-source point pollution, and preserving and protecting water quality in Malletts Bay and Lake Champlain. Wastewater solutions should address environmental sensitivity, equitable funding, historically problematic areas, and planned, responsible growth while identifying least cost alternatives to achieve our goals. The Department should also continue making drainage improvements throughout the community.

| ~~6.5.~~ The Department will continue to provide a high level of maintenance and service to all Town equipment, and continue efforts toward equipment replacement to maintain the community's investment and enhance service delivery in an effective and efficient manner.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

| ~~7.6.~~ The Department will continue to plan, maintain and improve the Town's parks and recreational facilities to provide safe and enjoyable recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities throughout the community.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

| ~~8.7.~~ The Department will continue to plan, maintain and improve the Town's buildings and public facilities to provide effective and efficient services to the community.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

| ~~9.8.~~ The Department will continue its efforts to secure alternative funding sources to improve and maintain the community's public infrastructure.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

### GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

General Administration includes the following departments; Town Manager's Office, Finance Office, Assessor's Office, Planning and Zoning Department, Town Clerk and the Health Officer.

The *Town Manager's Office* consists of the Town Manager and Finance Officer, Human Resource Generalist, and one full-time Administrative Assistant. This office is responsible for the overall administration and coordination of the departments as well as staff support for the Select Board.

The *Finance Department* is responsible for the financial functions of Town government through the position of Finance Officer, Deputy Finance Officer, and Finance Clerk. The activities include maintaining accounting records for multiple funds, general ledger, accounts payable, purchase orders, budgeting, wastewater and special assessment billings, payroll, audits, pension, and debt management.

The *Town Assessor's Office* has a staff of two full time employees who maintain detailed records of all real property in Colchester. Each year the office produces the Grand List on which property taxes are based. The Assessor's Records are reviewed annually and updated for changes in ownership and/or property descriptions. Periodically the Town must reappraise all properties so that assessments accurately reflect fair market value as measured by real estate sales.

The *Town Clerk's Office* consists of the elected Town Clerk/Treasurer, two full-time assistants, and two part-time assistants. They receive tax payments, run elections, record deeds, register dogs, and maintain and store vital documents.

The work of the *Planning and Zoning Office* falls into three general categories: (1) development review and administration, (2) comprehensive planning, (3) enforcement and inspection, and (4) assistance to other Town departments on Planning Projects. The office provides staff support to the Planning Commission which handles development applications and comprehensive planning, and the Zoning Board of Adjustment, which administers the Zoning Ordinance. The office consists of the Director of Planning and Zoning, Town Planner, Building Inspector, Life Safety Inspector, Associate Planner, Building and Zoning Assistant, Administrative Assistant, and a part time File Clerk.

The personnel listed above, as well as the Police Department have their offices in the municipal building on Blakely Road. The building is currently deficient in size and condition which is why a major expansion as well as other solutions are being examined.

### Goals

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

The Town departments and employees shall work to maintain and improve the health, welfare and quality of life of the residents of Colchester, and should have adequate resources to do so.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. It is a priority to have staff members who are qualified and motivated to perform their responsibilities well. Staffing levels must be sufficient for the work-load.
2. Due to the growth rate of Colchester, there should be a slow but steady growth in the size of the departments to adequately meet the demands of our citizens and businesses.
3. During the next five years, the planned expansion of office facilities for the Town should be completed.

### **GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

Since its original charter, the Town of Colchester has been administered by the elected Select Board. The Select Board has expansive authority over local governmental affairs. In addition to its other duties, and at the discretion of the voters, the Select Board appoints a Town Manager.

The following Boards and Commissions are also a part of Town government:

- Planning Commission
- Zoning Board of Adjustment
- Parks and Recreation Board
- Cemetery Commission
- Board of Trustees, Burnham Memorial Library
- Board of Listers
- Conservation Commission
- Water Quality Committee

### **Goals**

To effectively and economically administer the affairs of the Town.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. The Town should develop a Capital Budget and Program, meeting statutory requirements.
2. The Town should continue to pursue opportunities with neighboring municipalities to share resources for more cost-effective provision of services.
3. Sharing of facilities and services between the Town and the School District should also be considered where it is mutually beneficial.

4. Combining selected services into a Community Safety Department should be investigated and considered during the period of this planning process.

---

**HOUSING**

**SECTION SIX**

---

## VI. HOUSING

### INTRODUCTION

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission's (CCRPC) 2000 Economic and Demographic Forecast projects that over the next ten years Colchester needs to provide new housing for approximately 2,911 new residents to help meet regional housing needs.

Colchester provides a broad range of housing types and prices. Options range from mobile homes at about \$30,000 to homes over \$1,000,000 in value. The range of housing options is an important part of Colchester's overall diverse character. However, over the past five years, most new housing that has been built has been among Colchester's more expensive.

As of 2000 Colchester had 6,278 year round households, and approximately 428 seasonal housing units. Residential parcels (including condominiums and mobile homes) comprised 94% of all the parcels on the 2001 Grand List. However, residential property comprises only 73% of the total dollar value of the 2001 Grand List. Over the 10 years ending in 2000 there were an average of 73 new dwelling units constructed each year. The number of seasonal units is decreasing. This reflects the conversion of some of these units to year-round occupancy.

Single family housing has taken an increased share of the total housing stock. The share of renter-occupied units has also grown; going from 15.5% in 1970, to 21.4% in 1980, to 25.3% in 1990, to 29.1% in 2000.

**TABLE 5  
BUILDING PERMITS ISSUES BY TYPE OF UNIT**

Type	1970 -1980	% of Total Growth	1980-1990	% of Total Growth	1990- 2000	% of Total Growth
Single Family	802	60.9%	582	41.8%	523	70.9%
Duplex*	118	9.0%	219	15.7%	102	13.8%
Multi Family*	218	16.6%	543	39.0%	111	15.0%
Mobile Home	179	13.5%	49	3.5%	1	001%

\* number of dwelling units, not structures.

Statute requires that the Town address low and moderate income persons' housing needs as identified by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC). Colchester's role in addressing housing needs can only be evaluated in a regional context, by comparison with other towns in Chittenden County and in relation to goals set by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. The CCRPC's 2001 Chittenden County Regional Plan does not quantify supply and demand for affordable housing or establish what the "fair share" is for various towns. The Regional Plan however does provide data that the housing supplies are not meeting demands

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

and housing prices in the County are much higher than national average. Decreased vacancy rates, less than one percent County-wide have contributed to a scarce supply of rental housing. While the Regional plan does not provide a specific action plan, a definition of affordable housing has been incorporated as well as an affordable housing policy.

Based on the 2000 Census, Colchester provides more housing units than any town other than Burlington, accounting for 10.9% of the County's total housing units.

Mobile homes represent a low cost owner-occupied housing option in non-urban areas. Colchester has historically had the greatest number of mobile homes in the region. In 1994 the CCRPC surveyed the county and found that the Town had the highest concentration of mobile home units in Chittenden County with 661 units. The number of mobile homes in Colchester has not changed in recent years.

The Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce's 2001 report, Chittenden 2020: A Clear Vision for the Future, estimated that 75% of the new jobs produced over the next 20 years will be in the Service-Producing sectors. These sectors typically have lower wages. It is therefore estimated that the need for affordable housing will only increase on a regional basis in the foreseeable future.

The 2000 Census provides data that indicates Colchester ranks 15th out of the 18 Chittenden County Towns in terms of home-ownership. While roughly 70% of Colchester's housing stock is owner-occupied, efforts should be made to increase home-ownership levels and construct owner-occupied permanently affordable housing. Permanent affordable housing are units that are restricted through covenants (i.e. in accordance with 27 VSA §610) to be affordable (housing costs no more than 30% of the gross income of the households at or below mean incomes).

This data clearly indicates that Colchester is currently providing a large share of the total affordable housing supply within the region. However, there is always a need for new, quality affordable housing.

Colchester currently provides senior housing at the Holy Cross Senior housing complex. In 1999 the Planning Commission and Select Board adopted new senior housing density bonus regulations to encourage senior housing in mixed use zoning districts.

### **Goals**

Colchester should continue to provide a wide variety of housing options. The Town should continue to provide an adequate share of affordable housing as defined on a regional basis. Affordable housing should not be provided in a manner which segregates lower income people or provides them with a lower standard of public infrastructure and services than enjoyed by other residents.

More dedicated senior citizen housing is needed and should be planned for.

**Policies and Implementation**

1. Zoning and subdivision bylaws, and public works standards should not result in a cost of development that excludes the construction of affordable housing. The regulations should accommodate this need so that waiver of standards is not necessary to allow for construction of affordable housing and so that all residents enjoy similar levels of public services and infrastructure. Waiver of standards should be a rare occurrence and should not be used as an indirect subsidy for affordable housing.
2. Multi-family and high-density single-family housing should be permitted within growth centers.
3. The Town should continue to support and work with agencies and interest groups promoting affordable housing.
4. During the duration of this plan, The Planning Commission should consider incentives and density bonuses for permanently affordable housing and work in cooperation with developers interested in such housing.
5. Through the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, the Town should advocate for a comprehensive regional approach to affordable housing.
6. Within the next two years the Planning Commission shall propose amendments to the zoning regulations to allow density bonuses in all residential and mixed use zoning districts for projects which will be permanently affordable to persons living on incomes less than 100% of the median income of Chittenden County. These amendments shall also consider density bonuses for projects which will be permanently affordable to persons living on incomes less than 120% of the median income of Chittenden County.
7. If the above incentives do not create a market for affordable housing projects, during the next five years, the Planning Commission will propose an approach to encourage more affordable housing or permanent affordable housing, using either incentives, regulations, or both.

---

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**SECTION SEVEN**

---

## VII. NATURAL RESOURCES

### INTRODUCTION

From the shores of Malletts Bay and Lake Champlain to the adjacent wetlands, fertile uplands, and dry sandplains, Colchester is blessed with an abundance and diversity of natural resources rarely found within the borders of a single town. These resources provide an attractive and healthy place to live and work and also challenge us to be wise stewards of environmental quality.

**Lake Champlain** - Colchester's most distinct characteristic is Lake Champlain. The Town has about 30 miles of shoreline and almost fully surrounds 10 square miles of Malletts Bay. The Lake influences our economy, land use patterns, and everyday life in the community.

Outstanding views can be enjoyed, both from the shoreline and from the water. Views of Colchester from the Lake generally belie the developed nature of the Town. Structures that are well screened and meet the substantial setbacks from the shoreline required by current regulations minimize intrusion into these views. It is important for the town to continue to encourage new development as well as re-development that is sensitive to the Lake views.

Colchester residents consistently identify water quality in Malletts Bay as one of their highest concerns. The drainage basins of Malletts Bay and the Outer Bay are densely developed and sewage disposal is exclusively by means of on-site systems. Substandard disposal systems are numerous and soil conditions, at least in some areas, are often marginal. In addition to possible sewage contamination, surface runoff of nutrients, sediment and other material is also a growing concern as the drainage basin becomes more developed. The recently adopted Watercourse Protection District amendment to the Zoning Regulations begins to address the concerns of stormwater runoff by restricting development in the vicinity of surface waters. These restrictions encourage vegetative buffers around surface waters that allows for filtration of runoff prior to discharge in streams and other surface waters.

The Town of Colchester continues to recognize that an important component of maintaining Malletts Bay as a community asset is maintaining its water quality. Efforts to identify pollution problems and solutions are on-going. Localized bacterial contamination is frequently detected near shore in densely populated areas and at points of drainage discharge. Bacterial levels are sometimes detected at levels higher than recommended for human contact. Contamination near the shore is of concern because most human contact occurs in this area through swimming and domestic water intakes. Heavy metals have been detected in the sediments off Porters Point. The problem is of unknown origin and extent. The water quality of the Lake, including the open Lake, are of importance to the Community and regional enhancement programs should be looked to for long-term cost effective solutions to water quality issues.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

Wildlife abounds in and around Malletts Bay. The Bay's variety of depths and shoreline characteristics makes habitat for a diversity of species and most plants and animals known to inhabit Lake Champlain thrive in the Bay. Exotic species have not caused serious problems in Malletts Bay. Eurasian milfoil is present but not pervasive. Zebra Mussels have been detected south of Colchester Point and are present in Malletts Bay. Malletts Bay is a wonderful natural harbor on Lake Champlain and more than 1,500 boats are moored in the Bay each summer.

**Winooski and Lamoille Rivers** - Colchester's southern border consists of about 9 miles of frontage on the Winooski River between the Lime Kiln Gorge and Delta Park. The river corridor in Colchester upstream of the City of Winooski is undeveloped and a spectacular gorge and a hydro-electric dam exists between the Lime Kiln Bridge and I-89. Between the City of Winooski and River Road the river bank consists of uninhabited flood plains. Between River Road and the confluence there is a high steep eroding bank, with some structures close to the edge.

Colchester has about 3 miles of frontage on the Lamoille River. The shoreline of the river is forested, inaccessible and sustains productive wildlife habitat.

The lower Winooski River is currently assessed as not fully fishable or swimmable under the criteria of the Clean Water Act. The lower Lamoille is rated as fully fishable and swimmable. Given the drainage basin characteristics it is not likely that significant contamination enters either the Winooski or Lamoille River from Colchester.

**Colchester Pond** - Colchester pond is located in the far Northeast corner of Town and is about 1 mile long and 1/4 mile wide. The pond results from impounded drainage. Most of the shoreline of the pond is undeveloped woodland, and pasture. The pond is hydrologically isolated, has excellent water quality and no known exotic species. Colchester Pond and most of the surrounding land is owned by the Winooski Valley Park District. The State of Vermont has recognized Colchester Pond as an exceptional water resource and has excluded motor-boats and implemented special fishing regulations.

**Ground-water** - Colchester has a large variety of soil types and geological conditions and as a result has a large variety of groundwater conditions. The existence of more than 5,000 subsurface sewage disposal systems suggests the possibility of groundwater pollution but no comprehensive testing has ever been done. New State septic rules and innovative systems will offer the Town exciting opportunities to fix existing septic systems as well as allow for new systems that better address the presence of groundwater. However, efforts to limit the number of innovative systems permitted annually may hamper the Town's water quality initiatives. The Town should encourage changes to state septic rules and that would allow the Town to foster improved water quality as long as changes to wastewater treatment does not result in dramatic changes to what was thought to be previously undevelopable land. Many residents in more remote areas depend on wells for domestic water supply.

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

**Wetlands and Floodplains** - Twelve percent of the land area in Colchester has been identified as wetlands or floodplains. The 100 year flood elevation of Lake Champlain, as determined by the Federal Flood Insurance Program is at 102 feet above sea level. Development within the Flood Zone is now prohibited but significant development predated the regulations and there are more than 100 structures located in the flood hazard zone. In 1993 and 1994 Lake Champlain approached the 102 ft. level and many structures in the flood hazard area were damaged. In areas exposed to wave action even structures above the 102 ft. level were damaged. Inundated sewage disposal systems caused water pollution and public infrastructure was damaged.

There are extensive areas of wetlands in Colchester. Wetlands enhance water quality, are important wildlife habitats, attenuate flooding and are recreational resources. About 93% of Colchester's wetlands are functionally significant (Class 2) according to the State Wetland Rules. Several of the wetlands have received, or are deserving of, special protection. The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited and the State of Vermont have worked together to protect Half Moon Cove. The Nature Conservancy is seeking to obtain Munson Flats wetlands and the Lake Champlain Land Trust is working to protect the Colchester Point wetlands. In addition to the large wetlands there are numerous smaller wetlands associated with beaver dams, vernal pools and similar areas. Many smaller wetlands are not mapped.

**Soils and Geology** - Colchester's soils are a mix of sands and gravels, and clays and silts laid down by sedimentation from sea and lake waters that once covered the entire Town. These sediments overlie consolidated layers of shale slate, dolomite, quartzite, and other bedrock. There are also many areas of "ledge" where bedrock out-crops the surface.

Soil types, as mapped by the Soil Conservation Service, indicate that over 50% of the land area in Colchester is unsuitable for on-site sewage disposal, 20% would require mound systems and about 30% can handle conventional systems. These conditions determine, in part, where growth should occur and where problems with existing sewage systems are to be expected.

**Sand Plains** - Colchester is the only area in Vermont with extensive areas of sandy well-drained soils. The Pine/Oak/Heath plant community that inhabits these sandplains is largely unique to Colchester. Less than five percent of the original sandplain habitat exists. Though the largest remaining local habitat at Camp Johnson has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) covering ecological management, none have permanent legal protection.

Sandplains are characterized by flat, well-drained soil (making it desirable for development) that is acidic and nutrient-poor. They have an open canopy more characteristic of woodlands than forest. Pitch pine, white pine, black oak, red oak, and heath shrubs predominate. Colchester's sandplains are home to 27 rare plants, including 6 grasses, 4 sedges, 13 herbs, 3 shrubs, 1 tree and 2 rare animals.

Opinions differ on the minimum size of land necessary to sustain the community, ranging from a low of 25-40 acres to a high of 2000 acres. It is generally believed that with proper management,

## COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN

---

communities as small as 50 acres could preserve a large majority of the natural community's members.

No sandplain communities larger than 250 acres exist in Colchester. Because the lowest estimate of minimum size needed is 25-40 acres, the Vermont Natural Heritage program considers the following sites to be "Rare and Irreplaceable Nature Areas":

- Camp Johnson (250 acres): no legal protection; MOU governs current management
- Colchester High School Vicinity (164 acres):
- Sunderland Brook (92 acres): 25 acres protected to mitigate impact of Circ Highway
- Holy Cross Vicinity (45 acres): no protection currently in place

Other smaller parcels (acreage as of 1997): ~~Gauthier Industrial Park (6 acres)~~

- Smith Hollow Vicinity (26 acres)
- Bayside (20 acres)
- Sunny Hollow (15 acres)
- Holy Cross Woodland (8 acres)
- Winooski Bluff (8 acres)
- Airport Park (10 acres)
- Little Gap Woods (10 acres)
- Twin Bridges (5 acres)
- Macrae Road (5 acres)

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

Since sandplains are unique to Colchester, there are many challenges in how manage these areas. Sandplains exist on public as well as private property and potentially can restrict the potential use of these areas. The Town will continue to work with State agencies to determine suitable alternatives for these areas. Transfer of development rights may be looked to in an effort to fairly compensate landowners with otherwise restrictive natural areas.

**Natural Areas** - In 1991, the Agency of Natural Resources inventoried natural areas throughout Chittenden County. Colchester, with 29 sites with statewide significance, was noted for supporting "one of the greatest biotic diversities of any town in Vermont." Some are now under protection to a greater or lesser degree; others, some of which include irreplaceable habitat, are under direct threat of development and need protection.

Those considered most in need of immediate attention with the goal of permanent ~~legal protection-conservation~~ include:

- Camp Holy Cross Vicinity
- Colchester High School Vicinity ~~Colchester High School/~~
- ~~Clay Point~~
- ~~Diversity Hill~~ Vicinity
- Holy Cross Church Woodland
- Sunderland Brook

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

## COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN

---

Other areas have some level of protection, but the town and its residents would be well served by creating long-term ~~legal protections~~conservation initiatives ~~and/or management plans~~. These include:

- Bayside Park
- Camp Johnson
- Airport Park
- Colchester Pond
- Delta Park
- Half Moon Cove
- Malletts Bay State Park / Niquette's Bay State Park
- Pine Island Flood Plain
- Sunny Hollow Natural Area

Any development proposals that could adversely affect the following areas ~~which that~~ have been identified as sites of natural resource significance should be reviewed and their potential impacts evaluated including impacts that may not be immediate but pose long term adverse affects~~with care given to the long term interests of what we as a town leave to our children and grandchildren~~. These include:

- Cave Island
- Clay Point Road Caves
- Colchester Bog
- Colchester Point Rush meadow
- Colchester Pond Ridge
- Colchester Sea Caves
- Devil's Den Caves
- Marble Island
- Malletts Bay North Shore Headlands
- Malletts Creek Marsh – Munson Flat
- Parrot Jasper Mine
- Walnut Ledge Cave
- West of Indian Brook Cave

The State listed Natural Heritage Sites shown on the Natural Features Map have not been surveyed or precisely field located. The actual boundaries of these areas may be significantly different than shown on the map and the areas may be smaller. The map is for general informational purposes only and is not to be used for regulatory purposes.

**Open Space** – The Colchester Open Space Plan developed by the Planning Commission was adopted by the Select Board on February 22, 2000. The Open Space Plan inventories existing open spaces and natural areas and provides recommendations on what parcels should be

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

preserved and how the Town should initiate preservation of these parcels. An estimated 2,937 acres, or 12.5% of the total land area, in Colchester are currently permanently conserved.

### **Goals**

Colchester seeks to conserve and protect its natural resources for their intrinsic value as well as for their importance to quality of life within the community.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. The adverse environmental impacts of growth and development are to be addressed by encouraging only densities, uses and designs that respect environmental quality and make efficient use of natural resources.
2. The Planning Commission should continue to evaluate development projects for their affect on natural resources and require that appropriate criteria be satisfied before new development is approved.
3. The scenic resources of Colchester and the neighboring waters of Lake Champlain should be protected and enhanced. Special regulations apply in the shoreline area to accomplish this.
4. The Town's summer water quality monitoring program should be continued and possibly expanded to include tributaries and groundwater resources in other areas.
5. In January 2000 the Town revised its Health Ordinance to completely incorporate the State Environmental Protection Rules. Although the Town has been very active in pursuing alternative wastewater treatment the State Agency of Natural Resources and legislature are unwilling to permit these alternative systems. The Town should pursue adoption of sewage disposal alternatives that have been proven to be effective elsewhere to supplement current septic system requirements and should continue to lobby the ANR and Legislature to adopt new regulations. At the time of publication, new State rules were proposed by the ANR and endorsed by the Governor. These rules will be considered during the 2001-2002 legislative session. It is imperative for the Town to continue its efforts to ensure innovative technologies and other updates are included in these new rules. It is important to understand that the Town cannot adopt regulations permitting alternative wastewater systems without approval from the State.
6. The improvement and/or replacement of pre-existing substandard sewage disposal systems should be a priority. Health regulations should be complied with, at a minimum ensuring non-functioning systems are upgraded to meet Vermont's best available practices.

## COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN

---

7. The Colchester Water Quality Study Committee should complete its work as soon as feasible and the Town should act on its recommendations to protect Colchester's water resources.
8. The Town should continue to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program and to regulate development in the Flood Plain.
9. The Town should work cooperatively with conservancy organizations seeking to acquire and protect natural areas. Plans to acquire such properties should be developed in tangent with plans for proper stewardship of these natural areas. Maintenance plans for conserved properties should be developed and in place for conserved properties within one year of purchase or donation-
10. During the next five years, a transfer of development rights ordinance should be developed by the Planning Commission for consideration by the Select Board and implementation, with important natural and/or agricultural areas identified as sending areas.
11. A greenways plan should be developed for conservation of important connections in the landscape, such as narrow but continuous vegetated areas and smaller water courses in order to minimize fragmentation of existing open spaces. (The term "greenways" in this context refers to natural areas, not to transportation corridors.)
12. The Town should continue to work with the State of Vermont Natural Heritage Program to determine reasonable methods of managing and protecting the Pine/Oak/Heath Sandplain habitat.
13. The Colchester Open Space Plan, adopted 2/22/00, shall be considered part of this Master Plan.
14. The Town should pursue more accurate information on the location of wetlands, streams, and water resources and incorporate this information in Town maps and in its review of proposed developments.



---

**EDUCATION**

**SECTION EIGHT**

---

**VIII. EDUCATION**

The Colchester School District is an independent governmental body, politically distinct from the Town of Colchester. The District is governed by an elected School Board.

There are five school facilities in Colchester: Union Memorial (K-2), Porters Point (K-2), Malletts Bay (3-5), Colchester Middle School (6-8), and Colchester High School (9-12). The chart below has been supplied by the School District's Business Manager. It identifies capacities and the recent trend in enrollments.

**TABLE 7  
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT**

School	Capacity	Actual 1997-98	Actual 1998-99	Actual 1999-2000	Actual 2000-01	Actual 2001-02	Estimate 2002-03
Union Memorial	320	343	326	297	274	256	253
Porters Point	304	284	280	287	275	276	251
EEE	24	22	19	26	24	16	24
Malletts Bay	650	532	588	599	605	613	591
<b>Total Elementary</b>	<b>1298</b>	<b>1181</b>	<b>1213</b>	<b>1209</b>	<b>1178</b>	<b>1161</b>	<b>1119</b>
Middle School	572	585	540	554	567	588	592
High School	761	742	741	723	743	751	789
<b>Total Secondary</b>	<b>1333</b>	<b>1327</b>	<b>1281</b>	<b>1277</b>	<b>1310</b>	<b>1339</b>	<b>1381</b>
<b>Total School System</b>	<b>2631</b>	<b>2508</b>	<b>2494</b>	<b>2486</b>	<b>2488</b>	<b>2500</b>	<b>2500</b>

Source: Colchester School District, January, 2002

The average cost per student for all Colchester Schools in 2002 was \$7,951 .

Demographic studies indicate that enrollments are expected to decrease steadily for the next 10 years. The decrease will result from a diminishing number of children per household as well as from an aging population. There are currently about 39 public school students for each 100 homes in Colchester. Currently, Act 60 funding is directly proportional to the number of

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

equalized students enrolled in the town's public schools. This means that Colchester's residential school tax rate will primarily be determined by the level of per student spending. Well planned growth will likely reduce school fixed costs per student.

The School Board in 1998 completed a plan for renovating, repairing, and expanding its facilities.

### **Goals**

The Town supports the School District's mission " to ensure that all students will develop the academic proficiency, social skill, and character to be fulfilled, responsible, and involved citizens; we will accomplish this by providing diverse, challenging educational experiences in partnership with families and the community."

Colchester is a community that demonstrates its commitment to children not only through its schools and library, but also through its infrastructure that safely connects neighborhoods, schools, and a variety of recreational facilities. Our schools are a vital community resource available to all Colchester children and adults for a wide variety of educational, recreational, and civic activities.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. The school district has the facilities to educate a maximum of 2600 students.
2. The Town should continue to evaluate the impact of new residential development on school capacity. If it becomes apparent that additional residential development will exceed the School's ability to provide services for the Town, the Select Board, in conjunction with the School Board and Planning Commission, should take whatever steps it determines are necessary to stabilize or mitigate the impacts of residential development. The School District's Business Manager will submit a report on the student population to the town annually by November 1.
3. New subdivisions should be designed to provide for the safe and efficient movement of school children, including sidewalks, bicycle paths and accommodation for buses as appropriate. Safe, efficient and convenient transportation of children to school should be a priority as the Town improves its transportation infrastructure.
4. As part of any Town effort to quantify costs and benefits of residential development, costs associated with school capital projects, which are attributable to a development, should be paid by the permittee. The Town and School District should work together to monitor and maintain capital plans, budgets, and impact fees to ensure that this occurs.
5. The Town's capital budget and program should be coordinated as closely as possible with that of the School District.

**COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

6. The Town should seek opportunities for mutually beneficial sharing of services, facilities and personnel with the School District.
7. New facility proposals by the School District should be reviewed by the Planning Commission for conformance with the subdivision review criteria and the master plan.
8. As long as Act 60 is the law that determines how local schools are funded, the School Board should examine all possible alternatives to keep per student costs as low as possible while still providing a quality education.
9. The Town should support the development of a regional technical center that would provide a skilled workforce for Town businesses and future businesses. Action should be taken to mitigate and resolve traffic concerns at the proposed Colchester site.

---

**ECONOMY**

**SECTION NINE**

---

## IX. ECONOMY

### INTRODUCTION

Colchester has a diverse and robust economy that is not dependent on one particular industry or employment sector. As of this writing, Colchester is home to more than 640 businesses that support over 8,680 jobs.

Equitable economic opportunity and well being will grow in our Town. Working environments will afford employees the opportunity to sustain an active, diverse lifestyle. The employment base will feature a variety of environmentally sound, technologically advanced, growing companies. Incubator space will come on line to help nurture new enterprises. And the skills of all residents will evolve to support these industries and the mix of skills will be maintained and enhanced through a strong community ethic of lifelong learning, ensuring continual opportunity in the rapidly changing economy.

Colchester's produce is important to the Town and County. Several local high-tech firms have a national and international presence. E-businesses are now present in town and are expected to grow. The service sector continues to maintain a strong source of employment and the historically important tourism and recreational sectors continue to be growing element of the Town's economy.

The strongest and largest economic growth remains in the vicinity of Exit 16, mostly due to the infrastructure, primarily transportation and wastewater, being in place to support it. The Village and Warner's Corner-Prim Road areas continue to be secondary economic growth areas.

Challenges to a continued healthy economic base still remain.

#### Goals

The Town of Colchester will promote a diverse economic base and encourage growth in commercial and industrial uses while avoiding unmitigated impacts on the community, the environment, and on municipal infrastructure. Concentrated commercial and mixed-use uses should be planned to occur in local growth centers where services, including municipal sewer and water, and adequate roadways are now present or should be extended.

Commercial corridors should remain where they now exist and be improved upon to create a balanced and diverse mix of business as well as integrate aspects of residential use where reasonable in order to promulgate economic development which services the community. , but Strip development should generally be prevented. Large scale retail and other formula businesses that create more negative impacts than positive within the community should be prohibited in favor of businesses that contribute to the local economy. Small scale commercial businesses that are locally owned and/or that serve the everyday needs of surrounding

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

neighborhoods (i.e. businesses that can be demonstrated as having neighborhood serving zones) should be located within or close to residential neighborhoods.

Tourism and recreation based commercial uses are recognized as desirable types of economic development.

The Town should promote expansion and enhancement of land based production (agriculture) through careful management, exchange of development rights and use of value added potential of the Town's agriculture products.

Encourage the development of the Exit 17 area and the Severance Corner area as mixed use (commercial, light industrial, services, dense residential) in accordance with a masterplan developed for both areas.

In the previous decade regional concerns have surfaced over an increase in lower paying jobs (e.g. service sector jobs) and a need for wages that can support an individual or family. Colchester's development efforts should continue to focus on bringing higher paying jobs to the Town.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. Continuing to support economic development within the Town of Colchester is essential to expanding our employment opportunities, sustaining income growth, and assuring the continuance of a high quality of life.
2. Colchester Community Development Corporation (CCDC), existing businesses and the Town should work together to develop new jobs with wages able to support an individual or family.
3. The actions of the Select Board, Town staff, Planning Commission, Zoning Board and CCDC should be designed to support and preserve remaining agricultural enterprises.
4. Colchester should continue to maintain a fair, equitable and predictable local regulatory permit process.
5. The Town should continue to recognize the CCDC as a primary catalyst for economic development and an ombudsmen for the business community.
6. The Town should develop a policy to deal with the transfer of development rights or other methods from the most prime agricultural areas to the designated growth centers.

**COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

7. Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) methods should be explored to determine the feasibility of public/private partnerships formed to expand essential infrastructure in the designated growth areas.
8. The Town should continue the programs for retention of existing businesses and attraction of new businesses.
9. CCDC, the Board of Education, and the Town should continue work with local and regional skill training programs and institutions to encourage the necessary programming and training for a viable source of skilled and employable personnel to support the local and regional work force and economy.

---

**ENERGY**

**SECTION TEN**

---

## X. ENERGY

### INTRODUCTION

The Town of Colchester is not involved in energy generation and there are no large energy generation facilities within the Town. Town policy effects energy consumption through building codes, site plan review, fleet and facility management, and transportation planning.

According to the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, published by the Department of Public Service, the largest increase in demand for energy in Vermont is in the transportation sector which will account for half of the total energy consumption in the State between 1990-2015. Commercial uses show the next highest demand and for this sector an increase in energy consumption of 84% over the next 15 years is projected. The demand for energy in the residential sector is expected to increase by 21% during the next 15 years. The siting and construction of new energy generation facilities is difficult and energy conservation is important to address growing demand.

#### Goals

The Town seeks to encourage efficient use of energy and to help ensure that adequate, safe, and affordable energy systems and services are available to all residents and businesses. The community needs to have an adequate supply of energy to ensure long-term sustained economic vitality.

#### Policies and Implementation

1. The Town should continue to require, through its Building Codes and inspection program, that new buildings meet accepted energy conservation standards.
2. The Town's transportation planning efforts should include alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle, such as those called for in the Colchester Alternative Transportation Path Plan, and the Regional Transportation Plan.
3. The extension of natural gas service to areas not currently served, including the Malletts Bay area, should be encouraged by the Town. Town staff, the Planning Commission, and Zoning Board will encourage applicants to take advantage of available energy efficiency programs, designed to save them money and preserve energy resources for all Vermonters. Exterior incandescent lighting will not be permitted when reasonable alternatives are possible.
4. The Town should seek to ensure that all of its facilities are as energy efficient as possible.
5. The Town's largest energy expenditure is for street lighting. Additional Town costs are for maintenance and replacement. During the next five years, the Town should implement a comprehensive street lighting ordinance that reduces energy, maintenance, and replacement costs for the Town; minimizes night glow; is aesthetically pleasing; yet

## COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN

---

provides adequate lighting where necessary. The Town should attempt to work with other adjacent municipalities on regional outdoor lighting standards. Compliant street lighting and associated infrastructure should be installed and/or upgraded by new development.

6. The Zoning and Subdivision codes as well as other bylaws should require project designs to provide for efficient traffic flow. Design elements should include, but not be limited to, interconnected roadways, sidewalks and alternative transportation improvements.
7. Energy saving techniques should be included in design guidelines as they pertain to the construction, operation and maintenance of buildings and landscaping.
8. Town vehicles should be maintained at peak fuel efficiency.
9. Wherever possible, new or relocated electric cables, communication cables, switches and similar equipment should be located underground.
10. If energy companies seek to build transmission facilities through Colchester, not designed to bring energy to the Town, the Planning Commission will determine and seek payments (or a set-aside of a portion of the energy traveling over the facilities) to compensate for the aesthetic, safety, disruption during construction, and loss of use costs incurred by the project. This energy or these funds will be used to lower costs for all Colchester citizens. Energy companies and other utilities that have Certificates of Public Good should work with the Town to ensure that the good of Colchester's community is also being served.

---

**HISTORIC RESOURCES, CULTURE  
AND DESIGN**

**SECTION ELEVEN**

---

## HISTORIC RESOURCES, CULTURE, AND DESIGN

### INTRODUCTION

Colchester is a very diverse community which contains an immense inventory of historic resources, and cultural amenities. This section provides a description of the existing inventory of historic, resources, structures and amenities in Colchester. It further describes how these structures should be preserved and how future development can conform to the expectations of the community through design review standards.

### HISTORIC RESOURCES

The natural geography and environmental diversity of Colchester have made it a desirable place for settlement. Approximately 12,000 years ago, glacial sheets receded and gave way to the Champlain Sea which cloaked most of the Champlain Valley under its waters. As the Sea receded, evidence can be found that Native populations began to utilize the lands of Colchester. Archaic and Woodland Period archaeological sites, located along present and former stream channels testify that native peoples utilized Colchester for thousands of years making use of the area's stone raw materials for tools and abundant plant and animal resources for food and other necessities of life.

In 1609, Samuel de Champlain entered the area during an exploration of the waters now called Lake Champlain and an European presence was introduced to the area. In 1763, New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth chartered the Town of Colchester. The first European settlers of Colchester purchased land from the Onion River Land Company and attempted to take residency during the years preceding the Revolutionary War. After the War, the settlement of Colchester began to take hold as the region stabilized and land feuds between neighboring states were settled. Ira Allen was among the first residents of Colchester when the Town held its first Town meeting of record in 1793.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Colchester was primarily reliant on agriculture as its economic base. The gently rolling, fertile soils of Colchester were well suited to agriculture, but often required substantial clearing. Saw and grist mills developed along waterways and dams were built to exploit water power. The Village of Colchester, known today as Village, was Town's first center. Mallett's Bay was developed as a port of trade. Later nineteenth century developments brought the railroad to Town. The advent of the twentieth century brought substantial change to Colchester with the advent of the automobile, but the Town remained relatively agrarian until the second half of the twentieth century when development pressures from neighboring urban areas spilled out onto the Colchester landscape.

The landscape of Colchester has changed significantly over the centuries. Remnants of Colchester's past have begun to disappear from the landscape. Gone are many of the prehistoric and early historic sites. Quickly vanishing from the landscape are structures and features

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

associated with the agricultural history of the landscape. As new development takes place, Colchester's pre-European contact sites and historic buildings and structures should be preserved. Archaeological sites offer insights into the most distant past when people did not write and also provide information about more recent people and activities that no one wrote about. As with archaeological sites, significant historic structures should be preserved, although some structures may not be worth preserving because of their age. Preserving historic structures often requires repair or rehabilitation to provide continued use.

Pre-contact and historic period archaeological sites and historic buildings and structures constitute Colchester's rich and diverse heritage resources. The State of Vermont Division of Historic Preservation has published a list of historic structures and properties in the Town of Colchester. The list includes 40 properties which range from large complexes such as Fanny Allen Hospital and Fort Ethan Allen, to historic houses, and even bridges. A complete list can be found in Appendix A. Fort Ethan Allen is the only property in Colchester listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Once these resources are gone they can never be replaced. For certain eras of history, cultural resources may be the only clues to our past. Destroying cultural resources can therefore permanently destroy opportunities to understand and interpret our history. As Colchester's history continues to develop, cultural resources that represent the community's past should be recognized and preserved even as we plan for the Town's future.

### **Goals**

The Town should encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of all historic structures in Colchester through its regulations, policies, and budget. Changes to historic structures should be sympathetic to the structure and, to the extent possible, in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Development should be sensitive to Colchester's historic and archaeological sites and structures as these serve as visible reminders of the community's past. The Town should explore potential opportunities for funding preservation projects with not-for-profit organizations as well as State and Federal partners.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. The Town should analyze its existing regulations and policies to ensure that they do not discourage the preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures.
2. The Town should work to ensure the continued maintenance and upgrading of Town owned historic properties. Changes to historic structures should be sympathetic to the structure and, to the extent possible, in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
3. The Town should work with private foundations and citizen groups to preserve important historic structures, such as the recently discovered Malletts Bay School House.

4. To the extent possible, the Town should encourage important archaeological sites be preserved for future generations when new technologies can answer important scientific and cultural questions. If an important site can not be preserved, before development is allowed, archaeological investigations should be conducted to recover as much information as possible from the site.
5. Predictive modeling of archaeological sites should be explored by the Town as a tool to locate potentially important sites and assist developers in recognizing archaeological resources before final site plans are developed and thereby reducing project costs.
6. The State Register and National Register listings for the town should be used to assess the significance of historic buildings and structures. These listings should be maintained and updated by the Town to provide accurate documentation of the Town's historic resources.
7. The Town should explore participating in the Certified Local Government program and other State or Federal preservation programs.

### **CULTURE**

Because of Colchester's diversity there is an abundance of cultural amenities available to its citizens. These amenities include theatres, schools, tourist attractions, recreational opportunities, festivals, and sporting events. These amenities serve to increase business opportunities, and the overall well being of the community.

The following is a list of cultural amenities by category:

#### **Theater/Performing Arts**

- St. Michael's Playhouse (McCarthy Arts Center, St. Michael's College)

#### **Recreational Activities/Resources**

- Burnham Memorial Library
- Vincent C. Ross Sports Center (St. Michael's College)
- Colchester Senior Center
- State Fishing Access (a) Lakeshore Drive (b) Delta Park (c) Heineberg Drive (d) Lamoille River
- Colchester Historical Society
- Marble Island resort and golf course

**Parks** (see Natural Resources section for complete list of natural areas)

- Airport Park (Town)

## COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN

---

- Bayside Park (Town)
- Heritage Park (Town)
- Valleyfield Park (Town)
- Bonanza Park (Town)
- Billado Park (Town)
- Causeway Park and Recreation Path (Town)
- Rosetti Natural Area (Town)
- Fort Ethan Allen Parade Grounds (owned jointly by Colchester and Essex)
- Delta Park (Winooski Valley Park District)
- Macrae Farm (WVDP)
- Colchester Pond (WVDP)
- Malletts Bay State Park (State)

### Community Events

- Fair Day (July 4<sup>th</sup>)
- Winter Carnival (1<sup>st</sup> weekend in February)
- Green Up Day (May 31<sup>st</sup>)
- Town Meeting (March)
- Christmas Tree Lighting (Village Green)

### Community Communications

- Colchester Chronicle (published twice monthly)
- Public Access Cable Television (Channel 15 and Channel 17)
- Vermont ETV (Fort Ethan Allen)
- Vermont Public Radio (Fort Ethan Allen)
- [www.colchestervt.org](http://www.colchestervt.org)
- [www.mallettsbay.com](http://www.mallettsbay.com)

Please see Appendix B for a more complete list of cultural amenities including houses of worships, campgrounds, marinas, groups camps and farmstands.

### Goals

Colchester should develop and encourage a diverse offering of cultural amenities for use by residents of Colchester, Chittenden County, and elsewhere.

### DESIGN REVIEW

Building design is an extremely important component to community planning and one of the most noticeable elements of site planning. Many objections to development and growth can be mitigated with effective design review that ensures that projects will be appropriate to their surroundings. Colchester historically has not reviewed in detail a building's architectural elements as part of the regulatory review process. In 1999 the Planning Commission and Select

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

Board adopted a site plan criteria specifically aimed at giving the Planning Commission the ability to review the architectural elements of a project.

### **Goals**

To develop clearly written architectural design review guidelines for all commercial and mixed use areas within Colchester.

To enhance the built environment of Colchester through good design and building practices.

### **Policies and Implementation**

1. Within the next 2 years the Planning Commission should develop clear and concise written design review guidelines for the Exit 16 and Heineberg Drive/Prim Road local growth centers as well as Lakeshore Drive and Route 15. Design review guidelines for the Village should also be explored.
2. The Town boards and staff should follow Colchester's Open Space Plan to preserve scenic corridors and provide for more rural cultural activities.

---

**REGIONAL COOPERATION AND  
FEDERAL AND STATE REVIEW**

**SECTION TWELVE**

---

## **XII. REGIONAL COOPERATION & STATE AND FEDERAL REVIEW**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The goals and policies set forth in this plan can only be achieved through close cooperation between the Town of Colchester and other towns and cities in Chittenden County. For example: Our goals for Exit 17 depend on coordination with the Town of Milton on infrastructure and other issues, sewage from Exit 16 is discharged to South Burlington, there are shared facilities with Essex at Fort Ethan Allen, and police and fire department mutual aid agreements with the City of Winooski. During the next five years, Colchester should work with the MPO and its member Town representatives to allocate funding for completing the Circumferential Highway, especially the section west of I-89 and the recommended Route 127 corridor improvements. Many important services are provided or coordinated on a regional level, including: health care, transportation, solid waste management, water supply and others.

#### **Goal**

The Town of Colchester seeks to work together with other municipalities and agencies in Chittenden County, as well as with State agencies in order to achieve the goals and policies called for in this plan and assist other municipalities and agencies in meeting their goals.

#### **Policies and Implementation**

1. The Town will coordinate its development of the Exit 17 area with the Town of Milton growth center, transportation and sewer extension plans.
2. The Town is working with the City of Winooski on mutual drainage problems, and issues related to Whitcomb's Quarry. The Town will work with the City of Winooski to ensure its expansion plans do not create traffic problems in Colchester near Exits 15 and 16 or inhibit Colchester's plans for these areas by consuming all available traffic and/or sewage capacity.
3. Colchester's facilities and services overlap with those of the Town of Essex in the Fort Ethan Allen area. Mutual agreements are in place and this level of cooperation should be continued.
4. Colchester coordinates sewage disposal with the City of South Burlington and will continue to do so. Colchester should negotiate and/or work to develop additional capacity, paid for by the developers who use it, if possible.
5. Colchester will continue to participate with regional agencies to the greatest extent possible. The town currently works with the following groups:

**COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

- \*Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
- \*Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization
- \*Circumferential Highway District
- \*Winooski Valley Park District
- \*Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation
- \*Chittenden Solid Waste District
- \*Chittenden Unit for Special Investigation

6. Road, sidewalk, and bike path improvements should be coordinated, to the extent possible, with neighboring Town.
7. This comprehensive plan has been developed and should be implemented in ways that are compatible with the Regional Comprehensive Plan as well as with the comprehensive plans for neighboring Towns and appropriate State agencies.
8. Colchester should continue to work closely with the Federal officials at Camp Johnson to ensure coordination of sewage disposal, roadways, new Camp facilities and other items of mutual concern.
9. The Town should work with the Town of Milton and Town of South Hero to solve traffic concerns in the Exit 17 interchange area.

---

**MAPS**

---

## FUTURE LAND USE MAP CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS

The Future Land Use Map shows the uses planned and anticipated to occur in Colchester. This map shows general guidelines and is intended to be used together with the text and all other maps of included with this plan. Land use constraints exist which are not depicted on this map but which appear on other maps, in the text of the Plan or in other bylaws.

The Future Land Use Map is not a zoning map. The zone district map, will be adopted as a bylaw subsequent to adoption of the masterplan and may be revised periodically, but should be generally compatible with the Future Land Use Map. The zone district map will implement the Future Land Use Map, as well as other sections of the masterplan.

The following land use categories are established.

***Local Growth Center.*** Local Growth Centers, modeled upon the new urbanism which calls for higher density, compact, well integrated, mixed use development are to be the primary areas for new development in Colchester. Developers (or Local Growth Center residents and businesses) should be required to pay for the extension and upgrade of infrastructure (e.g., municipal water and sewer) required to support these densities and the amenities required to make these areas desirable and livable (common parks, bike paths, walkways, access to public transportation etc.) Uses appropriate for Local Growth Centers include light industrial, office, restaurant, retail and a variety of businesses. There must be a high level of integration between the high density residential development and non-residential uses. Multi-family and high density single family residential are strongly encouraged as permitted uses in Local Growth Centers while R-1 and R-2 zoning do not belong in Local Growth Centers. Building heights (including 3 to 4 story structures) in Local Growth Centers will be higher than other areas of Town providing they can be blended into the topography are visually compatible with the area and include architectural features that mitigate the visual impacts.

***Village Mixed Use.*** These are primarily existing developed areas and future development is meant to be compatible with the existing diverse mix of uses. Additional infrastructure will generally not be required to support desired levels of growth and density. Uses appropriate for Village Mixed Use includes small office, restaurant, small retail, agriculture, and many businesses integrated into neighboring residential uses. Industrial uses should be conditioned on their ability to fit with neighboring uses. Although Planned developments (PUD, PRD), multi-family and higher residential densities are to be encouraged, lower densities such as R-1 and especially R-2 are also compatible in Village Mixed Use areas. Building heights and sizes should be comparable to most areas of town other than Local Growth Centers.

***(R) Rural.*** These areas generally are distant from facilities and services. They tend to be open and sparsely developed. Soils may be prime for agricultural use, unsuited for sewage disposal or wet. These areas are planned to remain in low-density use such as agricultural, rural residential,

## **COLCHESTER MASTER PLAN**

---

and/or conservation. Extension of municipal infrastructure to these areas will be a low priority, and may not be permitted. The uses indicated within this area will be designated in more detail in the Zoning Code in order to reflect the policies and strategies of the masterplan and other bylaws.

***Suburban Residential.*** These areas are appropriate for residential development at a medium density of one to two units/acre, generally matching the existing development pattern. Limited development of neighborhood commercial services, such as professional offices or small stores may also be considered. The uses indicated within this area will be designated in more detail in the Zoning Code in order to implement the policies and strategies of the masterplan and other bylaws.

***Manufacturing/Distribution.*** These areas are served by rail or appropriate roadways to support manufacturing and distribution uses. These would be appropriately zoned for industrial use. The uses indicated within this area will be designated in more detail in the Zoning Code in order to implement the policies and strategies of the masterplan and other bylaws.

***Shipman Hill & Mallets Bay Ave. South.*** This area consists of the agricultural lands located along Mallets Bay Avenue and Lavigne Road, at the top of Shipman Hill. This area's unique characteristic is the farming community located within its boundaries. The Shipman Hill farms are an important part of Colchester's economy, community character and heritage; the Town seeks to retain and support these farms. The Town will investigate land preservation that compensates landowners with the market value for their land (e.g. transfer of development rights or purchasing development rights) in order to preserve the current uses and character of this area. Expansion of farm stand retail operations run in conjunction with active farms and additional structures for housing of farm help should be encouraged. Concurrent with these land preservation efforts during the next five years, the Town should pursue a new zoning district for the area that encourages farmland preservation while permitting landowners to take advantage of residential cluster development opportunities, including small scale neighborhood oriented commercial services, such as professional offices or small stores. If residential development occurs in this area, attempts should be made to cluster structures together to preserve as much usable agricultural land as possible. All new residential development should be made aware of the right of landowners right to farm. Every effort should be made to ensure that development assists the continued viability of farming in the area and not vice versa.

***Military Use.*** This area consists of land owned by the U.S. Government that is actively used for military administrative and/or training purposes.

## APPENDIX A

Name of Site	State Site Number
Holy Cross Church (Cloarec Hall)	404-1
Woehr House	404-2
Rossetti House	404-3
Munson House	404-4
Button House	404-5
Langdon House	404-6
Curtis House	404-7
Collins House	404-8
Platte House	404-9
St. J and Lamoille County Railroad Caboose	404-10
Gabriel House	404-11
Wallace House	404-12
Braeloch Camp	404-13
Austin House	404-14
Herrlich House	404-15
Wheelock House	404-16
Severance House	404-17
Wright House	404-18
Clark House	404-19
Wolcott House	404-20
Garrison House	404-21
Solomon House	404-22
LeClerc House	404-23
Beers House	404-24
Somers House	404-25
Colchester District School	404-26
92 College Parkway	404-27
Fox House	404-28
Fanny Allen Hospital	404-29
St. Edmund's Hall	404-30
Previll Hall	404-31
"Corn Crib"	404-32
Doolan House	404-33
Washburn House	404-34
Robinson House	404-35
Meeting Hall (razed)	404-36
School	404-37
Bridge on Lime Kiln Rd over Winooski River	404-38
Bridge on Bay Rd over Indian Brook	404-39
Fort Ethan Allen and Parade Grounds	National Register

## **APPENDIX B**

### Houses of Worship

Colchester Community Baptist Church  
Holy Cross Church (Church Rd)  
Jehovah's Witnesses (Main St)  
Malletts Bay Congregational Church (Lakeshore Dr)  
Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church (Main St)  
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church (Prim Rd)  
United Church of Colchester (Main St)

### Community Associations

American Diabetes Association  
American Legion Post 91  
Boy Scouts  
Champlain Vocational Services  
Colchester Community Bus  
Colchester Community Development Corporation  
Colchester Historical Society  
Colchester Senior Center  
Japan – America Society of Vermont  
Lions Club  
Rotary Club  
Special Services Transportation Agency  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Vermont Girl Scout Council  
Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program  
Visiting Nurse Association

### Farm/Farm Stand/Greenhouse

Arbortech Nursery and Greenhouse  
Brigante's Brothers Vegetable Stand  
Brigante's Farm Stand  
Button Farm  
Claussen's Greenhouses  
Claussen's Perennial Farm  
Colverdale Farm  
Destiny Morgan Farm  
E&J Senesac Farm  
Elm Hill Farm  
Fitzgerald Farm  
Mazza's Farm Stand  
Rivendell Tree Farm  
Shadow Cross Egg Farm

Sharp Farm  
Thompson Farm  
Trail's End Farm  
Trans-Plants

Campgrounds

Lone Pine Campsites  
Malletts Bay Campground  
Pine Haven Campground

Group Camps

Brown Ledge Camp  
Camp Holy Cross  
Camp Kinya  
Camp Tara

Marinas

Calm Cove Cottages & Marina  
Champlain Marina  
Coates Island Marina  
International Sailing School  
Jake's Malletts Bay Marina  
Malletts Bay Boat Club  
Marble Island Community & Resort  
Moorings  
Three Island Yacht Club

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
Vision Statement.....	2
Opening Statement.....	2
Purpose.....	3
History.....	3
Challenges & Opportunities.....	3
Process .....	5
LAND USE.....	6
Introduction.....	7
Residential Uses.....	7
Business Uses.....	13
Agricultural.....	15
Individual Areas.....	16
Clay Point Area.....	16
Severance Corners Growth Center.....	17
Town Services Center .....	18
West Lakeshore Drive – Malletts Bay Ave to Prim Rd.....	18
East Lakeshore Drive – Bayside to Norse's Corner.....	20
Poor Farm Road .....	21
Prim Rd/Warner's Corner/Heineberg Drive.....	21
Seasonal Camp Communities .....	23
Fort Ethan Allen/Camp Johnson .....	25
Shipman Hill .....	26
Malletts Bay Avenue South to Winooski.....	28
Colchester Village.....	29
Malletts Head/Marble Island.....	30
Exit 17 .....	31
Lakeshore Area .....	32
Exit 16.....	32
Northeast Quadrant .....	33
LOCAL GROWTH CENTERS .....	35
Exit 16.....	36
Exit 17 .....	36
Severance Corners .....	37
Growth Centers .....	37
TRANSPORTATION.....	39
Introduction.....	40
Public Roads .....	40
Private Roads .....	43

Intersections .....	44
Sidewalks .....	44
Multi Modal/Bicycle Paths .....	45
Public Transportation.....	46
General Policies and Implementation .....	47
UTILITIES, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES .....	49
Introduction.....	50
Water Supply .....	50
Sewage Disposal .....	52
Solid Waste .....	54
Storm Water .....	55
Emergency Services.....	56
Police.....	59
Parks and Recreation.....	59
Library.....	63
Public Works.....	64
General Administration.....	66
General Government.....	67
HOUSING.....	68
NATURAL RESOURCES .....	72
Introduction.....	73
Lake Champlain .....	73
Winooski and Lamoille Rivers .....	74
Colchester Pond .....	74
Groundwater .....	74
Wetlands and Floodplains.....	75
Soils and Geology .....	75
Sand Plains.....	75
Natural Areas .....	76
Open Space .....	77
EDUCATION .....	80
ECONOMY .....	84
ENERGY .....	88
HISTORIC RESOURCES, CULTURE, AND DESIGN .....	91
Introduction.....	92
Historic Resources .....	92
Culture.....	94
Design Review.....	95
REGIONAL COOPERATION AND FEDERAL AND STATE REVIEW .....	97
MAPS .....	100
APPENDIX A	
APPENDIX B	
APPENDIX C (2000 Open Space Plan)	
APPENDIX D (2000 Exit 17 Growth Center Plan)	
APPENDIX E (1993 Colchester Alternative Transportation Path Master Plan)	

**TOWN OF COLCHESTER**  
**2002 MASTER PLAN**

**COLCHESTER SELECT BOARD**

L. Richard Paquette, Chair  
Edward Ploof, Jr.  
Robert Campbell  
Chris Conant  
Marc Landry

**COLCHESTER PLANNING COMMISSION**

Harlan Lachman, Chair  
Michael Morin  
Russell Niquette  
Carol MacDonald  
Robert Melillo  
David Roy  
John Zenie

Adopted July 9, 2002

**TOWN OF  
COLCHESTER  
VERMONT**



**2002 MASTER PLAN**