

**TOWN OF
VERNON
TOWN PLAN
2003**

**TOWN OF VERNON
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Source 1995 Town Plan

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

The town of Vernon is located in the southeastern corner of Windham County. It has an area of 11,652 acres and a population at the time of the **2000** census **of 2,122**. The altitude is 280 feet. Vernon was chartered September 3, 1753, and organized in 1802. It is governed by a board of five Selectmen and its schools are operated by a Board of five School Directors. It belongs to the Brattleboro Area Middle School and Senior High School District and is one of the Towns within the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union.

The first and, at this time, only Nuclear Power Plant in Vermont is located in Vernon. The Town remains mainly agricultural-residential with a few mills and service businesses.

Because we have great respect for the State of Vermont and the Laws that govern us, we would like to remind everyone to consult 24 V.S.A. Subsection 2741 (d) for the definition of open space, farmland, and forestland contained within this Plan.

PURPOSE OF THE TOWN PLAN

Development activities are frequently irreversible. It is the purpose of the Vernon Town Plan to chart a course for development that will benefit the Town and its future generations, thereby avoiding actions, which cannot be adequately corrected. The official adoption of the Plan represents a conscious community decision about the Town's future character, its priorities for land use and conservation of natural resources.

The Town Plan reflects the collective values and goals of the Town's residents and provides guidelines to ensure that decisions made at the local, regional and state levels are in concert with these values and goals.

As a planning commission, we cannot predict a fixed plan for the indefinite future. Therefore, our planning process must be continuous so the policies will emerge continuously to guide the Town's development and utilization of its resources. The Planning Commission, and a report, of the Commission's findings will be presented to the Board of Selectmen, the Windham Regional Planning Commission and the Department of Housing and Community Affairs will evaluate the Town Plan at least annually, more often if necessary.

STRUCTURE OF THE TOWN PLAN

The Town Plan has as its basis, statements of objectives, which provide a direction for the future. The objectives are given definition through statements of policies and recommendations. The policy statements establish how the Town should be planned in order to achieve its desired quality of life.

Town policies shall also be for the purpose of providing guidelines to the Town Planning Commission and Board of Selectmen in developing subdivision regulations and other Town ordinances; to guide the regional planning commission and state agencies in their planning efforts; to assist the District Environmental Commission in judging applications submitted under act 250 and to guide those interested in subdividing and developing land in the Town of Vernon.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

1. To accommodate the changing needs of the Town through a continuous and comprehensive planning program.
2. To provide for a variety of land uses which will not detract from the rural, residential, scenic and agricultural character of the Town.
3. To manage Vernon's growth to a level that prevents uncontrolled development and that is consistent with the Town's ability to provide and pay for satisfactory educational, highway and other services.
4. To prevent uncontrolled growth that places an undue burden upon taxpayers or otherwise leads to an excessive increase in tax rates.
5. To insure that the basic needs of health, safety, education, welfare and housing will be met and maintained at satisfactory levels.
6. To discourage incompatible and uncoordinated development activity that will jeopardize public and private investments.
7. To encourage the continued use of lands for agriculture and forestry in order to keep these areas of nonrenewable resources available and to help meet existing and future needs for food, forage and fiber, to preserve the rural character of the Town, and to provide for diverse economic opportunities in farming and forestry.
8. To protect the rural character of the Town through careful management and guidance of new development.

9. To provide for the conservation of the Town's natural resources and the protection of sensitive areas in order to ensure continued availability of a sound resource base for the enjoyment and well being of all Vernon residents and future generations.
10. To protect areas of special educational and scientific value and to conserve sites and structures of historical and architectural significance.
11. To encourage the development of industrial and commercial activities are in keeping with the Town's rural character.
12. To require that, where possible, public utilities and transportation facilities integrate the use of corridors in order to minimize the impact on the environment and to assist desired development patterns.
13. To take continuing steps so that the safety of Vernon's residents is ensured and that a climate of orderliness prevails in the Town.
14. To ensure that any project that will increase the capacity of any existing town highway or the development of any new highway will be consistent with the general character of the Town and that such will perpetuate the quiet, picturesque and rural nature thereof.

TOWN PLAN POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. PLANNING FOR LAND USE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: GENERAL POLICIES
 - A. Capability of the Land
 1. Knowledge of the capability and quality of the land shall provide a foundation for judging how the lands of the Town of Vernon will be used. The Vermont Interim Land Capability Plan, the Vermont Capability and Development Plan, the Town Environmental Study, the USDA Soil Conservation Service's detailed soils survey and the various Town Plan Maps, contained herein, provide land capability information, which shall be considered as a base in making judgments.

B. Protection of Natural Resources

1. A major proportion of the total land area of the Town of Vernon has an ecological and/or a resource value of critical importance and should be protected. These lands include productive agricultural and forestlands, mineral, stone and sand deposits, flood plains, wetlands, groundwater storage and recharge areas, ponds and streams, high elevations and steep slopes and the location of particular scientific, historic, architectural, archaeological and wildlife areas and other areas of significant ecological value as identified on the Town Plan Maps and described in **Sections IV and V**.
2. It is the policy of the Town to encourage in every possible way the careful use of such lands so that the resource or condition is not significantly altered or threatened and the public good is upheld.
3. The Town shall be encouraged to purchase or accept rights to property that has specific resources value as identified in the plan.

C. Public and Private Capital Investment

1. The Town of Vernon and its required public services need an adequate tax base to support these services. Neither public nor private investment can grow or decline out of reasonable proportion to the other without undue stress on the community.
2. An assessment of public investment in municipal services and facilities is requisite to gauging the effects of proposals for private development or subdivision. It is the policy of the Town that increased costs of operation of Town services, which result from development activity, shall be weighed in relation to increased tax revenues.
3. It is the policy of the Town that the pace of development is at a rate or in a manner, which will insure that, the cash flow to the Town can be balanced against necessary or reasonably anticipated increases in public services.

4. The Town does have a capital budget and program which includes those capital expenditures anticipated within a five (5) year period, including but not limited to: fire and police protection; a town land acquisition program, a municipal building program. Separate funds for solid waste disposal, town roads program and, when appropriate, town wastewater treatment and water facilities.
5. Lands adjacent to public or quasi-public facilities, services, or lands including but not limited to highways, fire and police stations, schools, hospitals, libraries, parks, hiking trails, should be used in such a manner that will not endanger, jeopardize, or interfere with the public's use or enjoyment of, or access to, the facility, service or lands.

D. Planning for Growth

1. In planning for growth, it is the policy of the Town of Vernon to prevent commercial strip development and dense residential development that does not utilize a single access to the Town or State Highway. Such development adds unreasonably to traffic congestion and over-taxing of town roads and services.
2. The Town should provide for various types of industrial, commercial and residential, and recreational activities. The location of these activities shall be governed by the inherent capabilities of the land and by the concept that the rural character of the Town shall be preserved and the objectives, policies and recommendations and land classification system described herein upheld.

E. Impact on Neighboring Towns

The Town of Vernon feels fortunate to have Guilford as one of our neighboring towns. We seem to share common interests, concerns, and goals. Over the years our Planning Commission has met with Guilford's Planning Commission to discuss common interests. We have cooperated with and assisted them in areas such as roads, mapping and finances.

Some areas in which we have worked together include the following:

1. Roads—Vernon and Guilford have an agreement between each other for exchange of road maintenance.
2. Finances—Through our Finance Committee, Vernon has met with Guilford in helping them establish a Capital Plan and budget.

Guilford has been kind enough to invite us to attend their Planning Commission Meetings, as well as possibly meet with other towns to again discuss common interests.

Brattleboro is our other, much larger in population, neighbor. As a member of the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union, we send our students to Brattleboro for schooling beyond grade six, or they have the option, with tuition, to go to another public or private middle and high school.

We will address any problems that arise. However, as far as we are aware, there are no conflicts within our Town Plan and other neighboring communities.

F. Energy

Within our town, Vernon has two electrical generating plants. The Vernon Dam (USGen New England, INC.) is a hydroelectric plant producing 20 megawatts of electricity. Vermont Yankee Station (Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation) is a nuclear power plant producing 540 megawatts of electricity.

There are three different companies providing electric service to residents of Vernon. Central Vermont Public Service, Green Mountain Power, and Halifax Co-op control electrical service to the community.

The Town encourages energy conservation in every possible way. With the availability of energy conserving devices, many new homes are utilizing less electrical energy than once needed. Older buildings, including our own Town Offices, are being upgraded with newer systems that will pay for themselves by the energy costs that will be saved.

Both the Vernon Dam and Vermont Yankee Station are well-maintained and well run generating plants and we see no reason that either electrical energy source would become obsolete in the foreseeable future. The Vernon Dam and Vermont Yankee Station have comprehensive preventive maintenance and equipment upgrade programs in place and keep their plants in top running order. The plants enjoy a stable work force and conscientious management.

Looking towards the future, Vermont Yankee has the following intentions:

1. Vermont Yankee is intending on upgrading their generator (rated for 540 MW). The new one will be rated with a higher electrical output.
2. Vermont Yankee is intending on installing a steam reheat system. This will allow more (steam) energy to be put into the turbine, which in turn will give greater generator energy (MW) output.
3. Vermont Yankee is looking into the purchase of higher enriched fuel (from 3% enriched to 5-6% enriched) in order to get more energy out of the core. The core is already (physically) sized to accommodate this type of fuel. There is also the possibility of increasing operating cycles from eighteen months (refuel to refuel outage), out to twenty-four months between shutdowns.

II. COMMUNITY PROFILE: SPECIFIC POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Population Trends and Projections

As indicated in Table I, Vernon has experienced a relatively high rate of change in population throughout the past few years when compared to Brattleboro and Windham County as a whole. While Brattleboro has expanded its commercial and industrial bases dramatically, gradually emerging as a major regional economic center, the smaller and more rural outlying communities, such as Vernon, have accommodated much of the associated residential growth.

TABLE #1 POPULATION TRENDS

Year	Vernon		Guilford	
	Population	%Change	Population	% Change
1983	1,283		1,564	
1984	1,280	-0.2	1,599	2.2
1985	1,292	0.9	1,605	0.4
1986	1,422	10.1	1,612	0.4
1987	1,458	2.5	1,623	0.7
1988	1,558	6.9	1,612	-0.7
1989	1,538	-1.3	1,659	2.9
1990	1,850	4.9	1,941	1.4
1997	1,954	4.9	1,965	1.4
1998	1,940	4.9	1,968	1.4

Year	Brattleboro		Windham County	
	Population	% Change	Population	% Change
1983	12,155		38,200	
1984	12,081	-0.6	38,522	0.8
1985	12,445	3.0	39,000	1.2
1986	12,620	1.4	39,899	2.3
1987	12,639	0.2	40,254	0.9
1988	12,647	0.1	40,805	1.4
1989	12,707	0.5	41,246	1.1
1990	12,241	0.0	41,588	1.1
1997	12,393	2.8	43,127	2.8
1998	12,239	2.8	42,737	2.8

SOURCE: Vermont Department of Health, Population and Housing Estimates, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998; WRC

By looking at the previously established Population Estimates given in Table 1, it can be seen that Vernon's rate of population growth between 1983 and 1989 was 3.2% per year, a rate more than double compared to that experienced in Windham County as a whole (1.3%), and significantly higher than that of Brattleboro (0.8%). This dramatic increase in population growth is evident in an evaluation of the number of sewage permits issued each year for the construction of new homes in Vernon. Between 1983 and 1989, an average of approximately 25 new homes per year were constructed in Vernon. With an estimated 2.9 persons per household, new construction alone in Vernon has contributed significantly to the community's overall population growth. Since this plan was first completed, we now have additional updated figures. By comparing the population figures between the 1980 and 1990 census, we see an even greater population growth than originally determined by using the population estimates referred to above. Between the period of 1980 and 1990, Vernon grew by an amazing 57.5%. Only one Town in the State of Vermont grew by a greater percentage: Ferdinand, with a change of 91.7%. Eight other Towns in the State had a percentage change of over forty-percent between these two periods. Brattleboro grew by only three percent, while West Brattleboro showed a 12.1% change. Windham County as a whole also had a percent change of 12.6% from the 1980 to 1990 census. To sum this all up, Vernon does appear to be growing rapidly, over 4.5 times faster than Windham County as a whole, and at a greater pace than our neighbor to the North. For other Town's populations and percent changes, refer to Table 3.

As Brattleboro continues to develop its new industrial parks and as commercial opportunities continue to expand, it seems likely that Vernon will indeed experience greater pressure for new residential development, providing much needed housing for new employees moving to the region.

SEWAGE PERMITS ISSUED BY TOWN OF VERNON
With approval of a site engineer, etc.

YEAR	NUMBER OF NEW PERMITS	NUMBER OF REPLACEMENT PERMITS
1990	20	
1991	10	
1992	15	
1993	8	
1994	13	
1995	24	
1996	22	
1997	3	10
1998	7	7
1999	8	15
2000	9	12

SOURCE: Vernon Town Clerk Records

It is difficult to predict the consequences of continued growth at a rate similar to that experienced between 1980 and 1990. Indefinite continuations of *this* rate of growth would clearly begin to create unreasonable burdens on existing municipal services and would most likely require new public facilities to support a suburban settlement pattern. This plan should not be understood as encouraging such growth, as this would conflict with the general wishes of the Vernon residents to retain the rural character of the community, as expressed in a 1990 survey conducted by the Vernon Planning Commission.

TABLE 3. VERMONT'S 1990-1998 POPULATION COUNTY BY COUNTY, TOWN BY TOWN

County/Town	1990	1997	1998	% Change from 1980
Addison County	32,953			12.1
Bennington County	35,838			7.5
Stamford	773			0.0
Winhall	482			47.4
Calendonia County	27,846			7.9
Chittenden County	131,759			14.1
Burlington	39,127			3.8
Hinesburg	3,780			40.5
South Burlington	12,809			20.0
Essex County	6,396			1.5
Concord	1,093			-2.8
Ferdinand	23			91.7
Granby	85			21.4
Franklin County	39,980			14.9
Bakersfield	977			14.7
Fletcher	941			50.3
Lamoille County	19,735			17.7
Orange County	26,149			15.0
West Fairlee	633			48.2
Orleans County	24,053			6.5
Rutland County	62,142			18.9
Chittenden	1,102			-1.8
Pittsfield	389			-1.1
Rutland City	18,230			4.8
Washington County	54,928			12.6
Windham County	41,586	43,127	42,737	2.8
Brattleboro	12,241	12,393	12,239	0.0
West Brattleboro	3,135			49.3
Dover	994	997	1024	3.0
Dummerston	1,863	1,844	1,850	-0.7
Guilford	1,941	1,965	1,968	1.4
Vernon	1,850	1,954	1,940	(2141) 2000 4.9
Windsor County	54,055			5.9
Sharon	1,211			46.3

Policy:

1. In planning for growth, provision should be made to accommodate an increase in population based only on the existing and projected capacity of municipal services and facilities. The capital budget and program will define these capacities. Population projections contained in the Plan shall be used as a guide in determining population growth related to development activity.
2. The Planning Commission should coordinate with local boards and departments to identify existing and projected capacities of municipal services and facilities; the Town has developed a capital budget and program.

Recommendations:

1. The Town should monitor the rate of development of new housing units through a periodic review and evaluation of **new** sewage permits.
2. Applicants for development and large subdivisions should be required to disclose their best estimates of growth in population closely related to the impact of their development proposals.

B. Housing

Table #4 indicates the number and distribution of year-round housing types present in Vernon in 1991. Nearly eighty-five percent of Vernon's year-round housing stock is comprised of single-family dwellings. Mobile homes account for almost twelve percent, while the remaining, roughly three percent is accounted for in the structures housing two to ten units.

As shown in **Table #5**, up until 1989, approximately two percent of Vernon's housing units were seasonal, as compared to approximately thirty percent for Windham County as a whole. Moreover, as of 1990; less than one percent of the housing units in Vernon were seasonal.

The number of sewage permits issued by the Town for the installation of septic systems for newly constructed homes (including mobile homes) in Vernon has fluctuated between 3 and 9 over the past 4 years as indicated through new sewer permits issued. The dramatically higher rate of new home construction experienced in Vernon in 1999 and 2000 most likely reflects the economy and active market status those years.

**TABLE #4. CHARACTERISTICS OF YEAR-ROUND HOUSING UNITS,
1991
BY NUMBER OF UNITS AT ADDRESS**

Single Family	2-9 Units	10+ Units	Mobile Homes
550	19	3	76

Source: Vernon Town Clerk, 1991

**TABLE #5 HOUSING INVENTORY
VERNON HOUSING UNITS**

YEAR ROUND HOUSING UNITS			SEASONAL UNITS		
Year	Estimates	% Change	Year	Estimates	% Change
1988	650	13.8	1988	11	-26.7
1989	623	-4.2	1989	11	0.0
1990	648	4.0	1990	6	-45.5
1998	719	10.8	1998	6	20.0
1999	729	10.8	1999	6	20.0

WINDHAM COUNTY

YEAR ROUND HOUSING UNITS			SEASONAL UNITS		
Year	Estimates	% Change	Year	Estimates	% Change
1988	17,341	3.2	1988	7,379	8.0
1989	17,278	-0.4	1989	7,748	5.0
1990	23,702	7.9	1990	6,387	9.3
1998	25,184	7.9	1998	6,768	9.3
1999	25,563	7.9	1999	6,739	5.0

Source: Vermont Department of Health, Population and Housing Estimates, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1998, 1999; WRC, Vernon Town Clerk.

Single-family units have accounted for the majority of all new housing in Vernon throughout the past years. Given the lack of a centralized sewage treatment system, this form of development will most likely continue to dominate. Therefore, it is important that future development occurs on sites capable of maintaining permanently functioning on-site sewage and water facilities.

It is in the Town of Vernon's interest that new or rehabilitated housing should be safe and sanitary, available in adequate supply to meet the requirements of all the Town's residents and be coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.

Policy:

1. Wherever appropriate to the Town's rural character and the capability of the land, and to the efficient provision of services, developments in areas designated to accommodate residential growth, shall be encouraged to employ the cluster planning concept so as to avoid those negative aspects of development as set forth in **Sections IV and V** of this plan.
2. The development of housing shall be coordinated with the adequate provision of public utilities, facilities and services. As seasonal homes are convertible to permanent homes and are often so converted, the Town shall consider permanent and seasonal homes by the same standards.

Recommendations:

1. The Town should allow for a range of residential development that meets the diverse housing requirements of a variety of household types and income groups.
2. The Town should continue to enforce its state approved sewage disposal regulations in order to minimize pollution of Vernon's soils and water resources and public health problems resulting from increased residential development.

C. Transportation

Vernon has a total of approximately 39 miles of highway; of these, Town Roads comprise 24.83 miles, State Highways, 11.66 miles, and Interstate 91 accounts for 2.74 miles.

State Highway Route #142 provides access between the Connecticut Valley Villages in Northern Massachusetts and Brattleboro. Traffic along Route #142 has increased steadily in the past years, particularly along the northern sections as shown in Table #6.

Settlement patterns in Vernon have tended to follow existing roadways, with significant new residential development taking place along Hucklehill Road, Newton Road, Franklin Road and Pond Road in recent years. This recent development has contributed to the gradual increase in traffic recorded along Route #142, which provides primary access to shopping and employment opportunities in Brattleboro. It is anticipated that new residential growth in Vernon will continue and add to the traffic burden on Route #142.

A few parcels in Vernon have access to the railroad tracks. Potential access of new industries, if appropriate to these parcels, would most likely be by means of private sidings. The limited accessibility to rail facilities suggests a great dependence upon the highway network.

TABLE #6. TRAFFIC FLOW
ESTIMATED 24-HOUR ANNUAL AVERAGE

		1988	1982
Rte. #142	At the Mass. Border	1,060	(NA)
Rte. #142	Approx. 1 mile north of Mass. Border	1,420	1,190
Rte. #142	Near the Brattleboro border	2,610	(NA)
Rte. #142	In Brattleboro	3,140	2,990
Rte. #5	In Guilford	900	690
Rte. #5	In Brattleboro	4,630	3,650
Interstate #91	Guilford/Vernon area	15,30	(NA)

(NA) Not Available

SOURCE: State Vermont 1988 Traffic Flow Map prepared by the Agency of Transportation; 1986 Vernon Town Plan

Policy:

1. Vernon's network of highways and roads should form a system that provides for the efficient and safe movement of through traffic, as well as ease of access to individual properties on Class 1, 2, and 3 highways.
2. The transportation system of the Town of Vernon should provide convenience and service, which is commensurate with need and should respect the integrity of the natural environment. New construction or major reconstruction of roads and highways should provide paths, tracks or areas solely for use by pedestrian or non-motorized means of transportation wherever feasible.

3. Improvements to town roads should be carried out in a manner, which will protect and enhance scenic features while maintaining safety and durability.
4. It is a policy of the Town to discourage unnecessary new road junctions with Route #142 and strip development, which would increase the number of dangerous access points.
5. It is a policy of the Town that all developments shall access onto a class 3 road or better.

Recommendations:

1. The Town should coordinate with the Vermont Agency of Transportation in Planning for road improvement work along Route #142 as proposed by the Agency's current work plan.
2. The Planning Commission and Board of Selectmen adopted a town highway ordinance, which regulates the construction of new roads, driveway cuts, installation of culverts, etc.
3. No development should be permitted within existing or planned highways or rights-of-way.

III. RESOURCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Specific Policies and Recommendations

A. Employment and Economic Base

According to the 1980 Census of population, there were an estimated 563 Vernon residents age 16 and above employed in the regional work force. As of 1990, approximately 37% of the community's workers were employed by businesses and industries located within the Town of Vernon, while an estimated 46% commute to Brattleboro, and 11% travel out of state to neighboring communities in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut for employment opportunities. **(Table #7)**

Vernon functions to a great extent with a large measure of rural independence and self sufficiency, due primarily to the presence of the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant and thus USGen New England, Inc. which contribute significantly to the community's tax base and provide varied employment opportunities for its residents.

Vernon's economic base is also closely tied to its agricultural and forestry resources with five active commercial farms, several lumber operations and gravel pits; health and elderly care facilities and home based businesses offer stable employment opportunities for town residents.

B. Economic Growth

Economic development is a process through which communities; regions and nations seek to improve the well-being of their citizens. Economic development should lead to improvement in the quality of life as well as to an increase in the production and sale of goods and services. Economic development in Vernon, like population growth, must be balanced and consistent with the Town's overall objectives. Examples of the types of resources and economic development desired in Vernon are agriculture; forestry; industrial and commercial service facilities. A study conducted by the Vermont Agency of Development and Community Affairs entitled "Small Business and Employment Growth in Vermont" illustrates the critical importance of micro-businesses (ie. Firms with fewer than twenty employees) in these types of economic sectors in generating new employment opportunities, particularly in small rural communities. The study also emphasized the relative resiliency of such micro-businesses to declining national and regional business conditions. Such characteristics are important if Vernon is to maintain a strong and stable economic base.

Of significant importance to many of Vernon's residents today is the rather unique situation, which faces the community in the years to come. That being the scheduled expiration of the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant's operating license in the year 2012 and the potential impact it will have on the Town's tax base. The possibility exists that the power plant will be granted a renewal of its operating license for an additional ten to twenty years. We are already facing the possibility that the community will be challenged with the task of reevaluating its level of municipal spending and with identifying alternative means of generating local tax revenues in order to offset the decrease in Vermont Yankee's sizeable contribution to the Town's tax base.

Because of the potential future need to stabilize the local tax base and to continue to provide employment opportunities to Vernon's residents, the Town anticipates the potential need for additional industrial and commercial activities in the future. Of great concern, however, is that new industrial and commercial growth relates satisfactorily to the rural-residential character of the community. A 1990 survey of local residents clearly indicated that the protection of Vernon's rural character and agricultural resources should be an important consideration in planning for the future of Vernon.

While new industry and commerce should provide tax benefits to the local community, necessary road improvements, traffic problems, and expansion of residential development to accommodate new employees, the resulting burdens of the Town's educational system, can readily reduce such benefits. For this reason, and in order to protect the rural character of Vernon, the expansion of the commercial and industrial base should be controlled to ensure that only quality development takes place within the community.

Policy:

1. A balanced economic development will be pursued that provides long-range economic benefits including stable employment opportunities for town residents and an adequate local tax base.
2. All industry, commerce and institutions must adequately control its wastes, relate satisfactorily to existing land uses, minimize increases in traffic congestion, avoid contributing to sprawl or strip development or detracting from the rural character of the Town, and account to the Town for both direct and indirect municipal costs.
3. Commercial and industrial development should be well designed and attractive with ample buffer zones to protect adjacent land.
4. Any effort, which directly or indirectly accelerates economic growth, should be consistent with local and regional objectives.
5. The production and processing of native agricultural and forest products is encouraged.
6. "Home Industries" or those activities and occupations, which can be carried on within a rural or village residence without creating undue traffic, noise, or other disturbances of the quiet residential nature of the immediate area, are encouraged.

Recommendations:

1. The Town should consider the formulation of an industrial development plan which:
 - (a) Evaluates the potential social, physical, and economic impacts of an industrial park on the community in terms of effects on the natural environment, and on residential development, on public facilities and services, and on the local tax base;
 - (b) Identifies potential sites that are conducive to industrial development in terms of topography, soils, power availability, access availability to existing transportation systems, and would not, if developed, conflict with the objectives and policies established through this Town Plan.

2. The Town should control the location and aesthetic quality of future commercial and industrial development in order to minimize conflicts with surrounding uses; performance standards should be established to address the problem of adverse environmental impacts including, but not limited to, excessive noise, odor, dust, smoke, vibration, glare, water pollution and other nuisances; design standards should be implemented regarding access and parking, landscaping, screening setbacks, height limitations, signage and lighting.

3. The Town should pursue discussions with appropriate representatives of the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Company regarding the possible re-use of the power plant site for commercial and industrial development following decommissioning.

TABLE #7 PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT OF VERNON RESIDENTS, 1990

Place of Employment	% Persons Working
Vernon	36.5
Brattleboro	45.9
Remainder of Windham County	5.0
Greenfield, MA	3.2
Northfield, MA	1.2
Remainder of MA	3.2
New Hampshire	2.9
Connecticut	0.6
Other	1.5

SOURCE: 1990 Planning Commission Survey

IV. **NATURAL RESOURCES USE AND CONSERVATION: SPECIFIC POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A. Agricultural Resources

Vernon owes much of its present character to the continued use of large land areas for agricultural production. Besides forestland, the major land use in the town of Vernon is agriculture.

In order to establish sound policy about the use and preservation of Vernon's agricultural lands, there must be a common understanding of the agricultural resource base. This section deals with agricultural soils and agricultural land, two distinct, yet often overlapping agricultural resources.

Agricultural soils: The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Conservation Service (SCS) has worked with State officials to categorize soils found in Vermont according to their potential for agriculture use. This land use capability system is based upon the physical and chemical characteristics of soils as well as climatic conditions. All soils have been labeled as having high, good, low, or limited potential for agriculture. For state land use planning purposes, specifically for the **Act 250**-review process, high and good potential soils are considered "primary agricultural soils".

At the local level, the Vernon Farmland Protection Advisory Committee undertook an extensive soils mapping project in 1982; with assistance from the Soil Conservation Service; for the purpose of developing and implementing the Vernon Land Evaluation Site Assessment Program (LESA), a system designed specifically to help the Town identify farmland in need of protection under the community's Farmland Protection Program.

Soils were evaluated based upon their relative productivity in Vernon and were subsequently classified into seven different Agricultural Value Groups*. Groups 1 through 3 represent the three best soils groups in the Town of Vernon. Together with three additional soil types, which were placed in Agricultural, Value Group 4, these soils represent the "primary agricultural soils" as defined by the State soils classification system.

Agricultural Land: Agricultural land used for farming purposes in Vernon includes both lands whose soils are considered primary agricultural soils as well as those whose soils have been identified as non-primary. This suggests that any future efforts to identify and protect locally important farmland in Vernon need to consider more than just the soil characteristics of land.

* A copy of the full soil potential study is on file in the Vernon Town Offices

Recent studies of farmland in Vernon, indicate that approximately 1581 acres are associated with five farms in Vernon; representing both pasture as well as land under cultivation. This land is either owned by local farmers or is leased or rented by them from non-farmer landowners; and is identified on the Town Farmlands Map.

All of the farmland leased by Vernon's farmers is actively being farmed for crop production or pasture purposes, while a sizeable portion of the land owned by farmers is in forest use...for the most part unsuitable for direct crop production or pasture land. These forest lands may, however contribute to the general economic viability of local farms by providing opportunities for maple sugaring, firewood and lumber harvesting, Christmas Tree production, etc.

Vernon farmers clearly rely heavily on the availability of leased land to support their farm operations. Recent studies show that farmers leased approximately 547 acres of land in 1992. This represents approximately 35% of the total number of acres used by farms in operation at this time. This suggests that Vernon farmers, like their counterparts in neighboring communities, are vulnerable to sudden changes in the availability of a sizeable portion of the land, which they depend upon to keep their agricultural enterprise economically viable since they do not own, and therefore, do not control the lands they lease. It is nonetheless recognized that the economics of farming are changing and will continue to change in the future. In light of this reality and in fairness to the landowners, reasonable multiple use and alternative use of the important agricultural lands must be provided for. Preservation of farmlands, which cannot yield a reasonable, competitive living to a working farmer, has to be regarded as a public expense, not a private owner's burden.

Policy:

The Town of Vernon recognizes the considerable importance of farming to the Town's social, economic and natural environment, as well as the importance of protecting existing farms and agricultural land for expanded or new agricultural uses. For these reasons, when agricultural land is proposed for change of use, the Town adopts the following policies to guide future public and private development activity:

1. The Town will encourage the use of primary agricultural soils for farming and related pursuits that will maintain the potential of such soils for productive agriculture.
2. Agricultural land that is important to the Town is identified on the Town Farmlands Map. Important agricultural land includes, but is not restricted to primary agricultural soils as defined by the USDA Soil Conservation Service.
3. Any zoning or subdivision by-laws considered by the Town should provide for reasonable multiple use and alternative use of important agricultural lands at an intensity equivalent to that allowed on other similarly located properties. The use of cluster planning or similar concepts is encouraged in all areas.
- 3a. It should be noted that in July 2000 the Selectboard was authorized to sell a portion (25.7 acres) of the (approximately 29 acres) of land formerly known as The Streeter Property to Vernon Senior Housing, Inc. for \$1.00, for the purpose of building affordable senior housing for residents of Vernon.
4. The Town will strive to help maintain the farms, agricultural land and related agricultural services required to ensure a viable agricultural community.
5. Construction or extension of public services and utilities by the Town (i.e. Roads, sewer, recreational areas), State (highways), private companies (energy generation or transmission facilities), and abutting farmland, if permitted, should not change the Grand List Category if used as farmland; but, if it will do so, then the Town shall encourage the utilization of the authority granted its Selectmen and Town School District Directors by vote at the 1974 Annual Town Meeting to contract with farmers for Tax Stabilization purposes as provided for under Vermont Statutes Annotated, **Title #24, 2741**. Or, in the alternative, the farmer could consider the sale of development rights.
6. The Town will inventory its forest soils and secondary agricultural soils; for such lands. It is the policy of Vernon to plan where possible for development that will not materially reduce the productivity of these soils.

Recommendations:

1. The Town Farmland Protection Advisory Committee should continue to advise the Board of Selectmen, School Board, Planning Commission and other public and private bodies and individuals in the implementation of the above policies. The committee should employ land evaluation and site assessment (LESA) guidelines to determine which agricultural and forestry land is in the Town's interest to protect. Appropriate land protection measures and techniques should be employed.

2. The Town should continue the Farmland Protection Fund established on March 2, 1982. This fund is to be used to acquire interests in threatened agricultural land, acquire development rights, and recommend as supplemental state and local tax assistance, subject to approval by vote at a **Special Town Meeting or a Regular Town Meeting**.

3. The Town should continue to encourage the efforts of non-profit land trusts within the Town.

4. Since important agricultural land is frequently situated in aesthetically sensitive locations, the Planning Commission may wish to provide that major non-agricultural uses be subject to conditional use review pursuant to criteria to be established.

B. Forest Land

The majority of Vernon's land base is forested. Much of the forestland is impractical for development due to limited accessibility, steepness and poor soils. This is particularly true in the western portions of town. Several large forested areas are owned by the Vermont Fish and Game Department and are also generally unavailable for development.

The demands of the Town's forestland are likely to increase. Where conditions are favorable, future residential development will be encouraged on wooded land, as opposed to highly visible open areas.

Policy:

1. The value of forestland for lumber, recreation, wildlife habitat, scenic resources and as a vital component in the hydrologic cycle should be recognized and protected to the fullest extent possible; and proper management of forest resources should be encouraged to increase the quality of existing forest resources.

Recommendations:

1. The Town should inventory its productive forest soils and where possible plan for the development that will not materially reduce the productivity of these soils.

C. Water Resources

Groundwater and Aquifer Recharge Areas: The residents of Vernon rely entirely on groundwater for their drinking water supplies since no municipal water supply system exists within the community to date. Much of the future development in Vernon will continue to depend on groundwater resources. Thus, protecting this resource is of paramount importance.

Wells and springs receive their water from precipitation and surface waters, which infiltrate through overlaying and upgradient geologic materials. This groundwater recharge then moves through zones below the surface of the earth into underground zones or formations called aquifers. Aquifers are defined as subsurface formations, which can yield significant amounts of water to wells and springs. One way to protect this water is to identify the land surface areas which supply the recharge to the aquifers and then control polluting activities within these areas.

The map entitled *Surface Water and Flood Plain Overlay Map of Vernon (Map #4)* identifies potential aquifer recharge areas in Vernon according to underlying geologic conditions. The Vermont Department of Water Resources has also identified two Aquifer systems. These well water systems have been classified based upon their service to a cluster population and include wells serving Vernon Manor and Vernon Green Nursing and Retirement Home. As additional aquifer recharge areas or aquifer protection areas are identified through

further state or local studies, these should also be afforded appropriate protection as indicated below.

The *Surface Water and Flood Plain Overlay Map of Vernon (Map #4)* also indicates those general areas of Vernon in which the Vermont Department of Water and Resources can anticipate varying yields of groundwater based upon geologic analysis. Understanding potential water supply sources is an important aspect of planning for growth and conservation in Vernon.

Areas underlain by thick deposits of coarse-grained stratified glacial drift generally have excellent groundwater potential, which may be suitable for municipal or industrial requirements. Areas underlain by fine-grained stratified glacial drift and swamp deposits have low groundwater potential and generally will yield sufficient water for domestic wells only. Hardpan and ledge, however, underlie most of Vernon, which have low groundwater potential. In general, wells in these materials will yield only enough water for domestic or light commercial use.

Policy:

1. To insure maximum water yield and quality for the health and welfare of the public, areas which have been identified or will be identified as having high groundwater potential or which permit the collection or recharge of groundwater supplies should be protected from any potential adverse impacts of the land use activities and development.
2. It is a policy of the Town to protect its water resources by restricting development to areas other than headwaters of watersheds characterized by steep slopes and shallow soils or watersheds of public water supplies when and if developed.
- 3.. The Town will discourage development in areas where the topography and soil conditions will cause contamination of surface or subsurface waters or the failure of waste disposal systems. Vernon Town Plan maps and detailed soil survey information from the USDA Soil Conservation Service should be applied in determining where appropriate development can satisfactorily be located.

Water Courses and Shorelines: The most prominent body of water situated partially in Vernon is the Connecticut River. Approximately ten miles of its western shoreline abut the township. Broad Brook is located in the northern part of the Town and the extent of its drainage within the community is limited to the lower one-mile reach before discharging into the Connecticut River.

With the exception of the Connecticut River and lower most section of Broad Brook, the Town of Vernon has few streams draining off its twenty square mile

land area. These waters are typically small flowage and either drains to the east into the Connecticut River or to the west into the Falls River. Foremost of these waters are Town Brook, Newton Brook, Cold Brook, and Roaring Brook.

Two ponds are situated in Vernon: Lily Pond (42 acres) and Vernon Hatchery Pond (5 acres). Lily Pond supports warm water fish populations. Vernon Hatchery is an artificial impoundment owned and managed by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife for public fishing. It is stocked annually with brook trout.

Watercourses and shorelines are valuable scenic, recreational and ecological resources widely used and limited in amount. The resource value of these areas can be diminished or destroyed by development activity.

Policy:

1. It is a policy of the Town that watercourses and shorelines be retained and maintained in a natural state.
2. Shorelines and stream banks shall be protected from uses and settlement, which may reasonably be expected to cause erosion or reduce scenic qualities of surface waters or cause pollution from sewage disposal systems.
3. Development is discouraged in drainage areas of pristine or upland streams as classified by the Department of Water Resources. Within such areas special attention shall be given to prevent siltation of streams, soil erosion and pollution of ground and surface waters.

Wetlands: Wetlands include swamps and marshes with open water or with a vegetative mat over a high water table. In addition to their value as wildlife habitat, wetlands may contribute recharge waters to aquifers and serve as regulators of surface water flow. They hold great amounts of water during times of flood, and often provide a much more efficient and less expensive control measure than man-made dams and levees.

Policy:

1. The limited number of wetlands in Vernon should be protected from development and should not be drained for development purposes unless the long-term public benefit of so doing heavily outweighs the loss of resource value.

D. Wildlife Habitat

Deeryards: White tailed deer are a valuable resource to the Town of Vernon, providing opportunities for hunting and recreational viewing and filling an essential ecological niche in the community's natural environment. The heavily wooded, rugged and low population characteristics of the western portion of Vernon provide ideal habitat for wintering deer populations. These critical deer wintering areas comprise 672 acres of approximately five percent (5%) of the Town's total land area.

Deer wintering areas can be completely destroyed or their carrying capacities greatly reduced by some of the activities of man. Activities of primary concern are housing, recreational and industrial development, highway development and unscrupulous logging operations.

Wetland Areas: Wetlands throughout Vernon provide ideal habitat for a variety of plant and animal species. Many avian inhabitants such as ducks, geese, rails, and herons, as well as numerous songbirds and birds of prey rely on wetlands for nesting, brood rearing and migration rest areas. Wetlands are also essential habitat for muskrat, beaver, otter, mink, raccoon, a number of fish species, and a variety of reptiles and amphibians.

Rivers and Streams: Town Brook, Newton Brook, Cold Brook, and Roaring Brook are located in Vernon and support small, self-sustaining populations of brook trout.

Broad Brook is located in the northern part of the township and the extent of its drainage in the town is limited to the lower one-mile reach before discharging into the Connecticut River. Three species of trout, i.e. Brown, rainbow and brook trout, inhabit this section and receive reasonably high angling pressure.

The Connecticut River is the focal point for restoration of two anadromous fish species: Atlantic salmon and American Shad, to central New England. To assist providing the salmon and shad access to their historic spawning and nursery waters in the upper mainstream as well as several critical tributaries, a fish ladder was constructed at USGen New England, Inc. Vernon Hydroelectric Station. Since going into operation during the spring of 1981, both salmon and shad have been observed passing upstream through this facility. Shad have responded quickly to the opening of new habitat in the river adjacent to Vernon with young shad being produced during each year since the fish ladder went into operation. Presently, sufficient numbers of adult shad ascend the Connecticut River to the Vernon area to provide sport fishing particularly in the vicinity of the dam and Stebbins Island. Salmon numbers are expected to increase within the near future and likewise will restore a valued resource to the river.

Aside from anadromous species, the Connecticut River supports a diversity of resident fish species including small mouth bass, largemouth bass and walleye. Although less abundant in the river than the three preceding species, brown and rainbow trout frequent the Vernon area particularly at the mouths of the smaller tributaries to the river. Pan fish common to the area include yellow perch, white perch, rock bass, brown bullhead, common carp, and several sunfish species. The Connecticut River is also a valuable habitat for waterfowl and wading birds.

Whether it is the Connecticut River or any of the small streams located in Vernon, the continued ability of these waters to support wildlife resources is reliant upon the quality and quantity of their habitat. Stream relocation and channelization as well as pollution result in the long-term destruction of essential habitat.

Policy:

1. Critical wildlife habitats (including but not just limited to wetlands, deeryards, surface waters, etc.) shall be protected from uses and settlement, which reduce their vital biological function.
2. Sites or areas of endangered or rare species of wildlife shall not be used or developed in a manner that will destroy, diminish or imperil those species.

E. Fragile Areas

Fragile areas are irreplaceable components of Vernon's natural heritage. They are valuable for maintaining a diversity of natural communities, providing refuges for rare and endangered plants and animals, and for providing standards by which to judge the health of the environment. They have great biological, educational and social value.

The Vernon Black Gum Swamp: Three distinct black gum swamps and several groups of individual black gum swamps are located in the J. Maynard Miller Town Forest. The largest of these swamps straddles the boundary between the Vernon land and the Roaring Brook Wildlife Management Area, which is controlled by Vermont's Fish and Game Department. This five-acre swamp is listed as one of the 64 best natural areas in the State. Several plants, which are rare in Vermont, are found here. The black gums are the most conspicuous.

Although black gum is a common tree south of Vermont, it is found this far north in only a few isolated pockets called disjunctive communities. Our climate has been cooling over the last thousand years. In warmer times, black gums were more common to Vermont but the cold has forced them south. For some reason, a few gums are left in these swamps. They are remnants of the "climatic optimum".

The black gum swamps are worth preserving. They are important sources of scientific information and a valuable educational tool. Isolated pockets of a species may be genetically unique. Because they were never logged and are very old (some individuals perhaps as much as 400 years old). These swamps give us an idea of what a virgin forest was like. The wide diversity of plants in these small areas makes these swamps a valuable educational resource for schools and nature groups. The impressive sight alone of these thirty-inch diameter trees with their deeply fissured bark and broken tops is enough to justify their protection.

The community of plants in the Vernon Black Gum Swamps is fragile. Although the old gums still appear to be healthy and younger gums are growing nearby, many factors could destroy the swamps as we know them. Black gums prefer warmer climates; several bad winters could kill them. A bad windstorm could uproot their shallow root system. Careless logging, off-road vehicles or heavy hiker visitation could cause soil and organic matter to wash down into the swamp basins and suffocate the roots. Well meaning visitors could kill the trees and other rare plants simply by trampling, and perhaps compacting the soil.

Policy:

1. The Town will protect and maintain Vernon's black gum swamps by preventing sudden environmental changes around the swamps and by limiting unsupervised access to these natural areas.
2. The Town will encourage sound forest management practices on the J. Maynard Miller Town forestland, which surrounds the Black Gum Swamp, and shall discourage any tree cutting within a 300-foot radius of the swamp.

Recommendations:

1. The Vernon Municipal Forest Committee should coordinate with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to develop a master plan for the protection of the Black Gum Swamp in conjunction with the forestry and recreational use of the J. Maynard Miller Town Forest.
2. Roads usable by four wheel drive vehicles or dirt bikes should be closed at all forest entrances during both wet and dry seasons to help prevent soil erosion and possible fires.

F. Flood Hazard Areas

Within the flood hazard areas as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Rate Map #500137, dated September 27, 1991, and the Town's Flood Hazard Area Bylaw adopted May 2, 1991, or as may be amended, and such other flood hazard areas as may be defined by the Town, the following policies are recommended.

1. Flood hazard areas should be reserved for agriculture, open recreation or other low impact purposes, which do not significantly impair the lands natural ability to handle floodwaters.

2. All construction within flood hazard areas as defined by the Town and Federal Maps shall be carried out in a manner, which is consistent with prevailing local, state and federal regulations and shall adequately ensure the health, safety and welfare of the public during flooding.

3. Any construction within flood hazard areas should minimize disturbances of the soil, including earth removal, soil compaction or paving.

Recommendations:

1. The Town shall strictly apply and enforce the Vernon Flood Hazard Area Bylaw and should periodically review and update those Bylaws in full compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program.

G. Soils

Soils are an important consideration in site development, since their characteristics can affect the feasibility of on-site waste disposal, as well as the stability of structures built upon them.

Policy:

1. It is the policy of the Town of Vernon to prohibit development in areas where the topography and soil conditions will cause contamination of surface or sub-surface waters or failure of the waste disposal system. In determining where a development can satisfactorily be located, the Vernon Town Plan maps will be considered along with detailed soils survey information from the U.S. Soil Conservation Service.

H. Earth Resources

Policy:

1. Lands with high potential for the extraction of mineral and earth resources should not be developed so as to interfere with the subsequent extraction or processing of the resource.

2. The extraction or processing of minerals or earth resources should not have an adverse environmental impact, result in inconvenience or unreasonable burden on neighboring property owners, nor represent an unreasonable burden on municipal facilities.

3. The extraction of earth resources must insure site rehabilitation suitable for alternative uses.

V. RECREATIONAL, CULTURAL AND SCENIC RESOURCES: SPECIFIC POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Public Recreational Resources

Vernon has a well-planned Recreation Park, which opened in 1971 with a fine swimming pool and facilities. Since that time two lighted tennis courts, a basketball court, two shuffleboard courts, a group picnic shelter and picnic sites with tables and grills in the wooded area, and children's' playground have been added. The Town installed special equipment in the pool in 1985, providing Special access for the handicapped. Other facilities available at the Park include horseshoe pits, an Arts and Crafts program that has been developed, along with an extensive summer program that includes, but not limited to, swimming lessons, tennis lessons, special events, baseball, softball, outdoor educational programs, field trips, and Arts-in-the-Park program.

Trails are available for walking, biking, as well as cross-country skiing. A multi-purpose sports field on other town property close to the park is also available for public use. A winter recreation program is conducted at the elementary school that consists of youth and adult sports.

A volunteer Recreation Board appointed by the Board of Selectmen conducts the operation of the total recreation program. The Recreation Board employs a full-time Director to supervise the leisure activities of all age groups, and a support staff of one full-time person, and during the summer months, up to sixteen. They also depend on more than fifty volunteers throughout the year.

The Town has acquired a tract of land called the J. Maynard Miller Town Forest, which has on it, Black Gum Swamp and many beautiful and interesting natural areas. The Recreation Department has been involved in cutting and making trails, drawing a map and working with the Miller family who will be installing a permanent station at the entrance. Trails are used for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing and horseback riding. The Town has also purchased a fifty-foot access road and approximately one-acre of land bordering the Lily Pond.

One developer has deeded land to the Town, in close proximity to the Park, for passive recreation. Such dedication of lands for public use should be encouraged.

The Town also owns a small roadside area, Indian Point Picnic Area, which was developed in memory of Mrs. Clara Lou Cooper. It is hoped this can be further developed and maintained for public picnicking.

There is a large amount of Fish and Game Land within the Town and these should be utilized to the fullest extent for the enjoyment of Vernon's residents. Some of this land is not accessible except through private property.

Policy:

1. The use and development of land and waters should occur in such a way as not to significantly diminish the value and availability of outdoors recreational activities.
2. Existing access to land and water areas of high outdoor recreational potential shall be protected and desirable rights of way to these areas should be sought.
3. All Town Parks will be well maintained and be accessible to handicapped residents.

Recommendations:

1. The Vernon Recreation Board should continue to identify future recreational needs based upon changing recreational trends as well as projected changes in the composition of the local population.
2. State laws concerning snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles should be enforced and local ordinances for their control should be promulgated.

B. Historic and Architectural Resources

By virtue of its geographical location, Vernon has a unique heritage and a number of sites, which are important to its history.

The 1974 Historic Sites and Structures Survey conducted by the Vermont Division of Historic Sites of the Agency of Environmental Conservation identified the structures listed below as having significant local historical value and as deserving protection, maintenance or renovation. These structures are noteworthy because of architectural style or contribution to the character of the Town. Most are privately owned.

HISTORIC STRUCTURES

Structure	Location
Brick School House	Junction Route #142 and Pond Road
Brick House with Pilasters (west side)	West side of Route #142
Pond Road Chapel	
1/2 Greek Revival House	Pond Road near Chapel
Vernon Grange Hall	
Jonathan Hunt Mansion	Vermont Yankee Power Plant Info Center

In addition, the Vernon Historians have identified a number of noteworthy structures including the Bushnell Mill along Route #142, the Reed residence on Route #142, the Brown residence on West Road and the Emery-Moseley residence on Huckle Hill Road.

Policy:

1. Lands adjacent to or including areas of historical, cultural or architectural value should be used in a manner that will not reduce or destroy the value of the site or area.
2. All significant historic sites and structures in the Town should be identified and marked.
3. Wherever architecturally and historically significant structures have become obsolete for their original use, new and compatible uses should be found which would allow them to continue as a visual, social and cultural asset to the community.

C. Scenic Resources

Vernon enjoys a wide variety of scenic resources. Many of which are typical of Vermont settlements. These resources are a significant factor in the quality of life experienced in Vernon. Many of these resources, however, are highly sensitive and may be adversely impacted through careless development.

Policy:

1. Recognizing the value of scenic resources, it is the policy of the Town of Vernon to encourage land uses that will help to protect river corridors, scenic highways and roads, scenic views and other scenic resources.

VI. GOVERNMENT FACILITIES AND PUBLIC UTILITIES:
SPECIFIC POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Planning for Growth

Vernon seems to have taken care of its building needs quite well in the last few years. A much needed Town Office and Library Complex has been built as has a new town Highway Garage, and picturesque gazebo. A swimming pool, tennis courts, group picnic shelter and a basketball court are the major components of a long-range recreation park. An addition to the present school has also been completed, which increased instructional and recreational space by fourteen thousand (14,000) square feet.

Policy:

1. The development and provision of governmental and public utility facilities and services should be based upon a projection of reasonably expected population increase and economic growth, and should recognize the limits of the Town's human, financial and natural resources.
2. The Town has a capital budget, program and finance guidelines which includes capital expenses anticipated within fifteen years in advance (projected) period. Items included are fire and police protection, necessary municipal buildings and additions and recreational facilities.

B. Public Facilities or Services Adjoining Agricultural or Forestry Lands

Policy:

1. The construction, expansion or provision of public facilities and services should not significantly reduce the resource value of adjoining agricultural or forestry lands unless there is no reasonable alternative and the facility or service has been planned to minimize its effect on adjoining lands.

C. Planning for Transportation and Utility Corridors

Policy:

1. The development and expansion of governmental and public utility facilities and services should occur within highway or existing public utility rights-of-way corridors in order to reduce adverse physical and visual impact on the landscape and achieve greater efficiency in the expenditure of public funds.

2. Efforts will be made to influence public utility companies and developers to bury utility lines in areas of great scenic or historic value, in town centers and residential subdivisions.

D. Planning for Solid Waste Disposal

At present time solid waste disposal is by contract with Windham Solid Waste Management District and individual collectors in the area. In addition, we offer roll off service every fall and spring collecting large household items as a service to the residents of Vernon. Also, recycling containers are available at the Town garage for various recyclables.

Policy:

1. Development, which is responsible for unique or large amounts of solid waste, will be permitted only if it can be demonstrated that the method of disposal will not adversely affect the environment and that the Town can finance the disposal of additional solid waste without incurring an economic hardship.
2. The Town will meet the requirements of all State solid waste laws.

Recommendations:

1. The Town should work in conjunction with the Regional Planning Commission, Windham Solid Waste Management District, and other regional facilities to develop a long-range plan for solid-waste disposal and resource and energy recovery of solid waste.
2. The Town should work with appropriate agencies to study methods of reducing the quantity of wastes.

E. Privately Owned Facilities and Services

Policy:

2. It is the policy of the Town of Vernon, that no privately owned municipal type facilities or services such as private water or sewage system shall be accepted by the Town unless adequate surety is provided by the developer to financially assist the Town in the event that the Town is required to assume responsibility for the facility.

F. Fire and Police Protection

Fire: Vernon is well served by a Volunteer Fire Company of approximately 25 active volunteers. They are affiliated with the Tri-State Fire Mutual Aid System and Southwestern New Hampshire Mutual Aid System. All calls are received through an answering service, which then activates the siren warning system at the fire station.

The Vernon Memorial Fire Station was built with volunteer help on land given for that purpose by J. Wadsworth White of White Partitions. It is centrally located within the Town on Route #142. The building was completed in 1962. In addition to an area for housing equipment, the station contains a Chief's office, dispatch center and kitchen. The station is also equipped with hose washer and dryer. The lowest level has been developed into an Emergency Management Operations Center. An emergency power generator has been obtained with assistance from Emergency Management.

The Fire Company has as Equipment the following:

Engine #	Year	Make	Equipment Type	Gallons Water
		Custom	KME Pumper Truck	2000
5	1974	Ford	Brush Truck, 4wd ¾ Ton	250
1	1985	Ford	FMC Pumper	1000
2	1994	Freightliner	Pumper Tanker	2500

Policy:

1. Future developers and subdividers should provide for water sources and accessibility for fire protection in areas where water is not easily available. This might be done through the development of fire ponds or hydrant systems. Any such program should be done with the advice and recommendation of the Fire Company.

Recommendation:

1. In conjunction with the Fire Chief, the Planning Commission and Board of Selectmen should investigate the need for local fire codes.
2. The Town has completed work with the State for 911 System.

Police: a full-time Police Chief, one sergeant and six officers. Some are part-time Special Officers who assist both the Chief and other Officers Two Constables also contribute to police protection activities in Vernon. The second Constable also serves as Poundkeeper.

Vernon Police cruisers are equipped with statewide radio systems and a County Sheriff radio system. The state Police, the Brattleboro Police Department and the Windham County Sheriff's Department monitor the former. These radios also have the ability to activate a repeater system for longer-range communication if needed. The County Sheriff radio system is monitored by the Windham County Sheriff's Department and Vermont Yankee and allows for direct as well as car-to-car communication. This radio is the one primarily used. The Brattleboro Dispatch does most of the dispatching for Vernon. The cruisers also have monitors, which enables cross monitoring with the Northfield, Mass. Police, Vernon Fire Department, Rescue Inc., and the Vernon Highway Department. There is also a Town Radio System who allows communication with Emergency Management, the School, and Guilford, VT.

Policy:

1. Proposals for large-scale development shall include a statement of impact on the existing police services and of measures, which will be taken to minimize the additional burden, which a major development will place upon available police protection.

G. Education and Libraries

Education is probably the single most important community service provided by the Town of Vernon, both in terms of expense and social impact.

Vernon Elementary School is a large (57,000 sq. ft.) brick building situated on 10 acres of land on Governor Hunt Road. The school contains fifteen regular-sized classrooms as well as smaller classrooms for Chapter One, Speech, and Special Education. In addition to classrooms, the school also contains a guidance room, music room, art room, gymnasium, media center, computer room, cafeteria with stage, teachers' work room and lounge, principal's office, secretary's office, Director of Recreation's office, custodial work room and office, as well as, a large kitchen with walk-in cooler and freezer, food storage room and office.

In a separate building there is a large storage shed that is used for larger equipment and some Recreation equipment storage.

There is a baseball diamond with backstop, scoreboard, bleachers and protective fence located at the rear of the school property and are maintained jointly by the school and Recreation Department.

The school has two well-equipped playgrounds and two parking lots.

The school owns one school bus. It is housed at the Town Garage. The children are transported by contracted busses to the school.

The Vernon Free Library moved in late 1970 from its quarters in the former Old Center School to the new Town Offices and Library Building where it now resides in the North Wing on the first floor. There is also a room downstairs that is used for storage. Our Library provides many services to residents of all ages: books, records, magazines, are reproductions and jigsaw puzzles are circulated...all without any system of fines. Through association with the State's Department of Libraries, books for special needs may be borrowed from Libraries all over the state and beyond.

Policy:

1. It is a policy of the Town of Vernon to continue to provide high quality, cost-effective education to all students residing in Vernon.
2. The locations of any new school or library facilities shall take into account the future population centers of the area and the land compatibility of the proposed site
3. The full use of present school facilities should be considered to offer adult education, information programs and physical fitness opportunities. Such activities could take place during the school vacations and evenings. The use of school facilities should be made available for private activities for a fee.

Recommendations:

1. The Town School Board should coordinate with the Planning Commission, Town Clerk and Board of Selectmen to monitor the pace of new residential development and population growth and to evaluate the existing and projected capacity of Vernon's educational system in relation to new growth.
2. Applicants for development and large subdivisions will be required to disclose their best estimates of growth in school-aged population closely related to the impact of their development proposals.
 2. The Town may wish to study, if needed, an expansion of our present public library.

H. Health

I.

Vernon is indeed fortunate in having within reasonable distance most health resources desirable for a rural community. Emergency needs and ambulance service are well provided for by Rescue Inc. based in Brattleboro.

Health Facilities within 25 miles of Vernon

Name of Facility	Location
Brattleboro Memorial Hospital	Brattleboro
Brattleboro Retreat	Brattleboro
Grace Cottage Hospital	Townsend, VT
Franklin Medical Center	Greenfield, MA
Farren Care Center	Montague, MA
Keene Clinic	Keene, NH
The Cheshire Medical Center	Keene, NH

Health Facilities Farther to the North

Name of Facility	Location
Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center	Lebanon, NH
Hitchcock Clinic	Hanover, NH

The Council on Aging, sponsored by the Windham Regional Commission, sponsors health services for the senior citizens such as monthly health clinics at the Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, a Meals Program in Brattleboro and local transportation services.

Hospital based comprehensive home care is provided by the Southern Vermont Home Health Agency. The Vermont Department of Health continues to work with communities to provide health care in other areas including maternal and child health programs, communicable disease prevention programs, and health promotion programs for all ages. The Vernon pre-school/well-child clinics, which are conducted on a regular basis by the Vermont Department of Health, provide well-child care according to the guidelines set forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Special services available to residents of Vernon are provided through the Austine School for the Deaf, the Winston Prouty Center for Child Development, and the Speech Therapy Services through the Supervisory Union. The Women's Crisis Center located in Brattleboro operates a shelter, which provides safety and counseling for victims of sexual assault and battering.

Community Mental Health Services are provided through Health Care and Rehabilitation Services, which sponsor Mental Health Services of Southeastern Vermont. These services include counseling (in office and schools), partial hospitalization, aftercare and many other special services.

Policy:

1. An ongoing evaluation shall be made of the Town's health needs, facilities, services and manpower.
2. Regional health facilities, services and organizations, such as Rescue Inc., Community House, Inc., the Women's Crisis Center and the Council on Aging for Southeastern Vermont, should be supported and utilized, when they are in the Town's best interest.

I. Town Government Administration

The official business of the Town is conducted at the annual March meeting. Vernon Selectmen (5) conducts most of the business of the Town between Town meetings. Other elected or appointed officers are: Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, Town School Directors (5), Union School Directors (2), Library Trustees (5), Road Commissioner (1), Planning Commission (5), Recreation and Park Board (5), and the Board of Civil Authority, comprised of Selectmen, Town Clerk and Justices of the Peace who have duties of overseeing elections and carrying out the Election Laws. A management audit was conducted in 1991 in order to improve the efficiency of all departments.

Policy:

1. The Town will encourage broad voluntary participation in local Town government in order to help contribute a sense of community pride and responsibility among all citizens.

Recommendations:

1. Under the direction of the Board of Selectmen, the Town should continue periodic reviews and ongoing improvement studies with technical assistance from agencies such as the Windham Regional Commission and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns.
2. The Town should hold meetings of the Town Boards and Officers to facilitate communication on issues and matters of mutual interest.

J. Emergency Management

Vernon has an Emergency Management Director and Staff appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Staff typically consists of Town Officials and volunteer citizens, as well as, the Fire Department, Police Department, Recreation Department and the Highway Department complements the EMD.

The Selectmen of the Town, accepting their responsibility for the general well being and safety of the population of Vernon, have developed an emergency plan to provide advice and assistance in the event of a radiological incident at the Vermont Yankee Station. Although the plan written is to be used for an incident at Vermont Yankee, some of the plan information would also be useful in other emergencies requiring public notification and possible public response. Such emergencies may include train derailments, chemical spills, floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes.

The plan is practiced by frequent drills and full participation by the Town in an exercise evaluated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) once every two years. Vernon has a well-written and exercised emergency plan. An Emergency Operations Center is located in the basement of the Vernon Volunteer Fire Department building. The facility is equipped with radios, telephones, and radiation monitoring equipment.

Policy:

1. The Vernon Emergency Management organization should continue to support Vermont Yankee and Vermont Emergency Management activities.
2. Citizens should be encouraged to volunteer for duties in the Vernon Emergency Management organization.

Recommendation:

The Vernon Emergency Management organization should continue to be an integral part of the Town's volunteer emergency services.

VII. TOWN PLAN MAPS

A portfolio of land capability and resource maps, available for examination at the Vernon Town Office and/or contained herein, was prepared by the Planning Commission, after study and analysis of available information about the Town. The maps that are included are as follows:

- Map #1 Locally Protected Land Overlay Map for Vernon
- Map #2 Wetlands Overlay Map for Vernon
- Map #3 State Protected Lands, WHPA's, Threatened and Endangered Species and Significant Natural Communities Overlay Map for Vernon
- Map #4 Surface Water and Flood Plain Overlay Map for Vernon
- Map #5 Structure and Right-of-Way Distribution Overlay Map for Vernon
- Map #6 Sensitive Land Use and Culturally Significant Area Overlay Map for Vernon
- Map #7 Provisional Depth to Water Table Map of Vernon

***It should be noted that the referenced sections on Map #7 were used by other agencies, and cost prohibits us from reprinting the maps without said identifiers.
- Map #8 Fire Ponds, Town of Vernon

***It should be noted that Island Meadow Brook (near Fire Pond #9) should continue on to the Connecticut River.
***Also, Fire Pond #2, listed on Newton Brook.
- Map #9 Farm Lands, Town of Vernon