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Excerpts from 2007
Bennington Regional Plan*

THE REGIONAL PLAN

Bennington Region, Vermont

ADOPTED -- May 17, 2007

Bennington County Regional Commission

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APPENDIX A – Regional Plan Maps (adopted as part of the plan)

- o Land Use Plan
- o Public Facilities
- o Public Utilities
- o Existing Transportation System
- o Important Wildlife Habitats
- o Surface Water Classifications
- o Wetlands and Flood Plains
- o Agricultural Soils
- o Steep Slopes and High Elevations
- o Sand and Gravel Resources
- o Wind Resources

APPENDIX B – (not adopted as part of the plan)

Appendix B is a new addition to the Regional Plan document. It will serve as a source of information and will be updated or supplemented as new information becomes available. As such, it can be modified without formally amending the plan while providing current useful information.

- B-0 Households by Town 1990-2010
- B-1 2000 Census Profile
- B-2 The Regional Profile – Contents, 1999
- B-3 Bennington County – Town Employment 1988-1998
- B-4a Employment by Industry 1990-1998
- B-4b Employment, Establishments, Wages 1997
- B-5 BCIC Economic Goals
- B-6 Bennington Economic Development Committee Goals 2001/2002/2003
- B-7 Sample Commercial-Industrial Data Base, 1999
- B-8 Growth Centers
- B-9 Smart Growth Scorecard
- B-10 Transit Providers
- B-11 Transit Routes
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- B-14 Telecommunication Act – 1996 Municipal Guide
- B-15 Telecommunication Infrastructure Photos
- B-16 Rapid Response Plans & Codes-Standards
- B-17 Rapid Response Map
- B-18 Housing Tables H-1 – H-8
- B-19 Municipal Plan Review Process & Confirmations
- B-20 BCRC Web Site
- B-21 Title 24 VSA Municipal-Regional Planning Goals
- B-22 Act 250 Criteria
- B-23 Unorganized Town of Glastenbury

I. INTRODUCTION

The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) was established in 1967 to assist towns with their planning activities and to promote coordination of planning efforts among the towns in the region. The development of a good regional plan was seen as a particularly important function of the Commission because such a document would provide a mechanism for encouraging compatible planning at the local level. Preparation of the first regional plan began in 1968, and with the assistance of a private consultant, was completed in 1970. Early in that same year the BCRC became the first regional commission in Vermont to formally adopt a regional plan. The 1970 Bennington County Regional Plan represented an effort to assimilate the planning efforts of individual towns to produce a document that presented common goals and a basic development concept for the region. Regional planning at the BCRC has continued to follow this sound approach up to the present time.

A number of plans have been produced by the BCRC since the initial regional plan. The most important of these was the comprehensive Bennington County Regional Plan adopted in 1976. This plan updated information presented in the 1970 plan, reinforced the regional development concept, and importantly, added clear policy statements to guide future growth and development. Addendums to the 1976 plan included a housing plan (1977) and an energy plan (1982). The BCRC has also produced a number of informational and technical reports covering such subjects as air quality, transportation, possible expansion of the Green Mountain National Forest, summaries of the region's economic and demographic statistics, the Batten Kill, solid waste management, and guidelines to implementing town and regional plans

The importance of both local and regional planning received added emphasis when Vermont's new planning law, Act 200, took effect in July of 1989. Act 200 was actually a series of amendments to the existing municipal and regional planning and development act, designed to improve its effectiveness and to promote cooperation and consistency in the planning efforts of municipalities, regions, and state agencies. Although amended somewhat during the 1990 legislative session, the basic elements of the Act remain in place. Of particular importance are twelve planning goals that must be reflected in the new regional plan. The Act also provided new funding sources for planning, open land preservation, and affordable housing; established a review process to ensure compatibility among plans; and initiated the development of a computerized geographic information system (GIS) to help in the planning process. This new plan for the Bennington Region is consistent with the goals and requirements of Act 200, and contains all of the elements required by law.

The municipal and regional planning and development act (24 V.S.A. Section 4347) describes the purpose of a regional plan as follows:

A regional plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, efficient, economic development of the region which will, in accordance with present and future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, order, convenience, prosperity, and welfare of the inhabitants as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development. The general purpose includes, but is not limited to recommending a distribution of population and of the uses of the land for urbanization, trade, industry, habitation, recreation, agriculture, forestry, and other uses that will tend to:

- (1) Create conditions favorable to transportation, health, safety, civic activities and educational and cultural opportunities;
- (2) Reduce the waste of financial, energy, and human resources that result from either excessive congestion or scattering of population;
- (3) Promote an efficient and economic utilization of drainage, energy, sanitary, and other facilities and resources;
- (4) Promote the conservation of the supply of food, water, energy, and minerals;
- (5) Promote the production of food and fiber resources and the reasonable use of mineral, water, and renewable energy resources; and
- (6) Promote the development of housing suitable to the needs of the region and its communities.

This plan presents a regional context for growth and development supported by specific goals, policies, and recommendations, and was developed giving due consideration to the plans of municipalities that make up the region. Consequently, a coordinated regional planning effort will be promoted if the Regional Plan is referred to during the preparation of local plans and bylaws, state agency plans, private development proposals, and plans for major capital investments. Such an effort will help ensure that our region remains an outstanding area in which to live.

II. GOALS

This chapter enumerates a number of goals that are deemed important for the Bennington region. These statements reflect not only the planning goals of Act 200, but also the goals of previous Regional Plans. Moreover, most of the plans developed by municipalities in the region are directed toward the attainment of similar objectives. It is evident, therefore, that planning activities in the Bennington region remain focused on creating the type of environment envisioned when the current statewide planning goals were adopted.

This Plan is an appropriate vehicle to judge the effectiveness of measures taken to implement previous plans, and to establish a clear framework for planning activities and implementation over the next several years. Some of the goals may be realized by continuing to pursue current policies and directions; others may only be attained with new policies, investments, regulations, or other strategies. Each element of this Plan will detail specific policies and actions that will facilitate attainment of the following goals.

*** Plan future growth to reinforce historic development patterns, and to provide desirable housing and economic opportunities.**

The Bennington region consists of a number of well-defined village and town centers of varying sizes separated by agricultural valleys and forested mountains. A recurring theme among municipal plans in the region, and in past regional plans, is that this special rural character should be preserved. The most effective way to realize this objective is to direct new growth to village and urban centers while utilizing appropriate regulatory and nonregulatory tools to maintain open countryside between these growth centers.

New development should benefit residents of the region by providing a range of housing and employment opportunities. Commercial uses should provide needed goods and services for residents with accommodations for the traveling and vacationing public and should be located within Village and Urban Centers. New development must also take into consideration land suitability such as water supply and sewage disposal.

*** Protect important natural and historic resources.**

The quality of our natural resources must be protected to ensure a high quality of life for the residents of all of the communities in the region. While the natural beauty of the region is obvious to everyone who lives here or travels through the area, we must also remember that extensive practical use is made of that environment. We hike, hunt, ski, and extract timber in the forests that cover the Green and Taconic Mountain ranges; we fish, swim, canoe, and discharge wastes in such rivers as the Batten Kill, Hoosic, Walloomsac, and Mettowee; from the ground we extract important mineral and earth resources as well as our drinking water; and we all breathe the same air into which we dispose of the residue from domestic, industrial, and transport-related combustion processes.

Increasingly, these different functions may come into conflict. Obvious examples are commercial and residential development versus retention of agricultural land and open space, and projects that may aid the economy while further burdening the environment. Planning is essential to establish clear guidelines on the use of natural resources – guidelines that reflect community values. Planning gives the assurance that our natural resources can be managed to sustain their values while serving the many functions required.

Protection of historic resources is also of special interest to residents of the region. Historic resources include not only historic monuments, buildings and structures, and lands, but also archeological sites. The distinctive village centers and outlying rural areas contain sites and buildings that vividly depict the rich history and architectural heritage of the area. The unique character reflected by these historic resources provides residents with a tangible economic asset and an important sense of a common heritage, thus promoting a sense of identity and cohesiveness.

Important natural and historic resources should be identified, the adequacy of existing protection measures evaluated, and new means of protecting these resources implemented. Particular attention should be given to: significant natural and fragile ecological areas; important features of the landscape; scenic roads, waterways, and views; water resources including lakes, aquifers, rivers and streams, and wetlands; forests; prime agricultural soils; earth resources; air quality; and historic structures, sites, and districts. Today's waters are important archeological resources and were sources of food and transportation to the first Vermonters – our aboriginal ancestors. These same water resources also provided power to run mills that ground grain, sawed wood, and smelted iron.

*** Encourage development of a strong and diverse economy.**

Economic development should provide satisfying and rewarding job opportunities, while strengthening the manufacturing, agriculture and forestry, recreation and tourism, retail, and service sectors of the economy. Some employment sectors have shown strong growth (services, retail), and manufacturing employment has started to expand after several years of decline. Manufacturing is an important sector of the region's wealth and economy. While different municipalities will emphasize different economic activities, an overall regional balance should be sought.

Assistance should be offered to municipalities and appropriate organizations and individuals to encourage economically advantageous development. There is also the desire to maintain a more strategic economic implementation program. Efforts should be made to ensure that such development is sited in appropriate locations, and that it does not result in significant degradation of the environment, or place excessive burdens on public utilities, facilities, or services.

Act 200 specifically emphasizes the need to encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries. This objective is certainly relevant to the Bennington region because of the historical importance of these industries and their contributions in maintaining a high quality natural and cultural environment. Existing strategies designed to support agriculture, forestry, and related industries should be reinforced and should include the protection of important agricultural and forest lands.

*** Maintain and enhance recreational opportunities.**

The Bennington region has an outstanding natural environment that provides residents and visitors with a wide variety of recreational opportunities. Continued acquisition of land in mountainous areas by the National Forest Service should be promoted. At the same time, efforts should be made to identify particularly important recreational resources such as rivers, lakes, and trails, and to provide public access to these resources in appropriate locations. Conservation techniques may be employed to protect or improve natural resources for recreation (conservation easements, development rights, access). Experience with recreational use of the Batten Kill and certain areas in the Green Mountain National Forest has shown, however, that there is a need for improved planning to prevent damage from overuse

and to limit conflicts between different user groups. Here again, managing for the quality of recreational experiences while being protective of the natural resources is a continuing challenge. A 1993 joint study by the Towns and BCRC identified management options for the Batten Kill. Not to be overlooked are other important waterways such as the Walloomsac, Hoosic, Paran Creek, and urban waterfronts which include the aforementioned rivers. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has originally developed a guidance document for basin and watershed plans. The focus largely will be on water quality related issues. A process to develop plans in the Bennington Region is expected within the next two years. However, preliminary meetings will be held to discuss the objectives and process.

The region is also fortunate to have a number of popular municipal recreational facilities; the need for new or expanded facilities should be evaluated and assistance provided where needed. Privately owned recreational facilities, from ski areas to indoor fitness centers, also serve residents and visitors and must be considered in any recreation planning for the region.

*** Provide for safe, convenient, economic, and energy efficient transportation systems.**

The local and regional road systems are of critical importance to both residents and businesses in the region. Emphasis should be placed on the maintenance and improvement of existing roads. However, timely completion of the Route 279 in Bennington, particularly its northern leg, and planned improvements to Route 7 in Pownal are critical projects and an important part of the Regional Plan. Capital investments in roads, bridges, and other transportation infrastructure should support development in planned growth areas.

Attention should also be given to alternative transportation modes, including expanded facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists, and to the recommendations for improved passenger transportation services contained in the Bennington Region Transportation Development Plan. The potential for expansion of air and rail transport in the region must also be studied and plans developed for the use and possible expansion of supporting facilities. The Transportation Advisory Committee meets on a regular basis to discuss issues, programs, and directions regarding the various forms of transportation and enhancements such as pathways.

*** Plan for, finance, and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services.**

Public facilities and services are critical to the sustenance of existing communities, and are necessary to support future growth and development. Public sewage disposal and water supply systems are particularly important to protect public health and the environment and to enable concentrated growth in village and urban centers. The adequacy of these facilities should be evaluated and new or upgraded systems provided to serve planned growth centers. Similar assessments should be made for electric and cable television service, medical facilities and health care services, fire departments and rescue squads, police protection, and other public or quasi-public services. More recently the BCRC has developed sample bylaws for telecommunication infrastructure. The Commission is also evaluating options for siting towers within the context of a planned regional network. The objective is to have a coordinated outcome of deploying this technology and minimizing the visual impact on the natural and built environment.

The need for safe and efficient solid waste management continues to be a high priority for the region. Management efforts, developed through a collaboration of the public and private sectors, should focus on controlling costs to the extent possible and encouraging a range of techniques and innovation. The

BCRC's primary role is to monitor developments in strategies that will encourage waste reduction and recycling. Further progress in solid waste planning and project implementation will be important regional objectives in the coming years.

*** Encourage excellence in educational and vocational training services.**

A good education is necessary for individuals who wish to fully realize their abilities and contribute to the welfare of their communities. A number of public and private elementary and secondary schools, as well as two four-year colleges, a community college, a tutorial center, and a career development center serve residents of the region. Principal concerns include the high costs of education and the property taxes that fund a large percentage of those costs, and planning for future school expansion or construction.

Building a dynamic workforce in the Region is the challenge for several providers: Vermont Department of Employment and Training, Career Development Center, Tutorial Center and adult education programs, school placements, continuing education, and training programs at various area colleges. The Bennington School and Workforce Alliance is a regional consortium of providers to more effectively address and align education, training, and employment needs.

*** Provide opportunities for affordable housing to meet the needs of all residents of the region.**

Increasing real estate and building costs have made it difficult for many people to find suitable housing in their hometowns. An effort should be made to accommodate a variety of housing types (single-family, multi-family, manufactured housing, and rental housing), with special emphasis on meeting the needs of low and moderate-income residents and the growing elderly segment of the population. Plans should be developed to encourage the provision of adequate affordable housing in communities throughout the region, while considering the costs as well as the benefits of such housing to the towns. The BCRC "Housing Needs Analysis and Regional Compact" study provides a framework for implementation. The Regional Affordable Housing Corporation (RAHC) and Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council (BROC) respectively provide assistance for affordable housing in lower income households.

*** Encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources.**

Energy planning should emphasize the use of diverse and reliable supplies of energy resources in an efficient and environmentally sound manner. Particular attention should be given to the development of renewable energy resources in the area as well as alternative sources such as natural gas. Land use, transportation, economic development, and housing policies and strategies should support the efficient use of energy resources.

*** Strive for close coordination of policies in the Regional and municipal plans.**

Local and regional planning policies and programs will be more successful if they are mutually supportive. Town residents are also regional residents living and working throughout the area. Closer coordination also minimizes conflicts between towns or in regulatory proceedings. Foremost, good planning policy creates greater certainty in the outcome or vision.

In addition to towns, agencies and organizations will benefit the region by coordinating their plans and projects. BCRC is in a position to facilitate such coordination as an integral part of regional planning. It

is a function that needs the active participation of individual commissioners as well as the professional staff.

*** Continually assess the effectiveness of regulatory provisions.**

BCRC must be alert to the currency and adequacy of regulatory provisions – from town ordinances to legislative proposals – to ensure readiness and balance in pace with development and change. This will entail direct assistance to towns, monitoring legislation, and presenting the Commission’s assessment in response to issues.

Nuisance Wildlife:

The national trend in the decline of hunting and trapping activities have led some wildlife species to proliferate to levels where their presence is often viewed as a nuisance. While their populations have steadily grown, many Canada geese appear to have abandoned their migration instincts. Large congregations of these “resident” geese have caused site-specific pollution on lakes, ponds, golf courses and lawns. Meanwhile the decreasing demand for natural fur pelts have led to a large growth of the beaver population. Although often admired as nature’s engineers, the beaver’s dam building abilities can lead to costly property damage by flooding roads, wells, septic systems and wood lots. It is advised that municipal officials and private property owners consult with the Department of Fish and Wildlife toward resolving such wildlife nuisances.

6.6 Unique Natural Features and Scenic Resources

The BCRC and the Vermont Natural Resources Council have compiled inventories of unique geological, botanical, and hydrological natural features. The waterfalls, caves, glens, rock outcroppings, and other unique features described in these reports are located throughout the region and add to its special character. Any development that occurs near one of these sites should include undisturbed buffers around the resource to ensure that it is not damaged.

Similarly, the natural appearance of the region's landscape is fundamental to its rural character and appeal. As such, it is clear that scenery is a very real economic asset. People are drawn to this area by the beauty of the hillsides, mountains, rivers, fields, and the traditional townscapes that are complemented by this natural landscape. These scenic values should be protected. A beautiful agricultural valley set against a backdrop of wooded hillsides is surely more valuable to the region than the same valley beneath a hillside that is cluttered with unsightly buildings. Consequently, development on visually prominent hillsides or ridgelines must be carefully planned, with special care given to the siting and screening of buildings, to avoid the loss of scenic value. Development that reinforces traditional development patterns – growth in and around historic village centers and in clusters – will also help to maintain the region's aesthetic appeal.

Scenic resources are often taken for granted until they are compromised or threatened. With assistance from the BCRC, several towns in the region have recently completed scenic resource inventories. Once identified, a town could utilize one of the following measures to protect scenic resources:

- purchase of scenic lands,
- scenic easements or purchase of development rights,
- consideration of scenic impacts of public investment activities such as utility poles, street lights, and cleared power line rights-of-way,
- public education, and
- regulation through zoning, subdivision regulations, and the Act 250 review process.

The BCRC has developed several model bylaws to help communities protect scenic mountainsides and ridgelines. A model telecommunications facilities bylaw developed by the commission has proven particularly timely, as several towns have recently been planning for the age of wireless communications.

Light pollution or “sky glow” is a cumulative and increasing problem, especially near the urban areas and major resort development centers. Light projecting upwards from these areas produces a glow near the horizon that diminishes the natural quality of the nighttime landscape and night sky. As these urbanized areas continue to expand, special consideration needs to be given to lighting design in order to minimize this cumulative adverse effect. Likewise, low density sprawl in rural areas can change the evening landscape by casting and spreading light over a larger rural area. Effective lighting can be designed to minimize site specific impacts as well as the cumulative effect in larger geographic areas. Effective lighting design must be incorporated into project planning, whether public or private. Publications such as The Outdoor Lighting Manual for Vermont Municipalities and those of the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) are valuable sources when determining appropriate levels of lighting. Municipalities should incorporate lighting standards in their bylaws and apply similar principles and standards in municipal buildings and infrastructure. Some municipalities, such as Bennington, have included such standards for the review of projects.

Recreational Resources:

The region’s scenic and natural environment provides a special outdoor recreation experience for the area’s residents, tourists, and second home owners (camping, hunting, fishing, swimming, boating, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, biking, skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, nature and bird watching).

Many of the outdoor recreational resources in the region rely on the traditional willingness of landowners to allow access to private lands. As the population increases, so too does the pressure on private lands. With the increased recreational use of private lands, more landowners experience vandalism, littering and the general disregard for private property. Landowners must feel secure in the protection of their traditional rights and land uses if private lands are to continue to be used for recreational opportunities. Additionally, incentives for landowners to keep their land open are needed.

The region is host to sections of the Appalachian Trail, the Long Trail and the Taconic Crest Trail as well as a large section of the Green Mountain National Forest, three State Parks, and wildlife areas managed by the Department of Fish and Wildlife. As pressure increases on private lands, and as more private land is posted, the need for publicly owned land for recreation is critical. In bordering North Adams, Massachusetts efforts are underway to upgrade a rail-trail and the potential for interstate connectivity should be explored. It is in the region’s interest to encourage Federal, State, and local acquisition of land well suited for outdoor recreation, provided that adequate financial and management arrangements are made with involved local governments. Publicly owned lands should include areas that are managed for multiple uses, so as to provide both motorized and passive recreational opportunities.

There are six privately owned campgrounds in the region that contribute to the local economy. These private campgrounds complement the State Parks by offering diversified, seasonal recreational opportunities with additional amenities such as RV hookups with Internet and satellite connections. As tent camping continues to decline in popularity, these private campgrounds will play a greater role in offering residents and visitors a stress free outdoors experience while having the comforts of home in their RVs. Some are located near or adjoin federal and state land that provide for a variety of recreational experiences (snowmobiles, wilderness, hiking, fishing, and hunting).

The maintenance and development of designated recreational trail networks including hiking, cross-country ski, snowshoeing, snowmobile and all terrain vehicle networks are encouraged. In planning for development near these recreational amenities, design plans should work toward separation of vehicular

traffic and other competing or incompatible land uses. New development and subdivisions that are insensitive or diminish the enjoyment or continued use of trail networks should be discouraged.

The region's rivers and lakes offer opportunities for swimming, fishing, and boating, all of which require public access for parking or boat launching. Emerald Lake and Lake Shaftsbury are in state parks and have swimming beaches and facilities for boating, hiking, picnicking, and camping. Hapgood Pond, high in the Green Mountain National Forest in Peru, and Adams Reservoir at the Woodford State Park, offer a similar array of recreational amenities. A small but popular park operated by a private organization is located at Lake Paran. These parks are all maintained to provide for public recreational use of the lakes, and their geographic distribution ensures that no resident of the region must travel too great a distance to have access to one of the parks.

It is important that lakes and any public lands surrounding them are accessible to the public. While Vermont state parks close for the season, they remain available for use throughout the year. Off-season and winter use can provide a unique experience of peace and solitude to a variety of recreation pursuits. These range from backcountry hiking, nature observation, cross-country skiing, sledding, snowshoeing, snowmobiling on designated routes, and off-season camping with approval from regional park managers. Access to other lakes and ponds may be facilitated through the use of conservation or access easements and public acquisition of particularly valuable shore land areas. Recreational use and access must be managed, however, to ensure that excessive or inappropriate use does not damage the environment or result in conflicts among different user groups.

6.7 Policies and Actions

1. The surface waters of the Bennington region are extraordinarily valuable natural resources that must be protected from incompatible development and land uses. The natural characteristics and values of these resources should be preserved. An undisturbed buffer of at least 50 feet in width should be maintained, wherever possible, between any developed area and a river, stream, lake, pond, or wetland to ensure that water quality and natural ecosystems are protected. Greater buffer distances often will be required depending on the nature of the land and affected waterway. The density and type of new development in shore land areas may need to be limited to a greater extent than in other areas in order to prevent environmental damage and protect the values associated with these resources.
2. Recreational uses such as fishing, canoeing, and swimming are appropriate in natural settings in and along rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands. Development planning should include provisions for public access to these resources. The intensity of use and access points should be limited in particularly fragile ecological areas, especially when motorized vehicles are concerned.
3. Development in floodplains must be carefully controlled in accordance with flood hazard area regulations. Development is strongly discouraged in flood hazard areas.
4. Aquifers and ground water recharge areas (including all designated source protection areas) must be protected from activities or development that would adversely affect the quantity or quality of available ground water. Municipal subdivision and health ordinances and the regulations of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources must be strictly enforced to protect individual water supplies.

5. Developments or activities that would significantly degrade air quality in the region, or that would impede economic development in the region, should not be permitted. Efforts to limit air quality degradation from sources beyond the region should also be supported.
6. Public sector planning and investments should promote growth in designated growth centers and discourage scattered development in outlying areas that would result in the loss or fragmentation of important agricultural or forest lands.
7. Developments on agricultural lands shall be planned so as to preserve the viability, or potential viability, of the site for agricultural use. Developments should also include the objective of maintaining the values afforded by woodlands on or near the site.
8. Silvicultural practices that minimize soil erosion and impacts on roads, streams, wildlife habitat, and the natural appearance of mountain and ridge tops should be employed.
9. Developments should be planned and permitted so as not to preclude the future utilization of important earth resources.
10. The extraction and processing of earth resources and the disposal of wastes must not have an unduly harmful impact on the environment or surrounding land uses and development. Upon completion of the extraction or processing, the site should be restored and left in a condition suited for an approved alternative use.
11. An activity or development in the vicinity of an important natural area or wildlife habitat must be carefully planned so that adverse impacts are avoided.
12. New construction on visually prominent shorelines, hillsides, or ridges should include provisions for siting and screening buildings to protect important scenic values. Towns in the Bennington region are strongly encouraged to adopt appropriate ordinances to ensure that scenic values, including the natural appearance of view sheds and ridgelines, are protected adequately.
13. Acquisition of land, easements, or development rights by a public entity or nonprofit conservation organization is an appropriate method to protect important resources or to provide public access for recreation.
14. Owners of valuable agricultural and forest lands should contact the County Forester or the Bennington County Conservation District to become informed of the Vermont Current Use Program and encouraged to participate in that program.
15. The BCRC should continue to participate in cooperative planning for regional water resources. Such projects may consider issues related to environmental quality, public health, recreational use and public access, fish and wildlife habitat, and aesthetic values, and should involve representatives of town governments (in the region and in neighboring regions and states, as appropriate), special interest groups, and other interested persons.
16. The BCRC should compile a resource manual for municipalities that contains model bylaws that will aid in the protection of important surface waters and aquifers and groundwater recharge areas.

17. Efforts to acquire important shoreline and public access areas in rural areas should be supported, as should improvement projects (such as riverfront parks and building renovation and reuse) along waterways in urban and village areas.
18. The BCRC should participate in environmental reviews of developments that could have regional air quality impacts.
19. The BCRC should work with towns, perhaps through conservation commissions, for the identification of regionally significant agricultural and forest lands, and the implementation of suitable preservation strategies.
20. If a town is interested in using a creative technique such as a transferable development rights zoning system to direct growth in a certain way, the BCRC should help that town with a pilot project that could serve as a model for other towns.
21. BCRC will continue to support acquisition of important forest lands by the U.S. Forest Service. Acquisition of development rights provides an alternative to fee ownership.
22. The BCRC should prepare background information and model regulations to be used by municipalities to support the protection of agricultural lands, scenic uplands, and other important open space areas. The BCRC has worked with the Town of Bennington to develop such provisions, which have been adopted as permanent amendments to the Town's Land Use and Development Regulations.
23. The BCRC should compile an index of characteristics of key wildlife habitats to help local planning commissions and conservation commissions.
24. Construction of ponds is strongly discouraged, unless fed by groundwater and/or overland drainage, or is essential for fire protection. In-stream ponds are discouraged on all streams that support fish life. In cases where feasible alternatives do not exist, in-stream ponds on seasonal streams, or off-stream ponds that discharge directly into a stream may be acceptable provided that the pond waters do not violate Vermont Water Quality Standards.
25. Development should be designed and sited in a manner to preserve contiguous areas of active or potential wildlife habitat. Fragmentation of significant and necessary wildlife habitat is discouraged.
26. Large contiguous tracts of forests should be managed so as to maintain the diversity of age and species of tree cover necessary for shelter and food supply for deer, bear, and other large mammals and birds. Uneven age management of forest areas is encouraged in order to enhance or maintain the quality of the resource.
27. It is in the region's interest to conserve large tracts of bear habitat whenever possible and to adopt cluster land use concepts in zoning bylaws as a mechanism for maintaining contiguous forest cover. Undeveloped buffer zones should be maintained around identified critical bear habitats.
28. Encourage Federal, State, and local acquisition of land and facilities well suited for outdoor recreation, provided that the adequate financial and management arrangements are made with involved governments.

29. The Regional Commission encourages towns that have not already established Conservation Commissions to do so.
30. Outdoor lighting shall be kept to the minimum required for safety, security, and the intended use, consistent with the planning/zoning district in which it is located. This is also consistent with energy conservation policy. Lighting for larger projects or for buildings or structures that have special symbolic or have special security needs shall be based on a lighting plan prepared by an experienced or qualified professional. Lighting standards from publications referenced in this chapter can serve as the basis for lighting plans.

The old Green Mountain Race Track, located on a large tract of level land adjacent to Pownal Village and the Hoosic River, presents some unique planning challenges. The property has not been regularly used for a number of years and contains a large number of dilapidated structures as well as the large grandstand building. Several ideas for re-use of the property have been advanced in recent years, the most recent involving a mix of residential and commercial uses. Any redevelopment of the property should be accomplished in a manner that enhances the environment and does not adversely impact neighboring residential areas or Bennington's commercial center and downtown. The Track property should be considered as an extension of the Pownal Village area that can accommodate a moderate level of residential development as well as planned commercial or light industrial uses at a scale appropriate for a growing village area.

7.3 Development in Rural Areas

While concentrations of new development should be directed to established growth centers, some development has occurred, and will continue to occur, in rural areas outside of villages and urban centers. Such growth must be planned to avoid impacts on the region's rural character, environmental quality, and excessive costs to municipalities. Historically, rural homesteads were established in conjunction with farms, sawmills, or other land-based family businesses. In addition, small settlements sprang up at many rural crossroads and other locally convenient sites. These hamlets consisted of a small cluster of homes and perhaps a school, church, store, or some other public building. Many rural hamlets are still evident today. These areas are important as focal points for local communities and contribute to the diversity of the rural landscape. For the most part, hamlets have no public water supply or sewage disposal systems, and most of the buildings are located along one or two roads. Examples of hamlets in the Bennington region include: Rupert, West Rupert, South Dorset, Peru, Landgrove, Sandgate, Richville and Barnumville (in Manchester), West Arlington, Center Shaftsbury, North Pownal, and Stamford.

In recent decades, residential subdivisions have created new concentrations of settlement in rural areas. These developments are generally entirely residential, with self-contained road networks and on-site wells and septic systems (some subdivisions, particularly those with multi-family or clustered units, may have community water supplies and wastewater disposal systems). Subdivisions in the region range in size from a few to several dozen lots, and may consist of single-family homes on lots of one to ten or more acres, clustered single-family homes on smaller lots, or multi-family condominiums. A few examples of the many rural subdivisions in the region include: Dorset Orchard (Dorset), Bromley Brook Woods and Eagle Rise (Manchester), Wilcox Road (Arlington), the several Sunderland Hill and Bacon Hollow developments (Sunderland), and Hidden Valley (Shaftsbury). Subdivisions must be carefully planned to provide a desirable living environment for residents, and to ensure that the rural character and natural resources of the area are protected. In areas that have extensive or concentrated natural resources, including important agricultural land, proposals for residential developments must retain the integrity of those resources.

Municipal bylaws should ensure that development in rural areas reflects historical settlement patterns. Scattered development in remote areas with poor access to town centers must be avoided. New subdivisions must incorporate the positive characteristics of earlier rural settlements: a community identity, public open spaces, preservation of economically important resources (such as agricultural soils), and so on. Many of these objectives can be realized by clustering lots to create a hamlet-type character around the homes, while setting a significant percentage of the project area aside as open space reserved for agriculture, forestry, or public recreation. Such developments also are economically efficient because roads and other infrastructure need not be as extensive or costly to construct and maintain.

Agriculture, forestry, recreation, and other land uses that rely on the region's natural resources are appropriate uses in rural areas. Certain small-scale industries, especially those related to the region's agricultural and forest resources (e.g., dairy products, saw mills), may be compatible with, and most appropriate in, outlying rural areas. Properly planned residential development may be accommodated at overall densities of one to two acres per dwelling unit in valley areas where there are few physical or economic impediments to growth. Residential densities of three to twenty-five acres per dwelling unit are appropriate in rural areas that are more remote, are at high elevations or have other physical limitations, or which lie in agricultural zones (where clustered development to preserve open land also may be appropriate). Rural developments also must comply with local and state regulations pertaining to water supply and wastewater disposal to ensure protection of public health and the environment. In any event, rural development must not be widely scattered throughout the countryside, but should occur as relatively compact and cohesive units that serve to reinforce, rather than to replace, the region's rural character.

A limited amount of commercial development, properly planned and sited, can also be accommodated in rural areas. The "country store" is, after all, a characteristic feature of rural Vermont. Although shopping centers (as defined in this chapter) are clearly not appropriate outside of villages or urban centers, small general stores, service stations, and similar uses that provide goods and services for nearby residents may be located in rural areas. These businesses should be sited only in hamlets or as part of rural planned unit developments. Towns should limit the number and size of such establishments to prevent a proliferation of scattered commercial development that does not serve the needs of the community. Occupations that are customarily practiced in residential areas, and which do not affect the character of those areas, are another form of small-scale commercial use common in rural areas. Small professional offices, antique shops, and craft studios are examples of customary home occupations. Such businesses are protected by state law, and most municipal zoning bylaws clearly define the parameters within which they may operate.

In the past, more extensive commercial development was planned for and sited in certain rural areas that lie alongside principal state highways. These areas are found in "roadside commercial" zoning districts that were established specifically in response to a perceived need to cater to an automobile oriented lifestyle and to tourists traveling by car. . The area along Route 11/30 east of Manchester Depot is the most developed such roadside commercial district in the region. Towns should not pursue new roadside commercial designations because additional development in these areas would negatively impact the economic vitality of commercial areas in nearby villages or urban centers. Moreover, towns should include standards that will ensure that existing roadside commercial areas do not deteriorate into unsafe or unsightly "strip" developments. Town plans and zoning bylaws should place special emphasis on coordinating development in these areas. Roadside commercial uses should be avoided along sections of highway that have low sufficiency ratings because of poor visibility, steep grades, poor alignment, or other factors. Development standards should include provisions for adequate and efficient vehicular parking, ingress, and egress; location of parking lots (preferably to the rear or side of buildings); minimum lot size and road frontage; building siting and design; restrictions on signs, lighting, and other site structures; and landscaping.

Ski area development is another form of rural development that is important in the Bennington region. During the winter months, many people are drawn to the region to take advantage of the snow-covered mountain slopes and woodland trails. One major alpine skiing center – Bromley Mountain – is located in the Town of Peru. A smaller, former alpine center (Prospect Mountain in Woodford) and three nordic touring centers (Prospect Mountain in Woodford, Wild Wings in Peru, and Hildene in Manchester) are

also located in the region. The Merck Forest and Education Center in Rupert provides a range of year-round activities. These developments are appropriate and economically important land uses in rural areas. Small accessory commercial and residential uses (e.g., ski shops, snack bars, lodging facilities) complement the principal recreational use of the sites. A relatively large downhill skiing center such as Bromley Mountain, being a destination resort, must contain a larger and more diverse array of accessory land uses. Year-round uses at such resorts generate additional revenue to support capital projects and employ people to manage the enterprise. These alternative activities (mountain biking, downhill slides, motorized rentals, sporting events, etc.) can enhance economic vitality for the resort and the region. Such activities must be carefully planned, sited, and designed to fit into and complement the natural and built landscape. Large improvements and infrastructure more typical of amusement parks and out of context with the area should be avoided. Hotels, restaurants, vacation condominiums, and a number of retail stores either exist or are planned for the ski village area. The Town of Peru has been working with the resort to ensure that growth at the mountain is accomplished in accordance with the objectives of their Town Plan. Because such a level of development in rural areas can exert wide-ranging effects on regional land use and development, emphasis should remain on the expansion of existing alpine ski areas in the region, rather than the establishment of new ones. Cross-country skiing centers, with a moderate amount of accessory commercial activity, represent an economically viable means of maintaining rural open lands for public recreational use, and should be encouraged.

7.4 Historic Preservation

Mention has been made in this and in previous chapters of the importance of preserving the region's historic, archeological, and cultural resources. The town centers, villages, and hamlets in the Bennington region contain numerous historic structures that reflect the rich history and architectural heritage of those communities. Several historic village centers in the region – Dorset, Manchester Village, Old Bennington, Bennington, North Bennington, and Arlington – have achieved special recognition by being placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, many historically significant structures are found throughout the countryside. Preservation of the region's historic resources has many benefits. The area's historic rural character, in large part attributable to those early structures, attracts vacationers to the area thereby providing a valuable source of revenue and employment. The unique historic character of each town also provides residents with an important sense of their heritage and a link with the past, thus promoting a sense of community identity and pride.

An important first step in any effort to preserve historic resources is to identify those resources. Fortunately, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, together with local residents and historical societies, has completed comprehensive inventories of historic and archaeological sites and districts in the region. These inventories document historical and architecturally significant structures in areas such as Old Bennington, North Bennington, downtown Bennington, the Village of Arlington, Manchester Village, and Dorset Village as well as in other areas in each town in the region. Towns may wish to expand upon or refine these inventories so that they better serve local planning purposes.

Regulatory tools can help towns preserve historic resources. The Vermont Legislature, in 1986, passed the "Townscape Preservation Act" which enables towns to protect their historic resources by designating historic districts and landmarks under their municipal zoning regulations. When an historic district regulation is in place, approval of the municipality is required prior to the erection of any new structure within the district and before any modifications are made to the exterior appearance of a structure within the district. The municipality also would be able to review plans involving the demolition or movement of an historic structure. Design control districts, which may be created to give towns some control over

the appearance of discrete areas of historical, architectural, or cultural significance, or other areas in which there is a concentration of community interest, can also be used to preserve historic resources. A design review board may be created to assist the local planning commission or development review board in evaluating design proposals for new or altered buildings in those districts. The Villages of Old Bennington, North Bennington, and Manchester, and Bennington, Dorset, and the Town of Manchester, currently have design control ordinances in effect. Conditional use and performance standard provisions of municipal zoning bylaws can include requirements pertaining to the siting and design of buildings. Finally, municipalities may have input on aesthetic aspects of major development projects under Criterion #8 of Act 250.

Nonregulatory approaches to historic preservation are of equal importance. Local historical societies should continue the research, documentation, education, and advocacy efforts that they have pursued in their communities. Developers should be encouraged to incorporate historic structures and important architectural details into their project planning. The adaptive reuse of old buildings that no longer serve their original function is often preferable to the destruction and replacement of those buildings. There also may be opportunities for small historic preservation grants and investment tax credits for people who wish to rehabilitate historic structures. Public acquisition and use of particularly important historic buildings may be appropriate when new or expanded public facilities are needed.

In summary, the goals of any historic preservation program should be:

- * To maintain a community's special historical and cultural heritage and preserve a sense of place and pride for the town's residents.
- * To maintain those historic and aesthetic qualities which are economic assets to the community.
- * To assure that the renovation and alteration of existing structures, and the construction of new buildings, is done in a manner consistent with the character of the historic districts in which they are located.
- * To achieve overall visual compatibility within each district through careful attention to architectural, landscape, and site structure details.
- * To prevent poor forest management practices and clear cutting unless clearings are part of a management objective such as restoring and improving diversity and habitat.
- * To assure potential archaeology sites are considered when digging, landscaping, quarrying, or otherwise impacting on properties that fit models of such sites.

7.5 Upland Forests

The 'Upland Forests' comprise the most extensive planning area in the Bennington region. This area includes the remote and rugged lands of the Green and Taconic Mountains, as well as isolated valleys such as Black Hole Hollow in Arlington; essentially all of the land outside of villages, urban centers, and rural valleys (Figure 7-1). In total extent, upland forests cover approximately 266,500 acres, or 72 percent of the region's land area. Most towns in the region have zoned these areas as "Forest" or "Forest and Recreation" districts where most permanent development is either prohibited or allowed only in certain areas on very large lots with strict environmental controls. Such stringent regulations are

No discussion of the region's upland forests would be complete without mentioning the Green Mountain National Forest. A large percentage of land in the Green Mountains is owned and managed by the United States Forest Service. These lands are maintained and managed for the public's use and enjoyment. Forest management plans for the Green Mountain National Forest stress multiple uses of upland forest areas: timber production, wildlife habitat, wilderness preservation, and recreational uses are all important elements in these plans. The Forest Service recently completed an update to the Land and Resource Management Plan, which will guide management for the next 10-15 years. The regional office of the Forest Service wishes to work cooperatively with town officials and the BCRC in developing management plans and identifying parcels suitable for acquisition.

7.6 From Sprawl to Smart Growth

Sprawl exists in Vermont in many forms. Large-lot developments with low average densities are common due to consumer choice and sewage standards that historically promoted 10-plus acre lots. This type of development results in the fragmentation of open space, loss of natural resources, dispersed communities, and inefficient transportation systems. The Vermont Forum on Sprawl and similar organizations and programs seek to provide tools that municipalities can use to curb sprawl. Solutions and approaches will vary depending on the particular issues in any given community. One tool a community can utilize is a self examination "smart growth report card" (Appendix B-9). The Regional Commission is committed to prevention of sprawl and will assist towns that want to develop effective policies/regulations that will promote concentrated growth within growth centers while maintaining rural open lands between these centers. The BCRC should participate in state land use hearings to support developments that reflect smart growth principles and oppose or seek modifications to projects that promote sprawl.

7.7 Policies and Actions

1. New development should be concentrated within growth centers; scattered development that is remote and has little relationship to existing settlement patterns should be avoided. Distinctive edges between urban and village centers and rural countryside become obscured with the advent of sprawl. Municipal plans and zoning should strive to retain a clear boundary between the urban/village areas and countryside.
2. A variety of residential, commercial, industrial, and cultural and recreational uses, at relatively high densities, is appropriate and encouraged in urban centers. Public investments in infrastructure and public services, and private development activities, should seek to support the development or redevelopment of established urban centers rather than the creation of new concentrations of development. Development from urban centers must not sprawl into surrounding rural areas.
3. A variety of residential, commercial, industrial, and cultural and recreational uses is appropriate in villages, but at a significantly smaller scale and lower density than in urban centers. Public investments and private initiatives should support growth in existing or planned village areas. New development should respect the small scale and historic character of existing village development.
4. In rural areas, emphasis should be placed on the conservation and use of natural resources and the avoidance of costly scattered development that is disruptive of the region's rural character. Low-density residential, commercial (small general/convenience stores, home occupations) and compatible recreational uses are also appropriate in rural areas. Planned commercial or mixed uses within existing roadside commercial zoning districts must be carefully planned to avoid the

appearance of sprawl, traffic congestion, or safety concerns. Roadside commercial areas should not be expanded and should be retracted when feasible and appropriate. Development should reflect historic settlement patterns and preserve important resources, such as productive agricultural soils. Creative land use techniques should be used to retain the integrity of special natural resources.

5. The development of permanent improvements and structures for year-round use is inappropriate in upland forest areas (although certain important public service facilities may be permitted with proper controls). The conservation and wise use of natural resources in upland forests should be emphasized; forestry and outdoor recreation are appropriate activities in these areas. Special care must be exercised in areas where the elevation exceeds 2500 feet, because of the fragility of the environment. Acquisition of important upland forest parcels by the United States Forest Service is encouraged.
6. Important historic sites, structures, districts, and archaeological sites should be preserved. New development in historic areas should be architecturally compatible with its surroundings. The adaptive reuse of historic buildings is encouraged, and renovation work should maintain the architectural integrity of historic structures.
7. The following policies apply to new residential development:
 - The density of development must not exceed the amount that the land is physically capable of supporting (natural conditions, intensity of use, location, and provision of services).
 - Residential development must be carefully planned in areas where predominant natural slopes exceed 15 percent; residential development should not be permitted where slopes are 20 percent or greater.
 - Residential projects need to carefully integrate and utilize open space planning techniques.
 - During construction, all necessary measures should be taken to minimize soil erosion.
 - Natural vegetation, landscape features, and historic landmarks should be preserved to the greatest extent possible and incorporated in the development design. Streams, ponds, and wetlands should be maintained in their natural state, and access to these and other open spaces should be provided for residents.
 - Residential development should utilize cluster design techniques, and in appropriate situations a more traditional street grid should be used to enhance vehicular and pedestrian connections. Subdivisions should be linked to neighboring developments where possible via roads, trails, and common open space. An efficient utility network should be included
 - Prior to any large-scale residential development, a road system capable of handling traffic in a safe and efficient manner must either exist or be planned for immediate construction.
 - The road system should be designed to accommodate the intended uses in a safe manner taking into consideration vehicle type, pedestrians, cyclists, and the streetscape.
 - Development which exceeds a town's planned growth rate, or which causes substantial economic

hardship to a town because of the increased demand for facilities and services, is inappropriate and shall not be permitted.

- An evaluation of forest resources should be required in forested areas when subdivided parcels are 20 acres or more.

8. The following policies apply to new commercial development:

- The intensity of commercial development needs to be consistent with the character of the land and surrounding area. In the case of shopping centers, small convenience shopping centers, reflecting the character of the surrounding community, are appropriate in villages, and urban centers may contain convenience, community, or regional shopping centers (see definitions in this chapter), but shopping centers are not appropriate in rural areas.
- Shopping Centers/Creating Place: Improve the diversity and connectivity of these discrete commercial nodes into a complementary and attractive business center to strengthen the region's Urban Centers. Encourage public/private partnerships to develop creative implementation strategies to ensure the vitality of all commercial centers. Require careful planning to ensure the centers do not detract from existing commercial areas or appear out of character with the community.
- Big box retail stores may only be permitted in urban centers provided they exhibit exemplary architectural and site design and are shown to be in the best interest of the community after completion of a comprehensive economic/community impact study. Projects should also provide for: mix and balance of uses; site optimization including compact building groupings with parking located behind buildings, use of architectural design to complement the streetscape; and transportation facilities to accommodate and encourage access via public transportation, bicycling, sidewalks, and pedestrian pathways. Efforts must be made to minimize adverse impacts on existing highway operations and safety.
- Commercial developments need to include an architectural and landscape design plan that complements the surrounding environment.
- Space and amenities for public use (e.g., pedestrian walkways/paths, landscaped areas with benches, bike racks, restrooms) should be provided or required as conditions warrant.
- The amount of noise, glare, and lighting observable from off-site locations must be minimized.
- Adequate parking and loading spaces must be screened or effectively landscaped to improve aesthetics, especially from streets or neighboring residential areas.
- Provide for safe and efficient vehicular ingress and egress. Access onto roads where steep grades exist or within 400 feet of a major intersection should be avoided. Adjacent commercial developments should use combined cuts and connect parking lots internally whenever possible.
- Safe and convenient facilities for pedestrian access and circulation shall be provided.
- Commercial uses that generate large numbers of traffic turning movements must be avoided along

sections of highway with low sufficiency ratings, unless located within an established downtown.

9. The following policies apply to new industrial developments:

- Relatively large industrial developments need to be located in and near urban centers or in village areas where adequate supporting infrastructure exists.
- Two or more adjacent industrial uses should be designed as a coordinated industrial park; land within industrial parks should be used exclusively for industrial development.
- Utilities, roads, and other essential services should be available and adequate at the time of completion of the industrial development.
- Industrial parks should not be located in areas where truck or employee vehicle traffic would be channeled onto local streets in residential neighborhoods.
- The amount of noise, vibration, dust, odor, glare, and lighting that affects nearby residential areas must be minimized.
- Industrial development should provide meaningful well-paying jobs and should not pollute the environment. Industries that make use of locally available natural resources are encouraged.

10. The BCRC should continue to offer assistance to municipalities in the area of land use planning. Specific activities should include:

- Conduct workshops, prepare model bylaws, and undertake other educational projects dealing with creative planning techniques such as: cluster (open space) subdivision, agricultural land conservation, historic district ordinances, and performance standards for commercial and industrial developments.
- Work with towns to help delineate growth centers, and evaluate whether the capacity exists to allow for additional growth in villages or to establish new village centers.
- Cooperate with towns, the Bennington County Industrial Corporation, and other interested organizations in promoting new industrial development in the region consistent with the Regional Plan policies.
- Continue to work with the United States Forest Service and towns to develop forest management plans and establish criteria for identifying upland forest parcels that are appropriate for public acquisition and other areas that may utilize federal funds.
- Develop a more detailed regional land use map based on better geographic information. Prepare and distribute a composite region-wide zoning map; identify possible areas of disagreement or conflict among town land use plans.
- Offer assistance in promoting the development or redevelopment of historic "downtown" areas; planning for capital investments, preparation of creative land use regulations, assistance in planning for the adaptive reuse of buildings and the development of riverfront parks are potential

areas of involvement by the BCRC.

- Work to eliminate sprawl (scattered development outside settled urban and village centers). A community assessment tool prepared by the Vermont Forum on Sprawl “Smart Growth Card” is included in Appendix B-9. The region and municipalities must remain vigilant in testing our policies and actions if long-term goals are to be achieved.
- Work with municipalities, the regional development corporation, Chambers of Commerce, Regional Marketing Organization, downtown and other organizations on economic priorities and to further the goals and policies of the plan.

VIII. ENERGY

Recent dramatic fluctuations in the prices of fuel oil and gasoline have vividly demonstrated that energy is a scarce resource that should be considered in any comprehensive planning process. Both the type and quantity of energy used have economic and environmental quality implications for the region. Various fuels – wood, oil, electricity, propane gas, and coal – are used for space heating in residential households. Commercial, industrial, and public and institutional buildings use either oil or electricity (and to a lesser extent propane gas and wood) for heating. All of these uses rely on electricity to power appliances, lights, machines, and other conveniences. Of course, personal and commercial cars and trucks are responsible for consumption of a great deal of gasoline. Each of these energy sources or forms presents certain concerns, problems, and opportunities. Many such issues were thoroughly addressed in the Regional Energy Plan adopted by the BCRC in 1982. The Regional Energy Plan should be updated to incorporate new consumption data, demand projections, and recent energy initiatives in Bennington County. The policy framework of that Plan is still relevant, however, and will form the basis for this chapter.

The ten basic energy goals identified in the Regional Energy Plan are certainly still applicable today. Some progress has been made toward the attainment of many of these goals, but a continuing commitment will ensure further progress toward promoting economic growth while maintaining environmental quality. The goals are as follows:

1. Assure a safe and reliable supply of energy to meet reasonable consumer needs.
2. Reduce the flow of energy dollars leaving the Bennington region by decreasing our reliance on non-local energy sources.
3. Reduce local per capita energy consumption while maintaining a desirable living and working environment.
4. Increase opportunities to make energy choices and decisions at the local level.
5. Make energy choices that maintain or improve environmental quality.
6. Encourage the development of renewable energy resources.
7. Assure diversity in the energy mix so as to mitigate the impacts of a supply restriction in any particular fuel.
8. Strive for the most efficient use of each energy source, matching the fuel to the end use.
9. Assure an equitable and affordable energy supply for consumers across all economic strata.
10. Stimulate public commitment to the above goals by formulating specific land use, transportation, economic development, and housing policies and strategies.

8.1 Energy Conservation