

Photo courtesy of Julie Delphia



LEICESTER, VERMONT 2012 TOWN PLAN

Adopted September 17, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION	1
HOW TO USE THE PLAN	1
LEICESTER'S PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE.....	2
POPULATION & HOUSING.....	4
VITAL STATISTICS	4
POPULATION DENSITY.....	5
AGE DISTRIBUTION.....	6
HOUSEHOLDS.....	6
YEAR-ROUND VS. SEASONAL.....	7
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	7
HOUSING COSTS	7
ECONOMY	9
WORKFORCE.....	9
EMPLOYMENT	9
INCOME	12
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	12
UTILITIES & SERVICES.....	14
TELEPHONE AND INTERNET	14
SOLID WASTE.....	14
WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS.....	14
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT	17
COMMUNITY FACILITIES	19
LEICESTER FOUR CORNERS	19
BROOKSIDE CEMETERY.....	19
PLACES OF WORSHIP	19
RECREATION.....	21
EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE.....	22
SCHOOLS.....	22
<i>Leicester Central School.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Otter Valley Union High School</i>	<i>22</i>
ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION OPTIONS.....	23
<i>Foxcroft Farm Harvest Program</i>	<i>23</i>
CHILDCARE AND PRESCHOOL FACILITIES.....	23
TRANSPORTATION.....	24
EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRAFFIC PATTERNS	24
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.....	25
TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES	25
<i>Private Roads.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Driveway Cuts Intersecting Town Highways</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Pedestrians and Cyclists</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Wildlife and Lake Roads</i>	<i>26</i>
ENERGY	28
CONSUMPTION AND RESOURCES.....	28
ENERGY CONSERVATION AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES.....	28
<i>Solar</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Wind.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Geothermal Heating.....</i>	<i>29</i>
NET METERING	29
FUEL ASSISTANCE.....	29
ENERGY POLICY	30
NATURAL RESOURCES	31
FORESTLAND.....	32
WILDLIFE HABITAT AND CORRIDORS	34
SOILS.....	34

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES.....	36
EARTH RESOURCES.....	36
AIR RESOURCES.....	37
<i>Trash Burning</i>	37
<i>Outdoor Wood-Fired Boilers</i>	37
<i>Wood Stoves</i>	37
<i>Vehicle Emissions</i>	37
WATER RESOURCES.....	37
<i>Lakes</i>	38
<i>Rivers and Streams</i>	39
<i>Wetlands</i>	40
<i>Groundwater</i>	40
<i>Stormwater</i>	40
SCENIC RESOURCES.....	41
HISTORIC RESOURCES.....	43
LAND USE PLAN.....	45
VILLAGE CENTER AREA.....	46
LAKE DISTRICTS AREA.....	46
ROUTE 7 CORRIDOR AREA.....	48
INDUSTRIAL AREA.....	49
CONSERVATION AREA.....	49
RESIDENTIAL AND AGRICULTURAL AREAS.....	50
COMPATABILITY.....	51
SURROUNDING TOWNS.....	51
<i>Goshen</i>	51
<i>Whiting</i>	51
<i>Salisbury</i>	51
<i>Brandon</i>	51
ADDISON REGION.....	52
IMPLEMENTATION.....	53
ONE YEAR PLAN 2012-2013.....	53
FIVE YEAR PLAN 2012-2017.....	53

This 2012 Plan update was funded by a Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Department of Economic, Housing and Community Affairs. It was developed by the Leicester Planning Commission and the Addison County Regional Planning Commission.

During the update process the Leicester Planning Commission sought insight from Leicester residents regarding the many topics in this plan via a community survey in 2009 and public gatherings in 2010 and 2011. This document incorporates diverse perspectives and is intended to aid Leicester residents, the Planning Commission, Town Staff, and Selectboard in their planning decisions.

The Planning Commission wishes to thank everyone who contributed to the development of the 2012 Leicester Town Plan.

The Leicester Planning Commission:

- Donna Swinington – Chair**
- Peter Fjeld**
- Jeff McDonough**
- Jim Russo**
- Kate Briggs (in 2011)**
- Bethany Menkart (in 2011)**

INTRODUCTION

The Leicester Selectboard adopted the first Municipal Town Plan in 1971. Since then, Leicester's Town Plan has been revised at regular intervals. The 2012 update is not only a vision for Leicester's future, but a strategic road map for current and future planning decisions. The Town Plan is a living document, which can be amended and updated as needed. Its purpose is to reflect the environmental, social, and economic issues and opportunities of the town, celebrate the many aspects of Leicester's unique character, and provide guidance for protecting and cultivating the things that residents value most.

Leicester's Town Plan serves a number of planning and legal purposes. It serves as a visionary guide for the town. As such, it should be a reference for town officials to aid their decision making processes. It establishes goals for action and implementation, and suggests specific implementation steps. Vermont's Planning and Development Act, Title 24 VSA Chapter 117, governs municipal planning and zoning activities. 24 VSA § 4387 requires municipalities to review, revise and readopt their plans at least once every five years in order to keep plans current.

Zoning and subdivision bylaws are built on the foundation of the Plan's policy and documentation (24 VSA § 4401(a)(1)). The Town Plan is also the basis for testimony before the District and State Environmental Boards under Criterion 10 in Act 250 hearings (10 VSA § 6086 (10)). State law requires State agency plans to be compatible with properly adopted and reviewed municipal plans (24 VSA § 4350).

HOW TO USE THE PLAN:

The Table of Contents outlines the topic sections into which the Plan is divided. The selection of topics is guided by Vermont's Planning and Development Act (24 VSA Chapter 117) and by issues and concerns raised by Leicester's residents. Each topic has goals and recommended actions to guide associated planning tasks. Recommended actions should promote discussion and potential solutions for specific planning choices and challenges. The implementation section gives the Planning Commission a guideline for future action.

LEICESTER'S PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE

In 1761, Governor Benning Wentworth granted the charters to Leicester and several other towns to John Everts of Salisbury, Connecticut. In Leicester, as in many other communities, the town charter was granted without proper surveying. As a result, disputes quickly arose between Leicester and the neighboring towns of Whiting and Salisbury.

Whiting claimed the area now known as Leicester Junction and land to the west. Salisbury claimed land north from the farm known as "Oliver Hill." The boundary dispute with Whiting was resolved by 1784. The competing claims between Leicester and Salisbury were not finally settled until 1911.

After the end of the Revolutionary War, settlement began mainly on the west side of the town close to Otter Creek. The first plank schoolhouse in Addison County, known as the "Jerusalem" school, was built in this area. The building was moved to property now owned by Blue Ledge Farm and is still in use as a farm building.

Due to the lack of waterpower to operate mills, Leicester never experienced the level of economic development of neighboring towns. John Deere had a forge at the Four Corners until it was destroyed by fire in 1823. He then moved the operation to Hancock.

By 1825, there was a post office, shoe shop and general store at the Four Corners. Leicester Junction had its own post office until the mid-1980s. Leicester is currently served by the Brandon, Whiting, and Salisbury Post Offices.

Daily railroad service began in 1849. The stop in Leicester Junction was known as Whiting Station. In 1871, the Addison Branch of the Rutland Railroad began operation between Leicester and Port Henry, NY, crossing Lake Champlain at Larrabee's Point in Shoreham to Ticonderoga. The last train traveled the Addison branch in May of 1951 and the tracks were removed in the 1960s. Trains still travel the tracks of what was the mainline of the Rutland Railroad.

Leicester Junction had its own hotel, livery stable, general store and school. It was home to the Lime Kiln and Mineral Works that shipped their products throughout the country by rail.



Leicester Junction Station May 21, 1951 Courtesy of http://railweb.ch/then_now



Silver Lake/Chandler Hotel postcard, circa 1900. Built in 1886 and destroyed by fire in 1942
Courtesy of Don Shall Flickr Photo Site

Lake Dunmore, Fern Lake, and Silver Lake have been popular vacation destinations since the Victorian era. *Leicester Vermont's Silver Lake: Beyond the Myths* by William J. Powers, Jr. provides a detailed history of the latter. In 1879, Leicester resident Frank Chandler realized his dream of holding nondenominational revival meetings on his property at Silver Lake. Over time, a hotel, chapel, boathouses, and various outbuildings were constructed to accommodate hundreds of summer visitors who combined a religious retreat with a summer vacation in an idyllic spot. These meetings continued at least until 1908 and the Chandlers operated the hotel there even longer.

In 1916, the Hortonia Power Co. acquired the rights to develop a hydroelectric project which was completed shortly thereafter. Frank Chandler's heirs sold Silver Lake and its surrounding land (a total of 2,275 acres) to the United States Forest Service in 1937. The remaining buildings at the site burned in 1942.

Today, the area offers no vehicular access and is enjoyed by many hikers and campers every year who experience the beautiful natural setting which so affected Frank Chandler one hundred and fifty years ago. While much has changed, Leicester's natural beauty remains. The pastoral landscape west of Route 7, abundant forests of the Green Mountains, picturesque lakes, and historic buildings contribute to its enduring character.

Most year-round Leicester residents commute to other towns to work. Many homeowners, primarily in the lake area, live in Leicester only in the summer months. These factors must be considered as Leicester plans for its future. The sections that follow provide a more detailed look at the town's demographics and outline areas of importance in future planning.

POPULATION & HOUSING

Like most communities in the region, Leicester's population increased from the first Census in 1791, when there were 344 people, through the mid-1800s. It reached a peak of 737 people in 1860. Throughout the second half of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th, Leicester's population declined, reaching a low of 436 in 1920. From the 1930s through the 1960s, the population increased slowly.

In the 1970s, Leicester experienced an unprecedented population growth of 220 people. By 1980, the population was approximately 800 people, which exceeded the historic peak of 1860.

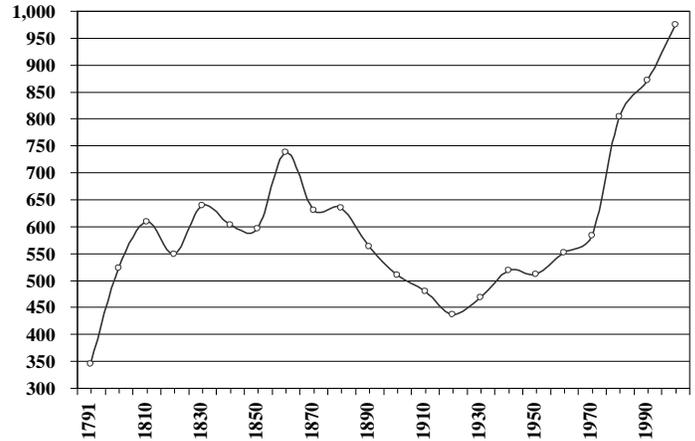
In 2000, Leicester's population was 974 people. According to the US Census Bureau, over the next 10 years the population of Leicester grew to 1,100. Leicester has a significant seasonal summer population on Lake Dunmore and Fern Lake that is not reflected in the Census.

Future growth projections estimate Leicester's population to be in the range of 1,200 people by 2015 and up to 1,400 by 2025. Reaching these population levels may require local government to reevaluate town services like law enforcement.

VITAL STATISTICS

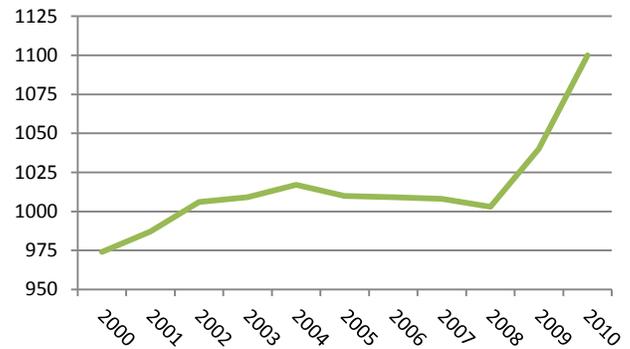
Population change is caused by natural increase (births minus deaths) and migration (people moving in minus those moving out). In the 1970s, Leicester's rapid growth was due mainly to in-migration, while in the 1980s it was due mostly to natural increase. In the 1990s, the two factors were more evenly responsible for population growth. The higher birthrates that began in the 1970s and reached a peak during the 1980s were part of the phenomenon described as the echo baby boom. By the early 1990s, many schools in the region were dealing with record enrollment levels. Birthrates declined in the late 1990's and stayed consistently lower with the exception of a spike in 2006.

Leicester Population 1791-1990



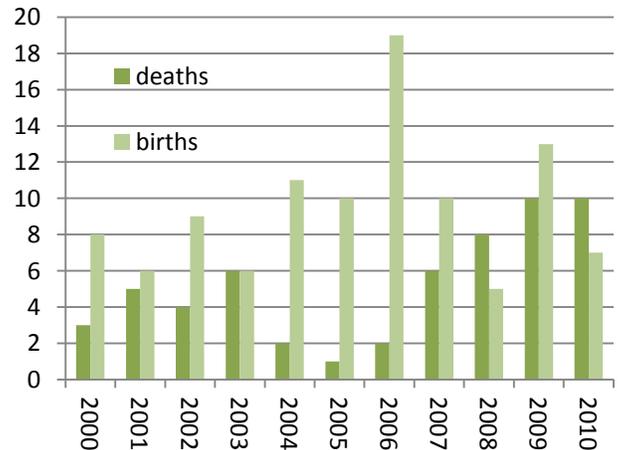
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Leicester Population 2000-2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

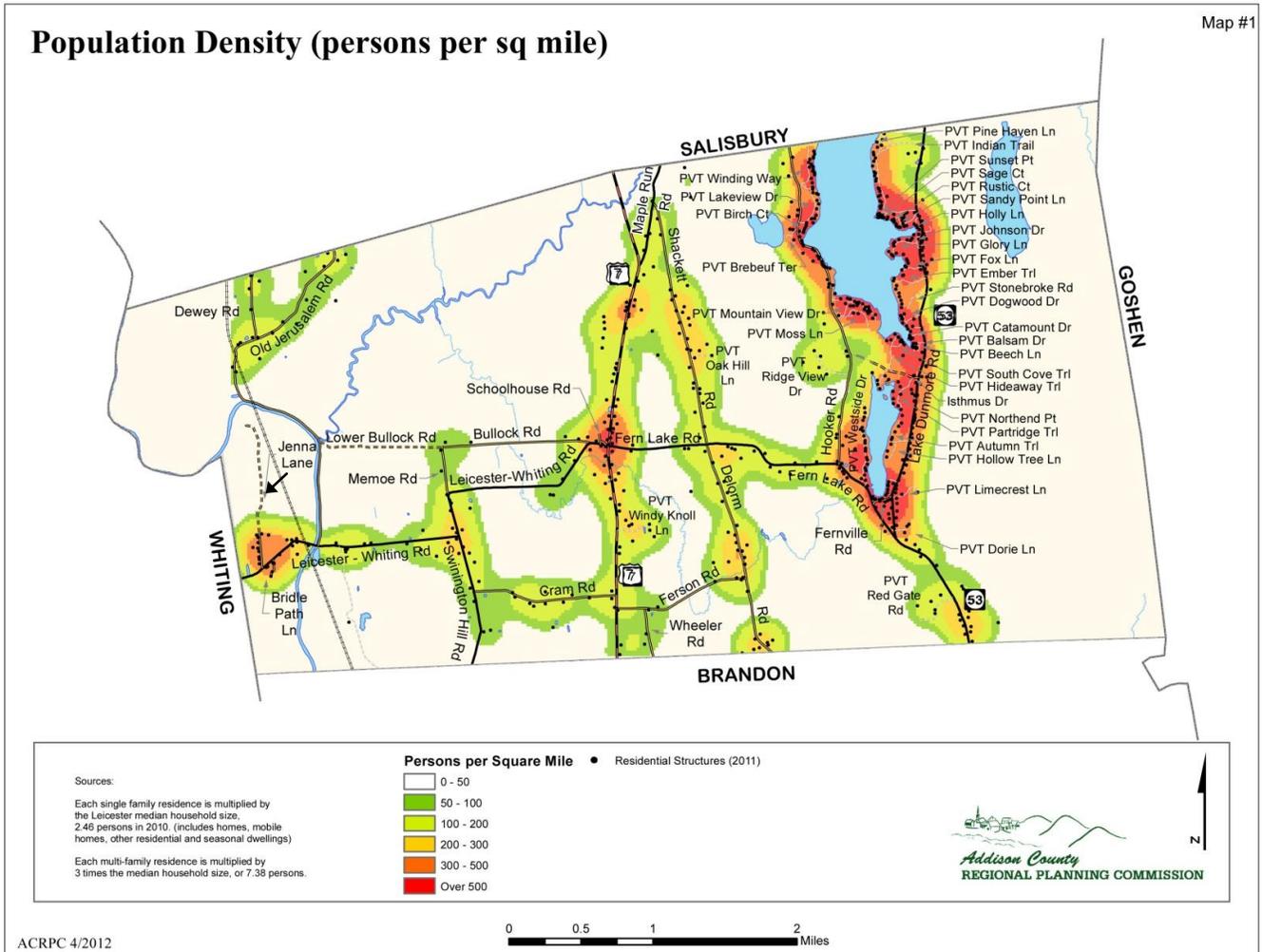
Birth & Death Rates 2000-2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

POPULATION DENSITY

Leicester's town-wide population density was just under 47 people per square mile in 2000, an increase of nearly 19 people per square mile since 1970. In the ring immediately surrounding the Lakes, density ranges from 300 to over 500 people per square mile. Leicester has several areas with higher densities of population; Leicester Junction and the Four Corners have densities ranging from 300 to 500 people per square mile.



AGE DISTRIBUTION

The median age in Leicester in 2010 was 46.7, rising from 38.7 in 2000. In the 1980’s 25.9 was the median age. Leicester’s population, like those of other communities in the region, is growing older as a result of several factors. The largest age group in Leicester is the baby-boom generation, who are now in the 45 to 64 age range. The average life span continues to rise and the number of people over age 65 in Leicester rose to 102 in 2000. Ten years later, there were 190 residents over the age of 65.

Another factor leading to an aging population is a declining birthrate. The number of children under age 4 has declined noticeably from 78 in 1990, to 52 in 2000, then to 45 in 2010.

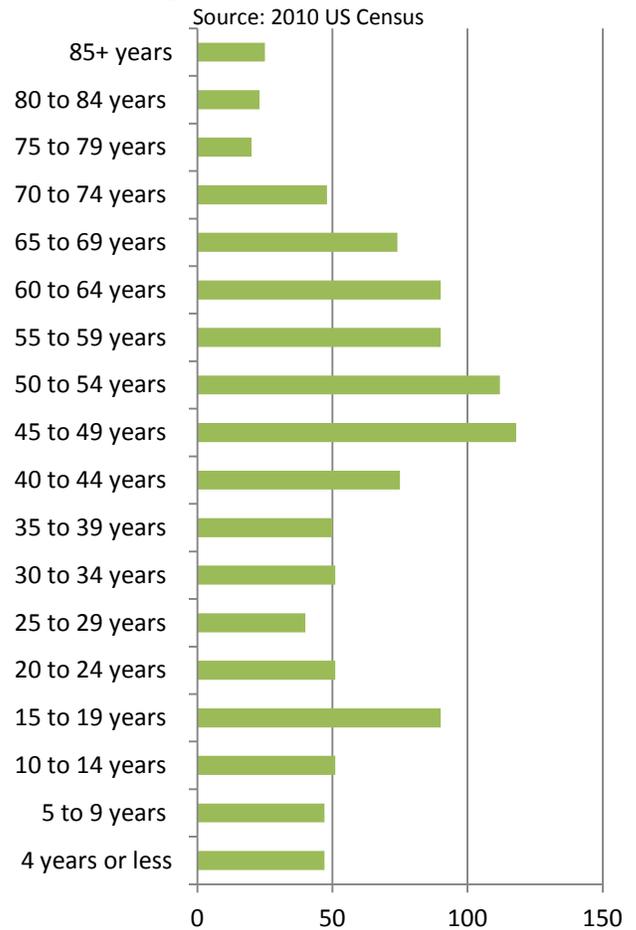
Patterns of age distribution and median age of the population should be monitored as they influence the character of Leicester and the needs of its residents. In the Addison County Region, few small towns currently have services or housing to meet the needs of elderly residents. This raises the question of whether the elderly, many of them life-long residents, will be able to continue to live in their communities or whether they will have to move to places that provide such services.

HOUSEHOLDS

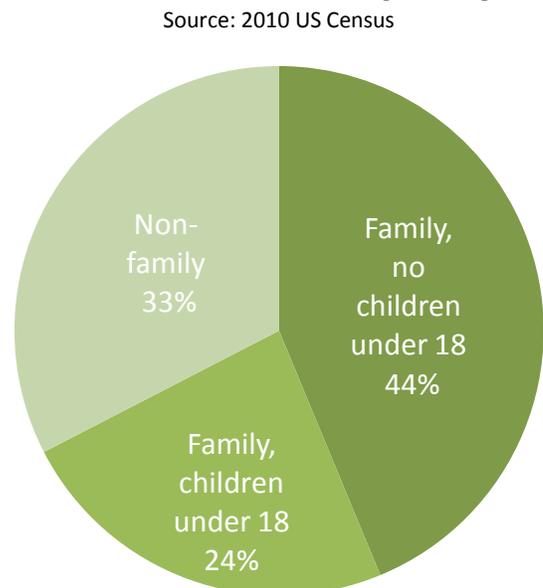
In the past 40 years, Leicester’s average household size has declined by one person and the number of households has more than doubled. In 2010 Leicester had a total of 448 year-round households, an increase from 391 in 2000. Of those 448 households, 377 are owner occupied, and 71 are renter occupied. The average household size in 2010 was 2.51 for owner occupied households and 2.17 for renter occupied households.

Total *family* households account for 302 of the 448 households. Of those 302, 65% are families with no children at home (under age 18) and 35% are families with children under 18. In the 10 years from 2000-2010, the number of households made up of married couples with no children (18 or younger) increased by 29.3% and the number of households with children decreased by 3.3%. This trend is correlated to the aging of the population mentioned in the previous section.

Age Distribution 2010



Household Occupancy



The amount and type of housing that Leicester’s residents will want is highly influenced by the nature of their households. As people grow older, they may want a home that is smaller, easier to maintain and closer to needed services. People living alone or in non-family types of households may want to rent rather than own a home. People with young children may want space for their growing families.

As the characteristics of the population and of households change over time, the policies guiding future growth and development should reflect these changing needs.

YEAR-ROUND VS. SEASONAL

The first Census count of housing in 1940 reported a total of 234 housing units in Leicester, of which a significant proportion was seasonal. Between 1970 and 2000 there was little change in the amount of seasonal housing, ranging from around 210 to 230 units, but a significant increase in year-round homes. According to the 2010 US Census, there are currently 658 total housing units in Leicester. Of those, 448 units are year-round, 191 units are seasonal, and 19 are vacant. From 2000, this represents an increase of 40 total units, an increase of 57 year-round units, a decrease of 22 seasonal units, and an increase of 5 vacant units.

Conversion of homes from seasonal to year-round use should be monitored carefully. As housing is converted, there is increased demand on municipal facilities and services. Conversion also raises concerns about the capacity of private water and septic systems to support increased usage, and affects the quality of life in the Lake Districts region. The discussion of this issue is raised elsewhere in this Plan.

HOUSEHOLD TYPE

The vast majority of year-round housing in Leicester is owner-occupied, single-family homes. 84% of year-round housing is owner-occupied and 81% of all units in Leicester are single-family. 17.4% of housing units is mobile homes and only 1.6% is multiple unit housing, such as duplex rentals.

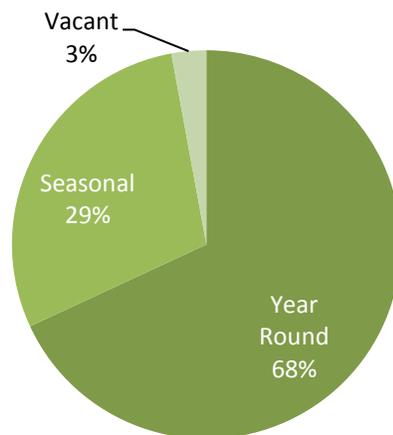
HOUSING COSTS

There are three main sources of information for tracking housing costs: the Census, the Grand List, and property sales records.

The Community Survey, administered by the Census Bureau, asks people about the value of their home and their monthly housing costs. Since these figures are available historically, they can be used to track changes in value over time. These values tend to be higher than the data from other sources.

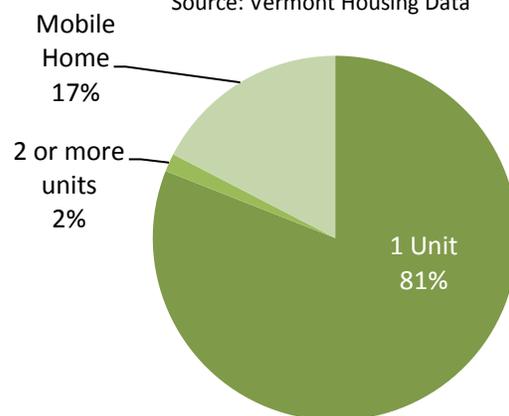
Year-Round vs. Seasonal 2010

Source: 2010 US. Census



Household Type 2005-2009

Source: Vermont Housing Data



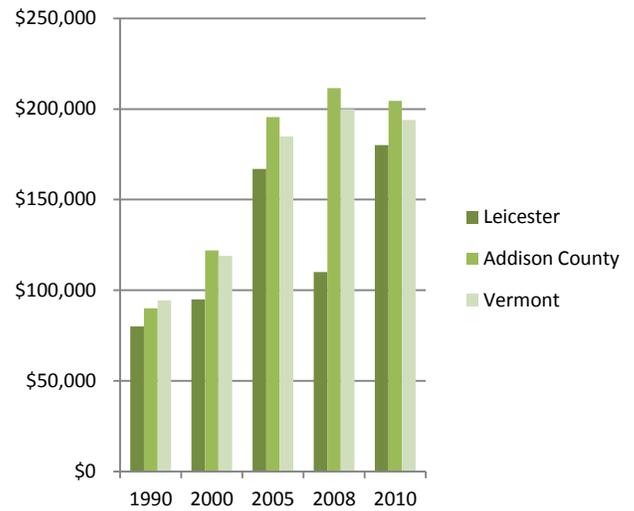
In 1990 the median price of homes sold in Leicester was \$80,000 (equivalent to \$131,000 in 2010). The chart to the right shows Leicester’s house prices are below both the County and State median prices, with a sharp decline during the 2008 economic recession. During this year, home prices in Leicester dipped to a median of \$110,000 and two years later soared to \$180,000. The median household income in Leicester is around \$40,000 a year, for home owners, and \$33,000 for renters. Although more affordable than a number of other Addison County towns, home prices in Leicester are disproportionately high in comparison to median income.

Looking at growth rates in households and in housing, over the past 30 years in Leicester, the number of households has increased at a faster rate than the number of new homes being built. This trend in part reflects conversion of seasonal residences to year-round use.

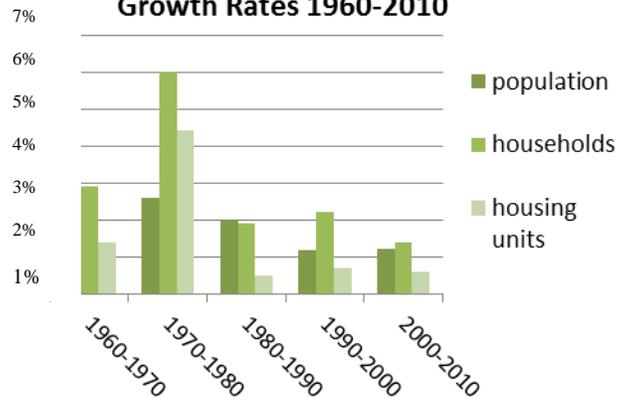
Affordable housing will continue to be an issue for rural towns, such as Leicester, in which the average annual income is below that of the County and State. This should be considered in every aspect of planning in order to support a diversity of housing types available to residents, first time home-owners, those with young families, and retirees.

Median Price of Homes Sold

Source: Vermont Housing Data, U.S.Census, Center for Rural Development



Growth Rates 1960-2010



Source: Vermont Housing Data ,U.S.Census

Housing

Goals

1. Provide a diversity of housing options to meet the needs of a diverse population of Leicester residents, including young families and seniors.
2. Support residential developments that are compatible with Leicester’s community character and fit well with the land use and natural resource goals.

Recommended Actions

1. Permit PUDs as the preferable alternative to the standard, major subdivision to minimize the loss of forested and agricultural land and other natural resources.
2. Encourage any major subdivisions to offer affordable housing.
3. Encourage any permitted lake-side development to adhere to the design guidelines in the 2005 *Leicester Lakes Area Pattern Book*.

ECONOMY

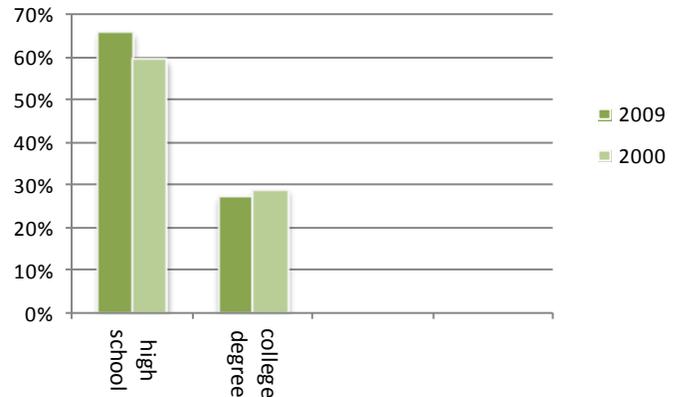
The interrelationships between population, jobs, and housing must be considered when planning for the future. This section of the Leicester Town Plan describes employment patterns in Leicester, and how the creation of jobs in the region could result in population and housing growth in Leicester.

WORKFORCE

In 2000, Leicester’s workforce was just over 500 people. Ten years later, in 2010, the workforce was 580, a rise that can be correlated to the increase in population. The education level of Leicester’s workforce has risen over the past two decades. In 2000, about 25% of people age 25 or older had some type of college degree, an increase from less than 10% in 1980. In 2010 closer to 30% of this age population had a college degree. The percent of the population without a high school diploma has dropped dramatically from more than 40% in 1980, and less than 30% in 2009.

Education Levels of Labor Force 2000-2009

Source: U.S. Census



EMPLOYMENT

In 2000, about 60 people reported to the Census that they both lived and worked in Leicester. Approximately 60 people also stated that they were self-employed. The vast majority of Leicester’s workforce, 85%, works outside of Leicester. Most work in Middlebury, Salisbury, Brandon, or Rutland. (See Labor Shed map for detailed information on where Leicester residents work).

In 2000, manufacturing was the largest single employment sector for Leicester residents employing just under 20% of the workforce. In 2010, the largest employment sector was Health and Social Services at a 17.6%. Manufacturing had decreased to 14%.

In the 2000 Census, 18 people reported that they worked in agriculture or forestry. In 2010, 7 people reported that they worked in agricultural or forestry occupations. Many Leicester residents, however, still see agriculture as a primary characteristic of the town. This discrepancy is discussed in greater detail in the *Economic Development* and *Natural Resource* sections of this Plan.

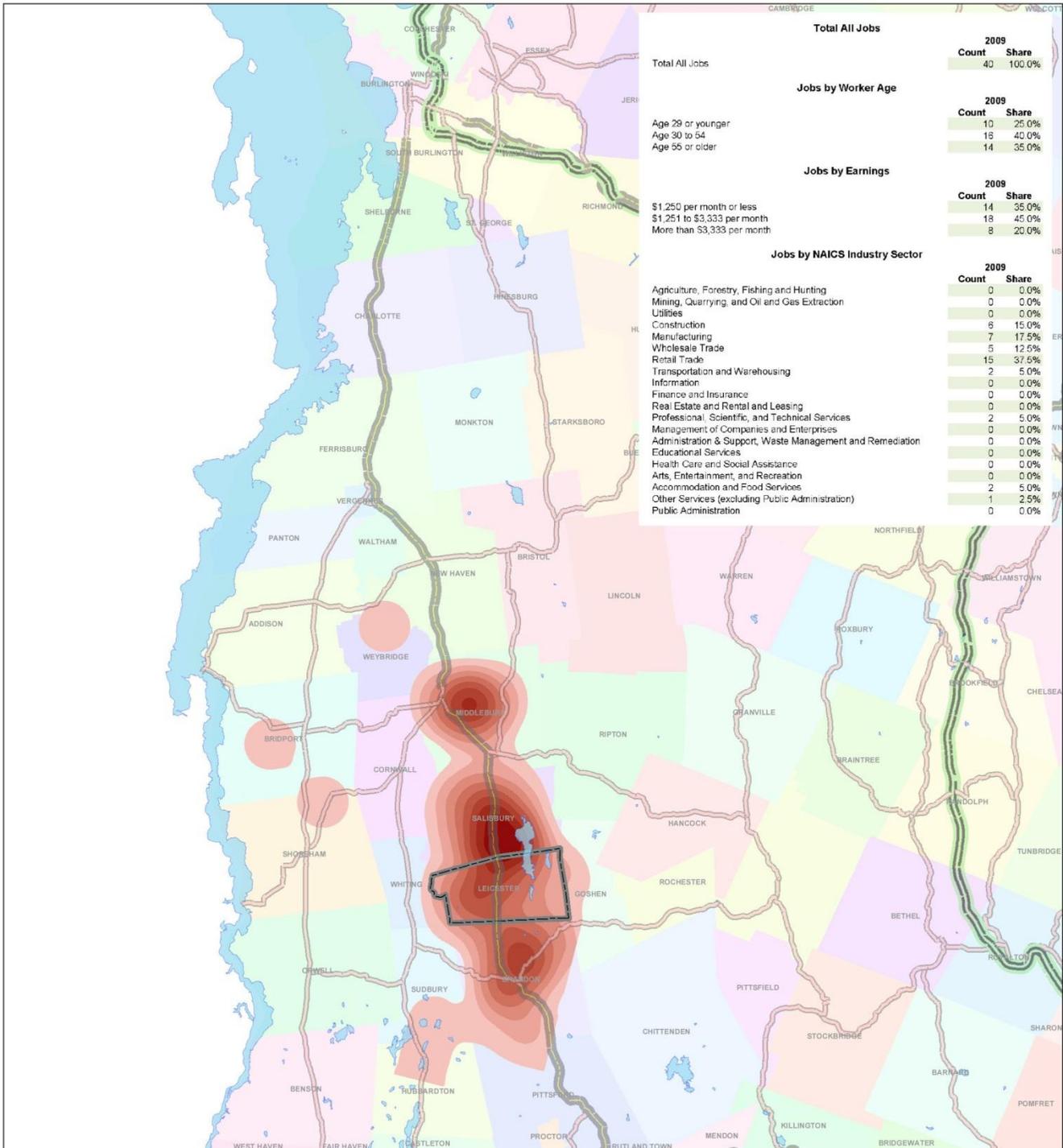
2010 Labor Industries , Leicester %

Ag/Forestry	1.3
Utilities	.8
Construction	8.3
Manufacturing	14.4
Wholesale	2.1
Retail	13.6
Transportation/Warehouse	2.5
Finance and Insurance	2.8
Real Estate	1.1
Information	1.3
Professional/Technical Services	4.7
Admin and Support Services	3
Education	12.5
Social/Health Services	17.6
Hospitality Services	7.6
Recreation, Arts, Entertainment	.8
Public Administration	3.4

Town of Leicester

Labor Shed - where people live who work in Leicester (40 jobs)
(only employment covered by insurance)

Map #2



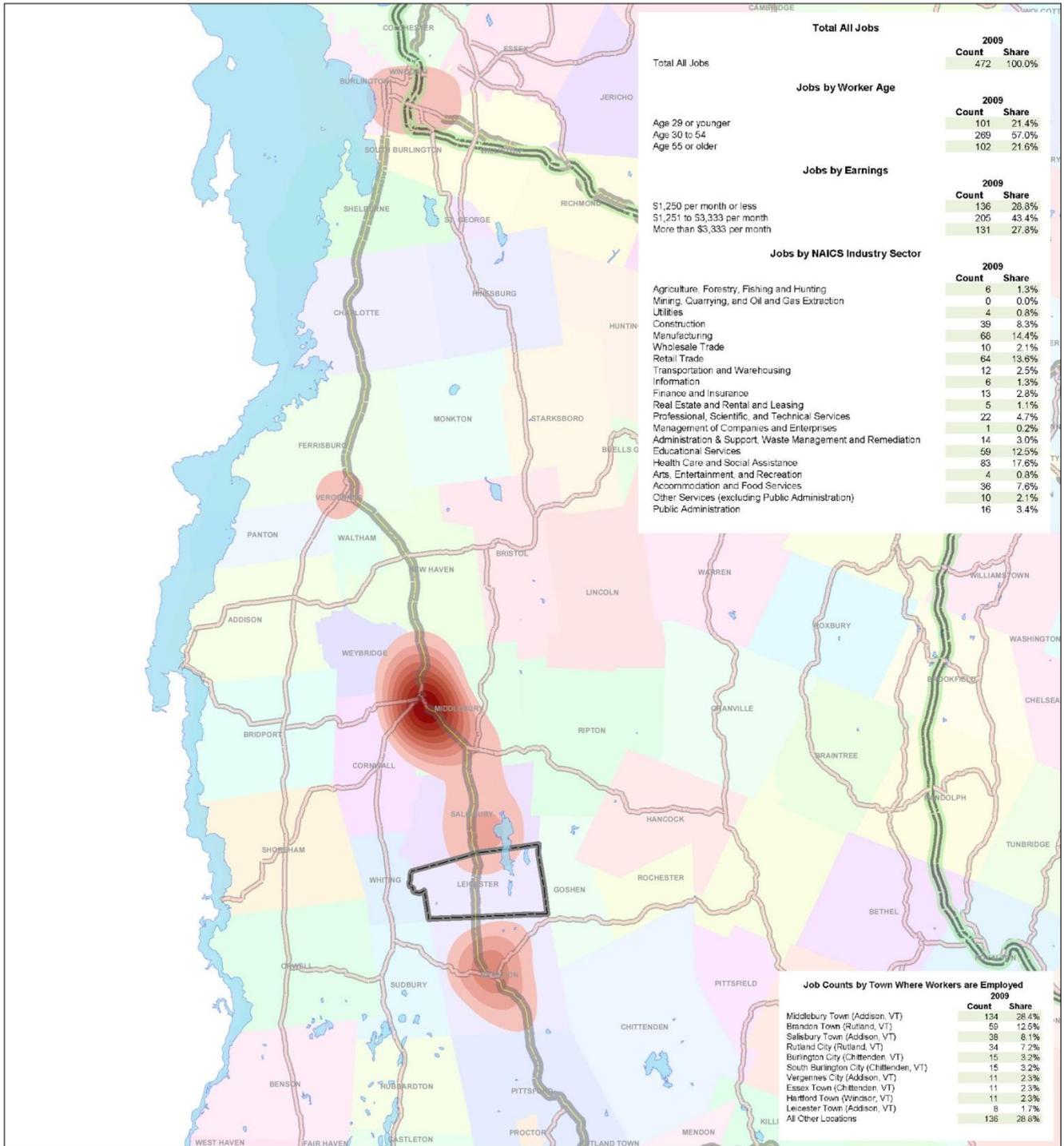
Sources:
US Census Bureau
Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD, 2009)



Town of Leicester

Commute Shed - where people work who live in Leicester (472 jobs)
(only employment covered by insurance)

Map #3



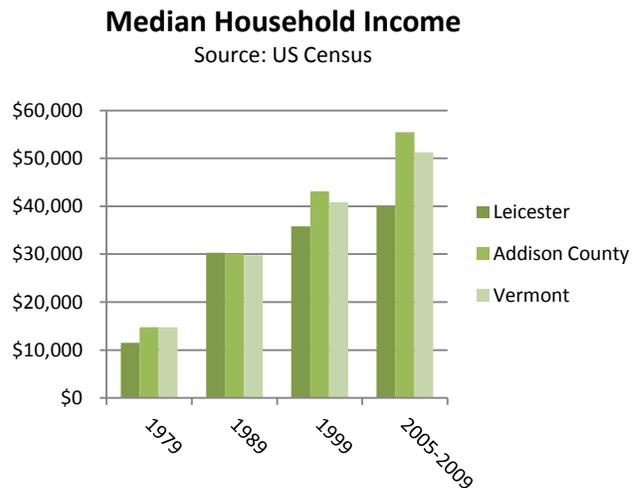
Sources:
US Census Bureau
Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD, 2009)



ACRPC 4/2012

INCOME

Median household income in Leicester rose from around \$12,000 in 1980 to just over \$35,000 in 2000, and \$40,000 in 2010. When adjusted for inflation, this is about a \$9,000 increase from 1980 to 1990, a \$5,000 *decrease* from 1990 to 2000, and another \$4,000 *decrease* in median household income from 2000 to 2010. This pattern shows that Leicester residents have faced an increasing challenge in matching income to the cost of living over the past 20 years. Beginning in the late 1990s, Leicester's median household income fell below that of both Addison County and the State of Vermont. In 2010, 9% of the population of Leicester lived below the poverty line, defined at the Federal level as making less than \$22,050 a year for a family of four, or approximately \$11,000 a year for a single person.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Town of Leicester has never had a particularly strong economic base like that provided by the mills that developed in Salisbury, or the manufacturing that occurred in Brandon. For many years, Leicester had been predominately an agriculturally based community.

Based on current statistical information, Leicester now depends greatly on outside sources of income, operating largely as a bedroom community to other towns and cities in the state. The town is still characterized by its agricultural landscape and steps should be taken to protect this resource.

Tourism and recreation are also key components to Leicester's local economy and character. Lake Dunmore, Fern Lake, and the Green Mountain National Forest bring many visitors and seasonal residents to Leicester, especially in the summer months. There is potential to develop more tourism or recreation based businesses around these resources (see the Recreation section of this Town Plan). While Leicester has historically been more of a summer destination, there is potential to establish winter activities such as snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing.

Existing local businesses and home occupations should also be supported by flexible zoning policies and needed technology/telecommunication infrastructure.

Economy

Goals

1. Nurture a strong and diverse economy in the region that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities for residents and maintains high environmental and social standards.
2. Maximize Leicester's potential for local economic development, aligned with our Land Use, Historic, and Natural Resource goals and strategies.
3. Promote year-round tourism.

Recommended Actions

1. Create a comprehensive inventory of Leicester businesses, including home businesses.
2. Update Leicester's zoning to allow easier development of home occupations, home based businesses, and other local businesses.
3. Encourage use of locally grown and/or produced agricultural and forestry products.
4. Participate in Act 250 reviews of major business proposals that could positively or negatively impact Leicester.
5. Support efforts to provide statewide internet access.
6. Encourage potential business partners for Leicester's Industrial District.



250th Celebration Float created for the Town of Leicester by the Foxcroft Farm Harvest Program and the Leicester Central School Summer Program. Courtesy of Julie Delphia

UTILITIES & SERVICES

TELEPHONE AND INTERNET

Like many rural Vermont towns, Leicester has an increasing need to have up-to-date communication technology. While some residents may be content to remain without high speed internet and cable television, the majority of the population depends on these technologies for daily communication and information gathering.

Increasingly these services are vital to the economic vitality of local businesses, including those based out of the home. Currently, the majority of Leicester's land-line services are provided by FairPoint. Cable services for high speed internet, cable television, and digital phone options are primarily provided by Comcast. Access to the latter depends on how remote the location and how much a resident is willing to spend. There are a number of Federal and State initiatives underway to provide internet access and assist Vermonters with securing services. Future assistance programs could be possible through the Vermont Public Service Board. Visit their website for more information: <http://psb.vermont.gov/>.

The quality of cell phone reception varies throughout the town. Currently there are two cell phone towers. One of the towers is a tree-like tower located off of Shackett Road and the other is an antenna placed on top of the Cole Barn on Route 7.

Proper siting and educational outreach should take priority when new infrastructure is needed or proposed. These proactive measures will ensure that structures will not be a visual blight or pose health risks.

SOLID WASTE

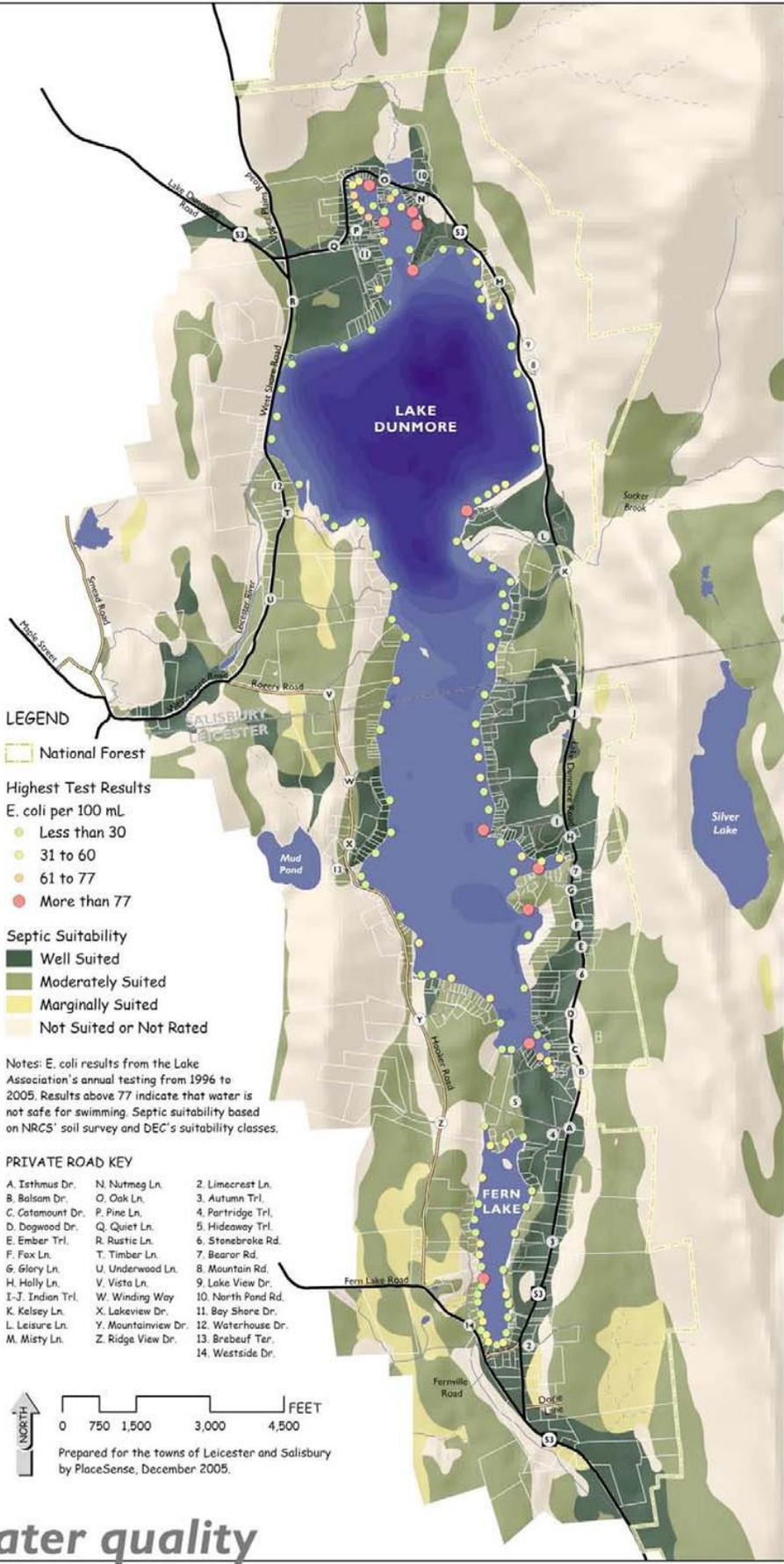
Leicester is a member of the Addison County Solid Waste Management District (ACSWMD) and disposes of its mixed trash through the transfer station in Middlebury. Several times a year ACSWMD collects special recyclables and household hazardous waste and takes them to the Middlebury Transfer Station. Pick-up can also be arranged through private haulers. Recyclable materials are collected at the Leicester Recycling Center at the Town Garage on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month from 10am-1pm. The Recycling Center is run by a private contractor, paid for by the town. During recycling hours, a contractor is also available for trash drop-off at a per bag rate. This is a private service, not subsidized by the town.

WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

All Leicester households rely on private well water and septic systems. There is no plan to make either of these available from a public system and there is no significant industry requiring a public system. Community septic systems could be considered for any PUD developments in order to create more affordable and efficient waste water systems for our rural communities. Aquifer maps for Leicester and Addison County can be found through the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

The high-density residential areas of the Lake Districts present the greatest concern regarding the septic capacity of soils. In 2005, a planning study, *The 2005 Salisbury-Leicester Collaborative Planning Study*, was done for Leicester and the neighboring Town of Salisbury. One section of the study compared development growth and septic suitability of the surrounding soils. Care must be given to aging septic systems in this area due to the potential negative impacts leaching can have on a lake-shore environment.

SALISBURY - LEICESTER COLLABORATIVE PLANNING STUDY

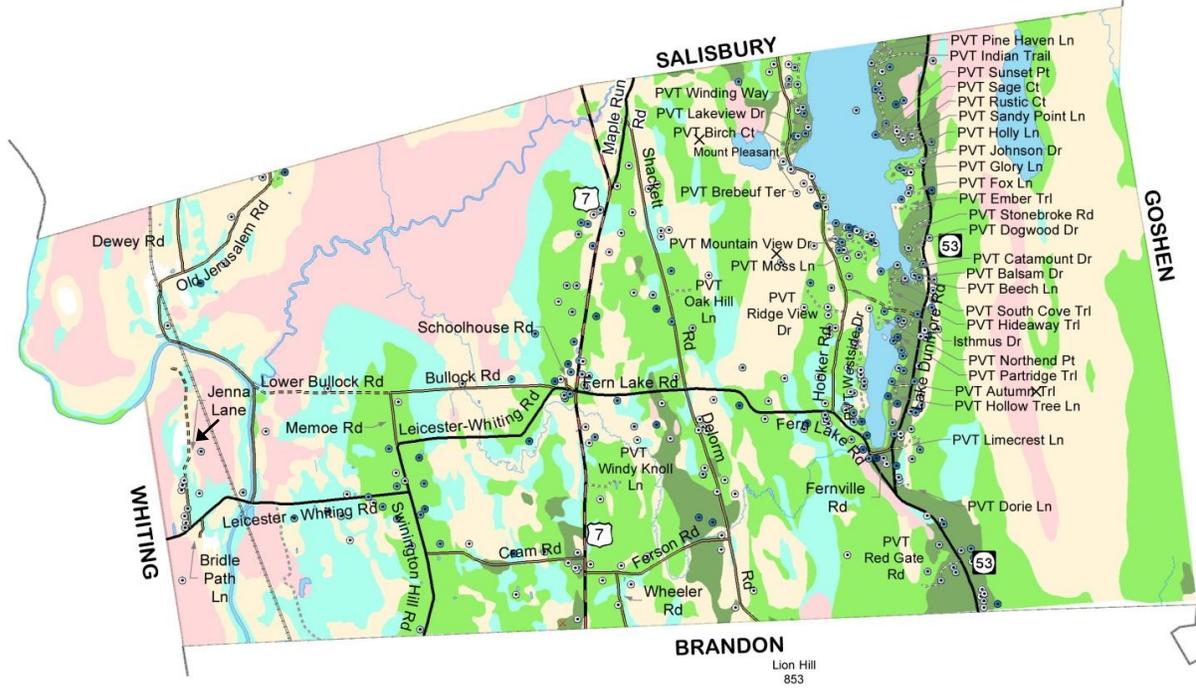


water quality

This map from the 2005 Salisbury – Leicester Collaborative Planning Study shows septic suitability of soils and e-coli levels surrounding Lake Dunmore.

Soil Septic Suitability with Private Water Well Yield

Map #4



Sources: Septic Suitability: Soil Suitability Ratings for On-Site Septic; NRCS, USDA, 2008. Private Water Wells: VT ANR, 2011	Soil Septic Suitability	Private Water Well Yield
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WELL SUITED MODERATELY SUITED MARGINALLY SUITED NOT SUITED NOT RATED 	YieldGPM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.00 - 6.00 6.01 - 17.00 17.01 - 40.00 40.01 - 100.00 100.01 - 200.00

ACRPC 4/2012



Utilities and Services

Goals

1. To protect and preserve our natural, cultural and scenic resources, by encouraging responsible installation and maintenance of wells and waste water systems.

Recommended Actions

1. Provide necessary information to landowners and developers regarding septic regulations.
2. Provide town service information on the Leicester Town website.
3. Ensure that existing structures, such as farm silos, be used for cell reception devices whenever possible.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The Town of Leicester, while not home to any first response agencies, provides necessary services and basic protections for the health and safety of its residents.

The Vermont State Police provide primary law enforcement coverage to the town from their offices 15 miles north in New Haven. In addition, the Addison County Sheriffs' office is available on a contract basis for traffic enforcement services when requested by the Selectboard. Community based law enforcement is limited to two Town Constables who provide services limited to their state recognized training levels.

Coverage for fire related incidents are provided under contract with the Town of Brandon Fire Department who are able to access additional resources through mutual aid agreements with surrounding departments. Calls for structure fires occur on the average of one per year but narrow and poorly constructed driveways and private roads have always hindered response to incidents at camps along the lakeshores. As fire equipment continues to increase in size, access to many camps is becoming problematic.

Emergency medical service is provided by the independent Brandon Area Rescue Squad with support from the Middlebury Area Ambulance Association. Patients are generally transported to Porter Medical Center in Middlebury, 10 miles north or to the Rutland Regional Medical Center 22 miles south. More critical patients are transported to Fletcher Allen Medical Center in Burlington, VT or to Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Hanover, NH. The Town of Brandon is the source of the closest doctors' offices. Additionally, Leicester is served by an appointed Town Health Officer whose responsibilities include water testing, septic system inspection, and management of infectious disease outbreaks in the town.

Leicester has an Emergency Management Coordinator who regularly attends training sessions and is active in county emergency planning efforts. Leicester has adopted a Basic Emergency Operations Plan and is exploring adoption of a recently prepared All-Hazards Mitigation Plan. This Plan will ensure eligibility for federal funds for mitigation projects. There are two potential significant risks in Leicester: flooding and a hazardous material spill. There are portions of Old Jerusalem Road along Otter Creek which have been identified as being at risk during particularly severe flood events. Concerns of a hazardous material spill are generally limited to the Route 7 corridor and to the propane storage facility located in Leicester Junction.

The town participates in the National Flood Insurance Program. This program allows residents to purchase flood insurance at subsidized rates in return for zoning limitations on development in mapped floodplains. These floodplain regulations primarily affect Otter Creek and Leicester River floodplains on the western side of the town. Since these areas flood one or two times every year, and no septic systems could be installed, demand for development there is minimal. Efforts to conserve these floodplains further ensure that Leicester residents will be protected into the future. Unfortunately the area around Leicester Junction was developed long before any flood protection systems were put in place. While these residences and businesses exist on slightly higher ground than surrounding lands, they are still at risk during the greatest flood events. Recent improvements to the Leicester-Whiting Road have elevated it above all but the worst flood events but, as a consequence, increased traffic has occurred during periods when State Route 73 in Brandon/Sudbury is closed due to flood conditions.

While natural disasters and other emergencies cannot be totally prevented, damages associated with them can be reduced through the process of municipal planning. The Town of Leicester has taken the initial steps toward limiting potential damage and is committed to continuing this process to protect the health and safety of its residents.

Emergency Management

Goals

1. Ensure the health, safety and welfare of Leicester's residents and visitors.

Recommended Actions

1. Provide educational information to residents regarding emergency contact information and procedures in the event of an emergency.
2. Maintain an active Emergency Management Coordinator position to ensure Leicester stays current with Regional and State resources and procedures.
3. Continue communication with the community regarding the maintenance of public and private roads for access in emergencies.



Fern Lake 2011 – Photo courtesy of Julie Delphia

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

LEICESTER FOUR CORNERS

Leicester's town owned buildings are clustered at the junction of Route 7 and the Whiting-Leicester Road (this area is also known as 'Leicester Four Corners'), and include the Leicester Central School, the Town Clerk's Office, the Town Hall, the Town Shed, and the Meeting House. These buildings, along with the adjacent 'Town Green', create the civic center of the town.

The Town Clerk's Office was built in 1968 and was expanded in 2001 with the addition of a new meeting room. This expansion doubled the size of the office. The Town Hall was built in 1858 to be used both as a school and town meeting place. It is now used for community meetings and Bingo night, and houses the Leicester Historical Society. It is also rented out to Leicester residents for private use.

The brick Meeting House was built by a group of townspeople in 1829. Since that time it has been through a number of restorations. In the past it has been rented to church groups and used for other community activities. It is currently used for Town Meetings and community gatherings. The Meeting House is restricted by a deed covenant and must continue to be used for religious, educational or municipal purposes.

These buildings offer ample space for community events such as concerts, community suppers, classes and meetings.

BROOKSIDE CEMETERY

The Brookside Cemetery is located along the Leicester-Whiting Road. There is a Cemetery Committee made up of volunteers. Funding for maintenance is provided by the town or by grants. The committee, along with willing residents, has facilitated installation of a new fence, cleaned up invasive weeds/shrubbery, planted flowers, and continues to clean headstones. There is ample capacity for future use of the cemetery for burial services.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church, located on Leicester Whiting Road, was constructed in 1883 to serve local families. The Leicester Church of the Nazarene met at the Meeting House for several years before constructing their current building on Route 7. The Nazarene building is currently also housing LifeBridge Christian Church.

Both facilities offer a number of public worship services.

Community Facilities

Goals

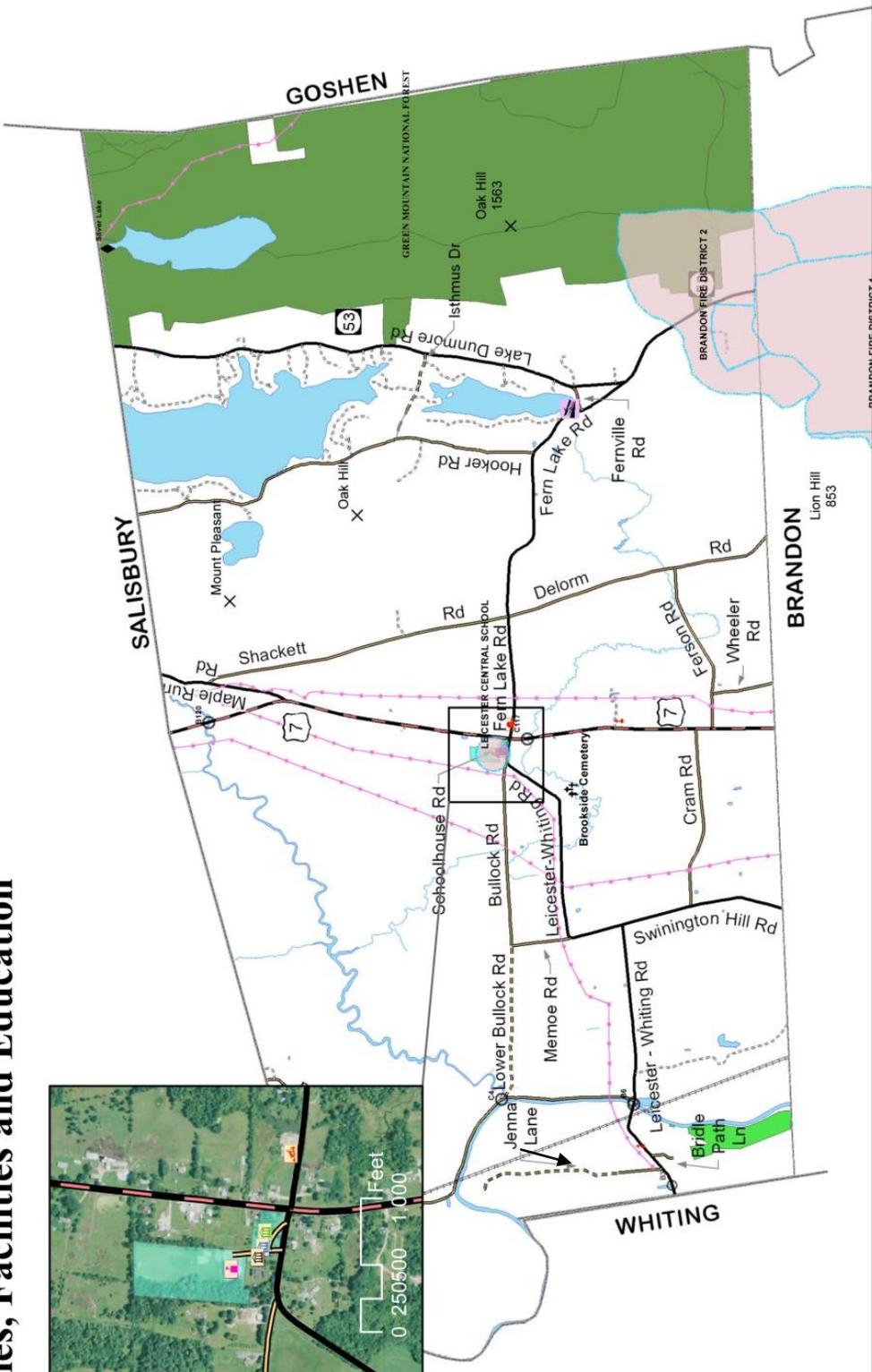
1. Promote Leicester's town owned facilities and town green as the hub of community life.
2. Maintain the town owned public places for future generations.

Recommended Actions

1. Implement a maintenance plan for all town owned community facilities.
2. Routinely check roof and foundations of all town owned buildings.

Utilities, Facilities and Education

Map #5



Public Lands

- Green Mountain National Forest
- State Of Vermont
- Municipal

Community Facilities

- Leicester Central School
- Town Office
- Meeting House
- Town Hall
- Town Shed

Public Landmarks

- Fern Lake Access
- ParkRide
- Local Bridges
- State Bridges
- Railroad
- Electric Transmission Lines

Water Source Protection Area (groundwater)

Silver Lake Hydropower Dam

Water Source Protection Area (groundwater)

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

ACRPC 4/2012

RECREATION

Recreational opportunities abound in Leicester's landscape of rolling meadows, forests, rivers, and lakes. Hunting, fishing, kayaking, canoeing, swimming, cycling, and hiking are just some activities enjoyed by residents and visitors. Public access to the lakes includes a boat launch to Lake Dunmore on Indian Trail, and a swimming area and boat access on Fern Lake. The Green Mountain National Forest provides Leicester with numerous walking and hiking trails. Popular trails include those to Silver Lake, the Minnie Baker trail, and the VELCO line trails. VAST snowmobiling trails also run through areas of Leicester. The Leicester Central School offers a playground, basketball court, soccer field, and baseball field to the community.

Cycling has become very popular on the roads in Leicester. Because there are no designated cycling areas or painted shoulder striping, this is a planning issue that needs additional attention to ensure the safety of all road users. See 'Cycling and Pedestrian' section in the Transportation section of the Plan for further information on this topic.

Mountain biking is another popular sport in Leicester, and adjacent areas. In the spring of 2011, the United States Forest Service, in partnership with the Vermont Mountain Bike Association and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, allocated \$154,000 towards the creation of a 9 mile mountain bike loop trail which will begin and end at the Silver Lake campground in Goshen. This trail will be accessible from the Branbury State Park in Salisbury, and also the Blueberry Hill Ski Center in Goshen.

There are many outdoor recreation opportunities available, but there is minimal public access to the Lakes and to Otter Creek. It would be beneficial for Leicester to partner with groups such as the Youth Conservation Corp, the Middlebury Land Trust and ACRPC to identify other potential public trails and canoe launches to make the most of the natural environment.

Recreation

Goals

1. Provide Leicester residents with a diversity of recreational opportunities.
2. Establish and maintain public access, including views, to Leicester's Lakes and shorelines, and the surrounding natural landscape.

Recommended Actions

1. Create a community survey focused specifically on recreational needs and desires.
2. Keep abreast of on-going grant and partnership opportunities to increase public access to foot trails and waterways, such as those offered by the Youth Conservation Corp.

EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE

SCHOOLS

Leicester Central School

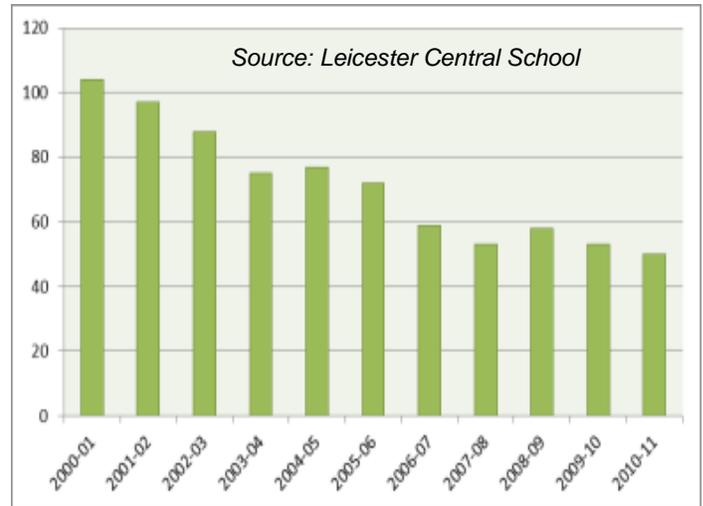
Leicester's preK-6 students attend the Leicester Central School. Grade 7-12 students go to Otter Valley Union High School (OVUHS). Every year, several Leicester students are home-schooled. The Leicester Central School is located in the town center and is a six-classroom structure built in 1956. The Leicester Central School is part of the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union. The school offers essential afterschool and summer camps to Leicester students.

In 2010 the school received two grants to upgrade the building. One was a Climate Change grant to improve lighting, and the other was a \$50,000 grant from the US Dept. of Energy Efficiency and Conservation (EECBG from VT Clean Energy Development Fund). The latter was used to replace an aging boiler with 2 Energy Star oil fired burners. The roof has also had recent repairs.

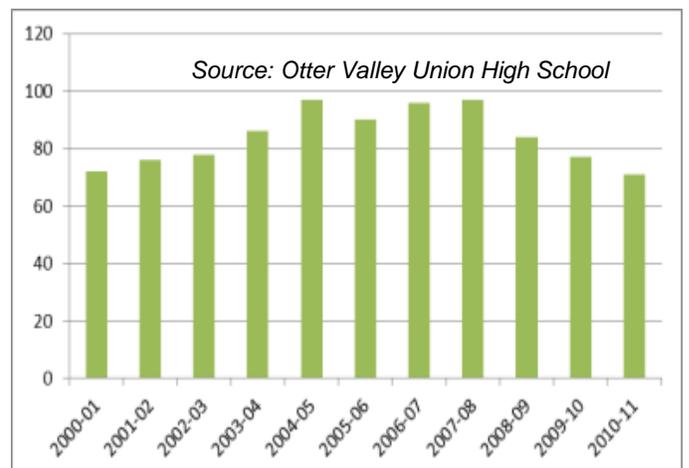
At the March 2011 Town Meeting, \$10,000 was approved for placement in the Physical Improvement Fund. This fund is expressly for the maintenance and repairs of the Leicester Central School.

In 2000 there were over 100 students in K-6th grade. In 2011, there were 50 students enrolled. While Leicester Central School offers residents a convenient option, the question of whether or not Leicester can afford to keep the school open is an on-going debate.

Leicester Central School Enrollment



Otter Valley Union High School Enrollment



Otter Valley Union High School

Junior High and High school students attend Otter Valley Union High school on Route 7 in Brandon. High-school numbers have also been declining in Leicester since 2008. See above graph for enrollment over the past 10 years. Students in Brandon, Sudbury, Pittsford, Goshen, and Whiting also attend Otter Valley.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION OPTIONS

Foxcroft Farm Harvest Program

Foxcroft Farm Harvest Program offers educational enrichment opportunities for students in the Rutland North East Supervisory Union (RNESU). It is located on Foxcroft Farm in Leicester and is supported and operated by a non-profit corporation. Harvest provides educational services that facilitate experiential and service learning activities for Otter Valley students during part of their school day. After school services are available to 4th-8th grade students for educational enrichment and service activities, as well as work readiness training opportunities for 9-12th grade students. Harvest also provides summer services that support educational projects for grade school students and work readiness training for 14 & 15 year old students. All of the activities support service learning, and everything that is raised or produced at the farm is either donated into the community or used to support the program. Through the Harvest Program, hands-on learners are able to discover their strengths, work through their challenges, and feel capable and needed. Students are provided with the opportunity and support to be productive, responsible, caring and contributing members of their community.

There are many continuing and alternative educational programs in Brandon and Middlebury. Both towns have public libraries with a full listing of events and workshops each month. The Hannaford Career Center and the Community College of Vermont are also in Middlebury, and offer classes to the non-traditional student. Community classes and workshops could also be offered at one of Leicester's community buildings.

CHILDCARE AND PRESCHOOL FACILITIES

In order to attract and retain young families in Leicester the community must offer childcare and pre-school options. Young families look for childcare and preschool options both in Leicester and in surrounding communities. The in-town options for Leicester residents include home based, licensed day care. New Leaf Montessori preschool is on Maple Run Road and offers full or half day options for ages 2^{1/2} - 5. The Addison County Childcare Services in Middlebury has a full listing of Childcare services for the region. This organization offers free assistance in finding the right daycare.

A Referral Specialist is available by calling: (802) 388-4304 or e-mail referral@mjcvt.org.

Education

Goals

1. Provide high quality educational opportunities and regional resources to all ages and abilities in Leicester.

Recommended Actions

1. Discuss with Town officials and residents the possibility of offering educational classes/events in Town community buildings.
2. Continue discussions within Leicester and with surrounding towns on the future and affordability of keeping Leicester Central School open.

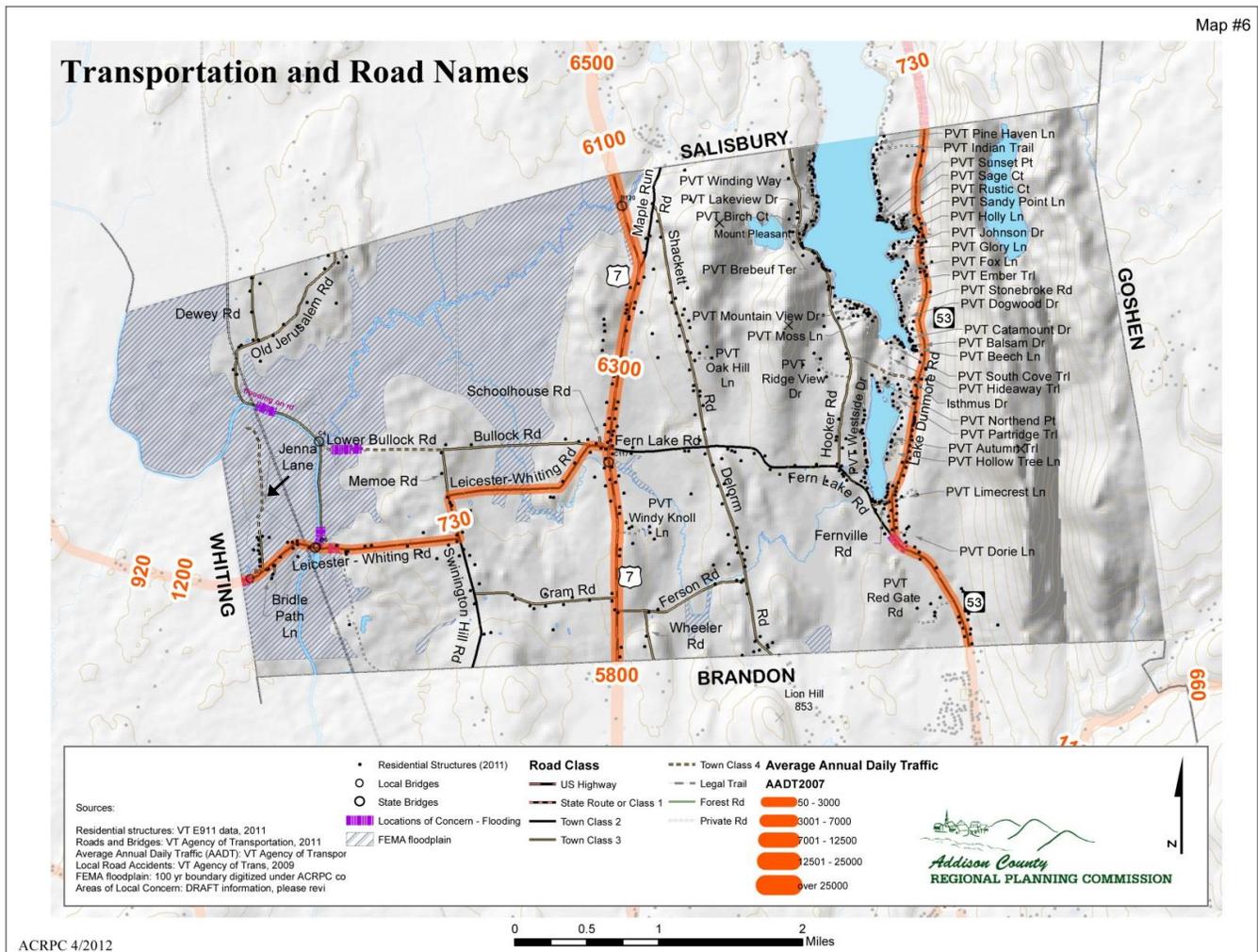
TRANSPORTATION

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRAFFIC PATTERNS

Leicester's public and private roads are shown on the Transportation Map below. There are 3.4 miles of state highway, Route 7, and just over 11 miles of Class 2 roads. There are about 13.5 miles of Class 3 roads and little more than a mile of Class 4 roads. There are a large number of private roads, especially around the Lakes. The town does not wish to assume ownership of any existing or proposed private roads at this time. Route 7, which runs through Leicester, is an important north-south corridor through the State. Route 7 traffic volumes increased by approximately 20% during the 1990's, and have continued this dramatic increase since then. More than 6000 vehicles travel on this road daily. Given the heavy traffic and high speeds, any development proposal requiring access onto Route 7 should be carefully reviewed.

The Leicester-Whiting Road is used as a detour when flooding of Otter Creek closes Route 73 between Brandon and Sudbury. Flooding happens fairly regularly in spring and greatly increases detoured traffic onto this town road.

Flooding also regularly occurs on Old Jerusalem Road, and there is active discussion regarding the feasibility of moving this road further away from the banks of Otter Creek.



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Addison County Transit Resources (ACTR), in partnership with the Marble Valley Transit District, serves Leicester with the north and south bound 'Rutland Connector' bus at least four times daily. This service began in 2006, and ridership has proven strong enough to secure continued funding for this Route. Buses on this route travel from Rutland to Middlebury and back. Between 2008 and 2011, Leicester's annual ridership averaged 360 pickups. This service offers Leicester residents travel to Rutland, Pittsford, Brandon, Salisbury, East Middlebury and Middlebury. ACTR has a number of free ridership programs for the elderly, disabled, visually-impaired and for qualifying young families with children. On average, 855 Dial-a-Ride (DAR) services are offered throughout the year. DAR offers individualized pick-up and drop-off services for qualifying riders. For more information, visit ACTR's website: <http://www.actr-vt.org/>. Leicester's bus stop and Park-and-Ride are located next to the town offices.

Access to public transportation allows residents to save on family transportation costs, cut down on energy and oil consumption, and provides access to services and amenities to the otherwise homebound. Leicester encourages the use of carpooling and the use of public transportation whenever possible. The addition of weekend services could be beneficial to families travelling to and from home and school, and connect to other weekend public transportation services in Vermont.

TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES

In the 2005 *Salisbury-Leicester Collaborative Planning Study*, three transportation issues were identified specifically in the Lake Districts. These included the following:

1. The existence of 40 plus private roads which were not built to the currently acceptable road standards, nor originally intended for year-round use.
2. A large number of curb cuts intersecting town highways.
3. The lack of space allocated on rights-of-way for pedestrians and cyclists. These issues are compounded in the Lakes District, and can be found throughout Leicester. A more detailed discussion of these issues is shown below.

Private Roads

As mentioned in the Emergency Management section of this Plan, emergency vehicle access to private roads, driveways and homes is an important issue to include in present and future planning initiatives. Discussion of this issue is particularly critical in the Lake Districts, where properties are close together, roads are narrow, and accessing them with wide emergency vehicles is sometimes questionable. While it is important to conserve the aesthetics of vegetated, country roads and driveways, the maintenance of minimum widths and turn-arounds are life-saving measures.

Driveway Cuts Intersecting Town Highways

Fast moving traffic and increased curb cuts intensify the potential for dangerous intersections, congestion, and driver confusion. *Access management* is a group of strategies, tools and techniques that work to optimize the safety and efficiency of roads. One of the most basic access management strategies is to limit the addition of new access points along roads and encourage use of shared driveways. Other simple access management techniques include the following:

1. Locating driveways away from intersections
2. Locating driveways on side roads, where appropriate
3. Establishing a minimum spacing distance between driveways
4. Consolidating driveways and connecting parking lots, where applicable

Pedestrians and Cyclists

Leicester is one of many rural Vermont villages offering its residents and visitors astounding views of landscape, mountain trails, various water sports, and lakeside relaxation. Many of these amenities are within walking and cycling distance from residences and summer camps. Although a number of residents and visitors do walk and bike on roads such as Hooker Road and Lake Dunmore Road/Route 53, speeding traffic, extensive driveway cuts, and blind corners raise numerous safety issues. Two different community surveys have been completed in the past five years that have considered the safety of road-sharing as it currently exists in Leicester.

There is overall agreement by survey-takers that there has been an increase in walkers and cyclists on the Lake Districts roads; however, there are mixed views on how to overcome the challenges associated with road-sharing. The most recent survey showed that the majority of participants agreed that wider cycling shoulders on Route 7 and other town roads, and a biking/walking trail around Lake Dunmore and Fern Lake would be appropriate. This was reflected in the survey conducted at a 2011 open house regarding Leicester's Town Plan update.

Survey participants also brought attention to the *Vermont Sun Triathlons* which happen during the summer. Special attention needs to be given to such events in order to address safety issues and alleviate tensions between drivers, athletes, and spectators.

Recreational trail studies and trail construction projects are eligible for grant funding through the Recreation Trails Program of the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, Lake Champlain Basin Program and ACRPC Transportation Advisory Council (TAC) grants. Exploring partnerships with organizations such as the Green Mountain National Forest Service, Keewaydin Foundation, Middlebury Area Land Trust, Moosalamoo Association, and the Youth Conservation Corp. would also increase future opportunities for cyclists and pedestrians.

Wildlife and Lake Roads

The Lakes and the surrounding woodlands provide essential spawning habitat to reptiles and amphibians, as well as habitat for mammals such as bear, deer, coyote, fox and bobcat. The Salisbury Swamp lies north and west of Leicester, and is one of the most important salamander breeding grounds in the State.

For more recommendations pertinent to the transportation section of this Plan, please see the *2005 Salisbury-Leicester Collaborative Planning Study* available on the town website or at the Town Office.

Transportation

Goals

1. Provide our residents and visitors with safe, well maintained roads that support vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic.
2. Continue to support alternative transportation options for residents of all ages and abilities.
3. Maintain and design public roads to reduce their negative impact on local wildlife populations, wildlife habitat, and water quality.

Recommended Actions

New Roads

1. Encourage minimization of road cuts during development of subdivisions.

Road Maintenance

1. Promote the road construction and maintenance practices illustrated in the Vermont Better Backroads Manual for use on private roads and drives in the Lakes area. Demonstrate best practices in road maintenance and construction by following the methods outlined in the manual when working on the town roads around the Lakes.
2. Educate and inform property owners about road issues through existing channels such as the municipal websites, and other local media.
3. Utilize the resources of the *Better Backroads Program*, VTrans, ACRPC and other organizations to identify problems with the transportation system in the Lakes area and develop solutions that will improve conditions.
4. Improve ditch and culvert conditions on Hooker and Lake Dunmore Road.
5. Ensure property owners refrain from making changes that significantly increase run-off into ditches adjacent to wetlands and shorelines.

Public Transportation

1. Work with ACTR to increase ridership opportunities for Leicester residents.
2. Maintain the Park and Ride at the Town Offices.

ENERGY

CONSUMPTION AND RESOURCES

Vermont's energy use is 34% for transportation, 29% for residential uses, and 37% for commercial and industrial uses. In 2005, Vermont's electricity came from nuclear power (71%), hydropower (20%), and power from renewables, including wood (9%).

Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS) provides almost all of Leicester's electricity. The electricity is generated by Vermont Yankee (36%), Hydro Quebec (28%), and other purchases (20%), in-state hydro (9%), from such plants as the Silver Lake Plant, the McNeil Generator (5%), and New York Power Authority (1%) and in-state thermal (0.6%). Vermont Yankee's license expires in 2012. It has applied for a 20-year extension of its license, which would allow operation until 21 March 2032. Hydro Quebec's contracts with Vermont begin to expire in 2015.

The Silver Lake hydro-electric plant run by CVPS on Lake Dunmore Road in Salisbury generates power from water stored behind Goshen Dam in the Sugar Hill Reservoir and in Silver Lake. Water flows from the reservoir through Sucker Brook to a diversion structure, Sucker Brook Dam, where it is piped into Silver Lake. It passes through a penstock that converges with the north branch of Sucker Brook before entering a generating station located in Salisbury. The facility has a name plate rating of 2.2 megawatts. The net generation of the plant is approximately 7,500 megawatt hours annually. This is a ponding plant, which means it can store water in both the reservoir and lake and release it to generate power on demand.

There has been no official inventory done on the heating methods of Leicester households. According to the new "Clean Heat" VPIRG report, oil is used by 49% of Vermonters and wood by 15%. There are a number of homes using solar technology as a source of heat.

The Town of Leicester appoints an Energy Coordinator after the annual Town Meeting. This individual manages existing energy resources in the town, develops policies to encourage the development and utilization of alternative energy resources, promotes conservation efforts, and develops a municipal energy plan. ACRPC works with Energy Coordinators around the county to promote energy conservation and to further each town's energy goals. The position was created in 1975, during the height of the previous national energy crisis. As the nation faces growing concern regarding oil prices, this position continues to be critical.

ENERGY CONSERVATION AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

Local energy sources, such as wood, wind, solar, geothermal, and hydropower offer distinct advantages over nonrenewable energy sources in that they can be produced locally and do less damage to the environment.

Other ways to conserve energy include car-pooling, using public transportation, working from home or locally, and resource sharing between neighbors. Homeowners can also take advantage of a wide variety of state and federal subsidies and rebates available for energy conservation efforts.

Efficiency Vermont offers programs including energy audits, incentives for Home Performance with Energy Star, information on appliances and compact fluorescent bulbs, building an Energy Star home, home heating help, rebate information, and a reference library. The *Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity* (CVOEO) provides free weatherization services to 350 Vermont households annually. High fuel costs have stimulated the demand for these services. Qualifying households may have to wait a year or more after application to this program. *Neighborworks of Western Vermont* also offers affordable weatherization options for eligible households. The Addison County Regional Planning Commission has funding to run energy audits on town-

owned buildings to identify ways to reduce energy costs. Leicester used this service to audit the Leicester Central School in 2005.

Solar, geothermal, wind and local hydropower are all alternative energy sources being used in Vermont. This Plan supports the use of such technologies to lower energy costs to homeowners, and decrease environmental impact of the use of fossil fuels.

Solar

Despite long winters and a variable climate, the energy equivalent of over 5 megawatt hours of solar energy falls upon each acre of land in Vermont annually. Seasonal differences in daylight hours between summer and winter present a challenge to using solar energy in Vermont. Despite these limitations, there are many dwellings in Vermont that rely on solar panels for the majority of their electricity, needing a generator or other back-up source only periodically. There are a number of 'solar farms', including one in Addison County, contributing to the regional energy grid.

The simplest use of sunlight for lighting and heating is passive use. Properly insulated buildings oriented so that their long axis is within 30 degrees of true south and with unobstructed south-facing windows can offset their space heating costs by 15-50%.

Wind

Wind power can be harnessed for both residential and commercial power generation. This technology is expected to improve in the near future to allow smaller, more efficient, and more affordable residential wind turbine than those currently available. There is currently one wind turbine in use in Leicester. This Plan supports small scale wind turbines sites so as to have little impact on the scenic qualities of the landscape.

Geothermal Heating

Geothermal heating relies on an energy exchange between the air within a building and the ground. Ten feet below the earth's surface, the temperature is typically a constant temperature of 50°F. This provides a year-round supply of hotter or cooler air – depending on the season, reducing the heating and cooling services typically needed for a New England home.

NET METERING

Net metering allows electrical utility customers to monitor energy outputs of alternative technologies, and feed any excess energy back to the utility companies, thereby lowering utility costs to that customer. The cost of constructing and installing a net metering system is exempt from Vermont's 6% sales tax.

FUEL ASSISTANCE

CVOEO provides fuel assistance to income-qualified residents either on a seasonal basis (call CVOEO at 800-479-6151) or on a crisis basis (call CVOEO Addison Community Action at 388-2285 or visit their Middlebury office at Suite 107, 700 Exchange Street, Middlebury to obtain an application). Individuals may visit the CVOEO website CVOEO.org/htm/community-action/fuel_terms.html for a description of additional fuel assistance programs available to Vermont residents.

ENERGY POLICY

The Leicester Town Plan encourages residents to take the necessary steps toward creating more energy-efficient and sustainable homes and lifestyles. The Plan supports *Park and Ride* for carpooling, increased use of public transportation, and zoning bylaws that allow for home business opportunities and the installation of alternative energy projects. The Plan supports the State Energy Code for the construction of new homes, and encourages all home owners to use *Efficiency Vermont* as a resource for rebates on electric appliances, and to build new homes to a five star energy efficiency standard. The Plan also supports the use of alternative technologies such as small-scale wind turbines, geothermal heating, small-scale hydro-electric, and solar technologies in order to create clean, affordable, and local sources of energy.

All energy related projects should consider the impact on natural, scenic, historic, and agricultural resources. These projects should be created to protect and conserve these important resources.

Energy

Goals

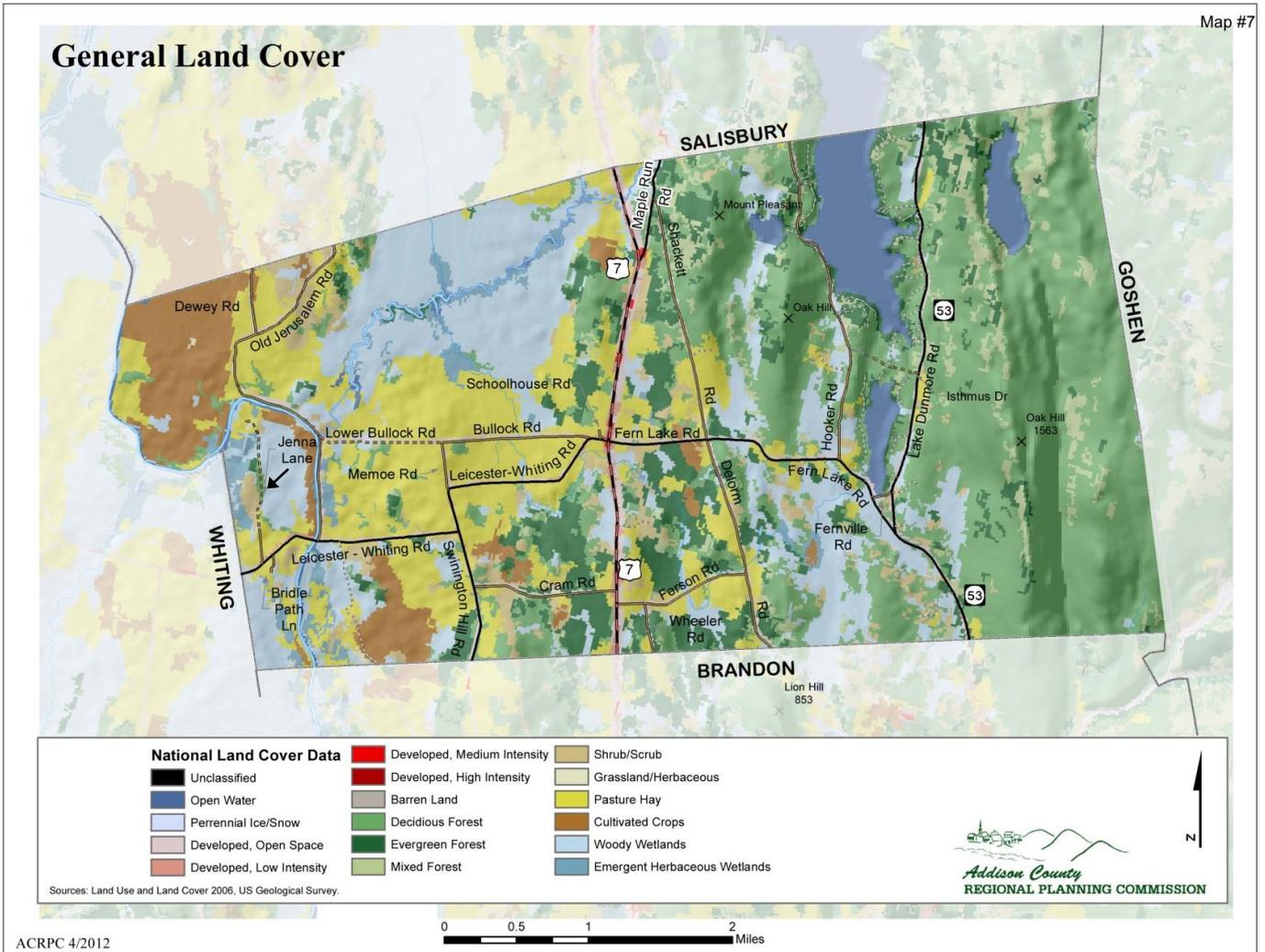
1. Provide the community with information regarding energy and cost efficient homes.
2. Support energy conservation projects.
3. Support local distribution of energy, including installation of net metering.
4. Recognize and support renewable energy sources such as solar, wind power, and geothermal heating.

Recommended Actions

1. Inform Leicester residents of current rebates and subsidies on energy costs available through utility, state and federal programs.
2. Support the efforts of the Town Energy Coordinator.
3. Continue to work with the ACRPC to audit Leicester's public buildings to make them more energy efficient.
4. Support the creation of well-paying jobs in Leicester and the region to decrease commuting distances.
5. Encourage use of energy-efficient building practices for new construction, and renovations based on the Vermont residential Energy Code.

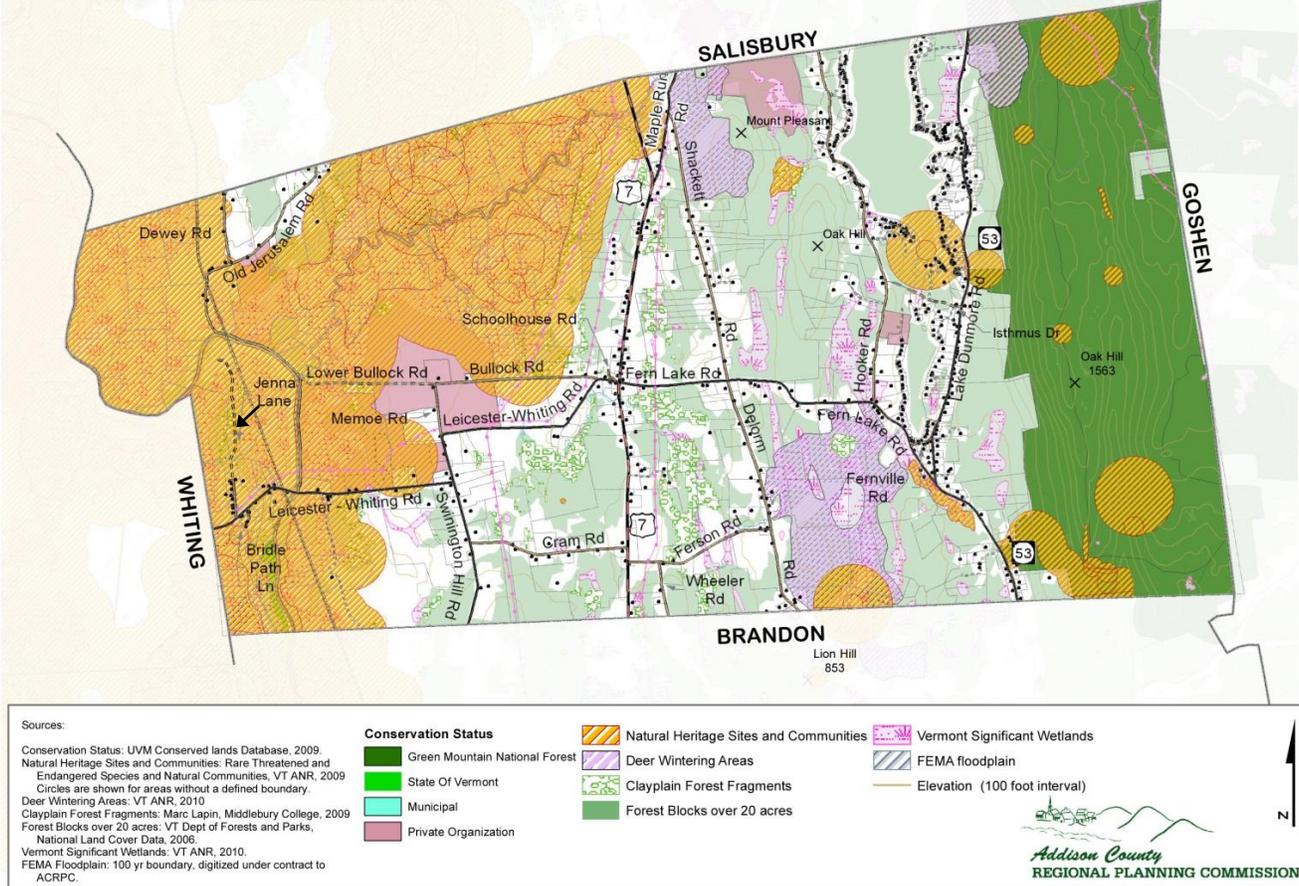
NATURAL RESOURCES

Leicester’s natural resources include the steep and rocky slopes of the Green Mountain National Forest, fresh mountain streams, deep lakes to the east, and rolling meadows and wetlands to the west. The associated land cover provides a diversity of ecologically significant habitats, beautiful rural landscapes, and prime agricultural lands. This abundance of natural resources gives Leicester the responsibility of managing lands and development in a way that preserves these resources for current and future generations.



ACRPC 4/2012

Significant Natural Resources and Wildlife Habitat



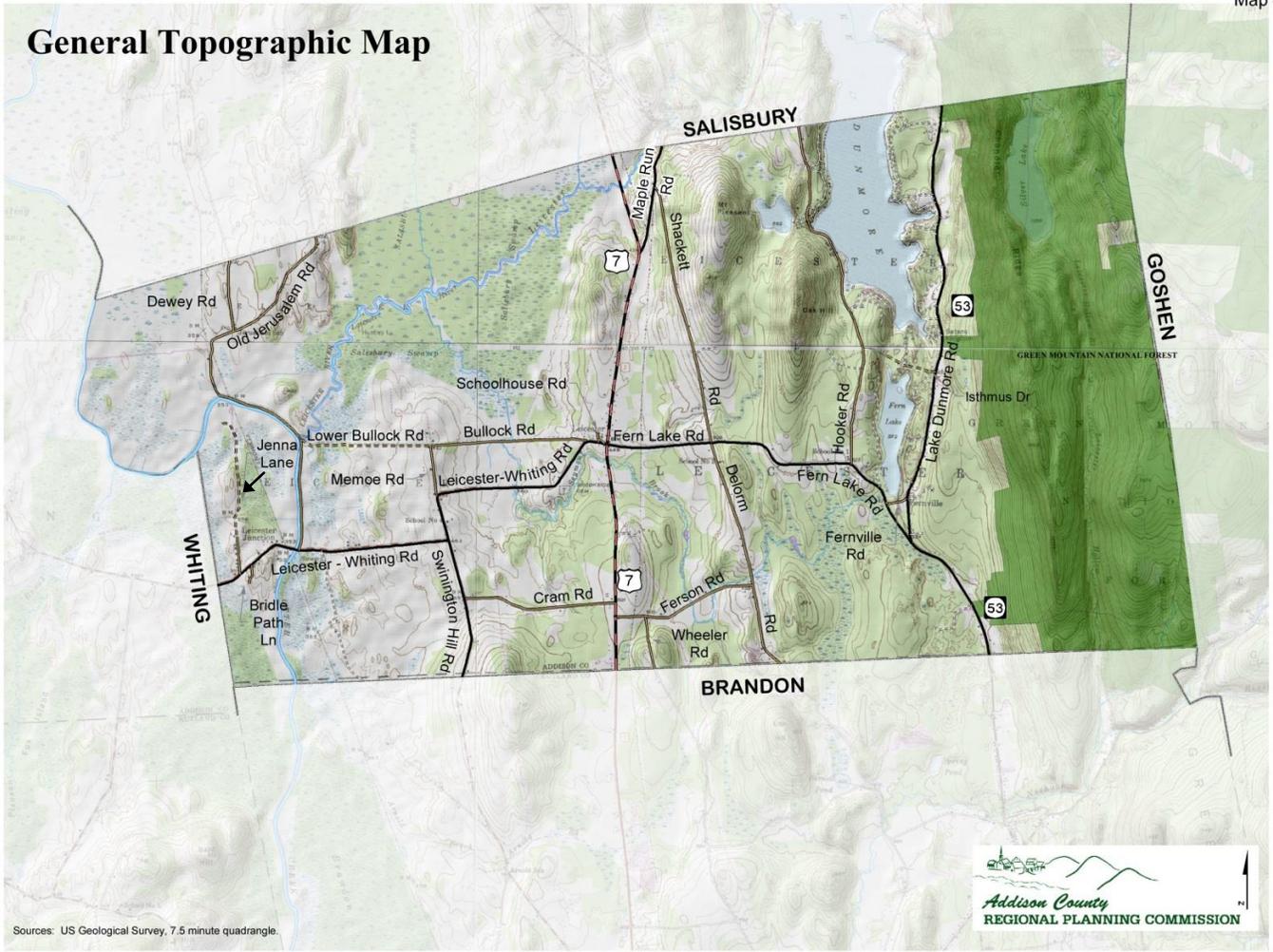
ACRPC 4/2012

FORESTLAND

2,600 acres of Leicester’s forestland are part of the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). This land is managed by the Forest Service and provides a variety of uses, including logging and recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, and camping. It is home to a large wildlife population including bear, moose, coyote, deer, bobcat, raptors, and songbirds. Connected to some of the State’s largest wetland areas, streams, and lakes, this forest provides essential habitat for many reptiles and amphibians. The terrain is steep and rocky and predominately a mixture of spruce, pine, fir, and northern hardwoods.

While the Forest Service manages these forestlands, the community is responsible for using these lands respectfully. Keeping off trails in the spring and practicing hike-it-in, hike-it-out principles are a few examples of wise use of this resource. Attention should be given to the development of properties abutting the GMNF, including the management of our roads, culverts and ditches. Infrastructure management and maintenance will determine if steep slopes erode or stay intact, if streams run clear or carry large quantities of sediment, and if trees grow well or die back. Forestlands not included in the GMNF are just as integral to the character of Leicester’s landscape and care should be given to maintaining healthy, contiguous tracts of forestland whenever feasible. Forestlands absorb carbon dioxide. They also provide timber, shade, beautiful views, erosion control, and essential wildlife habitat.

General Topographic Map



Sources: US Geological Survey, 7.5 minute quadrangle.



ACRPC 4/2012



Forestland

Goals

1. Support private landowners in improving the health of Leicester’s forestlands in partnership with other organizations.
2. Maximize the ecological services provided by our forestlands, such as soil protection, water filtration and wildlife habitat, while balancing their capacity as a recreational and economic resource.
3. Prevent erosion on steep slopes.

Recommended Actions

1. Update subdivision and zoning regulations to encourage the protection of contiguous forestlands.
2. Include the best available forest management science and practices in Subdivision and Zoning regulation associated with Leicester’s forestlands.
3. Encourage landowners to utilize programs, such as those offered by Vermont Family Forests that keep the origin, preparation, sale and use of wood products local and sustainable.
4. Provide educational materials to the Leicester community on land management techniques that bolster the health of trees and forests.

WILDLIFE HABITAT AND CORRIDORS

Leicester's varying landscape provides a diversity of wildlife habitats: hedgerows that support song birds; snags that provide nesting for raptors; wetlands for macro-invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles; and streams for cold water fish. While all habitats are important, there are certain areas in Leicester that are more significant than others for supporting larger quantities and/or diversities of wildlife, or for providing essential travel routes for wildlife breeding and foraging.

In the spring of 2011, Salisbury completed a wildlife tracking study and mapped the significant wildlife corridors within its municipal boundaries. Leicester shares many of the same ecosystems as Salisbury, and the road networks, wetlands and forests which were studied. The inventories completed by Salisbury reflect wildlife movement patterns and species that Leicester shares.

Documenting such areas is a helpful tool in determining conservation areas, road speeds and signage, and other development decisions. Leicester roads abutting Salisbury's significant wildlife crossings areas include the northern end of Maple Run Road, and the northern ends of Old Jerusalem Road and Dewey Road. Leicester residents have also reported wildlife crossing on roads adjacent to the lakes and wetlands.

Leicester development decisions should protect wildlife whenever possible. One challenge is that much of the land in Leicester is privately owned and managed. While zoning bylaws and permitting regulations do protect these resources to some extent, it is up to all members of the community to understand the values associated with the land (ecological, economic, and social) and manage them accordingly.

Wildlife

Goals

1. Manage natural resources in a way that supports the health and vitality of diverse wildlife populations.
2. Preserve and protect rare and endangered plant and animal species, outstanding natural communities, and other significant natural features.

Recommended Actions

1. Consider the formation of a joint Conservation Commission with Salisbury, VT in order to better collaborate on the inventory and mapping of wildlife habitat and travel corridors that cross our municipal boundaries.

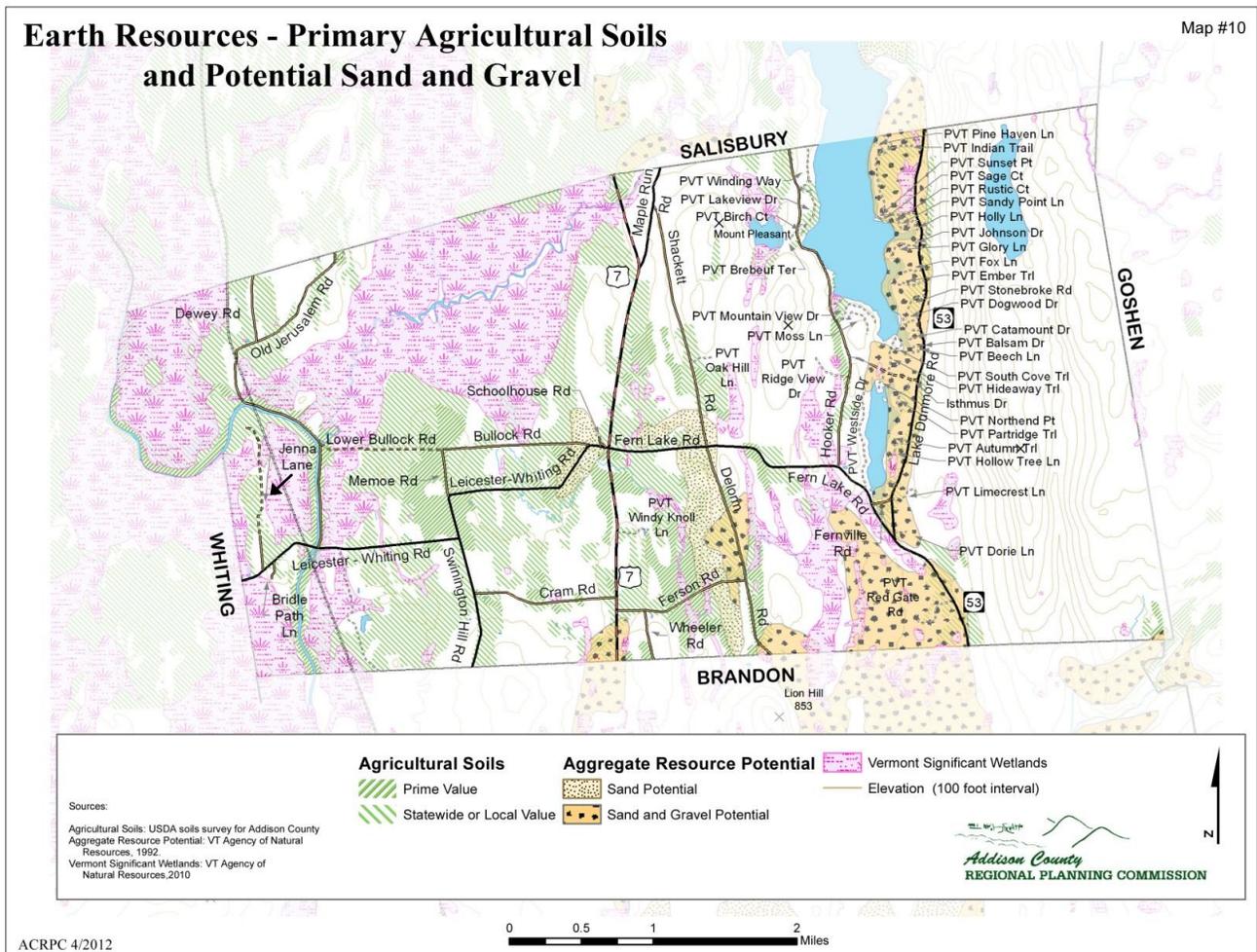
SOILS

Soil types in Leicester vary from east to west. The soils west of the Green Mountain National Forest and the Lake Districts are heavy and poorly drained, but quite fertile. There are approximately 3,800 acres of prime agricultural soils most of which are west of Shackett and Delorm Roads and south of the Leicester River. There is also a narrow band of prime agricultural soils along the banks of Otter Creek. Much of the prime agricultural soil remains in farmland. See Prime Agricultural Soils Map.

Soils must be managed to prevent topsoil from eroding too quickly, thus allowing nutrients to build in the soil rather than be washed away. This Plan supports best management practices for agricultural businesses to maintain and enrich these soils for future farming generations.

Leicester has around 950 acres of sandy or gravelly soil. Most of these soils are on the eastern side of Lake Dunmore and Fern Lake running along the base of the steeper slopes and in an area directly west of Delorm Road.

The density of residences around the Lakes has only been possible due to the capability of these sand and gravel soils to treat wastewater. Leicester's Lake District soils, however, may be reaching maximum capacity for septic systems due to steady development over the past 100 years. New summer homes, the conversion of seasonal camps to year-round homes, and failing older systems put a strain on the soils to filter and process waste water. Leicester residents must make every attempt to comply with State septic regulations to protect the ecological resources available. Consideration should also be given to complementary site design decisions, such as maintaining a vegetated buffer on shorelines, stream banks, and along roads, and enforcing building setbacks from the shoreline.



Soil

Goals

1. Support development and land use practices that are complementary to the soil capacities of the associated area to maintain healthy soils and minimize unwanted run-off throughout Leicester.
2. Preserve Leicester's prime agricultural soils for future generations.

Recommended Actions

1. Require all construction projects to present information on storm water and waste water capacities associated with the property and adhere to State septic regulations.
2. Ensure all subdivision and zoning bylaws limit development on prime agricultural soils.
3. Consider whether conversion from seasonal to year-round home use should be a conditional use.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

As can be seen in the previous map, much of Leicester's scenic landscape is due to the abundance of pastoral farmlands. The percentage of these lands actually being farmed has greatly decreased in the past 100 years. Maintaining agricultural lands and supporting a diversity of agricultural businesses is essential to Leicester's rural and scenic character and a vibrant local economy. See the Economic Development section of this Plan.

EARTH RESOURCES

There are extensive deposits of limestone both to the north in Middlebury and to the south in Brandon. Historically, Leicester had several active limekilns that were directly linked to the rail line. There was a stone quarry located south of the Leicester-Whiting Road and east of the rail line. Currently, there are no active stone quarries in Leicester. Sand and gravel deposits are found in Leicester, and there are currently two private gravel pits used for local landscaping businesses.

Earth Resources

Goals

1. Support resource extraction that maintains a high level of environmental quality for abutting land and preserves the character of the community.

Recommended Actions

1. Require resource extraction management to prevent erosion debris from entering watercourses, to reduce safety hazards caused by pits, or steep or unstable slopes, to restore terminated sites to their original contours with vegetative cover, and prohibit the removal of sand or gravel directly from watercourses, as stated in Vermont State law.

AIR RESOURCES

Due to Leicester's rural environment, air quality is typically high. The biggest threats to air quality are discussed below.

Trash Burning

The Addison County Solid Waste Management District, of which Leicester is a member, prohibits by ordinance the burning of solid waste. Violators are subject to a fine.

Outdoor Wood-Fired Boilers

Leicester residents who are interested in purchasing an outdoor wood-fired boiler should be aware that Vermont Air Pollution Control Regulations 10 VSA 5(204, 205), as adopted 10 January 2009, control use of outdoor wood-fired boilers. As of March 31, 2010, only outdoor wood boilers certified to emit less than 0.32 pounds of particulate matter per million BTUs (Phase II boilers) may be sold for use in Vermont. Units in use prior to that date must meet a standard of 0.44 pounds per million BTUs (Phase 1 boilers). Phase 1 boilers must be located more than 200 feet from the nearest neighbor's house and with a permanent smokestack that is higher than the roof peak of the house it serves.

Wood Stoves

Residents using wood stoves uncertified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are encouraged to exchange them for new, more efficient and cleaner burning wood, pellet or gas stoves. Catalysts in EPA-certified catalytic wood stoves should be replaced every five years. Potential customers for these products should be aware that rebates are sometimes available from the State government.

Vehicle Emissions

Vehicle emissions of carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide may be Leicester's largest source of air pollution. More than 2,000 vehicles drive up and down Route 7 each day. These and idling vehicles contribute significantly to air pollution. This Plan encourages residents to seek alternatives to single-passenger commuting.

Air Resources

Goals

1. Seek to protect and enhance the air quality in Leicester to reduce associated health problems, and create enjoyable places for people to live, work and recreate.

WATER RESOURCES

Leicester sits in the Otter Creek watershed, which means that all the land in Leicester ultimately drains to Otter Creek. This watershed is comprised of many smaller watersheds. It is important to recognize that all land drains somewhere, and how *any* land is managed affects the health of water resources downstream.

In 2005 Salisbury and Leicester received a Municipal Planning Grant and developed the *Salisbury-Leicester Collaborative Planning Study*. Among other topics, this study focused on water quality and included mapping and inventorying of e-coli and erosion issues in Lake Dunmore. The two priority issues identified for water quality were:

- *No public water or wastewater infrastructure currently exists in the Lakes area; all development depends on private septic systems and wells, an uncertain percentage of which have not been upgraded since their construction for seasonal use in the years before state environmental regulations went into effect.*
- *Development activities are causing the loss of existing forest cover and natural vegetation in the Lakes area and along the shorelines.*

Recommendations from the study have been incorporated into the goals and action items associated with this section of the Plan.

Recent legislation that should be incorporated into Leicester’s planning process includes Act 110, directed by the Secretary of Natural Resources and effective February 2011. This Act has been established to assist municipalities in river corridor and shoreline protection management programs. Programs such as these will greatly increase the ability of the town to protect its water resources.

Lakes

There are three major lakes in Leicester – Silver Lake, Lake Dunmore (shared with Salisbury), and Fern Lake. At 1,250 feet, 650 feet higher than Lake Dunmore, Silver Lake is located within the boundaries of the Green Mountain National Forest. Silver Lake is only accessible on foot or bicycle. Motorized vehicles and motorized boats are banned entirely from the primitive lakeshore campground at Silver Lake.

Silver Lake was once a 19th-century resort destination. During the late 1800s, Frank Chandler purchased the 2,500-acre property and built the three-story Silver Lake Hotel. Today, there are few reminders of Silver Lake’s days as a summer resort. In 1942, the hotel was destroyed by a fire, leaving only remnants of its foundations along the lake’s northern shore.

Lake Dunmore and Fern Lake still attract numerous seasonal residents and visitors to their shores each summer. The 1,000-acre Lake Dunmore is located in the Towns of Leicester and Salisbury. The 70-acre Fern Lake is south of Lake Dunmore, separated from the larger lake by a narrow isthmus. The shores of Fern Lake and Lake Dunmore are highly developed. Motorized boats and sports are allowed on Lake Dunmore. Fern Lake restricts motorized boats.

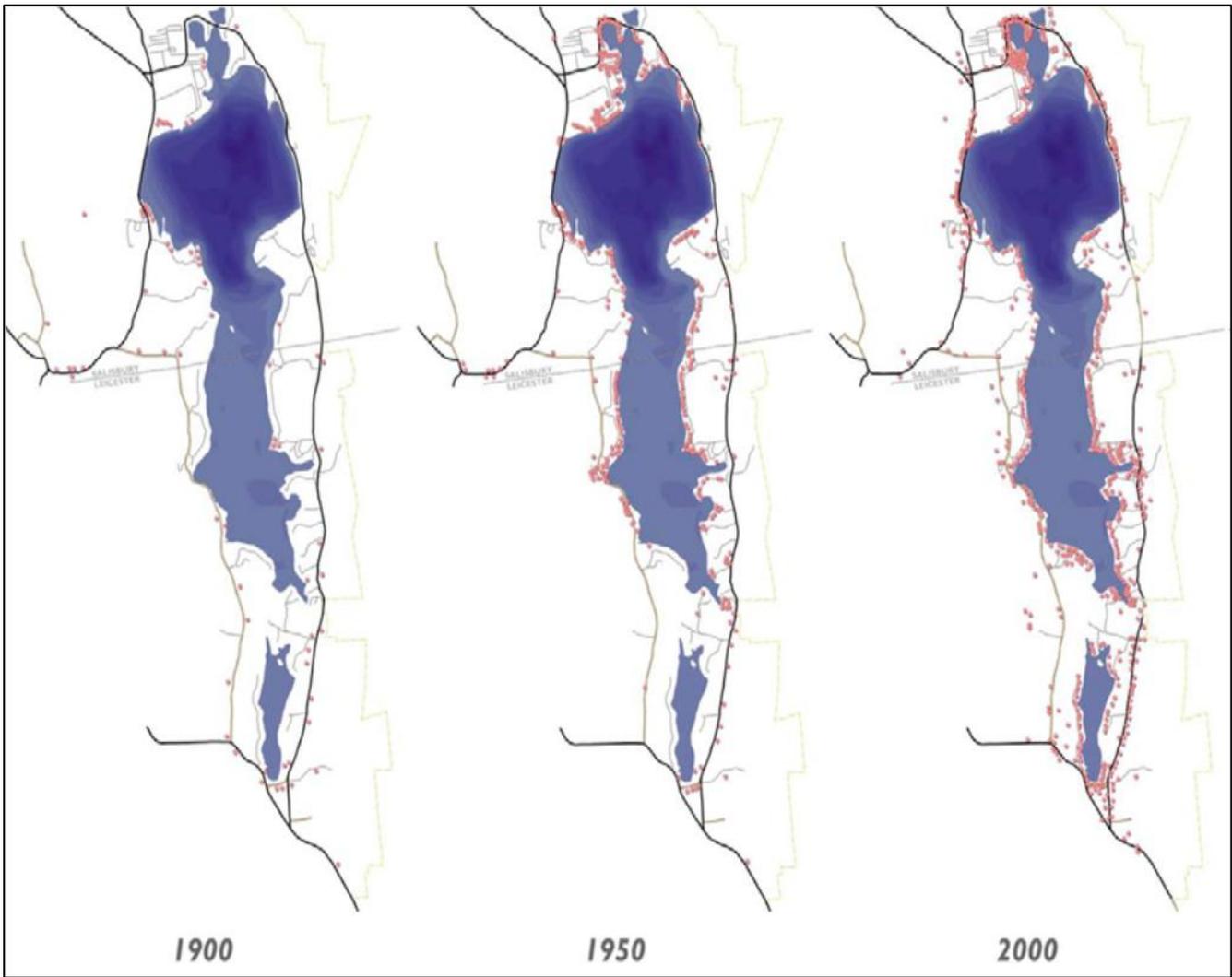


Lake Dunmore 2010 – Courtesy of Julie Delphia

The Lake Dunmore Fern Lake Association (LDFLA) actively addresses issues associated with the care of these Lakes, including the

impact of invasive species. One of the most important activities of the LDFLA is obtaining the funding for and administration of the Milfoil Management Program.

Protecting the health of the Lakes is an on-going task for the town. Development in the Lake Districts, road maintenance, and land management within these watersheds have a huge impact on the health and the well-being of the community.



This map from the 2005 *Salisbury – Leicester Collaborative Planning Study* demonstrates the steady development the Lake District has seen over the past 100 years. This development has put a strain on the soils ability to filter waste water effectively.

Rivers and Streams

Otter Creek flows through the western side of town, forming part of the border with Whiting. It overflows its banks regularly during the spring snow melt. The area near the creek comprises the majority of the approximately 700 acres of the town’s frequently flooded land.

The Leicester River flows from Lake Dunmore to Otter Creek, passing through the Salisbury Swamp. The flow of the Leicester River is largely controlled by a dam located in the Town of Salisbury.

Leicester has a number of small brooks and seasonal streams. Leicester Hollow Brook, which originates near Silver Lake and flows south towards Forest Dale, is a popular hiking and fishing destination. Numerous other small brooks and streams drain into Leicester's Lakes.

According to the Addison County River Watch Collaborative, sedimentation and high phosphorus levels (from manure, fertilizer and human waste water) are the biggest threats to water quality in Otter Creek. High E. coli counts also threaten recreational potential. There are a number of stretches on Otter Creek that are listed by the State of Vermont as impaired for swimming, but the section of Otter Creek that runs through Leicester is currently not one of them.

This Plan encourages residents to manage lands in ways that minimizes erosion and run-off into rivers and streams. Maintaining or establishing vegetated buffers along river and stream corridors is essential.

Wetlands

Leicester contains approximately 3,000 acres of wetlands, mainly in the western and northern part of town. These wetlands perform important functions such as providing wildlife habitat and storing floodwaters. The largest wetland area is Salisbury Swamp, which is located in Leicester and Salisbury in the area surrounding the Leicester River. It is a 1,900-acre wetland composed of several forest types – including northern white-cedar and maple-ash – and shoreline grasslands. In the spring, this area is filled with floodwater and there is often a continuous body of water from Brandon to Middlebury as the Brandon, Salisbury, Whiting and Cornwall Swamps converge. There are a number of rare plant species found in this area. The Salisbury Conservation Commission tracked amphibian and reptiles living in this habitat. To date they have found over 12 species of salamanders, 12 species of reptiles, and over 200 different bird species.

Wetlands are key to controlling floods, providing oxygen, filtering our water, and providing essential breeding grounds for thousands of wildlife species. Significant wetlands in Leicester are a precious resource that should be preserved for generations to come. Stormwater run-off from roads (including road salt, car oil, and brake fluid) and erosion from adjacent uplands should be minimized in order to protect wetlands.

Groundwater

Along the base of the Green Mountain National Forest, gravel soils allow for groundwater infiltration as runoff travels down from the mountains. Given Leicester's reliance on groundwater for drinking water, care should be taken to prevent contamination and ensure filtration. There is one identified aquifer area in Leicester at Cove Point.

Two other significant natural areas in Leicester are Scanlon Swamp and Leicester Junction Swamp. Scanlon Swamp is located southwest of Fern Lake and Leicester Junction Swamp is a 550-acre swamp that is located in the towns of Leicester, Whiting, Sudbury and Brandon.

Stormwater

Stormwater speeds erosion and carries sedimentation and toxins (run-off) from the land into our water. Impervious surfaces such as driveways, road networks, roofs, conventional piping, and the removal of woody vegetation and groundcover are all major contributors to increasing the quantity and velocity of stormwater.

In Leicester, like most Vermont towns, stormwater threatens natural resources. Its management also places an annual financial burden on the town. This Plan encourages the use of innovative techniques to

slow and capture stormwater. Maintaining existing vegetation wherever possible, especially in all significant wetland areas, is highly encouraged. Other methods include implementing Low Impact Development (LID) concepts for public road maintenance, private residences, and new development projects. LID techniques include the use of vegetated swales along road ways, gravel infiltration beds, constructed wetlands, minimizing impervious paving, maintaining or growing vegetated buffers and small-scale rain gardens.

The use of agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as minimizing fertilizer application, rotational grazing, maintaining woody vegetation, and conserving water can have a positive impact on the health of the watershed. The *Vermont Handbook for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control* and Vermont's *Better Back Roads* provide guidelines for all types of construction and for maintenance of roads that promote the health of water resources.

Water Resources

Goals

1. Protect and enhance all water resources available to Leicester in order to preserve high quality drinking water, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities.
2. Capture and slow storm water in order to lessen its negative impacts on natural, scenic, recreational, and historic resources, and on infrastructure.

Recommended Actions

1. Use zoning regulations that restrict development on steep slopes, such as hill-side overlay districts.
2. Incorporate the standards for erosion and storm water management of the *Vermont Handbook for Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control* into town zoning regulations.
3. Encourage protection of woody vegetation within the Lake Districts and other properties abutting significant wetlands, streams, rivers and ponds.
4. Seek funding for demonstration projects illustrating the protection of water resources through managed landscapes.
5. Provide reference materials, like the *Shoreline Stabilization Handbook for Lake Champlain and Other Inland Lakes*, to Lakes area property owners and publicize their availability.
6. Link a PDF of the above resources and references, including the *Leicester Lakes Area Pattern Book*, to the Town website and refer to it for new construction projects.

SCENIC RESOURCES

Leicester's natural resources contribute greatly to the scenic qualities of the town. The forests covering the hillsides and the lush agricultural meadows all contribute to the town's unique character. The physical beauty of the town impacts the day to day life of residents and attracts others to the area.

Through the years barns and buildings have collapsed, railroads and active quarries have come and gone, and major travel corridors, such as Route 7, have changed the way people interact with each other and the town. Management of natural resources and growth so as to preserve the town's scenic qualities is vital to the community and the town's economic well-being.

Scenic Resources

Goals

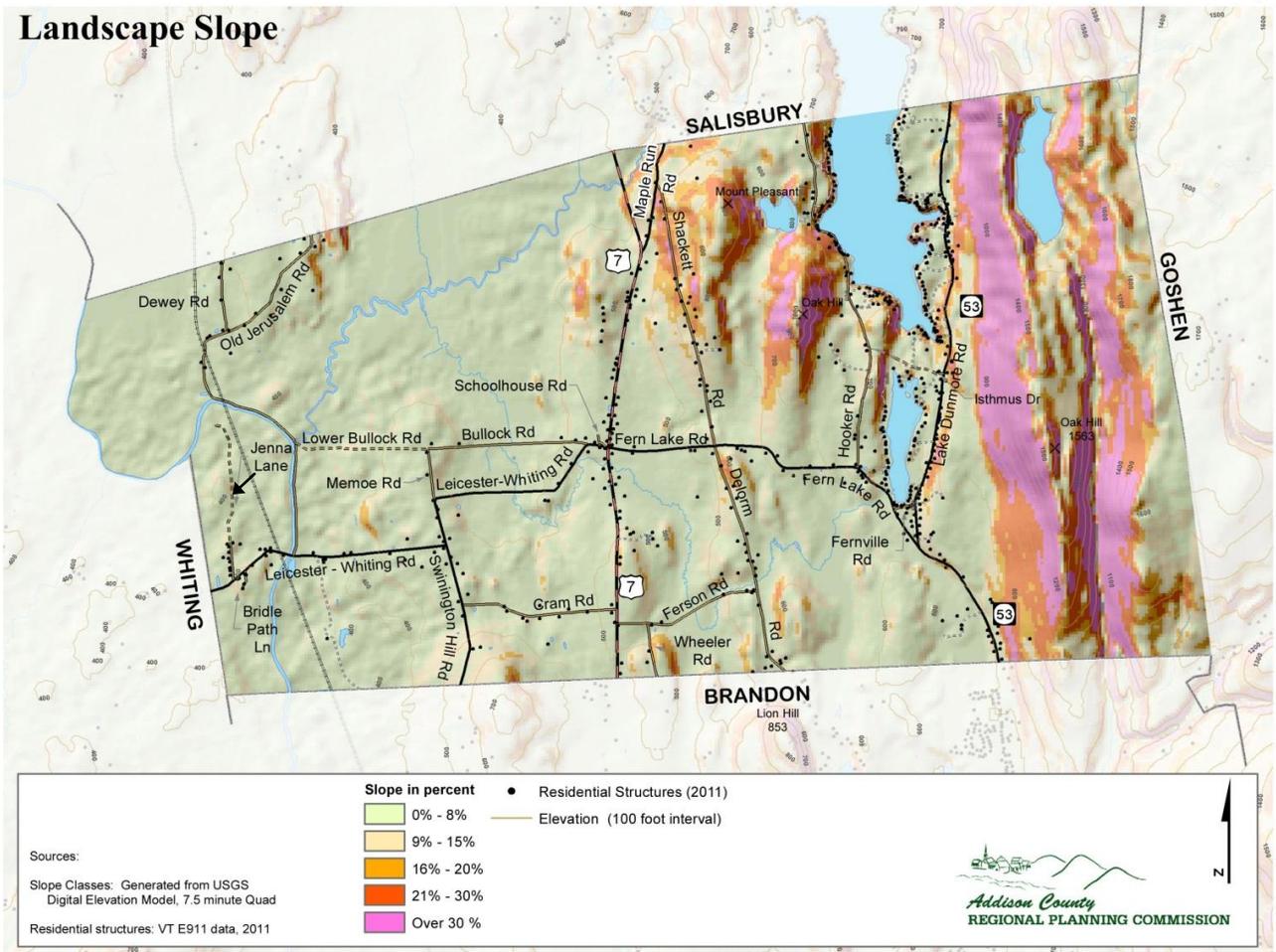
1. Preserve Leicester's scenic resources to maintain its unique landscape character, offer enjoyable outdoor recreational activities, foster pride in the community, and attract appropriate economic development opportunities.

Recommended Actions

1. Develop/update zoning and subdivision regulations that protect the scenic view sheds and ridgelines of Leicester.
2. Encourage zoning that continues to support the continued viability of agriculture.
3. Consider incorporating hillside over-lay districts in future zoning bylaws in order to protect the most significant views.

Map #11

Landscape Slope



ACRPC 4/2012

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Leicester contains a number of historic buildings, and the pattern of its historic settlement can be seen in the rural farming landscape, tree-lined dirt roads, and small summer camps surrounding the Lakes.

Leicester has three structures on the National Register of Historic Places: the Stagecoach Inn, the Town Hall, and the Leicester Meeting House. The annual town meeting is held in the Meeting House.

There are over 30 sites in Leicester that are listed on the Vermont State Register of Historic Places, which include a number of agricultural buildings still in use on Leicester's farms. See the Historic Register Sites map in this section.

The historic elements that remain are important reminders of Leicester's past and essential to retaining its unique character for future generations.

Historic Resources

Goals

1. Protect and restore Leicester's historic sites and buildings to preserve Leicester's unique character, traditions and values.
2. Promote the use of historic public buildings as places for the community and visitors to gather and connect.

Recommended Actions

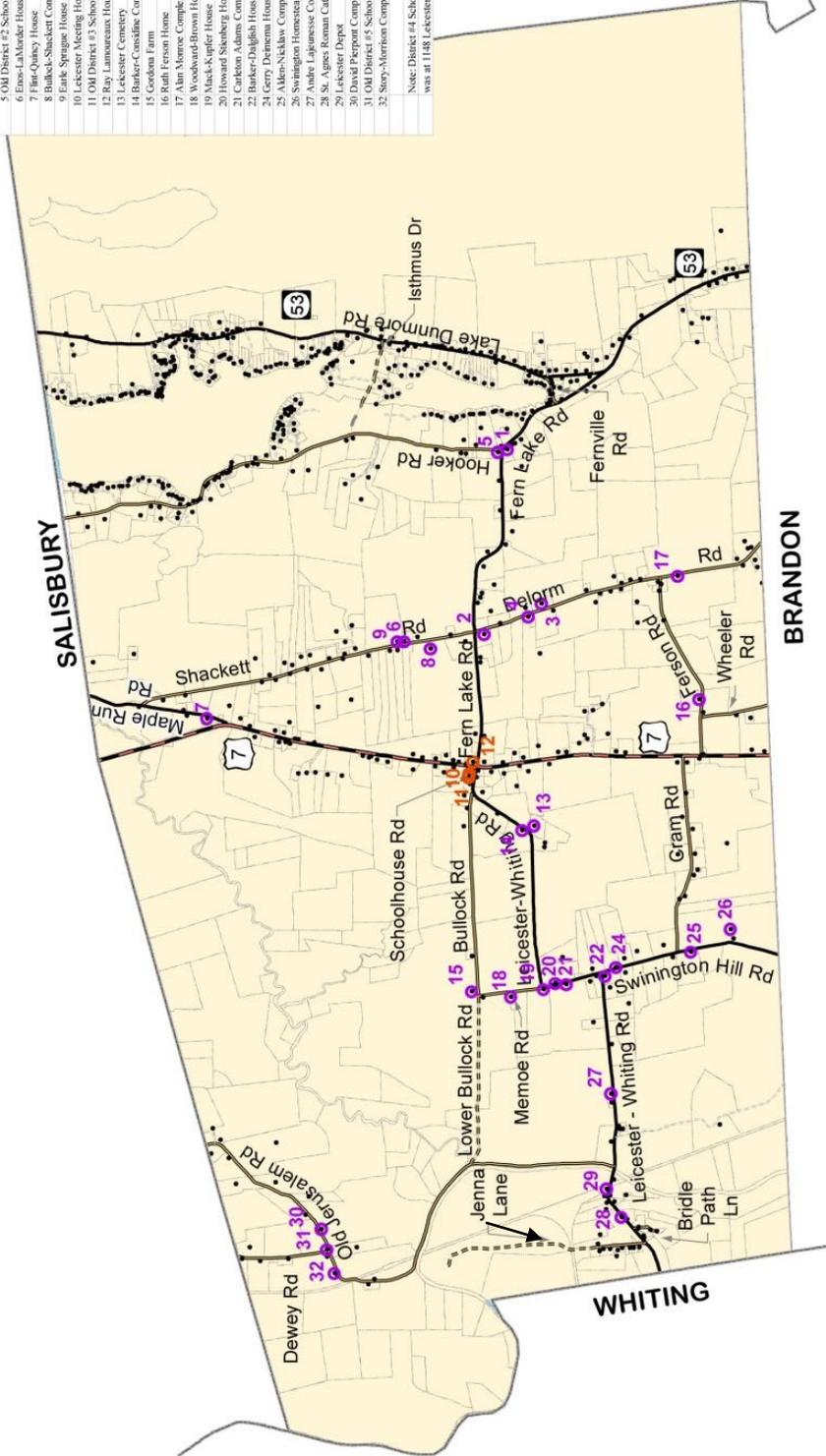
1. Encourage efforts to protect and restore Leicester's historic sites and buildings and land use patterns.
2. Support the listing of Leicester's historic sites and buildings on both the National and Vermont Register of Historic Places.
3. Create a management plan for maintaining, using, and adapting our public historic buildings for present day community needs.

Historic Register Sites

Map #12

Site #	Name	911 Street Address
1	Water Cuff House	610 Fern Lake Road
2	Smith-McAtee House	1498 Decker Road
3	Joseph Mullen House	1141 Decker Road
4	Marvin Johnson House	1254 Decker Road
5	Old District #2 School	18 Hooker Road
6	Emme-LaVorder House	355 Shackett Road
7	Fine-Quincy House	128 Maple Run Road
8	Bullock-Shackett Complex	250 Shackett Road
9	Frank Sprague House	399 Shackett Road
10	Leicester-Whiting House	1400 Schoolhouse Road
11	Old District #4 School	23 Schoolhouse Road
12	Ray Lamontagne House (Inn)	2003 Fern Lake Road
13	Leicester-Whiting House	4901 Leicester-Whiting Road
14	Barber-Considine Complex	457 Leicester-Whiting Road
15	Gordons Farm	1033 Bullock Road
16	Ruth Ferson House	671 Ferson Road
17	Alan Moore Complex	490 Decker Road
18	Woodward-Brown House	148 Memoe Road
19	MacK-Kupfer House	12791 Leicester-Whiting Road
20	Howard Sternberg House	1344 Leicester-Whiting Road
21	Candace Adams Complex	1598 Leicester-Whiting Road
22	Barber-Daglish House	1501 Leicester-Whiting Road
23	Gerry Detremma House	841 Swanton Hill Road
24	Allen-Nicklaw Complex	241 Swanton Hill Road
25	Leicester-Whiting House	2011 Leicester-Whiting Road
26	St. James Roman Catholic Church	2841 Leicester-Whiting Road
27	Leicester Depot	2681 Leicester-Whiting Road
28	David Pierpont Complex	2001 Old Jenksalem Road
29	Old District #5 School	1896 Old Jenksalem Road
30	Step-Morrison Complex	1770 Old Jenksalem Road

Note: District #4 School gone (site 23) was at 1148 Leicester-Whiting Road



Historic Register Sites Road Class

- Federal Register
- State Register
- Structures (2011)
- US Highway
- State Route or Class 1
- Town Class 2
- Town Class 3
- Town Class 4
- Legal Trail
- Forest Rd
- Private Rd

Sources:
 Historic Sites and Structures Survey,
 Division of Historic Preservation, VT, 1976
 National Register of Historic Places,
 Division of Historic Preservation, VT, 1974

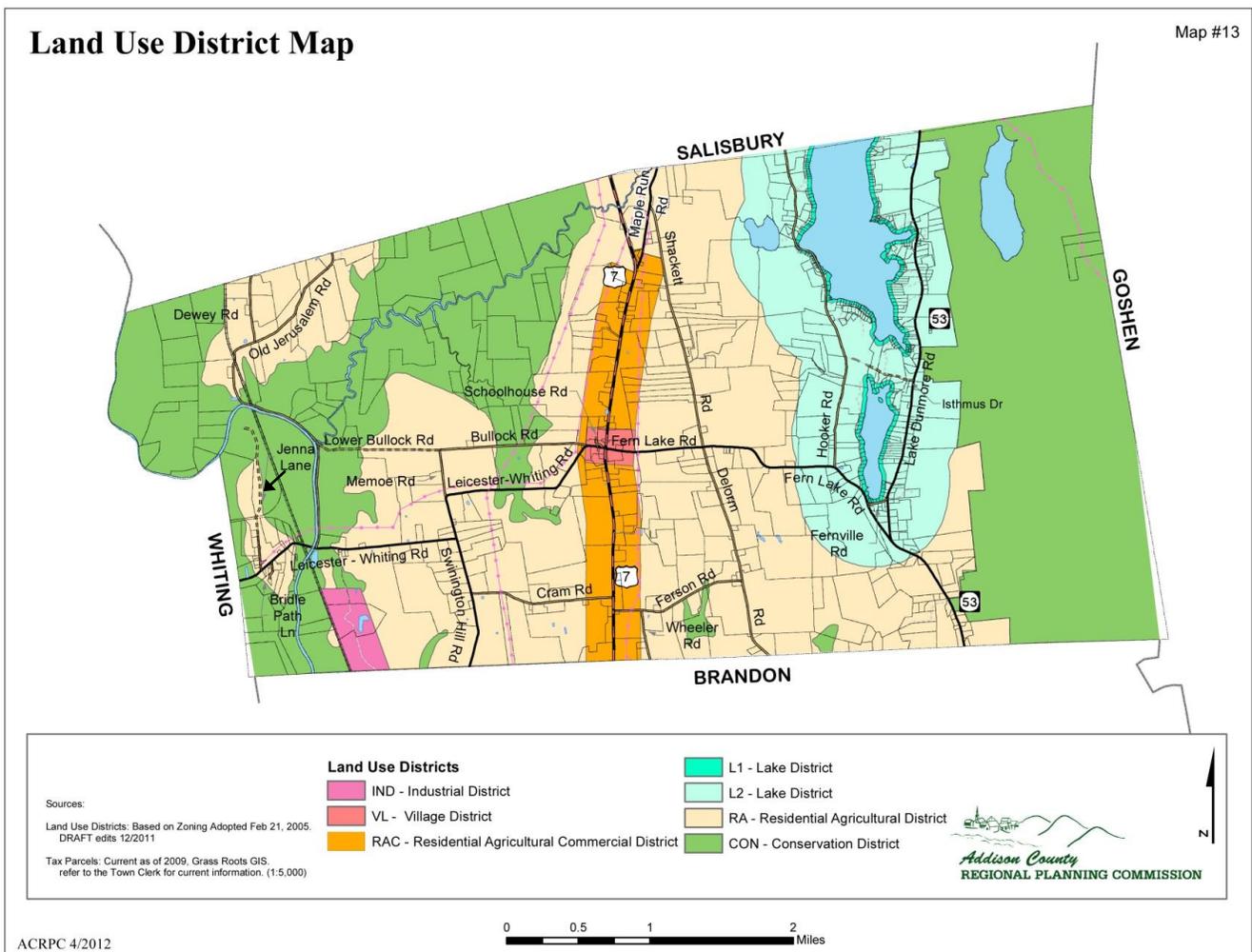


LAND USE PLAN

Historic patterns of land use have largely determined Leicester's character. Farmland, forests, and lake front homes dominate the landscape. Since the adoption of zoning in 1972, one of the primary activities of town government has been the regulation of land use and development. Recognizing that there is a delicate balance between the rights of individual property owners and the long term interests of the town, the Plan attempts to identify ways in which Leicester's rural 19th and early 20th century appearance can be protected while meeting its residents' 21st century needs for housing, employment, education, and recreation.

Decisions regarding the type and placement of new buildings, of nonresidential uses, and of needed infrastructure like roads and communications equipment have enormous impact. Land use regulation at the town level operates under the authority of Vermont State Statute—primarily 24 VSA Chapter 117. Other state statutes and regulations, however, including those regarding agriculture and the tax assessment of land may work against some objectives of the Plan. Communication and education are as important as formal regulation and enforcement activities in realizing the goals presented throughout this document.

This Plan continues the land use districts currently in effect: Village Center; Lake District 1; Lake District 2; Residential Agricultural Commercial (the Route 7 corridor); Industrial; Residential Agricultural; and Conservation. The Plan discusses each of these in detail and this discussion should form the basis for revision of the Zoning Bylaws.



VILLAGE CENTER AREA

Leicester Four Corners is Leicester's village center. Leicester Central School, the Town Clerk's Office, the Meeting House, the Town Hall, and other historic structures lie within this area. It is centrally located in the town on Route 7, the region's principal north/south transportation corridor. It is bisected by the Leicester Whiting Road from the west and the Fern Lake Road from the east. Because the majority of residents commute to jobs outside of Leicester and because the town has no restaurants or retail outlets other than the Leicester General Store, the enhanced use of the Four Corners for events/activities is essential to building and maintaining community identity. Future development of the village center should match the density of traditional Vermont villages with a mixture of residential, municipal and commercial uses.

Using the intersection of Route 7 and the Fern Lake Road/Leicester Whiting Road as a starting point, the dimensions of the area are as follows: 585 feet south; 725 feet north; 1047 feet east; and 704 feet west.

Village Center

Goals

1. Maintain and increase the role of Leicester Four Corners as a municipal and community center which supports residential, commercial, and civic uses with a density matching those of traditional Vermont villages.

Recommended Actions

1. Develop indoor and outdoor events/activities that will enhance Leicester Four Corners as a community hub.
2. Update Zoning Regulations that allow for the creative re-use of historic buildings.

LAKE DISTRICTS AREA

The area around Lake Dunmore and Fern Lake can be divided into two distinct districts: Lake 1, a narrow inner ring of land 150 feet wide measured from the mean water level of the relevant lake; and Lake 2, a contiguous outer ring that extends to 2500 feet from that mean water level. Portions of this ring on the eastern side of the lakes belong to the Green Mountain National Forest and are thus part of the Conservation District. Both Lake 1 and Lake 2 contain steep slopes whose development presents problems of stormwater runoff and erosion.

Prior to the adoption of zoning and the imposition of a minimum lot size of one acre, extensive subdivision and construction had already taken place in Lake 1. The district is densely developed and the majority of its lots are less than ½ acre. Over the past 15 years, Lake 1 has seen a shift from seasonal to year-round use. Small summer camps have been enlarged and upgraded to, or replaced by, year-round residences. The construction of foundations that permit the conversion or replacement of existing seasonal camps with year-round structures and the installation of year-round waste water systems typically require substantial damage to essential vegetation. The resulting erosion and stormwater runoff have had significant impact on the lakes' water quality. Although the town would prefer that a balance remain between seasonal and year-round use on the lakes, state guidelines for property tax assessment at highest and best use contribute to the conversion to year-round use.

The impact of conversion to year-round use can best be managed with improved construction standards (silt barriers, for example) and shoreline protection. In 2008, the Leicester Planning Commission completed work on the *Leicester Lakes Area Pattern Book*, which is a design guide for developers and property owners in Lake 1. It suggests ways in which new construction/renovation can reinforce the distinctive, historic character of the Lake Districts and integrate well into the existing landscape.

Infrastructure improvements have not accompanied the trend towards more intensive year-round use. Many of the private roads and driveways providing access to lakefront properties were not designed for winter use, nor

can they accommodate large emergency vehicles or heating fuel trucks. Seasonal residents are sometimes reluctant to assume the maintenance expense of year-round use. The town should encourage the formation of homeowner associations to address these concerns. Any new development of lake property should require private road maintenance agreements from affected property owners before construction begins. Alterations to and maintenance of roads in these areas can have profound impact on lake water quality. The town and homeowner associations should implement designs that meet the State of Vermont's best practices. The *Better Back Roads Program* is available to provide assistance in this area.

Lake 2 is not as densely developed as Lake 1. Extensive subdivision has occurred in some areas of Lake 2, particularly along Lake Dunmore Road. Lake 2 consists primarily of year-round residences, but seasonal camps still exist. The opportunity exists in Lake 2 to develop small businesses related to recreation and tourism that do not conflict with the residential character of the area.

Site Development

- Protect and/or preserve a significant percentage of existing woody and herbaceous vegetation on lake shore properties. Avoid clear cutting lake shore lots. Avoid creating large expanses of lawns.

Why? Existing vegetation provides a buffer between lake shore parcels.

Natural vegetation provides habitat and food for wildlife.

Mature trees provide shade.

Run off of fertilizers and pesticides, used for the maintenance of lawns contribute to lake pollution.

Wooded shorelines are aesthetically pleasing viewed from the lake.
- Maintain a native vegetated buffer along the shoreline. Stabilize shorelines with a natural buffer instead of retaining walls and bulkheads.

Why? A natural buffer along the shoreline stabilizes lake shore banks and protects against erosion.

A natural buffer will preserve and protect the natural habitat and shoreline ecosystem.

Views can be enhanced when framed by natural vegetation.

Properly designed buffers do not block views.

*For a list of native plants for shoreline buffers see appendix.

The illustration above is an example of design guidelines found in the *Leicester Lakes Area Pattern Book*. This publication suggests ways to lessen the environmental and aesthetic impact of shoreline development.

Both year-round and seasonal residents use the recreational resources provided by Lake Dunmore, Fern Lake, and Silver Lake. The lakes also attract visitors from around the country. The town should continue to provide year-round public access to Lake Dunmore from Indian Trail and to Fern Lake off the Fern Lake Road.

Lake Districts

Goals

1. Protect the natural scenic assets of the lake districts in their historic form.
2. Maintain opportunities for public recreation.
3. Encourage a mixture of seasonal and year-round homes.
4. Support the creation of small scale commercial and home-based businesses.

Recommended Actions

1. Implement zoning regulations such as hill-side overlay districts that restrict development on steep slopes.
2. Consult previous and current planning studies/publications on Leicester's lakes and others in the state to identify regulatory opportunities and challenges.
3. Work with the Lake Dunmore Fern Lake Association to identify concerns and planning solutions.
4. Promote the use of the *Leicester Lakes Area Pattern Book* by contractors and property owners in the Lake Districts.
5. Work with the Better Back Roads Program to improve and maintain the roads surrounding the lakes.
6. Promote the use of designs for road and driveway improvements that meet the State of Vermont's best practices for storm water and wastewater protection.

ROUTE 7 CORRIDOR AREA

Route 7 is the major north/south transportation route in western Vermont. The Route 7 corridor comprises most of the Residential Agricultural Commercial District of the town. This planning area extends 1000 feet to the east and west of the centerline of Route 7 and along its length from its intersection with Maple Run Road to the Brandon town line. The Leicester Village Center falls within this corridor but is treated as a separate land use district.

Currently the Route 7 corridor contains a mixture of residential, agricultural, and commercial uses. The volume of local and through traffic makes this the most commercially viable area in Leicester, particularly for retail activities. While the town wants to encourage business development in suitable portions of the corridor, the current mixed use should continue. Businesses of all types should be of a scale and character that will minimize negative effects on agricultural and residential neighbors. Buildings should be designed to relate to the mass and scale of existing development. Where possible, new development should be clustered to reduce the need for new infrastructure. Parking should be configured to limit the mass of any one lot and be partially screened from the highway by buildings, fencing, and landscaping. Sprawling development and major traffic generators like truck depots, drive through restaurants, or big box retailers are not appropriate for this section of Route 7 because of their impact on traffic flow.

Route 7 Corridor

Goals

1. Protect existing agricultural and residential land along Route 7.
2. Support scale appropriate business ventures which contribute to local economic development.

Recommended Actions

1. Continue to require conditional use review for all commercial development proposals in this district.
2. Allow development which is in harmony with existing buildings and uses.
3. Assure adherence to Vermont Transportation Agency standards, including site distance and curb cut regulations.

INDUSTRIAL AREA

Leicester has reserved an area for industrial use located in the southwest corner of town, just east of the rail line. The district abuts the Brandon town line and is shaped like a parallelogram 3250 feet long and 1500 feet wide. Currently there are no industrial facilities in the area. It is isolated from residential development and was previously the location of a large limestone quarry, a use it could still support. It is adjacent to the rail line, has a bed for a rail spur, and three phase power has been brought to the site. Should there be industrial development in this area; existing easements would permit construction of a road accessible from Swington Hill Road.

Any use other than industrial proposed for this site should be reviewed carefully to ensure it does not compromise its potential commercial use. Care must also be taken to ensure that proposed commercial or industrial uses do not adversely affect neighboring residential properties.

Industrial Area

Goals

1. Promote business opportunities which capitalize on Leicester's railroad access and build the local economy.
2. Support business proposals that limit negative impacts on adjacent properties and the environment.

Recommended Actions

1. Develop guidelines for this district that will promote industrial use, such as levels of appropriate truck traffic, noise control, and hours of operation.
2. Continue to require conditional use review of commercial development to ensure that it does not negatively affect municipal services or infrastructure and surrounding residential properties.

CONSERVATION AREA

Two very different types of land comprise the conservation district. On the eastern side of town, 2600 acres, including Silver Lake, belong to the Green Mountain National Forest. Most of this is forestland with very steep slopes. Leicester does not regulate land use in the National Forest.

The extensive wetlands and floodplains surrounding Otter Creek and the Leicester River on the western side of town are privately owned. These do fall under Leicester land use regulation—specifically Flood Hazard Regulations authorized by 10 VSA, Chapter 32. Participation in the National Flood Insurance Program required adoption of these flood hazard bylaws. In effect, the only permitted uses are agricultural, recreational, and accessory (lawns, gardens, parking and play areas).

Currently, the flood hazard area is primarily agricultural with limited residential use. There are residential areas, however, immediately contiguous to this area, access to which is severely affected by flood hazard conditions. While the town prohibits inappropriate and potentially hazardous development in its wetlands and flood plains, it encourages conservation of this land to ensure future agricultural use.

Conservation Areas

Goals

1. Protect the most vulnerable and critical natural features of these areas, including wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, significant habitat, and prime agricultural soils.
2. Develop local economic opportunities in agriculture, tourism and recreation built on the strengths of these features.

Recommended Actions

1. Revise Leicester Zoning Bylaws to reflect the goals for this district.
2. Continue to ensure that all development proposals for this area require conditional use review.
3. Make information available to town land owners regarding Vermont programs that permit the conservation of agricultural lands for the future.
4. Educate Leicester residents as to the location and characteristics of Leicester's conservation areas, including critical wildlife habitat and fragile hillside soils.

RESIDENTIAL AND AGRICULTURAL AREAS

The remainder of the land area of the town is used primarily for agricultural and year-round residential purposes. Continued residential development in this district should take the form of clustered housing or planned unit developments (PUDs) to minimize the "suburbanization" of farmland and potential conflicts between agricultural operations and abutting neighbors. This Plan recognizes that farming needs the ability to adapt within accepted agricultural practices to remain commercially viable. The town supports measures like "Freedom to Farm" that protect farmers from nuisance lawsuits filed by non-farming homeowners.

This district already contains a number of home occupations. The Plan encourages the establishment of home-based businesses whose scale and character are appropriate to their surroundings. Measures to minimize their impact on their neighbors include landscaping and fencing to screen stored materials, vehicles and machinery.

Leicester Junction is appropriate for more mixed residential, agricultural, and commercial use. With close access to a railroad line, Leicester Junction was the town's 19th century commercial and industrial center. It still retains its commercial character and historic buildings. This Plan supports mixed use residential and commercial development here, particularly the adaptation and reuse of the historic commercial buildings along the railroad outside of the floodplain.

The land along Swinington Hill Road falls in this district on its northern end. On its southern end, it has been zoned Residential Agricultural Commercial like the Route 7 Corridor. This area is appropriate for more mixed residential, agricultural, commercial and light industrial use, corresponding to the development that has occurred in the portion of the town of Brandon that it abuts.

Residential and Agricultural Areas

Goals

1. Protect the rural landscape of Leicester while allowing the creative re-use and development of historic and commercial buildings.
2. Support residential development that protects the town's natural, open spaces and permits the continuation of adjacent agricultural activities.

Recommended Actions

1. Revise Leicester's Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations to reflect the goals of this planning district including the development of PUDs and density based rather than minimum lot size zoning.

COMPATABILITY

In the State of Vermont most land use regulation occurs at the town level. Each town that has adopted zoning has its own town plan and zoning bylaws. This diversity can lead to conflicts and confusion. While Leicester's Plan is focused on guiding future development within its own borders, the effects of development do not respect municipal boundaries. Land use policies in neighboring communities and the region as a whole affect Leicester. In turn, Leicester's land use practices can have impact on adjacent towns and every town along the Route 7 corridor.

SURROUNDING TOWNS

Goshen

Leicester's entire boundary with the town of Goshen, which lies on its eastern side, falls within the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). There is no direct road access between the towns, although several Forest Service seasonal roads and trails cross the border. Thus, there are no potential land use conflicts here, but changes in use or management practices by the GMNF could affect both towns.

Whiting

To the west of Leicester is the town of Whiting. Otter Creek forms part of the boundary between the two towns which are linked by the Leicester Whiting Road. This area consists mainly of floodplains and wetlands. Both towns have established conservation districts along the entire border which require minimum lot size of 25 acres and which severely restrict residential development

Salisbury

Leicester's neighbor to the north is Salisbury. A number of roads connect the two: Route 7; Lake Dunmore Road (Route 53); Hooker Road; Maple Run Road; Dewey Road; and Old Jerusalem Road. The towns also share critical natural features – the Salisbury Swamp, Otter Creek, and Lake Dunmore. West of Route 7, their land uses are fairly well matched – Leicester with a mixture of conservation and residential/agricultural districts, Salisbury with low density residential and agricultural districts.

Both towns have defined the area around Lake Dunmore as a Lake District but the zoning regulations differ. Cooperation and coordination between the towns is essential for the long-term health of the lake. In Salisbury, the area between the eastern side of Route 7 and the Lake District is zoned as High Density Residential (one acre minimum lot size). The area in Leicester which abuts this from the south is zoned as Residential Agricultural Commercial along Route 7 and the remainder as Residential Agricultural (both of which require two acre lots).

Brandon

To the South, Leicester borders the Town of Brandon (Rutland County). Several roads link the two towns: Route 7; Lake Dunmore Road; Delorm Road; Wheeler Road; and Swington Hill Road. Brandon lies in Rutland County and contains two villages with a mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial use. Both of these features have lead to land use regulation which differs from that in Leicester. Leicester's industrial and RAC districts abut low density multiuse and conservation districts in Brandon. Commercial/industrial traffic originating in Brandon, or routed around Brandon by its road use regulations, travel Leicester town roads that are ill suited for heavy vehicles. Potential conflicts between the two may arise from these factors.

ADDISON REGION

Land use regulation in Leicester affects the rest of the region. The lakes and access to GMNF land provide recreational opportunities for the rest of Addison County and central Vermont. The Otter Creek floodplains and wetland areas serve an important function for the entire area in storing spring run-off. The Addison County Regional Plan combines the shared elements of town plans regarding maintenance of a rural way of life, diversification of the regional economy, and protecting natural resources.

Development trends in the rest of the region also affect Leicester. Any development along the Route 7 corridor increases traffic volume. Projects like road widening and changes in highway access policies have an impact. The increase in land prices in the northern communities of the region has spurred land development in Leicester and other towns with lower land prices.



Leicester, VT (from Leicester Whiting Road facing north toward Salisbury). Photo courtesy of Julie Delphia

IMPLEMENTATION

This Plan is intended as a guide for future decision-making and actions for residents, the Leicester Planning Commission, Town Staff, and the Leicester Selectboard. The Plan is clear about the goals Leicester desires to achieve, but flexible about how it achieves these goals.

The following outlines the actions of highest priority based on the goals and objectives in the Plan:

ONE YEAR PLAN 2012-2013

- Make the 2012 Town Plan available to Leicester residents and landowners on the town website and in the Town Office.
- Continue to provide access to all planning documents, referred to in this Plan, on the town website and/or at the Town Office.
- Begin revision of Leicester Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations to reflect the goals and objectives of this Plan.

FIVE YEAR PLAN 2012-2017

- Identify funding opportunities, including Municipal Planning Grants, to allow technical review of the revised Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations and their publication.
- Establish priorities among goals and actions within each Plan section.
- Continue to gather data regarding regional planning issues, opportunities, and changes in community needs.