

CHAPTER 12 – OPEN SPACE AND WORKING LANDSCAPES

Maintaining open space and scenic, working landscapes are among Williston’s most important goals for the future. The vision statement presented in Chapter 2 states that the Town will:

- sustain rural landscapes by reinstating the Local Tax Abatement Program; requiring an open space pattern for subdivisions, conserving lands identified in the open space plan through acquisitions or easements; and finding ways to help the owners of working lands continue their stewardship; and
- use regulatory and non-regulatory tools, including funding for the acquisition of development rights or land, to protect water quality, wildlife habitat, scenic views, and other natural and cultural resources.

This chapter expands on the vision statement in Chapter 2 by presenting a long-range strategy for preserving and protecting Williston’s conservation area, scenic viewsheds, and working landscapes:

12.1 Conservation Areas protect important natural resources, including wetlands, streams, and wildlife habitat, from incompatible development. Public access is limited.

12.2 Scenic Viewsheds are identified through a detailed visual assessment. They include open fields and meadows, and wooded slopes and ridgelines.

12.3 Working Landscapes include farms and other lands that are managed for the production of agricultural, forest, and earth products. They also include lands used for outdoor recreation, such as golf courses or fee-based trail systems. Public access is not necessary, and may be undesirable.

The goals and objectives provided in this chapter account for the changes in land use and development patterns that have taken place since Williston adopted its first Open Space Plan in 1989. In 2005, the Open Space Plan was broadened and became Appendix C to the *2006 Comprehensive Plan*. In 2010, the Town decided that Williston’s Open Space Plan is in no way ancillary to the way that Williston is managed, Appendix C was divided into two chapters in this plan: Chapter 8 - Parks & Recreation and Chapter 12 - Open Space and Working Landscapes, and incorporated into the main body of this Plan.

From Foothills to the Valley Floor: Williston’s Landscape

Williston runs east to west from the foothills of the Green Mountains to the lowlands that surround Lake Champlain (Map 1). The broad contours of the town’s landscape date back to a collision of continents 340 million years ago. That distant event influences current realities, like domestic well yields, but the terrain we see and the soils on which we build mostly reflect the less ancient passage of glaciers, the formation of a glacial lake, and even an incursion of the ocean, which briefly made parts of Williston beachfront property. Those events, which explain everything from why there is sand mining in north Williston to why it is difficult to locate a good site for wastewater disposal south of I-89, set the stage for the town’s development and this plan.

In recent times, Williston’s landscape has experienced rapid change. Agriculture has yielded to rural residential and suburban development. Natural cover has actually increased, as abandoned pastures and fallow fields mature into forests, but residential, commercial, and industrial uses have also expanded, replacing fields and forests with parking lots, buildings, and other uses. This change is documented in Chapter 3 of the Comprehensive Plan (see Table 3.A) and on Map 17, which shows the overall extent of productive agricultural soils in Williston and the farms that were evaluated for long term agricultural

viability using the Town's Land Evaluation, Site Assessment (LESA) system in 1988. At that time (when some farmland had already been lost to development), there were about 9,700 acres of active or potential farmland in Williston. Roughly 2,600 more acres of farmland have been developed or taken out of production during the past 18 years. Most of the remaining active farmland is located along the Winooski River in the Floodplain and Agricultural/Rural Residential zoning districts.

12.1 - Conservation Areas - The Town of Williston will protect conservation areas that provide significant benefits for soil conservation, water quality, groundwater recharge, and biological diversity.

Conservation areas include wetlands; streams, ponds, lakes, and the associated riparian areas; forestlands with rocky outcrops; significant wildlife habitat and travel corridors; and unique natural communities. Incompatible development would impair the ecological functions of these areas and reduce the benefits they naturally provide to humans and wildlife. For example, wetlands and vegetated stream buffers protect water quality and healthy aquatic habitat by filtering stormwater runoff and slowing downstream flooding. Conservation of forests on steep, rocky west-facing slopes will reduce soil erosion and provide deer wintering areas. Limited recreation (hiking, cross-country skiing, birding), environmental education, and scientific research are acceptable in conservation areas as long as they are compatible with the goal of protecting the physical features, ecological functions, and biodiversity they provide.

12.1.1 Maintain Existing Conservation Areas. Williston has protected conservation areas through a mix of land acquisition, the purchase of development rights (PDR), the transfer of development rights (TDR), the designation of open space within planned developments, and its land use bylaws. Map 5 shows the location of the existing protected areas. Conservation properties that are owned by the Town or the Lake Iroquois Recreational District include:

- Mud Pond and a majority of the surrounding bog and wetlands within the upper reach of Allen Brook (158 acres);
- approximately half of the headwater wetlands north of Lake Iroquois (about 53 acres), which are also part of the Champlain Water District's source water protection area (see Section 11.5 of this plan);
- approximately half of the forested slopes of Brownell Mountain (107 acres), which will also function as a country park, as described in Chapter 8 - Parks & Recreation;
- the former Hill property, located along the Sucker Brook off Route 2A (20 acres), which will also function as a country park, as described in Chapter 8 - Parks & Recreation;
- the 14-acre red maple/blueberry swamp on Marshall Avenue that the Town acquired when it extended Marshall Avenue, along with adjoining areas of the O'Brien Brothers development on which use is restricted due to the presence of wetlands;
- the forested slopes of the former Burnett property south of I-89 (91 acres); and
- the former Senecal property located between the Chatham Woods development and the Town-owned Allen Brook Nature Trail property (14 acres).

Conservation areas that have been protected by the purchase of development rights include 70 acres on the northern part of Gramma Ridge, which is located southwest of the Five Tree Hill overlook and portions of the conserved farms and woodlots listed in section 12.3 below. Conservation areas that have been protected as a result of the Town's development review process include numerous acres of streams and wetland buffers.

The Benefits of Protecting Stream Corridors. Vegetated buffers along the banks of rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands help prevent water pollution, attenuate floods, protect development from stream bank erosion, and provide important wildlife habitat. Williston's Stormwater Management and

Watershed Protection regulations require a 150-foot buffer adjacent to major streams (Allen Brook, Sucker Brook, Muddy Brook), the Winooski River, and major ponds and wetlands, and a 50-foot buffer along tributary streams. More information on stream corridors is available in some of the publications available on-line at http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/waterq/cfm/ref/Ref_Rivers.cfm.

Approximately 615 acres of open space have been protected through Williston’s development review requirements. As summarized in the table below, 256 acres of open space has been protected by Williston’s 75% open space requirement in the Agriculture/Rural Zoning District (ARZD) and an additional 358 acres of open space has been protected all other zoning districts.

Subdivision Name	Zoning District	Open Space (acres)
River Hill Farm	ARZD	111
Hayes	ARZD	24
Brownell	ARZD	15
Gardner	ARZD	91
Tangalos	ARZD	16
TOTAL ARZD		256
Wood Lily	RZD	14
Brennan Woods	RZD	101
Bittersweet Village	RZD	14
Pinecrest Village	RZD	36
Pleasant Acres	RZD	10
Old Stage Estates	RZD	45
Southridge	RZD	79
Coyote Run	RZD	14
Chelsea Commons	TCZD	2
The Commons	VZD	44
TOTAL OTHER ZONING DISTRICTS		358
TOTAL ALL OPEN SPACE		615

12.1.2 Develop Conservation Area Management Plans. The Conservation Commission should develop management plans for the conservation areas owned by the Town, as it does for the country parks. The commission should also work with the landowners and the Vermont Land Trust in developing management plans for the conservation areas that are under easement. These plans should emphasize the maintenance of water quality, biodiversity, and other conservation values. Currently there is a management plan for Mud Pond, an analysis of management alternatives for Five Tree Hill, and an interim management plan for the former Hill property and adjoining conserved lands. The Town should also consider developing management plans for areas protected under the 75% open space rule.

12.1.3 Identify Wetland and Riparian Conservation Area. The Town has identified several other important conservation areas, most of which are wetlands and riparian corridors, including:

- the Griswold Farm and adjacent wetlands and riparian forests, located off River Cove Road at the confluence of the Muddy Brook, Allen Brook, and Winooski River;
- the floodplain forests, tributary confluences, and wetlands along the Winooski River;
- several wetlands south of I-89, including the glacial spillway, located south of Old Creamery Road; the remainder of the wetlands north of Lake Iroquois; and the remainder of the wetlands and forested uplands surrounding Mud Pond;

- the Allen Brook tributaries, wetlands, and riparian areas;
- the remaining hemlock woodlands and wetlands, located south of Mountain View Road;
- the remaining wetlands in the Industrial Zoning District, specifically including those along Marshall Avenue and south of the intersection of Industrial Avenue and Rt. 2; and
- Johnson Falls off Governor Chittenden Road.

Wetlands and riparian areas are partially protected from incompatible development by the Town's stormwater management and watershed health regulations, the Floodplain Zoning District (in some cases), and other state and federal regulations. Permanent protection via conservation easements, or where public access is desirable, should still be pursued as funding opportunities develop.

12.1.4 Identify Upland Conservation Areas. Uplands are more likely to be developed than wetlands or riparian corridors and should have priority in Williston's land conservation efforts. Upland conservation areas include:

- the remaining undeveloped lands on Brownell Mountain, where conservation and trail easements or strategic acquisitions would complement the Town's existing conservation area/country park;
- the unprotected portion of Gramma Ridge, north of Butternut Road, where the Town has already obtained one easement; and
- the remainder of the Bur Oaks knoll (the town already owns the water tank) east of Maple Tree Place. This conservation area was set aside to protect the only regional stand of bur oaks.

This list may be expanded as the Town's conservation and planning commissions identify other parcels that have significant conservation value.

12.1.5 Identify Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas. Despite past development patterns that have fragmented wildlife habitats in Williston and surrounding communities, significant areas of habitat remain that are essential for a variety of plant and animal species and that contribute to local biological diversity and ecological integrity, and support traditional activities such as hunting and fishing. Several areas characterized as significant habitat were identified in *An Assessment of Wildlife Habitat in Williston, VT, 2005*. This University of Vermont study, copies of which are available from Williston Planning, identifies seven wildlife habitat areas – blocks of land characterized by relatively low development densities - that comprise functional habitat for many identified wildlife species. Additional research is underway to refine the wildlife habitat areas and to better define wildlife travel corridors that allow for the movement of wildlife species among habitat areas. When completed, these mapped data will provide the basis for definition of significant wildlife habitat in Williston.

12.1.6 Develop a Mechanism to Protect Significant Wildlife Habitat. The habitat assessment described in 12.1.5 addresses not only the ecological values that characterize the seven wildlife areas, but also the critical issue of connectivity. Maintaining connectivity through the protection of wildlife travel corridors is critical to the long-term survival of several wildlife species in Williston.

For these areas to retain their ecological functions for wildlife, it is important that future development be carefully located and designed to avoid habitat fragmentation and adverse impacts (i.e., impacts that would demonstrably reduce the ecological function of habitat on a particular parcel). This goal can be accomplished through the adoption of the following policies:

12.1.6.1 Define Significant Wildlife Habitat. Clear and unambiguous definitions are needed to ensure that adequate and defensible standards are developed to address wildlife habitat protection in

Williston. A definition of significant wildlife habitat should be developed that is based on the updated habitat data described in 12.1.5.

12.1.6.2 Develop Standards to Protect Significant Wildlife Habitat in Development Review. The definition of significant wildlife habitat and associated maps should be incorporated in the Town's *Unified Development Bylaw* together with appropriate habitat protection standards as an overlay district or other mechanism. These standards should facilitate the protection of areas characterized as significant wildlife habitat (i.e., located within one of the defined wildlife areas or encompassing an identified wildlife travel corridor or other identifiable significant habitat feature).

12.1.7 Utilize Environmental Reserve Funds and Other Non-Regulatory Strategies to Protect Conservation Areas. In addition to regulatory standards to protect significant wildlife habitat and other conservation areas, the Town should also consider appropriate non-regulatory protection strategies. Because conservation areas are especially sensitive to impacts from not only development but also land management techniques (e.g., clearing) that are not easily covered by development regulations, key areas should be identified for long-term protection through the use of the Town's Environmental Reserve Fund. Other non-regulatory strategies should be promoted, such as encouraging landowner involvement in the wetlands reserve program, habitat improvement programs, and conservation easements and/or current use if applicable.

12.1.8 Promote Private Stewardship of Conservation Areas. Listing private lands as a conservation area will not affect their continued use for farming, forest management, or fee-based recreation. In fact, the Town will actively support private stewardship through property tax abatement, as called for in 12.3.1 below, and by working with landowners to encourage sound land management practices (for example, maintaining a forest structure – including snags, downed trees, and understory vegetation – that supports diverse wildlife). Where appropriate, the Town will accept conservation easements, which may be donated by landowners who can benefit from doing so, or acquired using Williston's Environmental Reserve Fund and other resources. The Town should also be proactive in educating landowners about the current regulations designed protect conservation areas, such as watershed protection buffer requirements, and encourage them to take steps that bring them closer to compliance with all applicable laws.

12.1.9 Protect Conservation Areas in Development Review. Development of conservation areas is subject to the Town's bylaws, including the stormwater management and watershed health regulations that apply throughout Williston and the specific requirements of the zoning districts. Depending on their location and scale, projects that include conservation areas may be asked to set at least some portion of those areas aside as open space. This is required for most developments in the ARZD (see Policy 3.2.1) and encouraged in the RZD (see Policies 3.5 and 5.1.4).

12.1.10 Develop a Mechanism to Ensure Compliance With Conditions of Approval. In many cases, conditions of approval for new developments include required actions that are designed to protect Williston's natural resources. For example, as a condition of approval, a Class III wetland may require a 25-foot buffer and permanent demarcation on the ground, such as a fence or a tree line, to memorialize its location. Over time, long after the Certificate of Compliance is issued, the required protective measure may be overlooked unless the Town develops a mechanism to ensure long-term compliance.

12.1.11 Improve the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program to Better Protect Open Space Resources. The TDR option provides an incentive to protect open space resources while allowing a higher density in receiving land where development is encouraged. While efforts are made to improve

the town's TDR program (as presented in Policy 3.2.3), open space resources should be prioritized to ensure that the most important habitat features and open space resources are protected first.

12.2 - Scenic Viewsheds - The Town will protect and maintain the visual character that defines Williston, including open fields and meadows, wooded slopes and ridgelines, and scenic viewpoints.

When driving, bicycling, or hiking through Williston - especially the rural areas - one enjoys views of rolling fields framed by a background of wooded slopes, nearby ridgelines, and distant mountains. These views are central to the sense of place the residents of Williston treasure. To help maintain that sense of place, the Town undertook a detailed assessment that systematically evaluated the visual character and quality of the local landscape in 1989. The results of that analysis are provided on Map 20. The accompanying report is available from the Town planning office. Briefly, Williston's visual character is created by open fields and meadows, wooded hillsides, and ridgelines. These features, and the contrast between them, create a visually satisfying mosaic that is especially appealing where it includes long views to dramatic landforms, such as the Camel's Hump or Mt. Mansfield.

Some of the most important visual resources illustrated on Map 6 are listed below. This list does not include scenic farmlands, which are listed separately in section 12.3 below. Note the substantial overlap with other open space types. Scenic viewsheds that are at least partially protected from incompatible development include:

- the Brennan field, south of Mountain View Road, part of which was designated as open space when the Brennan Woods Subdivision was approved;
- the Martel Hill, located north Mountain View Road, a portion of which was set aside as open space when a residential subdivision was approved;
- the Southridge fields – which were designated as open space in the development review process - that provide an open view up to the homes of the Southridge Subdivision, north of Rt. 2;
- the former Mahan Farm fields, south of Route 2, which the Town has committed to conserve as mitigation for the approval of Maple Tree Place;
- the LaCasse fields along South Brownell Road, a portion of which were designated as open space when a residential subdivision was approved;
- Brownell Mountain, the northern slopes of which are a future country park and conservation area; and
- the former Lyons fields south of Town Hall, which are Town property.

Some viewsheds have recently been subdivided, or are now in the development review process, including the former Swift property along Oak Hill Road, the former Brown fields west of South Road, the former Foxwood Farm north of Maple Tree Place, and a portion of the ridge that forms (roughly) the boundary between Williston and Richmond. Some open space will be protected in each of these developments. Scenic properties that currently have no formal protection from incompatible uses include:

- open fields and meadows, including the pastures along River Cove Road; the fields southwest of the intersection of Mountain View and Old Stage roads; meadows south of Governor Chittenden Road; and portions of several parcels along Oak Hill; and

- prominent ridgelines, including much of the Richmond Ridge; the hills that lie above the Winooski River; the highlands above I-89 between South Brownell and Oak Hill roads; and the north-south ridge, including Gramma Ridge that runs through the central portion of Williston south Old Creamery Road.

12.2.1 Update the Visual Resource Assessment. Williston's landscape has changed since the visual resource assessment was done in 1989. Development has filled some views, formerly open fields are no longer mowed, and the number of public viewpoints has grown as roads and trails are extended. A new visual resources analysis will be conducted using a combination of public participation and geographic information systems technology.

12.2.2 Continue to Consider Visual Resources in Development Review. Visual impacts will continue to be considered in the review of any proposed development project in a scenic viewshed identified on Map 20 or its successor (as called for by Policy 12.2.1, above), including Administrative Permit proposals to construct new homes and other buildings that were not part of a subdivision process where building envelopes were identified. The bylaw should be updated to clarify this permit review criteria.

The Town originally implemented this policy through two overlay zoning districts: the Ridgelines/Wooded Hillside and Special Features. In 2008, the Ridgelines/Wooded Hillside and Special Features Overlays were replaced with specific performance standards, including standards designed to minimize the impact of development on important viewsheds. These standards address the siting of structures (outside the viewshed if possible, or where they will have the least impact if it is not) and building design, including height, color, scale, area of glass surface, outdoor lighting, and signs. The standards also limit clearing and thinning of wooded landscapes on ridgelines and steep slopes.

12.2.3 Explore New Methods and Technologies That Will Better Illustrate the Impact of Proposed Development On the Landscape. The Town currently relies on the Visual Resource Overlay to guide development projects in Williston. To avoid being subjective, the Town should explore new visual assessment methods and technologies that developers can use to better illustrate how the proposed development will impact the landscape.

12.2.4 Promote Private Stewardship of Scenic Viewsheds. Like conservation areas, scenic viewsheds are best protected by continuing private use for agriculture, wood lots, and recreation. The Town will implement the same tools listed in Policy 12.1.8 to help landowners maintain scenic viewsheds.

12.3 - Working Landscapes - The Town of Williston will encourage landowners to actively manage their resources for the production of food, forest, and earth products; wildlife, scenic views; and outdoor recreation. This support will include continued funding for the purchase of development rights; zoning for a reasonable range of income-generating activities in the ARZD; and restoring a local property tax abatement program.

Working landscapes are lands actively used for the production of food, fiber, earth products, and outdoor recreation. They include cropland, dairies, woodlots, orchards, sugarbushes, pastures, plant nurseries, sand mines, and fee-based recreation areas. Working landscapes do not include meadows or fields that are only periodically hayed for aesthetic purposes. These lands may fall into types of open space, but the intent here is to include only lands from which the owners derive at least a part of their livelihood.

Working landscapes are what many residents and visitors see as the classic image of Vermont. The persistence of these traditional land uses in rapidly changing Williston is a credit to the perseverance and hard work of dedicated private landowners. The policies adopted here seek to support their continued stewardship.

12.3.1 Reinstate the Local Tax Abatement Program. The most important step Williston residents can take to protect open space and working landscapes is to reinstate the Local Tax Abatement Program. It is clear that rapidly increasing property taxes are one of the factors contributing to the loss of working landscapes and other open spaces to which the state's Current Use Program does not apply. This is due both to the minimum size requirement and its complexity. To date, no known landowner who formerly participated in the Town's program has yet switched to the state's Current Use option. This policy calls for the immediate reinstatement of a Local Tax Abatement Program that recognizes the public values of private stewardship for the town's working landscapes, scenic viewsheds, and conservation areas. A feasibility study conducted in 2008 determined that the cost of such a program, rather, the subsidy taxpayers would pay for the benefits of open space conservation, would be capped at \$250,000. This is less than 2¢ on the current tax rate and will decline as the grand list grows.

At the direction of the 2006 *Comprehensive Plan*, a task force was appointed by the Selectboard to review and revise the details of the Local Tax Abatement Program. In 2008, a revised program was presented to Selectboard, but the Board took no action. Conservation and Planning Commissioners recommend that the Selectboard reconsider adopting the program or provide any specific objections so that those objections can be properly addressed.

12.3.2 Encourage Open Space Landowners to Conserve. By applying the 75% open space rule, the Town protects valuable open space perpetually but at the same time decreases the 'developable value' of the land. In other words, the land value has decreased but the tax burden has not. The Town should consider purchasing the remainder of the 'lost' development rights or provide an incentive, such as the local tax abatement program described in 12.3.1, to keep working landscapes in production and open spaces and conservation areas in effect.

The 75% open space rule also deters the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) from funding conservation easements proposals in Williston. This is because the VHCB would rather commit limited funds to conservation projects that are not already perpetually protected by Town regulations. This means that a landowner may choose to develop their land if conservation easement funding is not available. The tax abatement program described in 12.3.1 above will provide an incentive for landowners to keep their land in production or otherwise 'open' instead of choosing to develop.

<p>Current Use Program. More information on Vermont's Current Use tax program may be obtained from the Department of Taxes at http://www.state.vt.us/tax/pvr.shtml.</p>

12.3.3 Identify Important Agricultural Lands. As noted earlier in this plan, Williston has lost a sizeable area of productive farmland to development. Agriculture is still an important part of the local landscape, however, and the Town will continue to work with landowners to sustain it. The Town developed the LESA (Land Evaluation, Site Assessment) system on which Map 2 is based to help identify important farms in the late 1980s. The top five farms identified by that system are all still in production. These include the Clark (Riverhill), Conant, Fontaine, and Landvater properties along the Winooski River, and the Imajica farm. None of these farms are protected from conversion to other uses by a conservation easement or other restriction. Other working farms in Williston include the Onion River Horse Farm on River Cove Road; the LaCasse Farm on South Brownell; the North Williston Cattle Company on Fay Lane; the Adams Apple Orchard north of Old Stage Road; the

Johnson Farm and woodlot at the east edge of the Village, which the Town has helped conserve through the purchase of development rights (PDR); the adjoining Siple Farm, which runs along South Road and has also been conserved via PDR; the Paquette Full of Posies nursery located on Rt. 2 east of the village; the Boutin Family Farm; and several farms along Oak Hill Road, including the Isham Farm and sugarbush, which has been conserved through PDR. These farms are located in the Agriculture/Rural Residential Zoning District. The Burnett Farm on Route 2 west of the Village, the Glazer fields/Windswept Farms southwest of the intersection of Mountain View and Old Stage, and the Adams Farm Market and gardens across Old Stage, are in the Residential Zoning District. With the local foods movement, there are many small farm operations cropping up in Williston. The Town should encourage and support these small farms wherever possible.

Defining Farmlands. The State of Vermont uses a definition of agricultural lands that is based solely in the important farmlands definitions adopted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (see 10 V.S.A. § 6001(15)). Those definitions, which include “prime farmland” and “farmlands of statewide importance,” reflect the inherent characteristics and management of a parcel, but ignore its context. Their use in Williston and other suburban areas has been counterproductive, making it more difficult to promote a compact pattern of development because the state is “protecting” isolated parcels of productive soils that are surrounded by development and urban infrastructure. Williston follows the experience of numerous jurisdictions throughout the nation in focusing its farmland protection efforts on working farms (which may include soils that are not so productive) rather than on soil bodies.

12.3.4 Identify Other Working Landscapes. Other working landscapes include tree farms, commercial wood lots, nurseries, sand and gravel mines, and fee-based outdoor recreation. Some local examples include the Comeau sugarbush at the end of Bradley Lane, the sand and gravel operations in North Williston, the Boomhower wood lot and the former O’Brien property wood lot, located on Gramma Ridge south of Five Tree Hill, which the Town has helped conserve through PDR. Outdoor recreation facilities include two golf courses (Williston and Catamount), the North Country Sportsman Club located off Old Creamery Road; and the Catamount Family Center on Governor Chittenden Road.

12.3.5 Continue the Local Purchase of Development Rights Program. The Town will continue to fund its PDR program, and to work with other organizations, including the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, to leverage funds. While many landowners are uncomfortable with permanent restrictions on their rights, the Town should always be ready to assist those who are willing to commit to conservation.

12.3.6 Ensure that the Town Bylaws Permit a Reasonable Range of Uses in Working Landscapes. The Town will review its bylaws to ensure promotion of the development of diverse, innovative agricultural activities, including farm stands; cottage industries, like cheese making or other value-added enterprises; farm waste recovery for energy generation; and fee-based recreation, hospitality, and educational activities.

12.3.7 Promote Community Gardens in Designated Open Space. The Town should encourage developers to designate community garden space into their development plans whether inside or outside of the designated open space.

12.3.8 Consider Land Use Conflicts when Investing in Parks or Trails. The Town should carefully consider the potential conflict between public access and farm and woodlot operations before investing in country parks or trails.

12.3.9 Invest in Open Space & Working Landscapes. Williston should continue to budget funds for community and country parks, paths and trails. The Town should also continue annual funding of its

Environmental Reserve Fund (ERF) and seek matching grants for land conservation projects. The level of funding committed to the ERF should reflect the rising land values. It may ultimately be necessary to consider a voter-approved bond to protect open space on the scale needed to maintain Williston's rural landscape.