

CHAPTER 10 – EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

Schools are among the most important public facilities in Williston. They are focal points of activity for children and adults, a role that is reinforced by the location of school buildings and playgrounds in close proximity to the town’s public parks and recreation facilities, as well as to the town library. For many people, the town’s schools are one of the primary reasons for living in Williston. The funding of public schools accounts for roughly 75% of all local government expenditures, thus careful planning for the future needs of the school system are essential to sound fiscal management.

The schools serving Williston children are not operated by the town government. Rather, the Williston schools are governed by the Champlain Valley School District, which oversees all of the public schools in the towns of Charlotte, Hinesburg, Shelburne, St. George, and Williston. This unified school district was approved by voters in these towns on, June 7, 2016. In Williston, K-8 grade education takes place at the Allen Brook School and the Williston Central School. For the location of these buildings see Map 13 – Public Facilities. Williston high school students attend Champlain Valley Union High School in Hinesburg, which is a regional school serving children from the towns of Williston, Charlotte, Hinesburg, Shelburne, and St. George.

This plan element explains how the town will consider the needs of the schools when making land use and infrastructure decisions. It also covers child care.

Objective 10.1 – Schools – This objective and its supporting policies call for the town to manage growth in a way that is consistent with the capacity of the schools.

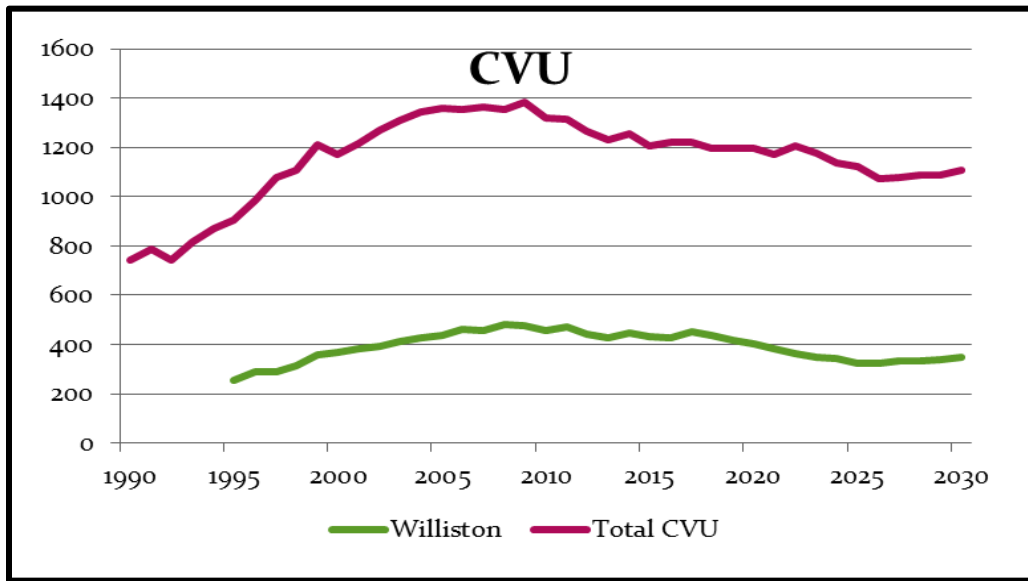
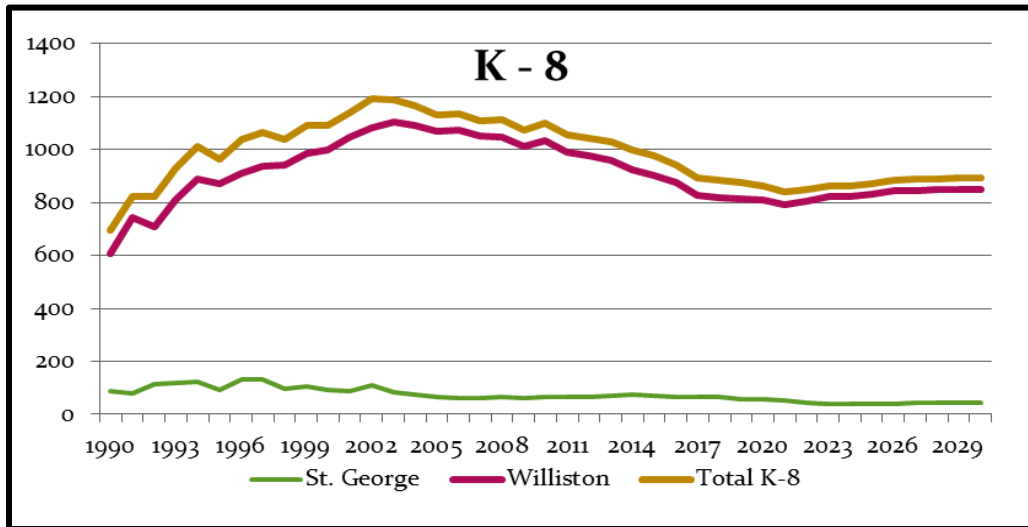
Objective 10.2 - Child Care - Vermont law was recently amended to require towns to address child care in comprehensive plans.

Objective 10.3 – Higher Education – The Vermont Technical College’s (VTC) Chittenden County campus is Williston’s only institution of higher education at this time. The town will facilitate VTC’s expansion and welcome other institutions of learning.

10.1 Schools - The town will continue to consider the capacity and needs of the schools serving Williston as it makes land use and capital budget decisions.

At the dawn of the 21st century, there was great concern about rising school enrollment levels and the ability of the town to ensure that school facilities could keep pace with the needs of the projected student population. The 2000 plan projected that the local schools would begin to exceed the capacity of the school system’s facilities in the 2006-07 school year, and modular classroom facilities were installed at the Allen Brook School. The last decade, however has seen a slow but steady drop in school enrollment numbers. These declining enrollment numbers allowed the Williston School System to remove the modular classroom buildings from the Allen Brook School campus in 2010 after a reorganization of programming at the town’s two elementary schools. An analysis of changing enrollments by grade and the number of births to Williston residents suggests that this pattern of small but steady declining enrollment levels before stabilizing will continue through the 2016-2024 timeframe of this plan. The school board’s is not currently proposing a new or expanded facility at this time, but will likely look to expand the Allen Brook School should school enrollment patterns change course and point to the need for additional classroom space. In November 2016, Williston voters approved a \$19.85 million bond to pay for extensive renovations and improvements to the Williston Central School which will be completed in 2017. These renovations will remove a number of existing deficiencies in the school facilities, and enable the school to continue to serve Williston children for decades to come.

The renovated and expanded Champlain Valley Union High School (CVU) has a capacity of approximately 1,460 students. The October 1 SY 2015-2016 enrollment was 1268 students, or 87% of the high school’s capacity. Enrollment levels at CVU have varied slightly in recent years, having reached its highest level of 1,418 during the 2009-2010 school. However, moving forward, the school system is projecting the student population at CVU to decline during the planning period, and thus staying well within the design capacity of the existing school building. Over the time frame of this plan, no new or expanded facilities are contemplated at this time at CVU.



10.1.1 Continue to Charge a School Impact Fee. The town currently collects a school impact fee for every new dwelling. These fees change each year, reflecting their use in paying debt service on the Allen Brook School and the improvements at CVU. The school impact fees were assessed and revised in 2013. The impact fees used to pay for the bonds financing the construction of the Allen Brook School were discontinued at the end of June 2015. The impact fees used to help finance improvements at CVU were updated as part of the 2013 revision, and these fees will continue to be collected through the end of FY 2025.

Private Schools. Private schools play a significant role in educating Williston residents. The 2000 Census found that roughly 18% of the town's elementary and middle school students and some 30% of its high school students attended private schools.

10.1.2 Prepare a Facilities Plan. To the extent that Williston's growth management decisions - which include both the annual cap on residential construction and the collection of impact fees - are based on the capacity of the schools, the school boards must be willing to provide the town with the facts it needs to defend those decisions. A facilities plan must be prepared by, or for, the school boards. That plan should include enrollment projections, a clear explanation of the capacity of the school buildings and bus routes, and action steps for providing any new facilities that increasing enrollments may require.

10.1.3 Meet Regularly to Discuss School Needs. The Selectboard, school boards, and the planning commission should meet at least once a year.

10.2 Child Care – The Town of Williston recognizes the importance of child care in community life, and will ensure that its planning and development review process do not place unreasonable limitations on child care facilities.

The private sector provides child care services in Williston. In 2016 there were 11 licensed child care centers and 8 registered child care homes in Williston, offering 614 slots for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. There were also 281 slots for after-school child care for school-age children. There were a few vacancies in each category, with only three total vacancies for infants and six for toddlers, town-wide.

10.2.1 Permit Child Care Centers Wherever Schools are Permitted. Williston brought its bylaws into compliance with the state law (24 V.S.A. § 4412(5)) allowing home child care in residential zoning districts in September 2005. In 2008 the town's bylaws were amended to allow child care centers in all zoning districts where elementary schools are permitted uses.

10.2.2 Permit Child Care Centers in Employment Generating Zoning Districts. Child care centers are currently allowed in many of the zoning districts allowing employment generating uses. This enables parents to access child care services in areas close to their jobs. The town shall continue to allow child care centers in employment generating zoning districts as appropriate.

10.2.23 Permit Child Care Centers as Accessory Uses. The bylaws have also been revised to make it clear that child care is a permitted accessory uses for educational institutions, churches, and places of employment.

10.3 Higher Education – The Town of Williston will encourage and facilitate the location and expansion of institutions of higher education within the town. Specifically, the town will facilitate the expansion of Vermont Technical College at its new location in Blair Park.

Williston residents have access to many opportunities for higher education. The University of Vermont and several private colleges are nearby in the greater Burlington region. The Vermont Technical College (VTC) is the only college located in Williston, and offers a number of engineering and technical degree programs, as well as an array of other vocational and technical training programs. Based in Randolph, VTC has been expanding its presence in Chittenden County with the acquisition of a building in Blair Park (see Map 13 – Public Facilities). Enrollment has grown from roughly 350 students in SY 2004-05 to approximately 660 students in 2015. Enrollment growth at VTC has slowed in recent years, however, VTC continues to have a long range goal of expanding its operations in Williston. VTC has also started housing a limited number

of students on campus, and currently offers dormitory space for roughly 45 students. The town will continue to work with Vermont Tech to ensure that adequate infrastructure is available for its expansion, and that the change from commercial space to an educational institution complies with relevant bylaws. You can learn more about VTC at <http://www.vtc.vsc.edu/>.