



VILLAGE VISION

2018-2024 WILLISTON VILLAGE MASTER PLAN

an amendment to the *2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan*

Acknowledgments

This plan represents a collaborative effort by Williston citizens and staff along with members of the Williston Historic and Architectural Advisory Committee, the Williston Planning Commission, and the Williston Selectboard, as well as the staff of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission.

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2018 Williston Village Master Plan

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List of Acronyms:

CoA: Certificate of Appropriateness

DRB: Development Review Board

HAAC: Historic and Architectural Advisory Committee

NPS: National Park Service

VZD: Village Zoning District

WDB: Williston Unified Development Bylaw

1.1 Purpose of the Williston Village Master Plan

The purpose of the Williston Village Master Plan is to provide guidance to town decision-makers, citizens, and staff as they work together to address development pressure, demands for transportation, and the desires expressed by community members to preserve the historic quality of the village while enhancing its vibrancy and role as the civic center of the town.

This plan is adopted as an appendix to the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan (often referred to as the Town Plan). While the Town Plan currently discusses some goals for the village, the creation of this plan is an opportunity for the town to explore the opportunities and challenges faced by the village in greater detail.

Based on public input, an accounting of the history of the village, and its geographic and historic context, this plan proposes changes to how the town interacts with the village in three action areas: Development Standards; Streets, Sidewalks, Paths and Trails; and Vibrancy. This plan establishes objectives and the policies to be implemented by the town to achieve those objectives.

1.1.1 How This Plan Will Be Used

Objectives and policies are organized in the implementation table at the end of this plan, which also identifies partners the town should work with and timelines for the implementation of each policy, along with any intermediate steps necessary to achieve them. These objectives and policies are tabulated in the same format as the objectives and policies in the *2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan* and can be used by the planning staff, planning commission, and town leaders to sequence, prioritize, and monitor progress toward achieving the vision articulated by this plan.

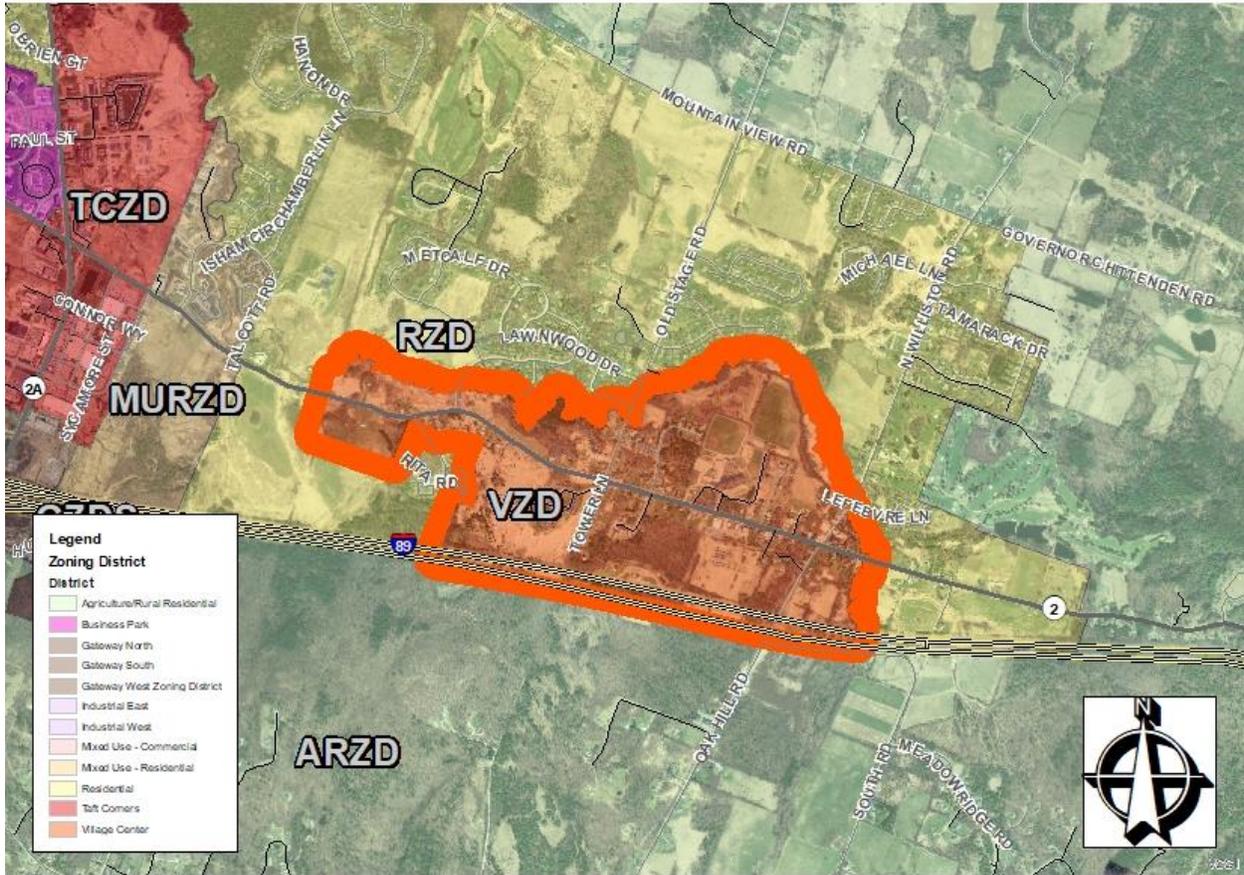


The Korner Kwick Stop and the Federated Church in the village at the corner of North Williston Road and US2 (Williston Road).

1.2 What is Williston Village? What Part of Williston is Covered by this Master Plan?

Williston Village is a place within the town of Williston, Vermont. It is one of several historic centers in the town and contains a high concentration of the town’s oldest buildings. The exact boundaries of the village depend on who you ask, but for the purposes of this plan, the village is all of the lands contained within the Village Zoning District as identified in the Williston Unified Development Bylaw. This plan may also identify goals beyond that zoning boundary, especially along Route 2, North Williston Road, Oak Hill Road, and Old Stage Road, which connect the village to the surrounding rural, residential, and commercial areas next to it.

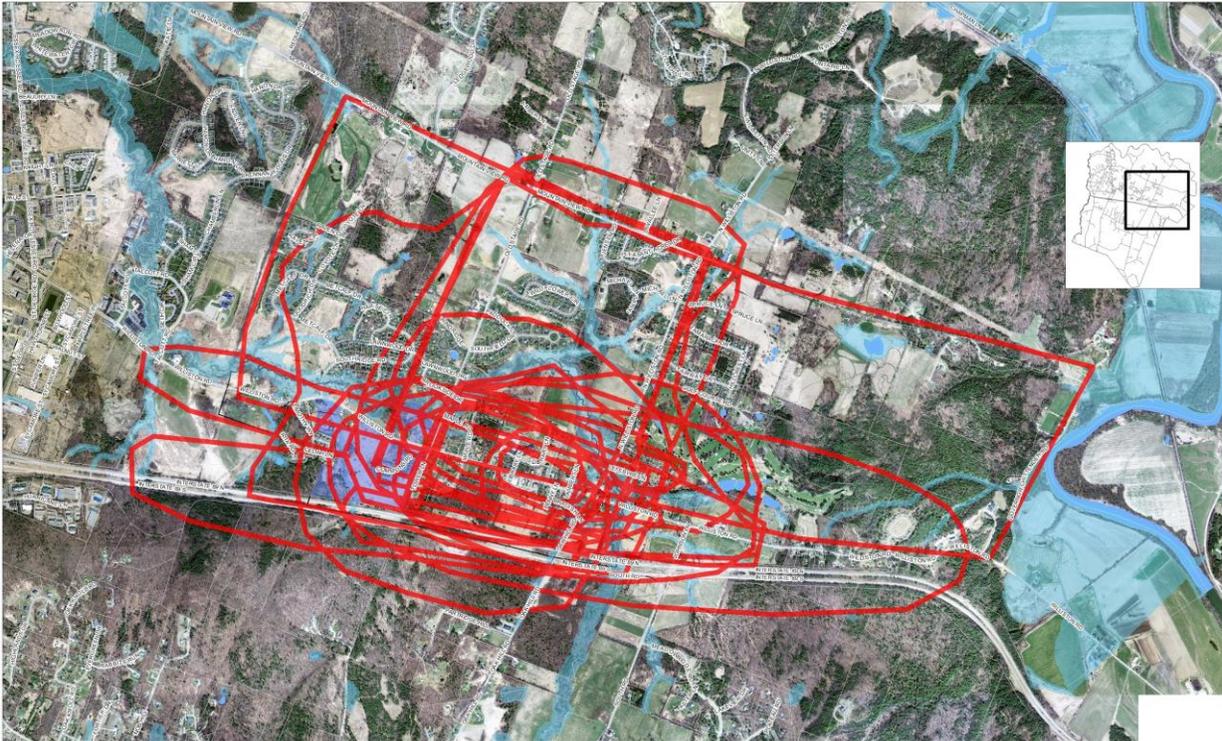
The Village Zoning District (VZD)



The Village Zoning District (VZD; in orange). The yellow area surrounding it is the Residential District (RZD) and the green area to the south is Agricultural/ Rural Residential (ARZD).

As part of the ‘kick-off’ sessions for this plan in 2016, town staff asked participants to draw the boundary of the village on a blank map. People drew fairly different boundaries, but most of them included the core of the village along Route 2 from Old Stage Road to North Williston and Oak Hill Roads.

Where is Williston Village?



At our kickoff “Open House” in 2015, we asked participants to draw “Williston Village” on a map that showed no other boundaries. The red lines show all of the different boundaries people drew.

What most people experience as “the village” stretches along US Route 2 (Williston Road) generally from the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church east to French Hill, and north from Interstate 89 to the Allen Brook. Today, the village contains single-family homes, apartments, businesses, municipal services, parks, paths, playing fields, a school, and the town library. The majority of the buildings in the village are historic, dating from between 1790 and 1900.

The way the village looks, feels, and functions today is a result of its strong historic fabric and many decades of efforts by the town and others to preserve it while also allowing for adaptation, vibrancy, and new development where appropriate. The same tensions between preservation and cost, intensity of use and the impacts it brings, and between change and adaptation continue to present the greatest challenges and opportunities to the people of the town as they work to shape the future of this special place while honoring its past.

This new *Village Master Plan* is an effort to clarify and, in many cases, reiterate the town’s longstanding vision for the future of the village. Over the last two decades, the town has worked through several difficult decisions about proposed development and changes to streets and intersections in the village. The town has also learned more about the extent of wetlands and other constraints on lands within the village. The knowledge of those constraints inform and in some cases limit its vision of what could happen in the future. Businesses within the village

have come and gone. The town has learned more about the challenges they face and how that connects to the stated goals that the village contain a vibrant mix of shops, offices, and homes. This plan addresses both the regulatory challenges faced by commercial users in the village as well as citizens' desire for a vibrant atmosphere there.



A 1984 rendering of potential strip development in the Village

1.3 Historic Significance

The majority of the historic buildings in Williston Village and the Williston Historic Gateway were built between 1790 & 1900, with a large portion being built between 1820 & 1860.¹ To understand why Williston Village and the town as a whole grew and prospered during this time, it is important to understand what this period in history looked like for Vermont.

Following the War of 1812 and the simultaneous Napoleonic Wars in Europe, the United States had been largely cut off from foreign trade opportunities. This led to one of the fastest growing industries in Vermont's history, the great Merino boom. At the peak of their production there were six sheep for every one human in the state. Larger Merino farmers were buying up smaller neighboring operations, and subsistence farmers turned to diversified farming and trades to make their living. It was in the context of this economic boom that many of the significant structures in the Village were built.

¹ See *The Williston Story*, F. Kennon Moody and Floyd D. Putnam, 1961

Unlike the bulk of Vermont whose reputation for accessible transportation was poor at best, Williston was very lucky to have the first form of transportation that would grow our town: the Winooski Turnpike. While other Vermont Villages were staying small, and their farmers were migrating West to make a new life, the Winooski Turnpike (now US Rt. 2) allowed Willistonians to capitalize on travelers and have access to commerce. As the only link between Montpelier and Burlington, 6 taverns were in operation in the Village and Historic Gateway along the Winooski Turnpike. A “tavern” at this time implied a place where travelers would find lodging, food, boarding for their horse and carriages, and most importantly entertainment. Second only to churches, taverns were the hub of the community and the social scene in the Village.

People working diversified farms and those focusing on trades founded villages like Williston. By 1842 two churches were built in the Village and several tanneries, machine shops, a grain mill, several distilleries, a blacksmith shop, meeting house, taverns and two stores were in operation.

With the diversification of agriculture and industry, and local business fueled by the Winooski Turnpike, actual cash was changing hands all over the Village. It was now possible for Williston Village to tax those industries and professionals who owned local businesses. Much of the actual industry moved north to North Williston with the advent of the train in 1849, leaving Williston Village to operate more as the professional and community center of Williston.

Reading through the list of homebuilders and property owners from the 1840's -1860's one may recognize the large number of notable families in Williston Village like Chittenden, Wright, Brownell, and Miller. With a thriving community and wealth inside the village, the use of vernacular Greek Revival and Federal architectural styles declined. Residents started to build more high-style facades in the 1860's. In the 1880's they adorned houses with architectural features, including stained glass windows and corbels, and built elaborate detached carriage houses. Taverns became less popular as the train carried travelers directly to their destinations, and the Village transitioned to working farms and the mostly residential district we see today.

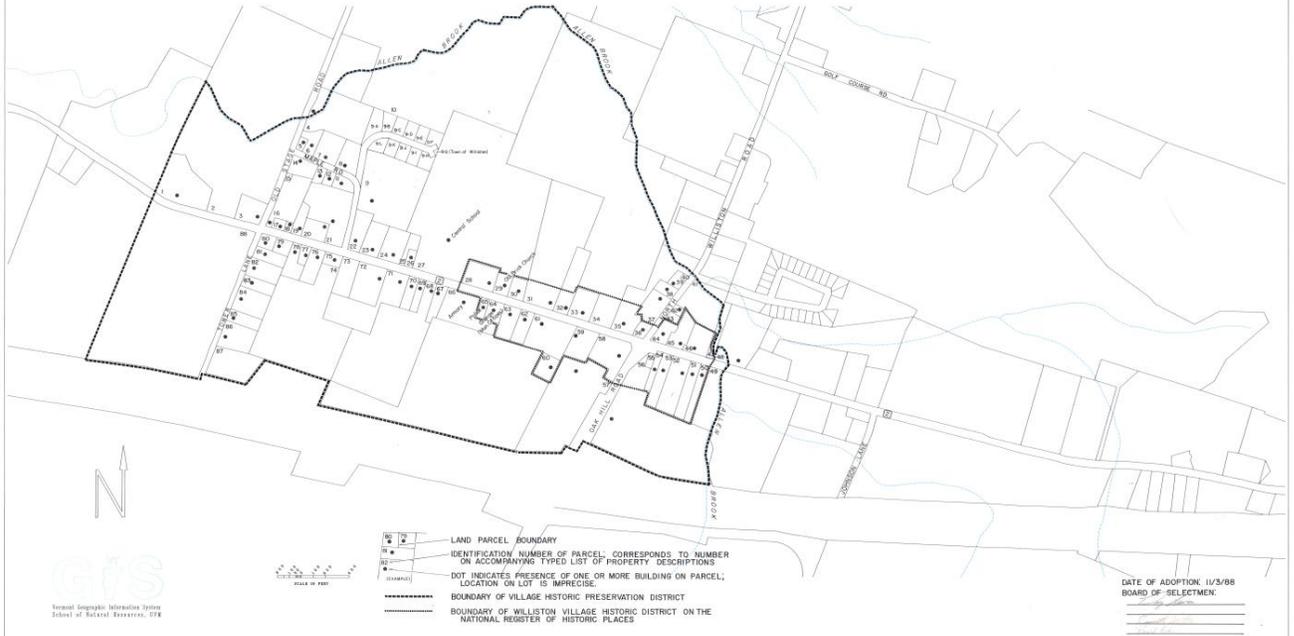
1.4. Boundaries of the VZD and sub-districts

Williston Village is partially contained by several regulatory and designation boundaries: the Village Zoning District (VZD), The Williston Village *Vermont Designated Village Center*, and the Williston Village National Register Historic District. Each of these mapped areas represents a set of tools the Town can use to meet its goals for the Village as discussed below.

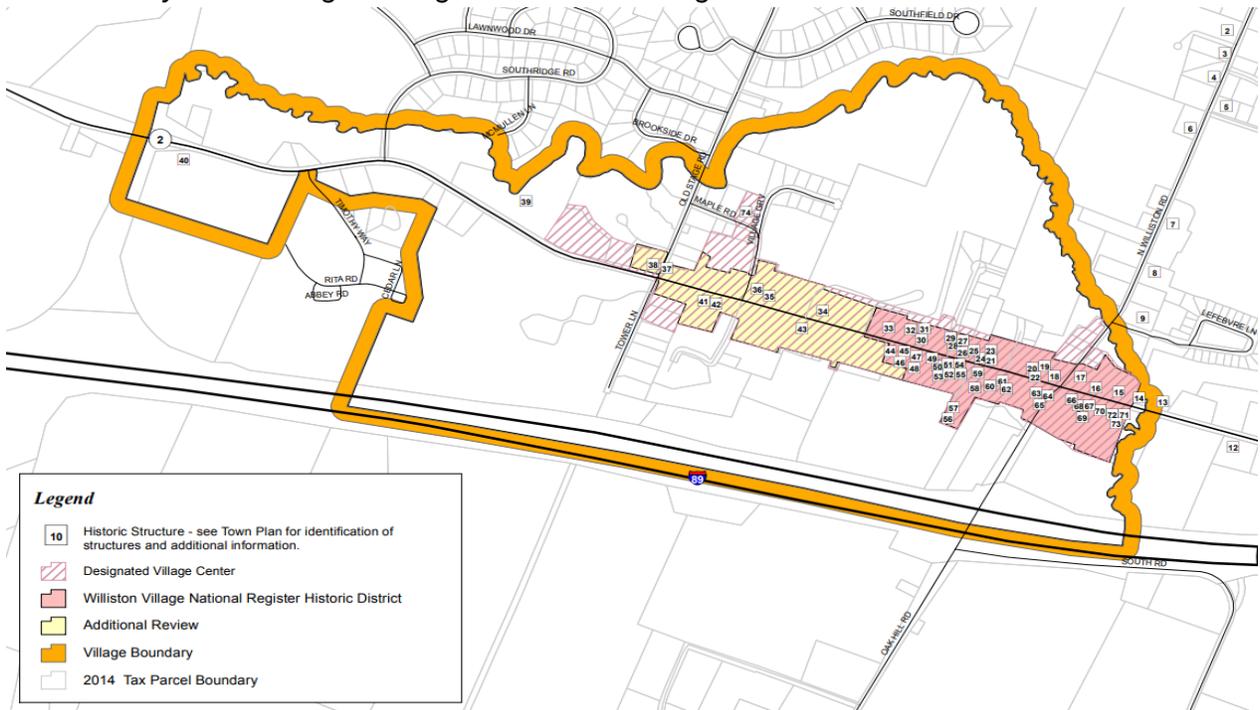
1.4.1. The National Register District

The Williston Village National Register Historic District was established in 1986 and expanded in 1992 to include accessory structures and outbuildings on the lots within the District.

VILLAGE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OVERLAY OF WILLISTON, VERMONT



The original boundary of the Williston Village National Register Historic District from 1988, with the boundary of the Village Zoning District surrounding it.



The National Register District (pink), Additional Review Area (yellow), and Designated Village Center (pink hatch) within the Village Zoning District (orange). A larger version of this map is contained within the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan as Map 6.

1.4.2. The Additional Review Area and remainder of the VZD

Development in the VZD, which surrounds the Historic District and additional Review Area, is subject to the same standards as the district, but those standards may be administered by the Zoning Administrator without approval by the HAAC or the DRB.

1.4.3 The Designated Village Center

Williston Village is also a state-designated Village Center. Designation was originally approved in 2006, was extended until 2012, and lapsed in 2016 following a delay in the adoption of the new Town Plan. Following the adoption of the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan in 2017, the town applied to the Vermont Downtown Board and received approval of a new Village Center Designation. Village Center Designation can potentially provide financial benefits to landowners and tenants, including tax credits for work on buildings, priority consideration for state facilities, grant opportunities, and flexibility in the use of special assessment district funds. These incentives can help maintain the historic character of the village as well as the other goals of this plan.

2. History of Past Planning Efforts in the Village.

There have been efforts to plan for the future of Williston Village almost as long as there has been planning and zoning in Williston. Efforts to retain and restore important historic structures were made by the town and other civic groups as far back as the 1960's. The first zoning district established in town that impacted the village came along in 1964. The first comprehensive plan in Williston that specifically discusses the village was adopted in 1987.

As the town began to experience increased development pressure and demand for services, citizens became more concerned about the impact development might have on areas of town beyond Taft Corners, including the village.

2.1. Pre-1980

1927: US-Route 2 is paved through Williston Village

1976: Williston completes its first Historic Sites and Structures survey.

September 28, 1979: Williston's first application for National Register Historic District is approved.

2.2. The 1980's survey

August, 1986: The Williston Selectboard votes to reduce the allowed residential density in the Village from six units per acre to three units per acre. This is further reduced to two units per acre, which is what is allowed as of 2017.

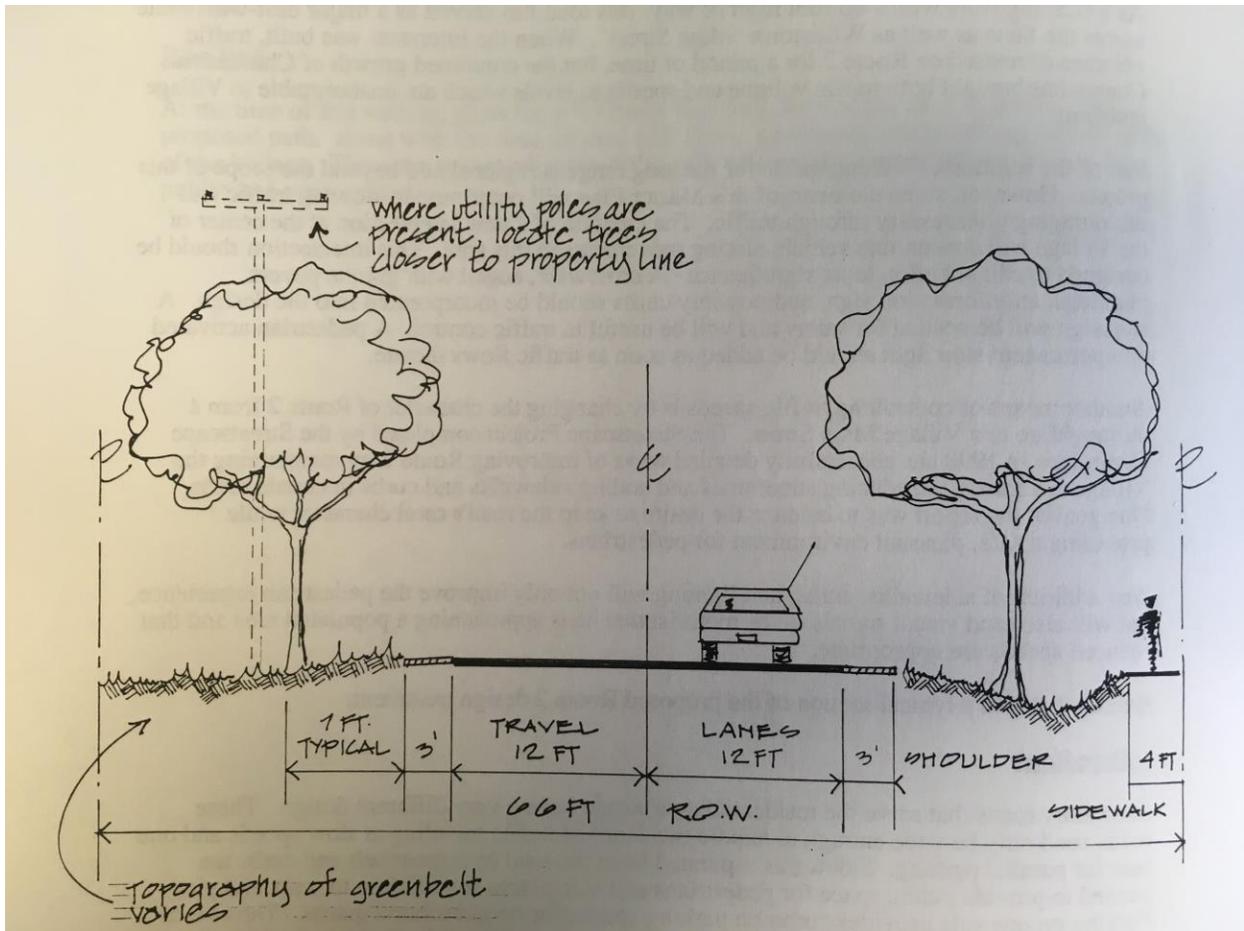
1988: Williston completes its first Streetscape Plan.

1989: The Williston Historical Society publishes *A Walking Tour of Historic Williston*, identifying many of the important structures within Williston Village.

1989: As part of a community conversation about growth in Williston, the University of Vermont Department of Historic Preservation Visual Lab prepares some physical models of what the Village might look like unless development standards are changed.

2.3. Village Streetscape Project

1990: The Williston Village Streetscape Committee submits its recommendations for Williston Village to the Planning Commission and Selectboard. Most of the committee's recommendations are related to extending the sidewalk system in the Village and adding crosswalks and other pedestrian enhancements. Tree planting in the "greenbelt" between the sidewalks and the road is also recommended.



Added sidewalks and Street Trees from the 1990 Williston Village Streetscape project

2.4. Village Streetscape Project II

1991: Williston amends its National Register Historic District to include many outbuildings and supporting structures not originally included in the District.

2.5. Plans for Development behind Town Hall

1991: Williston adopts its first Village Master Plan. The plan encompasses desired streetscape configurations, road connections, and design standards for development. The plan anticipates significant residential development south of Town Hall between the town property and Interstate 89 and north of Williston Central School. Neither of these developments ever happened.



A rendering of anticipated new development in the village from the 1991 Williston Village Master Plan

1999: Williston develops and adopts the *Williston Village Historic District Design Review Guide*.

2.6 Designations and New Rules

November, 2006: Williston applies for and receives Village Center Designation for a portion of Williston Village.

June, 2009: The *Williston Unified Development Bylaw* is adopted as a complete replacement of the existing *Williston Zoning Ordinance*. The *Bylaw* adds regulatory weight to the *Williston Village Historic District Design Review Guide*, placing it in the document as an appendix and stating that in most cases, the “should” requirements of the *Guide* will be treated as “shall” requirements in the *Bylaw*. The *Bylaw* also establishes an “Additional Review Area” beyond the boundary of the National Register District where applicants will have to follow the same design review and approval process as those within the district boundary.

November, 2011: The Downtown Board approves a five-year renewal of the *Williston Village Designated Village Center*.

May, 2016: Williston Planning staff kicks off the “Village Vision” public input project. The goal of this project is to develop a Williston Village Master Plan for eventual adoption into the Williston Comprehensive Plan.

September, 2016: Williston Public Works installs Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB's) at two crosswalks on US-2 within the proposed Designated Village Center boundary. Pedestrian safety and confidence is enhanced.

November 2016: Williston's existing Village Center designation expires. It cannot be renewed right away as the town is still working to adopt its new Comprehensive Plan.

September 2017: Williston's *2016-2024 Comprehensive Plan* is adopted by the Selectboard and approved by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. The plan contains new language referencing and discussing the benefits of Village Center Designation and calls for the adoption of the *Village Master Plan*.

October 2017: Williston applies for Village Center Designation. As part of the conversation between planning staff and the Williston Selectboard, the idea of allocating staff resources to promoting the benefits of designation to commercial property owners is discussed and supported.

November 2017: The State of Vermont Downtown Board approves a new Village Center designation for Williston Village.

2017-2018: Williston's Planning Commission will continue to work on the Village Master Plan and will transmit it to the Selectboard for adoption in 2018.

Beyond 2018: Further efforts to implement the Master Plan will be focused around zoning bylaw and design standards updates, transportation improvements with a focus on streetscape design, bicycle/pedestrian safety, and adding "vibrancy" to the Village by enhancing programming and opportunities for the people of Williston to access and enjoy their historic village center. The town will also work to make commercial landowners aware of the benefits of Village Center designation and help them improve their historic structures.

3. Williston Village in the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan

The 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan contains specific policies directing the town to undertake additional planning efforts for Williston Village. The Designated Village Center, Village Master Plan, and a specific call to address land development standards in the village are all discussed and identified as work items to be completed during the life of the plan.

3.1. The Town Plan calls for the Village Master Plan to be developed:

The bulk of the language in the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan is contained in Chapter 3- Land Use. Policy 3.6.1 below specifically calls for the adoption of this Village Master Plan.

3.6 – Williston Village - The Town of Williston will continue to maintain and protect the historic character of its village center.

The Village Zoning District (VZD) encompasses one of the two focal points of Williston's settlement (the other was in North Williston, at the railroad). A portion of the VZD is included in the Williston Village Historic District, which is on the National Register of Historic Places (see Map 6). A larger portion of the VZD includes a mix of historic and more recent development. Development in both areas must comply with the Williston Village Historic District Design Review Guide, as incorporated into the town's zoning bylaw. For more on the design review process please see Chapter 4 – Community Design. Williston Village also contains a state-designated Village Center. In Williston, village center designation is particularly important because it impacts the designated growth center adjacent to it. Ongoing approval of the growth center depends on it incorporating a designated downtown, village center, or new town center. Village center designation can also potentially provide financial benefits to landowners and tenants, including tax credits for work on buildings, priority consideration for state facilities, grant opportunities, and flexibility in the use of special assessment district funds. These incentives can help maintain the historic character of the Village.

3.6.1 Develop and Adopt a Village Master Plan. The village planning process should aim to preserve the historic character and pedestrian friendliness of the village and consider the present town green, the possibility of connecting streets within the village to enhance traffic and pedestrian circulation, and appropriate improvements at the intersection of North Williston, Oak Hill, and Rt. 2, as well as limitations on development imposed by the wetlands and streams that are found throughout the Village. As of June, 2016, the town has begun the process of creating a Village Master Plan.

3.6.2 Examine the Density Standards for Mixed-Use Development in the VZD. The existing development standards for the VZD allow properties to have a mix of residential

and some non-residential uses on the same property. The current standards do not address how the maximum allowable residential density might be affected by the location of non-residential uses on the same property. The town should consider developing standards for mixed use developments in the VZD. The Village Master plan process will include recommendations for changes to the bylaws that will address the density and intensity of development within the VZD. See Chapter 4, Community Design, for more discussion of this.

4.1 Why a new Master Plan? How was this Plan Produced?

The village is a unique part of the town. The village has been through several cycles of being more commercial, or more residential. Over the last several decades, vehicle traffic through the village has increased steadily. Stricter design standards for the village have resulted in careful reworking of historic structures and new development that “fits in” with the historic pattern. While the development of Taft Corners has shifted the center of commercial activity to the Growth Center, Central School and many town services have remained in the village, with evolving patterns of activity.

4.1.1 Adoption of the Village Design Guide, 2001

In 2001 the town adopted the Village Design Guide, an illustrated guide to the form and materials required for new development and changes to existing sites and buildings in the village Zoning District. This guide is still in use and is adopted by reference as part of the *Williston Unified Development Bylaw*.

4.1.2 Traffic

Increased traffic in and through the Village has created congestion. In 2009, the town considered a proposal to change the intersection of Williston, North Williston, and Oak Hill Roads from a 4-way stop to a roundabout. Citizen comment was divided on the matter and the Selectboard decided at that time not to pursue the change to a roundabout. Since that time, the Vermont Agency of Transportation and many Vermont citizens have had experiences with the construction of and navigation through roundabouts. Traffic congestion remains a challenge in the Village.

4.1.3 Community Events

The village is home to numerous community events. The town band has held bimonthly summer concerts on the green in the village since 1957, providing entertainment and connection to people in the village for several generations. The town green is the home of many of the town’s Independence Day activities, a “Chowder Challenge,” and summer camps. The nearby Brick Church is the site of a music performance series every year. Tournaments and sports and camps happen on the recreation fields behind Central School. Voting in primary and general elections often takes place at the Armory next to Town Hall. The village is home to the Town Library, which provides lectures, films, a home for the Williston Historical Society, and other services beyond the traditional loaning of books and media. In 2010 and 2011 there was a weekly farmers’ market on the green in the Village. The market was moved to Taft Corners after 2011.

4.1.4 Contemporary Development Review in the Village

Development Review in the village is performed by the Williston Development Review Board (DRB) with advice from the Historic and Architectural Advisory Committee (HAAC).

Development Standards that apply to projects in the village exist throughout *the Williston Unified*

Development Bylaw (WDB) and in the *Village Design Guide*. The WDB, adopted in June of 2009, is a complete rewrite of Williston's zoning and subdivision requirements. The WDB also has the effect of making the *Village Design Guide* more regulatory than advisory.

4.1.5 Changes in Housing

From the beginning of zoning in Williston until now, the allowed density in the village has ranged from two to six dwelling units per acre. The current residential density within the village could not be permitted under today's two-per-acre rules. Lower density brings challenges in terms of supporting transit and vibrancy while also not adequately addressing the impact of new development on the village's historic character. This new *Master Plan* provides some guidance to town officials as they consider changes to the rules that will more effectively address site and building design while allowing for a residential density that supports the plan's overall goals for a vibrant, pedestrian friendly, multi-use historic village center in Williston.

4.2 Process

This plan was developed with the help of public input and process, which is described in this section.

4.2.1 The kickoffs- what did we learn?

In May of 2016, planning staff and HAAC members kicked off an extensive public involvement process to determine a direction for this plan. This included a survey asking residents what they loved about the Village and what they would change, exercises related to traffic, the creation of a village timeline, and a mapping exercise to help staff and others understand what people experience as "the village."

Survey

Staff received 54 completed survey responses (27 paper surveys and 26 online surveys). The vast majority of the responses to our open-ended 2-question survey were related to traffic, intersections and roadway operations, business and development, conservation, walking, biking and recreation, the library and school, the general feel and historic aspects of the village, events and specific bylaw changes.

Question 1: What is one thing you love about Williston Village?

After reviewing the responses to this first question, it became clear that respondents found it difficult to name just one thing that they love about the village. However, about 59% of responses made reference to the small-town feel, sense of community, historic character and the lack of chain stores as the main aspects that are valued. Additionally, 33% of the respondents mentioned the importance of the library and about 35% emphasized the great opportunities for recreation with the bike path and walking trails. Other common values included events like the 4th of July celebration, former farmers' market, Town band performances and the perceived separation from the Taft Corners development.

Question 2: What is one thing you would change about Williston Village?

Similarly to question one, many survey respondents listed multiple things that they would change about the village. About 39% of the respondents wanted to see new development in the village. The majority of the development-related responses specifically indicated that a locally-owned restaurant or a coffee shop would be desirable. It's important to note that many of the responses specified a desire to see a non-chain establishment that is not associated with any national brand. Other development-related requests included infill development, housing to support young families, locally-owned retail shops and other communal venues that would make the village more of a destination. On the other hand, there were several respondents that were opposed to any new development in the village. About 11% of responses were related to conserving open land and prohibiting new development from impacting the Village.

Nearly 28% of survey respondents stated that they would like to see changes related to traffic, intersections and roadway operations. Some comments suggested a need to reduce traffic congestion during the peak hour, upgrade the Oak Hill/US2 intersection with a roundabout or traffic light, enforce speed limits, decrease noise coming from the interstate and look into a traffic calming plan. Moreover, 26% of responses mentioned a need to support bicycle, pedestrian and outdoor recreation improvements (in the form of sidewalk repairs, bike lanes, new crosswalks, gateway treatments) to enhance safety and support the overall walkability of the village. Lastly, several other responses cited a need to change bylaws (to prevent "undesirable" projects from being built in the village, prevent subdivision of lots smaller than .5 acres, limit the number of dwellings per parcel), bring back the farmers' market and make visual improvements to the village.

Traffic input as a walker

We received 28 individual input points on our four-square coordinate system diagram. The vast majority of the input points were placed around the center of the diagram, which indicates that many people felt neutral about the state of traffic as a walker. There were 11 points placed on the "traffic is great" side while 10 were placed on the "traffic is terrible" side. Seven points were also placed directly between the two. There was also an even mix between changing traffic (as it relates to walking) and not changing anything with traffic. On the comment board, participants stated that it was easy to walk around the village, the recreation paths are very safe and more sidewalks would be beneficial. Participants also want to see more crosswalks at Old Stage and North Williston Roads, better bike lanes and more visible roadway/crosswalk signs.

Traffic input as a driver

We received 33 individual input points on our driving diagram, the majority of which were placed around the neutral center. There were 8 placed on the "traffic is great" side while eleven were placed on the "traffic is terrible" side. Fourteen were placed directly on the center line. The overall change-related input suggested that there was a slight preference for making traffic changes. On the comment board, participants said that traffic was congested during the peak hours of the day, the school release causes congestion due to parents picking up their children and long queues are caused by the Oak Hill/US 2 intersection (numerous comments address changes to this intersection). Participants also conveyed a need to see a greater enforcement of

the speed limit, traffic control, the elimination of the truck lane west of the Village and varying roundabout comments.

What would you like to see in the Village?

On this map, we received 90 total input bullet points in the form of new village businesses, bike path connections, traffic and intersection changes, more crosswalks, requests for a farmers' market, conservation recommendations, recreation facilities including dog parks, and various other requested changes. There were also numerous conflicting comments related to the idea of adding a town pool or multiple roundabouts to the village.

Village timeline

Village Vision Open House participants added 25 memories, historical events and hopes for the future to the timeline. The future aspirations for the Village included the restoration of the Federated Church's steeple, temporary outdoor food vendors during the summer months, limited development on open land and turning the Brennan Barn into a community center. Furthermore, there were 12 public comments in support of an extension of the bike path from the village to Taft Corners. Some of the memories included the opening of the interstate, changes to the Williston school district and recollections of the 1983 village as a place where all of the town services were located. The post office for Williston was once located on the southeast corner of the Williston/North Williston/Oak Hill Road intersection, and moved to the Southwest corner of the same intersection in the 1940's. The post office was also located on the land adjacent to Central School Drive in the Village before it was moved closer to Taft Corners in the late 1980's.

4.2.2 Development of the plan draft.

Based on input from the 2016 public process and ongoing participation by HAAC and Planning Commission members, planning staff developed a draft of this plan throughout the remainder of 2016, 2017, and early 2018.

4.2.3 Amendment to the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan.

This plan is adopted as an appendix to the *2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan*. Many elements of the current plan, such as Chapter 13, *Open Space*, began as appendices to the plan and were later "rolled into" the body of the overall plan as new chapters or as elements of several chapters of the plan.

4.2.4 Adoption into the 2024-2032 Williston Comprehensive Plan.

Before the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan expires, the town will have an opportunity to write and adopt a completely new plan. Workplan items and other elements of this document are expected to be incorporated into the body of the *2024-2032 Williston Comprehensive Plan*.

5. Actions for Development Standards

5.1 Introduction

New development and substantial redevelopment of properties in the village is infrequent. However, those few projects are often more controversial and take more time than they would if they were proposed elsewhere in town. This happens in part because there are more exacting development standards in the village related to historic preservation, but also because new development in the village can be more controversial. While additional requirements are necessary to preserve village character, they can create uncertainty or present a barrier to the redevelopment and viable use of existing properties. The policies discussed below will identify ways the town could pursue making development standards for the village more clear and predictable, while ensuring they are aligned with the overall goals the town has for the village.

5.1.1. Structure of current development review process

Both the development standards in the Village Zoning District and the review procedures are different from other parts of town. Smaller projects that would be handled administratively outside of the VZD are more likely to require review and approval by the Development Review Board (DRB). This DRB review takes two forms: in some parts of the village, the DRB assumes the federal role of “historic preservation commission” and issues a Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA) for a project. The CoA process and requirements are in line with the guidelines for historic preservation established by the United States Department of the Interior. All new development and any changes to existing buildings in the Williston Village National Register Historic District and the “Additional Review Area” is required to be reviewed by the DRB and a CoA is issued by them before the work can proceed.

5.1.2. The Bylaw and the Design Guide

Development in the Village is subject to the overall requirements of the Williston Unified Development Bylaw (WDB) as well as additional design standards contained in Chapter 42 of the Williston Village Design Review Guide, which WDB 42 adopts by reference, giving the design “guidelines” almost the full force of bylaw requirements.

5.2 Public Input- What we learned about Development Standards in the Village

The “kickoff” open house in May of 2016 gave the planning staff and citizens opportunities to have conversations about how new houses and changes to buildings in the village are addressed by the town.

5.3 Objectives for Development Standards in Williston Village

The primary objective for development standards in the Village is to balance flexibility with compatibility by allowing new development that contributes to the vibrancy of the Village without detracting from the historic fabric and relevance of the existing buildings and sites. Development standards, to be enforceable, need to be clear. To that end, part of this objective is to merge the *Village Design Review Guide* standards into the Unified Development Bylaw.

5.3.1. Objective- Size, Mass, and Scale

The town will develop standards that ensure compatibility between the size, mass, and scale of new buildings.

5.3.2. Objective- Relationship to the Street

The current standards address the relationship of buildings to the street. This will be enhanced with specific requirements for buildings that are part of “back lot” developments where a relationship to a public street is not possible.

5.3.3. Objective- Rear Lot and Mixed-Use Development

Most of the village along US2 is “built out,” but some developable parcels or portions of parcels remain. New (non-replacement) houses in the last decade in the village have all been built on “back lots” or portions of deep lots along US2 where there is another structure between the new one and the street. The standards in WDB 42 and the *Design Guide* do not directly address many of the challenges faced by the HAAC and DRB tasked with reviewing back-lot development. Similarly, the HAAC and DRB have been challenged by proposals for mixed use development, where adding a commercial use to a residential use on a parcel can lead to a more intense development pattern than the community may have anticipated. The policies adopted below are intended to lead the town to add clarity to its regulatory documents to better address the most common types of major development In the village it experiences.

5.3.3.1 Policy- Rear-Lot Development Standards

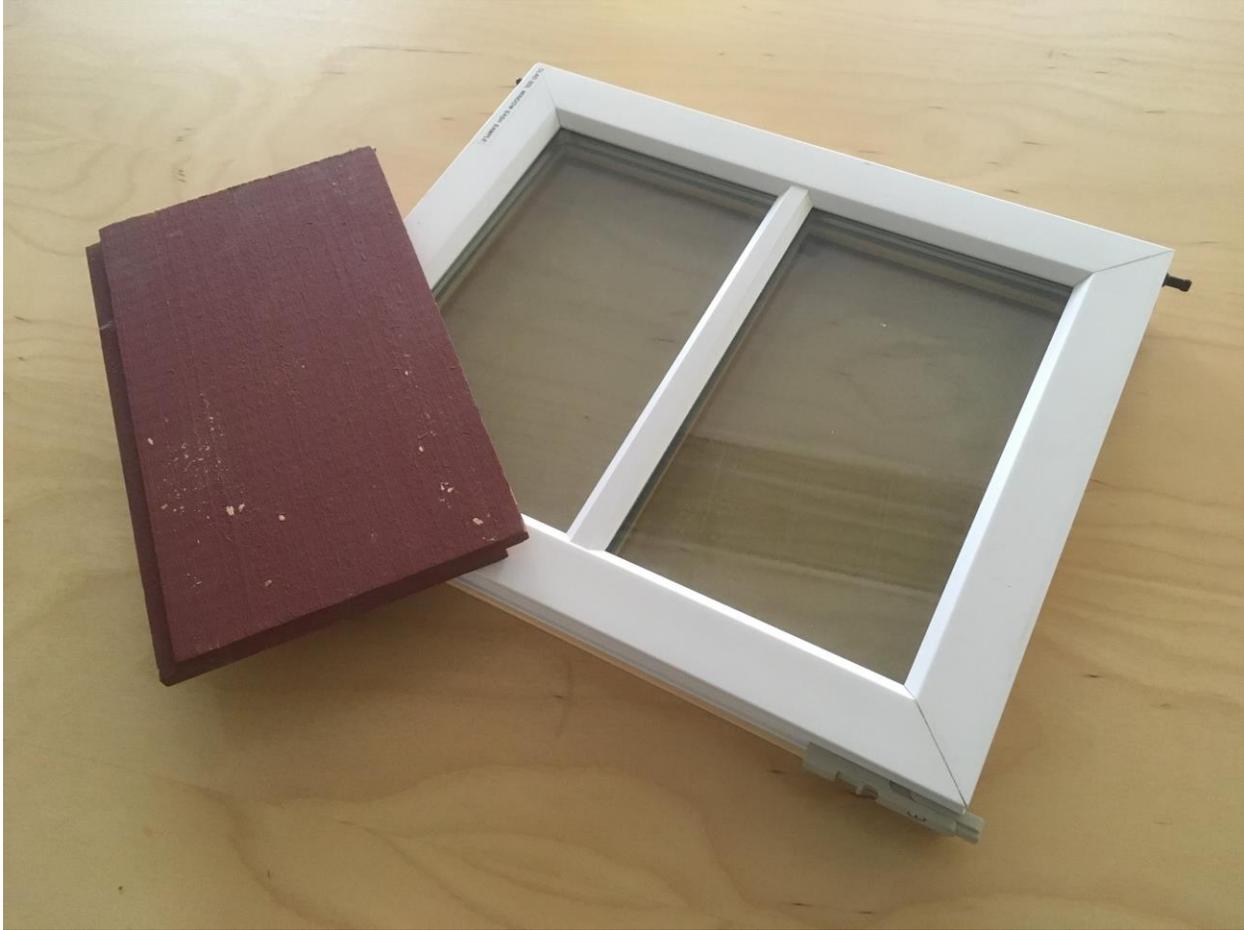
The HAAC, Planning Commission, and Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to the WDB that articulates specific standards for new development that does not have a street frontage relationship to US2 within the Village Zoning District.

5.3.3.2 Policy- Mixed-Use Standards

The HAAC, Planning Commission, and Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to the WDB that regulates the overall density and form of mixed-use development in the Village Zoning District.

5.3.4 Objective- Materials Standards

Much of the development review in the village is of small projects which might not require a permit in other parts of town. Window replacements, roofing changes, and changes to siding materials are common requests in the village. The HAAC and the DRB have worked through these requests in different ways over the years, attempting to follow the NPS guidelines for projects in historic districts while also allowing for a level of flexibility that permits property owners to perform important maintenance to their homes and businesses. While the bylaw and the design review guide both discuss material choices, there is not clear guidance to the HAAC and DRB about when certain material choices should or should not be allowed. Revisions to the guide and bylaw should provide clearer information about which replacement materials are acceptable in which circumstances.



A typical simulated-divided-light, fiberglass-clad wood window and wood siding sample proposed for a new house in the village.

It is important that citizens, home and business owners, and prospective purchasers of historic properties in the village understand what will be required when changes to buildings and sites are proposed. The town will work to make the development review and permitting process in the village more clear and predictable while ensuring that development in the village meets National Park Service guidelines for national register historic districts.

5.3.4.1 Policy- Historic Structure Materials Standard

The HAAC, Planning Commission, and Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to the WDB that explains when, how, and what type of windows, roofing, and siding are acceptable on historic structures and outbuildings within the Village Zoning District.

5.3.4.2 Policy- New Structure Materials Standard

The HAAC, Planning Commission, and Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to the WDB that explains when, how, and what type of windows, roofing, and siding are acceptable on new primary structures and outbuildings within the Village Zoning District.

5.3.4.3 Policy- New Addition and Outbuilding Materials Standard

The HAAC, Planning Commission, and Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to the WDB that explains when, how, and what type of windows, roofing, and siding are acceptable on new accessory structures and additions to historic structures within the Village Zoning District.

5.3.5. Objective- Demolition

Less frequently, there are requests for demolition; usually of an outbuilding or addition to a historic structure, but occasionally of an entire structure. The most recent full demolition and replacement of a primary structure was 7760 Williston Road in 2009.

While the zoning ordinance that was in place prior to the June 2009 adoption of the WDB contained some requirements for demolition, the current WDB does not. Each proposal for demolition since 2009 has been reviewed by the HAAC and the DRB with consideration given to the structural integrity of the structure proposed for demolition as well as its importance on the site. The DRB and HAAC have almost always required a letter from a structural engineer or other building professional stating what the integrity of the structure is and what the feasibility is of saving it. However, this has been a somewhat ad hoc process and the staff in the planning office struggles to give property owners and potential buyers of properties in the village guidance. The policies below identify components and decision points for the town that will lead to more precise and predictable standards and processes for proposed demolition in the village.

5.3.5.1 Policy- Demolition Process and Standards

The HAAC, Planning Commission, and Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to the WDB that identifies the process applicants who wish to demolish historic structures or portions of historic structures will follow. This amendment will include specific language about when and how the input of a historic preservation professional will be required where a demolition is proposed. This amendment will address when and how the retention of historic structures will be required.

5.3.5.2 Policy- Requirements and Enforcement of “Demolition by Neglect” Standards

The town currently has no rules related to properties that are allowed to fall into disrepair. This is a particular concern in the village where more expensive materials are often required when a structure is repaired, maintained, or modified. This can create a disincentive for some owners to perform basic maintenance (such as roof or siding replacement) that can lead to the decline of a structure to the point that it can no longer be saved. The HAAC, Planning Commission, and Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to the WDB that addresses standards and enforcement procedures for “demolition by neglect” situations. Town officials will also monitor buildings and work to connect their owners with funding opportunities to prevent deterioration. While this is a particular concern in the village, the town may wish to consider whether such requirements should be applied outside the VZD.

6. Actions for Transportation: Sidewalks, Paths, and Streets

6.1. Introduction

The street and sidewalk pattern in the village is a linear one, with most historic structures and sidewalks arranged along US2. This state highway carries a significant amount of motor vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic. The speed limit in the village along US2 is 30 miles per hour, but with the relative width and straight (alignment) of the road, it is easy for drivers to travel at higher rates of speed. The town and state have worked in recent years to add pedestrian crosswalks, and more recently, button-activated flashing yellow lights at some of those crosswalks to help ensure that pedestrians crossing the road are visible.

US2 in the village also experiences vehicle congestion during the week in the mornings, when commuter traffic and drivers accessing Central School are present; and during the afternoon “rush hour,” as commuters leaving the greater Burlington Area pass through and are generally slowed by the four-way stop at the US2/Oak Hill Road/ North Williston Road Intersection.

6.2. Public input: What we learned about transportation in the Village

In the public input related to traffic (for walkers and drivers) was that periodic vehicle congestion in the village was a concern but should be balanced with careful planning and design of street facilities. Citizens did express a desire that the village be a safe place to walk and cycle, and that the posted speed limit of 30 miles per hour be observed and enforced.

6.3 Objective for Sidewalks, Paths, and Streets in Williston Village

The town will work to ensure that sidewalks, paths, and streets in the village contribute functionally and aesthetically to the safe and efficient movement of people and goods while enhancing livability and historic character. These facilities not only allow people to circulate within the village, but also connect it to Taft Corners and its Growth Center, important school and recreation facilities, and open lands in town to the north and south. Stronger connections that can be used by all will enhance the vibrancy of the village as discussed in Chapter 7 of this plan.

6.3.1 Policy to Calm Traffic in Williston Village

The town will work with the Vermont Agency of Transportation and other partners to add traffic-calming measures to Williston Village. Some of these may be tested out as short-term “tactical urbanism” projects. StreetSide landscaping, crosswalk “bump-outs,” street furniture such as the lampposts called for in previous streetscape projects in the village, and other strategies to calm traffic and create a pleasant and safe pedestrian environment will be pursued.

6.3.2 Policy to Enhance the Visual Appeal of the Village

Elements called for by the previous Village Streetscape efforts such as street trees, lamp posts and other street furniture will also be pursued to enhance the visual appeal of the village. New and existing overhead utilities will be placed or moved underground whenever possible.

Significant reconstruction of Williston Road in the village should include accommodations for the future underground location of existing utilities.

6.3.3 Policy to Create Safe Connections Between the Village and the Rest of Williston

In addition to Williston Road, many cyclists, runners, and walkers travel to and from the village via Oak Hill Road, North Williston Road, and Old Stage Road. Access to the open lands, recreation opportunities and scenic roads beyond the village will be enhanced by planning for multimodal facilities along these connecting roads. Connections to the transit and commerce options in Williston's Growth Center will be enhanced.

6.3.4 Policy to Ensure Transportation Improvements are in Balance with Village Scale

Large-scale transportation improvements at intersections will be planned to balance safety, congestion relief, and the historic scale and feel of the village.

7. Village Vibrancy

7.1. Introduction

In addition to being a desirable place to live in town, Williston Village serves as the civic center of town. People come to the village to serve on various town committees, attend public meetings, use the town library, obtain passports, or pay tax and water bills. People come to the village to drop their children off at school, for sporting events, to play disc golf, run, bike, or skate on the rinks and paths contained within it. As of 2017, those people do not have a restaurant or coffee shop to go to, they cannot purchase a creemee or visit a gift shop. Their visit to the village is often limited to the single thing they came for, and then they leave, usually by car. The key to vibrancy is people. This section of the plan sets out goals and policies to help the town attract and retain visitors to the village to make it a more vibrant place.

7.2 Public Input- what we value about the Village

During and beyond our public input sessions, many Williston citizens expressed a desire that the village offer more to do- that opportunities for events, food and drink, and other appropriately scaled destinations could add to a desired “vibrancy” for the village.

7.3 Objective for Vibrancy in Williston Village

The town will work proactively with village residents, citizen groups, business owners, and others to allow appropriately-scaled events and businesses to locate in and contribute to the vibrancy of the village. Vibrancy is enhanced when visitors come to the village for one thing and stay to do another, for example, buying a creemee after a baseball game or visiting a shop after a doctor’s appointment or a trip to Town Hall. Village residents’ lives can be enhanced when not all commercial needs have to be met with a trip to Taft Corners.

7.3.1 Policy- Enhance the Village’s Role as a Center of Community Life in Town

The town will consider ways town lands and buildings in the village can be used as centers of community connection. An example would be deciding to offer additional town services or extended business hours at Town Hall.

7.3.1.1 Policy- Maintain a Civic Presence in the Village

The town plays an active role in historic preservation and vibrancy in the village by occupying and maintaining a number of historic sites and structures there. The town will ensure the village remains a civic center into the future by maintaining and upgrading its facilities in the village before considering moving them off-site.

7.3.1.2 Policy- Balance Scale and Intensity of Commercial Uses in the Village

The town will allow flexibility to use all or a portion of a structure in the village for commercial purposes while considering how that use will relate to onsite or adjacent residential uses. Standards for commercial uses will be clarified so prospective business owners have a clearer picture and lower risks of when considering locating in the village.

7.3.1.3 Policy- Enable Enhanced Special Events in the Village

The town will consider additional programming, such as a periodic “food truck night” or “family night out” in the village as a way to draw town residents and others to the village at times they might not otherwise go there.

7.3.1.4 Policy- Encourage Economic Development and Adaptive Reuse in the Village

Village Center Designation provides tax write-offs and other incentives for commercial users to upgrade their structures. Many old homes in the village are not as suitable or desirable for residential occupancy but may make excellent studio, co-working, or office spaces if they are properly converted. This can provide a property owner with the necessary funds to maintain the structure and its historic value. The town will develop educational materials and programming to inform commercial landowners in the village of the benefits of these tax relief programs.

7.3.1.5 Policy- Explore Public Parking in the Village

Commercial development in the village, which may be desirable to add vibrancy to the village and to encourage the adaptive reuse and restoration of historic properties, is often challenged by a lack of parking. The Town of Williston should explore ways to provide public parking in the village, including consideration of parking areas at town hall and possible opportunities for street parking. Designating some town parking as a park-and-ride facility would also meet some of the transportation goals in the village and allow more users in town to connect with rideshare and transit opportunities.

7.3.1.6 Policy- Residential Vibrancy The diversity of housing types in the village, from apartments to live-work buildings to large single-family homes, supports a community that is connected, neighborly, and walkable. The Town of Williston will explore amendments to the WDB that will support and enhance the diversity of housing types, compact development pattern, and mix of uses that make the village a great place to live.

7.3.1.7 Policy- Connectivity and Town Lands to Enhance Vibrancy

The village is connected and walkable in part due to formal and informal trails, walkways, sidewalks, and bike paths. The town will explore ways to enhance these connections by providing wayfinding, access to public property, and innovative uses of town land, like active farming and community gardens, that invite people to visit and pass through these important resources.

8. Implementation

8.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to condense the policies and objectives discussed in chapters 5, 6, and 7 of this plan into a summary table. This table identifies responsibilities, potential costs, and a prospective timeline for each policy discussed in the plan. Town staff and volunteer citizen groups will use this table to track progress as well as to review indicators that the policies identified in the table are working.

8.2. Implementation Table

Williston Village Master Plan- Implementation Table		
Objectives and Policies	Lead	Timeframe
5.3 Objectives for Development Standards in Williston Village	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.1 Objective- Size, Mass and Scale	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.2 Objective- Relationship to the Street	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.3 Objective- Rear Lot and Mixed-Use Development	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.3.1 Policy- Rear Lot development Standards	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.3.2 Policy- Mixed-Use Standards	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.4 Objective- Materials Standards	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.4.1 Policy- Historic Structure Materials Standard	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.4.2 Policy- New Structure Materials Standard	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.4.3 Policy- New Addition and Outbuilding Materials Standard	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.5 Objective- Demolition	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.5.1 Policy- Proposed Demolition Process and Standards	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.5.2 Policy- Requirements and Enforcement of "Demolition by Neglect" Standards	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
6.3 Objectives for Sidewalks, Paths, and Streets in Williston Village	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
6.3.1 Policy- Calm Traffic in Williston Village	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
6.3.2 Policy- Enhance Visual Appeal of the Village	Planning Staff	ongoing
6.3.3 Policy- Create Safe Connections Between the Village and the Rest of Williston	Planning Staff	ongoing

6.3.4 Policy- Ensure Transportation Improvements Are in Balance with Village Scale	Planning Staff	ongoing/ as needed
7.3 Objectives for Vibrancy in Williston Village	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
7.3.1 Policy- Enhance the Village's Role as a Center of Community Life in Town	Planning Staff	ongoing
7.3.1.1 Policy- Maintain a Civic Presence in the Village	Planning Staff	ongoing
7.3.1.2 Policy- Balance Scale and intensity of Commercial Uses in the Village	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
7.3.1.3 Policy- Enable Enhanced Special Events in the Village	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
7.3.1.4 Policy- Encourage Economic Development and Adaptive Reuse in the Village	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020; ongoing
7.3.1.5 Policy- Explore Public Parking in the Village	Planning Staff	FY 2020-2021
7.3.1.6 Policy- Residential Vibrancy	Planning Staff	FY 2020-2021
7.3.1.7 Policy- Connectivity and Town Lands to Enhance Vibrancy	Planning Staff	FY 2020-2021