

Ripton, Vermont

2010 RIPTON TOWN PLAN

Adopted July 26, 2010

Prepared by the Ripton Planning Commission

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RIPTON TOWN PLAN 2010

Introduction

The town of Ripton has considerable small-town charm in a lovely mountain setting. Its residents and this Plan intend to preserve Ripton's unique character by promoting policies that manage development and change in a way appropriate to its people and environment. Ripton, having a small tax land mass and difficult physical characteristics, does not lend itself to intensive development. Small scale, orderly use of land for the security, health, welfare and peace of its citizens is the goal of this plan. The terms "appropriate" and "inappropriate" used in this Plan are intended to be defined by the above statements.

Ripton's first Town Plan was adopted by the Ripton Selectboard on 28 December 1971 under the authority of the Vermont Planning and Development Act, Title 24 VSA Chapter 117. Subsequently, the Plan was revised every several years, most recently on 11 October 2004. The Plan must be amended and/or readopted, or a new plan adopted, every five years. The Plan may be amended at any time by due process. The Town Plan serves as the basis for zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations.

The Plan may affect development through the Act 250 process; therefore it is important that residents of the town consider the Plan carefully to be certain that it reflects the best interests of the community.

I. LAND USE

Goal: Permit land use that enhances the town’s rural residential identity and preserves the historical character of Ripton’s village center.

The Town Plan guides land use in Ripton. Ripton’s zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations are the primary vehicles for implementation of the Town Plan. The Town adopted the Zoning Bylaw on 7 March 1989. This bylaw was updated most recently on 13 April 2006. A free-standing Fluvial Erosion Hazard Bylaw (FEH), which complements the Zoning Bylaw, was approved on 14 September 2009.

To provide continuity between Ripton’s current land use patterns, the quality of life to which we are accustomed, and a future that meets the goals of its residents, Ripton needs to guide development through the Town Plan and zoning bylaws. Zoning provides the primary mechanism for implementing land use goals and helps ensure that residents have adequate access to municipal services at an affordable tax cost. Ripton’s zoning bylaw encourages retention of a largely forested landscape, which is Ripton’s best protection against flood hazard.

In 1995, when the Town approved the “Ripton Hollow” as a Historic District, commercial and public facilities were primarily located in one area along Vermont Route 125. However, there are now three facilities located near the junction of the Lincoln Road, Robbins Crossroad and the Dugway: the Ripton Elementary School, the Ripton Volunteer Fire Department and the North Branch School. Recently, year-round residential settlement has oriented to the outlying roads, especially along the Lincoln Road, North Branch Road, and Natural Turnpike.

By providing for smaller lot size requirements closer to the town center and along existing class 1, 2, and 3 roads, Ripton’s zoning supports a settlement pattern and density of residences that are consistent with the Town Plan’s vision for the town, while ensuring that all residents have an adequate range of opportunities for property use.

A. Zoning Districts

The following districts are described below and are shown on the accompanying Land Use District Map (Map 8):

Neighborhood Commercial	NC-1
High Density Residential	HDR-2
Medium Density Residential	MDR-5
Low Density Residential	LDR-10
Rural Residential	RR-25
Conservation	CON-25
Institutional	INS-5
Historic	HISTORIC
Flood Hazard Area	FHA
Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area	FEH

Neighborhood Commercial District NC-1 (1 acre)

This district is in the village area along Vermont Route 125 where there is a mixture of existing, small-scale residential, public and commercial uses. The intent of this district is to continue these uses and permit modest expansions of these uses or similar new development along the village's main street.

Uses permitted in this district are limited to one- and two-family houses, public buildings, small neighborhood or recreation retail and service businesses and offices. The minimum lot size is one acre for residential uses and one-half acre for other uses.

High Density residential District HDR-2 (2 acres)

This district includes areas in and immediately adjacent to the existing village center that are served by existing town roads. The purpose of this district is to guide higher density housing development to locate close to existing village services and, therefore, to avoid the widespread construction of new roads, and to utilize soils best suited to economic and environmentally desirable development.

Uses permitted in this district are limited to one- and two-family houses, home occupations, as well as hay land, pasture, and domestically related agricultural uses. The minimum lot requirement for residences and home occupations is two acres; the minimum lot requirement for agricultural, non-residential building uses is five acres.

Medium Density Residential District MDR-5 (5 acres)

This district includes substantial areas suitable for development along town roads outside the village area. The purposes of this district are to encourage development to use existing town highways, especially where these highways form efficient loops, and to use soils most economic and satisfactory for development.

Permitted uses are limited to one- and two-family houses, home occupations, and agriculture (land cultivation or pasturing only). The minimum lot requirement is five acres.

Map 8 proposes the addition to MDR-5 of portions of parcels within 500 feet of the Lincoln Road or between the Lincoln Road and the North Branch, and north from the Dugway and Robbins Crossroad to the end of pavement (south of 1652 Lincoln Road). Most of these parcels were in the LDR-10 district in the 2004 Town Plan and the 2006 Zoning Bylaw revision, but almost all are nonconforming with respect to the 10-acre zone requirement. At the same time parcels south of the Dugway, west of Lincoln Road, and north of the elementary school and the fire station are proposed for removal from MDR-5 and addition to LDR-10. This, and all other proposed zoning district boundary changes in this document, will not come into force until the Zoning Bylaw is revised to reflect the same boundary modifications.

Low Density Residential District LDR-10 (10 acres)

This district is designated along active town highways outside the village area. It allows the opportunity to develop land on existing roadways.

Uses permitted in this district are limited to one- and two-family houses, home occupations, agriculture (land cultivation and pasturing), commercial forestry and camps. The minimum lot size is 10 acres.

Map 8 proposes the addition to LDR-10, and removal from RR-25, of privately owned parcels north of Route 125 and west of the Frost Road. This arrangement reflects more accurately the existing parcel sizes in the affected area. Also, the area is road-accessible and relatively close to the town center, in accordance with Town Plan guidelines. Map 8 proposes addition to LDR-10 and removal from MDR-5 of parcels south of the Dugway, west of the Lincoln Road, and northwest of the elementary school and the fire station.

Rural Residential District RR-25 (25 acres)

This district includes lands remote from existing class 2 or 3 roads and with a mixture of soil capabilities. One intent of this district is to discourage residential development in remote areas of the town when more economic and convenient locations are available.

Uses permitted in this district are limited to one- and two-family houses, home occupations, commercial forestry, camps, and agriculture. The minimum lot size is 25 acres.

Map 8 proposes the addition to RR-25, and removal from LDR-10, of parcels lying more than 800 feet south of the Natural Turnpike and east of a line approximately one-quarter mile east of the start of the class 4 portion of Wagon Wheel Road.

Conservation District CON-25 (25 acres)

This district is intended to limit development on lands remote from class 2 or 3 roads and the town center. Most of these lands are owned by the Green Mountain National Forest. Uses in this district are limited to forestry, agriculture, and open land recreation. The construction of buildings is discouraged. If the Forest Service should in future wish to sell any of its land, it would be encouraged to sell minimum lot sizes of 25 acres.

Map 8 proposes addition to CON-25 of remote privately owned lands that share characteristics of Forest Service land and are largely surrounded by Forest Service land.

Institutional District INS-5 (5 acres)

Public and private institutional buildings, structures and contiguous open spaces are included in this district. Land uses within this district should be limited to educational, recreational, municipal, agricultural, and forest uses. Land within this district includes parcels owned by Middlebury College, and can accommodate educational buildings and dormitories and other related uses in connection with school facilities. The minimum lot size is 5 acres.

The Ripton Zoning Bylaw as amended, approved on March 4, 2003, included by specific reference a revised map of land use districts in which the Institutional District was expanded to include the parcel on which the Ripton School is currently located. Map 8 reflects that change to INS-5.

Historic District HISTORIC (1 acre)

Overlapping the Neighborhood Commercial District is the Ripton Historic District, adopted by the Town in 1995 and revised slightly in 2003 (see Map 8). The Historic District contains structures of historic and architectural significance to the town. With respect to external appearances, and other than normal maintenance, structures within the Historic District may not be substantially altered, restored, moved, changed or demolished. New structures may be erected with approval of the plans by the Town's Planning Commission. The Planning Commission does not dictate the architectural style of any one period, but approves only construction that is compatible with structures in the Historic District.

Flood Hazard Area FHA

The areas of special flood hazard are indicated on the Fluvial Erosion Hazard maps made part of this document by reference, and are mapped in detail on the Flood Insurance Rate Map for the Town of Ripton, dated 18 September 1985. Flood Hazard Area Regulations controlling use and establishing flood-proofing standards are adopted as part of the Zoning Bylaw.

Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area FEH

Areas along the Middlebury River and its three branches that the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) has identified and mapped as possessing high likelihood of erosion hazard lie within an erosion hazard overlay area. The area within this overlay area is largely identical to the Flood Hazard Area but differs in that erosion hazard results from water flow, not inundation. New development within the Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area is prohibited except for additions or accessory structures of 500 square feet or less that do not decrease the existing structure's setback distance from the stream channel. The ANR has mapped the Middlebury River and the Middle Branch. The maps as well as the Fluvial Erosion Hazard Bylaw, approved on 14 September 2009, are, by reference, part of this Town Plan revision, and are available for study in the Town Office. As the erosion hazard areas of the North and South Branches are mapped, these maps will be added to this overlay area, following public hearing and approval by the Ripton Selectboard.

Policies:

1. Restrain rapid and inappropriate growth.
2. Guide development toward the town center and to parcels with Class 1, 2, or 3 road frontage, and with soil conditions suitable for development and slope less than 20 percent, and away from land that is remote from the town center or without Class 1, 2 or 3 road frontage or with soil conditions unsuitable to development or slopes greater than 20 percent.
3. Discourage development where adequate drainage, snowplowing, emergency vehicle access and similar services are not available.
4. Require permanent year-round residents to install and maintain either a functional state-permitted or an inspected pre-existing wastewater system and potable water supply.

5. Encourage flexibility in the design of development to minimize the number of access points on public rights of way and maximize open land.
6. Promote and maintain conditions ensuring the health, safety and welfare of its residents.
7. Prohibit new house construction and storage of toxic, buoyant or unsecured items or materials in the Fluvial Erosion Hazard District.
8. Continue a policy of modest public development and expenditures consistent with low intensity land use.
9. Protect property values while permitting an adequate range of opportunities for property use.
10. Encourage the establishment of home occupations and small businesses, compatible with surrounding land use.
11. Encourage preservation of the town's largely forested nature through the use of planned unit development techniques and enrollment in the Vermont Use Value Program.
12. Consider acquisition of outlying properties for trade with parcels closer to the town center to promote development incentives where town services are available.

B. Land Use and the Green Mountain National Forest

The general land purchase policies of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) are determined by a list of 16 guidelines that address the Forest Service's multiple goals and objectives. The more of these guidelines a parcel meets, the higher is its priority, although any parcel offered for sale by a willing seller that meets at least one guideline would be considered for purchase, assuming sufficient funding and an absence of other parcels of greater priority. USFS acquisitions are constrained by the town's existing settlement pattern. A recent court decision denied municipalities the right to approve or disapprove such land sales. Since 2004, the Forest Service has acquired one parcel of 167 acres in Ripton.

Ripton residents' comments had a major impact on the final design of the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) Natural Turnpike Project, a multi-year project affecting 11,000 acres in Ripton and South Lincoln, of which 4,700 acres are USFS land. A primary decision of the project separates snowmobile and ski use from vehicular use of the Natural Turnpike (Forest Road 54) on USFS land for safety reasons. Snowmobilers and skiers will have a new trail just west of and parallel to the existing road. Other changes will include closure of unauthorized roads and trails, installation of gates on some trails, removal of an existing gate to allow vehicle access to an area formerly accessible only on foot, arrangements for year-round access to two private inholdings, diversification of forest types and ages to improve wildlife habitat, timber harvest to support local and regional economic resources, and improvement of fish habitat on Sparks Brook.

Policies:

1. Encourage the Town and interested residents to participate in the Green Mountain National Forest's public information exchange prior to any significant Forest Service decisions affecting forest management in Ripton.

C. Land Use and Middlebury College

Middlebury College owns 2,203 acres of land in Ripton, of which 2,068 (94 percent) are wooded. Middlebury College seeks to manage its lands in line with its overall educational mission. Key components are: 1. maintaining, enhancing, and restoring ecosystem functions; 2. maintaining recreational values related to Nordic skiing and hiking; 3. maintaining scenic and aesthetic values; 4. providing opportunities for field study for students; 5. practicing ecological forestry; and 6. continuing to produce and market forest products.

The Bread Loaf Campus on Route 125, east of Ripton Village, comprises most of the non-forested land. Bread Loaf, with its more than twenty buildings, is the site for a number of programs. Foremost of these is the Bread Loaf School of English, a six-week summer period during which the campus provides housing and other facilities for approximately 250 students, 25 faculty and 25 staff. This is followed by the two-week Bread Loaf Writers' Conference in August, with roughly 200 participants. Additionally, the College uses Bread Loaf throughout the spring and fall for various alumni and college activities such as graduation, Family Weekends, and Alumni College. When no college events preclude its use by outside groups, other educational conferences and seminars may rent the facility.

Ripton considers the Bread Loaf Campus, with its 19th century origins and generally harmonious architectural style blending well with the mountain scenery, to be a significant asset to the town. The Town has a strong interest in seeing that the Bread Loaf Campus be maintained as it has been in the past, with close attention to its aesthetic and historical appeal. The Town encourages such sensitivity in any future development that may occur on the Campus, and desires that the Campus continue as a center for academic, non-profit activity rather than commercial enterprise.

At the Bread Loaf Campus the Carroll and Jane Rikert Ski Touring Center operates a student and public cross-country ski area. Ripton's elementary school students attend weekly ski lessons there for six weeks each winter. The high school's Nordic ski team trains there and Bread Loaf also hosts a Bill Koch league that is popular with Ripton families. In 2008, a group started the Frost Mountain Nordic Club at Bread Loaf; this too has many Ripton members. The Middlebury College Snow Bowl, further east on Route 125, is in the town of Hancock. The Addison County Transportation Resources (ACTR) Shuttle has provided public transport to Rikert and the Snow Bowl since 2007.

Lands set aside from forestry include: about 200 acres of lands bequeathed to Middlebury College from the estate of Joseph Battell on the north side of USFS Forest Road 59 (Steam Mill Road), about 30 acres of forestland along the South Branch on the south side of the Bread Loaf campus, and lands along the

Middlebury River (55 acres). In addition, the 87-acre Coal Kiln lot east of Goshen Road is effectively removed from active forest management by virtue of its use by Spirit in Nature, an organization that maintains a network of trails.

In 1993 Middlebury College agreed to a compensation plan in lieu of taxes for the Town of Ripton. This compensation is in three parts:

- Taxes on certain properties taxable by State Law.
- An annual gift-in-kind of \$16,000 that the Town can use to have services provided by the college.
- An annual inflation-adjusted formal gift-in-lieu of taxes. In 2008, the total amount of this compensation was \$89,726.

The agreement lasts for twenty years, so another agreement will need to be negotiated in 2013.

Policies:

1. Work with Middlebury College to continue the financial and community arrangements that allow Ripton residents to enjoy the recreational opportunities and scenic quality that the College lands currently provide.
2. Encourage management of College forestlands that promotes biological diversity and maintains intact forest blocks.
3. Work with Middlebury College to ensure the maintenance of the historic nature of the Bread Loaf Campus and its buildings.

II. NATURAL, HISTORIC, SCENIC AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Goal: To identify, protect and conserve important natural, historic, scenic and recreational resources of Ripton, including:

- Significant natural and fragile areas and native biological diversity
- Water resources, including rivers, ponds, aquifers and wetlands
- Significant scenic roads, waterways and views
- Important historic structures, sites or districts, archaeological sites and archaeologically sensitive areas
- Important recreational areas and opportunities

Most of Ripton's land area is forested and mountainous. It rises to the crest line of the Green Mountains to the east and occupies a natural basin that forms the watershed of the upper Middlebury River, including its three main branches. The Middlebury River flows west from Ripton through a dramatic wild gorge to the community of East Middlebury. The town center is located below the confluence of the Middle and South Branches. Most habitation is limited to the less steeply sloping lands between and along the Middlebury River's branches.

A. Land Cover

Ripton's area is 32,704 acres. As the chart below indicates, only about 25 percent of Ripton is privately owned. The rest is either part of the Green

Mountain National Forest (GMNF) (22,201 acres) or is owned by Middlebury College (2,141 acres). Since the GMNF makes a payment per acre in lieu of taxes and Middlebury College only pays taxes on part of its lands, Ripton's taxable land is about one-third of its total.

Land Ownership in Ripton

	Number of acres	% of Ripton
Private	8,300 acres	25.4%
GMNF	22,201 acres	68%
Midd College	2,203 acres	6.6%
Total Ripton	32,704 acres	100%

Forest land in Ripton was heavily exploited for timber products in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but has largely recovered. Pre-colonial Vermont was 95 percent forested, but by 1880 only 37 percent of the state was tree-covered. By 1995 the recovery was largely complete; 76 percent of Vermont was forested (C.M. Klyza and S.C. Trombulak, 1999, The Story of Vermont). Although no records exist of the percentage of Ripton that was cleared at the peak of logging and hill farming, anecdotal evidence suggests that extensive clearing took place.

Interpretation of Ripton's land cover from infrared air photos taken in 1992 and black and white orthophotos from 1995 (Maps 2 and 3) showed the following cover types and percent of total cover:

Land Cover Type	Percent of Total Cover
Forested Land	98
Open and transitional brush	1
Wetland	1

In the air photos the area bounded by the Lincoln Road, Robbins Cross Road, Peddlers Bridge Road and Route 125 was largely clear in 1942 but was mostly forested by 2006 (Map 1). The darkest areas on the 2006 map are red pine plantations. Note particularly on the 2006 map the dark areas surrounding the Ripton Elementary School fields on the Lincoln Road opposite the west end of Robbins Cross Road and the more extensive dark area just west of the Natural Turnpike opposite the Billings Farm Road. On the 1942 map these areas appear as fields; the red pines had not yet been planted.

While Ripton is not heavily reliant on agriculture, its timber resources are a source of economic activity. Thirty-two property owners have enrolled 3,325 acres in the Vermont Use Value Program. Some niche agricultural activities exist, such as specialty vegetable growing, tree farming, and, to a lesser degree, animal husbandry.

Open fields are a necessary component of a diversified habitat that includes large and small animals, birds, flowers, berries, fruiting trees, and other sun loving vegetation. Fields also provide scenic vistas and outdoor space for summer and winter physical activities.

Policies:

1. Encourage management of private and public lands with an awareness of the ecological services the land provides (e.g. forested lands serve as flood control and help sequester carbon; wetlands and floodplains are important for flood control and as wildlife habitat.)
2. Encourage participation in the Use Value program.
3. Encourage small-scale agricultural activities.
4. Support forest industries through zoning.
5. Retain or restore cleared fields because of their importance in providing landscape diversity.
6. Support Conservation Commission and State efforts to identify, protect and conserve important natural, historic, scenic and recreational resources.

B. Earth Resources

Ripton has few geological resources of economic importance. Since the 1950's, gravel deposits have been extracted from the GMNF and private property with landowner permission, but construction and road maintenance materials are primarily trucked to Ripton from the Champlain Valley. Preliminary planning to allow development of a local gravel deposit began in 2004. Since that time, the GMNF has selected possible sites for excavation, although the potential site locations have not been made public. The Ripton Selectboard has met with the GMNF to discuss the plan and potential sites. A public hearing will be announced in the future to discuss the issue. Planning and construction of excavation sites will adhere to State and Town policy of allowing appropriate development of land.

If undertaken, extraction of soil, sand, or gravel must prevent erosion debris from entering watercourses and pose no safety hazard from pits or steep or unstable slopes. Upon termination, sites must be restored to natural contours with a vegetative cover. Ripton's policy, as well as Vermont State law at 10 V.S.A. subsection 1021, prohibits the removal of sand or gravel directly from watercourses because such extraction decreases stream and streambank stability and increases the likelihood of sediment transport.

Policies:

1. Encourage local resource extraction only if the process does not unduly impact environmental quality or the character of the community. The extraction process must:
 - a. Prevent erosion debris from entering watercourses;
 - b. Reduce safety hazards caused by pits or steep or unstable slopes;
 - c. Restore terminated sites to their original contours with vegetative cover;
 - d. Prohibit the removal of sand or gravel directly from watercourses, as stated in Vermont State law.
2. For the purpose of decreasing transportation costs, collaborate with the GMNF to identify potential gravel extraction sites in Ripton for use in construction and road maintenance.

3. Encourage the public hearing process facilitated by GMNF to discuss the development of local extraction sites.

C. Soils

Ripton’s soils pose challenges to septic systems, which involves consideration of both soil composition and landscape slope. Table A presents the relative abundance of four categories of soils. Well-suited soils have both soil composition and slope of less than 20 degrees that make them reasonable for an in-ground sewage system. These soils are scattered throughout the town, but not always where they are wanted for convenient building purposes. The best-drained soils for septic use lie on steep land along the Middlebury River, in the central “Hollow,” and on the land of Middlebury College’s Bread Loaf Campus.

TABLE A

Class	Description	Acreage	Percentage
1	Well suited	1,131	3.6
2	Moderately suited	13,796	43.5
3	Marginally suited	3,157	10.0
4	Not suited	13,389	42.3
	Not rated (water)	84	0.3
	Not rated	140	0.4

Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service (U.S. Dept. of Agriculture)

Map 4 shows distribution of the four soil categories summarized in Table A, based on Vermont Environmental Protection rules, August 16, 2002, and 20 percent slope for lots created on or after June 14, 2002. Map 5 shows the distribution of five categories of landscape slope, ranging from flat to greater than 30 degrees.

Policies:

1. Consider soil suitability for both current and future uses.

D. Biologically Significant Areas

Ripton is endowed with a variety of natural communities that sustain diverse and in some instances rare or fragile biological resources. Map 6 shows the general location of these areas of significance.

Invasive exotic species threaten to overwhelm populations of rare native species. A case in point is a wild chervil infestation that threatens a population of eastern Jacob’s ladder, a Vermont threatened plant species, along the Natural Turnpike. Vehicles bring chervil seeds inadvertently from the White River valley, where the species is rampant along roadsides. Control of wild chervil by hand-pulling along the Natural Turnpike began in 2008.

The 2009 report “Critical Paths: Enhancing Road Permeability to Wildlife in

Vermont” identifies the area along Route 125 between the Bread Loaf Campus and the Robert Frost Interpretive Trail as a priority road crossing zone. The report calls attention to the impact of roads on wildlife habitat, thereby assisting implementation of the State Wildlife Action Plan, which aims to maintain and improve the status of Vermont’s Species of Greatest Conservation Concern. The report notes specifically that the Ripton crossing receives frequent visitation by deer and moose, largely due to the presence of a natural salt lick adjacent to the Robert Frost Trail parking lot. Several collisions between vehicles and moose in the crossing area make it a cause for safety concern, as well. Other animals said to use the crossing include bobcat and fisher. It is clearly an important link in a north-south wildlife corridor in the Green Mountains. A second wildlife crossing, lying across Route 125 east of the Bread Loaf fields and just before the road begins to ascend east toward the Green Mountain ridge, was included in the report, but was not considered a priority site, although it is widely known among residents as a good site for spotting moose.

Policies:

1. Participate in measures to control invasive exotic species that directly threaten local populations of rare, threatened or endangered species.
2. Preserve and protect rare and endangered plant and animal species, outstanding natural communities and other significant natural and fragile features for aesthetic, scientific, economic and recreational purposes.
3. Request installation of large, highly reflective signs and a lower speed limit in the immediate area of the priority wildlife crossing on Route 125 at the Robert Frost Trail. Replacement of the existing nearby culvert with a larger one would provide safe crossing access for all but the largest mammals.

E. Air Resources

While most issues dealing with air quality are out of the hands of the Town, several potential pollution sources are close enough to home to warrant treatment here.

Trash burning

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

Outdoor wood-fired boilers

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

Wood stoves

Residents who have wood stoves uncertified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are encouraged to exchange them for new, more efficient and cleaner burning wood, pellet or gas stoves. Catalysts in EPA-certified catalytic wood stoves should be replaced every five years. Potential customers for these products should be aware that rebates are sometimes available from the state government. Contact heidi.hales@state.vt.us for further information about these and other opportunities.

Vehicle emissions

Vehicle emissions may be Ripton's largest source of air pollution. Remember to have your vehicle inspected annually. Automobiles no longer require more than a few seconds of warm-up. Idling contributes significantly to air pollution.

Ticonderoga Paper Mill

Concerns about emissions from the Ticonderoga Paper Mill, directly upwind of Ripton, were heightened when International Paper proposed to burn used tires as fuel without installing smokestack scrubbers to reduce pollutants including particulates. Although this proposal was rejected, Ripton residents may wish to keep informed about potential threats to air quality from this source.

F. Water Resources

Surface Waters

The Middlebury River and its three branches and many tributaries constitute an exceptional water resource that is valued by residents and visitors for swimming, fishing, picnicking, wildlife, and scenic enhancement. All public waters in Ripton are categorized by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources as Class B, high quality, except Brandy Brook, which is Class A, highest quality.

To promote continued high water quality the Town encourages the retention or creation of vegetated buffer strips. Although buffer strips of 30-100 feet are adequate for protecting water quality, strips of 100-300 feet enhance wildlife populations and provide wildlife travel corridors. See Map 3: "Ripton Land Cover Types." The Town seeks to protect and enhance the quality of its surface water.

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission, under contract to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, completed a Middlebury River Corridor Plan in 2009. The plan, which was based on a fluvial geomorphic assessment completed in 2003, identified and prioritized the sites along the length of the Middlebury River at greatest risk of erosion or inundation damage. At numerous sites along the river and its branches mass bank failure, undersized bridges and culverts, lack of river access to flood plain, and other signs of potential risk were noted. The village area of Ripton is one of the two sites of greatest erosion hazard along the entire river corridor.

Flooding of some sort has occurred in Ripton on average about every decade. For example, in 2000 floods destroyed the bridges on Wagon Wheel Road and Brooks Road. In 2008 the Middlebury River flooded on 14 June and 6 August

and accessed flood plain areas unreached since the 1938 hurricane. Route 125 was partially washed out above and below Ripton village. Selden Mill Road, Deer Creek Run, Goshen Road, Deacon Hill Road, North Branch Road, Billings Farm Road and the Dugway sustained major damage. The private Billings Farm Road culvert was washed downstream, and Potash Bridge's up-river railing was destroyed, and the bridge was left isolated in the middle of the river after many cubic yards of fill at both ends were washed away. Homes between Route 125 and the river in Ripton village lost several feet of backyard to the river. If more than 95 percent of the town land cover had not been forested, the destruction would have been far more severe.

Following extensive and costly repairs, the Town of Ripton, with the help of the Addison County Regional Planning Commission, obtained a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) River Management Program. The mitigation work will reduce, but not eliminate, the immediate risk to Ripton village of further destructive erosion. It will not necessarily assure the long-term safety of the village area of the town. The prudent course of action will be to set in motion a planning process that would include as one option the systematic relocation of the town center to another, less risk-prone part of Ripton.

To protect human health and safety and minimize property loss during floods the Town approved a Flood Erosion Hazard Overlay Zone Bylaw (FEH) on 14 September 2009. This bylaw is separate from but complementary to the existing Ripton Zoning Bylaw. FEH provides for constraints on development in a new Erosion Hazard Zone. The area covered in the zone differs slightly but importantly from the FEMA Flood Hazard Zone identified in the existing Zoning Bylaw by taking into account erosion hazard rather than inundation hazard, a greater risk in Ripton with its mountainous topography. Maps prepared and updated by the ANR delineate the boundaries of the erosion hazard overlay zone, and are, by reference, included as part of this plan revision. These maps are available for public inspection in the Ripton Town Office.

Policies:

1. Encourage the use of protective buffer vegetation to filter and limit runoff into surface waters.
2. Encourage road maintenance practices that limit runoff.
3. Monitor the quality of surface water and take steps to maintain or, if necessary, remedy causes of poor water quality.
4. Limit development in areas where there is a high potential for erosion and subsequent surface water pollution.
5. Coordinate with other towns in Ripton's watersheds to protect and enhance the quality of surface waters.
6. Avoid development and other encroachments – including fill, dredging, new structures, parking areas, infrastructure and utilities, and unnecessary public

investments – within the mapped erosion hazard zone, and allow only forestry, agriculture, passive recreation, functionally dependent facilities, limited improvements to existing structures and facilities, and state-recommended channel management activities within this area, subject to Zoning Board review and approval.

7. Develop a long-range plan for the future of Ripton village.

Ground Water

Ripton values ground water as a vital resource that must be protected from degradation. It serves as the sole source of drinking water for the town's residents. Reduction in flow or quality due to excessive withdrawal or contamination would have dire repercussions for many residents. Many residents rely on shallow wells or springs that are susceptible to drought under normal conditions or can become easily contaminated. Residents with shallow water sources are especially vulnerable to water table decline from high intensity withdrawal.

Daily use above 5,000 gallons per day from one tract of land is considered a "high intensity use" by the State of Vermont. Withdrawals averaging more than 20,000 gallons per day must be reported to the Secretary of ANR, as required in 10 VSA 48, Section 1417(a). The Town believes that high intensity withdrawals of water in Ripton in excess of 57,600 gallons per day for uses other than residential and agricultural are not in the best interests of Ripton residents and should not be permitted.

Ripton has five public water sources: the Ripton Elementary School, the North Branch School, Middlebury College's Bread Loaf Campus, a source for Silver Towers Camp on the Goshen Road, and a broad area along the town's western boundary that serves as a portion of the municipal water supply source for the Town of Middlebury. The source protection areas for the two schools are areas of about 200 feet radius from their respective wells. The Bread Loaf Campus water supply is a covered underground reservoir in the Brandy Brook watershed. Brandy Brook is Ripton's only Class A stream. The Town of Middlebury water source in Ripton provides upslope recharge for Middlebury's community water system.

Policies:

1. Discourage any activity that could degrade the quality and yields of Ripton's ground water.
2. Identify locations, sources, and quality of ground water.
3. Require that residents comply with sewage regulations that align with Vermont Agency of Natural Resources regulations.
4. Require residents to properly dispose of substances that could degrade ground water quality. These include, but are not limited to, automotive fluids, fluorescent bulbs, gasoline, mothballs, pesticides/herbicides, batteries and other substances,

as outlined by the Addison County Solid Waste Management District.

5. Prevent high intensity uses of ground water from a single tract of land exceeding 57,600 gallons per day for any but residential or agricultural requirements.
6. Take all necessary measures to prevent contamination of public water system source protection areas in Ripton.

Wetlands

As their name implies, wetlands are defined by water, an abundant and important resource in Ripton. The significant elevations of Bread Loaf, Battell, and Boyce Mountains to our east funnel water through town, creating a complex network of rivers, brooks and creeks. Nearly every part of Ripton is affected by this flow, which in turn has created 86 mapped Class 2 wetlands and hundreds of unmapped Class 3 open and forested wetlands.

There are three basic characteristics of a wetland: an area inundated or saturated with water during the growing season; soil that develops from being saturated; and abundant vegetation that thrives on water soaked soil. The National Wetland Inventory divides wetlands into three classifications:

Class One wetlands are deemed exceptional and/or irreplaceable for their contribution to Vermont's natural heritage. A 100-foot buffer zone is required. Ripton has no Class One wetlands.

Class Two wetlands are considered significant in that they serve one or more functions of Section 5 of the Vermont Wetland Rules, or share a boundary with a mapped wetland. They usually require a 50-foot buffer. The rules describe ten functions and values including: water storage for flood or storm runoff, surface and pond water protection, erosion control, as well as habitats for wildlife, birds, fisheries and hydrophytic vegetation. Educational opportunities, aesthetic consideration, and recreation are also important. Ripton has 86 Class Two wetlands.

Class Three wetlands are usually less than one acre in size. The mapping is done by aerial photography. This process, however, often overlooks forested wetlands, which are potentially quite large, an important consideration in Ripton. Although not protected under the Vermont Wetland Rules, Class Three wetlands offer the same advantages as the other classifications. Vernal pools and seeps, swamps, and backyard marshes enrich our lives from the song of wood frogs to the warning slap of a beaver's tail. The distinctive greens of our water-loving hemlocks, balsams and spruces help define Ripton itself.

According to the 2005 Vermont Significant Wetland Inventory Map, Ripton's major wetland is the centrally located, roughly one square mile area east of Chandler Hill created by Sparks Brook. The more sprawling Abbey Pond system as well as the areas encompassing the Robert Frost Interpretive Trail along the South Branch of the Middlebury River, and Alder Brook near the border with Lincoln from Cobb Hill south are also significant. These areas are vulnerable to all the threats common to wetlands. Introduction of exotic invasive plant species

is a serious concern. Already encountered in Ripton wetlands are phragmites, purple loosestrife, and Japanese knotweed. Logging and off-road vehicles contribute to increased erosion, creating rutted, often impassable areas. Also of concern is improper draining, dredging, and/or filling for residential or agricultural development.

Policies:

1. Protect wetlands and the values and functions they provide by retaining the present amount of wetlands.
2. Participate in measures as needed to control invasive exotic species that directly threaten wetlands.
3. Discourage activities in wetland habitats that could harm or degrade them such as the use of ATV's and other off-road recreational vehicles.
4. Discourage improper logging and development practices that threaten our present and future wetland resources.

G. Forest Resources

To promote continuous forest cover in Ripton, the Town discourages clearcuts larger than those allowed on Green Mountain National Forest land (40 acres). Timber harvesters should bear in mind the range of community responsibilities inherent in the ownership and utilization of natural resources, including provision of clean air and water, protection of wetlands, wildlife, endangered and threatened species, other fragile natural features such as heron rookeries, and appealing viewsapes. Tourism is of economic importance to the town and Addison County. See Map 3: "Ripton Land Cover Types" and Map 6: Ripton's Biologically Significant Areas."

Policies:

1. Regard trees as a renewable resource over which the Town and its residents exercise stewardship.
2. Encourage management practices on Ripton's forestlands consistent with the management plans of the Green Mountain National Forest, which uses the best available forest management science and practices.
3. Promote commercial opportunities on the basis of sustained yield harvesting, under which mature trees are logged one at a time or through small group selection, unless management goals can only be reached through clear-cutting or shelterwood cutting.
4. Encourage the maintenance of contiguous forested land to protect animal habitat and corridors and to reduce flooding.
5. Encourage creative and non-destructive business opportunities on privately held forestlands, such as the production of wood products, tourism and the full utilization of timber by-products such as wood chips for fuel when such practices

are done under sustainably-harvested guidelines that follow the State of Vermont's Accepted Management Practices.

6. Promote sustainable forest management techniques through Federal and State assistance programs that reduce taxpayers' costs.
7. Encourage landowners to utilize programs, such as those offered by Vermont Family Forests that keep the origin, preparation, sale and use of wood products local and sustainable.
8. Encourage reduced impact logging, such as the use of logging wagons, to reduce rutting and consequent erosion.

H. Scenic Resources

Ripton has many beautiful areas and views that are enjoyed by residents and tourists. Ripton village's three white buildings are frequently photographed. Route 125 is one of the state's three scenic highways. A portion of the North Branch of the Middlebury River is identified by the GMNF as Eligible as a Wild, Scenic and Recreational River. The Lincoln Road adjacent to this river is a lovely drive, as are parts of the Natural Turnpike (Forest Road 54) and the Steam Mill Clearing Road (Forest Road 59). The views of Robert Frost Mountain and Bread Loaf Mountain are treasured by many as are the views afforded by the fields at Bread Loaf.

Policies:

1. Encourage management of private and public lands to maintain and promote the scenic quality of Ripton.

I. Recreation and Special Uses

Ripton offers unusually significant recreation opportunities, particularly for dispersed, low intensity activities such as hiking, hunting, Nordic skiing, birding, kayaking and fishing. Some of Ripton's important recreational resources include:

- 22,201 acres of Green Mountain National Forest of which 9,596 acres are part of the Breadloaf Wilderness and Battell Wilderness;
- 5.8 miles of the Long Trail crossing the northeast corner of Ripton, accessible from Route 125 at Middlebury Gap in Hancock; Burnt Hill and Skylight Pond trails off Steam Mill Road (Forest Road 59) in Ripton; Emily Proctor and Cooley Glen trails off Natural Turnpike (Forest Road 54) in Lincoln;
- The Catamount Nordic Ski Trail crosses Ripton from South Lincoln Road in Lincoln 14 miles south to the Widow's Clearing Trail parking area on Goshen Road;
- Robert Frost Interpretive Trail and Wayside Area off Route 125;

- Spirit in Nature, the Wilkinson and Water Tower trail networks and the Widow's Clearing Trail off the Goshen Road;
- A Ripton recreation trail from the end of Pearl Lee Road to the Lincoln border which continues to Cobb Hill Road in Lincoln;
- The 42 kilometers of Nordic ski trails at the Carroll and Jane Rikert Nordic Ski Center owned by Middlebury College, and part of its 2,203 acres of land in Ripton (of the 42 kilometers of trails 3.5 kilometers are located on GMNF land);
- One-third of the 20,000 acre Moosalamoo National Recreation Area lies within Ripton. Bounded on the north by the South Branch of the Middlebury River and on the east by Brooks Road (FR67), and contiguous with lands in Salisbury and Goshen, this National Recreation Area is dedicated in perpetuity to recreation for Ripton residents and visitors.
- Many miles of trails exist on private land in Ripton and usually connect with Class 4 roads or public trails. Because most landowners in Ripton do not post their land, opportunities abound for low intensity, dispersed recreation for Ripton residents. (Map 7, "Ripton's Roads, Trails, Utilities, Facilities and Education" designates Ripton's watercourses and the more frequently used trails. Landowner consent of access is not implied by trail map.);
- The Middlebury River, its three branches and tributaries provide an extensive network of fishing opportunities.

Policies:

1. Discourage any activity that degrades the opportunities for dispersed, low intensity recreational activities.
2. Discourage the use of motorized recreation vehicles on trails without snow cover to limit noise pollution and soil erosion. This is consistent with other parts of the Town Plan that seek to maintain a high quality of surface water for a variety of recreational uses within the town, and to protect wetlands and fragile biologically significant areas. The damage created by off road vehicles in the form of soil erosion is contrary to the values set forth in the Town Plan.
3. Encourage landowners to provide open access to their lands for low intensity recreation opportunities, and urge people who take advantage of this access to treat the privilege responsibly.
4. Encourage everyone to consider trail conditions when determining the appropriateness of recreation activities. For example, consider riding or hiking on back roads rather than forest trails when wet, soggy conditions make trails more susceptible to erosion.

III. TRANSPORTATION

Goal: To provide Ripton residents and visitors with safe, efficient, cost-effective transportation opportunities while encouraging a reduction in miles traveled per person through community planning, ride sharing, and use of public transportation. Most transportation in Ripton is automotive and private in nature.

A. Public Transport

Public transport is available through Addison County Transit Resources (ACTR) (802-388-1946, www.actr-vt.org), on a schedule that varies according to the season. In the winter, commuter service to Middlebury and Bristol is provided Monday - Friday, and midday service seven days a week. For the remainder of the year, commuter service is limited to Thursday and Friday, and recreational service on Saturday. Fares are \$1 one way, \$9 for a 10-ride pass available at the Ripton Store, and \$30 for a monthly pass (only available for January and February). Passengers under age 6 ride free with a fare-paying passenger. Passengers ages 6 to 17, age 60+ or with an ADA disability ride for 1/2 price (one-way and passes). Passengers can self-certify their age or disability. Holders of Middlebury College identification cards ride free. Ridership on ACTR's commuter bus was low during its initial year, and as a result it may be difficult to have service five days a week in future years. A sustained education campaign could increase ridership.

Several Addison County social service agencies, including Elderly Services, provide complimentary rides to and from their facilities for those receiving their services. ACTR has volunteer drivers for medical appointments. Medicaid covers transportation for any number of trips per year if the client has Medicaid coverage for transportation. The Champlain Valley Agency on Aging provides three trips per month for medical appointments or grocery shopping for disabled people or those over 60.

BNB Taxi (802-989-4064) offers rides from Ripton to Middlebury \$20/one way or \$40/round trip. Middlebury Transit Inc. (802-388-3838) is a privately owned luxury transportation company that offers charter service and charter excursions for small groups.

B. Roads

Ripton's terrain, rivers, and winter weather make road maintenance a challenge. Runoff and stream overflow frequently cause erosion, and steep hills require heavy sanding in snow and ice storms. The 29-plus miles of public road, 13 bridges, and more than 200 culverts are maintained by three entities:

- State of Vermont, Agency of Transportation, District 5, 5.786 miles, Route 125;
- Town of Ripton, whose roadwork is performed by private contractors, 23.28 miles;
- United States Forest Service (USFS), which shares 11.88 miles with the Town and has 22.91 additional miles.

Ripton has approximately 10 miles of private roads, all gravel. Less than half of

public roads, 11.23 miles, are paved, with half of that being Route 125. Map 7 (page 57) shows Ripton's roads and trails and is made part of this plan by reference. Roads are classified and named as shown in the following table.

Type	Miles	Road Name	Town#	USFS#	Bridges
State Scenic Byway	5.786	Route 125			5 total
Class 2: State aid road	4.900	Lincoln Rd	1		B2, B3
Class 3: year-round road	18.380				
	0.80	Maiden Lane	2		
	0.48	Peddlers Bridge Rd	2, 14		B13, B5
	2.86	North Branch Rd	3		B18
	0.85	Dugway Rd	3		B15
	0.50	Pearl Lee Rd	4	69	
	0.50	Barker Rd	5		
	0.46	Dragon Brook Rd	6	95	
	0.15	County Crossroad	7		
called N. Branch	0.74	E. Middlebury Rd	9		B9
	0.10	Norton Farm Rd	10	235	B12
only part year-round	3.37	Natural Turnpike	11, 22	59, 54	B16
	0.40	Chandler Hill Rd	12		
	0.66	Robbins Crossroad	13		
	0.65	Wagon Wheel Rd	15	214	B14
south part discontinued	0.09	Ira Dow Rd	17		
	2.37	Goshen Rd	18	32	B17,B10
	0.53	Frost Rd	19	396	
only part year-round	0.45	Steam Mill Rd	20	59	B8, B7
	1.10	Brooks Rd	21	67	B11
Class 4: trails, a road that is not 1,2, or 3	1.720	Parts of: Natural Turnpike, Norton Farm, Pearl Lee, Wagon Wheel			
Legal Trails	1.5+/-	County Crossroad, Pearl Lee, off of Brooks Rd.			
USFS Roads		see class 3 above with USFS #; also 233 Alder Brook Rd; 296 Old Town Rd.; 89, 130, 205, 206			
Private		Barrows Rd			
		Burnt Hill Rd			
		College Inn Rd			
		Deacon Hill Rd			
		Eagles Nest Rd			
		Elzira Winter Rd			
discontinued town rd		Fire Brook Rd			
		Hemlock Lane			
south discontinued		Ira Dow Rd			
		Murray Lane			
status uncertain		Old Town Rd		296	
		Reichert Lane			
discontinued town road		Selden Mill Rd			
		Scott Rd			
		Whitman Rd			
		Wimett Lane			

Vermont Route 125

Route 125, also named the Robert Frost Memorial Highway or Middlebury Gap Scenic Highway, is one of three routes designated a “Scenic Highway” by the Vermont legislature. The road is a major factor in Ripton’s quality of life, and attracts tourists, bicyclists, hikers, and nature enthusiasts to the area. Ripton encourages the State Agency of Transportation to maintain Route 125 so as to emphasize its scenic qualities and natural features, and to limit the use of the road by heavy commercial traffic.

Route 125 is, however, the main route in and out of Ripton, leading west to East Middlebury and Routes 116 and 7, and east to Hancock and Route 100. Advisory signs on Routes 7 and 100 read “Route 125 is not suitable for tractor-trailer trucks”; the tight radii of turns in the road, narrow lanes, and lack of road shoulder cause trucks to cross the centerline. But tractor-trailer trucks and recreational vehicles with cars in tow are not prohibited, and logging trucks must use the route. Local traffic, through-traffic, tourists, and bicycles wind their way up and down the mountain together, with occasional need for the Fire and First Response Squad. When the road is closed due to an accident, washout, fallen tree or rocks, drivers may use local roads but are not officially re-routed by the Town because of liability issues, and because the shortest alternative routes are also narrow, twisting roads unsuitable for truck traffic.

In general, Ripton agrees with the recommendations of the 1996 *Vermont Route 125 The Middlebury Gap Scenic Highway Corridor Management Plan*. The plan could provide the basis for future cooperation between the State Agency of Transportation and Ripton. The Town feels it essential to be involved if and when any Route 125 alterations, other than routine maintenance, arise. The Ripton Planning Commission stands ready to work with the Agency of Transportation so that the cooperation envisaged proceeds in an organized and productive manner.

Town Roads

Roadwork is typically the largest component of the municipal budget. Ripton has a Road Commissioner but no municipal road crew or garage. Road maintenance and construction are provided by contract and are expected to remain so. The Town, however, purchases sand, salt and other materials that are stored at the Town Shed site on Peddlers Bridge Road, adjacent to the Middle Branch of the Middlebury River. Typical annual roadwork includes: plowing and winter maintenance, summer maintenance, right-of-way mowing, resurfacing, and reconstruction. A “Major Project Fund” was established for special projects and has allowed response to emergency situations.

In 2000 the Town adopted “Road Design Standards for the Town of Ripton” which sets requirements for transportation and construction improvements, and incorporates guidelines and standards from the Vermont Agency of Transportation. Permits for driveways, also called road cuts, must be obtained from the Selectboard through the Zoning Administrator.

The Town has several ordinances related to roads and trails including:

- Special Regulations Governing Obstructions to Highways
- Speed Ordinance

- Trails Ordinance
- Stop Sign Ordinance

U.S. Forest Service Roads

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) maintains 22.91 miles of roads in Ripton and shares roadways with the Town on an additional 11.88 miles of road. Most USFS roads are open to public vehicles in spring, summer and fall and are available for snowmobiles and Nordic skiing in winter.

The Natural Turnpike and Goshen roads are examples of low traffic arterial roads (roads that link communities) maintained by both the Town and USFS. The Natural Turnpike or Forest Road 54 connects Ripton and South Lincoln, and is closed to through-traffic in winter and gated at a portion that is maintained by the USFS. The Goshen Road or Forest Road 32 connects the town to its southern neighbor, Goshen. There are numerous USFS roads and trails off of these two roads that provide opportunity for hiking, Nordic skiing and snow-shoeing. Some allow snowmobile and mountain bike access.

Policies:

1. Encourage car pools, ride sharing and public transportation to and from Middlebury and beyond.
2. Collaborate with the State Agency of Transportation and adjacent towns to maintain the “Scenic Highway” qualities of Route 125, to limit heavy commercial traffic, and to arrive at mutually agreeable plans for modification of the Route 125 corridor.
3. Support the ACTR route and encourage commuter transport with a goal of five days a week commuter service year round.
4. Provide a bicycle rack at the ACTR stop at the Town Office.
5. Encourage ACTR to consider provision of service to support middle and high school afterhours activities.
6. Support transportation opportunities provided by social service agencies.
7. Encourage practices that emphasize the scenic quality of Ripton’s roadways.
8. Encourage practices consistent with the recommendations of the Vermont Better Backroads Program.
9. Encourage practices that eliminate erosion and sedimentation.
10. Given the land use pattern, the low population and traffic volumes in Ripton, and the cost of new roads, limit additional paving to special maintenance problems and the elimination of highway hazards.
11. Private subdivision or construction of roads that the Town might be expected to maintain must meet State Agency of Transportation Guidelines for Class II and III town highways, Town Road Standards, and any scenic preservation standards set by the Town.

12. Discourage construction of additional public roads.
13. Encourage private road residents to establish maintenance and repair agreements and support the enactment of a State statute that will lay out basic requirements for private road owners, if no local written agreement exists.
14. Require new private roads and encourage existing private roads to be developed to Class 2 or 3 highway standards.
15. Collaborate with the USFS regarding winter use of roads, limitation of road development in remote areas, and road construction practices consistent with low impact development.
16. Encourage road design and construction that considers all users and creates a safe environment for travel by foot, bicycle, ski, or vehicle.

IV. ENERGY, UTILITIES, SERVICES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

A. Energy

Goal: Assure that no Ripton resident goes without heat and increase Ripton's energy efficiency and self-sufficiency, reduce its energy use, and reduce its carbon footprint by:

- Encouraging installation and use of renewable, locally produced individual or community-scaled energy;
- Informing Ripton residents about current rebates and subsidies on energy costs available through utility, state and federal programs;
- Helping Ripton residents weatherize their homes.

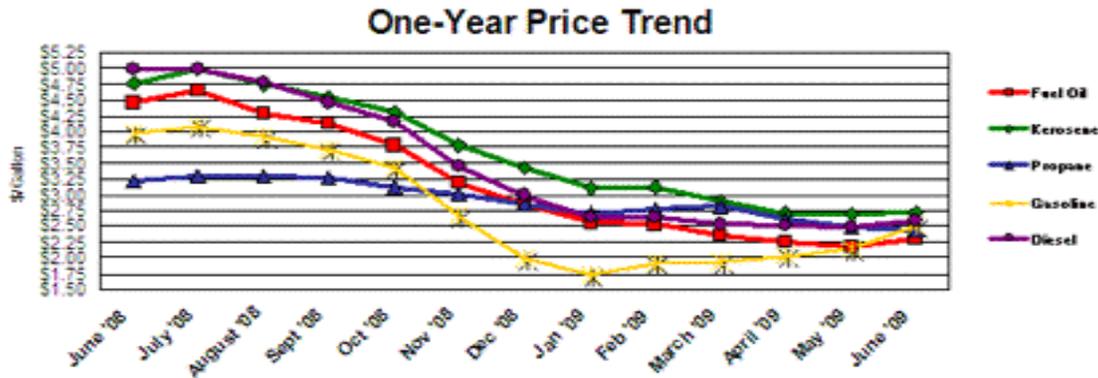
Fuel Use

Vermont consumes less energy than any other state, it produces the least CO², and it leads the nation in energy efficiency. One-third of Vermont's energy use is for transportation, 29 percent is for residential uses, and the remaining 37 percent is for commercial and industrial uses.

In 2005 Vermont's electricity came from nuclear power (71 percent), hydropower (20 percent), and power from renewables, including wood (9 percent). The Vermont legislature and Governor Douglas have committed to 25 percent of the state's energy use coming from renewables by 2025.

Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS) provides almost all of Ripton's electricity. Our electricity comes from Vermont Yankee (36 percent), Hydro Quebec (28 percent), other purchases (20 percent), instate hydro (9 percent), McNeil Generator (5 percent), New York Power Authority (1 percent) and instate thermal (0.6 percent). Vermont Yankee's license expires in 2012. It has applied for a 20-year extension of its license, which would allow operation until 21 March 2032. Hydro Quebec's contracts with Vermont begin to expire in 2015.

Based on the Ripton Planning Commission 2009 questionnaire, 174 respondents indicated that 44 percent of Ripton households use wood as a primary or back-up heating fuel, 6.4 percent use electricity for heat, 31 percent use fuel oil, and 18 percent use propane. The following graph compares the price trends of various fuels used by Ripton residents, updated through June 2009.



The following table lists the relative cost per million BTUs of heating fuels in Vermont in June 2009.

Type of Energy	BTU/unit	Adj Effic	\$/unit	\$/MMBtu
Fuel Oil, gallon	138,200	80%	\$2.31	\$20.93
Kerosene, gallon	136,600	80%	\$2.72	\$24.93
Propane, gallon	91,600	80%	\$2.45	\$33.43
Natural Gas, therm	100,000	80%	\$1.60	\$20.00
Electricity, kwh	3,412	100%	\$0.15	\$42.64
Wood, cord (green)	22,000,000	60%	\$190.00	\$14.39
Coal, ton	24,000,000	60%	\$285.00	\$19.79
Pellets, ton	16,400,000	80%	\$257.00	\$19.59

Not only is firewood the least expensive fuel, it is renewable, carbon neutral, and locally abundant. If harvested by the homeowner, the cost is even lower than the listed heating fuel cost. However, it is heavy to move, generates smoke and particulates, depending on the age and efficiency of the wood stove, and some people find the effort and mess to be unacceptable or unfeasible.

The Vermont government is running a Burn Clean Woodstove Changeout Program. This gives homeowners a \$450 rebate on the replacement of an old woodstove with a new, cleaner burning wood, pellet, or gas stove, or a \$75-\$100 rebate for replacement of an old catalyst in an EPA-certified woodstove. Call 888-520-4879 or email heidi.hales@state.vt.us or visit www.anr.state.vt.us/air/htm/woodstoverebate.htm.

Fuel Assistance

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

CVOEO provides free weatherization services to 350 Vermont households annually. Due to high fuel costs, demand for this service is high. Qualifying households may have to wait a year or more for it once they have signed up.

In response to rapidly rising heating fuel prices late in 2008 a number of Ripton residents formed the Ripton Energy Assistance Program (REAP) to provide a range of heating fuels to income-qualifying Ripton residents at no cost. Partnering with HOPE (formerly ACCAG), REAP provided firewood and arranged for fuel oil or propane delivery to several Ripton households in the winter of 2008-2009. REAP intends to continue this opportunity into the future. Ripton residents needing help with heating fuel may call HOPE at 388-3608.

Energy Conservation

On behalf of the Town of Ripton, REAP participated in the Vermont Community Energy Mobilization Pilot Project (VCEM). Organized by Efficiency Vermont in 2009, VCEM provided training for community volunteers and offered free energy-saving equipment for installation in Ripton homes. Volunteers visited 60 Ripton homes, one-third of Ripton's households. They made energy assessments, calculated the homes' efficiency in retaining heat, and installed 538 compact fluorescent bulbs, 15 hot water tank blankets, pipe wraps for 41 homes, and 23 low-flow showerheads. The project will save Ripton homeowners money and will prevent release of 31 tons of CO² from Ripton homes annually over the life of the installed equipment. REAP has expressed interest in participating in a second round of energy saving if it is offered by Efficiency Vermont.

Energy conservation is the most cost-effective way to reduce energy costs in Vermont. A wide variety of state and federal subsidies and rebates are currently available for Vermont residents to conserve energy. Visit Efficiency Vermont's home page at Efficiencyvermont.com to learn about their current programs, including energy audits, incentives for Home Performance with Energy Star, information on appliances and compact fluorescent bulbs, building an Energy Star home, home heating help, rebate information, and Efficiency Vermont's reference library. Efficiency Vermont is the nation's only energy efficiency utility. Compact fluorescent bulbs are about the same price as incandescent bulbs in Vermont, but not in other states, because of an Efficiency Vermont subsidy. Compact fluorescent bulbs now come in a wide variety of sizes, shapes and wattages. You may have to pay more for bulbs you special order, but you will experience significant savings over the lifetime of the bulbs.

Policies:

1. Encourage replacement of old appliances with new Energy Star rated appliances. Help secure rebates from Efficiency Vermont and others.
2. Encourage replacement of old inefficient woodstoves with new efficient EPA-certified woodstoves. Secure state rebates.
3. Facilitate energy audits and recommended comprehensive retrofit modifications in Ripton homes and Town buildings, especially the Town Office and Community House.
4. Encourage installation of photovoltaic and solar hot water collectors, including an option of discounts for multiple installations.
5. Explore siting opportunities for a town-wide project that takes full advantage of the reduced costs of thin film amorphous photovoltaic sheeting over “traditional” photovoltaic cells as this technology becomes commercially available.
6. Develop a community-based wood bank.
7. Require outdoor wood boilers in Ripton to comply with state efficiency and emission standards (see Section II (E) (2)).
8. Encourage investigation of wind turbine siting feasibility, especially for community benefit through group net-metering.
9. Explore opportunities to install small hydro facilities concurrent with repair from flood events affecting Route 125 in the Ripton village area.
10. Promote weatherization of Ripton homes through CVOEO and through access to low-interest loans.
11. Facilitate continuation of local efforts like REAP to reduce energy use and provide homeowner assistance for heat.

B. Utilities

Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment

All Ripton households rely on private water and septic systems. There is no plan to make either of these available from a public system and there is no significant industry requiring a public system. Middlebury College’s Bread Loaf Campus maintains an underground reservoir and extensive leach fields to accommodate the water and septic requirements for up to 300 seasonal residents and students.

Solid Waste

Ripton provides a volunteer-staffed recycling drop-off at the Town Shed on the first and third Saturdays of each month. Recycling has established itself as a fact of life in Ripton. In 2008 the average number of visits per drop-off at the recycling center was 49. Ripton’s total waste stream averages 225 tons annually. The percentage of the waste stream that is recycled averages well above the 40

percent required by the State solid waste law. Residents wishing home pick-up of trash or recycling may subscribe to one of several private services. Un-recycled trash is hauled to the Addison County Solid Waste Management District (ACSWMD) transfer station. Ripton participates in the ACSWMD.

Electricity and Telecommunications

Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS) provides electricity and FairPoint Communications provides land-line telephone service to properties along major town roads and nearby private roads. Portions of the Lincoln Road, Natural Turnpike, and Steam Mill Road do not have electrical or telephone land-line service, nor do many minor roads in outlying areas or properties surrounded by National Forest lands. Utility poles are shared but all ownership is listed to CVPS, and the utility value is among the most highly valued property in the Grand List. Lines are underground along a section of USFS land on Route 125, and some property owners have paid for their lines to be buried, but the general practice is for lines on poles. The aerial lines are frequently damaged in storms resulting in several power outages per year.

Ripton has at least seven year-round off-grid homes powered by generators and solar and/or wind power. One is in a location where Fair Point and CVPS service are available, and has been shown as a model for alternative technologies. Several properties with CVPS service combine solar or wind power with their public utility service, and this trend is increasing. One property has a wind tower that is permitted for net-metering with CVPS. The number of homes with hard-wired back-up power generators increased in the last decade.

Internet service is provided via radio signal, digital service line (DSL), or satellite. There are no cable or fiber optic networks to homes in Ripton. The Ripton Broadband Cooperative, owned and managed by residents since 2005, provides high-speed Internet service to approximately 30 percent of Ripton households. It reaches major residential areas and is expanding coverage to the Lincoln Road north of Pearl Lee Road, and the area east of Reichert Lane. FairPoint Communications provides DSL service to properties within a 2-3 mile radius of its equipment pad at the Chipman Inn, but does not serve the North Branch Road, northern Lincoln Road, or Bread Loaf areas. Some Ripton residents rely on satellite Internet connections which are available through several providers. The Middlebury College Bread Loaf campus receives Internet via a College-owned fiber optic line. The line is installed on CVPS poles from Middlebury and continues through Ripton to the Snow Bowl in Hancock.

It generally holds that there is no cell phone service, but Verizon signals reach a few locations. Some households have discontinued their land-line service for Internet telephone.

Policies:

1. Encourage the development of cell phone service in Ripton in compliance with the Town Plan and the Zoning Bylaw.
2. Encourage use of existing poles and towers rather than new structures to accommodate power and telecommunications service.

3. Encourage underground siting of lines.
4. Support expansion of affordable high speed Internet access.

C. Public Protection, Health, and Safety

Police

Law enforcement is provided on an as-needed basis by the Vermont State Police. For routine patrols and speed enforcement Ripton contracts 30-40 hours per month with the Addison County Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff's Department also assists with enforcing ordinances and acts on complaints of illegal burning and dumping. During spring, summer and fall the town benefits from a similar number of hours by a patrol car on National Forest roads.

Fire and First Response

The Ripton Volunteer Fire and First Response Department (RVFD) is the town's primary emergency service and responds to approximately 50 calls per year. The Department consistently has a roster of 15-17 members, although retention, recruitment and availability, particularly during weekday hours, are always a concern. The Fire Department is assisted by mutual aid from nearby communities, especially Middlebury, which is called to any structure fire. First Responders work closely with the Middlebury Volunteer Ambulance Association, which provides ambulance transport and training opportunities. A three-member Executive Board began meeting with the Department Chief in 2008 for long-range planning and strategizing.

The Department's facilities are top-notch. Flooding in 2000 resulted in a FEMA grant for construction of a new station and relocation of headquarters from a floodplain on Peddlers Bridge Road to land leased from the Ripton School at the corner of the Dugway and Lincoln Roads. The new 4-bay station opened in 2005 with great celebration. For the first time the Department has running water, meeting space, and adequate space for equipment. The building is an emergency shelter, and community groups use its meeting space weekly. FEMA funding covered approximately \$150,000 of the \$385,000 construction cost. The Town borrowed \$176,500 for the project with loan repayment to be complete in May 2016.

The station was completed in time to house the Department's newest vehicle, a tanker specifically designed for small, rural, volunteer departments with an easy to operate fill system. This tanker was purchased with federal funding through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, and a required local match. A \$25,000 loan for the match was paid in 2009. The Department's primary fire-fighting vehicle is a 1986 International/KME pumper purchased with the help of Middlebury College. The Department's two vehicles for quick-response, a 1976 Dodge outfitted with a pump and hose and intended to go where the KME may not, and a 1979 Ford ambulance, are imminently in need of replacement. For this purpose the Town established a vehicle replacement fund in 2007.

Emergency Management

The position of Emergency Management Coordinator was filled in fall 2009 after being vacant for more than a year. As with firefighter and first response volunteerism, this position requires a substantial amount of time in training and meetings.

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission prepared a Regionwide All Hazards Mitigation Plan, of which Annex N, dated November 2008, pertains to Ripton. The Plan lists suggested hazard mitigation studies, notes the portions of the 2004 Town Plan that support hazard mitigation, and assesses the risk of a variety of hazards. Hazards that rank high or medium-high likelihood include flash floods, hazardous materials transport accidents, winter storms/ice storms, and high winds. The town has high or medium-high vulnerability to tornados, flash floods, hazardous materials accidents, hurricanes/tropical storms, earthquakes, droughts and wildfires/forest fires.

Hazard mitigation programs and activities are in place or are ongoing in the community. Ripton residents are reminded that Ripton's Rapid Response Plan designates the Town Office and Ripton School as possible emergency operations centers during a larger disaster, and the Ripton School, Fire Station and Community House as potential community shelters.

Healthcare and Human Services

The most important health facility in the area is Porter Hospital in Middlebury. Other health care organizations serving the county are the Counseling Service of Addison County, the Addison County Home Health and Hospice of Addison County, and Open Door Clinic – Community Health Services. Ripton residents may subscribe to emergency service by the Middlebury Volunteer Ambulance Association.

Several public service agencies offer services to Ripton residents and ask for Town support through Ripton's annual budget. These include: the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, Elderly Services, the Addison County Regional Solid Waste Management District, HOPE (Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects, formerly Addison County Community Action Group), and Addison County Transit Resources. State of Vermont and federal agencies include: the Agricultural Extension Service, the Department of Public Health, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Social Services Agency.

D. Town Facilities and Lands

The Ripton School District owns one building and approximately 17 acres, and the Town of Ripton owns four buildings on approximately 1.5 acres of land, one parcel of undeveloped land, and three cemeteries.

Goals:

1. Improve the energy efficiency of Town buildings.
2. Store road sand and salt in an environmentally responsible way.
3. Maintain cemeteries in an environmentally sensitive way.

The Town Office, 1131 Route 125, Ripton Historic District.

Built in 1838 adjacent to the present Community House, the building was originally a Congregational Church. The Town purchased it for a meeting house and moved it to its present site in 1868. Subsequently, outlying school buildings closed and the building was converted to the Town's only school. In 1989 the Ripton School District transferred ownership to the Town for office space. Currently, the first floor is the office of the Clerk, Listers, Zoning Administrator; meeting space for the Selectboard and Planning/Zoning Board; polling place; and includes a vault for Town records. The vault has a fire-rated door, but has some vulnerability - its ceiling leaked during floods in 2008. The second floor is rented as a private office. Most of the building had a new asphalt roof installed in 2008, but the rear roof was not replaced and leaks. Energy efficient lighting was installed in 2008, and a water heater in 2009. The exterior of the building was painted in 2009 and some rot repaired.

The Community House, 1283 Route 125, Ripton Historic District

The Community House is also a former Congregational Church. Built in 1866, it has served as a gathering place, school gymnasium, and library. The building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and is home to Ripton's Town meeting, polling during presidential election years, public meetings, private rental events, and The Ripton Coffee House, a popular folk music venue. The building had a major renovation in 1976, a standing seam roof installed in 2003, and energy efficient lighting installed in 2008. Due to recurring heating and freezing problems, the building is closed for rentals during January and February, but the utilities are kept on and their cost is high.

The Town Shed, Peddlers Bridge Road

This rudimentary metal building houses the recycling trailer. Road sand is stored adjacent to the town shed. Much of the 0.79-acre site is in a floodplain.

The Ripton School, 753 Lincoln Road

Single-story, 8 rooms, and opened in 1989, the School is further discussed in the Educational Facilities section. Although Ripton has no public library, the School library has a section with general interest books that may be checked out by residents. A community garden is located at the Elementary School; all residents are encouraged to participate in the work and in the harvest.

The Ripton Fire and First Response Station, 25 Dugway Road

The four-bay metal building with office and meeting space, was completed in 2005, and is discussed under Public Protection.

2.81 acres, Dugway Road, between the road and the Middlebury River

Cook Cemetery, Natural Turnpike

Gee Cemetery, North Branch and Dugway Roads

Galvin Cemetery, Route 125

Policies:

1. Facilitate energy audits and recommend comprehensive retrofit modifications to Town buildings, especially the Town office, community house and school.
2. Apply for or assist with grants for energy improvement projects.

V. EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Goals:

To provide high quality education within the town of Ripton for all elementary aged children residing here.

To support high quality education at the Union District level for Ripton middle, high school, and adult education students.

To support safe, affordable, high quality childcare in Ripton for Ripton residents.

A. School Facilities

The current Ripton School opened in 1989 to provide education for students in grades kindergarten through 6. In 1998 pre-kindergarten was added and is currently offered two full days and one half-day per week. Ripton is a member of the Addison Central Supervisory Union. Students in grades 7 and 8 attend Middlebury Union Middle School and those in grades 9 through 12 attend Middlebury Union High School. The Ripton Elementary School board has five elected directors, and Ripton has one Union District representative.

The Ripton Elementary School mission statement, educational beliefs, practices, and policies are clearly stated in the Ripton Elementary School Handbook. The School is located on 17 acres of land about one mile from the village center on the Lincoln Road. In 2009-2010 the school employed 20 full or part-time staff. The building was designed for 60 students in its original configuration, but provision was made to expand to 90 without enlarging the building footprint.

Ripton Elementary School enrollment peaked at 69 in 2005-2006. Table D lists the number of Ripton students enrolled in public school from 1996 to 2010. Total public school enrollment of Ripton students in grades pre-kindergarten through 12 rose fairly regularly between 1985 and 2002, and peaked at 116 in 2005-2006. Thereafter enrollment declined to 88 by 2008-2009. A modest decrease in enrollment in the next four years is expected, given the number of births since 2004. See Appendix Table B. Enrollment 1996-2009 from Town Reports

The Town's policy is to accept development and population growth, but only at rates and in locations that fall within the capacity limits of Town services, especially education. Eighty-five percent of Town taxes are committed to education. Thus, Ripton residents must be concerned not only about undue or unanticipated increases in public school enrollment and the expense they would add to our taxes but also decreases that might make keeping a public school in Ripton too expensive. A statewide decline in school population, including in Ripton, leaves the future of the school in question. The projection for the 2011-2012 school year is 38 students. Zoning and subdivision regulation may affect school growth, for example through their impact on the number of families with school-age children in Ripton. Ripton presently has two tuition students from Granville and will accept tuition students from districts in which there is school choice, provided there is available classroom space.

As a result of moisture damage, the School undertook major renovations in 2006. The roof was extended, windows and clapboards were replaced, and repainting done. Following an energy audit in 2007, and after receiving an energy grant, energy efficient high performance lighting was installed throughout the building. In 2008, the school water system received an upgrade to provide disinfection capabilities. No extraordinary maintenance expenses are anticipated in the next few years.

The School offers a variety of after school sports and activities and is the site of the community soccer field and the community garden. Friends of Ripton School (FORS), a not-for-profit fundraising group, and the Ripton Capital Project Fund, support School projects. FORS spearheads the Ripton Ridge Run as its major fundraiser. Money raised by FORS is used for field trips, ski days and classroom materials. The School receives a yearly gift-in-kind amount of about \$2,000 from Middlebury College.

The Ripton School is a designated Red Cross Emergency Shelter, and has a generator owned and maintained by the Town. The fire station was constructed in 2005 on a portion of the 17-acre school land parcel. The fire station shares water and septic services with the school. A mowed path is kept open between the school and the fire station.

In 2000 the private North Branch School began operation, serving middle school students from Ripton and surrounding towns in grades 7 through 9. The school enrollment is 27 students. The North Branch School began offering summer programs in 2009.

B. Child Care Facilities

Goals:

To provide quality year-round childcare for pre-kindergarten age children and infants within the town of Ripton for its pre-school children.

To provide summer childcare for Ripton children.

No private childcare existed in Ripton in recent years. However as of fall 2009, a licensed childcare provider and nutritionist is offering childcare services. As of winter 2010, one child is enrolled.

In East Middlebury and Middlebury there are childcare centers and pre-schools used by Ripton parents. Some of these, such as the Mary Johnson Children's Center and its affiliated center in East Middlebury, are supported by voter-approved funding. Some Ripton parents prefer the convenience of facilities near employers in Middlebury.

The School runs a summer camp for Ripton Elementary children; for this there is a charge but also scholarship money.

Policies:

1. Participate in long-term planning for the Ripton Elementary School
2. Permit childcare facilities as a home occupation in residential zones.
3. Encourage summer use of existing educational facilities.

VI. PRESERVATION OF RARE AND IRREPLACEABLE NATURAL AREAS, SCENIC AND HISTORIC FEATURES AND RESOURCES

The Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) Land and Resource Management Plan, released in February 2006, identified the Abbey Pond-Beaver Meadows area in the northwestern corner of Ripton and adjacent portions of Middlebury and Bristol as an Ecological Special Area, to be managed to protect its special values that include an extensive wetland complex and pond with rare plants and great blue heron rookeries.

The GMNF Land and Resource Management Plan also identified the portion of the North Branch of the Middlebury River between its confluence with the main stem of the Middlebury River and the confluence with Alder Brook as Eligible as a Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River with “outstandingly remarkable botanical and ecological values.”

In 2010 the Middlebury Area Land Trust is beginning location studies for extension of the North Country National Scenic Trail across Addison County. This long distance three-season hiking trail will link with existing or proposed trail sections between North Dakota and Crown Point, New York. The trail is proposed to pass through Ripton on its way to the Long Trail and Appalachian Trail. Ultimately it will extend to the Continental Divide and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trails as well.

Several areas of this plan address these very important concerns: see in Section I goal, Section IA policy 11, Section 2 goal, and Section III policy 4. The issues are discussed in depth under Section II, Natural, Historic, Scenic and Recreational Resources in sub-headings D, F, G and H, and in discussion of the Town’s Historic District in Section IA.

It is expected that any consideration of change in land use will include concern for the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historical features and resources. The Town will draw upon its Conservation Commission for expertise in locating and tabulating areas needing protection.

Policies:

1. Protect all structures recognized in the State Register of Historic Places, whether in the Historic District or elsewhere in the town.
2. Cooperate with the Middlebury Area Land Trust and the North Country Trail Association to secure Town and landowner approval for passage of the North Country National Scenic Trail through Ripton.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM FOR THE PLAN

Implementation of the Town Plan falls initially to the Ripton Planning Commission. As detailed in Section I, the Land Use section of this Plan, use of land is structured by districts, which are defined and include the types of use, areas, and dimensions involved in each of the zones, all of which must conform to the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning Act (Title 24 Vermont Statutes Annotated, Chapter 117). Implementation of this Plan will include the Ripton Health Ordinance, Ripton Road Access Ordinance, Flood Hazard Regulations, Ripton Zoning Bylaw, Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zone Bylaw, Subdivision Regulations, and any other ordinances in effect.

VIII. RELATIONSHIP OF PLAN TO NEIGHBORING TOWNS

The land along Ripton's borders is, for the most part, steep and mountainous; it is therefore unlikely to be developed. The U.S. Forest Service owns most of this land in Ripton and in neighboring towns, which include Middlebury, Bristol, Lincoln, Granville, Hancock, Goshen, and Salisbury. (See Conservation District on Map 8.)

There are two recreational facilities in towns bordering Ripton. The Snow Bowl is a small student- and family-oriented downhill ski facility located 1/2 mile east of Ripton on Route 125 in Hancock. Middlebury College remodeled the Snow Bowl's base lodge in 2004, but the capacity of the facility remained unchanged. In 2009 Middlebury College replaced the existing double chair lift up the "front" side of the mountain with a triple chair lift. The impact on the Town of Ripton was inconsequential. The Moosalamoo Campground is a small "semi-primitive" camping facility, located 1/4 mile south of Ripton on the Goshen Road in Goshen. It is owned and operated by the U.S. Forest Service. There are nineteen campsites and the Forest Service has no plans for expansion.

Planners in neighboring towns do not expect any unusual growth in residential, commercial or industrial development trends that might have an effect on Ripton. Nor does Ripton plan any development that might affect neighboring towns.

Policies:

1. Cooperate with the Addison County Regional Planning Commission and surrounding towns regarding planning efforts.

IX. POPULATION AND HOUSING

A. Population

Chartered in 1781, Ripton reached its peak population approximately one-hundred years later with 672 recorded in the 1880 US Census. Over the next fifty years people steadily left Ripton, and the population dropped below 200 by 1930. A slight increase in the 1930s was short-lived, and decline continued until 1960 when the population hit a low of 131. Steady growth from the 1960s on brought the population back to 586 per 2008 US Census estimates. Currently, total numbers are steady; the 2010 voter checklist is 446, nearly the same as 2004. However, as throughout Vermont, the number of elementary school age children is declining. The number of pre-k through grade 6 students at Ripton Elementary School was 56 in 2004, 46 in 2008-09, and is 45 in 2009-10. Thirteen births were recorded in 2000, three in 2001, and for the rest of the decade have been three to ten per year. Through 2010 Addison County's population is predicted to grow, but the greatest growth is projected for groups between the ages of 45-64 and 80-plus. (Addison County 2005 Housing Needs Assessment, p. 9)

Population 1810-2005

Year	Population	Percent Change
1810	15	
1820	42	180
1830	278	562
1840	357	28
1850	567	59
1860	570	1
1870	617	8
1880	672	9
1890	568	-15
1900	525	-8
1910	421	-20
1920	237	-44
1930	194	-18
1940	231	19
1950	207	-10
1960	131	-37
1970	187	43
1980	237	27
1990	458	93
2000	555	21
2008	586	5

Number of Residents on Voter Checklist

Year	Number	Percent Change
2000	385	
2001	394	2.3
2002	412	4.6
2003	410	-0.5
2004	444	8.3
2005	436	-1.8
2006	453	3.9
2007	424	-6.4
2008	444	4.7
2009	433	-1.0%
2010	446	3.0%

The checklist includes only registered voters, not all residents, and includes voters who were last registered here but no longer live here.

Age Distribution 1990 and 2000

	1990	2000
0-4	38	41
5-9	38	33
10-14	40	44
15-19	15	32
20-24	21	30
25-34	89	63
35-44	107	106
45-54	47	106
55-64	23	55
65-74	32	23
75-84	8	20
85+	0	3
Total	458	555

B. Housing

The housing section of the town plan provides a housing policy and specific goals to promote that policy. The policy is implemented through zoning and subdivision regulations.

Current Housing Stock

Ripton's oldest houses are 19th century single-family dwellings. Many are along Route 125 in the village historic district, but there are others on most town roads. During the first half of the 20th century, Ripton's population dropped and so did house construction. From 1950 on several year-round and vacation homes were constructed, and mobile homes replaced older housing stock or were sited on

new lots. The overall quality of construction and finishes in recent buildings, camp conversions, and renovation projects is higher than in the past.

Current housing stock includes 239 single-family homes, 15 of which have accessory dwellings, 18 mobile homes, one 4-unit apartment building, and 1 apartment above a store. There are also 47 camps or seasonal dwellings, 1 inn, the Middlebury College Bread Loaf campus with an inn and several residences rented for summer use, and the Vermont Elks Silver Towers Camp with dorms and a mobile home for summer use. Approximately 200 homes are occupied year-round by owners, and 35 units by tenants. There are slightly more homes and camps on parcels greater than 6 acres than on parcels smaller than 6 acres.

All home water supply and waste disposal systems are individual and not all properties have them. Several year-round residences have no documented water or septic and fit the definition of "camp." Permits have been required for wastewater systems in Ripton since the mid-1980s, and since 2006 are granted by the State. Town permits for new house construction have been required since 1989. From 2000 -2007, forty permits for new dwellings were issued, while from 2008 - July 2010 only one new dwelling permit and one permit for a primitive camp were issued.

The 2000 U.S. Census supplied the following statistics:

Housing Units	1970: 149
	1980: 281
	1990: 282
	2000: 283
Occupied Units	1990: 175
	2000: 210
Owner-occupied	1990: 74.4%
	2000: 78.6%
Renter-occupied	1990: 24.6%
	2000: 21.4%
Seasonal	1990: 36.5%
	2000: 22.3%

Future Housing Need, Housing Costs and Affordability

Goal: Support the provision of suitable, safe, energy-efficient, affordable housing that is in keeping with the surrounding environment, and located near existing town roads and facilities.

Availability

Ripton has approximately 240 single-family residential properties. Throughout the past two years there are usually at least six residences listed for sale with realtors, plus a few listed for sale by owner. Availability in the three percent range, which Ripton's number minimally meets, is considered healthy and stable.

For rental housing, availability is slightly higher. The four-unit apartment building

on the North Branch Road was never full in 2008-2010. In 2008-09 three single-family homes and at least one appurtenant dwelling were added to the rental stock. In August 2009, advertisements and a housing count indicated a rental vacancy rate over five percent. Five percent rental vacancy is considered healthy. The vacancy rate in August may be higher than the rest of the year because summer rentals end, but it remains that the number of rental units has increased.

With projected household growth predicted for older households, the existing housing stock, and lack of services, may not meet the needs of an aging population. Currently there is a concern about attracting families with young children to maintain an elementary school population.

Affordability

Affordable housing is that which a household making the county's median income could afford if no more than 30 percent of household income is spent on mortgage, property tax, and insurance, or for rent and utilities. The 2008 median household income for a family of four in Addison County is \$62,000. The mortgage payment, including tax considered affordable for this household is \$1,550 per month. The affordable rent for a family in Addison County is \$1,200 with an additional \$350 estimated for heat, hot water, and electricity. The 2009 hourly wage required for a 3-bedroom unit in Addison County is \$21.90, 272% of a minimum wage of \$8.06. (Vermont Housing Data, www.housingdata.org).

Rental availability and anecdotal evidence of pricing indicates an affordable rental market. Grand list values and sales prices indicate that there is a good deal of affordable owner-occupied housing in Ripton. The problem is that there is very little availability.

The median primary residence home price in Ripton in 2008 was \$206,000, below the \$211,000 median for Addison County, and above the \$200,000 for Vermont. The monthly payment for Ripton's median home value including \$4,798 in property tax is \$1,631 per month, \$81 per month greater than the affordable value. However, had in 2008 a property owner with a \$62,000 income owned a house in Ripton appraised at \$206,000 that owner would have received a property tax adjustment of \$1,797 and the home would be affordable, at \$69 per month below the affordability threshold.

In 2009 at least four 3-bedroom homes were for sale for less than \$206,000, two under \$250,000 and one for \$595,000. The small number of sales per year can easily skew the numbers used to calculate affordability. In general, housing costs are rising despite a slow real estate market. A town-wide reappraisal was completed in 2004; by 2008 a 3-year study of sales put the Town's level of appraisal below 80 percent and triggered another reappraisal to be completed in 2011. From 1990 to 2000 Ripton's median housing value rose 61 percent, with most of that increase occurring during the last few years of the decade. From 2000-2008 the median housing value rose 61 percent again, from \$127,900 to \$206,000, while median household income increased roughly 44 percent county-wide. The median wage and income for Ripton residents was lower than the median for Addison County in the last US census, so housing may be less affordable for the average Ripton resident than the average Addison County resident.

The standard definition of affordable housing does not account for rising consumer costs. Utility and transportation costs certainly relate to affordability in Ripton. As fuel costs soared in recent years, those in relatively large homes and older housing, particularly those on fixed incomes, saw their living situations become far less affordable. A 2009 pilot community weatherization program helped residents of 60 homes improve energy efficiency and save on utility costs, and identified the need for insulation improvements. Also, any assessment of affordable housing in Ripton must be viewed in light of the town's rural nature and relative lack of developable land, public transportation, employers and services. In particular, land sales are infrequent and availability for development limited. Though a build-out study indicated that current zoning and private ownership allows the addition of 535 dwellings, steep slopes, wet soils, and lack of septic capacity make this number unlikely. There is still a substantial amount of undeveloped land in the high and medium density residential zones, 2 and 5 acre lot sizes respectively, but much of it is held in large parcels and some of it is not developable. In 2009 there were 2 land parcels for sale in Ripton, one a 3-acre lot on a town road for \$35,000, and the other a 96-acre parcel in a 10-acre zone on a private road for \$209,000.

Most recent housing development is in the low-density residential zones on ten-acre parcels. Zoning and subdivision regulations approved in 2006 play an important role in assuring that growth takes place in appropriate locations at appropriate rates.

Studies have shown that new development usually costs a town more in additional services and school expenses than it receives back in new property taxes.¹ Ultimately, ownership of large acreages of Ripton land by the USFS and Middlebury will cap Ripton population expansion significantly below that of many area towns. Not only do Middlebury College and Forest Service lands provide exceptional recreational and open space opportunities, they do so at bargain rates to the Town in terms of required services.

A review of the Town's building applications indicates modest growth in the number of housing units since the 2000 U.S. Census, as shown in Table C.

¹ Vermont Land Trust: Property Tax Impacts of Land Conservation (8/06), Brighton, D.: Tax Consequences of Land Acquisition by the U.S. Forest Service in Vermont (4/09), Brighton, D.: Land Conservation and Property Taxes in Vermont (undated). These documents are on file at the Ripton Town Office.

TABLE C

Year	Permanent & Seasonal Homes	Replacement Structures*	Subdivisions & New Lots	Mobile Homes	Conversions**	Camps
2000	1	4	0	0	1	1
2001	4	0	4:4	0	1	0
2002	5	2	1:3	1	1	1
2003	6	4	4:6	0	0	0
2004	8	1	1:1	0	0	0
2005	5	1	1:2	0	0	0
2006	6	5	1:1	0	0	0
2007	1	1	0	1	1	0
2008	0	0	1:1	0	0	0
2009	1	1	1:1	0	0	1

*Dwelling removed and another built

**Camp converted to dwelling, or apartment added

Policies:

1. Suitable housing

- Allow for a variety of housing types in the Town Plan and zoning bylaws to meet the needs of present and projected population.
- Encourage the diversity of our community to be sustained through the transfer of existing housing.

2. Safe housing:

- Encourage enforcement of Vermont Department of Health minimum health and safety standards.
- Adopt building and health codes to prevent loss or degradation of existing housing.
- Encourage identification and improvement of substandard sewage disposal systems.
- Support fire department efforts for chimney and wood-burning safety.

3. Energy-efficient housing:

- Encourage innovative planning, design and construction of housing that minimizes cost, energy consumption, and environmental impact.
- Encourage construction that complies with the Vermont energy code, Energy Star efficiency standards, LEED standards, and Vermont Residential Building Energy Standards.
- Consider energy requirements necessary for residences and businesses when establishing plans and bylaws.
- Encourage establishment of home occupations and small businesses, compatible with the surrounding land use, to reduce commuting costs.
- Encourage all new residential construction to use a code compliance form from VT Software, Fast-Track Compliance Tables, Trade-Off Compliance Tables, or from an energy ratings service like Efficiency Vermont.

4. Affordable housing:

- Support policy that keeps affordable housing affordable for the long-term, particularly when there is public funding of the project.
- Encourage the preservation of existing safe and energy-efficient affordable housing that complies with zoning and septic regulations.
- Support new low-cost housing that meets the needs of residents.
- Facilitate the cooperation of public and private entities in planning and developing affordable housing.
- Support environmentally sound policies that promote growth of household income to make housing more affordable.
- Support transportation alternatives such as ACTR that make affordable housing viable in an outlying community such as Ripton.

5. Housing in keeping with the surroundings:

- Encourage development that is compatible with existing architecture, community character and other land use concerns.
- Preserve the Historic District and encourage preservation of historic structures both in and outside the district.

6. Housing and natural resources:

- Provide for planned unit development in plans, bylaws, and subdivision regulations.
- Encourage location of development in areas with the least valuable or sensitive environmental characteristics.
- Maintain vegetation along stream banks to the greatest extent feasible to provide habitat, prevent erosion, and reduce the amount of pollutants entering surface waters.
- Establish Flood Erosion Hazard Districts along rivers and streams to protect property and natural resources.

7. Housing and cost to the municipality:

- Minimize the costs of new development to the municipality by discouraging development on class 4 roads and in remote areas.
- Monitor conversions of camps or seasonal housing to year-round housing.
- Discourage development on environmentally sensitive sites, unless appropriate mitigating actions are taken.

8. Public and private organizations may be assisted in providing services by:

- Providing data to state or federal agencies when allocations of federal subsidy funds are under consideration.
- Helping the ACRPC maintain an up-to-date housing database.

X. EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goals:

- Sustain available locally based jobs while maintaining the rural character of Ripton.
- Improve public transportation options and ride-sharing to employment centers such as Middlebury.
- Support regional decision making for job opportunities.

A. Employment

Ripton is a bedroom community of Middlebury and other larger centers. Eighty-eight percent of Ripton's labor force drives an average of 25.5 minutes to work. Because the great majority of the population works in Middlebury or other employment centers, residents have a strong interest in the overall health and diversity of the region's economy. This plan supports regional decision-making that engenders job opportunity while maintaining high environmental standards. According to the 2000 US Census only 9.2 percent of the population, primarily self-employed, worked in Ripton. The largest employers in town are the Ripton Elementary School, which employed 7 residents in 2009-2010, and seasonally the Middlebury College Bread Loaf campus. Figures 1 and 2 show the occupations and employment categories of Ripton residents in 2000.

B. Economic Development

Recreation, tourism, education, home occupation, forest industries, construction trades, small-scale agriculture, one inn, and one retail establishment contribute to Ripton's economy. This plan supports the continuation of these activities, and expansion consistent with the town's rural nature and scenic character.

Policies:

1. Support development of high speed Internet and technology that has low impact on the environment and enables home occupations and educational opportunity.
2. Support development of local enterprises that create markets for locally produced goods and services.
3. Support new business development in areas where services such as road, fire protection, and utilities exist.
4. Support efforts to create child care.
5. Encourage home occupations, and support the opportunity for home occupations through zoning.
6. Encourage small-scale agricultural businesses.

7. Support forest-products based businesses.
8. Support public transportation and ride-sharing to employment centers.
9. Encourage seasonal employment of Ripton residents at sites such as the Middlebury College Bread Loaf campus and Silver Towers Camp.
10. Support the continuing operation of a Ripton Post Office.
11. Consider the implications of an aging population and its needs.

Figure 1. Occupations of Ripton residents in 2000. Source: 2000 U.S. Census

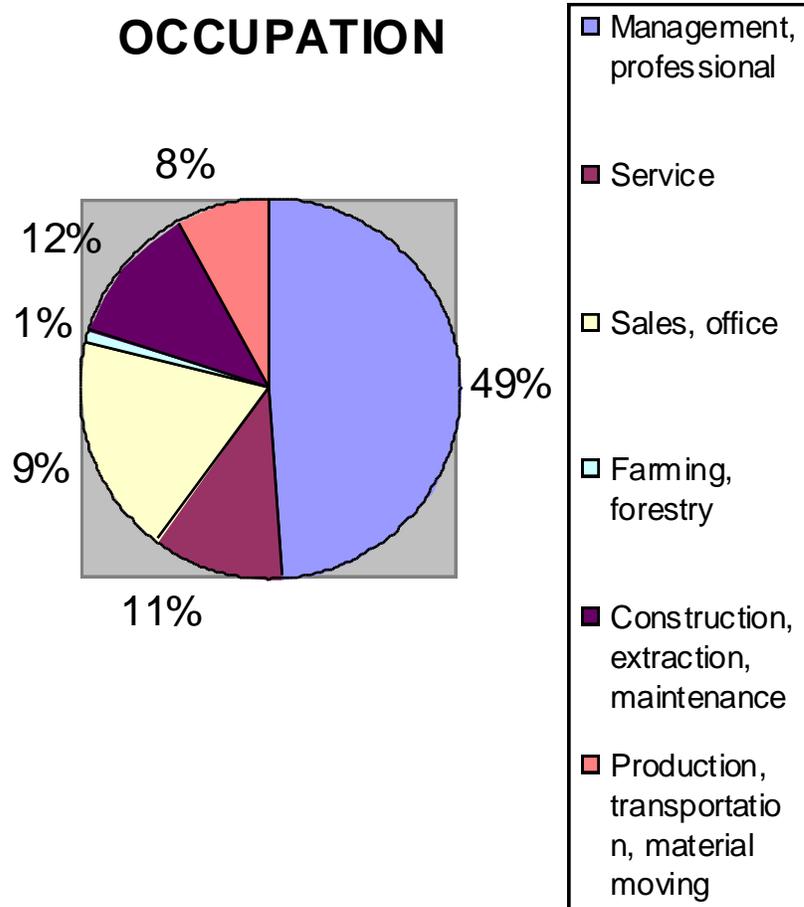
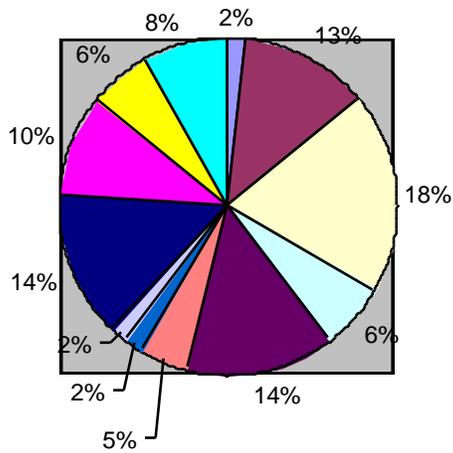


Figure 2. Categories of employment of Ripton residents in 2000. Source: U.S. Census

INDUSTRY



- Ag, forestry, hunt, mine
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale trade
- Retail trade
- Transportation, warehousing, utilities
- Information
- Finance, insurance, real estate, rental leasing
- Professional, scientific, management, admin
- Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation
- Public administration
- Other

Enrollment 1996-2009 from Town Reports

Grade/Yr	Births	PreK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total	Total	
96-97	7	0	11	7	9	8	5	13	7	60	14	10	3	7	9	7	50	110	
97-98	8	0	8	11	9	9	6	4	10	57	7	15	9	3	6	7	47	104	
98-99	5	7	1	7	9	7	5	10	9@	55	11	9	15	8	3	5	51	106	
99-00	8	4	10	5	8	11	8	7	11	64	6	11	8	14	5	3	47	111	
00-01	9	7	7	10	5	7	8	8	9	61	8	5	11	7	13	5	49	111	
2001-2002	4	10	6	8	8	6	8	8	10	65	7	8	5	8	6	12	46	111	
2002-2003	7	7	10	5	10	8	4	8	9@	61	8	6	7	6	7	9	43	104	
2003-2004	7	3	7	9	5	10	8	5	7	54	8	8	5	7	5	7	40	94	
2004-2005	4	6	7	6	7	5	10	9	5	55	6	6	8	7	9	5	41	96	
2005-2006	8	5	12	9	7	8	7	11	10	69	4	10	8	11	5	9	47	116	
2006-2007	4	2*	5	10	7	7	9	6	11	57	6	2	6	9	10	7	40	97	
2007-2008	3	1*	3	5	11	8	8	10	7	53	6	8	2	10	10	10	46	99	
2008-2009	6	3	2	2	7	8	7	6	11	46 ∞	3	5	8	6	9	11	42	88	
2009-2010		4	5	1	2	8	9	7	6	42	8	3	5	8	6	9	39	81	

Notes: * Several families with preschool-aged children moved or opted for private.

@ This year had three tuition students from Hancock in 6th grade.

∞ Between 07-08 and 08-09 six federally subsidized housing units (rentals) were removed from the market and several families had to move out of town.