TOWN OF GEORGIA, VERMONT
2011 COMPREHENSIVE MUNICIPAL PLAN

Balloon Over Lake Arrowhead Photo Credit: David Juaire

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF PLAN

This plan was developed to assist Town Officials, residents, and persons contemplating actions involving land use and development in the Town of Georgia. It provides a comprehensive framework and statement of policies, goals and implementation strategies from which to make decisions regarding land use, economic development, provision of services and facilities, resource use and conservation (including historic, scenic, cultural, and natural resources), and public health, safety and welfare.

The Georgia Town Plan also serves as the legal basis for the adoption of local land use regulations, capital budget programs, and impact fee ordinances. By statute, plans must be readopted every five years or they expire.

It is important to note the legal link between the plan and other regulations the Town may adopt. The policies, goals and implementation strategies found herein should serve as a guide for decision making by the appropriate branches of government as well as the private sector. The plan policies give definition and meaning to the regulations and should be used in concert with one another in order to be effective in directing growth and development in desirable ways. A good plan is one that is used by both the public and private sector to make reasonable decisions concerning development and land use for the overall benefit of the citizens residing in the Town.

This plan updates a plan adopted on September 26, 2006. The 2011 plan has been developed by the Georgia Planning Commission with assistance from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and with input from other Town boards, municipal offices, private citizens and the Town Administrator. The plan has been developed to conform to current state statutes, including 24 VSA Chapter 117.

This plan represents a significant effort to capture public opinion regarding the goals for our community and the challenges that we face. In 2006, the Georgia Planning Commission involved the citizens of the Town through a town-wide survey which was distributed and tabulated. The survey was responded to by 482 property owners in town representing approximately 26% of those solicited. It produced good results and provided useful insights into how townspeople want to see the Town develop. At the base line, the people of Georgia have said they very much like our current rural character. However, they do want additional services, amenities and jobs but any development should be consistent with the nature of our community. (For additional information on the survey see the appendix.) The Planning Commission believes the findings of this survey are still true today and continue to use this information to guide municipal planning efforts.

As part of the 2011 Town Plan revision, the Planning Commission sought to further

engage the public on two specific issues currently facing the community: energy and issues related to public and private roads.

This Town Plan, as noted above, required considerable involvement and effort. Projections are based, to a large degree, on the 2005-2009 American Community Survey and the 2010 Census, as well as a review of past Town reports.

In addition to the citizen survey and census data, several recent studies, reports, and proposals relating to the future of our town have been useful in the development of this Town Plan. These include: Georgia Village Plan: A Vision for the Future (2003); Town of Georgia Sewer and Water Assessments for the Historic Village and the Town Center; the Municipal Exploration Committee recommendations; U. S. Route 7 Corridor Study; the Vermont Interstate Interchange Design Guidelines study; and the Georgia South Village Core Strategic Plan, the Georgia Facilities Improvement Proposal and the Ancient Roads Study.

The Town Plan is given consideration in state agency planning decisions, state and federal regulatory schemes, such as Act 250 Hearings, Agency of Transportation Hearings, and Public Service Board Hearings. The Planning Commission and Selectboard are statutory parties in any Act 250 Hearing involving Georgia and conformance with Plan Policies is one method of participating in those hearings.

A less tangible, but much desired, goal of this Town Plan is to serve as a focus for community action as well as governmental action. There is much that citizens can do for the benefit of themselves and the town by working towards an identified common goal. Georgia has many excellent examples of this, including the Historical Society, the Recreation Committee, the Solid Waste Committee, the South Georgia Fire District, and the Conservation Commission, to name a few. These and other groups continue to work to make Georgia a better place to live.

Planning is a continuing and dynamic process, the purpose of which is to prepare for the future by understanding where we came from, how we got there, where we want to go from here, and how that can be best accomplished. The process involves developing a "community vision." This plan is an attempt to provide that vision for the town over the next five years and beyond. As stated in previous plans, "A community which plans has decided to exercise some choice over its future. It rejects the idea that the undesirable consequences of growth are inevitable."

Georgia took the first steps toward planning almost forty years ago when it adopted zoning in 1967. The first town plan was adopted in 1972 and was updated in 1986, 1995, 2001 and again in 2006. This plan will be another step in the continuing process of promoting a desirable community setting while protecting and improving environmental quality.

Another statement from previous plans is as true today as when it was written and sums up the purpose of this plan: "Changes are coming and at an increasing rate. The

problems posed by these pressures must be addressed by comprehensive forethought to ensure that future decisions will provide long term solutions rather than stop gap measures. Since communities exist primarily for the health and enjoyment of those who live in them, it follows that the nature, location, and timing of any future development should be determined by the people of Georgia rather than left solely to chance or the decisions of developers. The intent is not to eliminate any existing land uses or to stop all future development, but to channel the desired growth to appropriate locations within the Town."

While municipal planning can lead to many positive actions and benefits to the community, it must also be recognized that there are external factors, over which we have little control, which will influence our community. The national economy, tax policy, federal and state regulation or legislation, natural disasters, the weather, dairy prices and the real estate market are a few factors that can have major impacts on all of us. No plan is perfect nor can anyone anticipate all the factors affecting us as individuals or as a community. Not all of the goals, policies and implementation strategies outlined in this plan will be achieved. So why plan at all? If only a few of the goals are met and the result is that we leave our community a better place for our children, then, the efforts will have been worth it.

B. STATEMENT OF AUTHORIZATION

The Georgia Town Plan has been prepared in accordance with and under the authority of Title 24, Chapter 117 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated (V.S.A.) which will henceforth be referred to in this document as "the Act." As such, the provisions of the Act are hereby incorporated by reference into this Town Plan and the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations and may be used by the Planning Commission to further define and clarify any policies, goals, implementation strategies, powers and duties expressed herein. This Act is also known as the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act.

First enacted in 1968, the Act has undergone several amendments, with a major change in 1988, known as the Growth Management Act or Act 200. The Act provides the legal framework for municipal planning, capital budgeting, impact fee ordinances, transfer and purchase of development rights, and land use regulation.

SECTION 2. PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES

The following section includes goals and policies related to each section of the Town Plan. Many of the policies were developed as part of past town plans and have been carried forward in the 2011 update because they continue to be relevant. Other goals and policies are new, reflecting current town planning goals.

Implementation strategies related to these goals and policies are located in Section 8, Plan Implementation

A) Housing

Goals:

To ensure that safe, sanitary and adequate housing is available and affordable for Georgia residents.

To achieve a diverse mix of housing types that meets the needs of Georgia's population at every stage of life.

Policies:

A-1) Where possible, rehabilitate existing housing through the use of existing programs or volunteer efforts, such as Habitat for Humanity.

A-2) To encourage the provision of affordable housing.

A-3) Ensure that residential development does not exceed the ability of the community to provide services and facilities for such development.

A-4) Design and phase development so as to minimize impacts on municipal services, local tax burden and important resources.

A-5) Encourage Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) that allow for clustered housing and less infrastructure to reduce the cost and other impacts of housing development.

A-6) Provide a diversity of housing types and ownership that meets the needs of Georgia residents.

B) Economic Development

Goal:

To encourage the development and expansion of appropriate and compatible industry and business in the town.

Policies:

B-1) To promote a diversified and stable economy by encouraging compatible industrial and commercial development and the continuation of existing industries, small businesses and home occupations.

B-2) To provide necessary infrastructure to accommodate more intensive land uses (such as industrial and commercial) within areas designated for such growth. To avoid those areas where infrastructure is not available, the land will not support the use, or there would be a conflict with present land uses.

B-3) To encourage clustering of related and compatible businesses and industries and avoid strip development along highways.

B-4) When planning for commercial and industrial development, encourage such development to serve the public good in terms of employment, revenue, environmental quality, health and safety, and services.

B-5) To encourage home occupations that are compatible with the surrounding areas through specific standards in the zoning bylaws.

B-6) To enhance and protect the vitality of Villages and population centers as important community assets.

B-7) Commercial and industrial development should not place an undue burden on the town in terms of services and facilities required from their development and its associated impacts.

C) Taxes, Growth and Fiscal Condition

Goal:

To maintain a sound fiscal balance for the town, to encourage reasonable, functional, orderly development of facilities, utilities and services, and to promote the health of agriculture while providing a stable economic base for the other sectors of the economy.

Policies:

C-1) The location, form, and rate of growth must not exceed the ability of the residents of the town to pay for the necessary services and facilities required from that growth but must be sufficient to mitigate the increasing cost of services.

C-2) Development should occur based on projected need, availability of revenues to provide services, and recognition of the limits of human, financial, and natural resources.

C-3) The development of infrastructure should not significantly impact natural or human resources outlined in this plan unless there is a demonstrated public need.

C-4) Growth should be guided toward locations which can make use of existing services and facilities.

D) Transportation

Goal:

To provide a safe, efficient, cost effective transportation network to meet the varied needs of the residents of the Town.

Policies:

D-1) Development of roads must meet specified standards as set forth by the Selectboard. Roads will be accepted into the Town highway system only after meeting these requirements and a finding that it is in the public good to do so. Developers shall bear all costs associated with acceptance of roads.

D-2) Highway access for the purpose of development shall be strictly controlled on Rural Principal and Rural Minor Arterial Roads. Wherever possible, lots will be required to provide one access/egress point onto said highways which will serve the entire

parcel. Multiple curb cuts are strongly discouraged.

D-3) To plan development so as to avoid the need for major public investment in transportation networks. Particular regard shall be given to impacts on the carrying capacity of transportation networks affected by the development. Developers will be required to pay for the costs of necessary improvements.

D-4) To support alternative forms of transportation such as bike and pedestrian paths or lanes, particularly in conjunction with new development or road projects, and to connect these systems, where possible, to form a comprehensive network.

D-5) To insure that Town interests are protected through the use of a permit process for uses taking place within road rights of way.

D-6) Roads should not be constructed or extended into important resources areas when it would lead to the destruction or degradation of those resources.

D-7) The Town will work cooperatively with the state to develop a transportation network that meets both state and local needs. The Town will play and active role in the planning of new improvements proposed by the state which might affect Georgia. Such plans shall conform to the overall goals and policies of the Town.

E) Historic and Scenic Resources

Goals:

To encourage that Georgia's noteworthy historic and scenic resources remain intact.

Policies:

E-1) Places of outstanding historical, educational or scenic value should be protected from development that would unreasonably impair their character or quality.

E-2) Encourage the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic structures.

E-3) To encourage innovation in design and layout of development so that the visual impact can be minimized.

E-4) To encourage the use of vegetative buffers and other screening

methods to reduce the visual impact of development.

SECTION 4. THE PHYSICAL SETTING

F) Geology and Topography

Goal:

To protect private and public investment and maintain the natural environment by considering topography and geology when determining land use.

Policies:

F-1) Geologic factors should be considered in planning to insure the proper use of land.

F-2) Development, excluding renewable energy and communications facilities, on ridges and hilltops should be discouraged and their adverse aesthetic and environmental impacts should be prevented.

F-3) Site modifications necessary for a particular project should be allowed but there should be no substantial change to natural drainage ways.

F-4) Consider geologic factors in future planning.

F-5) Intensive land development on slopes in excess of 25% shall be prohibited and every effort shall be made to maintain a suitable cover of natural vegetation to reduce erosion.

F-6) Development shall be performed so as to prevent runoff and soil erosion. Vegetative cover should be maintained or established and erosion control measures shall be undertaken at the time of construction.

G) Soils

Goal:

To maintain and improve the quality of important soils, such as agriculture and forestry soils, when considering the future development of the town.

Policies:

G-1) The Town shall require proof of a State wastewater permit as a condition of local Zoning Permits, where applicable.

G-2) Slopes in excess of 8% may be highly subject to erosion, depending on soil type, and consideration should be given to the use of acceptable soil erosion measures. Vegetative cover should be established and maintained as soon as possible after construction.

G-3) Development on poorly drained soils should be avoided wherever possible and strict regard to soils testing and septic system design should be required.

G-4) The use of accepted agricultural and forestry practices and/or best management practice is encouraged as a way to protect valuable soil and other resources.

H) Earth Resources

Goal:

To protect local earth resources until needed for future use for the benefit of the community; and to minimize the impacts of extraction on the environment.

Policies:

H-1) Extraction of earth resources should be permitted when it has been demonstrated that the activity will not have an undue impact on the Town of Georgia and its residents.

H-2) All proposed earth extractions must have a plan for the reclamation of the site, acceptable to the Planning Commission, to ensure the wise use of resources. Guarantees may be required of the developer to assure that the site is properly reclaimed.

I) Climate and Air Quality

Goal:

To consider climatic factors and to protect the quality of the air when planning for future development.

Policies:

I-2) Development which degrades air quality should be strongly discouraged.

J) Water Resources

Goal:

To maintain, improve, and protect the quality of Georgia's water resources, including groundwater and surface water.

Policies:

J-1) Accepted agricultural practices, best management practices, and accepted management practices for logging jobs are strongly encouraged as a means of protecting water resources.

J-2) Future development near surface waters should be low density and low impact.

J-3) As much as reasonably possible, streams, ponds, rivers, and wetlands should be maintained in a natural state and protected from pollutants so they can provide their natural functions. Buffer strips should be encouraged so as to protect these natural functions.

J-4) Consider impacts to Public Source Water Protection during the development review process.

J-5) Development should be limited on wetlands and hydric soils.

J-6) Development within shoreland and streambank areas should, where reasonable, maintain existing vegetation, prevent soil erosion, prevent pollution of the water body, and be set back in accordance with established buffers so as not to detract from the natural beauty or cause harm to the environment.

K) Fragile, Unique and Sensitive Areas

Goal:

Protect fragile, unique, and sensitive areas.

Policies:

K-1) Buffer strips should be encouraged to prevent harmful effects of development from affecting these areas.

K-2) Proposed developments which might affect these resources should be referred to the appropriate state agency for comment.

K-3) Development in or near wetlands are subject to the Vermont Wetlands Regulations and possibly the Army Corps of Engineers Regulations. Notice to the Wetlands Division is required.

SECTION 5. UTILITIES, FACILITIES AND TOWN SERVICES

L) Utilities, Facilities and Town Services

Goals:

Development and growth in Georgia should occur at a rate which can be accommodated by reasonable expansion and/or improvement of facilities and services.

Public utilities and services should be enhanced in ways that improve economic development opportunities and quality of life, but that do not jeopardize public health, the environment or scenic resources.

Regulation of land development in Georgia should not negatively impact the availability of safe and affordable childcare.

All Georgia residents shall have access to quality education.

Policies:

L-1) Review projects based on their individual impact, as well as their conformance with the overall rate of growth and facility/service capability planned for the town.

L-2) Locate facility and service improvements in existing development

areas and areas that are designated for future growth.

L-3) Quality educations for citizens shall be a priority of the Town of Georgia.

L-4) All commercial telecommunication facilities shall be located in appropriate areas, respecting the integrity of residential areas, aesthetic concerns, and natural resource issues. As noted elsewhere in the Plan, the protection of scenic and natural areas is very important to the Town of Georgia.

L-5) Wherever possible, new facilities shall be co-located on or near existing structures, unless the Planning Commission determines that separate facilities will create less visual and aesthetic impact.

L-6) Locate facility and service improvements in existing development areas and areas which are designated for future growth.

SECTION 6. LAND USE

M) Land Use

Goals:

To concentrate residential, commercial and industrial growth in the Village Center and the South Village area to protect the Town's rural character and resources.

Policies:.

M-1) To avoid strip development the town may require developers to use techniques such as clustering to discourage strip development along highway corridors.

M-2) Use the site plan review process to encourage innovation in design and layout for improved traffic flow, pedestrian access, parking, landscaping and screening, lighting and aesthetics.

M-3) Farmers have the right to use accepted practices in the operation of their farms even when they conflict with residential use.

M-4) Preserve and protect open land agricultural fields and forests through programs that encourage farming and forestry such as the current use tax program, conservation easements and transfer of development rights (TDR).

M-5) Encourage the preservation of land in an agricultural, wooded or open state, particularly in areas of the town, which are important scenic viewsheds and not well connected to service systems.

M-6) Strip development along highway corridors should be strongly discouraged.

M-7) Georgia's rural landscape should continue to be characterized by open land agricultural fields and forests.

M-8) Changes to land use regulation should recognize the frailty of farming and forestry and reconcile the need of an individual landowner to realize a reasonable return on their investment with the need to retain valuable farm and forestland for production.

M-9) Important resource lands such as prime and statewide agricultural and forest soils are a unique and limited resource, which are essential for food and fiber production.

M-10) When locating residential development, agriculture should be the predominant use in agricultural areas.

M-11) Consider the impacts of livestock in medium and high density residential areas.

SECTION 7. ENERGY

N) Energy

Goals:

To reduce the use of and dependence on expensive and polluting energy sources.

To promote energy efficient use and conservation of local and outside energy sources.

To promote the use of renewable energy sources.

Policies:

N-1) To promote the use of small scale renewable energy sources.

N-2) To promote educational opportunities which increase energy awareness of students, local officials and townspeople.

N-3) To encourage the use of car and van pools, public transportation and park and rides for commuters and others.

N-4) To encourage the use of energy efficiency as a criteria for the purchase of Town equipment and facilities.

N-5) To consider energy costs and energy efficiency as a criteria for the purchase of Town equipment and facilities.

SECTION 3: THE COMMUNITY SETTING

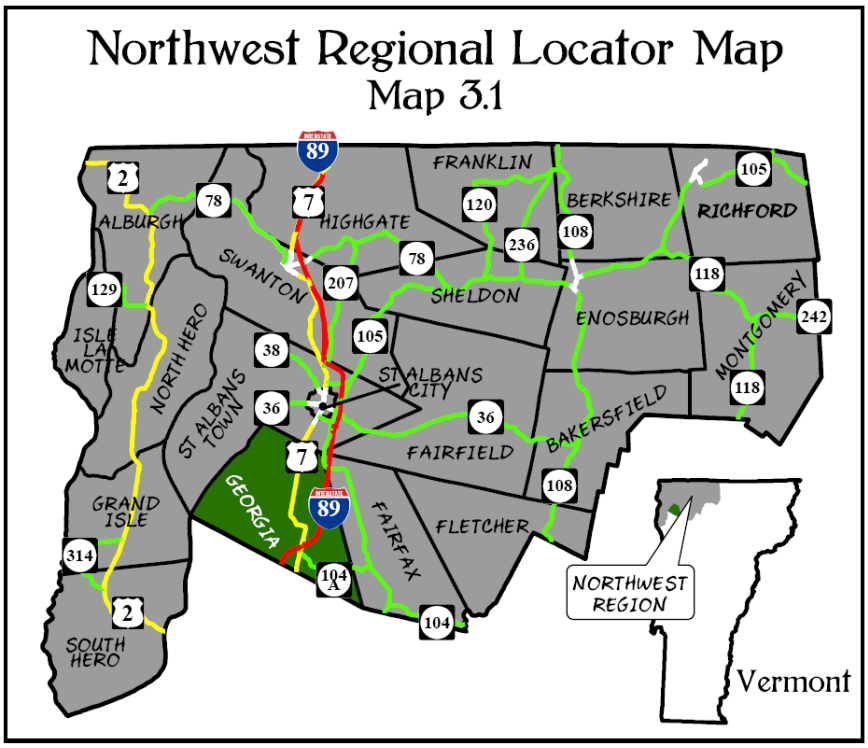
A. LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

Georgia is located in the southwest corner of Franklin County and borders the Chittenden County towns of Milton and Westford to the south, the Franklin County towns of Fairfax to the east, St. Albans and Fairfield to the north and Lake Champlain to the west. Georgia has over seven miles of shoreline along Lake Champlain and part of its border with Milton bisects Lake Arrowhead.

The Town of Georgia has a land area of 30,952 acres, or 47.8 square miles, making it a large town by Vermont standards (many are app 36 square miles).

The Town is characterized by a narrow shoreline, a broad, relatively flat plain, the foothills of the Green Mountains, the Lamoille River and tributaries, as well as various other smaller streams, tributaries and wetlands. The Town is roughly half open land and half forested, with much of the open land devoted to agriculture.

Georgia's long boundary with Lake Champlain, it's relatively flat plain, and foothills of the Green Mountains make it a diverse and beautiful town.



B. HISTORY

To write a history of Georgia in a few pages is like writing a single page town plan. Since 1967 the Georgia Town History Committee has produced 34 volumes of Georgia history. However, an effort has been made to touch on the highlights of our history reflecting the major changes in our community as we move through the first decade of the 21st century.

Georgia was chartered by the first royal Governor of New Hampshire, Benning Wentworth, August 17, 1763. In 1773 the original shares were purchased by men who later became prominent in Vermont affairs, Levi Allen, Ethan Allen, Remember Baker, Heman Allen and Ira Allen. By the time the town was settled, Ira Allen owned most of the shares.

The town of Georgia was organized on March 31, 1788 at a meeting warned by Judge John White of Chittenden County, of which Georgia was then a part. Reuben Evarts was elected clerk. The other officers were Stephen Davis, Stephen Holmes, and Richard Sylvester, selectmen; Frederick Bliss, constable; Solomon Goodrich and Abel Pierce, haywards; William Farrand, Noah Loomis and Stephen Fairchild, surveyors of highways.

The families of William Farrand and Andrew Van Guilder were the first to winter in Georgia, during 1785-86. The first child born in town was named Georgia Farrand. He was named by Ira Allen. The Farrands settled in the northwest corner of the town, the Van Guilders in the southeast corner. Several single men had spent their summers in town before this, returning to their homes in southern New England in the winter.

Early settlers had to transport their grain to Whitehall, New York, or Vergennes to be ground. Transportation was by way of the lake, on foot, or by ox team through the woods. In 1788 there was almost a famine as it was a poor crop year and more people wintered in town than the food supply could support.
The population of Georgia increased rapidly from 1791 when there were 340 people in town. The population figures are interesting:

1800 A.D. – 1068 residents
1810 A.D. – 1760 residents
1830 A.D. – 1899 residents
1850 A.D. – 2688 residents
1870 A.D. – 1603 residents
1890 A.D. – 1282 residents
1910 A.D. – 1090 residents

The population was never again over 1100 until 1970. Georgia was the largest town north of Burlington until 1830 and the largest town in Franklin County until 1840.
In 1800, construction of a "meeting house" was started, and in 1802 the Old White Meeting House was dedicated. It was built under the direction of Captain Spratt, an

English architect. It was carefully built of the best of materials and for years was the largest and finest building in northern Vermont. It served the town in many ways for 150 years. It was destroyed by fire on October 2, 1952.

During the War of 1812, smugglers drove beef cattle into Canada to supply the British Army, but the men of Georgia sided with the customs officers and put up so courageous a fight that the traffic was stopped. The smugglers called Georgia "Hells Gate."

The Georgia militia company crossed the sand bar to Grand Isle in September 1814 and was transported across the lake to Plattsburg. There they helped repel a British invasion from Canada.

In 1850 the Central Vermont Railroad was completed through Georgia. The High Bridge over the Lamoille River is the highest railroad bridge in Vermont; it is also the most photographed railroad bridge.

Hemenway's Gazetteer lists 142 men from Georgia who served in the Civil War. Twenty-six of these men died of disease or wounds while in the service. There were six commissioned officers and two Civil War generals born in Georgia: General George H. Stannard and Brigadier General Joel A. Dewey. A granite monument near the Dunsmore farm marks General Stannard's birthplace.

Other famous men of this age who were born in Georgia were Alvah Sabin, Congressman from Vermont; Gardner Colton, who invented the first electric locomotive and who also popularized "laughing gas"; and Daniel Bliss, founder of the American University in Beirut, Lebanon in 1866.

The Vermont roster for the Spanish American War shows five men from Georgia and the roster of the Vermont Adjutant Generals office shows 24 Georgia men in the armed service during World War I. Of these two died in service and two were wounded in action. Six were commissioned officers.

In the Second World War there were at least 56 men and women from Georgia in the armed services. One, Wendell Post, did not return. Many others from Georgia served in the Korean, Vietnam and Gulf wars.

In 1896 Georgia established a public library. The Georgia Library is now located in the building which formerly housed the Northwest Regional Library on Route 7.

Our Churches

As early as 1793 Congregationalists gathered in Georgia. Gradually the congregation diminished until in the 1930s services were no longer held and the church was torn down. Sarah Hyde was the inspiration for the Episcopal Church in East Georgia which was constructed in 1872. It too succumbed to lack of parishioners and by 1945 it was torn down. In 1985 the Northside Baptist Church purchased a building on Route 7 at the north end of town and it soon was renovated to serve its parishioners; this

congregation has since left this location for a site in St. Albans which allowed for a larger building.

There are currently four active churches in Georgia:

- the Methodist Church in Georgia Center, organized about 1830;
- the Baptist Church in Georgia Plains, organized about 1793;
- the Ascension Parish, whose first Mass was celebrated in the school, and in 1988 they gathered in their own new church on Route 7 just south of Georgia Center; and
- the Redeeming Grace Church, located in Georgia South Village, organized in 2010.

Our Schools

Early in its history Georgia had 16 school districts where one-room schools served the neighborhoods. In 1959 a consolidated school opened its door to 242 students. By 1973 another school had been built and the enrollment had grown to 430 students. In 1991, $3.87 million was spent to house about 700 students with a new building and considerable renovations to the two older ones. The student population since then has remained quite stable with the latest (2009-2010 school year) being 657 based on the FY 2010 Public School Enrollment Report published by the Vermont Department of Education.

Our Town

We now rank 32nd in population in the State. Over the years, the number of farms has decreased in Georgia until in 2005 there were only 15 active farms left in town.

Although the Grange has been active in Georgia for many years, we now have Friends of the Arts, a Lions Club, active Boy, Cub, and Girl Scout troops, a Georgia Historical Society, a Riding Club, Snowmobile Club as well as homemakers and 4-H groups. The Georgia Station Post Office opened in 1993 at Bob's Hardware, and is now located at the Georgia Market on Route 7. Georgia has a four-bay, 9000 square foot fire station on Route 7, a planned expansion of the highway department into vacated fire department space, construction of a new sand and salt shed, and expanded internal meeting rooms and office facilities at the Town Hall.

Georgia will continue to grow. With close access to I-89, Lake Champlain on its western shore, Mt. Mansfield not far away, and Burlington within a half-hour, the town has strong appeal. We will continue to grow as the area grows. It is a nice place to live and it will continue to attract people.

C. DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

In order to plan successfully, a community must define its makeup. This section of the town plan includes a community profile of Georgia, which provides a solid baseline for

town planning activities. An understanding of recent growth trends, current community make up, and future growth projections, planners can better respond to residents' needs, and better account for the impacts and opportunities of growth. A community profile accomplishes the following: 1) documents the growth trends which have brought the town to its current situation, 2) assesses the current makeup of the town, from demographic, economic, housing and social perspectives, and; 3) assesses the range of growth factors affecting the town,.

Population Growth

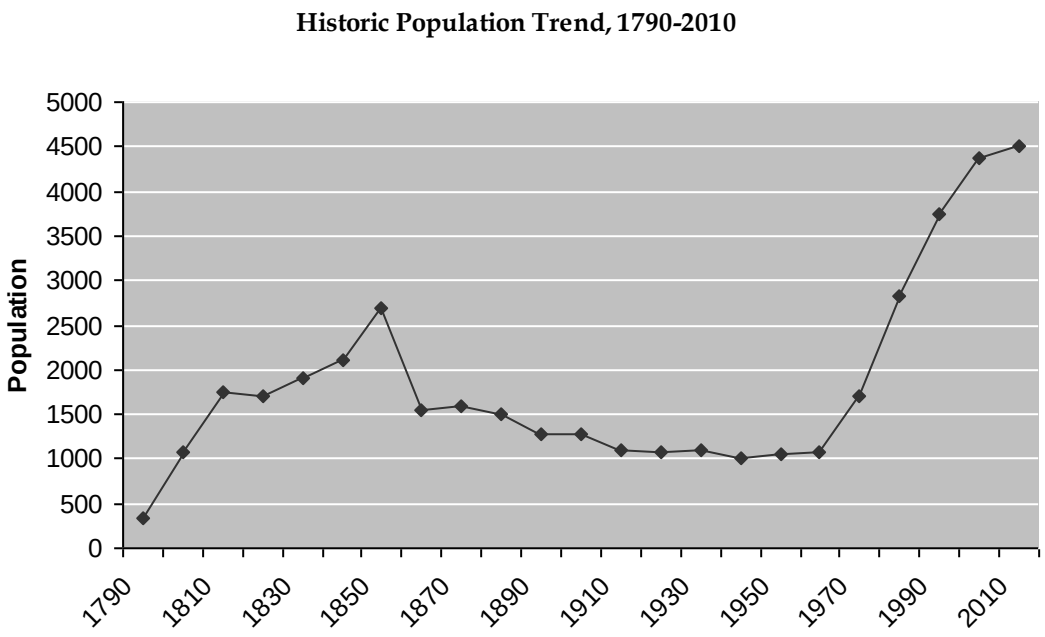


Figure 3.1 - Source: 2010 Census

A review of historic population data for Georgia, **Figure 3.1**, indicates early rapid growth, reaching a population of almost 2,700 persons in 1850. The growth which characterized the town's early years was followed by almost 100 years of population decline reaching a low population point of just over 1,000 persons in 1940. Population levels began to increase again at a relatively slow rate in the 1940s and 1950s, picking up speed between 1960 and 2000, increasing by almost 3,300 persons. Clearly, those 40 years have been a time of tremendous change in the town. Since 2000, the population has significantly stabilized. **Figure 3.2** illustrates that while growth has continued since 2000, it has been at a far slower rate (3.2%) when compared with other recent decades.

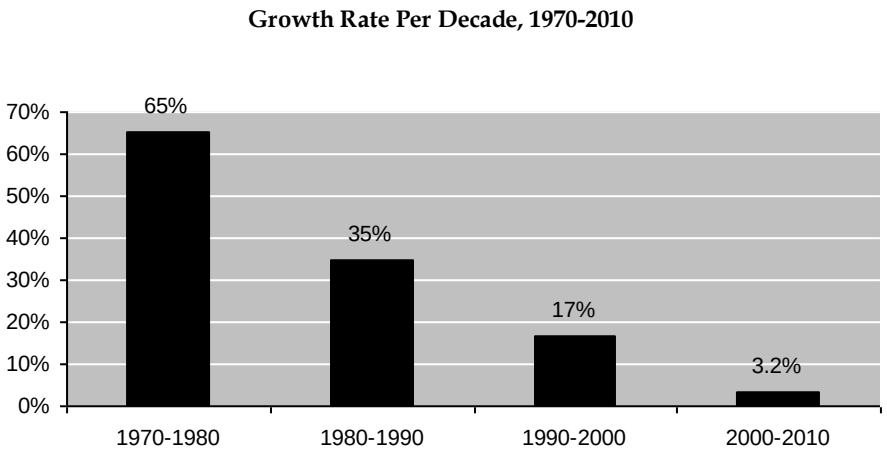


Figure 3.2 - Source: 2010 Census

Georgia's low growth rate is consistent with growth trends throughout Vermont in recent years. The recession of the late 2000s has put a brake on the economic growth that may have characterized the early part of the decade, which also had an impact on population growth Population estimates for 2009 fell consistently short of the 2010 reality as counted by the 2010 Census.

Figure 3.3 compares Georgia's average yearly growth rates during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s with Franklin County, Chittenden County, and the entire State of Vermont. Since the slowdown in Georgia's population growth starting in the 1990s, the town is showing an average yearly population growth rate more consistent with the State at large; it fell off sharply compared to Chittenden and Franklin Counties.

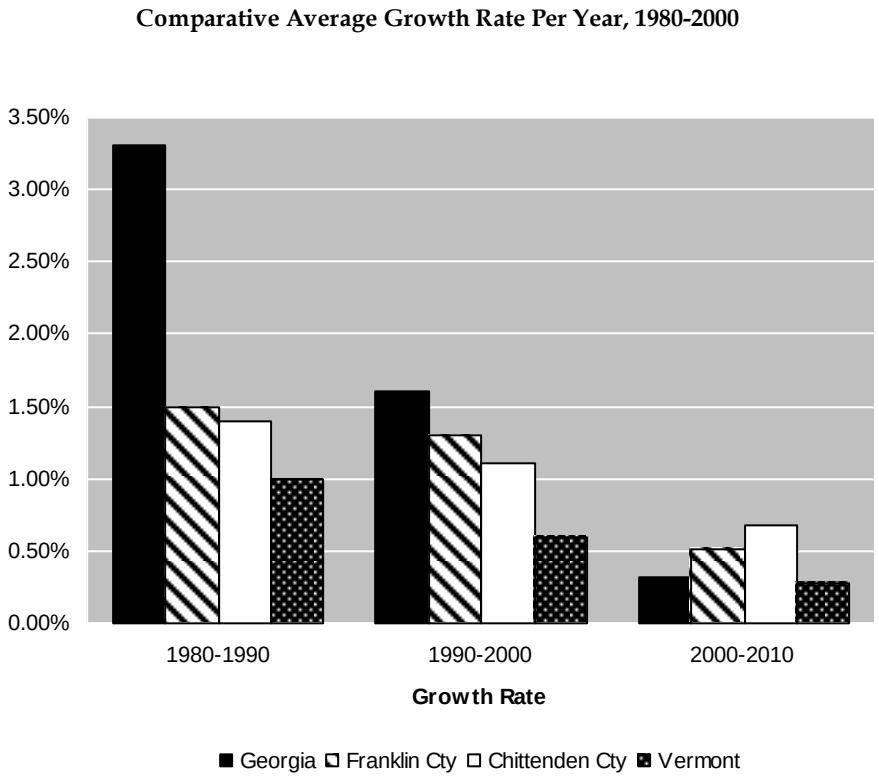


Figure 3.3 - Source: 2010 Census

Figure 3.4 shows that Georgia is among the most slowly growing towns in Franklin County, besting only Richford and Enosburg in its growth rate, even while Chittenden and Franklin Counties grew at a more rapid rate.

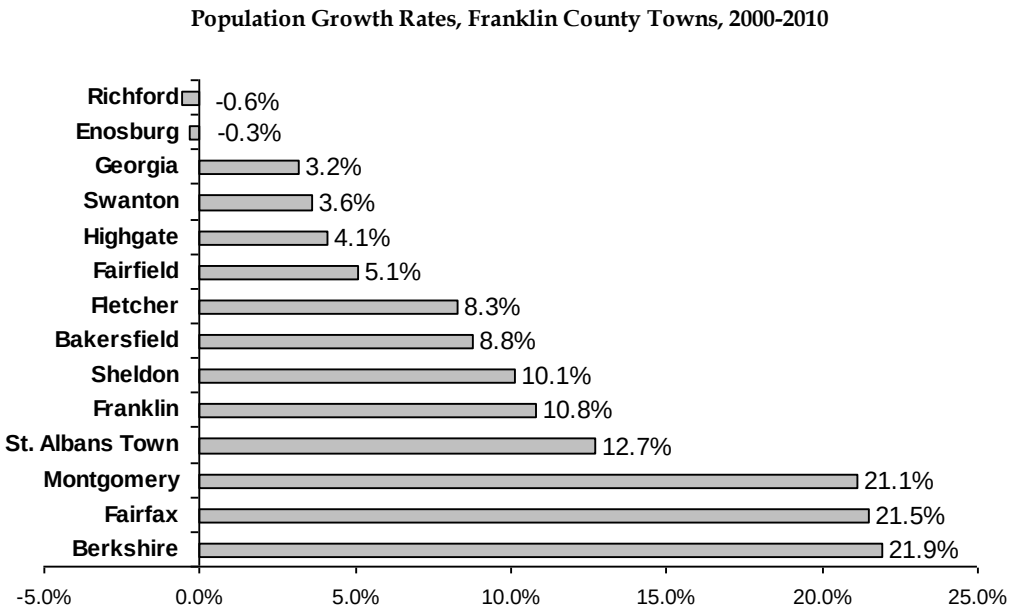


Figure 3.4 - Source: 2010 Census

An Aging Population

Figure 3.5 contains a graphic comparison of the percentage distribution of the Georgia population by under-35 and over-35 age groups. The figure shows that the under-35 population steadily decreased since 1980 as the over-35 segment of the population increased. The two segments each held approximately a 50% share of the population in 2000.

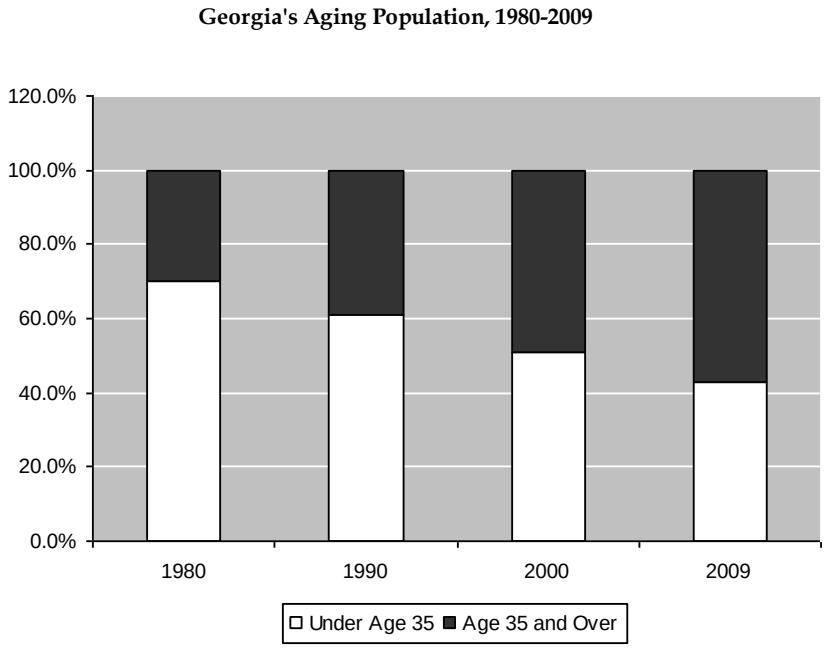


Figure 3.5 - Source: 2010 Census

This trend is consistent with the historic impact of the aging "baby boom" generation

combined with the slow growth of recent years and the failure to attract a younger demographic.

This trend is further illustrated in **Figure 3.6**, which shows a decline in the percentage of married family households with children under the age of 18. This trend is further reflected in the stability of the school population in town.

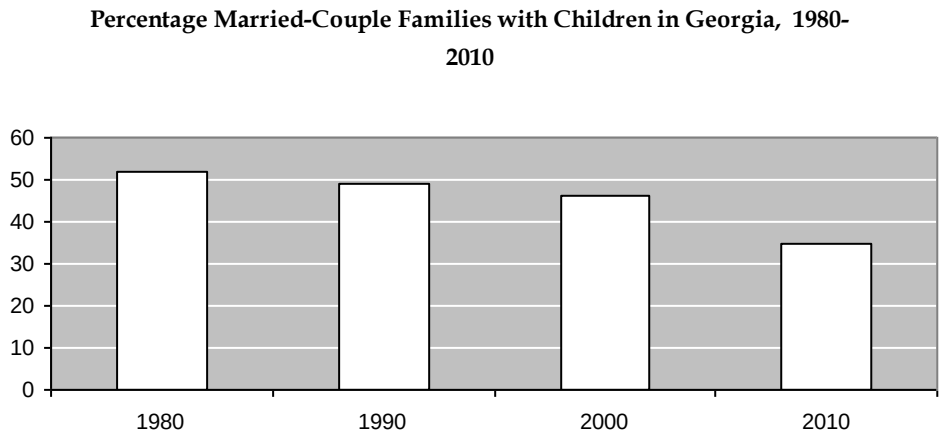


Figure 3.6 - Source 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Household Incomes

In 2009, the median household income (MHI) for Georgia was $68,470, which is significantly higher than the State's MHI of $51,284 and Franklin County's MHI of $52,279. A closer look at income levels in Georgia suggests (**Figure 3.7**) that the town is attracting people with substantially higher incomes per household, possibly because its proximity to higher-paying jobs in the City of Burlington.

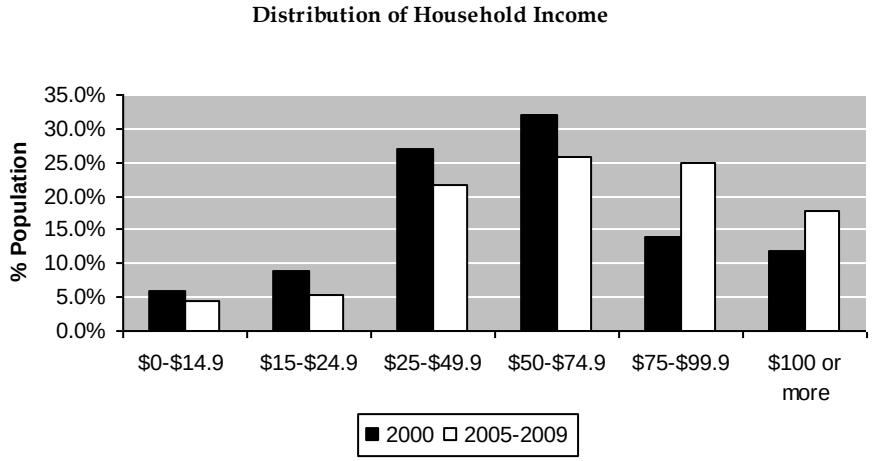


Figure 3.7 - Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Income data for 2005-2009 show that nearly 70% of households have incomes higher

than $50,000 growing from 58% ten years earlier and at least 40% of households have incomes higher than $75,000 annually. A higher percentage of upper income households may also be a further reflection of Georgia's aging demographic.

D. POPULATION PROJECTIONS

While this plan update would ideally include an estimate of future growth in the town, significant data limitations exist to meeting this end. The 2006 Town Plan update used MISER population projections for 2030 based on 1990 Census Data and updated in 2003. While very good current population data from the 2010 Census is available, no current projections exist.

We do know that during the past few decades, Georgia has become a popular place for young families to move and build a home. This "migration" to Georgia has clearly varied in concert with the regional economy. The mid to late 1980's were years when many families moved to town, evidenced by a substantial amount of residential construction. However, the recession in the early 1990's slowed down the pace of growth, and the growth has been moderate since, 3.2% between 2000 and 2010.

E. PROPERTY AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Georgia's growth has taken a number of forms over the years. The changing distribution of property types affects the town's ability to provide services and has implications for taxpayers. **Table 3.1** shows the distribution of property types in Georgia. The percentage of residential units still makes up a sizable majority of the town's building stock.

Table 3.1. Georgia Property Types, 1985-2010

	1985		**2000**		**2005**		**2010**	
	# prop	%	**# prop**	%	**# prop**	**%**	**# prop**	**%**
Residential	897	**64%**	1,340	**75%**	1,419	**77%**	1,504	**76%**
Vacation	189	**14%**	193	**11%**	184	**10%**	160	**8%**
Farm/Open	no data	**no data**	40	**2%**	39	**2%**	37	**2%**
Commercial/Industrial	38	**3%**	55	**3%**	57	**3%**	66	**3%**
Other	252	**18%**	165	**8%**	149	**8%**	218	**11%**
TOTAL	1,376		1,793		1,848		1,985	

Source: Town of Georgia

The number of seasonal vacation homes has decreased by a small amount. Perhaps some of the vacation homes were converted to permanent year-round residences. The percentage of Farm and Commercial/Industrial properties have remained steady over the past decade and beyond although there has been an overall increase in the number of Commercial/Industrial properties, which, even though the percentage remained the same between 2005-2010, could have the effect of reducing the burden on residential

development to provide tax revenue.

As shown in **Table 3.2**, the market value of taxable property in Georgia increased at an unprecedented rate of approximately 110% between 2000 and 2010 for an annual average of 11%, which is much greater than the annual growth rate of 1.8% experienced in the period from 1990-2000.

Table 3.2. Property Trends

	1980	1990	2000	2010
Market Value*	$43	$205	$241	$507
Population	2,780	3,753	4,375	4,515
Value ($) per Capita	$15,500	$54,600	$55,100	$112,230
*Note: All figure in millions				

Source: Town of Georgia

The majority of this growth occurred between 2005 and 2010 as in 2005 the gross market value of properties of Georgia had increased from $241 million to $264 million, a substantial, yet consistent rate of growth as that which occurred between 1990-2000. The dramatic increase in Georgia property values between 2000 and 2010 was due to a Town-wide reappraisal in 2006.

F. HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Georgia's housing trends directly reflect population growth trends. As a primarily residential town which, in part, serves as a bedroom community for regional job centers, the town's housing stock is focused on single family units that are used on a year-round basis. The town also has a notable second home component, although it is consistent with the state average. Finally, there is a limited rental housing market in the town. Between 2000 and 2009, it is estimated that the total number of housing units in Georgia increased by 435, a 29 percent increase over the 2000 level. Georgia's housing stock is strongly oriented toward single family units, as shown in **Table 3.3**, with the same trends continuing in 2009.

Table 3.3. Housing Units by Type

	1990		2000		2005-2009	
	units	%	Units	%	Units	%
Single Family	1206	86%	1290	87%	1662	87%
Duplex	55	4%	73	5%	51	3%
3 units	24	2%	32	2%	72	4%
Other	112	8%	91	6%	136	7%
Total	1397	100%	1486	100%	1921	100%

Source 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Housing usage in Georgia has trended increasingly to owner-occupied from 1990 to 2000 with rentals stable and seasonal declining as a percent of the total.

Table 3.4 below shows housing use broken down into four major categories: 1) Owner Occupied (occupied by year-round residents who own the dwelling); 2) Renter Occupied (occupied by year-round residents who rent the dwelling); 3) Vacant-Seasonal Use (held for occasional use), and; 4) Vacant.

Table 3.4. Housing Units by Use

	1990	2000	2005-2009
Owner Occupied	75%	80%	77%
Renter Occupied	11%	10%	10%
Seasonal	12%	9%	10%
Vacant	2%	1%	3%

Source 2005-2009 American Community Survey

G. HOUSING NEED

Overview

Housing issues are clearly an important aspect of a town plan. The following presents some perspective on housing issues, particularly as they apply to Georgia.

Housing markets and issues will change over time along with the economy and other factors. However, it is important to keep in mind that people will always need adequate shelter. Since Georgia is a popular place to live, it will be important to ensure that housing in the town meets the needs of its residents.

In assessing housing issues, it is important to consider a regional perspective. In this part of New England, housing stock and pricing can vary significantly from town to town. No town is a closed system, where future housing needs can be projected based on an analysis of the current population alone. Housing markets are always regional in nature. Demographic trends and in-migration/out-migration over a broad area will affect demand levels and pricing in Georgia.

The town is part of a regional market. This is particularly true, as many Georgia residents commute out of the town for employment. Given existing commuting patterns, it is realistic to assess both Franklin and Chittenden Counties as comparative areas.

Housing and Market Conditions

Georgia's housing stock is strongly oriented toward single family homes, which are owner-occupied. By regional standards, this housing stock is in the moderate range of the price scale. Nevertheless, Georgia does not have many units at the low end of the price scale. Further, it is clear that the local rental housing market is limited. **Table 3.5** contains a summary comparison of Georgia's housing stock with that in Franklin County.

Table 3.5. Housing Stock Comparison for Georgia, Franklin County

	Georgia		Franklin County	
	2000	**2005-2009**	**2000**	**2005-2009**
% Owner-Occupied	90%	88%	75%	75%
% Renter Occupied	10%	12%	25%	25%
Occupied Mobile Homes as % of Occupied Units	6%	8%	10%	9%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

The sales price of Georgia's owner-occupied housing stock ($217,450) is more expensive when compared to the region-wide price for Franklin County ($180,000). This reflects the predominance of single family housing. Georgia's housing stock contains a relatively small percentage of mobile homes, which often offer an affordable housing option. Condominiums, which have offered an affordable housing option in other parts of the state, have clearly not gained market acceptance in this region.

From a real estate perspective, Georgia is a single family market. Owner occupied housing is relatively more expensive in Georgia than in Franklin County, but pricing is not at the high end of the scale. Lake frontage in the town is associated with seasonal housing stock. However, recent real estate transaction data indicates that this is not a very active market.

A comparison of 2000 and 2009 prices shows how costs of both home prices and rentals have increased a much faster pace than Franklin County has. Stocks of rentals and mobile homes have remained quite stable over the decade.

Housing Needs

The demographics of a community or housing market can be used to assess housing needs, by general type. A range of factors, including individual preferences, affect housing needs. Housing market analyses make it clear that age and income are strong factors in the type of housing people want.

Using data for the current and projected mix of households by age of household head and income, it is possible to make broad assessments about housing need. For instance, a household with a head aged between 35 and 39 years, with an income level in the $50,000-$74,999 range, will probably be seeking, or have recently purchased, its first home. Markets with a substantial number of households in this category will be a

good one for affordable, starter housing. With the exceptions of upper age bracket households and households with a preference for mobile homes, households with incomes below $25,000 are most likely to be renters, while households with incomes of $50,000 or more are likely to be a mix of new and established single family homeowners.

Figure 3.7, shown earlier, illustrated income distribution as well as a comparison of the changes between 2000 and 2005-2009. Georgia's shift to higher income brackets is dramatic. At least 40% of all households now make over $75,000 annually.

Since only a segment of all households will be seeking housing at any time, it is helpful to assess the "propensity to move" of income categories to estimate the size of the housing markets. Households in various income groups have markedly varied propensities to move within the course of a year. Most significantly, the propensity to move declines with increasing age and income. Thus, lower income households are the most likely to move, while older, higher income households are the least likely to move.

The analyses make it clear that housing needs are likely to stabilize with the trend toward higher income residents since they tend not to be as upwardly mobile. In-migration of moderate income people will be a function of Georgia's ability to make provisions for affordable housing units. This will be a serious consideration for Georgia's future.

Housing Affordability

High housing costs place a greater strain on lower income households than on households that are economically better off. Therefore, affordable housing initiatives generally emphasize the importance of providing affordable housing to households that are at or below the median income of the area.

Generally, the median home sales price in Georgia has been higher than that of Chittenden County, both of which are higher than the median Franklin County. The price of housing in Georgia generally followed historic regional and statewide trends, gradually increasing between 1990 and 2000, In 2000, sales prices climbed steeply between 2002 and 2006. Between 2006 and 2008, Georgia and Franklin County's sales prices fell off sharply, while Chittenden County's prices increased marginally. Between 2008 and 2009 Georgia and Franklin County's prices increased marginally, while Chittenden County's prices decreased. Between 2009 and 2010, Georgia's housing prices dropped sharply, Franklin County's stayed the same and Chittenden County's slightly increased.

It seems that Georgia and Franklin experienced the bursting of the housing bubble of the early 2000s before Chittenden County. The Georgia median sale price ($217,450) increased by 47% over that last 10 years, while the median sale prices in the County and the State both increased by over 58% and 63% respectively during the same period. When compared with other local housing markets, including St. Albans Town

($205,000) and Milton ($232,500), Georgia appears to be a similarly affordable community in which to buy a home.

According to Vermont Statute, housing is considered affordable when a household earning not more than 80 percent of the county median income or the metropolitan statistical area's median income, if it applies, pays no more than thirty percent of their income on housing.

All municipalities in Franklin County are deemed part of the Burlington-South Burlington Metropolitan Statistical Area by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The most recent data tells us that the median household income for the Burlington-South Burlington MSA was $57,622, while it was $52,279 in Franklin County (2005-2009 ACS). Since Georgia's MHI ($68,470) is significantly higher than that of the Burlington-South Burlington MSA and Franklin County, it is appropriate to use the MSA statistics to compute affordability statistics.

Table 6 shows the home ownership affordability gap for Georgia, which is the difference between the maximum affordable mortgage and the median sale price for primary residences. Households could afford a mortgage with monthly payments that did not exceed 30 percent of their monthly income. It appears that even at 100% of median household income, a home a the 2010 median sale price of $217,450 would be out of reach. The "break even" income for home affordability in Georgia is approximately $61,500, indicating that more affordable housing options for Georgia may be needed.

Table 3.6. Affordability Gap for Homeownership Costs in Georgia

	HHI	30% of Income Per Month	Taxes & Insurance	Income Available for Housing per Month	5% Down Payment	Maximum Affordable Mortgage	Median Sale Price Primary Residences (2010)	Owner Afford-ability Gap
Median	$57,622	$1,441	$300	$1,141	$9,559	$200,744	$217,450	($16,706)
Low (80%)	$46,098	$1,152	$300	$852	$7,145	$150,036	$217,450	($67,414)
Very Low 50%	$28,811	$720	$300	$420	$3,522	$73,971	$217,450	($143,479)
Very Low 30%	$17,287	$432	$300	$132	$1,108	$23,262	$217,450	($194,188)

Data Source: Median Household Income (2005-2009 ACS); median home sale price (2010 VT Department of Taxes); taxes and insurance (NRPC estimate); all other figures computed by NRPC.

Rental housing can be more affordable than home ownership in Georgia; however, the cost of rental housing is on the rise and the number of rental units in Georgia is relatively small. Affordable rent is defined by the State of Vermont as rent plus utilities. According to the 2005-2009 ACS, the estimated median contract rent in Georgia was $810 and the median gross rent was $905, leaving the median cost of utilities to be about $95. Households at about 63% of median household income could afford the 2010 median gross rent in Georgia.

Housing Affordability issues are addressed by a number of statewide and regional

organizations. At the state level, agencies like the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA), Housing Vermont, and the Vermont State Housing Authority administer a number of programs which are oriented toward making housing more affordable for low and moderate income residents. Of particular relevance for a town oriented toward home ownership like Georgia, VHFA provides several low cost mortgage programs, which can decrease both the initial and ongoing costs of home ownership. Land trusts can also play a role in housing development where the dual goals of conservation of open, agricultural land and provision of moderate income housing are involved. The Champlain Housing Trust is the primary land trust serving and promoting affordable home ownership in the Town of Georgia.

For low income residents, the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity offers a weatherization program which offers greater energy efficiency in housing and which can improve basic housing conditions. Households whose income level is less than 150 percent of the Federal poverty guideline can apply for the program which, dependent on the individual circumstances, can address problems with insulation, building envelope, windows &doors, heating system and distribution and additional items

Summary

Georgia is unlikely to become a center for subsidized housing in the region. There is currently no infrastructure in place to support a concentration of high density housing, and the lack of commercial and social services make it a less than ideal location. The vision for the Georgia South Village includes opportunities for affordable and senior housing.

Given the regional market, and the type of household which has found Georgia to be attractive, a more likely affordable housing initiative might take the form of a reasonably priced, for sale development, which could be subsidized with a land lease shared equity arrangement through a housing trust, and with Vermont Housing Finance Agency mortgage programs. This would give households in the low to moderate income range (80%± of Median) a home ownership opportunity.

Market forces will likely continue to dominate the housing real estate in Georgia. However, by recognizing local and regional housing needs, Georgia can play an appropriate regional role in providing an adequate housing stock for a variety of population groups. The town plan can set policies, or suggest courses of action which could encourage a variety of housing forms in the town. It will be important to consider town services in making planning decisions. Current town services do not provide public water or sewer systems for the majority of town residents. Because most residences must rely upon on-site systems, there is limited opportunity to concentrate residential development at higher densities, which can be an aid in the provision of affordable housing opportunities.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO HOUSING
SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES RELATED TO HOUSING

H. THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Georgia's economy can be viewed in two ways:

1) What economic activities occur within the town, and;
2) In what local or regional economic activities are Georgia residents involved?

While Georgia is often regarded as a bedroom community, the data makes it apparent that there is a substantial amount of economic activity within the town. Clearly, industrial development had a substantial impact during the 1980's. This is true throughout Franklin County. While the county remains Vermont's top dairy producer, it is also home to some of the state's top manufacturers.

Georgia experienced strong employment increases through the 1980's and 90's, largely in response to the establishment of new industries in the local business parks. While Georgia's employment base has experienced significant growth, the town is still not a regional job center.

While employment in Georgia varies from regional norms, Georgia residents are a part of the regional economy, and find jobs in a variety of industries and occupations. **Figure 3.8 and Table 3.7** compare the percentage distribution of Georgia residents' employment by industry to Franklin County and the State of Vermont. **Figure 3.9 and Table 3.8** compare the occupations of Georgia residents with those of the residents of Franklin County and Vermont.

Overall, the data show that Georgia residents find jobs in industries and occupations which do not differ significantly from regional or statewide averages.

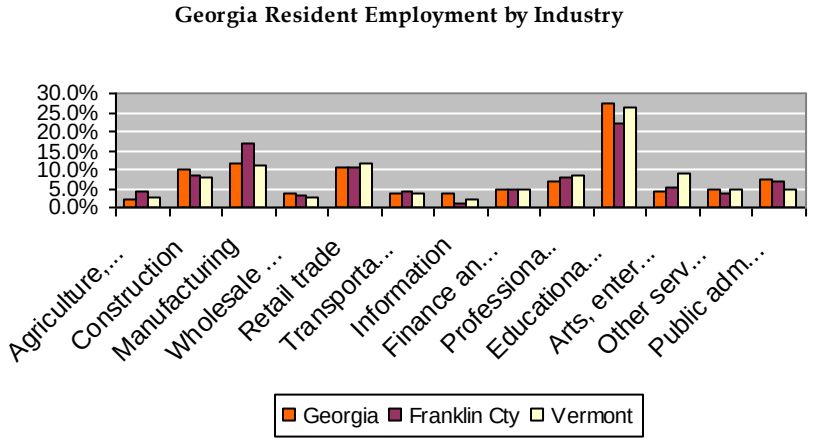


Figure 3.8 - Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Table 3.7. Breakdown of Resident Employment by Industry for Georgia, Franklin County and Vermont (2005-2009)

	Georgia	Franklin Cty	Vermont
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	2.1%	4.4%	2.6%
Construction	9.8%	8.5%	8.1%
Manufacturing	11.4%	16.8%	11.1%
Wholesale trade	3.8%	3.4%	2.8%
Retail trade	10.4%	10.8%	11.8%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	3.5%	4.4%	3.7%
Information	3.7%	1.3%	2.2%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	4.7%	4.5%	4.8%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	6.7%	7.6%	8.4%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	27.5%	22.3%	26.2%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	4.1%	5.5%	9.1%
Other services, except public administration	4.8%	3.5%	4.5%
Public administration	7.5%	6.9%	4.7%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

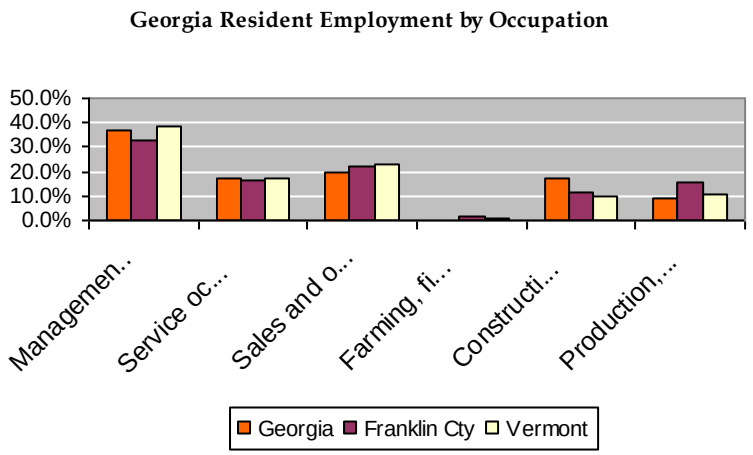


Figure 3.9 - Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Table 3.8. Breakdown of Resident Employment by Occupation for Georgia, Franklin County and Vermont (2005-2009)

	Georgia	Franklin Cty	Vermont
Management, professional, and related occupations	37.0%	32.9%	38.4%
Service occupations	17.4%	16.1%	16.9%
Sales and office occupations	19.5%	22.1%	23.1%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0.0%	1.8%	1.2%
Construction, extraction, maintenance, and repair occupations	17.1%	11.8%	9.6%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	9.1%	15.3%	10.8%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Employment data makes it clear that the greater Burlington area is the dominant job center in the region. Many Georgia residents commute to Burlington on a daily basis for employment. Journey to work information is included in Section 7, Energy.

The educational services, health care and social assistance industry employs the most Georgia residents by far. Today, Georgia's employment base is much less dependent on manufacturing than it was in 2000 with manufacturing dropping from 29% to 11.4% of Georgia’s industry. Much of agriculture and small business data could be unreported and therefore understated in the data available from the state. In Georgia, small and home-based businesses and agriculture are integral aspects of our economy and, particularly in the instance of agriculture (despite employing a small percentage of residents), give the town a unique visual and social image.

Note the following:

- Agriculture provides both full-time and seasonal employment. Seasonal employment in agriculture can help to increase income levels for otherwise underemployed persons.

- There is a relationship between Georgia's farms and the location of industry engaged in the processing of agricultural products. The continued presence of farms in the town will create jobs both directly and by attracting other businesses which utilize agricultural products.

- Georgia's agricultural landscape is attractive to Vermont travelers. As such, it creates secondary economic activity for businesses which can draw from travelers in the region.

- Agriculture is a fiscal bonus from the town's standpoint. While generating

substantial tax revenues, it creates minimal need for town services.

- Small businesses also serve an important economic role by creating jobs for persons seeking a change in careers or underemployed persons. Looking to the future, it is likely that small businesses will create most of the new jobs in the region. Similar to agriculture, small business is a fiscal benefit to the town, as it creates tax base while requiring relatively few services.

Summary

Businesses and appropriate industries are an essential component of a healthy community. Careful planning can provide a better standard of living and meaningful jobs to residents. The designation of growth centers and the construction of the necessary infrastructure for certain types of growth have enhanced the ability of towns to attract appropriate and desired commercial and industrial activity.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES RELATED TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I. TAXES, GROWTH AND FISCAL CONDITIONS

Overview

Given Vermont's property tax system and state aid to education policies, the pace and form of land development has a great deal of significance to the fiscal health of communities. Virtually any form of land development has two related effects:

1) The generation of additional revenues in the form of town/school property taxes and state aid to education, and

2) The generation of need for additional community services, which have associated costs.

This plan section provides background on Georgia's recent and current fiscal situation, and provides a basis upon which to project our fiscal future based on potential development trends.

Town & School Expenditures & Property Taxes

Town and school expenditures have increased at different rates in recent years. This is shown in **Figure 3.10** below, which covers the period from 2005 to 2010**. Figure 3.10** shows total expenditures broken into two parts: 1) Town (Highways, Police, Fire, etc.), and; 2) Georgia School District.

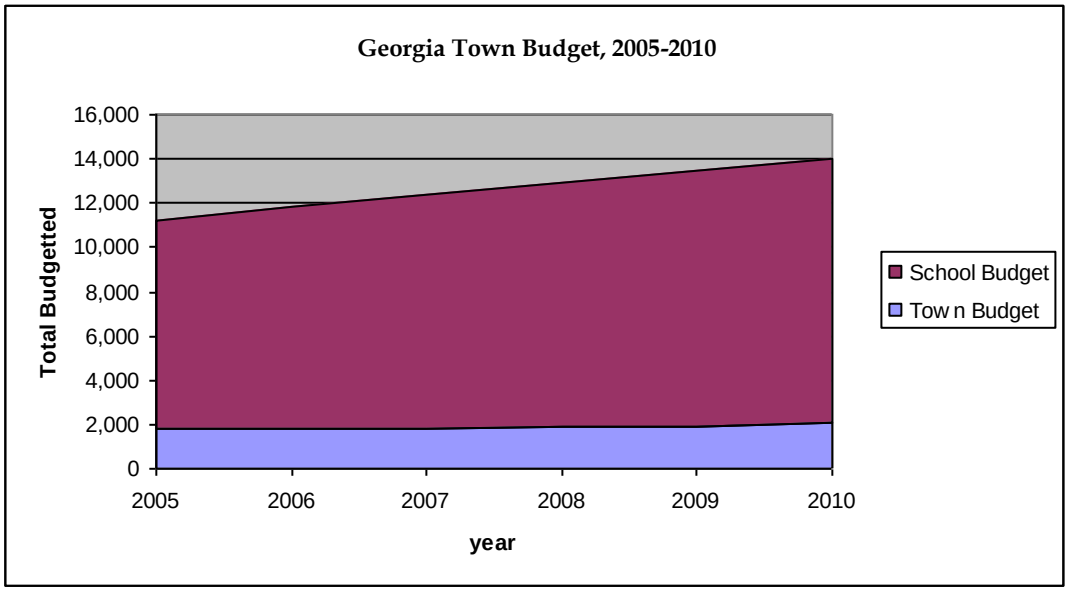


Figure 3.10 - Source: Town of Georgia

As shown in **Figure 3.10**, town expenditures, though a relatively small portion of the budget picture, have increased at about 2.7% per year. This is generally consistent with the inflation rate during this time period. The school budget has been increasing at about 5.5% per year, or double the town rate. The school budget made up 85% of the total by 2010. Over that period the total budget increased from $11.2 million in 2005 to $14.0 million in 2010 -- a 25% total increase. The average annual increase in the total budget was 4.6% per year.

Increases in budgets have been accompanied by real increases in the tax burden carried by Georgia residents. **Figure 3.11** shows changes in the residential tax rate in Georgia, associated with Education and Town expenditures, for the period 2005 to 2010. The major reduction in the property tax rate in 2006 was the result of a town-wide reappraisal.

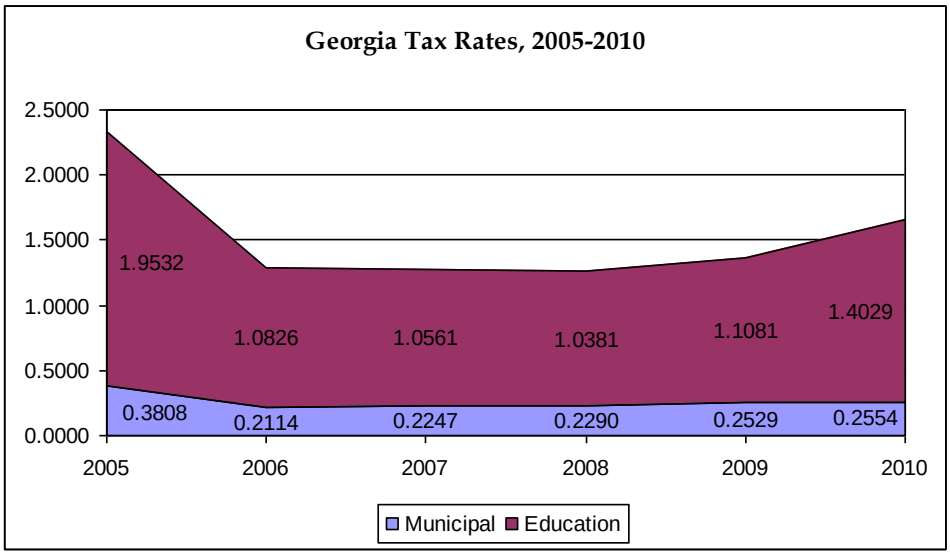


Figure 3.11 - Source: Town of Georgia

Fiscal Impacts of Development

Fiscal impact assessment involves the measurement of the impact a proposed land use may have on a community, from a dollars and cents standpoint. A common approach involves "cost averaging", an assumption that each new increment of growth will have the same costs as existing development in the town. In its simplest form, this approach includes the following basic steps:

- Determine the populations generated by growth - People, School-Age Children, and Employees.
- Translate the populations into consequent public service costs (Town and School).
- Project the revenues to be generated by the project.
- Compare development-induced revenues to development-induced costs to determine net result. A positive fiscal impact refers to revenues exceeding costs, while a negative impact refers to the reverse situation.

Georgia's current analysis of the fiscal impacts of residential, non-residential, seasonal, and undeveloped land is out-of-date and needs to be reviewed. In 1997, the Vermont legislature passed the Equal Education Opportunity Act (Act 60 and 68), which is intended to provide equitable levels of funding for education, and be income sensitive for local property-tax payers. This has potentially changed the fiscal impacts of land use.

Due to the complexities of the per-pupil allotment based on Act 60, the generalization that certain land uses (residential) have a “negative” fiscal impact on a Town because they add to school expenses, while others (non-residential, seasonal, undeveloped land) have a “positive” fiscal impact because they “pay their own way” is outdated. Such an analysis is also of little use in providing considerations for future land use in Georgia, particularly with respect to ensuring that town services and facilities will be able to handle growth without straining the town's fiscal resources. Because Act 60 and Act 68 allocate a certain “per-pupil” amount of money to each town, it is no longer possible to unequivocally say that residential uses have a negative impact on Town resources and revenues. Additional school children will increase service costs ONLY if the Town’s fixed costs also increase. If the Town’s fixed costs do not increase, then additional residential development and its related school children will not cause the school service costs to increase.

In the short term, until a deeper, more current analysis can take place looking at the actual fiscal impacts of development, the benefit and impact that additional development will have on the Georgia’s Town and School budgets and tax rates must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Summary

Georgia needs an updated analysis of the fiscal impacts of development. An outdated analysis indicates that a strong rate of residential growth will tend to increase tax rates in Georgia, as this type of growth generates new residents and school children, both of which generate service costs. Tax rate increases could be modified by increases in the non-residential property base, particularly in instances where non-residential projects take care of many of their own service needs. However, this analysis needs to be understood to be a generalization, and that residential development can have a revenue-boosting effect in light of Act 60 and 68. The presence of major industries in Georgia has clearly had a positive impact on our town's fiscal situation. Just as importantly, the preservation of undeveloped and agricultural land will also be important from a fiscal standpoint, as these lands generate taxes while creating relatively small service demands.

In the years since 1995 Georgia has experienced relatively small growth in population. Despite this, a review of town and school finance makes it clear that the cost of providing services and facilities increased significantly. The cost of service provision has specifically increased for the school system over the past five years, while the Town’s cost of providing services has remained relatively unchanged. These increased costs resulted from the desire of Georgia residents to improve the level of services available as well as increases in state education funding requirements.

A balance of public and private investment is necessary to provide a sound economic base for our community. The cost of the provision of services must be made based on the available tax revenues and reasonable public and private investment. Town government is charged with providing for orderly growth and services at a rate that does

not unduly tax the residents, yet protects the health, safety, and welfare of those same citizens.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES RELATED TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

J. TRANSPORTATION

Georgia is served by a network of State and Town Highways, as well as a rail line. In many ways, Lake Champlain also serves a transportation function. Single occupancy vehicles are by far the most common form of transportation. **Map 3.2** shows Georgia's transportation system.

The Highway System currently includes 91.10 miles of roads (including Class IV roads and legal trails). This is broken down into State owned and maintained roads and Town roads. Class IV road mileage is included in these figures because of impacts from their use if reclassified and because of their potential recreational use. The State has 17.63 miles of roads, including the 6.53 miles of Interstate 89 and its on/off ramps. The balance of State road miles includes Rte. 7 (7.6 mi.), Rte. 104 (0.130 mi.) and Rte. 104A (3.362 mi.). These roads are owned and maintained by the State. Changes in the Planning Statutes and policy shifts at the Agency of Transportation allow considerably more input from municipal government and the public at large regarding improvements of these State Highways within Town borders.

The balance of the road network is made up of Town and private roads, which can be seen on the transportation map. No attempt has been made to inventory private roads for this Plan. Some private roads are Development roads and will likely be accepted into the Highway system at a future date. Others will remain private to serve only the individual landowners.

Town Roads are classified, according to a statutory scheme, into Class I, Class II, Class III, or Class IV roads. These state classifications are primarily for the purpose of distributing State Aid and often do not reflect the actual usage of the road. State Aid is distributed by Class type as follows: 6% of State funds for all Class I roads, 44% of funds to all Class II roads, and 50% to all Class III roads.

Class I roads form extensions of State Highways and are numbered as such, Class II form connections from town to town and or carry more than normal traffic, Class III roads are all other traveled roads receiving State Aid funds, and Class IV roads are all other roads owned by the Town (no State Aid). Class IV roads do not have to be maintained by the Town.

The Town of Georgia has no Class I roads, 19.53 miles of Class II roads, 43.64 miles of Class III roads and 7.72 miles of Class IV roads and 2.59 miles of legal trails, for a total of 73.48 miles.

Another classification scheme which portrays usage more than the Class I-IV system is as follows: Major Arterial Highways, Minor Arterial Highways, Collectors, and Local streets.

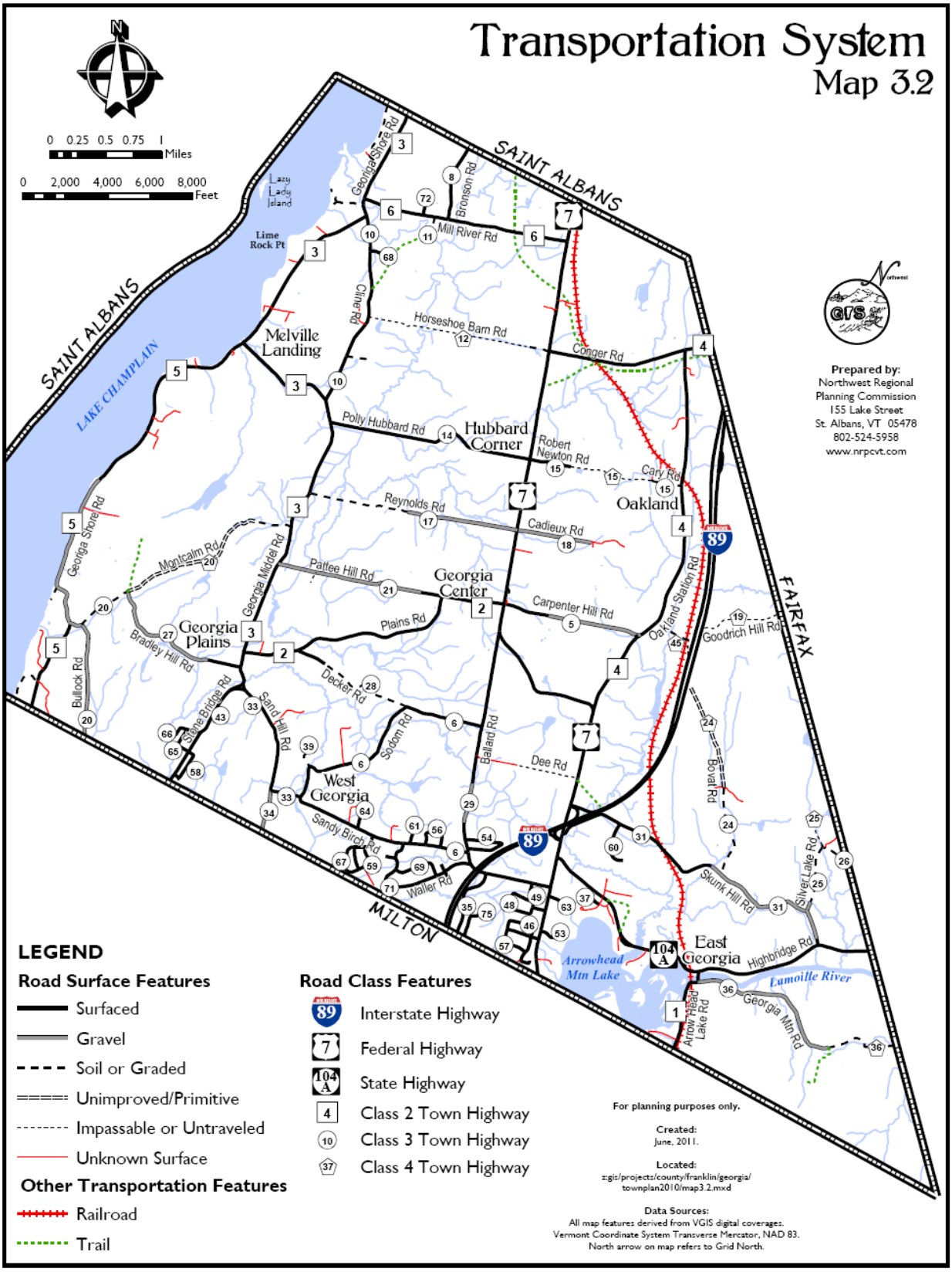

Transportation System
Map 3.2
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
SAINT ALBANS
SAINT ALBANS
LAKE CHAMPLAIN
Lazy Lady Island
Lime Rock Pt
Melville Landing
Hubbard Corner
Oakland
Georgia Center
Georgia Plains
West Georgia
East Georgia
Arrowhead Mtn Lake
Lamoille River
FAIRFAX
MILTON
Prepared by:
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
155 Lake Street
St. Albans, VT 05478
802-524-5958
www.nrpcvt.com
LEGEND
Road Surface Features
Surfaced
Gravel
Soil or Graded
Unimproved/Primitive
Impassable or Untraveled
Unknown Surface
Other Transportation Features
Railroad
Trail
Road Class Features
Interstate Highway
Federal Highway
State Highway
Class 2 Town Highway
Class 3 Town Highway
Class 4 Town Highway
For planning purposes only.
Created:
June, 2011.
Located:
z:gis/projects/county/franklin/georgia/townplan2010/map3.2.mxd
Data Sources:
All map features derived from VGIS digital coverages.
Vermont Coordinate System Transverse Mercator, NAD 83.
North arrow on map refers to Grid North.

Table 3.9. Functional Classification of Roads in Georgia, 2010

Function	Description	Miles
Rural Principal Arterial (Interstate)	Primarily serves Statewide and interstate travel. (miles of two travel lanes) Bicycles not allowed.	6.53
Rural Minor Arterial	Links cities and large towns (or major resorts) and forms an integrated network providing interstate and inter-county service.	3.85
Rural Major Collector	Primarily serves traffic of intra-county importance (such as to larger towns, parks, regional schools etc.)	7.24
Rural Minor Collector	Provides service to smaller communities; network is spaced to collect traffic from local roads to major collector.	11.61
Rural Local	Provides service to adjacent land and over relatively short distances.	51.56

Source: NRPC, 2011

In addition to the highways themselves, the town maintains bridges, culverts and drainage systems. Maintaining bridges and culverts can be enormously expensive. Fortunately, the State of Vermont's Town Structures Grant program is designed to assist towns with these responsibilities. The town has taken advantage of this program very successfully. Past projects involving these programs were the replacement of Stonebridge Brook Bridge and the replacement of two large culverts on Polly Hubbard Road.

Georgia has a major rail line, owned by New England Central Railway, running north and south through Town, though there is little direct service provided to the Town. There is a railway siding where the Vermont Whey Plant used to be located, off of T.H. #31 near the Industrial Park. This could serve as a terminus for additional industrial development in the immediate vicinity. New England Central Railway owns additional lands near the Georgia High Bridge, which at one time served as a cattle and freight yard. If rail commuter service were ever considered for the region, this site might provide access for Georgia residents. At one time there was also a train depot at Oakland Station (hence the name Oakland Station Road). It is possible that this could serve a similar function if a future need arises.

Amtrak offers passenger rail service out of their St. Albans depot. Amtrak trains provide passenger service south from St. Albans twice per day. There are several large freight trains passing through Georgia each day. The Town should develop emergency management plans in the event of a derailment or accident.

Lake Champlain has served as a significant transportation corridor for all lakeshore communities in the past. The lake has a rich history involving everything from naval battles and rum smuggling to passenger steamship service. Today, most lake transportation takes place in a recreational or sport context. The lake is widely used

during warm weather (and to a lesser extent during winter) by large numbers of people.

There is limited public transportation serving Georgia. Commuter buses arrive and depart from the State owned and maintained commuter Park and Ride facility located off Skunk Hill Road near the intersection of Route 7 and Interstate 89.

The Green Mountain Transit Agency (GMTA) provides shuttle service Monday-Friday connecting the Georgia Park and Ride Lot and the Arrowhead Industrial Park to stops in St. Albans, Swanton, Highgate, Alburgh, Sheldon, Enosburgh and Richford.

The Georgia Park and Ride is also served by the St. Albans LINK Express operated by the Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA). The LINK Express provides service Monday-Friday between St. Albans and Burlington/Winooski. There are limited transportation services provided to the elderly and special needs persons through various service providers.

Air service is provided to the region by the Franklin County Regional Airport in Highgate and the Burlington International Airport in Burlington. There is no local taxi service in Georgia.

There are only a few sidewalks or pedestrian paths, although there has been increasing discussion regarding this in order to provide for safer means of pedestrian travel, especially in the “village area” near the intersection of Route 7 and Route 104A.

The South Village Strategic Plan emphasizes pedestrian connectivity as integral to the development of the South Village area. Some of the actions regarding sidewalks include a feasibility study, which is currently underway. Next steps will be to find design and construction funding and working with developers who are required to construct sidewalks as part of their proposals. A sidewalk master plan may be appropriate.

Georgia's Highways are maintained by a Highway Department of four full time employees. For more information regarding the Department and its resources refer to the utilities facilities section of the Plan. The 2010 highway budget was $783,279 of which we will receive an anticipated $149,751 in State Aid to Highways. Of this budget, $529,907 is direct costs for road maintenance, the remainder being for equipment and construction. The highway budget accounts for 39% of total Town budget (excluding school district budget). In and of itself, spending is not an accurate measure of the quality of a town's roads.

Significantly larger sums of money could be spent in improving and maintaining the highway system. However, road and bridge work is very expensive and those costs are passed on to the taxpayers. It is hoped that a reduction on the reliance of the local property tax for funding education would allow communities to invest more money in other town services such as transportation. Overall, Georgia provides a high level of service and has a good transportation network. One of the major problems facing most Vermont communities is the lack of good gravel and sand resources for road

construction and maintenance. A stone quarry is open in Georgia which provides a local source of aggregate for road construction.

Summary

Safe, convenient and affordable transportation has become an essential need in today's mobile society. Public investment in transportation systems should be based on need, energy efficiency, and cost effectiveness.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION

K. CULTURAL RESOURCES

With ninety-two structures on the State Register of Historic Places, and historic districts in Georgia Center and Georgia Plains, Georgia is rich in cultural and historical resources. As with many Vermont towns, the value of Georgia's cultural and historical resources is greater than the sum of its parts. The development pattern of villages and countryside, the context for Georgia's historic sites, is a valuable asset. While this pattern is valuable, it is also fragile.

In addition to Georgia's historic structures, numerous cemeteries are located around the town. A link to past generations, Georgia's cemeteries are an important cultural resource.

The Lamoille River and Deer Brook corridors have sites of known archeological sensitivity, while the stream corridors extending northward from Arrowhead Mountain Lake to Silver Lake contain sites of expected archeological sensitivity.

Summary

Prehistoric and historic sites are an essential link to our past and represent significant social and cultural investment and deserve consideration in the planning process. Efforts should be made to reduce or mitigate negative impacts on these valuable resources.

SECTION 4. THE PHYSICAL SETTING

A. INTRODUCTION

The Town of Georgia is rich with natural resources. The diverse landscape stretches from the shores of Lake Champlain across the sandy flats of Georgia Plains and the open farmland of Georgia Center, to the western foothills of the Green Mountains. These resources enrich the lives of all those who live, work and play in our community. Our natural resources provide recreational opportunities, a scenic landscape, and support the local economy. Through good planning and sustainable management of these resources, we seek to enhance the quality of life for current and future Georgia residents.

The Georgia Conservation Commission was formed in 1992 by the voters of the town in accordance with state statute. The commission has nine members who are appointed by the select board for a term of four years. Normally meetings are held once a month and work days are scheduled throughout the year. The members work to preserve, protect, and enhance the native plants, animals, and their habitats in the town for current and future residents. The Conservation Commission has an educational presentation board which is displayed each year at town meeting, Fall Fest and other events around town. Topics have included Stream Bank Buffers, and Invasive Plants and Insects in Vermont. On the recommendation of the Commission, the Town purchased a 70 acre parcel in 2004 at the North end of Lost Pond; this area has a management plan which is overseen by commission members. Other duties currently include maintaining Town owned properties including Russell Greene Natural Area at Deer Brook, the Henley Webster Town Forest and the Mill River Falls natural area.

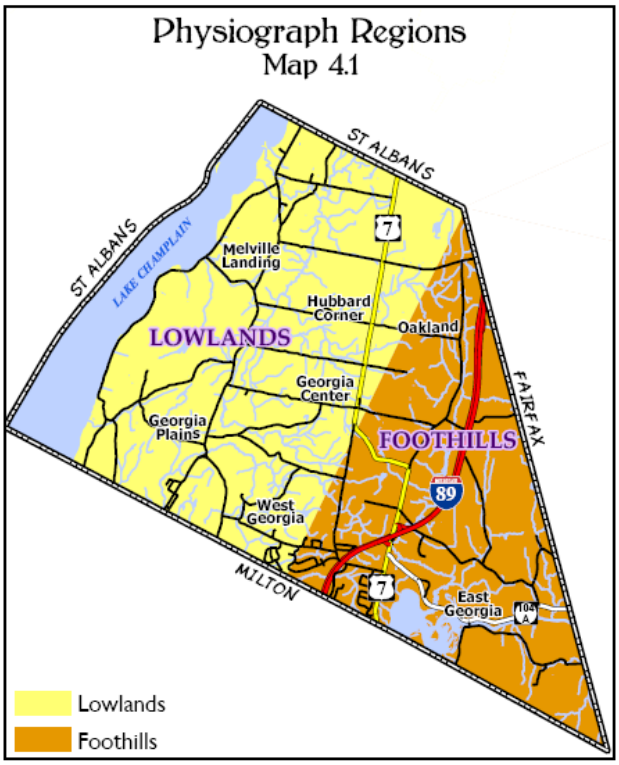
The Town also established a Conservation Reserve Fund, guidelines for the use of these funds can be found on the town website. Conservation Commission members also work on controlling invasive plants, increasing wildlife habitat, controlling erosion, building trails, improving water quality along Georgia's extensive Lake Champlain shoreline, tree plantings, and Green Up Day held in May.

B. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Geology

Perhaps the most notable geologic feature in Georgia is the 5-mile north/south length of Champlain thrust fault ledges, a limestone and dolomite precipice that overlooks the lake. The shoreline slopes west of the Champlain thrust fault are generally less than 12%. The Champlain thrust fault is typically made up of rock outcrop and west facing slopes greater than 12%. These rock outcrops and steep slopes of the Champlain thrust lie in a sparsely populated area several thousand feet east of the shoreline and west of Middle, Cline, and Bronson Roads.

The Town of Georgia spans across two Physiograph Regions: The Champlain Lowlands and the Foothills of the Green Mountains (**Map 4.1**).



The Champlain lowlands extend eastward from the Champlain thrust fault to the Hinesburg-Oak Hills Thrust fault, which is generally marked by I-89 and the ridge of quartzite it rides along. The slopes are typically less than 12%.

The eastern part of Georgia is considered to be the foothills of the Green Mountains. Many of the forested slopes east of the northern half of I-89 and around Cushman Hill and Georgia Mountain are greater than 12%, while a few areas of slopes greater than 25% exist around Lamoille River, Arrowhead Mountain lake and several of its tributaries.

The Champlain lowlands were formed as a result of Lake Champlain's predecessors (Lake Vermont and the Champlain Sea), glacial action and weathering. The Geological history of the bedrock and soils are therefore much different than the history of the Green Mountains. The bedrock tends to be less complex and not as highly metamorphosed. Dolomite and Limestone marbles, shales, slates, and occasional quartzite are the most common bedrock materials in the Lowlands. Soils in the Lowlands also reflect the geological history and are predominately marine sediments, such as clays and sands. These are most often found in elevations of less than 700'.

The Green Mountain foothills have a much different geological history than the Lowlands. The Bedrock is highly metamorphosed and complex due to the numerous upheavals and folding of the earth's plates and enormous heat and pressure created in the process. In the vicinity of the Hinesburg Oak Hill Thrust, the bedrock is primarily Dolomite Marble. As you move eastward to the foothills, the bedrock changes to predominately Quartzite.

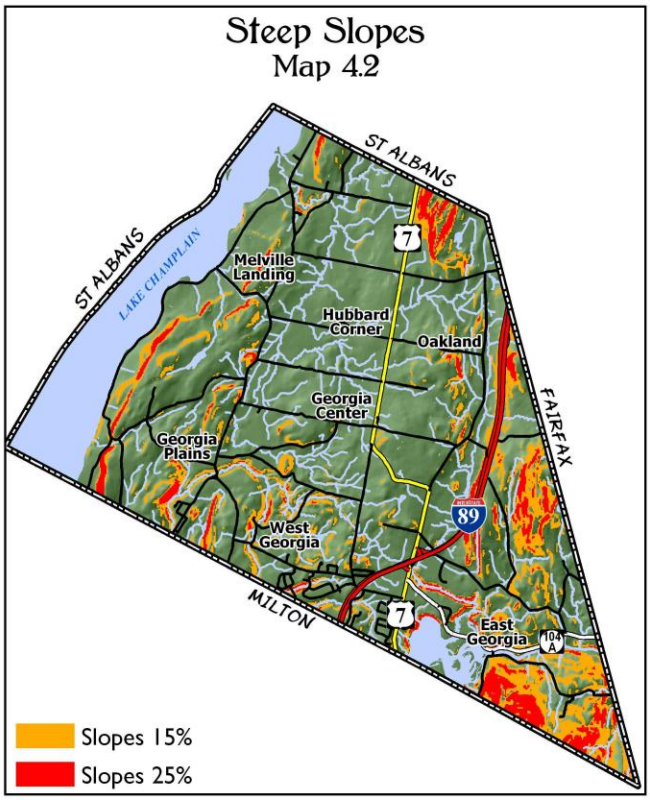
Parker Cobble is identified in the Vermont Natural Area Inventory as a significant geological site in Georgia containing fossils which are used as age indicators for the Cambrian Geologic Period.

Topography

Topography, or the shape of the land surface, is a function of the underlying bedrock,

soil cover, and the effects of weather over the ages. Georgia's topography is comparatively uniform; there is no major mountain range and the difference between the highest elevation and the lowest elevation is 1300'. The lowest elevation in Georgia is app. 103' feet above sea level at Lake Champlain. The highest is Georgia Mountain at 1400' in the southeast corner, near the Milton Fairfax border. In Georgia, most human activity such as homes, farms, and businesses, takes place in the 103' to 500' elevation range.

The topography adjacent to the lake ranges in altitude from just above the ordinary high-water mark of 94' to 103' above sea level. Georgia's shorelands slope to the lake from a distinct south to north trending, which is the Champlain Thrust Fault line, and which tops out at almost 500 feet and creates a distinct, narrow sloping lake edge 1/4 to 1/2 mile in width. At several points, outcroppings which are perhaps remnants of one "wave" of the Champlain Thrust Fault emerge, most notably at Lime Rock Point, 35 to 40 feet above the Lake.



The Georgia lakeshore is perhaps less dramatic than further south in Milton, where the Thrust Fault emerges in the bedrock hills of Milton creating a more elevated and cliff-like environment, such as Eagle Mountain.

Topography is one of the major factors that determine suitability of specific land uses. Traditionally, major settlements have been located near water courses, for power and transportation, and roads have followed the course of valleys and streams for ease of construction.

Georgia's drainage pattern is a result of its geology and topography. Our drainage network includes meandering streams, lakes and ponds, and significant wetland areas. Poorly draining soils and high ground water tables in many parts of town present a challenge to development.

Map 4.2 gives a good indication for the limits for development, based on slope factors. Where development is proposed on slopes of greater than 15% the developer should address the potential concerns of erosion, structural problems, and ground water pollution associated with the thin soils usually found on steep slopes. Steep slopes present greater limitations for road construction, on site sewage disposal, foundation construction, and provision of emergency services by the town.

Summary
The underlying bedrock and surficial geology are important considerations in the capability of the land to support development and should be considered in the planning stage. The continued availability of pure water supplies, and earth and mineral resources depend on sound planning for their wise use. The identification, protection and wise use of these resources are extremely important to the residents of the town as they are in limited supply and can be contaminated, depleted or rendered useless by certain developments.

Drainage and slope are very important considerations for establishing appropriate and economic use of land. There are physical factors associated with slope and drainage ways which directly affect the cost of development and provision of services. Areas of steep slope are more expensive to develop and are subject to much higher rates of foundation failure, septic problems, and serious soil erosion problems. Upland areas also provide needed habitat for wildlife, and recharge our ground water resources for drinking water.

C. SOILS

Topography, geology, drainage, and soils are major factors presenting opportunities or constraints for development. These factors should be viewed as a whole when assessing the ability of the land to support a certain use or activity. Many other factors may enter into a planning process, but if the physical conditions will not support the proposed use, problems will result, not only for the town but for individual landowners too. Georgia's soils fall into two general groups, those formed from the Green Mountain's glacial till, and those formed from lake and marine sediments and the Champlain Lowlands glacial till.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service maintains soil survey maps for approximately 95% of the United States. This information has recently been made available online through the Web Soil Survey (http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov)

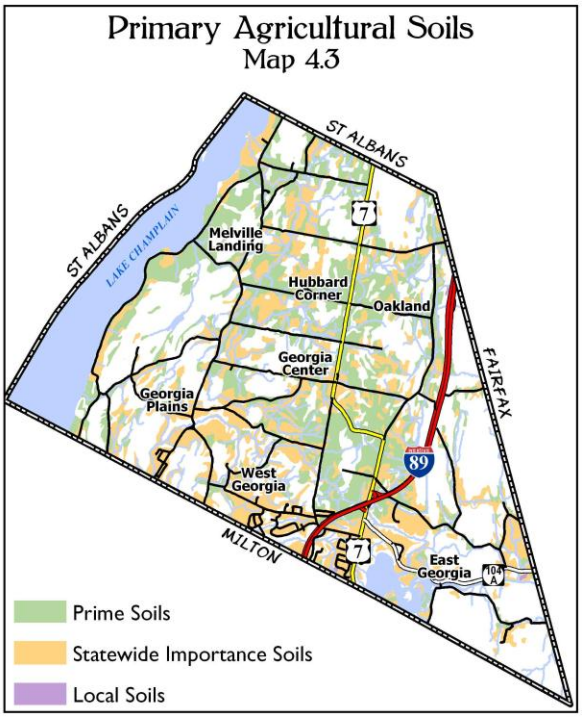
As far as development potential is concerned, the town has a mix of soils. Some are ill suited to development, having low permeability (or high), shallow depth to bedrock, or high water table. **Maps 4.3 and 4.4** show the locations of prime agricultural and prime forestry soils in Georgia. Others are well suited to development presenting few constraints from a physical perspective. In general, development constraints are based on many factors including soils (**Maps 4.3 and 4.4**), topography (**Map 4.2**) and the presence of sensitive natural features such as wetlands and floodplain (**Map 4.6**). These maps show a broad picture of the town and do not indicate that specific sites might or might not be suited for development.

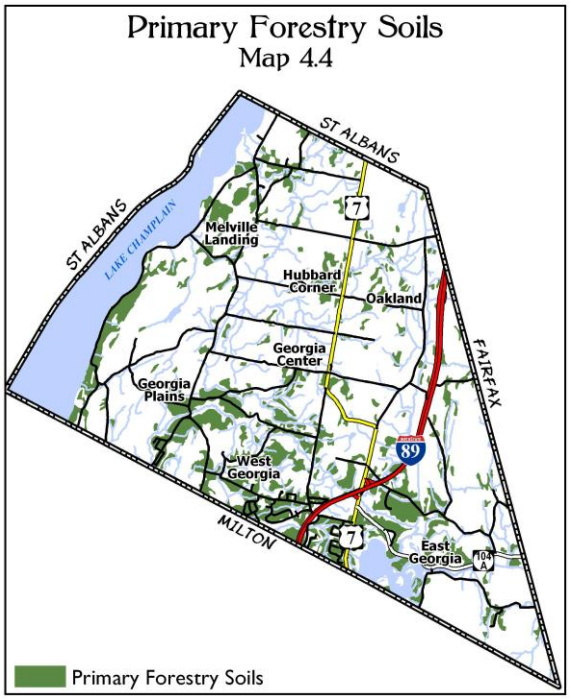
Because Georgia relies on site septic systems for disposal of sewage and ground water

for our drinking water supplies, soil types are very important considerations in locating developments.

The presence of appropriate soils is also critical to supporting the working landscape in Georgia. **Map 4.3** and **Map 4.4** indicate the locations of soils that can support agricultural and forestry operations. Vermont's agricultural soils have been classified by USDA/NRCS in the publication, "Farmland Classification Systems for Vermont Soils" (June 2006).

The two categories of agricultural soils are Prime Soils (Classes 1-3) and Statewide Soils (Classes 4-7). Prime Soils are described as "having the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, forage, and fiber crops, and are also available for these uses." Statewide Soils are defined as "having good potential for growing crops, but have one or more limitations which restrict the choice of crops and require more intensive management than prime soils." The location of these soils does not necessarily correspond to areas presently being farmed, rather it indicates areas that have the highest capability for producing crops from a soils capability perspective. Preserving large, contiguous blocks of agricultural soils is necessary to continue to have viable agricultural operations in Georgia.





The NRCS has also identified "primary forestry soils," important to sustain commercial forestry operations in the region, according to their relative productivity.

Soils are a finite resource. We require suitable soils for food production, building materials, waste water treatment, drinking water, renewable and non renewable energy

sources, and as a medium on which to place our homes. Given these factors, the proper development of soils is enormously important to consider when protecting the public health and welfare and providing safe homes and services to our residents. Primary agricultural and forestry soils are a very finite resource, which because of their unique chemical and physical properties are capable of producing food, energy and fiber for our use. Once converted to other uses they are essentially lost for food production.

D. EARTH RESOURCES

Earth resources, including sand, gravel and stone, are important resources particularly for use in construction and road maintenance. Sand and gravel are finite resources; they are important to the continued growth and economy of the town and should be protected from incompatible uses, until needed.

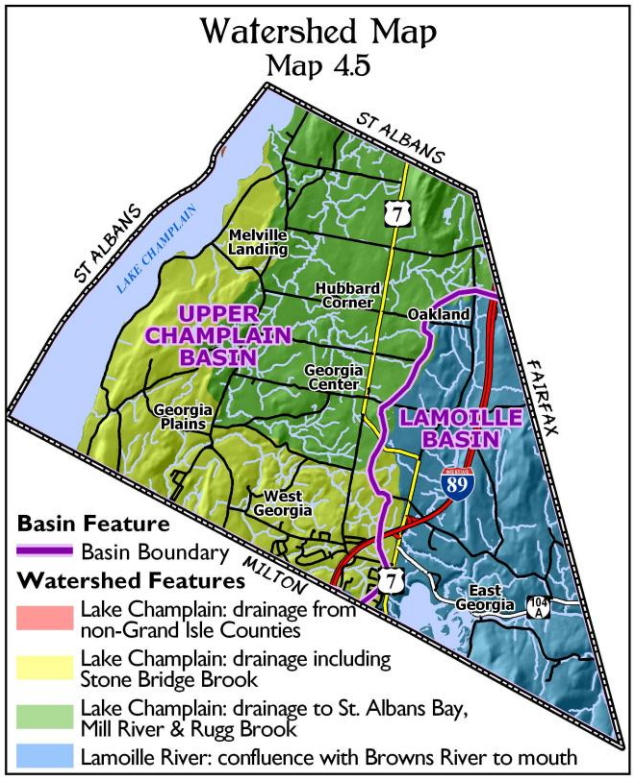
In 2009, the Town of Georgia spent $36,322 on processed and unprocessed aggregate to maintain town roads. With the availability of a quarry in Georgia, the town is purchasing its aggregate from a combination of in-town and out-of-town sources. If possible, the town should secure additional economical sources of gravel from a location close to town to meet future road construction and improvement needs. A local gravel inventory should be taken to determine if local sources are available.

Gravel and sand pits can be located and designed to reduce the negative impacts of excavation and operation. With well designed reclamation plans, sites can be restored and used for other purposes including: agriculture, residential, commercial or recreational. This requires careful planning and engineering; local regulations should include performance standards for extraction, noise, dust, hauling, reclamation and bonding to insure adequate protection to residents and wise use of the resource.

E. CLIMATE AND AIR QUALITY

Georgia's climate is humid and continental, with precipitation relatively equally divided between rain and snow. The influence of Lake Champlain has moderated Georgia's climate, giving it a longer growing season than in other parts of the county. In the eastern quarter of the town, where agricultural land does not dominate the terrain, the vegetation is the northern temperate deciduous forest typical to Franklin County.

The quality of the air we breathe is an essential requirement of continued good health and should be protected from degradation in the interest of the public good. Our climate has a great effect on our lives, including social, economic, natural resource, and energy considerations. As such, climatic factors should be considered in future planning to insure the appropriate and efficient provision of housing, services, energy needs, food production and the like.



F. WATER RESOURCES

Georgia's hydrology is largely a function of Lake Champlain and its tributaries which pass through Georgia. As shown on **Map 4.5**, the Town of Georgia is divided into three subwatersheds.

The northwestern portion of Georgia drains into the Mill River, which is joined by Rugg Brook and ultimately drains to St. Albans Bay. The southwestern portions of Georgia, which includes the Stone Bridge Brook watershed, drains directly into Lake Champlain. Eastern portions of Georgia are part of the Lamoille River Watershed, including Arrowhead Mountain Lake.

Rivers and Floodplains

The Town of Georgia includes portions of the Lamoille River, Rugg Brook, Mill River and all of Stone Bridge Brook, in addition to many smaller streams and brooks. Erosion is a major issue in Georgia's rivers, due in large part to unstable soil types and significant conflicts between rivers and road infrastructure. The Town of Georgia has been successful in obtaining grants from the Agency of Natural Resources and the Better Backroads Program to address some of the most pressing erosion issues that threaten public road and bridges. The Georgia Zoning Regulations also require a fifty (50) ft buffer from the edge of the waterways and a "no development" buffer of two hundred (200) feet along Deer Brook and Arrowhead Mountain Lake in the I-1, I-2 SV,

and B-1 zoning districts.

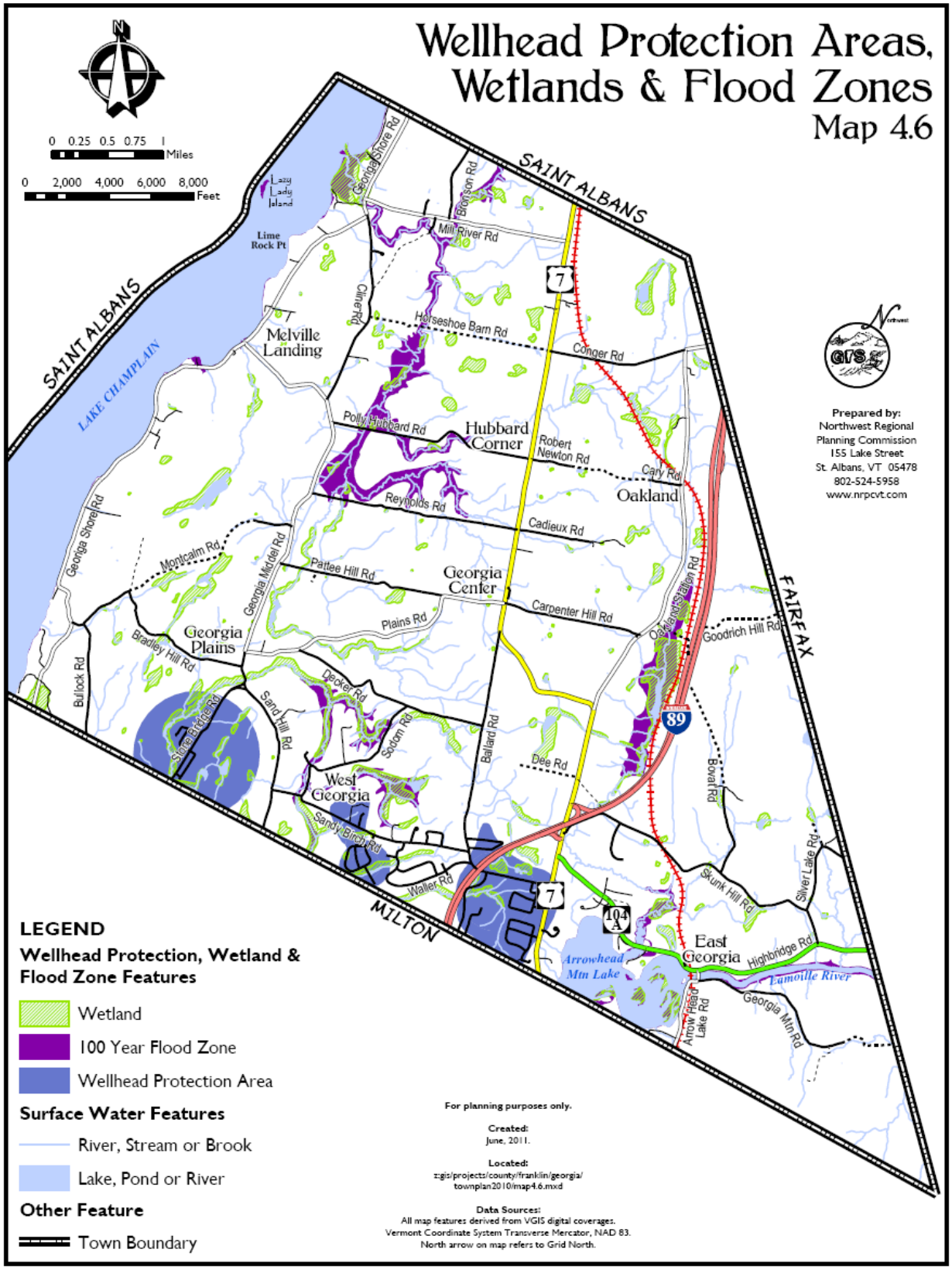
Stormwater runoff has also been identified as a threat to our local waterways as it carries sediment and pollutants, increases the volume of water in our rivers, accelerates flows, and exacerbates erosion in the stream channel. Ensuring stormwater from roads, parking lots, roofs and other impervious surfaces is adequately captured and treated is an important step to protecting our water quality and improving the stability of our streams and shorelines.

Flooding is another concern that can and should be addressed through planning. The most recent record floods of spring 2011 demonstrate both the unpredictable impacts of climate and weather The Town of Georgia participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). This program requires the town to impose certain restrictions on development within special flood hazard areas (SFHA) as designed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The areas designated as Zone A are those which have a 1 percent chance of flooding in any given year (commonly referred to as the 100-year floodplain). Unfortunately, these maps have not been updated since 1985 and may no longer provide the most accurate information. The NFIP program is structured to minimize risk to life and property, but is not necessarily intended to provide water quality benefits.

In Vermont, most flood damage is the result of fluvial erosion rather than inundation. The FEMA maps may not adequately identify areas at risk of erosion. To address this issue, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources is using the results of geomorphic assessment studies to map fluvial erosion hazard (FEH) corridors. These maps have been developed for the Town of Georgia and can be used to help inform local planning.

Arrowhead Mountain Lake

Arrowhead Mountain Lake was formed by the impoundment of water by the Central Vermont Public Service Corporation power dam at Milton Falls. The lake that was formed has provided significant new areas for wildlife over the years. The water levels fluctuate based on need for water in the plants turbines. The levels are regulated by the State of Vermont and the Federal Government. Arrowhead Mountain Lake also provides a valuable source of water for the Georgia Dairy Industrial Park. Water is drawn from the Lake, treated at the Park, used for industrial processing, re-treated and discharged back into the lake.


Wellhead Protection Areas, Wetlands & Flood Zones
Map 4.6
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
SAINT ALBANS
LAKE CHAMPLAIN
Lazy Lady Island
Lime Rock Pt
Melville Landing
Hubbard Corner
Oakland
Georgia Center
Georgia Plains
West Georgia
East Georgia
Arrowhead Mtn Lake
Lamoille River
FAIRFAX
MILTON
Prepared by:
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
155 Lake Street
St. Albans, VT 05478
802-524-5958
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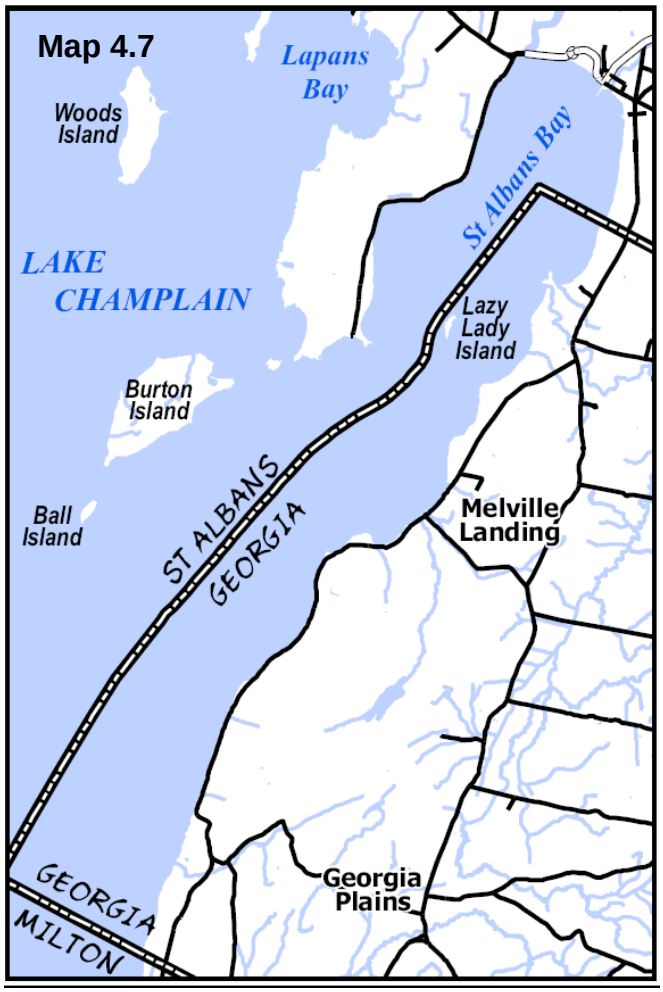
LEGEND
Wellhead Protection, Wetland & Flood Zone Features
Wetland
100 Year Flood Zone
Wellhead Protection Area
Surface Water Features
River, Stream or Brook
Lake, Pond or River
Other Feature
Town Boundary
For planning purposes only.
Created:
June, 2011.
Located:
z:gis/projects/county/franklin/georgia/townplan2010/map4.6.mxd
Data Sources:
All map features derived from VGIS digital coverages.
Vermont Coordinate System Transverse Mercator, NAD 83.
North arrow on map refers to Grid North.

Lake Champlain

The Town of Georgia has approximately 7 miles of lakeshore frontage on Lake Champlain. The lake, which is more than 400 sq. miles is the largest freshwater body in North America besides the Great Lakes.

Georgia forms the easternmost shore of St. Albans Bay and holds, within its waters, several small islands, the largest of which is Lazy Lady Island. To the west, St. Albans Point and Burton Island form a peninsular which separates the northerly half of Georgia's waters from the broad lake (See **Map 4.7**).



The water quality of St. Albans Bay is impaired primarily by excessive levels of phosphorus which lead to algal blooms and growth of aquatic weeds. This problem impacts recreation in the lake, making boating, swimming and fishing less enjoyable for residents and visitors of our community. According to a report from the Lake Champlain Basin Program, the sources of phosphorus pollution going to St. Albans Bay are approximately 55% developed lands and 45% agricultural lands.

Lake Champlain is a sensitive resource. It is sensitive environmentally, aesthetically and in terms of its ability to absorb development. The area's "carrying capacity" and development requires extensive oversight and planning initiatives to ensure its long term health and viability.

Sewage disposal along the lakeshore also has the potential to degrade water quality. In 2005, an extensive study was completed looking at different options to improve wastewater disposal along the Georgia shore. Regional solutions were examined and found to currently be cost-prohibitive. However, alternative individual system options, now permitted by the State of Vermont, are working to improve the waste disposal issue for several shore owners. As they become more generally applied, these will substantially reduce this as a problem.

Lake Champlain continues to be a valuable asset to our community for community recreation and enjoyment, but access to the lake remains an issue. The Town Beach is the primary means of access for the public to the lake. The bulk of shoreland is in

private ownership which limits the use and enjoyment of the lake for the citizenry as a whole. The town will continue to investigate ways to increase public access to the lake.

Shoreline

The Lake Champlain shoreline is a unique ecosystem that provides an important habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial animals. The Lakeshore in Georgia is relatively open with typical grasses and cultivated fields running adjacent to the shore itself, typically to the east of Georgia Shore Road, particularly in the central part of the lakeshore in town. In the northerly section there are more wooded areas in the vicinity of Melville Landing, Lime Rock Point and the Mill River mouth.

Much of the Georgia shoreline is characterized by high-density, seasonal camps. Although much of the lakeshore is densely developed, there are notable open sections at Lime Rock Point, the Mill River Delta, Rhodes Shore, and White Shore. This is contrasted dramatically by the extensive open space to the east of Georgia Shore Road, and indeed pressure is mounting to develop these lands with their views and potential access to the lake.

The shoreline, characteristic of many Champlain Valley lakeshore sections, alternates between bedrock shales, limestones and loamy bank conditions, (Lordstown is a predominant soil type in this area). Several areas along the shore are subject to erosion.

Wetlands

Wetlands are abundant throughout Georgia and play an important role in maintaining water quality. The location of known wetlands are shown on **Map 4.6**.

The extensive biological activity of a wetland area enables the absorption and assimilation of nutrients and thus purifies to some extent the water that is discharged. These areas store large quantities of water during periods of high runoff and gradually release water during low flow periods. Therefore, the wetland regulates stream discharge both during low flow and peak flow. Loss of this storage capacity not only adversely affects stream behavior but also increases floods and reduces stream flow during crucial low flow periods. Wetlands also provide habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals, including a disproportionately high number of threatened or endangered species, compared to other ecosystem types. Many wetlands receive some protection through State and Federal regulations.

Drinking Water Supply

There are three Wellhead Protection Areas that have been delineated to protect public drinking water sources: one which serves Rhodeside Acres, one which serve Sherwood Forest, and one which serves the South Georgia Fire District (see **Map 5.1**, Utilities, Facilities and Town Services).

Most Georgia residents obtain their drinking water from ground water resources. The management of all our water resources has a direct impact on the present and future

quality of the water we consume.

Scenic Resources

The views and scenic beauty of the Georgia landscape are greatly valued and appreciated by residents and visitors alike. Georgia's gradual transition from the foothills to the lake provides beautiful scenery: The juxtaposition of rolling farmland, historic settlements, and forest within the Champlain lowlands creates a landscape that enhances our community and our quality of life. Scenic resources must be a consideration in planning and development, including ridgelines, foregrounds of distant views, open lands, vistas, and historic village settlements.

Lake Champlain is particularly important as visual and aesthetic resource for the Town of Georgia. To the west, we enjoy beautiful views of the Adirondack's and to the east we see the Green Mountains. The shoreline itself is an scenic resource and is particularly sensitive to human and natural change.

Changes in our working landscape will also affect the aesthetics of our community. Just as Vermont's forest cover has risen from 20-30% in 1850 to over 75% today, we can expect to see our landscape change as the economics of forestry and agriculture change. We can also expect that demand for new renewable energy sources will create interest in wind power development in our town and towns within our viewshed. Balancing economic, environmental and aesthetic interests will require careful review of projects and consideration of all potential costs and benefits.

Poorly planned development can threaten the scenic beauty of our community. These scenic resources contribute to the local quality of life and sense of place, help to preserve and enhance property values, and are instrumental in defining the character of the Town. Future development must be sensitive to these areas of the landscape. Development should be properly sited to protect scenic vistas, and to avoid steep slopes and hilltops. Through the use of flexible zoning tools, such as PUDs, the town can allow creative site design accommodates and respects scenic and natural resources.

Summary

Abundant clean water is a basic need for public health and economic and community development. Protecting these resources from pollution and inappropriate use is of paramount importance to the citizens of the town and is the public good. Because these resources do not follow municipal boundaries, it is also important to coordinate and cooperate with adjacent municipalities to see that the resource is wisely managed.

Sources:

1) National Flood Insurance Program, Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1981.
2) The Ordinary High and Low Water Marks are set by the Army Corps of Engineers at 96 and 93 feet, respectively.
3) 1981 and 1991 Georgia Town Maps, Vermont Orthophotos Series, and the 1871 Beers Atlas Map of Georgia.
4) The St. Albans Bay Pollution Abatement Feasibility Study, TWM Northeast, Williston, VT 1991.

5) The Georgia shore Wastewater Feasibility Study, Stone Environmental, Inc. Montpelier, VT 2005.

G. FRAGILE, UNIQUE AND SENSITIVE AREAS

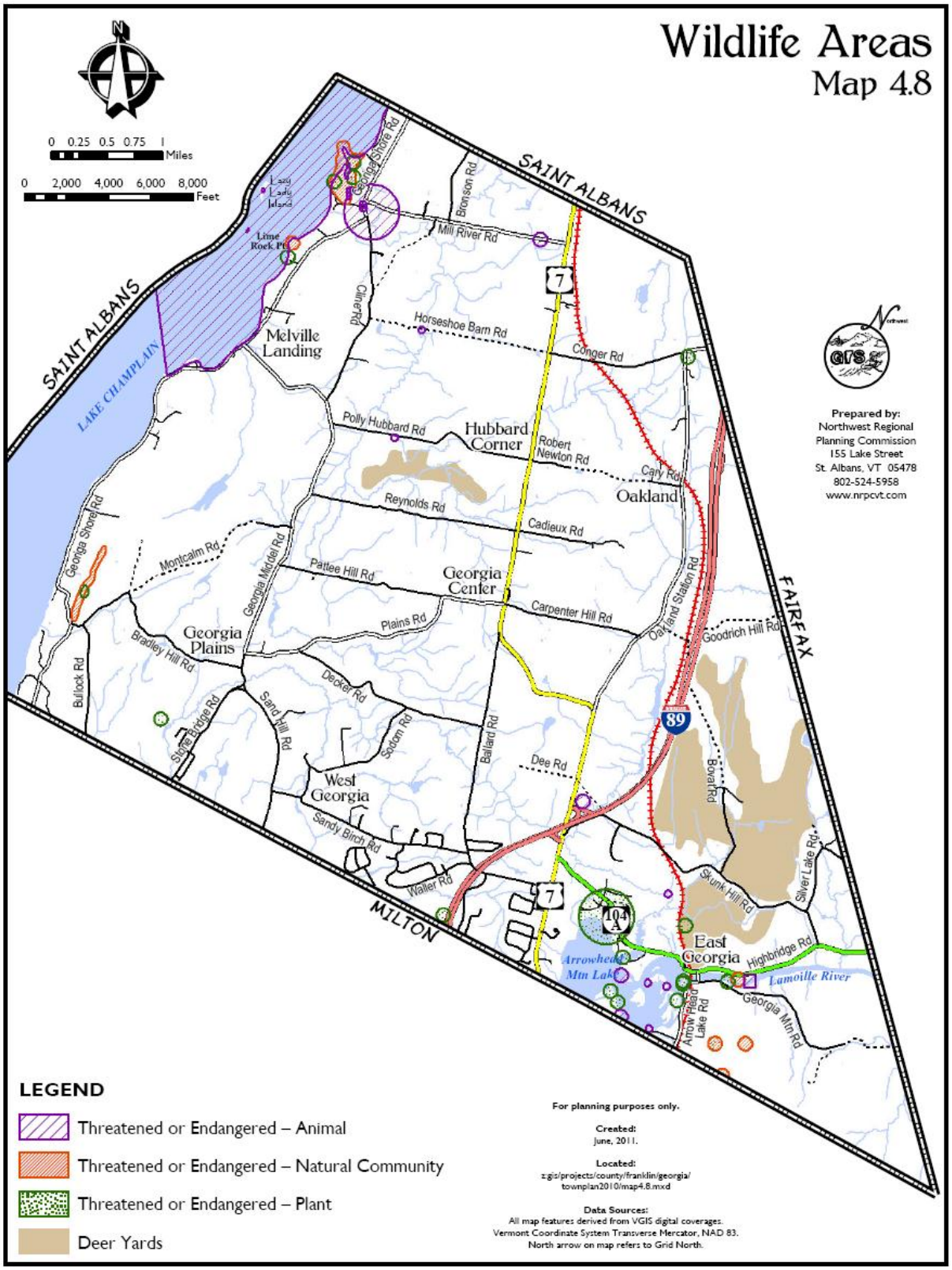
All three physiographic regions contain sites for natural, unique, and fragile areas/species. **Map 4.8** indicates the location of critical habitat areas including deer yards and habitats used by threatened and endangered species.

The 1992 Non-game and Natural Heritage Program Report identified five sites in Georgia as Biological Areas of State-Significance. The Program, part of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, determined the sites on the basis of uncommonness of the natural community type, ecosystem integrity and lack of major disturbance, and the presence of rare species. State significance implies that a site is one of the best examples of its natural community type in the state, or that it is the site for at least one rare species.
These sites are:

- A 60 acre ecosystem containing four rare plant species and a good example of floodplain forest.
- A nesting site for the state threatened common tern (Sterna Hirundo).
- A site hosting a large population of state threatened northern stickseed (Hackelia Americana) and a good example of upland northern white-cedar (Thuja occidentalis).
- A short length of dolomite ledge hosts a population of northern stickseed.
- An uncommon east-facing dolomite ledge hosts a population of northern stickseed, as well as a rich northern hardwood forest containing two uncommon species, American ginseng (Panax quinquefolius) and walking fern (Asplenium rhizophyllum).

In 2006, the Program identified an additional site:

- A dolomite bluff composed of a mixture of young cedar and mature oak-hardwood forests hosting a rare, state threatened short-styled snakeroot, and the uncommon long-fruited snakeroot. The Limestone Bluff Cedar-Pine Forest occurs primarily along the shores of Lake Champlain. The area in Georgia is very unique in that it is located about 1500’ east of the lakeshore. Cedar Bluff Forests are highly threatened by development as they occur on low cliffs with commanding views of Lake Champlain. This Cedar Bluff Forest is part of the larger block of contiguous forest running north from Bradley Hill Road to Polly Hubbard Road.


Wildlife Areas
Map 4.8
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
SAINT ALBANS
SAINT ALBANS
LAKE CHAMPLAIN
FAIRFAX
MILTON
Melville Landing
Hubbard Corner
Oakland
Georgia Center
Georgia Plains
West Georgia
East Georgia
Arrowhead Mtn Lake
Lamoille River
Lime Rock Pt
Lazy Lady Island
Mill River Rd
Horseshoe Barn Rd
Conger Rd
Polly Hubbard Rd
Robert Newton Rd
Cary Rd
Reynolds Rd
Cadieux Rd
Montcalm Rd
Pattee Hill Rd
Carpenter Hill Rd
Plains Rd
Goodrich Hill Rd
Bradley Hill Rd
Decker Rd
Sandy Hill Rd
Sedom Rd
Dee Rd
Sandy Birch Rd
Waller Rd
Skunk Hill Rd
Silver Lake Rd
Highbridge Rd
Georgia Mtn Rd
Arrow Head Lake Rd
Bovat Rd
Oakland Station Rd
Ballard Rd
Bronson Rd
Cliner Rd
Georgia Shore Rd
Georgia Middle Rd
Bullock Rd
Stone Bridge Rd
7
89
104 A
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LEGEND
Threatened or Endangered – Animal
Threatened or Endangered – Natural Community
Threatened or Endangered – Plant
Deer Yards
For planning purposes only.
Created:
June, 2011.
Located:
z:gis/projects/county/franklin/georgia/townplan2010/map4.8.mxd
Data Sources:
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Vermont Coordinate System Transverse Mercator, NAD 83.
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Other sites, not included in the Biological Natural Areas of State-Significance, exist within the Town of Georgia.

- A 50 acre deep inland marsh is a habitat of unusual significance for waterfowl. The Lake Champlain Basin Study identified the marsh as a site for unique, rare, or endangered species.
- A 50 acre hilly area contains fossils which are used as indicators for the Cambrian Geologic Period.
- A rare plant, animal, significant natural community or state fragile/natural area exists at a shoreline.
- A brook has been identified as a site for unique, rare, or endangered species by the Lake Champlain Basin Study.

Habitats for rare and endangered species constitute an important resource for the Town of Georgia. Not only are they sites for future biological study, but they also serve as examples and focal points for Georgia's natural character. These habitats should be considered when the Planning Commission evaluates the appropriateness of development in a particular area.

Summary

These areas serve unique functions which are very sensitive to human interference and deserve a level of protection. They are usually unsuited for human habitation but ideally suited for wildlife habitat and have significant ecological, recreational, scientific, and scenic value. They represent a dwindling resource which, with careful planning, this generation may be able to offer as a gift to the next.

Sources:

Lake Champlain Atlas: Water Quality and Shoreland Use, Lake Champlain Basin Study, 1978
Vermont Rivers Study, Vermont Agency of Environmental Conservation, 1986
Biological Natural Areas of Western Franklin County, Non-game and Natural Heritage Program, Department of Fish and Wildlife, 1992
Vermont Natural Area Inventory
Significant Habitat Map, VT Department of Fish & Wildlife
Comprehensive Regional Plan, Franklin County, VT Dubois & King, 1969
Comprehensive Municipal Plan, Franklin County, VT Dubois & King, 1969
St. Albans Bay Pollution Abatement Feasibility Study TWM Northeast, 1991
Report on Preliminary Engineering for New Water System for the Town of Georgia, VT Webster-Martin, Inc., 1975
1988 Vermont Recreation Plan-Assessment and Policy Plan Recreation Division, Dept. of Forest, Parks and Recreation
Note - The most recent reports should be used when delineating these areas

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO THE PHYSICAL SETTING

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES RELATED TO THE PHYSICAL SETTING

SECTION 5. UTILITIES, FACILITIES AND TOWN SERVICES

Overview

In a growing town, community facilities and services are often in transition. Existing facilities and services become inadequate as growth occurs. In Georgia, it is apparent that both population growth and the increasing expectations of Georgia residents regarding community services are continuing to result in facility and service expansions and improvements. While town budgets have not increased substantially, the prospect of future service and facility improvements, as well as need for new services, will undoubtedly have fiscal effects. **Map 5.1**, Utilities, Facilities, and Town Services shows the location of such existing facilities. This plan section contains an overview of town facilities and services from two perspectives: 1) What is the current state of the facility or service? Are there current deficiencies? and; 2) What changes are expected over the next five to ten years? Further, it is the goal of this plan section to aid the town in anticipating changes over the next few years, and to establish priorities for facility and service improvements during that period.

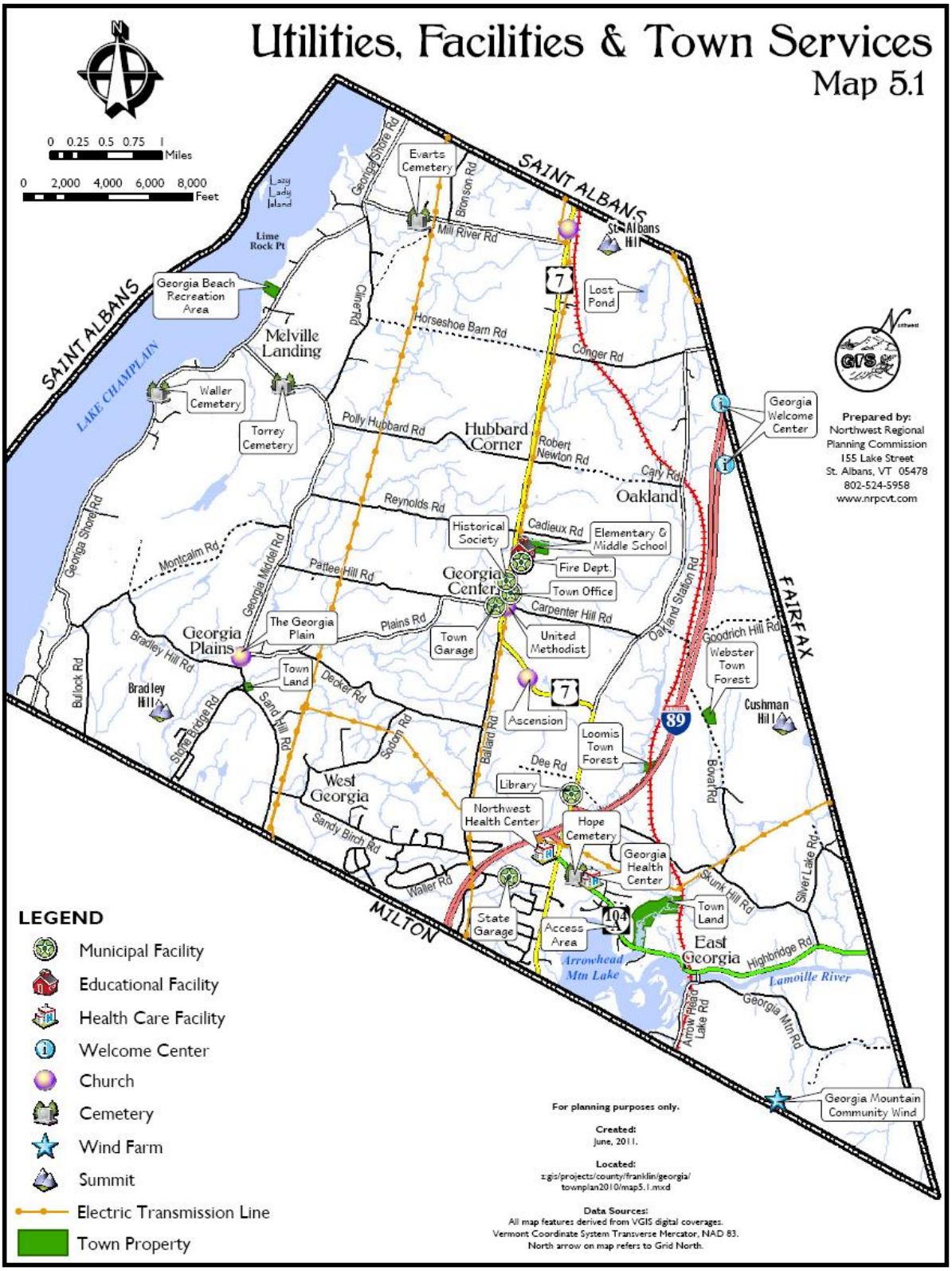
A. PUBLIC SAFETY

Police Services

Georgia's police protection system currently is handled by both the Vermont State Police, who respond from St. Albans, and by contract services with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office. Georgia residents or businesses typically call 911 in the event of a need for police services.

Given the amount of growth which has occurred in town, several arrangements for increased police services have been considered by the Selectboard, including a contract with the Vermont State Police, a contract with the Franklin County Sheriff's Department, and the creation of a local police department. Based on investigation by the Selectboard and Town Administrator, the most cost effective option is to contract services with the Sheriff's Department and the State Police. The cost and liability exposure to the Town from having its own Police Department is seen as prohibitive at this time.

As of 2011, there is a 16-hour-per-week contract with the Sheriff's Department and a four hour per week contract with the State Police. While this approach appears to be adequate, concerns about issues like speeding and potential for property break-ins will likely increase residents' expectations for higher levels of service in the future and may result in increased town expenditures in this area. These contracts will be carefully monitored for effectiveness.


Utilities, Facilities & Town Services
Map 5.1
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
SAINT ALBANS
SAINT ALBANS
LAKE CHAMPLAIN
FAIRFAX
MILTON
Lazy Lady Island
Lime Rock Pt
Georgia Beach Recreation Area
Melville Landing
Waller Cemetery
Torrey Cemetery
Evarts Cemetery
Mill River Rd
Bronson Rd
Georgia Shore Rd
St. Albans Hill
Lost Pond
Horseshoe Barn Rd
Conger Rd
Cimarron
Polly Hubbard Rd
Hubbard Corner
Robert Newton Rd
Cary Rd
Oakland
Reynolds Rd
Cadieux Rd
Historical Society
Elementary & Middle School
Fire Dept.
Town Office
Georgia Center
Carpenter Hill Rd
Montcalm Rd
Georgia Middel Rd
Pattee Hill Rd
Plains Rd
The Georgia Plain
Town Garage
United Methodist
Oakland Station Rd
Goodrich Hill Rd
Webster Town Forest
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Sand Hill Rd
Sodom Rd
Ascension
Loomis Town Forest
Dee Rd
Library
West Georgia
Northwest Health Center
Hope Cemetery
Sandy Birch Rd
Georgia Health Center
Waller Rd
State Garage
Access Area
Arrowhead Mtn Lake
East Georgia
Town Land
Skunk Hill Rd
Silver Lake Rd
Highbridge Rd
Lamoille River
Georgia Mtn Rd
Arrow Head Lake Rd
Bovat Rd
Georgia Mountain Community Wind
LEGEND
Municipal Facility
Educational Facility
Health Care Facility
Welcome Center
Church
Cemetery
Wind Farm
Summit
Electric Transmission Line
Town Property
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Fire and Emergency Services

The Georgia Volunteer Fire Department is a volunteer force and is a member of the Franklin County International Mutual Aid Agreement. The Georgia Fire Department covers an area of 47.8 square miles as primary response from one station that is centrally located for our Firefighters and First Responders.
The department's financial needs are primarily supported by the town budget. In addition, several developers have contributed toward major equipment purchases. Fire fighters are paid $10/hour and officers $12/hour while responding to calls and during training. "911" emergency dialing is available in all of Georgia, and dispatch services are handled by Central Dispatch in St. Albans.

Georgia First Response is part of the Fire Department, which responds to emergency situations in town. First Response relies principally on emergency equipment which the town contracts for on an annual basis. Georgia contracts with Am Care from St. Albans for ambulance services. Am Care responds to all emergency situations in Georgia. Emergency response is a significant issue in Georgia because of the presence of several major industries and Interstate 89. Future growth, both residential and non-residential, will eventually make it cost effective for the Town to acquire its own emergency equipment.

During the past few years, the numbers of fire calls responded to by the department have increased significantly due to an increase in motor vehicle accidents. The department currently has a volunteer roster of 35 persons, which has remained stable within +/- 10% for the past several years and includes both long-term and new residents of Georgia. This is a positive development, as many towns in the state are having trouble maintaining their volunteer forces. However, it is important to note that training and equipment costs have increased considerably in recent years, and that the larger force and workload have resulted in higher town expenditures.

In 2005 a “Municipal Exploration Committee” was formed and charged with recommending solutions to current over-crowding of facilities in several municipal departments.

As a result of this committee’s work, the Town identified the need to construct a new Fire Station. In 2010, a bond was presented and approved to build a new building. The new Fire Station is 8,996 square feet and has seven apparatus bays, all with direct access due to doors on the front and back of the building. Traffic flow has been designed to provide for a separate exit when responding to emergencies. The new meeting & training room provides a safe and convenient location for Department training as well as use by other Town entities. Planning for future growth has been well thought out. If future expansion of the Fire/Rescue building is needed it can be added in the future with the site plan configuration, and pre-fabricated building material. The apparatus bay area for the new facility includes room for up to two additional trucks to meet the possible growth needs of the Town. The new station will also be home to the Georgia First Response who have had no building of their own and have held their

regular business and training meetings at the Town Offices. They, along with Fire Department personnel, will also have a place to decontaminate equipment and store needed supplies. The new station has storage for equipment, training and meeting space, and accommodations for personal and equipment decontamination, now and in the years to come. The Selectboard believes that the new station meets the current and future operating needs of the Fire Department. Following construction, the current fire station on Plains Road will then be turned over to the highway department for needed expansion of their facilities.

B. TOWN SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Highway Department

The Georgia Highway Department is responsible for town highways and bridges (see Transportation Section). The Highway Department is based in the town garage facility and has 4 full-time employees and no seasonal employees. Department equipment currently consists of two medium trucks, two tandem dump trucks, two backhoes, a grader, a roadside mowing tractor, track paver, roller trailer, wood chipper, broom sweeper, air compressor, pressure washer, as well as miscellaneous equipment. The Town's fleet of highway vehicles is adequate for current needs.

Workload has increased from past years due in large part to the increased service expectations of residents. Residents now expect their roads to be plowed sooner, and expect road surfaces to be maintained at a higher level, than they did in past years.

As previously explained, the Highway Department will soon be taking over the entire building on Plains Road, which was previously shared with the Fire Department. This will give the Highway Department 6,820 square feet of space, approximately twice what it currently has. The additional space will be used for vehicle and equipment storage, a tool and equipment room, and other consolidations of space. The Town has also received a grant to improve the energy efficiency of this building. Additionally, a new sand and salt shed will be constructed across the street. This will satisfy the highway department facility needs for the foreseeable future.

The following are likely to be required during the next few years:

- Regular replacement or rebuilding of major equipment as existing pieces reach the end of their useful life. Replacement will accelerate as department workload increases.
- Additional expenditures for re-surfacing, paving, and reconstruction of Town Highways.
- Utilize existing technology and services to prioritize highway construction and maintenance projects in the most cost effective way.
- Increased service demands and road mileage may result in a need to employ an additional full-time person during the next five years.

Transportation Facilities Recommended for Improvement:

1. **Sand Hill Road** (TH #33) is being used more and more as a Minor Arterial for residences off Stonebridge Road to access the Interstate.
2. **Oakland Station Road** (TH #4) is used extensively by residents of other towns as a Minor Arterial to access Route 7 and hence the Interstate.
3. **Upgrade all Y-shaped intersections including:** Carpenter Hill Road (SA #4), Plains Road (SA #2), and Middle Road (SA #3)

Administrative Functions

Georgia's administrative functions have gradually expanded over the years, including both personnel and facility needs.

Town personnel now include the Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, Assistant Town Clerk, Town Administrator, a part time Zoning Administrator, a part time Planning Coordinator, and a part time Lister Clerk. Additionally, the Town has contracted services for our assessor and assistant assessor positions.

Elected and appointed officials perform important functions in Georgia. The town's five elected Selectboard members are responsible for overseeing all of the town's affairs, budget, Capital Budget and policy issues which arise from time to time. The Selectboard appoints all other officials except the Planning Commission and the Library Board. Planning Commission is elected under the provisions of Title 24 VSA Section 4323(c). The Selectboard is also the Board of Health for the town.

The Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) and the Planning Commission oversee planning and development issues in the town. The Planning Commission is responsible for the preparation of the town plan, zoning and subdivision regulations, and subdivision reviews. The ZBA is responsible for reviewing conditional uses, variances, appeals and interpretation of the by-laws. There are several other elected or appointed officials and boards which perform important functions for the town such as the First Constable, Delinquent Tax Collector, Auditors, Lister Board, Animal Control Officer, Health Officer, Board of Civil Authority, Justices of the Peace, Conservation Commission and Historical Society.

The Town Administrator position handles numerous administrative functions ranging from dealing with concerns and inquiries, applying for and administering grants and loans, investigating and implementing cost control measures, reviewing and responding to Selectboard correspondence, responding to state and federal requirements, reviewing expenditures and billings, and acting as liaison between town boards and citizens. The Administrator attends all Selectboard meetings and performs whatever duties required by the Board and other duties as assigned.

The Planning Coordinator serves the Planning Commission. This involves reviewing all development proposals, attending all meetings, preparing Planning Commission correspondence, working on plans and by-laws and any other tasks required by the

Commission.

The Zoning Administrator handles all zoning related issues. This involves attending all meetings of the Zoning Board, reviewing permits, issuing permits, investigating complaints, and enforcement against violations.

The Town Clerk's Office has also experienced a major increase in workload over the past ten years. Deed and document recording and research, issuing various licenses, birth and death certificate recording, tax billing, concerns and general inquiries have all increased dramatically as the number of new houses, businesses and properties has increased. As mentioned before, the change from a small rural town to a more suburban town has resulted in a population more used to a higher level of services.

All of the above administrative services are based in the Georgia Town Office. In 2010, a Georgia Facilities Bond issue was presented and approved which included a reconfiguration of the Town Offices, including an upgrade to the basement to create two new overflow meeting rooms, utility room and installations of a lift. The facility is expected to be completed by early 2011. The Town has also received a grant from the VT Department of Public Service to improve the energy efficiency of this building and to install LED exterior lighting to illuminate the parking lot and veteran's memorial.

Library

The Georgia Public Library is available to Town residents, and is primarily supported by the town budget. The aging and undersized library was replaced when the Town took over the former Northwest Regional Library. The agreement between the town and the State specifies that at least 50% of the building must be used for library purposes.

The Library currently utilizes most of the building. There are two meeting rooms available for the public to use. These community rooms were used 426 times during 2009, which clearly demonstrates the value of having this space available to the community. The library serves the population of Georgia, as well as seasonal residents and people from surrounding communities. In 2009, there were 16,032 patron visits to the library, up from 11,590 in 2005. Adult patron visits increased from 7,586 to 10,763 and juvenile patron visits from 4,004 to 5,269 during this time frame. Access to the public computer stations for 2009 was 2,120, which does not include time that patrons spent using the wi-fi service available in the library. The library employs three part-time staff members and has seven regular volunteers. The library's collection, however, is very limited. Compared to towns serving similar populations, the Georgia library has 3.55 volumes per capita when the average of Vermont's libraries is 4.58. Collection development must be a priority to provide the citizens with adequate resources. Statewide the rate per capita spent on library collections is $3.81, while in Georgia it is $2.29.

In 2006, the town installed a new septic system to support the building. The town should investigate ways of generating revenue from the building to help reduce the taxpayer burden of maintaining the building and to better utilize the library budget. In 2010, the town received a grant from VT Department of Public Service that will help to improve the energy efficiency of the building and reduce its operating expenses.

Recreation

The people of Georgia based on results of the town-wide survey, desire additional recreation facilities, particularly in the southern sections of town. There are currently two major recreational facilities in Georgia, which accommodate a variety of recreational activities.

1) The Town Beach - facilities include the Beach, Fishing Access, Multi-Purpose Athletic Field, Tennis, Volleyball and Basketball Courts, Pavilion with Public Facilities and a Playground, which was replaced with an extensive array of equipment suitable to a wider age range. The Town Beach facility is maintained and operated by the Georgia Recreation Committee, while the responsibility for facilities at the school lies with the school district. During normal operations, the Town Beach is used for summer outings, Little League, company picnics, Fresh Air family picnic, swimming, fishing and boating access. Annually, the beach is also used for Fall Fest. While there are limitations, options for expansion and/or improvement of the Town Beach Facility should be investigated.

2) The School Property - facilities include the Gymnasium, a Soccer, Softball and Babe Ruth Field, a Walking Path Inside and Outside of the School, and Limited Playground Equipment.

Though the town currently has exceptional recreation facilities that are well utilized and maintained, Georgia should research opportunities for acquiring additional land when possible, particularly when these lands fill an expressed recreational need. To that end, the town should investigate possibilities for better utilization of existing recreation areas set aside from approved subdivisions, and encourage comprehensive recreation planning for all new developments.

C. SOLID WASTE

Georgia is a member of the Northwest Vermont Solid Waste Management District, which offers disposal options for several types of solid waste such as Household Hazardous Waste and Special Trash that are open to residents of Georgia, including collections within the Town of Georgia itself. In addition, the District has drop-off facilities where residents may take trash at a cost of $2.00 per 18 gallon bag, $3.00 per 33 gallon bag, and $4.00 per 45 gallon bag. There is no charge for recycleables. Recycling is mandatory within the District, and all haulers are required to provide curbside pick-up of recyclables as well as trash. Georgia's Conservation Commission sponsors Green Up Day activities.

D. WATER AND SEWER

The Town does not own or operate its own water or sewage treatment facilities. The South Georgia Fire District owns and operates a water system which currently serves approximately 175 users. There are also several small public water systems in housing developments. The vast majority of all water systems and sewage disposal systems are private and on site. This fact further supports the need for adequate design and construction of systems, in accordance with State standards.

Most townspeople get their drinking water from groundwater sources, whether from a deep well or a shallow well. Given this fact, it is extremely important that septic systems be properly designed and constructed to eliminate contamination of groundwater resources that are also used for our drinking water. This cannot be overstated. Pathogens and bacteria from improperly treated waste water can remain "alive" for five years or more and travel for miles from their source if they mix with the groundwater.

The lakeshore presents unique concerns for sewage treatment and potable water supplies. In 2003, the State approved several new and innovative waste disposal systems some of which work very effectively in conditions as found along the lake, such as small lots and poor soils. These have been installed in about a dozen homes and cottages in this area. In 2004, a wastewater disposal feasibility study was conducted to determine the practicality of implementing regional systems for disposal. A proposal incorporating four regions along the shore was shown to be feasible. However, the costs for such a system proved prohibitive at the time. So alternative individual systems were recommended and have already been implemented in some cases. As byproducts of the study, we now have complete inventories of well water and septic tank locations, sizes and ages along the entire shore for reference as needed. As more owners implement these recommended solutions as replacements, concerns for septic pollution will be greatly alleviated.

The southern end of Town is also an area that has been studied for wastewater disposal alternatives and for potential community water systems. A comprehensive study of feasible options for wastewater and water was completed in 2005. Alternative

locations for disposal of collected wastewater were identified that could be implemented as development occurs in the region around the intersection of U.S. 7 and I-89. As for a recommended source for water, the most practical solution would likely be connection to the Champlain Water District which currently extends through most of Milton. These will have to be given serious consideration in order to implement the vision of the Georgia South Village.

E. EDUCATION

Georgia's growth during the past few decades has resulted in changes in the local educational system. The Georgia School District and the Franklin West Supervisory Union currently take responsibility for providing the public education system for Georgia's school children. Georgia's schools have evolved from multiple school districts and school buildings within the town, to a centralized system, which was created in 1959, when the Georgia Elementary School opened. Within 10 years, this facility was so crowded that a second school was rented in St. Albans to handle grades 5 through 8. In 1973, the "Big School" was opened. Finally, in 1991, the two schools with a new addition became the Georgia Elementary and Middle School. Georgia's elementary and middle school aged children now utilize the Elementary and Middle School for grades K through 8.Secondary students (Grades 9 through 12) attend the area high school of their choice on a tuition basis, with individual families responsible for handling transportation. In recent years, most Georgia students have chosen to attend the Bellows Free Academy in St. Albans, Bellows Free Academy of Fairfax, or the Essex Junction Educational Center. Each year, a few students are enrolled at approximately five other area high schools.

The Georgia Elementary and Middle School facility was built in 1991 and was planned to accommodate fifteen to twenty years of growth. The facility was financed by a twenty year bond. Total capacity is 900 students. Enrollment has been remarkably stable over the past ten years going from 686 students in 2000 to 672 students in 2010. This is not surprising as the town population is aging with a lower percentage of families with children than in the past. As it is projected that current trends will continue for the balance of the decade, the current facility should suffice for the foreseeable future.

While the School District maintains control over the budget for the Georgia Elementary School, it is important to note that several aspects of the total school budget remain out of local control. These include: 1) Vermont State Aid to Education funding; 2) Tuition levels paid to out-of-town high school facilities and; 3) Vermont State educational mandates which have not been fully funded. The impact of the Equal Education Opportunity Acts (Act 60 and 68) on the town’s ability to raise education funds remains dependant on State legislation and is therefore out of the Town’s control.

Overall, the school district intends to maintain a quality educational product for Georgia's children. Georgia continues to have an enviable reputation for high education standards.

Since the addition of 1991, there has been a significant increase in the use of school facilities by community groups and area agencies. The Georgia School District supports this growth in utilization of facilities and only asks that all requests for space be directed to the school secretary, so proper scheduling may occur.

School Enrollment

Public school enrollment is directly related to town-wide growth and is of critical importance in any Vermont town. Simply put, educational services are the major set of local expenditures facing most Vermont taxpayers. This is certainly the case in Georgia. **Figure 5.1** shows trends in public school enrollments in Georgia, broken down between elementary and middle school levels (includes Grades K through 8) and secondary school level (includes Grades 9 through 12.

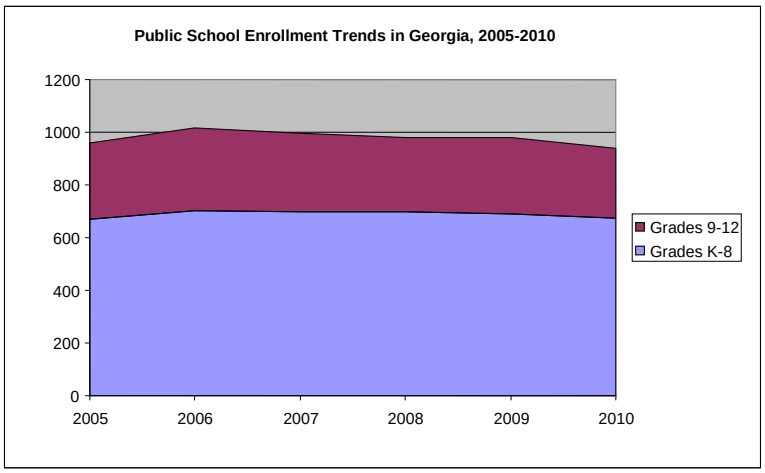


Figure 5.1 – Source: Source: Franklin West Supervisory Union & Georgia Town Reports

Students in grades 9 - 12 are tuitioned to area high schools of their choice. Enrollment has ranged from a high of 317 to a low of 266 during the past ten years. Tuition costs for area schools have become a more significant factor in the total educational budget than in years past as charges for tuition has increased rather dramatically. As seen in **Figure 5.2,** Georgia invests very generously in education as evidenced by its level of overall spending per pupil.

In 2010, Georgia is expected to spend approximately $12,700 per student.

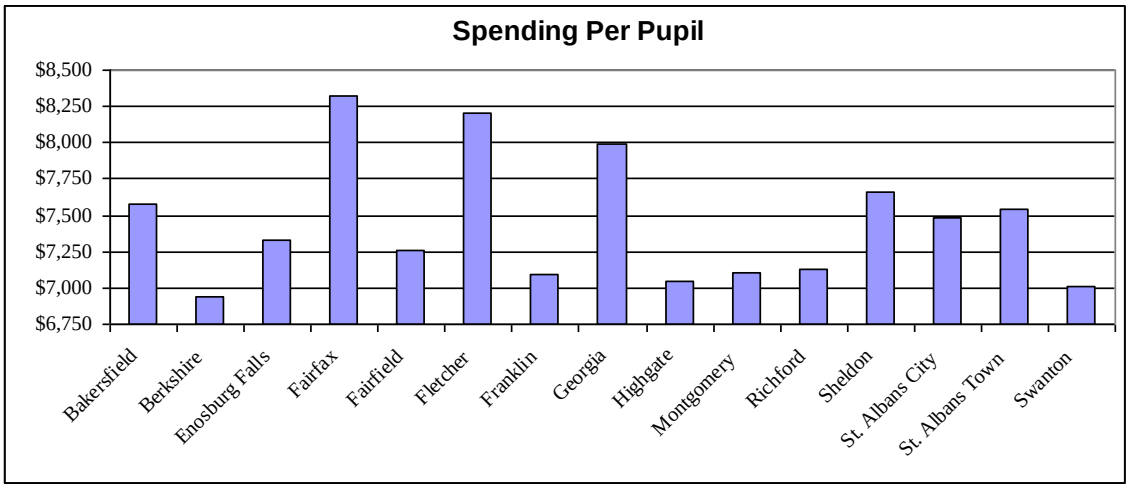
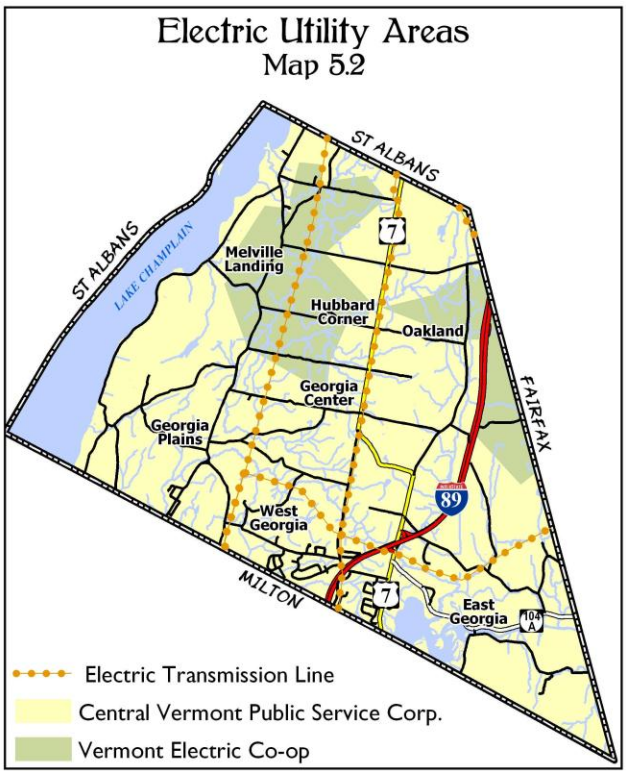


Figure 5.2 - Source: St. Albans Messenger, June 2003

F. PRIVATE UTILITIES

Georgia is served by several utilities which provide needed energy, power and communication services. Vermont Electric Power Company owns and maintains a major 115 KV transmission line, which bisects the Town in a north/south direction, as well as numerous substations and fiber optics cables. These lines serve as a major transmission link for the power grid from Canada to the Northeast.



As shown on **Map 5.2**, Electric Utility Areas, Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS) Corporation serves much of the residential and commercial electrical needs of the town, with Vermont Electric CO-OP (VEC) serving the rest. VEC owns approximately 13.2 miles of overhead and underground lines, while CVPS owns app. 77 miles. CVPS serves approximately 1700 residential, commercial and industrial customers and Vt. Electric CO-OP serves approximately 100 customers.

CVPS estimates they will have ample supplies of electrical energy in the near term for both residential and commercial/industrial usage. Three phase power is available for commercial and industrial purposes along Route 7 from the Georgia Elementary school south to the Milton line; along Ballard Rd from Rte 7 south to the Manor Rd.; along Manor Rd.; and along Route 104A from Route 7 approximately 1/2 mile. Three phase power enhances growth potential of the commercial/industrial base.

Vermont Gas Systems has a major north south transmission line and provides gas service to approximately 440 residential, business and industrial customers in Town. The system presently consists of 6.9 miles of transmission lines and 5.9 miles of distribution lines. Natural Gas is a clean fuel source of energy used for heating, hot water, cooking, clothes drying and industrial/commercial processing. The presence of this energy source near the B-1, I-1 and I-2 Zones enhances commercial industrial development potential.

Fiber optic cables are available for telephone service and the cable companies are providing greater coverage for Georgia each year. It is expected that technological advances will continue to fuel the fast growing field of information and communication, which may present a range of increased opportunities for Georgia.

G. TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The field of commercial telecommunications has many implications for land-use in the Town of Georgia. Telecommunications have become increasingly important as a tool for economic activity. Moreover, the technology enables people to "telecommute," and thereby live a long distance from where they work, which may have the affect of populating more rural areas. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 (federal statute) placed certain limitations over municipal control of telecommunication structures. With these confines, however, Georgia can use land-use regulations to protect the town's rural nature, historic character, and scenic beauty.

Telecommunication Towers

Telecommunications infrastructure is a critical component to economic development in rural areas. However, commercial towers and related infrastructure require careful consideration. Since wireless communication facilities emit electro-magnetic radiation which may affect human and animal health, and towers (and supporting facilities, e.g. roads, transmission lines and fences) create aesthetic and wildlife impacts, telecommunications has emerged as a form of land-use which has significant impacts on a wide area around its location, and therefore is a planning concern.

Telecommunication towers tend to be located in highly visible locations, for example on mountaintops and ridgelines. Furthermore, the technology is evolving quickly. While the use of such technology has increased dramatically within the past ten years, it could be replaced by another technology within the next ten years.

Toward that end, when siting new facilities or upgrading existing facilities, there must be clear evidence that the proposed facility and location are necessary. The Zoning Regulations incorporate appropriate guidelines and regulations governing at least the following areas: integrity of residential zones, protection of scenic areas, protection of wildlife areas, preferred locations, and co-location or clustering of tower facilities.

H. HEALTH SERVICES

The closest hospital to Georgia is the Northwestern Medical Center in St. Albans. NMC is a 70-bed community hospital with an active medical staff of more than 75 physicians spanning 22 medical specialties. NMC's service area covers the greater Franklin and Grand Isle County region, which includes the town of Georgia. NMC cares for approximately 2,000 inpatients each year; performs over 3,000 surgeries; delivers over 400 babies; and treats over 27,000 patients in the Emergency Department. NMC offers a comprehensive array of diagnostic and rehabilitative services as well as Chronic Disease Management and Health Promotion initiatives.

The Northwestern Georgia Health Center, located on Highbridge Road in Georgia, is an

NMC-employed practice providing primary care for adults and children. Through a wholly-owned subsidiary, NMC also operates the Northwestern Walk-In Clinic on Ethan Allen Highway in Georgia, with extended hours during the week as well as Saturday hours. This facility offers non-emergent care for minor medical conditions with no appointment necessary; occupational health services; x-ray imaging; mammography; and physical therapy.

The nearest trauma center is at Fletcher Allen Health Care in Burlington. Georgia residents also are served by providers in St. Albans and Milton.

I. CHILDCARE

Childcare can be a growing concern for existing and prospective families, whether it means finding quality services or securing the costs of services. High quality, available childcare is a critical component supporting a stable workforce.

According to state data, Georgia currently has 20 registered childcare homes and 2 childcare centers, with a total capacity of 183 children. The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that there are 1,149 children from birth to age 14 living in Georgia. Data on other options, such as siblings, stay-at-home parents, family care providers, un-registered childcare homes or other opportunities are not available. Therefore, there is currently no data on how the needs of the 1,149 children are being met.

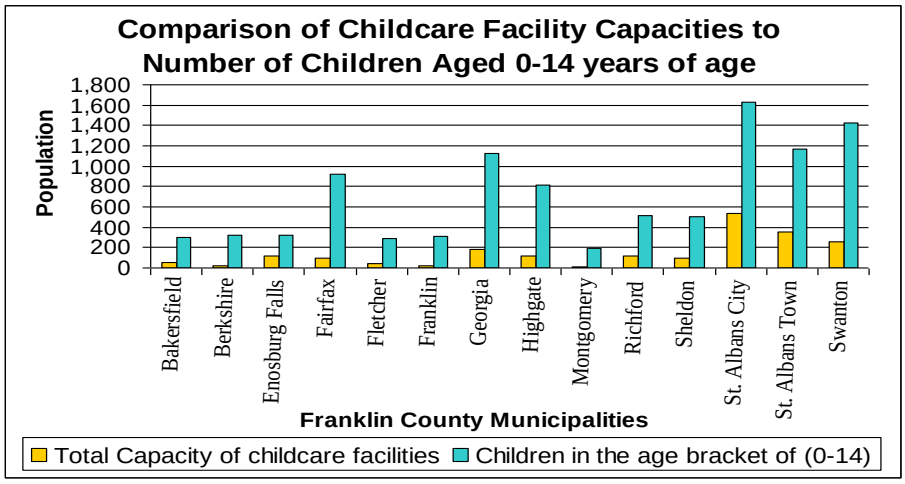


Figure 5.3 - Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Georgia's population of children under the age of 14 is among the highest in the County, it competes with Fairfax, St. Albans City, St. Albans Town, and Swanton Town. In all Franklin County municipalities there are not enough registered facilities for the number of children living in the town, suggesting most child care needs are met through other means.

Summary

As the Town of Georgia grows, the demand for municipal and educational services will also grow. In some cases growth will carry with it demands not only for more service, but also demands for technically higher quality services and often a broader array of services. As a result, Georgia will face demands to not only expand traditional services (general administration, zoning administration, road maintenance, etc.) but also to provide some new services such as police patrol. This will bring added expenses for staff and equipment, as well as needs for larger facilities.

The discussion in this section has indicated how each of the municipal and educational services has or will respond to the demands of growth. In general, it is apparent that this Town Plan is based on an annual population growth rate well below that associated with the construction (on average) of 35 new dwelling units per year. More rapid residential growth may cause the Town's facilities to exceed their useful capacities sooner than anticipated.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO UTILITIES, FACILITIES AND TOWN SERVICES

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES RELATED TO UTILITIES, FACILITIES AND TOWN SERVICES

SECTION 6. LAND USE

Overview

The use of land, both historically and currently, defines the physical make-up of the Town, providing not only a sense of place, but an insight to how the town functions economically, physically and socially. Current land use trends in Vermont are often inconsistent with local historic patterns of development. To some extent that has happened in Georgia. An example is the Interstate highway, which represents a national land use/transportation initiative which has altered traditional or normal development patterns that did or may have occurred in Georgia.

All of the factors discussed in this plan have to be reconciled with the community's short and long term goals for itself...does Georgia want to remain rural?...does Georgia want more industrial development? What will be the future of the Town Center? These are questions which a Land Use Plan attempts to answer.

The land use plan must be responsive and directive, and yet flexible. On the one hand, it must respond to conditions as they now exist. Ideally, the location and form of natural landscape features should dictate patterns and location of future growth. The land use plan must respond to existing patterns of development, enhancing their value and utility, and not alienating them, or rendering them obsolete. On the other hand, the land use plan must direct future development to take place in ways that will serve goals, policies and implementation strategies as we now understand them. Land use patterns in the future should enhance Georgia's scenic, cultural and natural resources. Land use patterns in the future should ensure that Georgia continue to function as a viable community.

A. LAND USE TRENDS

Historically, land use in Georgia has been dominated by residential and agricultural uses. Much of this development has taken place in three village centers, Georgia Center and Georgia Plains, and more recently in South Village around the Interstate access. More than half of the town's population lives in these villages, along the southern edge of town, and in the clustered development near Arrowhead Lake. While St. Albans has long influenced development in Georgia, the construction of I-89 places Georgia within the reach of Chittenden County commuters. Today, more than half of the town's working population commutes to Chittenden County. Access to transportation and services, as well as natural conditions conducive to development, have resulted in significant development in the town’s southern tier.

In recent years, Georgia has also experienced more industrial development. Located next to the interstate and the railroad, the Georgia Industrial Park brought jobs to the town and diversified its tax base. There is also a private Industrial Park located off

Route 104A in South Georgia. These parks offer a variety of employment opportunities for the area. Industrial development should continue to be an element in Georgia's overall land use plan, but care should be taken to contain such development to suitable areas, and to minimize environmental impacts on the rest of the town.

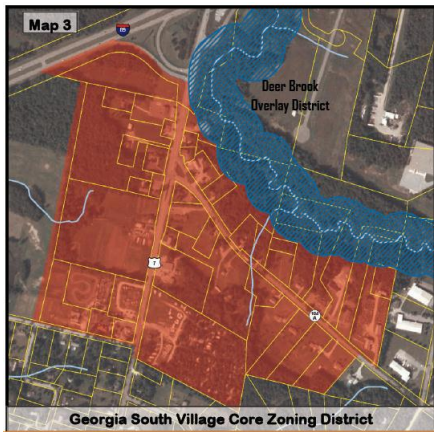
In recent years a service economy has developed to serve Georgia's expanding industrial and residential bases. If properly located, this type of development can enhance the quality of life in Georgia. A community ceases to function when people must go elsewhere for day to day goods and services. Future efforts should encourage a suitable amount of service industry development, and should encourage it to locate so as to enhance the vibrancy and desirability of living in Georgia Center, Georgia Plains, and the South Village.

In 2006, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission worked with the Georgia Planning Commission to complete a build-out analysis that helped to anticipate future land use and development trends. According to NRPC projections, Georgia could realistically see the addition of 401 new housing units by 2020, which would be more than a 20% increase in households from 2000 to 2020. The vast majority of this development was projected to occur in the Residential High Density, Residential Medium Density, and Agricultural/Residential Districts. The results of the Build-out analysis are shown on **Map 6.1**, Community Buildout. It should be noted that this analysis was completed before the current economic recession and before the Town adopted the South Village Zoning District. Both of these events are likely to affect the location and rate of new development in Georgia.

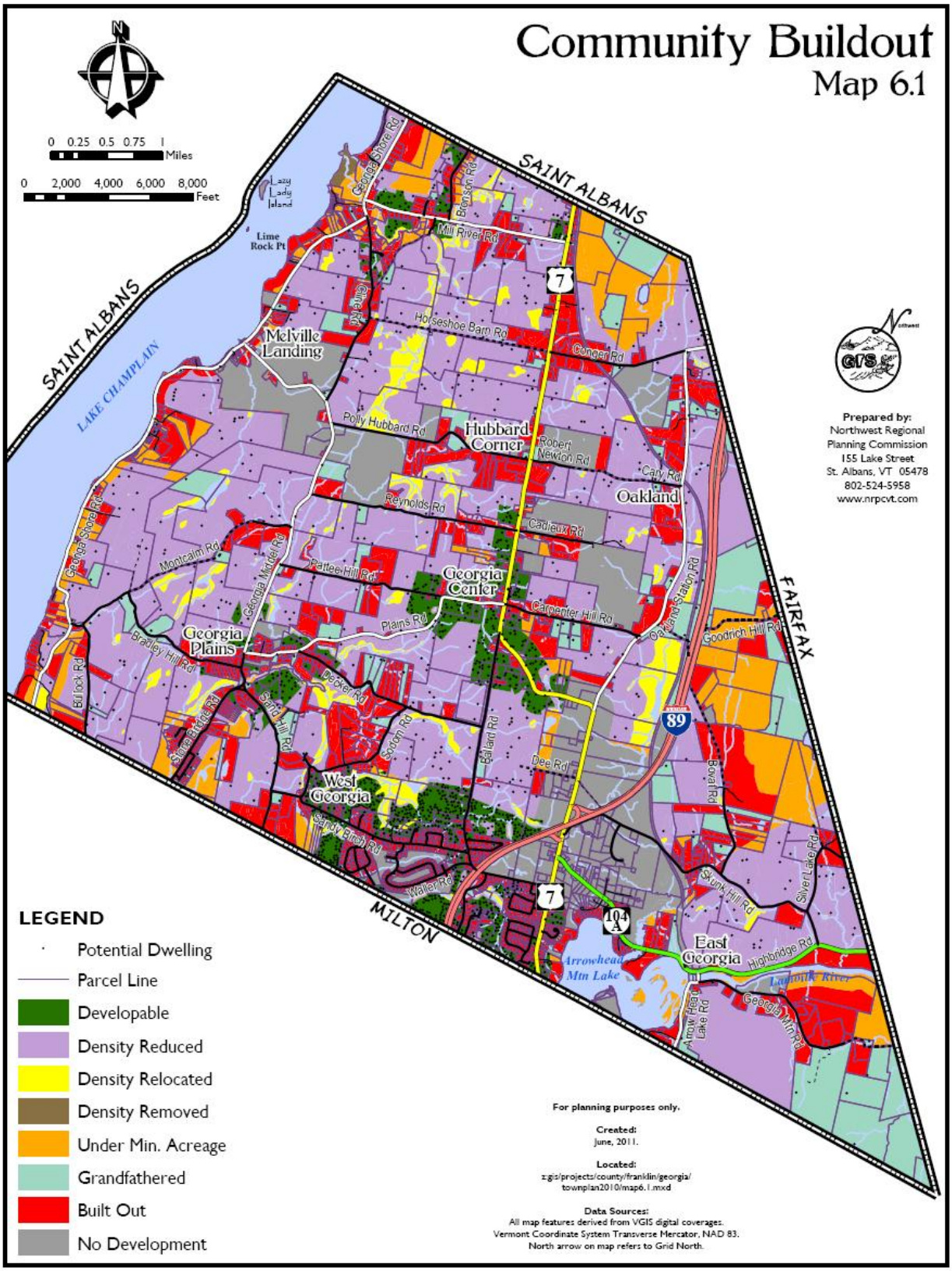
Implications for Planning

Based on historic development patterns, current trends, and physical constraints, including natural resources, elevation, and septic suitability, the Town of Georgia has carefully considered the appropriate uses for the different areas of town and has explored the planning tools that will support and encourage appropriate development of these areas.

Georgia South Village



The Georgia South Village is an area of approximately 120 acres located south of the Exit 18 interchange of Interstate 89. Today, this area consists of commercial and residential development along routes 7 and 104a, surrounded by high-density residential neighborhoods to the south and southwest and an industrial area to the east.


Community Buildout
Map 6.1
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
SAINT ALBANS
LAKE CHAMPLAIN
Lazy Lady Island
Lime Rock Pt
Melville Landing
Hubbard Corner
Oakland
Georgia Center
Georgia Plains
West Georgia
East Georgia
Arrowhead Mtn Lake
Lamoille River
FAIRFAX
MILTON
Prepared by:
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
155 Lake Street
St. Albans, VT 05478
802-524-5958
www.nrpcvt.com
LEGEND
Potential Dwelling
Parcel Line
Developable
Density Reduced
Density Relocated
Density Removed
Under Min. Acreage
Grandfathered
Built Out
No Development
For planning purposes only.
Created:
June, 2011.
Located:
z:gis/projects/county/franklin/georgia/townplan2010/map6.1.mxd
Data Sources:
All map features derived from VGIS digital coverages.
Vermont Coordinate System Transverse Mercator, NAD 83.
North arrow on map refers to Grid North.

Since 2003, the Town of Georgia has been planning for the creation of a village area that will include a mix of residences, businesses, professional services, light commercial and public facilities with bike and pedestrian facilities, green space and other public amenities. The planning for this area was summarized in 2009 in the "Georgia South Village Core Strategic Plan." In 2009, the vision for this area was codified into the Georgia Zoning Regulations. The regulations support creating a smart-growth, mixed use village by:

- Requiring buildings to be 2-3 story, minimum.
- Establishing a zero front setback minimum and 15-ft front setback maximum.
- Establish design criteria and standards that support appropriate design, scale, connectivity and architectural detail that will create a village with a unique sense of place.
- Requirements for amenities include pedestrian access, street trees and outdoor lighting.
- Requiring parking to the side or rear of a building.

The Georgia Planning Commission continues to work on planning for the transportation, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure that are necessary to support the future development intended for the South Village. In 2011, the Planning Commission will complete a Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Study that will lay the groundwork for future sidewalk construction in the Village.

Georgia Center

Georgia Center shall continue to serve as the municipal center for our community. This Georgia Village Plan, developed in 2003 by Lamoureux and Dickinson, included a future growth plan for the Georgia Center area. The Plan included the expansion of municipal and educational facilities, multi-family and senior housing, and modest commercial together with ample greenspace and parks. In 2009, the Town took steps to developing this vision with the construction of a new Fire Station in Georgia Center.

Georgia Plains and other Traditional Village Centers

A potential secondary development area exists in and around the village of Georgia Plains. While the soils in this area drain less well than those in the primary development corridor, the area contains fewer natural resources than either to the east or west. Most of the development here would be residential, although a certain amount of service base might be viable at or near the Georgia Plains crossroads in order to provide a place for people to congregate and interact, an essential element of a strong community. This area should remain compact, surrounded by open space.

Other crossroads and historic village centers have been identified. Zoning should allow for mixed use in these areas, strengthening their role as sub-centers in the town and communities which are identifiable. This pattern of denser development would, as in the preservation of Georgia's rural/pastoral qualities, require refinement as well as distinct changes to Georgia Zoning and the development of a Proposed Land Use Plan which reflects this historic settlement pattern.

A population which reaches its homes by automobile each evening is less likely to need or recognize the services of village centers. If Georgia is to maintain its rural character, its distinction between village and countryside, and its spirit of community, it must take special pains to enhance the quality of village life to make living there as desirable as possible. Without vibrant village centers in Georgia Center, Georgia Plains, and the South Village, scattered development with higher impacts on natural resources and greater demands on the town's budget will prevail. While zoning minimum lot sizes can achieve part of the differentiation of densities between the development areas and the outlying countryside, the more important and more difficult means of containing development to the traditional centers and the South Village will involve taking those steps that make the higher density areas the more desirable places to live, work, and play. Carefully planned and implemented landscaping, preservation of historical and cultural resources, and close attention to the provision of desired services within these areas will be essential.

Lake Champlain Shoreline

Land use along the Lake in Georgia has typically been of three basic types: 1) agricultural; 2) year-round residential; and 3) seasonal residential.

It is interesting to catalog some recent trends, particularly with regard to residential development. The 1871 Map of Georgia from the Beers Atlas shows about 10 lakeshore dwellings and farms. One hundred ten years later, there were approximately 175 camps, or seasonal dwellings along the lake in concentrations along Mills Shore, White's Shore, Rhodes Shore, Sweeney Shore, Hayden Shore, The Cedars, the Pines and Pelletier Shores. Residential development was at a level of 55 homes along Georgia Shore Road, including farmsteads. By 1991 there were 186 seasonal homes and 84 residences on Georgia Shore Road. As of 2010, there are approximately thirty additional residences on Georgia Shore Road. In addition, a substantial number of existing seasonal cottages have been improved and updated.

Although much of the lakeshore is densely developed, there are notable open sections at Lime Rock Point, the Mill River Delta, Rhodes Shore, and White Shore. This is contrasted dramatically by the extensive open space to the east of Georgia Shore Road, and indeed pressure is mounting to develop these lands with their views and potential access to the lake.

Land development along the shoreline should occur within parameters developed to preserve environmental and visual quality, as well as the accessibility of the resource for the community. Clustering, screening, sensitive siting and site development are all standards which should be applied by the Planning Commission, when reviewing development. The Planned Residential Development and Site Plan Review processes should be used to protect this fragile resource.

The Lakeshore District definition and purpose could be further articulated and addressed: 1) setback and siting criteria, 2) vegetative management, 3) lakeshore

stabilization and access, 4) water and sewage management, 5) utility layout and specifications, 6) landscaping and open space requirements, 7) road and driveway development, 8) maximum density requirements, 9) phasing of development, and 10) lake access.

Agriculture and forestry efforts must be carefully considered and managed within the context of supporting these activities, facilitating their operation and ongoing viability, while at the same time ensuring that the land and water resource is not further undermined.

Finally, lake access, visually and physically, should be maintained and enhanced. The town might explore the purchase of additional lands or obtaining easements which maintain the open spaces. These steps could be an integral component, for example, of a PRD process.

Rural Character and Agriculture

Much of Georgia outside of the South Village Core and Traditional Village Centers continue to have a rural/agricultural character that is valued by Georgia residents and should continue to be promoted.

Agriculture and forestry continue to be important components of the local culture and economy. It is important to remember that owners of farms and forests provide a public benefit by not developing their property, and cost the town little in terms of municipal services. From popular scenic vistas, to important wildlife habitat, these contributions to the well-being of the town cannot be overlooked.

The development of farms and forests for residential use is becoming more profitable for the individual land owners. This creates pressure for development. It is important that this development be guided by good land use planning in order to maintain the unique character of our community and ensure that local services are not overwhelmed.

Industrial Development

Industrial Development is generally concentrated in the two industrial parks located to the east of Exit 18, which measure approximately 600 acres. Industrial activities should continue to be focused in these areas as they are largely buffered from residential neighborhoods and provide the appropriate infrastructure to support these uses.

B. EXISTING LAND USE

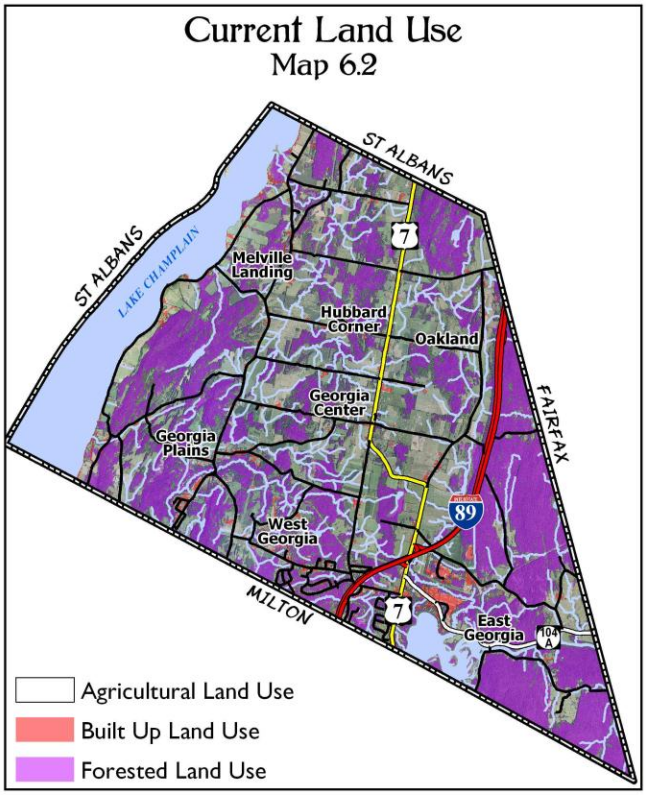
The Town of Georgia is currently approximately 29% forested, 42% agricultural/open, 23% water and 6% developed (Landsat 2002, **Map 6.2**).

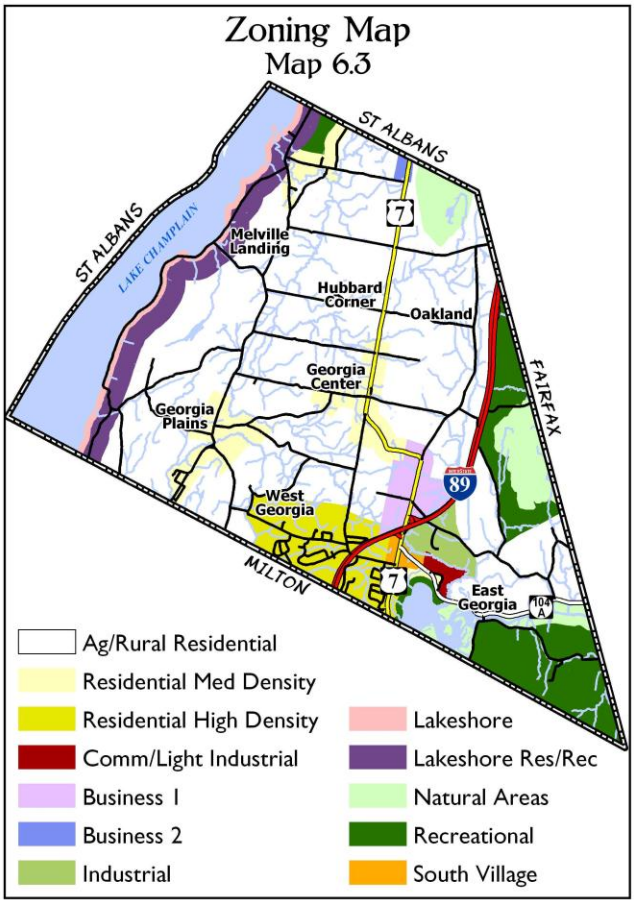
Today, the town of Georgia is divided into twelve zoning districts. These districts have been developed to implement the Town's goal of maintaining rural character and allowing for appropriate residential, commercial and industrial development in the areas that are most suited to these uses (**Map 6.3**).

The purposes of the 13 land use districts currently included in the Georgia Zoning Regulations are summarized below:

Agricultural/Rural Residential District (AR-1)
The primary purpose of the Agricultural/Rural Residential District ("AR-1") is to provide a place in Georgia for *agriculture* and silviculture *uses*. The Town Plan encourages development in other areas of the Town and not in the AR-1 District. Residential and other *uses* permitted in the district should be very low *density* and should not interfere with the agricultural and rural nature of the District, and should not place an unreasonable burden on the Town's ability to provide and maintain Town *service*s to all residents. It is a policy of the Town to strongly discourage *strip development* in this district. Land should be developed so that large contiguous expanses of agricultural, *forestry*, significant geological areas, wildlife habitat, *scenic area*s, and other important *open space* land will be protected. Development may be phased in order to meet the purposes of this district.

Medium Residential District (AR-2)
The purpose of the AR-2 Residential District is to provide a location for residential development at a higher *density* than surrounding rural areas where historic centers of the town are located. In addition, small *scale commercial uses* will be allowed. Development in the district should reflect historic village patterns, protect important resources, enable the economic provision of *service*s, plan for pedestrian and vehicular access, avoid *strip development*, and be planned so as not to burden the ability of the Town to provide adequate facilities and *service*s.





High Density Residential District (AR-3)
The purpose of the AR-3 District is to enable higher *density* residential development where existing development at a higher *density* has already occurred. Development in the district should enable the economic provision of *service*s, reasonable pedestrian and vehicular access within the district and to nearby business and recreation districts, protect important resources, avoid *strip development*, and be planned so as not to burden the ability of the Town to provide adequate facilities and *service*s.

South Village District (SV)
The purpose of the South Village Core District is to provide a concentrated core settlement of small-scale commercial, governmental, and residential *uses* in a traditional Vermont village setting. The standards in this section intend to achieve a livable *streetscape* where people can walk, gather, and meet comfortably. A mix of *uses* is allowed at a higher *density* than elsewhere in the Town to create a community where people live, work, and shop. Developers are encouraged to work with the Planning Commission on developing their site according to the Design Criteria and Guidelines which are intended to implement the South Village Core Strategic Plan.

Business High Density District (B-1)
The Business-High Density District is a high traffic area with good access to major highways. The purpose of the Business-High Density District is to enable high *density commercial uses* in an interconnected, unified pattern that does not result in *strip development*. Development in the district will have controlled access on highways, screening and landscaping, creative design and layout, good pedestrian circulation, and connections to adjoining residential and industrial districts. This district is not intended to serve as a regionally-designated growth center. *Commercial uses* shall be of a *scale* and size appropriate only for a locally-designated growth center.

Business Medium Density District (B-2)
The Business-Medium Density District is a moderate traffic area with good access to major highways. The purpose of the Business-Medium Density District is to enable mixed commercial and *residential uses* in an interconnected, unified pattern that does not result in *strip development*. Development in the district will have controlled access on highways, screening and landscaping, creative design and layout, some pedestrian circulation, and connections to adjoining residential and commercial districts. This district is not intended to serve as a regionally-designated growth center. *Commercial uses* shall be of a *scale* and size appropriate only for a locally-designated growth center.

Industrial District (I)
The purpose of the Industrial District is to enable industrial development in an area with good highway and rail access and set apart from agricultural and residential districts. The I-1 District enables heavy and *light industrial* development in an efficient pattern.

Commercial-Light Industrial District
The purpose of the Commercial-*Light Industrial* District is to enable commercial and

light industrial development in an area with good highway access and set apart from agricultural and residential districts. The I-2 District enables *light industrial* development to develop in an efficient and integrated pattern. This district is not intended to serve as a regionally-designated growth center. *Commercial uses* shall be of a *scale* and size appropriate only for a locally-designated growth center.

Recreation District (R-1)
The Recreation District has severe limitations for development, including steep slopes, poor soil suitability for development, and high elevations. Therefore, much of the district is best suited to remain in a natural state or to be used for outdoor recreation purposes. *Residential uses* are limited to large *lot*s to minimize the impact on the land and prevent substantial *alteration* to the landscape.

Natural Areas District (N-1)
The Natural Areas District has significant natural features or areas which are unique or irreplaceable. The purpose of this district is to protect these features and areas in their natural state to the extent possible for present and future generations. *Structure*s are limited to large *lot*s to minimize the impact on the land and prevent substantial *alteration* to the landscape.

Lakeshore District (L-1)
The Lakeshore District contains land bordering Lake Champlain - one of the most significant natural features of the Town of Georgia. The purpose of the district is to protect the water quality of the lake and the recreational potential and natural beauty of the *shoreline*.

Lakeshore Residential-Recreation District (L-2)
The Lakeshore Residential-Recreation District contains land close to Lake Champlain - one of the most significant natural features of the Town of Georgia. The purpose of the district is to protect the water quality of the lake and the natural beauty of the shoreland area. Development within the district should preserve the contiguous open lands, and protect the view looking eastward from the lake. There are some severe limitations on development in this district due to soil conditions and slopes and thus densities in the district should be low.

Flood Hazard Zone District
The Flood Hazard District is defined and delineated by the Flood Hazard Regulations as adopted by the Town of Georgia on June 20, 1990. These regulations are hereby made part of this Regulation by reference. The Flood Hazard Regulations apply to development located in areas identified as special flood hazard areas on the National Flood Insurance Maps which are also adopted by reference. This district overlays other zoning districts herein described. Wherever there is overlap, the provisions of both districts shall apply. If there is a conflict between the two district requirements or specific provisions for development located within the Flood Hazard Areas, the more restrictive shall apply.

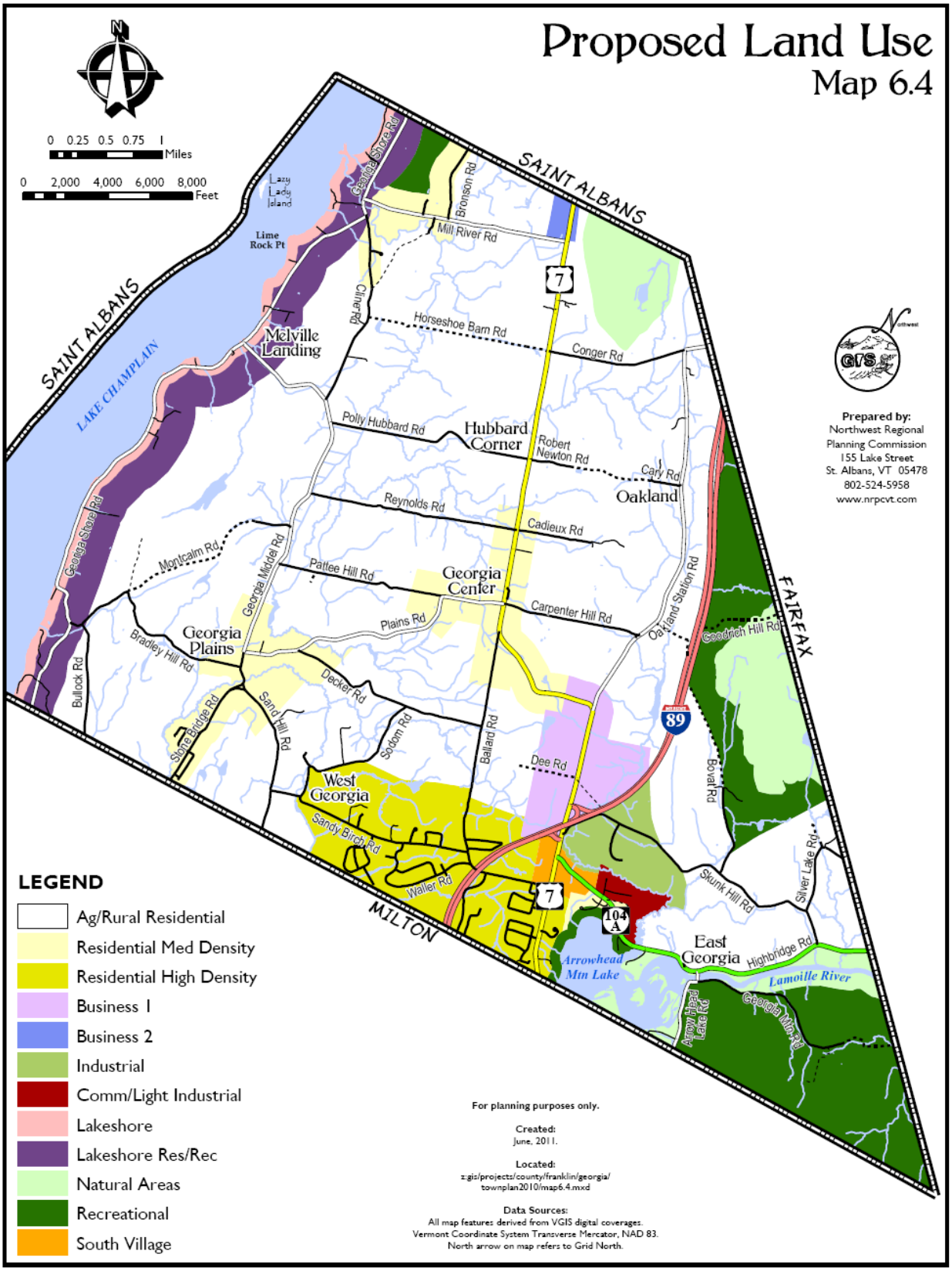
C. PROPOSED LAND USE

The proposed land use map is intended to respect the traditional land use patterns and activities that have defined the Town, while being attentive to the physical capabilities of the landscape and the desires of its residents. The Town is proposing to maintain the current 12 land use districts listed and described below, and as shown in **Map 6.4**, Proposed Land Use.

It is the intent that the Planning Commission use the Proposed Land Use Map, the district purposes outlined below, and the goals, policies, and implementation strategies in this Plan when preparing updates to the Georgia Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations. Any future zoning map is not required to match the proposed land use map exactly, but it should be used as a guide when delineating zoning district boundaries.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO LAND USE

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES RELATED TO LAND USE


Proposed Land Use
Map 6.4
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
SAINT ALBANS
LAKE CHAMPLAIN
Lazy Lady Island
Lime Rock Pt
Melville Landing
Cleaning Shore Rd
Bronson Rd
Mill River Rd
Chinaford
Horseshoe Barn Rd
Conger Rd
Polly Hubbard Rd
Hubbard Corner
Robert Newton Rd
Cary Rd
Oakland
Reynolds Rd
Cadieux Rd
Montcalm Rd
Georgia Middle Rd
Pattee Hill Rd
Georgia Center
Carpenter Hill Rd
Plains Rd
Oakland Station Rd
Goodrich Hill Rd
FAIRFAX
Georgia Shore Rd
Bradley Hill Rd
Georgia Plains
Bullock Rd
Decker Rd
Sand Hill Rd
Sodom Rd
Ballard Rd
Dee Rd
Bovat Rd
West Georgia
Sandy Birch Rd
Waller Rd
MILTON
Skunk Hill Rd
Silver Lake Rd
East Georgia
Highbridge Rd
Arrowhead Mtn Lake
Lamoille River
Arrow Head Lake Rd
Georgia Mtn Rd
LEGEND
Ag/Rural Residential
Residential Med Density
Residential High Density
Business 1
Business 2
Industrial
Comm/Light Industrial
Lakeshore
Lakeshore Res/Rec
Natural Areas
Recreational
South Village
For planning purposes only.
Created:
June, 2011.
Located:
z:gis/projects/county/franklin/georgia/
townplan2010/map6.4.mxd
Data Sources:
All map features derived from VGIS digital coverages.
Vermont Coordinate System Transverse Mercator, NAD 83.
North arrow on map refers to Grid North.
Prepared by:
Northwest Regional
Planning Commission
155 Lake Street
St. Albans, VT 05478
802-524-5958
www.nrpcvt.com

SECTION 7. ENERGY

Vermont planning law requires that municipal plans include an energy element, which is intended to plan for and promote the efficient and economic utilization of energy in the community. While it is recognized that energy supply and demand are directed largely by economic forces at the state, federal, and international levels, there is a lot that can be done on a household and community level to promote the use of renewable resources, to promote energy efficiency, and to conserve energy**.**

A) Existing Conditions: Energy Use

Energy use is generally broken down into the following four categories:

Residential	involves all sources of energy use in the home from water heating to space heating and electricity.
Commercial	involves all energy use directly used for service, wholesale and retail trade, and manufacturing or products
Industrial	involves all energy use directly used for service, wholesale and retail trade, and manufacturing or products
Transportation	involves all energy used in moving people and things from one place to another

Figure 7.1 shows the breakdown of energy use in Vermont by end use. Unfortunately, data for energy use on a local level is not widely available and so we must draw general conclusions from statewide data.

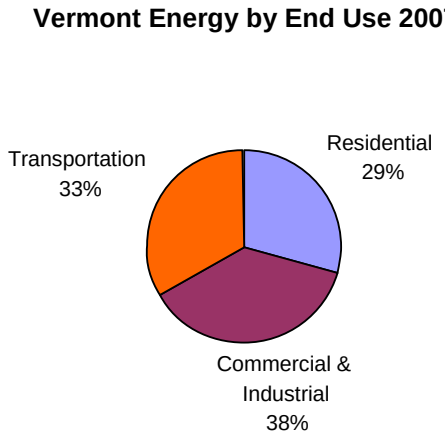


Figure 7.1 - Source: Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, 2008 Public Review Draft

According to the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, the commercial & industrial sector(s) consume the most total energy (measured in Btu's) accounting for 37% of the State's total. Transportation consumes 33% while households expend the remaining 29% of Vermont energy. The end-use sectors derive 54% of their energy from petroleum, 5% from natural gas, and 5% from all other energy sources.

In addition to end use, overall energy consumption can be divided into four main categories: Petroleum, Electric, Natural Gas and renewable energy sources. In the State of Vermont, energy use in these areas is broken down as shown in **Figure 2**. Energy Use in Vermont (Vermont Energy Atlas 2008 Public Review Draft).

Figure 7.2 shows that about half of Vermont's energy demand is met by petroleum-based fuels. This is consistent with what **Figure 7.1** showed, which is that the biggest end uses are transportation and residential (heat). A third of the state's energy is consumed in the form of electricity, which predominantly comes from resources that could be considered "cleaner", like hydro or nuclear. The remaining energy demand is met by natural gas and renewable generating facilities.

Total Vermont Energy Consumed by Source, 2007

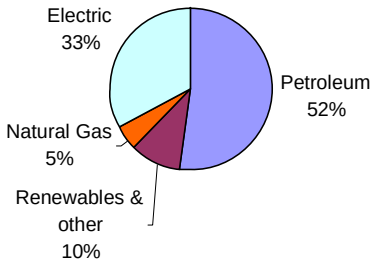


Figure 7.2 - Source: Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, 2008 Public Review Draft

In the absence of available statistics on local energy use for Georgia, it is possible to look at the energy supply available in Georgia that supports three main areas of use: electricity, heat and transportation.

Electricity

Electricity was the second most consumed form of energy in Vermont in 2007 and it is likely consumed at a similar level in Georgia. According to the Vermont Energy Atlas (**Figure 7.3**), electricity consumption in Georgia increased steadily between 2004 and 2008 and this has likely continued to the present.

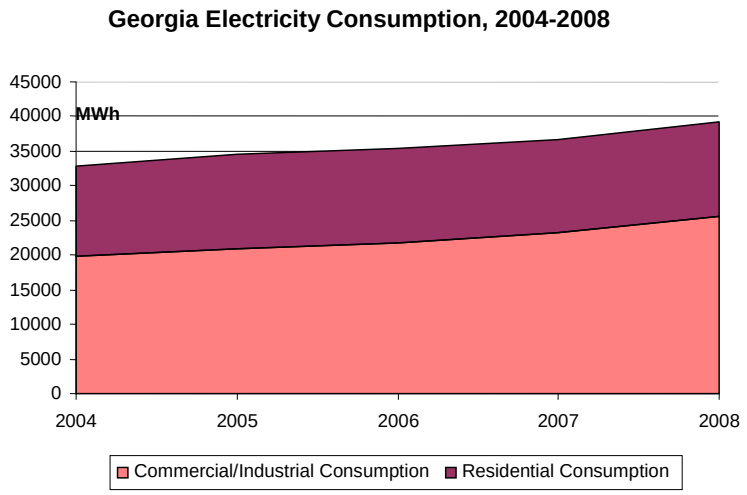


Figure 7.3 – Source: Vermont Renewable Energy Atlas

According to the Vermont Department of Public Service, there are two electricity service providers for Georgia. The primary service provider for the town is Central Vermont Power Service (CVPS) and a small area of town is served by the Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC).

Energy sources for electricity provided by CVPS and VEC include hydroelectric, nuclear power, wood, wind, methane and other means. The following charts (**Figures 7.4 and 7.5**) show where CVPS and VEC's energy comes from.

CVPS Energy Sources

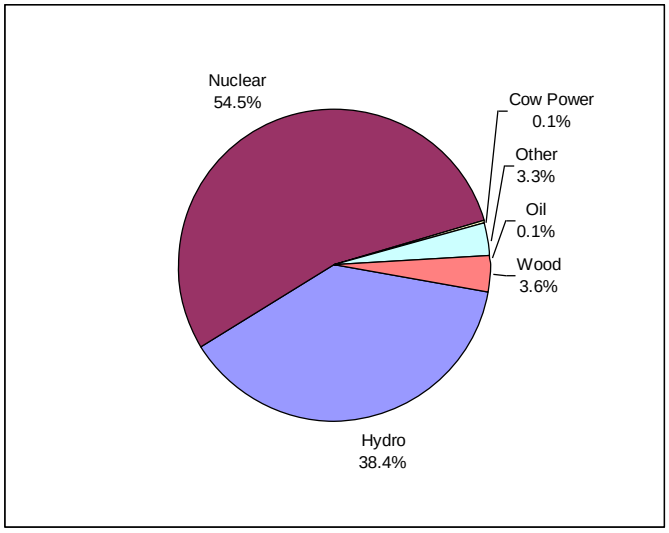


Figure 7.4. – Source: CVPS

VEC Sources

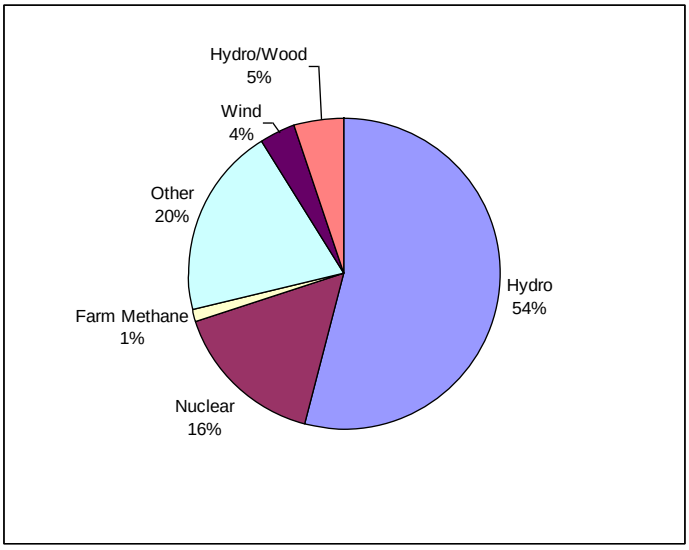


Figure 7.5. – Source: VEC

Statewide, about two-thirds of the electricity supply comes from long-term contracts with Entergy (Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant) and Hydro-Quebec. As a result, Vermont and Georgia customers pay approximately 15 to 20% less for their electricity than other New England states (**Figure 7.6**). However, these contracts expire or begin to expire in 2012 and future electricity costs could increase significantly. A greater share of CVPS power comes from Entergy than the state as a whole, and VEC is more reliant on Hydro-Quebec than the state as a whole. Because of this, Georgia customers will be more heavily impacted by changes to power purchase agreements governing these sources.

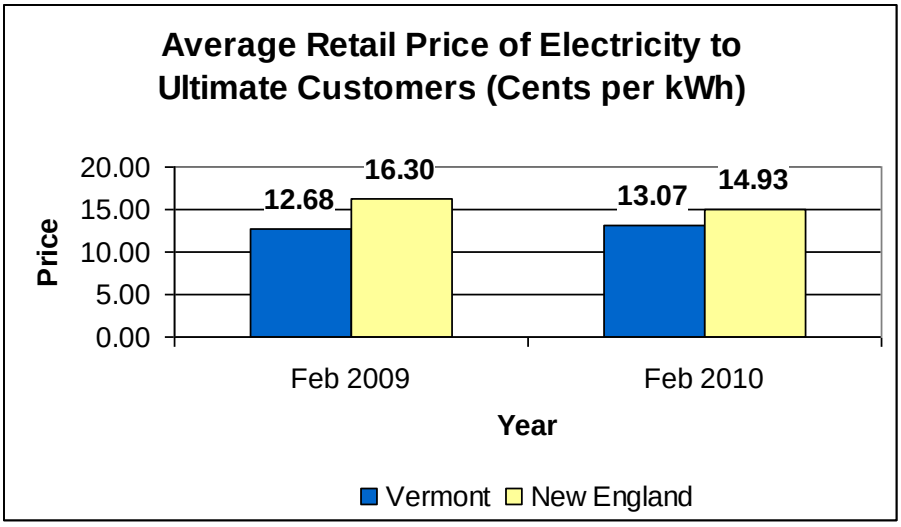


Figure 7.6.

Heat

In Vermont, heat is a large and essential area of energy consumption. It is important to understand the available heat-related energy supply in a town where the winter temperatures regularly fall below zero degrees Fahrenheit.

Figure 7.7 shows the breakdown of energy sources for heating fuel for the Town of Georgia.

Figure 7.7 shows that the predominant energy sources for heating fuel in Georgia are oil or kerosene, which is consistent with the state at large. The next largest heat resource category for Georgia is utility gas, at 22%. This is larger than the state's 14% use of the same source, due to the fact that portions of Georgia have access to natural gas, a lower cost and cleaner alternative to other fossil fuels. Note also, that only 12% of Georgia residents use wood for their primary heating source. According to the Draft Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, wood is one of the least expensive sources of thermal energy in Vermont,

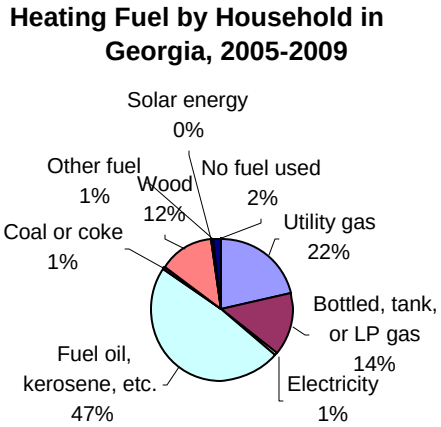


Figure 7.7 – Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

although the labor associated with obtaining, storing and using wood fuel keeps people from using it in greater numbers.

The 2% of households in Georgia that use no fuel are likely lakeshore seasonal residences. There is practically no usage of coal as a source of heating fuel. Vermont is the only state in the United States with no coal plants.

The development in southwest Georgia and along Route 7 has access to natural gas. Vermont Gas Systems, Inc. (VGS) is the state's single natural gas distribution company. VGS serves approximately 35,000 customers in Chittenden and Franklin Counties and continues to increase its customer base and gas sales by about 3% to 4% per year. VGS's gas is supplied from a connection at Highgate Springs to the TransCanada Pipeline.

This reliance on non-local, unsustainable energy sources for heat could have negative implications for future energy affordability and reliability. Residents and developers could consider alternatives to current heating sources, which provide greater public benefit at lower economic, social, and environmental costs.

Transportation

Transportation is a major factor in energy use for Vermont and for the Town of Georgia. In large quantities, cars, trucks and other vehicles not only produce harmful carbon emissions but also consume large amounts of petroleum-based energy at a high cost. According to Vermont's Comprehensive Energy Plan (2008 Public Review Draft) "The transportation sector posted the largest increase in statewide energy demand, increasing 28% between 1990 and 2007 and is the state's fastest growing end use sector compared to heating and electricity. Transportation sector energy is driven by vehicle miles traveled from both residential and travel related demand."

Georgia's easy access to Interstate-89 and close proximity to Burlington has contributed to the town's growth and high median household income. Looking at the town's commuter patterns illustrates that many people have a lengthy commute to work. About 60% of persons 16 or older work outside of Franklin County while about 40% work in Franklin County, supporting the idea that a majority of Georgia residents commute to Burlington. The mean travel time to work is 25 minutes, with a sizeable share of the population (44%) traveling between 25 and 34 minutes.

As **Figure 7.8** illustrates, an overwhelming majority of Georgia residents drive to work alone, while 15% drove with at least one other person in a carpool.

One statistic to highlight from **Figure 7.8** shows that 7% of Georgia's working population worked at home, thus having no commute. This is a positive step toward reducing carbon emissions and promoting fuel economy.

Potential opportunities for Georgia in reducing its carbon footprint and reducing fuel consumption include carpooling, public transit options and working at home.

At this point in time, increasing fuel efficiency for vehicles is largely an individual choice. Hybrid vehicles are available but production costs have not come down enough to make them affordable to the population while cost of fuel has not risen to the point where they are an absolute necessity.

Means of Transportation to Work, 2005-2009

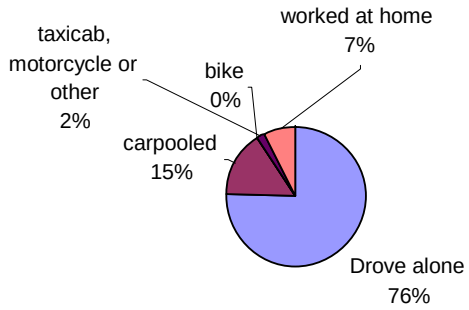


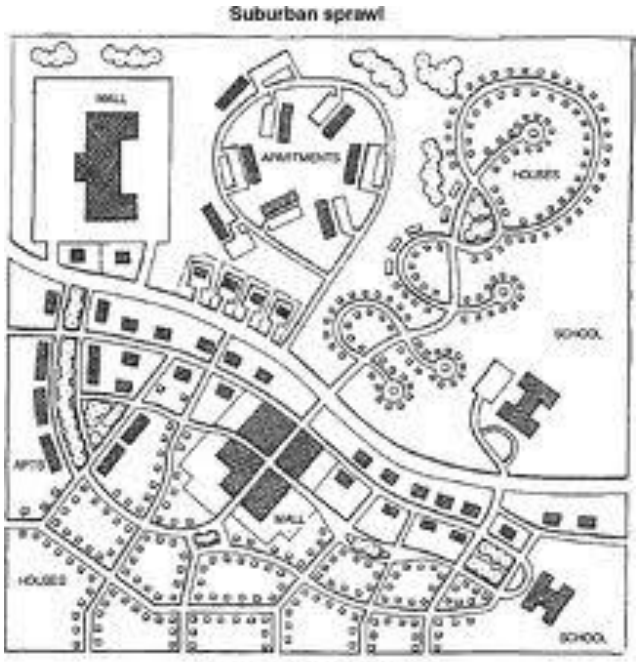
Figure 7.8 – Source: 2005-2009 ACS

B) OPPORTUNITIES TO CONSERVE ENERGY IN GEORGIA

There are myriad opportunities for energy conservation in Georgia. The biggest area of impact could come from land use planning policies. According to the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, it is estimated that simple, inexpensive energy conservation measures employed in new construction could result in energy savings from 20 to 30%. Couple these with an additional 10% savings for conservation measures applied to existing homes and businesses and one can see that real energy savings can be realized over a ten year period.

Efficient Use of Land

From a land use planning perspective, it is sensible to encourage the development of village centers, clustered housing, energy efficiency in design, location and construction of buildings, and the development of more efficient transportation networks.



"Smart Development" practices encourage just such a development pattern, using land efficiently by clustering buildings in a compact area, much like a traditional village pattern. This type of development also leads to less stormwater runoff and less pollution. Infill development, or developing or redeveloping vacant or undesirable lots in existing centers is the most efficient use of land because they avoid the development of open land while at the same time revitalizing town and village centers.

Georgia's South Village Core Strategic Plan is a guide for future development in the growth center, and incorporates Smart Development principles into the development standards and design guidelines that apply in the area.

Promoting home occupancy businesses through its land use ordinances is yet another way that Georgia can contribute to energy conservation. Home occupancies cut down on commuting distance, and provide nearby employment for residents.

Transportation

In addition to efficient land use practices**,** promoting a variety of transportation choices is another means for a town to conserve energy. Communities should be designed to support walking, bicycling, and public transit as well as driving. Neighborhood streets can be designed so that they are narrow enough to slow traffic speeds and create a safe and pleasant walking environment. Extending a traditional grid pattern rather than building cul-de-sacs allows for full pedestrian access throughout a community.

While hybrid fuel and electric vehicles have a higher initial cost, these types of vehicles may be more economical in the long run. In 2007 only 420 new or used hybrid vehicles were sold in the state (~1% of the total vehicles sold).
The 2011 Draft Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan highlights some incentives for such vehicles already in place, such as state income tax credits designed to encourage high-tech industries that can apply to electric and other high efficiency cars.

Programs like Safe Routes to School exist to help municipalities encourage school aged children to be more active and to walk and cycle safely. There is currently no active SR2S program in Georgia but there are several ongoing programs in other towns in Franklin County. SR2S programs can lay the groundwork for obtaining additional state and federal funds for infrastructure promoting walking and cycling.

Carsharing is a national, membership-based program where members pay for the occasional use of a vehicle without the high fees and paperwork associated with rentals. Much of the carsharing fleet is made up of hybrid fuel vehicles. Currently, the Carsharing fleets closest to Georgia are located in Burlington and Winooski.

Energy Efficient Building Practices

The most logical time to look at energy conservation is at the time of construction, renovation, or replacement of equipment. Simple practices incorporated into new construction could save from 20%-30% in energy use. Upgrading water heaters, heating

systems, windows and doors, insulating and sealing cracks and drafts can save an additional 10% for existing homes.

There is a great potential to reduce heating bills in old, inefficient buildings .
Funding from the state for town energy audits is available and individual households are also eligible for free energy audits. Energy audits can tell individuals where they can improve the efficiency of their home through additional insulation and upgrades to more energy efficient heating, cooling and other systems. Audits of Georgia Elementary School, Library, Town Garage and the Town Office were completed in 2010.

In new construction, incorporating passive solar design is one way to capture the sun's heat throughout the day. The town's Site Plan Review process could include requirements or incentives for orientating new buildings to take advantage of passive solar energy.

"Green building" programs like LEED actually measure the sustainability of new construction by looking at the energy use, site location, reuse of materials, water efficiency and design innovation of a building. Vermont's non-profit Building for Social Responsibility promotes green building and supports a voluntary certification program for residential buildings in Vermont.

C) OPPORTUNITIES FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY IN GEORGIA

Biomass

Wood is a local energy resource, which has been used as a principal source of heat for much of the town's history. The state sponsors a program to subsidize certain woodchip heating systems. Woodchip heating could be considered for the town's municipal buildings, including schools.

There are currently 6 farms in Franklin County using its methane waste to generate electricity for CVPS, although none located in Georgia at this time. According to CVPS, a nearby St. Albans Town farm produces over 15 million pounds of milk a year, and is expected to produce 1.4 million KWH (kilowatt-hours) of electricity a year. There are three medium sized farms in Georgia that could produce this type of energy for the town.

Wind

There are two net-meter wind turbines located in Georgia. While most of Georgia is on the low end of the spectrum for wind power potential, the town does have three wind-generating sites in Georgia: one in central Georgia, one in northern Georgia, both located at private residences. The third is a high potential area that is part of Georgia Mountain Community Wind, located just over the border

with Chittenden County.

In addition, recent improvements in turbine technology, proposals for small scale, community scale, and utility scale wind power facilities are increasing across the state. Environmental impacts that will be considered when looking at wind proposals include impacts on aesthetics, wildlife (birds and bats), forest clearing and potential erosion from siting and access roads, and noise.

Solar

There are three existing solar energy sites in Georgia, with great potential for the development of many additional sites in the future.

Micro Hydro

Micro-hydro is a potentially low impact form of renewable energy, where power is generated through the force of falling water. New dams are generally not built; rather, the site conditions have to be appropriate for a project. There are currently no micro-hydro projects in Georgia at this time, although there is a successful site in Barton, which could serve as a guide.

In closing, renewable energy is an active area of research. The State of Vermont is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Energy Plan and we should expect new sources and technologies to become available during the five years that this plan will be in place.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO ENERGY

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES RELATED TO ENERGY

SECTION 8. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Many goals and policies have been proposed in the plan to help Georgia continue to develop as a strong community. A cooperative effort will be required between town officials, developers, and town citizens to successfully implement the goals, policies and implementation strategies as set forth in the plan. Plan implementation options fall into two categories -- regulatory and non-regulatory. Regulatory options consist of zoning and subdivision options and other town ordinances, which can include numerous specific regulations that further goals and policies in the plan. Non-regulatory implementation options include but are not limited to capital planning, special studies, and advisory commissions. The Planning Commission recommends the strategies listed below to implement the Town Plan.

A. REGULATORY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations

The majority of policies outlined in the Georgia Town Plan will be implemented through the Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations. The purpose of the Georgia Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations is to implement the Georgia Town Plan and to further the purposes of the Vermont Planning and Development Act [Title 2, Chapter 117, Section 4302 of V.S.A.]; specifically, to promote the public health, safety, comfort, convenience, economy and general welfare of the community.

The Georgia Zoning and Subdivision Regulations incorporate many tools enabled in the Act, including zoning districts, site plan review, conditional use review, off-street parking and loading standards, performance standards, planned unit developments and setback requirements. The zoning and Subdivision Regulations should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to implement the goals, policies and implementation strategies of this plan.

Georgia Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations: Specific Implementation Strategies:

Community Setting

- Housing
  - ✓ Investigate the implementation of creative zoning techniques such as density bonuses to encourage affordable housing.

- Transportation
  - ✓ Develop regulations to ensure pedestrian and bike accessibility and connections to and within the South Village Area.
  - ✓ Review regulations concerning development on Class IV roads.
  - ✓ Review the effectiveness of access management regulations and propose amendments if necessary to reduce the potential for curb cuts and strip

development along existing roads.

- Land Use
  - ✓ Contain the majority of residential development to a limited geographical area within the town in order to remain a functional community in its own right while preserving its rural and historic character and limiting the expansion (and cost) of municipal services.
  - ✓ Review bylaws regarding impacts of agricultural uses, particularly livestock, in medium and high density residential zoning districts.

- Energy
  - ✓ Consider incorporating incentives for energy conserving site design in the town's Site Plan Review process, such as passive solar gain.
  - ✓ Explore possible incentives for the production of renewable energy sources.

Town Ordinances

The town has adopted other regulatory ordinances that implement the goals and policies of the town plan, such as sewage disposal, road ordinances, and impact fees.

Town Ordinances – Specific Implementation Strategies

- ✓ Review the Town Road Ordinance with regard to development on Class IV roads.
- ✓ Reevaluate and revise as appropriate all town ordinances to assure conformance with the town plan.

B. NON-REGULATORY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Capital Planning and Impact Fees

Capital budgeting is an important tool to plan ahead for future municipal expenditures. The capital budget provides several benefits to a town, including

1) enabling the Town to raise revenue for anticipated needs before they become urgent,
2) providing flexibility in moving priorities around in an emergency,
3) improving the ability of the school and Town to coordinate the planning of capital projects, and
4) making the Town's financial management and decision-making process more visible to the voters.

Georgia has been assessing impact fees on new development since 1995. These fees are used to mitigate the fiscal impact of new development on a community. Under State law (24 V.S.A 5200), the purpose of authorizing impact fees is "to enable municipalities to require the beneficiaries of new development to pay their proportionate share of the cost of municipal and school capital projects which benefit them and require them to pay for or mitigate the negative effects of construction." Georgia's impact fee is important because it defers the burden of additional services incurred by new development from

existing taxpayers. The Town should continue to update the capital budget and program, which carefully outlines an appropriate impact fee formula.

The Town must continue an updated capital budget plan and program to continue to levy impact fees.

Capital Planning: Specific Implementation Strategies

- ✓ Review the Capital Budget and Program and revise consistent with the adopted Capital Facilities and Equipment Impact Fee Ordinance.

Special Studies and Projects: Specific Implementation Strategies

- ***General:***
  - ✓ Hold semi-annual meetings with the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment and Selectboard to coordinate the implementation of the goals, policies and implementation strategies in this Plan.

- ***Energy:***
  - ✓ Conduct periodic energy audits of Town buildings and vehicles.
  - ✓ Encourage the establishment of a municipal energy committee and/or town energy coordinator and continue a Town representative's participation on the Regional Energy Commission.
  - ✓ Investigate heating the Town and school's buildings with alternative fuels such as solar, wood pellets, etc.

- ***Water Resources:***
  - ✓ Investigate whether fluvial erosion zoning standards should be developed and incorporated into the Zoning Bylaws.
  - ✓ Pursue State and Federal Grant Programs to secure funding for projects that improve water quality such as shoreline stabilization and buffers.

- ***Recreation***
  - ✓ Pursue State and Federal Grant Programs to secure funding for recreational projects that are consistent with the recreational goals of the town.

- ***Public Facilities and Utilities***
  - ✓ Continue to pursue a wastewater treatment solution for the South Village Core giving consideration to the Wastewater Treatment

- ***Transportation:***
  - ✓ Investigate ways to further support walking, bicycling, and public transit as well as driving. One way would be to consider working with Georgia Elementary School to start a Safe Routes To School program.
  - ✓ Complete a sidewalk feasibility study for the South Village Core, in order to ensure and inviting, safe, pedestrian friendly environment.

- ***Economic Development:***

- ✓ Work to promote wide access to broadband Internet so as to encourage home occupation businesses and entrepreneurship amongst Georgia residents.

C. LOCAL PARTICIPATION

There are many active boards and committees in the Town of Georgia. Within these boards there is a wealth of knowledge about Recreation, Town Services, Conservation, Energy, Transportation, Housing, Farming, Natural Resources and other topics discussed in the Town Plan. The Planning Commission should utilize this knowledge and experience to help implement the plan.

SECTION 9. GEORGIA'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE REGION AND ADJACENT COMMUNITIES

Georgia is located at the southern end of Franklin County, adjacent to the Chittenden County Town of Milton to the south, the Franklin County Towns of St. Albans to the north, and Fairfax to the east. The town of Fairfield has a point of land that touches Georgia in the northeast corner but provides no real physical connection or any conflict in land use.

To the west of Georgia is Lake Champlain, which provides a physical separation between the Grand Isle County communities of South Hero, Grand Isle and North Hero. While it may be argued that land uses between these communities have an effect on water quality and that their plans should be reviewed for compatibility issues, we have chosen to review those communities with a direct land link. Water quality and land use Issues are addressed in our plan, although they may be most adequately addressed on Regional scale, such as through the Lake Champlain Basin Study.

Compatibility of this plan with those of adjacent municipalities and the Region was undertaken by reviewing those plans and zoning districts along the borders of Georgia. A review by community follows.

A. ADJACENT COMMUNITIES

St. Albans Town

St. Albans Town's most recent Town Plan was adopted and approved by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission in 2005. It is currently expired. However, based on that plan, there are three primary "areas" related to the compatibility of land use between Georgia and St. Albans: land use districts, the shoreline, and transportation.

Land Use Districts

Land use districts in both towns are generally compatible. Georgia and St Albans both have "lakeshore" districts. See below for more detailed discussion of shoreline issues.

Moving east to Bronson Road, Georgia has a Lakeshore/Recreation District, a Recreation District, and the AR-2 Medium-Density Residential District. Throughout this area, St Albans' Rural District is described in the Town Plan as primarily rural, nevertheless it has potential for more intense development because of the relatively small (~ 1 acre) minimum lot-size allowed in the Zoning Bylaws.

From Bronson Road to Route 7, Georgia has the Ag/Rural Residential (AR-1) District and the Business-1 (B-1) District. St. Albans has an Industrial District (offset from the Georgia town line by 500 feet). While there have not been any problems in the past with regard to industrial development in this area, there is potential for conflict;, for example, an increase in truck traffic, if the district is extensively built-out.

Eastward to the Fairfax line, Georgia has mapped a Natural Areas District and an AR-1 District, and St. Albans Town has a Conservation and Rural Lands Zone. While minimum lot sizes are considerably smaller in both St. Albans Zones (10 acres and 1 acre respectively as opposed to 20 acres and 5 acres respectively) it is unlikely that either area will see much intensive development due to physical limitations of the land.

Shoreline

Development along the shoreline of Lake Champlain must be closely regulated to ensure protection of lake water quality standards. New wastewater options for residents now offer better methods to protect against wastewater runoff. These should be applied whenever development applications are presented.

The St. Albans plan states: "All permitted uses in this district would be subject to special considerations given to improving sewage disposal and preventing unnecessary clearing and shoreline erosion". Georgia supports this view and further believes, if properly regulated, development along the shoreline can lead to improved pollution control, shore beautification, and enhanced revenue for our communities.

Transportation

The following roads connect Georgia and St. Albans Town: Interstate 89 (by way of Fairfax and Fairfield), Route 7, Bronson Road, Ferrand Road, and Georgia Shore Road. Additionally, train tracks and a bus shuttle run through both towns. I-89 and Route 7 function as "major arterials" in both towns. Georgia Shore Road functions as a "collector" in both towns, especially during warmer months. Bronson and Ferrand Roads serve as "local streets" in both towns. Since all of the roads which connect the two towns have the same functions, there is no inherent conflict regarding these roads.

The main concern regarding the road system is access management on Route 7. St. Albans' Town Plan and Zoning Bylaws include language regarding access management. Access management is important on Route 7 since this road serves as a major arterial, and failure to control access will result in reducing its effectiveness.

Georgia and St. Albans Town would benefit from cooperating with regard to provisions for public transportation since both towns have largely commuting workforces.

Milton

Milton adopted its latest Comprehensive Plan on April 21, 2008. As with St. Albans Town, there are three primary "areas" related to the compatibility of land use between Georgia and Milton: land use districts, the shoreline, and transportation.

Land Use Districts

Starting from Lake Champlain, Milton has Shoreland and Ag/Rural Residential Districts, while Georgia has a Business-1 and Lakeshore Residential District mapped. Each of these districts proposes resource protection and generally low intensity of development.

Eastward of the shore districts to Stonebridge Brook is a combination of

Lakeshore/Recreation, AR-1, and AR-2 Districts in Georgia and Ag/Rural Residential and Flood Hazard for Milton..

The area in between Stonebridge Brook to Arrowhead Mountain Lake encompasses the most intensely developed region of Georgia, the High Density Residential (AR-3) District, as well as the Recreation District in a 500 foot swath around Arrowhead Mountain Lake. Milton adjoins with the Shoreland Residential and Transitional Residential Districts. The Transitional Residential District has a density of one dwelling unit per ten acres of land with strong incentives for clustering, whereas Georgia's AR-3 allows one unit per acre.

East of Arrowhead Mountain Lake, Georgia has Natural Area and Recreational Districts whereas Milton has Transitional Residential, Agricultural/Rural Residential, and Forestry/Conservation/Scenic Ridgeline Districts. These districts primarily provide for low intensity development and are compatible.

Milton and Georgia have much in common with each other. Both towns have experienced high rates of residential growth and retain significant agricultural and natural resource areas. However Milton has more commercial and industrial development along Route 7, and also more public infrastructure, such as municipal water and sewer. In general, the Milton and Georgia Town Plans are compatible with regard to the adjacent land use districts.

Shoreline

Milton and Georgia share the shoreline of Lake Champlain. The Milton Town Plan makes reference to the problem that existing septic systems are frequently undersized and in poor condition resulting in lake pollution but does not include any specific policies regarding this issue. As expressed elsewhere Georgia and St. Albans Town share this concern.

Transportation

The following roads connect Georgia and Milton: I-89, Route 7, Old Stage Road, Hibbard Road, Stonebridge Road, Bullock Road, North Road/Arrowhead Lake Road, and Georgia Shore Road. Additionally, railroad tracks also run through both towns.

I-89 and Route 7 function as “major arterials” in both towns (although the Milton Plan classifies Route 7 as a “minor arterial”). Old Stage Road, Stonebridge Road, and North Road/Arrowhead Lake Road serve as “collectors.” Hibbard Road, Stonebridge Road and Georgia Shore Road in vicinity of the town boundaries serve as “local streets.”

Fairfax

Fairfax adopted its Town Plan in September 2008, with an update to its Development Regulations (Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations) in 2011. The two main areas related to the compatibility of land use between Georgia and Fairfax are land use districts and transportation.

Land Use Districts

The boundary between Georgia and Fairfax includes a significant amount of natural areas that serve as wildlife habitat. The Georgia side of the border is made up of Ag/Rural Residential (AR-1), Recreational, and Natural Areas while the Fairfax side of the border includes Rural and Conservation Districts. It should be noted, however, that Fairfax's 2011 Zoning Bylaws allow for much smaller lot sizes (between two and five acres), which therefore could result in fairly intensive development along the Georgia border.

Transportation

The following roads "connect" Georgia and Fairfax: I-89, Route 104A, Goodrich Hill Road, Blake Road, and Georgia Mountain Road. Route 104 runs along the border of the two towns for 0.13 miles.

I-89 functions as a "major arterial" in both towns. Route 104A serves as a "minor arterial," and is notable for its scenic quality due to its proximity to the Lamoille River and Georgia Mountain. Route 104 serves as a "collector" where it joins the two towns. Goodrich Hill Road, Blake Road, and Georgia Mountain Road are "local streets." Goodrich Hill Road and Georgia Mountain Road are Class 4 roads on the Georgia side, but turn into Class 3 roads on the Fairfax side.

Although most of these roads currently function similarly in both towns, and so are not a cause for concern at this time, as discussed above, intensive development along Route 104 or Route 104A in Fairfax could create traffic impacts in Georgia on Oakland Station Road, Route 7, and Route 104A.

B. THE REGION

Georgia is part of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC). The Commission is comprised of two appointed commissioners from each of the 24 member municipalities and a support staff. The Commission provides technical assistance in matters of land use and development and develops a Regional Plan similar to our Town Plan. The Northwest Regional Planning Commission adopted a Regional Plan effective October 3, 2007. There are many topics in the Regional Plan which are pertinent to Georgia, however three main areas related to the compatibility of the Regional Plan and this Town Plan are: growth center designation, transportation, and shoreline protection.

Growth Center Designation

The Regional Plan identifies one "regional growth center" and five "sub-regional growth centers," neither of which includes Georgia. The Regional Plan describes the attributes of a sub-regional growth centers as 1) moderately large size compared to other towns in the region, 2) retail and commercial services adequate to serve neighboring towns, 3) densities that enable the area to serve as a transportation hub for neighboring towns, and 4) access to government services.

Georgia is identified as a "Potential Sub-Regional Growth Center" in the Regional Plan

because it does not have the characteristics listed above, but could have if appropriate planning is accomplished. The Regional Plan does indicate that the Georgia could benefit from “local growth center” planning. This characterization is compatible with this Town Plan, in that the town’s commercial center currently serves primarily local needs.

The southern portion of Georgia, the South Village, has the potential for becoming a sub-regional growth center in the future, because of its access to Interstate-89, the Route 7 corridor, and the existing and potential for additional industrial and commercial development, as envisioned in the South Village Core Strategic Plan, which explored concepts for the development of this area. The residential part of the South Village has a fire district which provides water to the local residences, and has capacity for expansion. However the lack of municipal sewer and a more extensive water distribution system, and the requisite governmental services to administer both means that for the time being this area cannot be considered a sub-regional growth center.

It is uncertain whether Georgia will invest in sewer or water infrastructure in the near future. It would take a tremendous capital investment to develop this type of infrastructure and the town does not have a large enough population or tax base to support the investment at this time. The town has investigated the possibilities and implications of this infrastructure, and has identified potential practical solutions if this is the direction townspeople wish to go.

Transportation

The Regional Plan describes the multi-faceted transportation network in the region, and includes goals, policies, objectives and strategies for this network. The Interstate, Route 7 and the rail line are important components of both the local and regional network.

Both the Town Plan and the Regional Plan support the minimization of curb-cuts on Route 7, especially in the vicinity of the Interstate exit ramps, in order to maintain the arterial function of Route 7. The Town Plan and the Regional Plan also support public transportation in the Route 7 corridor, and support improvements in the vicinity of Exit 18 to consider the needs of pedestrian travel.

Shoreline Protection

The Lake Champlain shoreline is both a local and a regional resource. Protection of this resource is a high regional and local priority.

The Regional Plan indicates that one strategy for protecting and improving the water quality along the shoreline is to encourage shoreline settlements to consider developing wastewater treatment districts to manage common effluent issues. improve the quality of wastewater treatment. Additionally, the Regional Plan indicates the importance of coordinating development and wastewater management. This Town Plan supports both of these strategies.