

# Town of Elmore, Vermont

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2013-2018 Town Plan

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## **Introduction: The Elmore Town Plan**

Few towns can lay claim as “the beauty spot of Vermont,” but Elmore is one such place. Elmore is a quintessential Vermont town—a quaint village on the shore of Lake Elmore, with a general store and historic church surrounded by agricultural fields, forested hills and mountains, and miles of gravel roads winding throughout.

Elmore has grown and changed over the years from an agricultural and forestry community with a few small village centers, to a recreation town centered around Lake Elmore, to a growing bedroom community developing on the many back roads. Today, residents generally work in other towns, but live in Elmore to enjoy country living close to recreational amenities and away from the hustle-and-bustle of the cities and suburbs. Protecting and maintaining the character and charm of Elmore is important to the future of the town. This has been challenged in recent decades, as Elmore’s population has nearly tripled within the last forty years (more than doubling between 1970 and 1990). While growth can be beneficial to the community, growing at this rate can cause unexpected consequences.

Town plans are a place where communities have an opportunity to reflect on past accomplishments, take stock in where they are, and establish a vision for the future. For Elmore, this is our opportunity to reflect on our present challenges and opportunities and chart our course for the twenty-first century. The Elmore Planning Commission has prepared the following plan after consultation with residents, visitors, other boards and anyone else who had an interest in the future of community. The Planning Commission is authorized by the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117, §4381), hereinafter referred to as “Chapter 117,” to draft this plan and has followed all requirements in its preparation and adoption.

### **Statement of Objectives**

The purpose of this Town Plan is to provide guidelines for future growth, development and the preservation of town resources (public land, facilities and services) and natural areas. To this end, the objectives of the plan (listed in no particular order of prioritization) are:

- To maintain the rural character of our town and landscape;
- To promote agricultural and forest-based land uses;
- To maintain a pure and adequate supply of groundwater for the town’s future;
- To provide a healthy and scenic environment for water-based recreation;
- To protect unique and fragile areas, including but not limited to: higher elevations, especially on the Worcester Range; excessive slopes; shallow soils to bedrock;

wetlands and flood hazard areas; shorelands; endangered species habitats; deer wintering areas and other critical habitat for indigenous species;

- To minimize habitat fragmentation for all native and transient species
- To identify and preserve historical resources including the last one room school house in VT;
- To protect and improve our air quality;
- To protect the ecology of our lakes, ponds and wetlands;
- To ensure all children living in Elmore have access to high quality education;
- To provide residents with services that promote safety and well-being;
- To take advantage of opportunities to collaborate with other communities when there's a mutual benefit;
- To encourage a diverse, balanced economy that supports other objectives found within this plan;
- To establish a plan for managed growth of the town in all areas, and under such conditions, that demand for increased services will not significantly affect the tax burden for residents; and,
- To protect the scenic character of Elmore, including the historic lakeside village, forested hills, agricultural fields and wildlife habitats.

### **How is a Town Plan useful to residents of Elmore?**

There is a range of ways in which a town plan can be used—from simply a source of information to a foundation for regulations. Ultimately, the residents of Elmore determine the application and implementation of the Elmore Town Plan. Among the potential uses of the municipal plan are the following:

- A source of information: The plan is a valuable source of information for local boards, commissions, citizens and businesses. The information in a plan could serve to familiarize residents (both current and prospective) and interested developers with Elmore and its topography, hydrology, geology assets and limitations.
- A basis for community programs and decision-making: The plan is a guide for the recommendations contained within a capital budget; for any proposed community

development program; and for the direction and content of local initiatives such as forest and farmland protection, recreation planning and housing.

- A source for planning studies: Few plans can address every issue in sufficient detail. Town plans not only record and discuss what is known about the resources and residents of the town but also what is not known. Therefore, many plans will recommend further studies to develop courses of actions on a specific need.
- A standard for review at the state and regional levels: Act 250 and other state regulatory processes identify the municipal plan as a standard for review of development proposals. Town plans are important to the development of regional plans and inter-municipal programs. In addition, state proposals must comply with town plans, including the purchase of state land for parks and recreation.
- A long-term guide: The plan is a long-term guide by which to measure and evaluate public and private proposals that affect the physical, social and economic landscape of the community.
- An eligibility requirement for state and federal grants: In 2000, the state began requiring municipalities to adopt plans as an eligibility requirement for most grants and low interest loans. Planning grants, water and wastewater grants, community development grants, and other key sources of funding all now require the municipality to have an adopted plan. While many private funding sources do not require plans for eligibility, a town plan that documents the need for funding will generally strengthen an application.
- A basis for regulatory action: The plan serves as a foundation and guide for the creation or amendment of the zoning, subdivision or flood hazard bylaws, and for decisions made under these regulations.

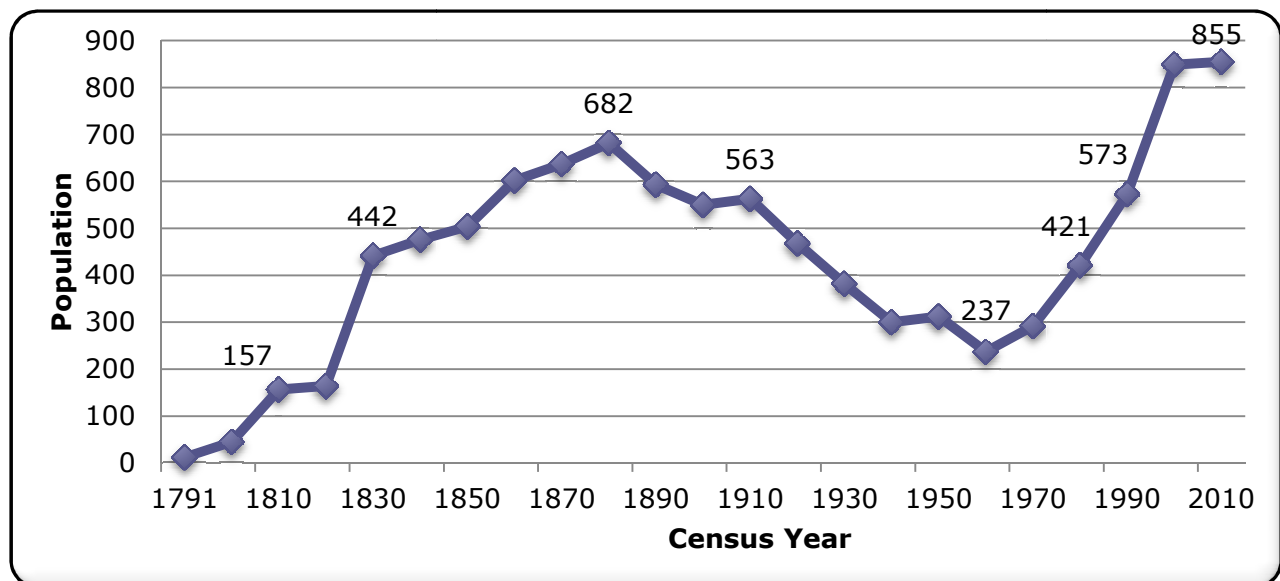
## CHAPTER 1: Community & Demographic Profile

The Town of Elmore is located in southeastern Lamoille County, with an area of 39.15 square miles (38.6 square miles of land and 0.45 square miles of water). Bordering towns include: Morristown, Stowe and Worcester to the west; Hardwick, Wolcott and Woodbury to the east; and Calais to the south. The community's defining features include Elmore Mountain (2,608 ft.), which overlooks Lake Elmore (219 acres) and the adjacent village center. The town is predominantly rural and heavily forested.

### Historical Population

Since 1791, the United States government has conducted an official count of persons living in each municipality every ten years, otherwise known as the decennial Census.

**Figure 1** shows the population trend in Elmore for each Census between 1791 and 2010.



**Figure 1:** Population change in Elmore (1791-2010); **Source:** U.S. Census Bureau

According to the most recent 2010 Census, Elmore had a population of 855 residents and an average density of 21.8 residents per square mile. Historically, Elmore's population has fluctuated. During the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Elmore experienced substantial population growth as the local economy grew around the region's mining, logging and milling industries. After peaking at 682 residents in 1880, the town's population began to decline, as mills closed and the economy waned through two World Wars and the Great Depression. Elmore's population decline to a 20<sup>th</sup> century low of 237 in 1960. However, from 1970 to 2000, Elmore—like many other towns across the region—saw sharp population growth, as the back-to-the-land-movement brought new residents to Vermont including farmers, urban migrants and second-home owners.

Within the last decade, the region's population growth appears to have leveled-off. It remains to be seen whether Elmore's relatively flat population change from 2000 to 2010 (0.7-percent increase) is the beginning of a new trend, or a blip on the growth rate that began during the 1960s.

### Regional & Neighboring Populations

The period between 1970 and 2000 was a time of unprecedented growth for much of northern Vermont. There were a multitude of factors which contributed to this growth (discussed in further detail in the Housing and Economic Development chapters), including the completion of the federal Interstate Highway System and migration from other states.

Geography	1990	2000	2010	% Change (1990-2010)
<i>Elmore</i>	573	849	855	49.2%
Calais	1,521	1,529	1,607	5.7%
Hardwick	2,964	3,174	3,010	1.6%
Morristown	4,733	5,139	5,227	10.4%
Stowe	3,433	4,339	4,314	25.7%
Wolcott	1,229	1,456	1,676	36.4%
Woodbury	766	809	906	18.3%
Worcester	906	902	998	10.2%
Lamoille County	19,735	23,233	24,475	24.0%
State of Vermont	562,758	608,827	624,741	11.0%

**Table 1:** A comparison of population change in Elmore with neighboring towns, Lamoille County and the state as a whole (1990-2010); **Source:** U.S. Census Bureau

As shown in **Table 1**, Elmore's population grew at a rate faster than any neighboring community between 1990 and 2010. It should be noted, however, that the net increase of 283 residents observed during this period is comparable or even less than that of several other towns within the region. Ultimately, as Elmore has a very limited commercial base, its growth potential is largely tied to the regional economy. From this standpoint, Elmore is strategically positioned between several of the state's largest job centers, including: Morrisville (6 miles), Montpelier (22 miles), Barre (28 miles) and Chittenden County (approximately a one-hour drive). Situated around Lake Elmore, the Town's local economy is also stimulated by recreational opportunities such as swimming, hiking, boating and fishing. The presence of these opportunities and recreational facilities such as Elmore State Park has attracted not only visitors and full-time residents, but part-time residents as well. According to the 2010 Census, Elmore is now home to 159 (29.3%) seasonal, recreational or occasional use residences. Part-time residents should

not be overlooked when considering the overall impact residents have on town resources and the local tax base.

### **Age Distribution**

According to the 2010 Census, the median age of Elmore residents was 46.1 years. On the basis of median age, Vermont ranks as the second oldest state in the country, behind only Maine. It is important to closely monitor this trend going forward, as shifts in age demographics influence demand for housing, education, employment and other public services. The age distribution of the local population also impacts both the human and financial resources available to meet these needs.

While the aggregate median age of the region is older than the national average, Elmore's unique scenic character, small-town fabric and the abundance of nearby recreational amenities make the town an attractive place for residents of all ages. Particularly, Elmore is a family-oriented community and boasts the state's only remaining one-room school house (hosting Grades 1-3). The character of the community is greatly enhanced by a blend of new residents and multi-generational Vermonters.

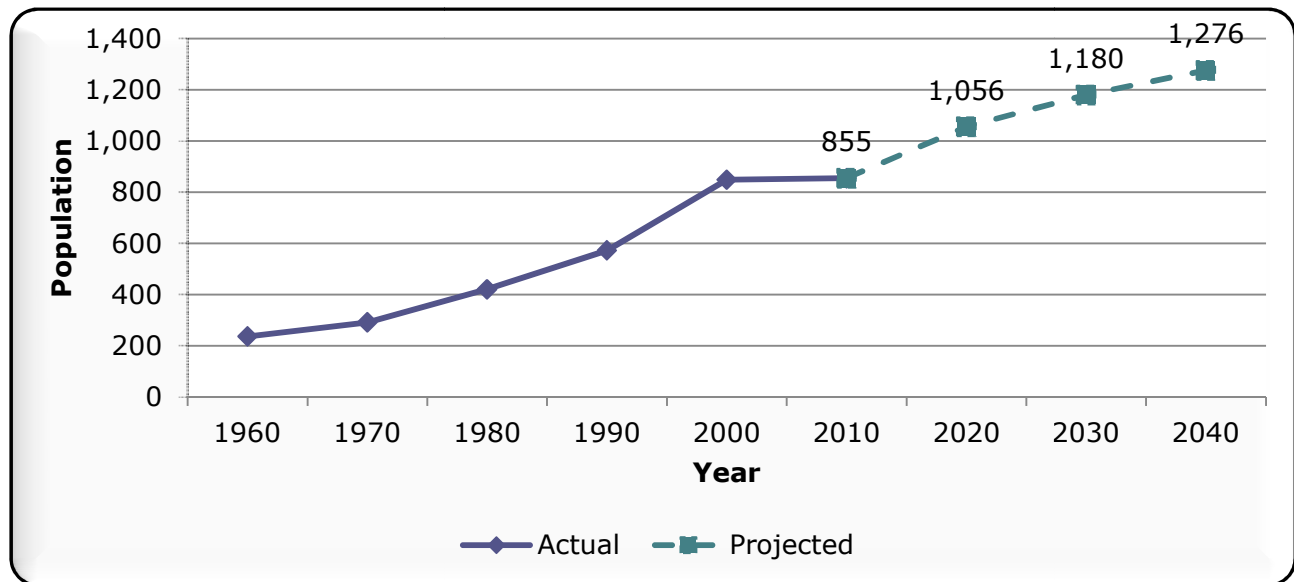
### **Future Population Projections**

Populations may change abruptly, due to a variety of unforeseen factors including shifts in the housing market and general economy, or other isolated events such as war, recession or major technological breakthroughs. Amid these variables, a common community planning tool is the application of mathematical models to predict future populations, based on observed trends. Such population projections are only expectations of what might occur; as with any prediction, their accuracy depends on the validity of the underlying assumptions upon which they are based. While imprecise, these models can provide a general forecast of where populations are likely trending.

**Figure 2** shows a population projection for the Town of Elmore through the year 2040, based on a regression model provided by the Lamoille County Planning Commission. Relative to other Census years, 2010 is an interesting data point from which to make a projection, as Elmore's population remained flat in the preceding decade after forty years of steep population growth. As more information on the health of the national economy and updated Census estimates become available in the coming 3-5 years, the town will have a better sense of long-term local and regional population trends. Generally, Lamoille County has grown at a rate faster than the state as a whole since 1970. However, within the region, there are always isolated areas of growth and decline between each Census.

Based on Elmore's rural residential character, it is likely that economic growth within the Morristown-Stowe and Barre-Montpelier labor market areas (LMAs) would be the largest determinant in fueling population growth in town. These and other economic variables will be further discussed in ensuing chapters.





**Figure 2:** Elmore's population growth between 1960 and 2010, extended by a projection using a mathematical regression model; **Source:** Lamoille County Planning Commission, 2012

### Goal

- The Town of Elmore seeks to manage growth and economic development in order to welcome new residents and business opportunities while preserving the quiet and scenic character of the community.

### Objectives, Policies & Recommendations

#### Policy:

- Elmore enforces zoning and subdivision bylaws for the purposes of promoting the health, safety and general welfare of residents. These bylaws regulate the density and character of development in town in order to protect scenic and natural resources, and local property values. Bylaws also provide guidance for thoughtful economic development.

#### Recommendation:

- In regards to population and growth, the Elmore Planning Commission believes that the existing zoning and subdivision bylaws are effectively furthering the town's desired vision for the future. In the ensuing Town Plan cycle, the Planning Commission should monitor demographic and population trends to ensure that continues to be the case.

## CHAPTER 2: Historical & Archaeological Resources

Elmore's historical resources include many examples of native Vermont architecture, some in the village of Elmore and others scattered throughout the town. Several of the oldest and most interesting buildings are clustered in Elmore proper. These include, but are not limited to, the Town Hall, the one-room schoolhouse, the church and the Elmore Store. The village is one of our most treasured historic resources because of its authenticity and charm. The town also contains the remains of the once-thriving village of East Elmore. There may be other places, structures or foundations of historical significance—of which the authors of this document are unaware.

### The Elmore Historical Society

The Elmore Historical Society was formed on September 6, 1996. Its purpose is to record, preserve and collect all available information about the hamlets and people of Elmore, from as far back as the area was settled. An extensive narrative and photographic history of the town is available to the public via the Elmore Historical Society's website: [www.elmorehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.elmorehistoricalsociety.org).

### Historic Structures

The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation owns the Elmore Fire Tower, which sits atop Elmore Mountain. It was built following the hurricane in 1938 and remained in use to monitor forest fire activity until 1974. On September 5, 1995, it was designated a National Historic Lookout.

A 1983 survey of the town by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation identified 37 buildings and three districts that were historically significant in town. The three districts were the Lake Elmore Historic District, the Lake Elmore East Historic Camp District and the Lake Elmore West Historic Camp District. Presently, none of the structures have been placed on the National Registry of Historic Structures. However, in 1992 the Vermont Advisory Council on Historic Preservation placed all three districts on the State Register of Historic Places. **See Map 1 in Appendix A** for the location of historic structures and districts in Elmore.

### Archeological Resources

Elmore's archeological record differs from its historic sites, insofar as the information that exists is buried. Archeological sites contain a fragile, complex and irreplaceable record of past human activities. For 10,000 years, Native Americans focused their activities within the river valleys and lake basins. Any prehistoric archeological sites constitute an essential link to our past and are often the only source of information for the longest part of human history in Elmore.

A National Park Service Study of archeologically significant riparian areas was conducted as a part of the Vermont Rivers Study in 1986. The Park Service findings concluded that

Elmore Pond Brook, from Lake Elmore to the Wolcott town line, has an expected moderate-to-high archeological sensitivity. This rating does not necessarily indicate that any archeologically significant resources have been located in this area; it only denotes that the topography, sun exposure, availability of food and other important natural resources exist in the right combination. Additionally, Elmore has also been noted for the presence of unique rock outcroppings in town. These and other documented archaeological resources should be preserved and protected from development activities.

### ***Goal***

- To identify and preserve Elmore's heritage, historical and archeological resources for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

### ***Objectives, Policies & Recommendations***

#### ***History***

Objective: To record and preserve the history of Elmore.

Policies:

- Grant applications intended to augment Elmore's historical record and preserve historical sites and artifacts in town are supported.

Recommendations:

- The Elmore Historical Society should work with the town and state Division for Historic Preservation to identify a secure and safe place for the long-term storage of items intended for preservation.

#### ***Historic Structures***

Objective: To preserve individual buildings, structures and districts of historical value.

Policies:

- Elmore encourages the restoration and re-use of historic buildings.

Recommendations:

- The Elmore Historical Society should develop a plan to identify and preserve Elmore's historic resources.
- Elmore should compile a comprehensive listing of historical areas and structures in town.
- The Historical Society should research avenues and sources of funding for historic preservation projects in town.

- The zoning bylaws should continue to recognize the historic significance of the Elmore Village District.

### *Archeological Resources*

Objective: To preserve Elmore's fragile archeological record.

#### Policies:

- If during the development of a parcel an archeological site is discovered, the town encourages the developer to contact the state archeologist to provide a reasonable opportunity to investigate and suggest a means to mitigate the impact.
- Projects occurring in the archeologically sensitive area around Elmore Pond Brook should consider the potential impact of their project on archeological sites during the early stages of development. This will offer the best opportunity to mitigate potential impacts.

#### Recommendations:

- Elmore should map existing archeological sites found in town
- Incorporate the importance of preserving archeological sites in Elmore's Zoning Bylaws
- The Elmore Historical Society should host events and workshops to educate the public on the importance of preserving archeological sites

## CHAPTER 3: Natural & Scenic Resources

Elmore is fortunate to have an abundance of natural and scenic resources, from which residents derive a vast amount of pride and value. These resources include mountains, forests, fields, surface and groundwater, wild plant and animal populations, and clean air. Additionally, Elmore possesses several other special natural features, most notably the breathtaking views of the Worcester ridge, preserved wetlands and riparian habitats, and a traditional working landscape. Current development pressures that impact the town's natural resource base include the building of roads and structures on steep slopes and unsuitable soils, and the conversion of seasonal camps to permanent residences.



Lake Elmore, September 2012

### Earth Resources

#### Sand & Gravel

Although the majority of land in Elmore consists of shallow soils on glacial till, there are a few sites of interest that have sand and gravel deposits. The largest areas of sand and gravel are west of Elmore Mountain Road, especially around the Bliss Hill Road area. A second area with sizable deposits is in the East Elmore area. Sand and gravel deposits are essential resources for construction and road maintenance. They are, however, finite resources and, once depleted, cannot be replaced. By their nature, extraction operations have a high potential of becoming a nuisance to nearby property owners. For this reason, the state (through Act 250) and the town (through local zoning) regulate the siting of earth extraction operations.

#### Prime Agricultural and Productive Forest Soils

Soil provides the medium and nutrients for agricultural and forest-based land uses. To this end, the state has identified Prime Agricultural (Prime Ag) and Class I Productive Forest Soils for preservation. Whether the crop is hay, corn or trees, the best use for

these identified soils is agriculture or forestry. As a limited resource, management and conservation are the keys to long-term sustainability. **See Map 2 in Appendix A** for the distribution of prime agricultural soils in Elmore. For more information on local soil characteristics, please refer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 1981 *Soil Survey of Lamoille County, Vermont*.

Protection of forest soils and water quality can be accomplished both through regulation and the adoption of Accepted Management Practices (AMPs) and Best Management Practices (BMPs) among private landowners. These standards are established minimum and optimal forest management practices, developed by the state's public and private land managers. Residents with questions concerning these standards should contact their County Forester for information.

Any development on slopes greater than 15% is required by the Elmore zoning bylaws to submit erosion and sedimentation control plan for approval by the town's Development Review Board (DRB). The Planning Commission should assess the benefits of amending local zoning regulations to discourage or restrict the fragmentation of large tracts of productive soils. The Planning Commission should assess the benefits of amending local zoning regulations to discourage or restrict the fragmentation of large tracts of productive, prime agricultural soils of statewide and local significance.

### Topography

Elmore's topography can present serious limitations to development. In particular, high elevations and steep slopes are found in the Worcester Range, including Elmore Mountain. For a description of development suitability based on slopes found in Elmore see **Table 2** below.

Slope %	Description
0-3%	Suitable for most development, but may require drainage improvements
4-8%	Most desirable for development; fewest restrictions
9-20%	Suitable for low-density housing on large lots, with some consideration for erosion control and runoff
21-30%	May be developed with careful site design and off-site wastewater treatment
> 30%	Construction should be avoided; natural vegetation required to control soil erosion

**Table 2:** Description of the development suitability of topographic slopes found within Elmore

Through the Act 250 process, Vermont has set a statewide limit regarding development over 2,500-feet in elevation. These areas are typically slower to recover from land disturbances and represent a greater risk for erosion. All development, including forestry

operations, requires an Act 250 permit for projects over 2,500-feet. All land at elevations above 2,500-feet in the Town of Elmore is currently in public ownership.

Additionally, Elmore has established a forest reserve district in the Worcester Range for elevations above 1,300-feet. Some low-density housing is permitted in the district up to a 1,500-foot elevation; land uses above 1,500-feet are limited to forestry, agriculture and outdoor recreation (low impact uses, with minimal construction).

### **Water Resources**

Elmore has countless important water resources that contribute to the unique character of the town. Lake Elmore will be discussed throughout this plan, due to its central role in the community. In addition to Lake Elmore, there are two large undeveloped ponds, several smaller ponds, many wetland areas, rivers, streams and other important water features located throughout the town. **See Map 3 in Appendix A** for the location of notable water resources in Elmore.

#### Lakes & Ponds

At an elevation of 1,139-feet, Lake Elmore is a 219-acre body of water that supports a variety of outdoor recreational activities, including boating, fishing and swimming. It also serves as a critical aquatic habitat and invaluable part of the town's natural ecosystem and cultural identity. Lake Elmore is a natural lake, with an artificially controlled surface elevation and maximum depth of 17-feet. The Morrisville Water and Light Department owns a dam at the northern end of the lake, and uses it as a water impoundment for its downstream dams. The lake supports four noteworthy plant species, including a threatened and a rare species of bur-reed and two rare aquatic buttercups. Aquatic life is challenged to adapt to the lake's fluctuating water levels. Due to the generally shallow nature of the lake, Eurasian Milfoil—an invasive species that multiplies rapidly, crowding out native plant species—is a significant concern. Boats should be carefully washed off before entering Lake Elmore, to avoid spreading Eurasian Milfoil and other invasive species.

Little Lake Elmore is a 20-acre lake in north-central Elmore, which can only be accessed by foot from a small wooded track, approximately three-quarters of a mile from the nearest road. It is a wilderness-like lake, which also supports a threatened bur-reed species and a rare water milfoil.

Hardwood Pond is among the highest elevation bodies of water in Lamoille County (1,568-feet). This 44-acre natural pond is also located in a remote section of town. Additionally, there are numerous other smaller ponds dotting the landscape in Elmore.

Little Lake Elmore and Hardwood Pond are protected by Elmore's Shoreland zoning district, which extends to lands within 500-feet of their shores. There is a 100-foot

setback and vegetative buffer requirement and a 5-acre minimum lot size in this district. These setbacks have been recognized by the Regional Planning Commission as an aggressive means to protect water quality. Lake Elmore itself has less strict standards, although much of the shoreline is already developed. Within 500-feet of Lake Elmore, the minimum lake setback and buffer is 40-feet; the minimum lot size is 1-acre.

### Rivers & Streams

Elmore is split among the watersheds of the Lamoille and Winooski Rivers. The town's Water Resources Map (**Map 3, Appendix A**) identifies three additional sub-watershed boundaries. The northwest third of town drains into either the Elmore Pond Brook or Bedell Brook, depending on which side of Elmore Mountain and the Worcester Range the land is on. These brooks eventually drain into the Lamoille River. The northeast third of town drains into the Elmore Branch, which also eventually flows into the Lamoille River in Wolcott village. Flowing south into the Winooski watershed is the North Branch, which is fed by Barnes

Brook. Russ Pond Brook and Hardwood Brook both originate in Elmore and join the North Branch in Worcester.

The Elmore zoning bylaws protect rivers and streams by requiring a 50-foot vegetative buffer and minimizing stream and river crossings to preserve natural riparian corridors. These minimum standards should be maintained into the future.

### Wetlands

There are a few large wetlands in Elmore. The two most visible wetlands are the 144-acre wetland complex south of Lake Elmore and the wetlands along the North Branch, adjacent to Route 12. Additionally, smaller wetland patches are located in east Elmore adjacent to Barnes Brook, Elmore Branch and east of Hardwood Pond. Wetlands serve critical roles including storm-water retention, erosion control, groundwater recharge and wildlife habitat.

The U.S. Department of the Interior has mapped wetlands and each town has a set of National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps. Vermont's wetland regulations are based upon these NWI maps. They designate all wetlands in Elmore as "Class II" and are therefore required to have a 50-foot buffer between the wetland and any adjacent land development. Elmore's zoning reflects these standards and also requires a 50-foot buffer along any mapped wetland.

### Flood Hazard Areas

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines a floodplain as an area of land adjacent to rivers and streams that is subject to recurring inundation. These areas store water during heavy rains and spring thaws, thus slowing the velocity of water



flowing downstream. Gradual release of stormwater minimizes erosion, stream-bank scouring and downstream flooding.

Floodplains are considered unsuitable for development for several reasons: potential danger to life and property; loss of floodwater storage; effects on channel capacity and downstream communities; and improper functioning of subsurface sewage disposal systems, when there are high water tables. However, floodplains are often prime agricultural land, due to the highly productive nature of the soils, and can serve as recreational sites, such as parks and ball fields.

FEMA-delineated Flood hazard areas in Elmore are generally associated with the Elmore Branch and North Branch (**see Map 3 in Appendix A**). The town amended its zoning bylaws in March 1989 to include flood hazard area regulations to protect the health, safety and welfare of residents and visitors. The adoption of these regulations also allows property owners in Elmore to purchase federally subsidized flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). These regulations allow agriculture, forestry and recreational facilities in the flood hazard area, while other development activities are subject to review and conditional approval by the DRB.

In 2010, the Elmore Planning Commission began developing a fluvial erosion overlay, which would protect lands within riparian corridors that are subject to erosion damage from the natural movement of river and stream channels. As demonstrated during Tropical Storm Irene, serious flooding damage often occurs outside mapped floodplains and within such erosion corridors. The Planning Commission intends to revisit adoption of this overlay, along with an update of the local flood hazard regulations, at the conclusion of the Town Plan update process.

### Groundwater

Most drinking water in Elmore is provided through private wells and springs. These sources are replenished from rain and surface waters, which percolate through the soils. Any activity which introduces contaminants directly into the ground (such as underground storage tanks, septic disposal fields and agricultural activities) can affect groundwater quality. Since all water in Elmore is provided through wells and springs, it is important to protect the quality of well water through proper separation between wellheads and septic disposal fields and other hazards. All wells and springs are required to meet the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) water supply standards.

Public groundwater sources in Vermont are assigned Wellhead Protection Areas (WHPAs). ANR is responsible for the Wellhead Protection Area program. A public water supply is defined as a system serving ten or more connections or 25 or more persons. Elmore has one designated WHPA for the Elmore Water Cooperative. In 2011, the town passed a

bond vote to upgrade and convert the Elmore Water Cooperative into a municipal system (more information in the Utilities & Facilities chapter).

### Forest Resources

In an effort to identify forest resources for protection, the Elmore Planning Commission conducted a Forest Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (FLESA) of all parcels greater than 25 acres in size in 1991. This included 88% of the land in town (22,362 acres of 25,408), the vast majority of which is privately owned. The FLESA studied and recorded the size, points of access and soil characteristics of these parcels. Special features of value to recreation or wildlife were also noted. These features included the presence of wetlands, shorelines on lakes and ponds, year-round streams, trails, Class IV roads, critical species habitat, and proximity to state-owned property. Additionally, parcels were judged for their development potential by evaluating accessibility, soils suitability and the availability of electricity.

The purchase of development rights (PDR) and conservation easements are potential strategies to protect Elmore's forest resources from development and fragmentation. Any future forest conservation effort in town should review the findings of this report for guidance.

Forest Type	Acres in FLESA Parcels
Hardwood	15,614
Softwood	749
Mixed forest	3,931
Forest wetland	256
Scrub wetland	480
Other uses, including agriculture, open water or developed areas	1,332

**Table 3:** Acreage by land cover in Elmore, according to the Elmore Planning Commission FLESA

Sustainable management of forest resources is expected within the Forest, Rural-West and Rural-East districts. State law exempts forestry from zoning regulations, provided Accepted Management Practices are followed. Individuals or companies practicing forestry on their land must have an approved Forest Management Plan that conforms with state standards as approved by the Commissioner of Forest, Parks and Recreation. This exemption from zoning includes logging roads. The development of all logging roads must also comply with Acceptable Management Practices as required by the State Forest, Parks and Recreation Division.

## Wildlife Resources

Elmore's landscape of mountains, forests, lakes and riparian corridors supports extensive and diverse wildlife habitat. Sites of particular interest, as identified by the state's 1976 Natural Areas Inventory, include:

- Lake Elmore Swamp: A 70-acre deep marsh and shrub-wooded swamp located at the south end of Lake Elmore, used by waterfowl and other wildlife species in seasonal migration; and,
- Little Elmore Bog: A 120-acre wooded boggy area located within Lake Elmore State Park, used by waterfowl and other species of bird.

### Deer Winter Areas

Vermont's deer require a protected habitat to endure severe winter weather and heavy snowfall. These areas are referred to as deer wintering areas or more commonly "deeryards", and generally consist of areas where coniferous forests dominate. Winter deer yards provide two features important to whitetail deer survival: shelter and food. Statewide, under average winter conditions, between 6 and 8-percent of Vermont's forestland is suitable for winter deer range. Wintering areas do not change substantially between years and can be used by generations of deer over several decades, if appropriate habitat conditions are maintained. Not only are these areas critical to deer, but nearly half of Vermont's vertebrate wildlife species rely on coniferous forests for at least part of their life needs. Elmore's mapped deer wintering areas are concentrated in the northeast region of town, along the Elmore Branch (**see Map 4 in Appendix A**).

### Bear Habitat

Bears also require large areas of uninterrupted forestland for breeding and travel between seasonal habitats. The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department prepared a map in 1989 to indicate general areas of black bear habitat throughout the state. According to this map, potential bear habitat exists throughout town, outside Elmore's village center.

### Core Forest Habitat

While some species such as deer can accommodate human populations, many others rely on large blocks of unfragmented forest for their mating, nesting, feeding, and denning habitats. These areas are referred to as "Core Forest Habitat," and generally consist of forestlands that are at least 100 meters (328 feet) from significant development, such as roads, houses, and active farmland. Species that rely on such areas include hawks, owls, songbirds, fisher cats, moose, bobcats, and black bears. Mammals such as deer, moose, bear, bobcat, fisher, and coyote may require very large contiguous forest acreage up to 600 to 7,500 acres. Fragmentation of large forest blocks through subdivision and development diminishes species' ability to access core habitat functions, and may result in a change in species' composition from species such as moose, bears, hawks, owls and bobcats, to other species such as pigeons, sparrows, starlings and skunks. Blocks of core

forest habitat are found throughout Elmore. The Worcester Range provides a large expanse of core forest habitat. Development is prohibited in higher elevations of this Range.

#### Other Critical Wildlife Habitat

The Vermont Non-game and Natural Heritage Program of the Fish and Wildlife Department maintain an ongoing effort to identify and map special natural features in towns throughout the state. These maps demonstrate the locations of rare plant and animal species, significant wildlife communities and other natural or fragile ecological areas. Data from these maps, transposed into the attached Critical Habitat map (**see Map 4 in Appendix A**) demonstrates habitats of threatened and/or endangered plant and animal species exist around Lake Elmore Swamp, Little Elmore Bog, Hardwood Bog and atop Elmore Mountain. These species are protected by the Vermont Endangered Species Law (10 V.S.A. Chapter 123) and Act 250 Criterion 8(A), which prohibits development proposals that imperil necessary habitat or an endangered species.

Additionally, Elmore's lakes and ponds also support abundant fish habitat. According to the 1986 *Vermont Rivers Study* Elmore Pond Brook is home to Brown, Rainbow and Brook Trout. Lake Elmore is also a noted habitat of warm-water fish species, while Little Elmore is a noted habitat of cold-water fish species. **See Map 4 in Appendix A** for the location of critical habitat areas in Elmore.

Elmore's current zoning bylaws establish Forest Reserve and Shoreland Districts for, among other purposes, preserving wildlife habitat and implementing the goals of this chapter. Maintaining these districts will ensure that Elmore's biological diversity is preserved for future generations.

#### Wildlife Corridors

In addition to the aforementioned locally significant habitats, the Town of Elmore is also part of multiple intertwined regional and international wildlife corridors. Many forest-dwelling animals found in Elmore—including bears, moose and bobcats—have a range of several dozen, to, in some cases, several hundred miles. The Staying Connected Initiative (SCI) is an organization devoted to safeguarding against habitat fragmentation across the Northern Appalachian region. According to maps produced by SCI, Elmore is located at the crossroads of two high-priority linkages: 1) A passage between the Worcester Range and Northeast Kingdom; and 2) A northern Green Mountains passage that extends through north-central Vermont, into Quebec. Elmore supports such efforts to map and preserve important wildlife corridors throughout the region. More information on the work of the SIC is available at: [www.stayingconnectedinitiative.org](http://www.stayingconnectedinitiative.org).

#### **Scenic Resources**

The Worcester Ridge is an important natural scenic resource. This ridge stretches from the northern tip of Elmore to the Town of Middlesex in Washington County, and is one of

the largest undeveloped mountain ranges in the state. The highest elevations in Elmore occur along the Worcester ridge. The slopes are steep and the soils are shallow and low in nutrients (typically Lyman-Tunbridge with D and E Slopes). The Worcester ridge is visible from many places in Lamoille County, as well as some locations outside of the county.

Through the zoning bylaws, the town has attempted to protect the scenic values by establishing strict standards for compliance on development over 1,500-feet in elevation. Elmore also promotes the use of Planned Unit Developments (PUD), which allow landowners creativity and flexibility in developing site designs that are naturally more efficient, but may not be otherwise permitted under zoning. At the discretion of the Elmore Development Review Board (DRB), PUDs may take advantage of opportunities to cluster housing units, preserve open space, and/or incorporate mixed uses. These more economical and environmentally friendly developments further the town's objective of preserving and protecting Elmore's scenic, natural and ecological resources.

### **Siting of Telecommunications Facilities**

The Town of Elmore recognizes that telecommunications towers and related facilities are necessary to provide residents with world-class mobile voice and data coverage. These services are not only important leisure amenities, but are also critical for public safety and economic development. Elmore zoning bylaws require that any proposed facilities be sited with strict regard for the town's scenic resources and natural environment. To this end, the following standards have been established:

- In order to minimize tower proliferation, it is the policy of the town to encourage developers to exhaust all reasonable options for sharing space on existing towers or tower sites, prior to proposing new towers and related facilities. The principle of co-location is the favored alternative. In making such a determination on the feasibility of co-location, applicants shall evaluate space available on existing towers; the tower owners' ability to lease space; geographic service area requirements; mechanical or electrical incompatibilities; the comparative costs of co-location and new construction; and regulatory limitations.
- One of Elmore's principal scenic qualities is its ridgelines and mountainsides. These areas are significant features of the community's scenic, rural character. Local ridgelines are predominately undeveloped and provide unbroken views of the Green Mountains from the valley floor. The use of the towns' ridgelines for telecommunication towers and related facilities must be approached in a manner that will not unduly detract from, nor adversely affect, these scenic values. Accordingly, protection of these areas from insensitive development is necessary to prevent disruptions to wildlife corridors and preserve the Worcester Ridge and the Green Mountain Range. To

minimize conflict with scenic values, facility design and construction shall employ the following principles:

- a. Where feasible, be sited in areas not highly visible to the traveling public, or from residential areas, historic districts and public lands and outdoor recreation areas, including hiking trails and beaches;
  - b. Be located in forested areas, or be sufficiently landscaped to screen the lower sections of towers and related ground fixtures from public vantage points, such as trails, roads or water bodies;
  - c. Utilize materials, architectural styles, color schemes, lighting fixtures and other design elements to promote aesthetic compatibility with surrounding uses and to avoid adverse visual impacts;
  - d. Where prominent views of a site exist, be located downgrade of the ridge so as not to exceed the elevation of the immediate ridgeline;
  - e. Where constructions of access roads are involved, to minimize visibility, be situated to follow the contour of the land and to avoid open fields or meadows;
  - f. To avoid peaks and ridges which function as regional focal points; and
  - g. No external lights.
- In planning for telecommunication facilities, consideration shall be given to the environmental limitations of a given site. Impacts of the use on wildlife habitats, soil erosion, forestry and agricultural lands, and similar resources should be carefully addressed. Projects that adversely impact these resources are discouraged.
  - Towers, antennae and related fixtures that fall into disuse or are discontinued shall be removed by the facility owner to retain the values set forth above. The town reserves the right to require, as a permit condition, that prospective developers post bond at the time of construction for the eventual removal of the facility.

### **Siting of Alternative Energy Facilities**

The proliferation of both small and large-scale alternative energy systems has emerged as a controversial issue in Vermont in recent years. Particularly, the construction of large-scale wind turbines has been demonstrated to have a significant impact on natural and scenic resources in towns throughout the state. While Elmore recognizes that renewable energy generation is critical to promoting a sustainable economy and healthy environment, such infrastructure must not be built at the expense of the very resources that make the town an attractive place to live, work and play. Furthermore, the needs of wildlife and the maintenance of fragile wildlife corridors will be a priority in all decisions. Further discussion concerning the siting of alternative energy facilities is addressed later in the Utilities and Energy chapter.

### **Goals**

- To use Elmore's earth resources conservatively, for the benefit of existing and future generations, and to conserve and enhance the agricultural and forestry soils in town today.
- For Elmore's water resources—including its lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, wetlands, groundwater and associated habitats—to be preserved and, where degraded, improved in order to ensure water quality for drinking, recreation and the environment.
- For Elmore's forested landscape to be maintained into the future, for its value as timberland, recreation and wildlife habitat and corridors.
- To protect and maintain, in a healthy condition, natural areas with significant ecological value and critical habitat for wildlife, including deer wintering areas and habitat for rare and endangered species.

### **Objectives, Policies & Recommendations**

#### **Earth Resources**

Objective #1: To protect resources from erosion and inappropriate development.

#### **Policies:**

- Extraction and related processing operations will be permitted only when it has been demonstrated that there will be no adverse impacts on the town or its residents. Potential conflicts between current land uses and proposed extraction shall be minimized. Strict standards for the operation, maintenance and restoration of extraction sites may be established, as appropriate, based on the unique conditions of the area affected.
- All development in town must be pursued with strict regard to the capacity of the soils to support it.
- Development on slopes greater than 30% is prohibited.
- Development over 2,500-feet in elevation is prohibited; Elmore supports public ownership of lands over 2,500-feet.
- Further development of existing construction above 1,500-feet in elevation is prohibited. Very low-density housing is permitted over 1,300-feet, up to 1,500-feet.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Continue to enforce local zoning regulations with regards to earth extraction and processing operations. Where the provisions are found not to achieve the goals of this plan, the bylaws should be amended.
- Continue to maintain a Forest Reserve District in the Worcester Range to regulate development above 1,300-feet in elevation.

Objective #2: To conserve Prime Ag and Class I Forest soils for use in agriculture and forestry.

Policies:

- Further fragmentation of productive agricultural and forestland is to be avoided; continued access to the productive forest and farmland will be ensured.
- Use of Accepted Management Practices (AMPs) by agriculture and forestry operations is required, as established by the state. Elmore encourages the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to better protect soil resources from erosion or degradation.

Recommendations:

- Elmore should review existing subdivision regulations to ensure compatibility with the goals of this plan, in relation to the fragmentation of agricultural and forest lands.
- The Planning Commission should assess the benefits of amending local zoning regulations to discourage or restrict the fragmentation of large tracts of productive, prime agricultural soils.

*Water Resources*

Objective: Development should be sited and constructed in such a manner as to minimize the potential for ground and surface water contamination.

Policies:

- A 100-foot setback and vegetative buffer are required around Little Lake Elmore and Hardwood Pond.
- A 40-foot setback and vegetative buffer are required around Lake Elmore.
- A 50-foot vegetative buffer is required from the edge of any perennial stream or river. Stream and river crossings should be kept to a minimum and installed only when essential to a property owner's full enjoyment of their land.



- A 50-foot setback and vegetative buffer is required around any Class II wetland. No filling or draining of wetlands is permitted.
- Floodplains are considered unsuitable for development; agriculture, forestry and recreational facilities are appropriate uses of the flood hazard areas.
- All wells and springs must meet the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) water supply regulations.

Recommendations:

- Continue to monitor lakes in town for evidence of Eurasian Milfoil and other invasive species.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing shoreline zoning in maintaining appropriate setbacks from ponds and protecting/re-establishing shoreline vegetation.
- Maintain the current setbacks and buffers found in the zoning bylaws to protect streams and rivers.
- Complete a revision of the flood hazard regulations to include a fluvial erosion overlay and ensure the town's continued compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

*Forest Resources*

Objective: To conserve large parcels of working forestland for future timber management, as well as the recreational and wildlife benefits these parcels provide.

Policy:

- The purchase of development rights (PDR) is supported as a mechanism for preventing fragmentation of forest resources, while maintaining private ownership and management of timberland.
- Along the Worcester Range, additional development above 1,500-feet in elevation is prohibited.

Recommendation:

- The Planning Commission should distribute information about land trust programs, other conservation options, and statewide resources (including the Vermont Land Trust and Vermont Coverts) to land owners of large tracts of land in town.
- The Planning Commission should also distribute information on the Staying Connected Initiative and the importance of preserving critical wildlife corridors.

- The Planning Commission should review existing Planned Unit Development (PUD) provisions to determine if they are effective in promoting conservation of large parcels of working forestland. The Planning Commission may consider techniques such as revised PUD standards, density averaging, and/or density transfers to accomplish this objective.

### *Scenic Resources*

Objective: To protect the scenic character of Elmore, including the historic village, lake, forested hills and agricultural fields.

#### Policies:

- Elmore supports small-scale wind energy systems that are safe, effective and efficient, that benefit individual property owners directly. The town does not support large-scale commercial wind energy development.
- Elmore supports the use of Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) as a mechanism for protecting scenic features, including agricultural fields and forested hills.
- Along the Worcester range, additional development above 1,500-feet in elevation is prohibited.

#### Recommendation:

- The town should codify policies pertaining to the siting of telecommunications and alternative energy facilities contained within this plan into the zoning bylaws.

## CHAPTER 4: Transportation Plan

### State Highways

Elmore is conveniently located along Vermont Route 12, connecting Lamoille County to the state capitol of Montpelier. The town is also only a short distance from Route 15, the region's major east-west auto corridor, and Route 100, northern Vermont's primary north-south arterial. In addition to circulating motorists to and from destinations throughout the region, these state highways also accommodate bicyclists, joggers and tourists. Route 12, which runs through the heart of Elmore village and along the lakeshore, is a noteworthy scenic highway, offering unbroken views of Elmore Mountain. These panoramas are particularly breathtaking during autumn, when Vermont's world-renown foliage is on display. As the only numbered state highway in Elmore, Route 12 is maintained by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT) District #6, with a maintenance garage located in nearby Morrisville. **See Map 5 in Appendix A** for the location of state and local roads in Elmore.

### Town Highways & Bridges

In accordance with state statute, local roads in Elmore are classified in accordance with their level of function and use, as described below:

- Class 1 Highway: State-maintained roads (7.90 miles in Elmore, including Route 12);
- Class 2 Highway: Town-maintained roads, with state funding assistance and state maintenance as needed (4.85 miles, including a short portion of Elmore Pond Road);
- Class 3 Highway: All other town-maintained roads (21.55 miles, including Camp Road); and,
- Class 4 Highway: Roads not actively maintained by the town (17.80 miles, including Dodge Road).
- Legal Trails: Roadways available for public use but not maintained for vehicular traffic.

All Class 2 and 3 highways are maintained by the Elmore Highway Department, with a garage located next to the town fire station, off Beach Road. The highway department is managed by a full-time Road Commissioner, with oversight from the Selectboard. The town maintains only 0.5 miles of paved roads. The highway department does not use salt during the winter and therefore does not have a salt shed. Sand and other maintenance materials are stored on-site at the town garage. In the case of class 4 roads, the Town of Elmore is not responsible for maintaining these roadways. Class 4 roads typically have low flow traffic and are characterized by limited residential development. Currently, Elmore has approximately 16 roads classified as class 4. Presently, Elmore has three designated Legal Trails; Eagle Ledge, Stage Coach Road and Courchaine Farm Road. To

meet town transportation needs, road classifications in Elmore are evaluated by the Selectboard on an annual basis.

In addition to local highways, the town also owns and maintains six bridges. Five of the bridges are cement deck bridges, while the sixth is a large culvert, technically considered a bridge by the AOT. Elmore is a participant in the Town Highway Bridge Program, through which the state covers 90-percent of bridge repair and replacement costs. Without this aid, bridge maintenance would be cost-prohibitive for many small towns. However, as the schedule for such bridgework is ultimately determined by AOT—and there are typically many structures within the queue—towns have limited control over when bridge repairs are made. All other crossings in Elmore are served by culverts, ranging in size from 18 inches (for intermittent streams), to 14-foot diameter tubes (for larger waterways).

### **Town Highway Standards**

The Town of Elmore has adopted local highway standards, specifying minimum construction and dimensional requirements for new roads. These standards were last updated several decades ago and are in the process of being revised, with technical assistance from the LCPC, concurrent with this plan update. The revised highway codes and standards will be based on best practices from other comparably situated towns across the region and address other issues, such as drainage and mitigation. Elmore currently requires an access permit for new driveways that connect to town highways; the town may assume ownership of a new road, at the discretion of the Selectboard.

To ensure the town highway system is safely navigable, the zoning bylaws have established regulations regarding access to lots, driveways, and parking and loading areas. All site plans permitted as a conditional use are also evaluated by the Elmore Development Review Board, to ensure that they will not have a negative impact on traffic and circulation in the surrounding area.

### **Public Transit Providers**

Elmore is not directly serviced by any public transit providers; however, bus service is available through the Green Mountain Transit Authority (GMTA) in Morristown and Stowe. Residents may ride the bus from Morristown to Waterbury via the Route 100 Commuter route, where additional transit connections to Montpelier and Burlington are also available. For more information on local public transportation options, residents are encouraged to visit [www.gmtaride.org](http://www.gmtaride.org).

### **Airports & Rail Service**

Elmore residents have access to private and charter aviation services through the Morrisville-Stowe State Airport (MSA) located on Route 100 in Morristown (7 miles from Elmore village). Additionally, commercial airline service is available through Burlington International Airport (BTV) in South Burlington (46 miles from Elmore village), offering

direct flights to destinations across the eastern United States and Canada. As the Morristown-Stowe Airport explores plans for substantial expansions including a proposed 300 foot runway extension, MSA is required to meet all federal aviation regulations. Federal regulations require the review of town plans when developing expansion projects.

The nearest passenger rail service for residents of Elmore is provided through AMTRAK, with nearby stations in Montpelier (35 minutes from Lake Elmore by car) and Waterbury (40 minutes). Both Montpelier and Waterbury are linked to a daily route, "The Vermonter," which runs from St. Albans to Washington, D.C. with stops in New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

### **Alternative Transportation**

Chapter 117 (Title 24, Section: 4414) requires municipal transportation plans to account for alternative transportation facilities, including parking facilities, bicycle paths and trails, among other amenities. Due to Elmore's traditional rural character, the town has less capacity and demand for such facilities, relative to other larger communities. Nonetheless, Elmore does seek to promote alternative modes of transportation that are feasible for residents to access. The 2008 Elmore Town Plan identified the following transportation amenities:

- Recreational and hiking trails: Including the Skyline Trail along the Worcester Ridge, Putnam State Forest and Elmore State Park trails, as well as with other unnamed trails in East Elmore;
- Air facilities: Lake Elmore is used by seaplanes and other amphibian crafts.
- Park-and-ride facilities: The church parking lot and area around the historic Town Hall function as unofficial carpool lots.
- Pedestrian facilities: Picnic tables are located on the shore of the lake, next to the historic Town Hall.

In 2011, Vermont enacted "Complete Streets" legislation, requiring that new and renovated paved roads throughout the state be designed to safely accommodate motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. Currently, all dirt roads are exempt from this law, however, towns are still encouraged to consider how different grades of gravel and sand can affect road safety. New or renovated paved roads that do not comply with Complete Streets legislation will be required to file a Rational Form, explaining the reason for not meeting the legislative requirements. To meet Complete Streets criteria, the town should continue to consider bicycle and pedestrian accommodations with all new transportation improvements, and inquire with the Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC) and AOT where clarification is necessary. For more

information contact the Vermont Department of Health at 802-863-7200 or access a Complete Streets Guide at <http://healthvermont.gov/family/fit/target.aspx#streets>. For a rural, predominantly automobile dependant town like Elmore, providing bike and pedestrian opportunities can be a difficult task. Installing appropriate infrastructure such as sidewalks, bikeways and bike lanes can be a costly procedure. However, as encouraged through the Complete Streets legislation, the best time to consider incorporating these bike and pedestrian safety features is when local roads are scheduled for a complete re-paving job. Incorporating sidewalks and bike lanes in Elmore center would increase bike and pedestrian safety for all ages, concentrate more activity in the downtown area, and provide alternative travel links to existing recreational, municipal and commercial facilities.

There are a variety of bike and pedestrian programs and resources available to assist communities in overcoming both outreach and infrastructure cost barriers. One of the most well know programs, is the Safe Routes to School Program. This nationally recognized program was designed to increase physical activity amongst today's youth, provide safer walking and biking routes to schools, and reduce in-town traffic congestion. While participating in the Safe Routes to School Program, communities can receive engineering/design guidance for alternative routes to schools and infrastructure funding assistance to aid pedestrian and bike safety. Additionally, communities may consult training specialists for assistance in coordinating effective educational outreach strategies and events to encourage children to make use of alternative modes of transportation when traveling to school. For more information on this program visit the Vermont Safe Routes to School Resource Center at [www.saferoutesvt.org](http://www.saferoutesvt.org).

Additional resources available to aid communities in creating more bike/pedestrian friendly environments include Local Motion and the League of American Cyclists. Local Motion is a Burlington-based organization that promotes biking events and services across Vermont. Local Motion can provide free trailers full of bikes for communities to host bike safety trainings or other local riding events. For more information visit [www.localmotion.org](http://www.localmotion.org).

The League of American Cyclists offers a variety of incentives, hands-on assistance and award recognition for communities and businesses that participate in the Bicycle Friendly America Program. This program is designed to both reward and rank towns which are actively supporting biking in their community. Additionally, the League of American Cyclists offer streetscape design guidance to improve cycling opportunities and traffic safety courses. For more information on these programs and services visit [www.bikeleague.org/](http://www.bikeleague.org/).

## **Transportation and Natural Resources**

Like all aspects of the built environment, transportation infrastructure can have a significant impact on natural resources. Improperly maintained roads and ditches can have negative impacts on water quality. Undersized or improperly installed culverts lead to downstream channel erosion and result in ponding of water that can undermine the road bed. In addition, some culverts may create barriers to the migration of fish and other aquatic species. Roads may also create barriers for the movement of wildlife and fragment important wildlife habitat. Route 12 from Elmore to Worcester is known as “Moose Alley” due to the high number of moose sitings and crossings.

Many of these issues can be addressed through maintenance and planning. The Vermont Local Roads Program provides educational materials and financial assistance for reducing erosion on gravel roads. Undersized culverts should be replaced, and new culverts should be properly sized. In addition to reducing downstream erosion, constructing culverts wider than a stream’s normal width can also facilitate passage of certain species such as fisher and bobcat. Providing periodic breaks in guardrails can improve the permeability of a road for moose and deer, and increase human safety by allowing large animals to cross the road quickly. The construction of new roads in unfragmented core forest habitat areas should be extremely limited and governed by the Town’s established development guidelines and bylaws.

## **Priorities for Transportation Investments**

While Elmore was fortunate in comparison to many communities in southern Vermont, the town did sustain significant damage to local highway infrastructure during Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. Accordingly, transportation planning priorities are primarily associated with investments in mitigation, to avoid future losses. At this time, Elmore does not anticipate any major new highway construction projects during the coming planning cycle.

## **Goal**

- To provide a safe and efficient transportation network, that utilizes a variety of modes and is maintained in a cost-effective manner.

## **Objectives, Policies & Recommendations**

### *Local Highways*

Objective: The town highway system should be safe and efficient for both motorized and non-motorized forms of transportation.

Policies:

- Future growth in Elmore should occur in areas and under such conditions that the demand for increased transportation services will not significantly affect the tax burden for existing residents.
- 
-

- The construction of new transportation infrastructure, including roads, bridges and culverts, should be planned with a high-level of sensitivity towards potential wildlife impacts, including habitat fragmentation and the disturbance of fish passages.
- New roads, whether public or private, shall not be constructed in the Forest Reserve District.

Recommendations:

- Elmore's town highway standard should prioritize mitigation measures, such as increasing minimum culvert diameters, to protect roads from future flooding events.
- The Planning Commission and Selectboard should consider developing additional standards in Road Standards and/or Zoning and Subdivision Regulations (such as conditional use review) for the construction of roads on steep slopes within important natural areas and wildlife habitats. This action will allow the location of roads in Elmore to be modified to avoid sensitive habitat areas.

*Alternative Transportation*

Objective: Pedestrian and non-vehicular transportation networks should be safe and conveniently located to encourage their use.

Policy: The Town of Elmore encourages the expansion of public transit opportunities in town, such as van service to bring residents to and from shopping and other services in Morristown/Stowe.

Recommendations:

- The town should work with AOT to establish a crosswalk across Route 12, from the Elmore Store to the Lake School.
- The Planning Commission should help promote "Go Vermont" and other programs that encourage carpools and ride-sharing ([www.connectingcommuters.org](http://www.connectingcommuters.org)).
- The town should work with LCPC to identify potential sites for transit stops or additional park-and-ride lots, along with accompanying shelter areas, where feasible.
- As the AOT plans future improvements to Route 12, Elmore and the LCPC should advocate for wider shoulders, to accommodate bicyclists and other alternative forms of transportation.
- The town should contact AOT regarding the feasibility of installing sidewalks between Elmore State Park and the Elmore Store.
- Elmore should advocate for the development of a recreational trail between Lake Elmore, south through the Putnam State Forest trails network and onward to a trailhead on Route 12.



## CHAPTER 5: Community Facilities and Services

### Public Buildings and Public Facilities

Approximately one thousand six hundred and ten acres of Elmore are public lands. Figure 3 below shows existing public land in Elmore including the lake, state park, state forest and municipal lands. Additional semi-public facilities in town include the Elmore Church site, situated on 1.2 acres of land used to hold community gatherings. **See Map 6 in Appendix A** for the location of community facilities, services and public land in Elmore.

.25 acres - Lake Elmore School and schoolyard
.25 acres - Town Clerk office building
.25 acres - Town Hall
3.1 acres - Town garage and fire department buildings
2.52 acres - Cemetery lands
1,604.14 acres - State park and forest

**Figure 3:** Public lands by acreage in Elmore.

### Hospitals

The area is served by Copley Hospital in Morrisville, VT, Fletcher Allen Health Care in Burlington, VT, Central Vermont Medical Center in Berlin, VT and the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center located in Lebanon, NH.

### Libraries

The Morristown Centennial Library serves the area. The Stowe Free Library also serves the residents of Elmore with an annual \$10 usage fee for access to all library resources.

### Water Supply

The Town of Elmore has no municipal water supply. There are, however, private community water cooperatives. The Town of Elmore is a member of a water cooperative serving 23 hook-ups in Elmore Village. The spring house that supplies this water cooperative must comply with the State of Vermont Water Resources Department regulations. At the present time, there are no expansion plans for the village water cooperative.

Many of Elmore's rural residential homes are served by private water systems supplied by shallow springs. Some of these are gravity-fed systems that can be located on a neighbor's property or some distance from the homes they serve. These types of springs can be adversely affected by nearby development which can pose a threat to water supply by the construction of new wells or water potability, by the installation of septic systems. An increase in population density may pose a serious water supply problem for these water systems.

### Sewage Disposal

Elmore has no central wastewater treatment facility. Sewage is treated in individual on-

site septic systems. State regulations govern new and replacement systems (i.e., perk tests and septic designs).

In 2002 new State wastewater regulations were passed and phased in by 2007. These new rules allow 'alternative systems. However, the legislation also removed the statewide ten acre exemption. Under previous law, homes located on lots 10 acres or greater in size were not required to have a permitted septic system. Conventional septic fields are limited to slopes less than 20% and other site conditions such as percolation rates and depth to groundwater. New alternative systems may be located in many areas that could not support a conventional septic field. Over time, this may result in new development pressures on areas previously considered "unbuildable" On the other hand, alternative systems may also allow better treatment of wastewater on small, existing lots, such as those around Lake Elmore.

In 2007, all wastewater permitting responsibilities shifted to the state level, eliminating the need for local septic permits unless towns voted to take over the permitting process. Many towns decided to turn over the responsibility to the state in 2007 because of the rising costs involved in permitting locally. New state regulations require that sewage officers be licensed engineers or site technicians.

## **Refuse Disposal**

Refuse disposal is handled on an individual basis by residents who either make private arrangements or transport their own trash and recyclable products to a small transfer station (Morrisville and Stowe offer local stations). Elmore is a voting member of the Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District and complies with district rules and regulations. It is the district's policy to try to avoid burying refuse in the ground by recycling as much as possible.

Disposing 'household hazardous waste' is very costly for the solid waste district and is usually handled as a district-wide event. Educating the community about what products to avoid buying would help reduce the cost of disposing hazardous products.

Disposal of hazardous waste is governed by state and federal laws. Salvage yards and the open storage of junk and vehicles are regulated locally through zoning.

## **Public Safety**

### Fire Protection

Elmore has a volunteer fire department, which was formed in 1983. The Elmore Fire Department operates from a station located adjacent to the town's garage, located on Beach Road (map 20, block 20, lot 21). Elmore is a participant of the Lamoille County Mutual Aid Network for dealing with large fires. Elmore and Wolcott have a special arrangement whereby both departments respond to each other's fire calls.

The Fire Department provides the following services listed below.

1. Fire suppression

2. Search and rescue
3. Water rescue
4. Hazardous Materials (Haz Mat) protection
5. Emergency management
6. Fire prevention
7. Education
8. Auto extrication
9. Vermont rural fire protection
10. Carbon monoxide alarm investigations
11. Home inspections for fire insurance companies
12. Residential Dry-hydrant testing

Additionally, members of the Elmore Fire Department participate in the 'Early Intervention' educational program, Act 250 hearings, and town planning meetings.

In 1998, Elmore built a fire station at the site of the town garage. This was important to the maintenance and care of fire trucks and the storage of personal gear for the firemen. Other improvements have been made over the past few years including the addition of an emergency generator for the station and a 4,000 gallon underground water tank for filling tankers.

The Fire Department has also been active in applying for grants to construct 13 dry hydrants around town and to purchase pagers and wildland protective gear. Additionally, a Capital Equipment fund is maintained to defray replacement costs. The current vehicle inventory consists of the following:

2500 Gallon Pumper Tanker Truck:

purchased date - 2011  
purchased price - \$300,000  
projected replacement schedule - 2036  
projected replacement cost - not able to project at this time

1989 GMC Rescue Truck:

purchased date - 2011  
purchased price - \$23,000  
replacement schedule - 2027  
replacement cost - not able to project at this time

1979 International Pumper; Reel Truck:

purchased date - 2002  
purchased price - \$23,000  
replacement schedule - 2018  
replacement cost - \$25,000

2003 GMC 2500 Pickup Truck:

purchased date - 2012  
purchased price - \$7,000 with painting, lighting and lettering  
replacement schedule - 2020  
replacement cost - \$10,000

All dates and replacement amounts are approximate.

#### Police Protection

Police protection is supplied by the Vermont State Police Department. Dispatch out of the State Police Department provides for 911 emergency services. Traffic enforcement in Elmore is provided by the Lamoille County Sheriff's Department. As a result of the Town's reliance on state police (Williston barracks), Elmore residents face longer response times (1-2 hours) to local crimes. The Elmore Planning Commission and Selectboard should consider participating in a county-wide discussion with other Lamoille County town officials to discuss the need for local police protection.

#### Emergency Rescue

The Morristown Rescue Squad responds to most Elmore emergencies. Lamoille Rescue Squad is available as a back-up service. Additionally, the Vermont State Police Search and Rescue Team and the Elmore Fire Department respond to reports of missing hikers. During the winter months, the Stowe Hazardous Terrain Team responds to emergencies dealing with hazardous terrain.

#### Water Safety

The Vermont State Police and the Elmore Fire Department respond to boating accidents. There are currently no public boats maintained locally for water rescue.

### **Recreation Facilities**

Overview: Lake Elmore and Elmore State Forest offers the most visible recreation opportunities to residents and visitors. Traditionally, Elmore's private lands have provided opportunities to snowmobile, ski, hike and hunt. See below for a list and brief description of public and private recreation lands in Elmore.

#### *Public Lands*

- a) Elmore State Park/Lake Elmore: For more information on Elmore State Park see Chapter 3 on natural and scenic resources.
- b) Putnam State Forest: In 2008, the state long-range plan for Putnam State Forest was due for revision. This revision was completed as part of the Worcester Management Unit in fiscal year 2011.

Putnam State Forest is open for low impact public recreation. No mechanized transportation is allowed, with the exception of snow machines on designated VAST trails. Low-impact camping is allowed when obtaining prior permission from the Barre District Office of Vermont State Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. Currently, there is no fee for use.

- c) Forest Legacy Parcel: The Atlas/Forest Legacy Parcel (Wagner Woodlands Timber property) located in between Elmore State Park and Putnam State Forest, is open for low impact public recreation. No mechanized means of transportation are allowed, with the exception of snow machines on

designated VAST trails. Residents and visitors may access the Forest Legacy parcel for free.

- d) Fishing Access: The Vermont State Department of Fish and Wildlife maintains boat and fishing access on Lake Elmore. These amenities are open to the public free of charge.
- e) Town-Owned Recreation Land: Several town-owned properties also provide recreational opportunities for Elmore residents. These include the schoolyard and Stanley Merriam Park, open to the public after school hours, for sports activities, playground use and other low impact recreation purposes. The Town also owns public lake frontage on Lake Elmore at the Town Garage and Town Hall, though it is not publicly accessible.

### *Private Lands*

- a) Private-Owned Recreation Land  
The Catamount Trail Association and the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers depend on the use of private property to provide hiking, snowmobile, snowshoe and cross country ski trails. Additionally, hunters, fishermen and trappers, have traditionally relied on the generosity of private landowners for the recreational use of those lands.

Additional measures to protect land owners are enforced through the Vermont Recreation Use Statute; Title 12, part 9, section 203. Title 12 states that when a land owner makes their land available for public use without consideration for recreational uses, this statement shall not be misinterpreted to 1) limit property owner rights, 2) limit the ability of a land owner and recreation user to enter into an agreement for recreational uses, 3) support any claim of eminent domain, 4) create any duty of an owner to inspect their land for dangerous conditions, and 5) relieve any users from their obligation to exercise proper safety while participating in recreational activities.

### **Communication Towers**

Under present standards, towers are considered telecommunications facilities. These towers have begun to raise planning concerns related to the health of Elmore residents and visitors, as well as scenic resources. Wireless communications facilities may emit electromagnetic radiation which affect human health, may conflict with other forms of development, and raise issues of aesthetic impact. To ensure adequate transmission of signals, towers and related facilities are often confined to hilltops or high elevation points. Due to their higher visibility, conflict with scenic landscapes has become an issue. To avoid these issues, both public and private utility companies are advised to situate and construct telecommunication infrastructure and facilities based on the policies and standards listed on pages 41 and 42 of this plan.

## **Facility/Service Priorities and Funding Opportunities**

### *Water Supply and Waste Water Treatment*

Currently, Elmore has no municipal water supply or central wastewater treatment facility. This puts tremendous pressure on private residents and businesses to maintain individual septic systems and seek outside sources for drinking water supply. Rising numbers of individual septic systems increases the risk of both surface and groundwater pollution in the central village area and along Lake Elmore. Additionally, economic growth is limited by the lack of municipal water and sewer infrastructure. To minimize water pollution, the town of Elmore should consider water and sewer updates for lake front developments. Implementing municipal water systems and waste treatment facilities can be a costly procedure. However, there are funding opportunities available to construct and update these systems.

Funding opportunities for water and waste disposal systems are available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development Program and the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The Rural Development program offers a wide range of utility grants and loans to assist rural communities in financing utility and infrastructure improvements. The DEC offers Public Water System Construction Loans to both municipalities and nonprofit water cooperatives. For more information on these funding opportunities visit [www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov) and [www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/](http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/). Additionally, for towns in the preliminary stages of water and sewer updates, DEC offers a Planning Advance for decentralized wastewater feasibility studies. For more information on this funding opportunity please contact Don Robisky at 802-654-8991.

Another strategy for financing water and sewage treatment systems is developing a Tax Increment Financing district (TIF). TIF districts are typically designated by a municipality to target areas in need of economic growth or public infrastructure improvements. Initial improvements are commonly financed through federal or state bonds, grants and loans. Financial debt acquired during the construction and implementation process is repaid by property tax revenue generated from the targeted infrastructure or facility improvement. Examples of towns in Vermont that have successfully implemented TIF districts to fund water and sewer expansions include Milton, Newport City and Winooski. To learn more about existing TIF districts in Vermont visit the Vermont Legislature's 2011-2012 Legislative Reports listing online at <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/reports/allreports.cfm?Type=Other&Session=2012>.

### *Recreation and Community Facilities*

Given the nature of Elmore's rural character it is important to maintain and protect the town's valuable recreational resources. To assist in developing new or updating existing recreation and community facilities funding assistance is available through the Department of Buildings and General Services (DBGS) and the USDA's Rural Development Program. DBGS offers a Recreational Facilities Grant Program to financially assist municipalities and non-profit organizations in developing recreation opportunities in Vermont communities. The USDA Community Facilities Grant Program provides a wider range of assistance to rural areas, by awarding grants to municipalities, counties and nonprofit organizations engaged in constructing, expanding or improving essential community facilities. To learn more about recreation and community facility funding

opportunities visit [www.bgs.vermont.gov/](http://www.bgs.vermont.gov/) and [www.rurdev.usda.gov/](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/).

## Goal

- To ensure adequate public facilities and services are available to protect and enhance the lives of residents and visitors of Elmore.

## Objectives, Policies and Recommendations

### *Public Buildings and Facilities*

Objective: To maximize positive aspects of the present use of public and semi-public buildings, facilities, and lands.

Recommendation:

- The town should develop a maintenance plan and capital budget to preserve public property and equipment.

### *Water Supply*

Objective: Personal water supplies should be safe and of adequate quantity.

Policy: Any new water supply must meet state water supply rules including isolation distances.

Recommendation:

- Zoning and subdivision regulations should require the identification of existing and proposed water supply locations to ensure water quality is protected.

### *Sewage Disposal*

Objective: To preserve public health and prevent pollution of surface or groundwater.

Policies:

- Ensure that State regulations for wastewater disposal are followed. Conventional septic fields are not permitted on slopes greater than 20%.
- 

Recommendations:

- The Planning Commission and Selectboard should discuss the future of wastewater treatment and permitting in town to address the permitting changes that took effect in 2007. The Planning Commission should evaluate how the introduction of new "alternative" wastewater treatment systems may impact future land use and development patterns in Elmore.
- The Planning Commission should consider having a decentralized wastewater feasibility study conducted for Lake Elmore and Elmore Village properties.

### *Refuse Disposal*

Objective: To ensure Elmore businesses and residents can responsibly dispose of solid waste and are incentivized to reduce the amount of waste generated by increasing recycling efforts. This study should consider the impact on taxpayers.

Policy: All projects should provide for adequate removal of solid waste. Backyard burning of trash is prohibited.

Recommendation:

- The 2012 Elmore Junk Storage Ordinance will be consistently enforced as written to manage junk storage refuse.

### *Public Safety*

Objective: To protect the health, safety and welfare of Elmore residents and visitors.

Policies:

- The town supports the public safety activities of the Elmore Fire Department.
- All development should be accessible to emergency vehicles.
- Large developments, and developments in remote locations, should include fire ponds and dry hydrants to aid in fire fighting, if similar resources are not available nearby.

Recommendations:

- The town should consider options to improve water rescues including budgeting for the purchase of a rescue boat, portable defibrillator or other life saving equipment to aid the Elmore Fire Department in rescue operations on Lake Elmore.

### *Recreation*

Objective: To maintain current low-impact public and private recreational uses.

Policy: Elmore supports local land owners who generously keep their lands open to traditional recreational uses such as hiking, hunting, fishing, horseback riding and for VAST trails use.

Recommendations:

- The Planning Commission should continue to participate in the state's process to update the Putnam Forest Management Plan.
- The town should secure funding to map and mark all town rights-of-way.
- The Selectboard should review alternatives to create a legal right-of-way to provide access to Little Elmore, if one does not exist.
- The Planning Commission should meet annually with the Lake Elmore Association for sharing information and to address concerns if they arise.
- The Planning Commission and Selectboard should explore potential free access to the beach for Town residents.
- The town should talk with relevant property owners and the Department of Fish and Wildlife to consider requesting that the State renew its former lease to allow fishing access on Little Elmore.

### *Communication Towers*

Objective: To support the enhancement of a telecommunication network when such facilities do not have significant adverse environmental, health or aesthetic impacts.



## Policies:

- In order to minimize tower proliferation, it is the policy of the town to encourage applicants to exhaust all reasonable options for sharing space on existing towers and tower sites prior to proposing new sites and related facilities. The principle of co-location is the favored alternative. When determining the feasibility of co-location, proposers shall evaluate the following site requirements: space available on existing towers, the tower owner's ability to lease space, geographic service area requirements, mechanical or electrical incompatibilities, the comparative costs of co-location and new construction, and regulatory limitations.
- One of the town's principal scenic qualities is its ridgelines and mountainsides. These areas are significant contributors to the maintenance and enjoyment of Elmore's rural character. These ridges are predominately undeveloped and provide an unbroken skyline when viewed from the valley floor. The use of the town's ridges for telecommunication towers and related facilities needs to be undertaken in a manner that will not detract nor adversely affect these scenic values. Accordingly, protection of these areas from insensitive developments is a matter of public good. To minimize conflict with scenic values, facility design and construction shall employ the following principles listed below.
  - a. Where feasible, site towers/facilities in areas not highly visible to the traveling public, or from residential, historic district, public use, and outdoor recreation areas including hiking trails and beaches.
  - b. Locate towers/facilities in forested areas or sufficiently landscape to screen the lower sections of towers and related ground fixtures from public vantage points, such as trails, roads or water bodies.
  - c. Utilize materials, architectural styles, color schemes, lighting fixtures, mass and other design elements to promote aesthetic compatibility with surrounding uses and to avoid adverse visual impacts.
  - d. Where prominent views of a site exist, locate towers downgrade of the ridge so they don't exceed the elevation of the immediate ridge.
  - e. When constructions of access roads are involved, minimize their visibility by situating roads along the natural contour of the land, and avoid open fields or meadows.
  - f. Avoid peaks and ridges which function as regional focal points.
  - g. The height of towers should not exceed that of the tree canopy in forested areas.
  - h. No access roads (this does not include logging roads) suitable for vehicle traffic should be constructed on the Worcester Range above 1,500 feet in elevation.
  - i. Avoid using external lights.
- In planning for telecommunication facilities, consideration shall be given to the environmental limitations of any given site. Impacts resulting from the use of wildlife habitats, forestry, agricultural lands, and similar resources should be carefully addressed. Projects that materially impact these resources shall be discouraged.

- Towers, antennas, and related fixtures that fall into disuse, or are discontinued shall be removed by the facility owner to retain the values set forth above. The owner may be required to post bond for removal.

Recommendation:

- Periodically review the telecommunications provisions in the zoning bylaws to ensure the above goals and policies are supported.

## CHAPTER 6: Education Plan

### Overview

#### *Local Schools*

Currently, children residing in Elmore attend the town's one-room elementary school, Lake Elmore School (**See Map 6 in Appendix A**), the last operating one-room schoolhouse in Vermont. This facility has a capacity of 23 students. Every June, expected enrollments for the fall semester are reviewed by the School Board. The decision of which grades/students will be sent out of Elmore is made on the basis of this review. The goal of the Town is to operate at full capacity with a consistent student population. The question of continuing to operate and maintain a public school in Elmore has been raised by local concerned citizens and pending state legislation. The Town of Elmore supports the continued operation of the last remaining one-room schoolhouse in Vermont located in the village of Elmore. If State statute dictates specific actions need to be taken that would affect the Elmore school, it will be taken into consideration by the appropriate Elmore municipal entities and the School Board.

Per the existing school policy, elementary school children who cannot be accommodated in the one-room Elmore school building are eligible to attend any public or private state supported school. Morristown Elementary School is the 'designated' school for Elmore elementary children and guarantees admittance for Elmore students. Additionally, the school district pays tuition for students in grades 7-12 who attend schools outside Elmore. Morristown has recently renovated and updated their facilities to meet population growth and to provide appropriate educational programs.

Elmore middle and high school students attend any school of their choice that has available capacity at the time of enrollment. Since bus transportation is only provided to Morrisville, the majority (52) of Elmore's middle and high school students attend Peoples Academy in Morrisville. Presently, only 6 Elmore students attend other secondary schools such as the Stowe Middle and High School and other private schools in the area. Some surrounding schools within the Lamoille Valley region provide busing service.

As a result of Act 60, passed in the 1997 legislative session, the system for funding education changed dramatically. This legislation provides for a statewide education tax rate and requires that towns with greater property wealth share their resources with communities facing limited property wealth. Elmore residents continue to vote on their school budget at Town Meetings. However, under Act 60, the state instead of the Selectboard sets the education tax rate. To encourage communities to take advantage of shared educational facilities and resources, the Vermont State Legislature will vote in April, 2013 on centralizing school services throughout the state.

#### *Early Education Services*

Early education has been shown to be critical to the future success of children in school. There are a variety of early care and educational opportunities available. The Lamoille

Family Center offers a range of early education services through a coordinated service network known as Children's Integrated Services (CIS). Programs offered through this network include Maternal Child Health, Early Childhood and Family Mental Health, and the Early Intervention Program for children with developmental delays.

The Maternal Child Health program provides both nursing and family support services to expecting and new mothers as well as children from birth to age six. Nursing services focus on the promotion of healthy lifestyles during pregnancy, childbirth, child growth, and the transition to parenting. Additionally, this program helps new parents find high quality health and child care within their area. Family support services highlight successful development of life skills in young adults to assist them in achieving lifelong educational, economic and parental goals.

The Early Childhood and Mental Health program provides educational assistance to children ages zero to six to address emotional-social development needs. Consultation and case manager services are available through this program for families with children that are experiencing behavioral challenges. The Early Intervention program on the other hand, offers a network of services to children with developmental disabilities from ages zero to three. Services available through this program include speech, occupational and physical therapy as well as developmental education.

After age 3, children previously enrolled in the Early Intervention program may receive continued support through the Early Essential Education Program (EEE) sponsored by the State Department of Education. EEE provides screening and educational support for three to five year olds in need of pre-school services. Speech, hearing, and developmental progress are assessed, and individualized programs are developed for students found in need of service.

Additionally, statewide early education resources include the Building Bright Futures program. This service focuses on the health and educational success of children up to age six, by improving accessibility and affordability of education and child care. At the local level, Building Bright Futures is facilitated through 12 Regional Councils throughout the State, and relies on the participation of community members, parents and early childhood care professionals. Each council such as Morrisville Building Bright Futures coordinates local programs while notifying the State of gaps in early education services. For more information on the Building Bright Futures program visit: [www.buildingbrightfutures.org/](http://www.buildingbrightfutures.org/).

### *Child Care Support Services*

The Lamoille Family Center (LFC) offers a variety of child care programs and services including the Birth to Three Project, resource development, care referral, financial assistance, the LFC Child Care Center, playgroups and the Child and Adult Food Care Program. The Birth to Three Project employs a Child Care Mentor to communicate with registered, family and neighbor care providers to address how the quality of care may be improved. In the case of the Child Care Resource Development program, a specialist seeks to improve the quality of care by offering professional development opportunities to child care providers. These opportunities include literacy and child care visits as well as trainings on childhood development, positive learning environments, active listening,

nutrition, and Vermont Early Learning Standards. Additionally, to receive statewide recognition, childcare programs are eligible to apply for Vermont's STARS rating system. For information on STARS visit:

<http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/stars/>.

To assist parents with finding quality care providers in their area, the Child Care Referral program employs a referral specialist to maintain a database of registered caregivers in Lamoille Valley. A specialist will assist parents in identifying appropriate caregivers that will best meet the needs of their children.

To assist income eligible families with affording quality child care, the Lamoille Family Center offers a Child Care Financial Assistance program. For qualified participants, payments will be paid directly to caregivers by the State of Vermont. Financial Specialists are available to assist interested parents in filing applications and identifying whether they meet income qualifications.

The Lamoille Family Center recognizes that operating a child care service can pose financial constraints as well. To help pay for nutritional meals provided at care centers, LFC offers the Child and Adult Care Food Program. This federal program reimburses child care program operators for meals distributed to children during hours of operation.

In addition to the variety of child care services mentioned above, the LFC also offers educational workshops for parents. Common workshop topics include challenging behaviors, safe computer use, and healthy childhood sexual behavior. Additionally, the Lamoille Family Center offers Playgroups September through May, providing both children and parents with an opportunity to socialize with neighboring families. Regularly scheduled play dates are key to a child's cognitive development and teaches them from an early age how to cooperatively play with others. For more information on child care and early education programs offered through the LFC call 802-888-5229 or visit <http://www.lamoillefamilycenter.org/>.

The availability of before and after school care is very important to the children and their families who reside in Elmore. Elmore has several licensed professionals that offer family daycare services based out of their home residence in Elmore. These home daycare facilities provide care for children of all ages including infants and toddlers. Additionally, the Lamoille Family Center's Child Care Center offers on site supervision for children under the age of three that qualify for early intervention.

### **Goal**

To plan for the future of Elmore in a way that allows for quality educational services and adequate facilities for all local residents without placing an undue burden on taxpayers.

## **Objectives, Policies, and Recommendations**

### *Facilities*

Objective: To ensure safe and adequate facilities are available to provide for the education of residents.

Policy:

- The Elmore School Board should continue to evaluate what is in the best interest of students and taxpayers with regard to maintaining or expanding the current Lake Elmore

Recommendation:

- The School Board should continue to monitor the needs of students and assess the most effective way of meeting those needs to ensure students have access to high quality education.
- The School Board should invite parents and community members to review the current safety policies for all schools accessed by Elmore children and address areas found to be inadequate.

### *Services*

Objective: To provide a quality education to the children of Elmore.

Policy:

- Elmore recognizes the importance of early care and education to the community and supports the development of these types of services.

Recommendations:

- The School Board and Planning Commission should meet periodically to address issues and concerns regarding growth in town and future educational programs and facilities.
- Elmore child care facilities are encouraged to achieve a four stars or higher rating through the State's STARS program.

## CHAPTER 7: Housing

### Housing Demographics

Single-family units are the predominate form of housing in Elmore. A breakdown of housing from the 2012 Grand List records is as follows:

- 172 residential homes on 6 or less acres
- 161 residential homes on 6+ acres
- 4 mobile homes without land
- 14 mobile homes with land
- 106 vacation homes on 6 or less acres
- 58 vacation homes on 6+ acres
- 8 operating farms
- 3 commercial buildings

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2010 467 (90.8%) out of 515 total housing units in Elmore were single-family dwellings. While the population from 2000 to 2010 only increased by 6%, the number of housing units increased by 27%. Additionally, during the same time period, the number of vacation units increased from 145 to 159. While the total number of housing units in Elmore has increased, the vacancy rate has raised from 27% in 2000 to 32.6% in 2010. Out of the 515 housing units, approximately 177 are classified as vacant. The rise in vacancy rates may largely be attributed to the increase in vacation homes built over the past 12 years. Overall, 317 housing units are owner-occupied while 159 are seasonal, and only 49 are renter occupied.

### *Median Housing Costs*

According to the 2010 Census, the median value of homes in Elmore is \$241,400. This figure is for property value, whether or not it is for sale. However, this figure does not take into account the stability of Elmore's tax rates, which can attract new homeowners. Tax rates in Elmore have been stable for over a decade. The figures on the table below reflect actual sale prices of houses in Elmore sold in 2012.

House Type	Sales Price	Number of Valid Sales
House on 6 acres or less	331,666	3
House on 6 acres or more	225,333	3
Open land/Woodland	48,250	4
Source: Vermont Property Transfer Records		

**Table 4:** Average Sales Prices, Elmore 2012

The Department of Housing and Community Affairs housing policy states that housing is affordable when the cost of housing does not exceed 30% of a household's income. This 30% figure is based on households earning 80% of the median county income. The affordability figure for Lamoille County is \$1,044.68 per month (\$52,232 median

household income; \$41,748.56 is 80% of Lamoille County median income; \$12,535.68 is 30% of the 80% figure; divided by 12 months). During the 2010 Census, figures for homeowners were calculated for Elmore. Median costs were \$1,209 per month for those with a mortgage and \$500 for those without a mortgage. By the definition above, Elmore's housing is not considered affordable to the average county resident. When residents were asked about affordability during the 2010 Census, 21.4% of residents had mortgage payments that were not affordable.

In contrast to homeowners, the median rent in Elmore of six hundred and fourteen dollars is considered affordable. This figure does not include utility expenses. Only 16.7% of residents classified their rent as unaffordable. However, this figure has jumped a great deal since 2000 when only 7% of renters' payments were considered unaffordable.

Since 2000, regionally housing affordability has increasingly become a major concern for Lamoille County residents and prospective buyers. Incomes in Lamoille County increased by only 13% between the two Census counts (2000- 2010) while housing values rose nearly 50%. In comparison, a similar scenario has played out in the Town of Elmore between 2000 and 2010. Income for the average Elmore resident increased by 16% while housing values rose by over 50%.

### **Housing for All Ages**

As noted in the Demographics section of this Plan, Vermont as a whole is aging, and Elmore is not isolated from that trend. As residents age, many may wish to remain in Elmore, but it will become more difficult to take care of large, rural properties. At the same time, housing costs may be prohibitively expensive for younger families and individuals seeking their first home. While Elmore lacks the infrastructure to support large senior housing or affordable housing developments, there are several strategies to address this issue that are in keeping with Elmore's rural character.

#### *Accessory Dwellings*

Based on State Statute, homeowners are allowed to add accessory dwellings (frequently referred to as "in-law apartments") to any single family home. Accessory dwellings are a key component of allowing older residents to "age-in-place." By adding an accessory dwelling, homeowners can provide space within their home to parents or adult children, or supplement their annual earnings with rental income. Accessory dwellings represent an opportunity to create additional housing in Elmore without developing valuable natural areas.

#### *HomeShare*

HomeShare Vermont assists elders and persons with disabilities to live independently in their own home by bringing them together with persons who are seeking affordable housing, and/or, care giving opportunities. HomeShare conducts background checks and monitors matches to ensure safety of those involved. HomeShare expands housing opportunities while maintaining open space, farmland, forests, and other critical environmental areas. For more information visit <http://www.homesharenow.org/> or <http://homesharevermont.org/>.



**Goal**

To encourage the planning of housing which preserves the rural character of Elmore, conserves energy, provides for efficient delivery of public services, and minimizes the impact on forestry and wildlife, while accommodating a variety of income levels, ages, and housing preferences of residents.

**Objectives, Policies and Recommendations***Housing Demographics*

Objective: Elmore should have a variety of housing types to meet the various needs of its residents, including vacation homes, single-family, two-family, mobile homes, and apartments.

## Policies:

- Accessory apartments are encouraged as they provide needed income for the homeowner and small apartments for residents living alone.
- Vacation homes are encouraged in town where appropriate.

## Recommendation:

- The Planning Commission should monitor development trends in various areas of town and neighboring communities.

*Affordable Housing*

Objective: Working residents of Elmore should have the opportunity to find affordable housing, for purchase or rent.

## Policies:

- Sites for manufactured homes are not differentiated from site-built homes in the local permitting process.
- Affordable housing should minimize long-term living costs through high quality design, efficient construction, energy efficiency, and proximity to employment.
- Elmore encourages land use patterns that are inherently more affordable by nature of cost efficiencies associated with construction (e.g. shorter access roads, smaller lots, proximity to utilities).

## Recommendations:

- Elmore should work to promote HomeSharing options among Town Residents.
- The Planning Commission should work with the Lamoille Housing Partnership to find ways to ensure that working residents have housing they can afford.
- The Planning Commission should continue to maintain the option in the zoning bylaws for landowners to create Accessory Dwellings.
- The Planning Commission should consider revisions to encourage greater use of Accessory Dwellings as a tool for creating additional housing in Elmore. Options include, but are not limited to, allowing new accessory dwellings which result in the expansion of the height or floor area of a principal single family dwelling as a permitted rather than conditional use in some districts, and/or expand the definition of an

accessory dwellings to include a two-bedroom dwelling in addition to one bedroom and efficiency dwellings.

### *Housing Development*

Objective: Ensure a pattern of residential growth compatible with Elmore's rural character that does not outstrip the Town's ability to provide necessary services.

#### Policies:

- New residential development should be strategically located to protect important natural resources and critical habitat.
- New residential development should be located in areas where existing infrastructure and roads are in place.
- In order to accomplish the policies listed above, new residential development shall be strictly limited at elevations above 1,300 feet and prohibited at elevations above 1,500 feet.

#### Recommendations:

- Maintain and promote the option in zoning regulations of utilizing Planned Unit developments to cluster development on the least sensitive portion of a property and away from steep slopes, agricultural soils and critical habitat areas. PUDs shall not be permitted to create development above 1,500 feet in elevation.
- Consider developing mechanisms to allow "transfers of development rights" from areas with important natural resources to areas that are more suitable for development.

## CHAPTER 8: Economic Development

Since the last Town Plan was adopted in August 2008, the nation as a whole has experienced a steep economic downturn, recession, and slow recovery. No community, including Elmore, has been spared from the impacts of these events. The local impacts are readily seen in the data contained in this section. These events have demonstrated the importance of developing a diverse local economic base.

With the majority of Elmore residents commuting to other communities for employment, the town's economic future will likely rise and fall with regional trends. Today Elmore has only three commercial properties in town and no industrial buildings. There are still eight operating farms and many acres of working forestland. However, the predominant land use in town remains residential.

For Elmore to have a healthy economy, it must have a diversity of land uses in town. While Elmore lacks the infrastructure to support large businesses, the town encourages rural industries and home businesses as a means to diversify the economy and provide local employment. This diversity is key to maintaining a stable local tax base and provides an opportunity for residents to earn a livable wage locally or within their current residence.

### Labor force

According to the 2010 Census there are approximately four hundred and seventy Elmore residents in the labor force. From 2000 to 2010 the town's labor force increased by twenty seven people (3%). Over the same time period, Elmore's unemployment rate dropped from 5% in 2000 to 3.2% in 2010. According to the 2010 Census, only ten residents work in town, accounting for 2.5% of Elmore's labor force. This figure has dropped by forty nine people since 2000. The decline of residents working in town may largely be attributed to the increasing retired population in Elmore as well as a reduction in home businesses. Currently, two hundred and eighteen (54.2%) residents work within Lamoille County, while one hundred and eighty four (45.8%) work outside the county. Additionally, nine (2.2%) Elmore residents work out of state. The majority of residents who work out of state commute to NH for employment. Towns where less than 30% of residents work in the town in which they live are generally classified as bedroom communities. As Elmore has less than 5% of residents working in town, it is classified as a bedroom community.

Currently, the majority of residents in Elmore are employed in private wage or salary positions (60.2%) while the remaining residents are employed by the government (22.4%) or self employed (16.9%). The remaining .4% of workers are classified as unpaid family workers. As a result of many individuals leaving town for work, the occupations and industries of residents may not reflect local economic activity.

The two most common occupations of people living in Elmore are management, professional, sales/office and service jobs. Currently, the most common industries are education, health care and social services. However, retail trade and manufacturing also make up a significant portion of the employment base for the Town of Elmore. For a more detailed depiction of occupations held by Elmore residents see Tables 5 and 6 below.

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>
Management, professional, and related occupations	167	209
Service occupations	50	70
Sales and office occupations	92	87
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining	5	10
Natural Resources, Construction, and maintenance occupations	61	44
Production, transportation and material moving occupations	38	40
Source: 2000 Census, 2010 American Community Survey		

**Table 5:** Occupations of employed persons living in Elmore

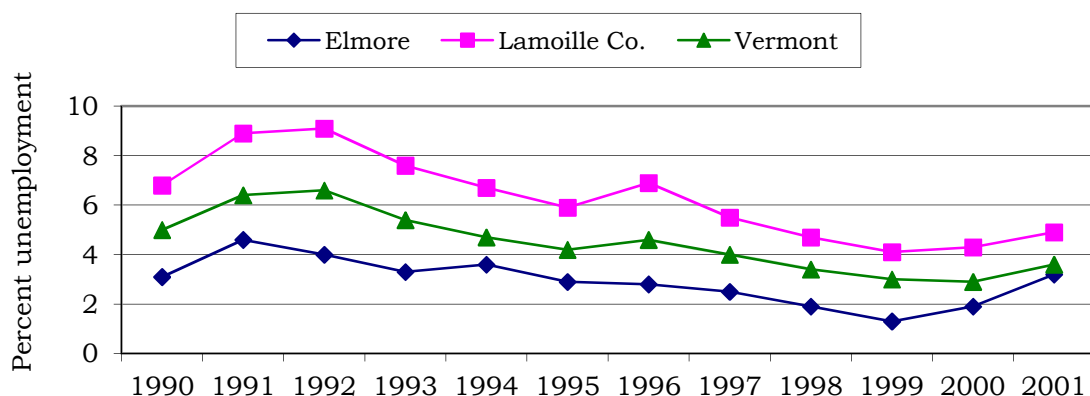
<b>Industry</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining	14	10
Construction	56	52
Manufacturing	38	50
Wholesale trade	16	0
Retail trade	44	69
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	11	15
Information	14	15
Finance, insurance, real estate, leasing	10	0
Professional, scientific, management, administration, and waste management services	15	29
Education, health care, and social services	103	117
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	51	41
Public administration	23	41
Other services	18	11
Source: 2000 Census, 2010 American Community Survey		

**Table 6:** Industry of employed persons living in Elmore

## Unemployment

Unemployment figures are used as a primary indicator of the overall economic health of an area. The figure below shows unemployment rates for Elmore and Lamoille County as compared to Vermont from 1990 to 2001. Unemployment rates for Elmore, Lamoille County, and the state all peaked in 1992 and generally declined until 2000. As mentioned earlier, Elmore's unemployment rate began to rise again in 2000 to 5%. However, as of 2010 the town's unemployment rate slowly began to drop again. Overall, Elmore has tended to maintain an unemployment rate slightly lower than both the county and the

state average.



**Figure 4:** Unemployment rates for Elmore, Lamoille County and Vermont

Source: Department of Employment and Training.

### Income and Poverty

The median household income in Elmore for 1999 was \$45,357. County wide the median household income was \$39,356, and the statewide figure was \$40,856. The 2000 Census identified 51 residents of Elmore whose income level for the year 1999 was at or below poverty level. A look at the distribution of poverty status in Elmore by age range shows that approximately 27% of those persons qualifying for poverty status were under the age of 18. A look at household income sources in Elmore for 1999 shows that 1.0% received income from Supplemental Social Security Income (SSI) and 2.3% received some form of Public Assistance income.

According to the 2010 Census, the current median household income for Elmore is around \$60,792 per year. Elmore's median income has not only increased dramatically over the past decade, but has continued to surpass both the county (\$52,232) and statewide (\$51,841) average. However, the current poverty rate for all families living in Elmore stands at 10.8%. 35.2% of people living at or below the poverty level in Elmore are less than 18 years of age. An additional 20.4% of people facing poverty are 65 or older. Although Elmore currently holds a higher poverty rate than the County (8.7%) and State (7.1%), over 50% of this figure is comprised of children or senior citizens. In the case of children under the age of 18, a large portion of this 35.2% figure may account for teens who have not entered the workforce yet. When it comes to 20.4% of residents over the age of 65, a large portion of the town's poverty rate accounts for retired senior citizens living on fixed incomes.

### Natural Resources and Economic Development

Elmore is renowned as the "Beauty Spot of Vermont." From the unbroken forested backdrop of Elmore Mountain and the calm, pristine shores of Lake Elmore, to the quaint,

country charm of Elmore Village and the quintessential Vermont landscape of open fields surrounded by wooded hedgerows. Elmore's natural beauty and environment is its chief economic asset. These resources attract both residents and visitors alike.

Outdoor Recreation is a major economic driver within the State of Vermont. The ski industry is clearly a major economic force in nearby communities. Efforts are underway to develop a stronger, four season recreational economy. Lake Elmore is a major draw for summer visitors, and other diverse recreational activities abound in Elmore. This provides opportunities for development of businesses directly related to recreation, as well as for other businesses that might sell products or provide services to visitors.

Wildlife-based activities including hunting, fishing, sight-seeing, and photography are estimated to have brought in more than \$383 million dollars to the state's economy (Vermont Forest Resources Plan, 2010). According to a new survey conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Census Bureau, hunters alone spend more than \$189 million in Vermont annually. About \$151 million is spent on equipment, more than \$20 million is trip-related, and more than \$17 million is spent on other items. As discussed in the Natural Resources section, Elmore contains large amounts of core forest habitat, making it an attractive location for hunting and other wildlife based activities. Similarly, Elmore's lakes and ponds are attractive areas for people interested in bird watching, swimming, fishing, and other passive recreational activities.

For Elmore to capitalize on its scenic, natural landscape, these unique qualities must be respected and taken into account as new development occurs. Conservation and protection of these important resources should be considered an economic development strategy as well as a natural resource conservation strategy.

### **Agriculture and Forestry**

While there are few dairy farms left in Elmore, the emergence of new agricultural products has led some to say that Northeastern Vermont is experiencing an "Agricultural Renaissance." New agricultural products being produced in Elmore include organic farming, seed and nursery production, and specialty products such as cheese and bread. More traditional farming products are also still being produced in Elmore, including dairy, Christmas trees, hay, corn and silage, and maple syrup. Both traditional and emerging agricultural products represent avenues for Elmore to continue to have farming as a part of the landscape. Elmore should encourage such operations, as well as all types of diversified farming and value-added agricultural products. In addition to farm enterprises themselves, a vibrant agricultural economy relies on the availability of appropriate infrastructure, including roads, utilities, processing, and storage capacity.

Elmore has a large forested land base. Over the last several decades, many of the large sawmills in the Lamoille County Region have closed, partially due to increased international competition. Currently, much of the timber produced in Lamoille County is exported to Canada for milling. Increasing the amount of forest products processed in Elmore could provide local employment as well as an incentive for landowners to maintain forestland, rather than convert it to residential development.

### *Agricultural Diversity*

While it is unlikely that a large traditional sawmill would be located in Elmore, small “backyard” mills, portable mills, wood pellet producers, firewood suppliers, cottage furniture makers and wood turners all represent potential opportunities to process timber products within Elmore. Currently, there is only one wood pellet producer in Vermont, located in Rutland. Small-scale wood pellet production represents an especially unique economic development opportunity for Elmore to pursue in an effort to diversify forestry products and stimulate in-town job growth.

In addition to diversifying the number of wood-based products, agricultural production in Elmore would economically benefit from growing and producing a variety of vegetable, dairy, and value-added products. Additional value-added product opportunities may include producing hemp or beer hops to sell to local breweries.

### **Elmore Village**

Elmore Village is the traditional civic and commercial center of Elmore. This area is where the town’s highest residential densities are expected, along with small businesses serving the Elmore community. Mixed uses (such as dwellings in second stories above stores) are allowed in this area. Generally, development shall be designed to be compatible with existing development with regard to building styles, materials, scale and orientation.

Elmore village is served by a small water cooperative. This alleviates the need for each property to provide its own water supply. More area can be devoted to structures, septic fields, parking, and other infrastructure due to the lack of conflicting setbacks from private wells.

Most buildings in Elmore Village are served by private, onsite septic systems, creating a natural limit to the amount of development in the area. Certain commercial uses, such as offices and retail stores, require significantly less wastewater capacity than residential uses. As a result, property owners could conceivably develop new, small businesses in existing buildings and lots within the village, providing local employment for Elmore residents.

Parking is another limiting factor to economic development in the village. By allowing flexible parking regulations, and encouraging offsite, shared, and on-street parking, new parking can be incorporated into the existing fabric of the village.

The State of Vermont “Village Center Designation” program provides tax credits for repairs and code improvements to historic, non-residential properties located within a Designated Village Center. Utilization of these tax credits can create an incentive for businesses to refurbish existing structures and locate in the village rather than an outlying area. In order to receive Village Center Designation, a town must submit an application to the Vermont Downtown Board. Elmore should consider applying for Village Center Designation for Elmore Village.



### **Elmore Mountain and the Forest District**

Elmore Mountain is perhaps the most prominent physical feature found in the Town of Elmore. The Mountain is visible throughout Elmore and surrounding communities. The unbroken, forested landscape of Elmore Mountain and the Worcester Range is a key reason why people chose to live in or visit Elmore. Residential and commercial development in this area should be extremely limited, and is prohibited above 1,500 feet in elevation. In areas below 1,500 feet, careful consideration shall be given to the location of proposed structures, roads, and clearing areas to maintain the scenic qualities of the forested backdrop, prevent soil erosion, and avoid impacts on important natural resources such as wildlife habitat. Low impact outdoor recreational activities such as hiking trails, camping (without structures), hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing, are all permitted uses in this area. Responsible forest management that meets Vermont State Accepted Management Practices (AMPS) is encouraged. Limited onsite processing of forestry products (such as use of portable mills at logging sites) is allowed, provided no permanent structures are created. Clearing of forestland for the purpose of future development is expressly prohibited.

### **Lake Elmore and other Shoreland Areas**

The goal of Shoreland areas is to protect the sensitive shorelines of the large lakes in Elmore, including Lake Elmore, Little Lake Elmore, and Hardwood Pond. As a result, development in these areas is fairly limited.

The shorelines of Little Lake Elmore and Hardwood Pond are largely undeveloped, and should remain in this state. Activities that encourage people to enjoy the shorelands while respecting their ecological integrity, such as bird watching, swimming, fishing, and other passive recreational activities are appropriate uses in these areas. These areas may attract visitors to Elmore to enjoy such activities. Visitors should be encouraged to visit or purchase items from businesses located in other parts of town. To further encourage recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors along the lake shore, the Town of Elmore should consider hosting annual events such as boat racing, fishing tournaments, ice boating, and summer music events. Annual events can assist in attracting new visitors to support local businesses.

Much of Lake Elmore's shoreline has been developed with vacation homes and camps. These uses provide a customer base for Elmore businesses, and provide tax revenue to the town. It is expected that some structures in the shoreland area will be renovated and upgraded to include modern comforts and amenities. However, such upgrades should be in keeping with the scale and character of existing structures on the lake, and should not create more than 10% impervious coverage on any given lot.

Elmore State Park is located on the North Shore of Lake Elmore. In 2011, the State Park brought in 30,605 visitors to Elmore. 19,097 of those visitors accounted for people visiting the park for day use only, while approximately 11,508 visitors were overnight campers. Over the past two decades, Elmore State Park has attracted a wide range of visitors to the Town of Elmore. Visitor numbers have ranged from 22,000 to 35,000. Table 7 below takes a closer look at the visitor history for Elmore State Park. As visitor numbers have



fluctuated over time, dips and peaks in annual numbers reflect both economic growth and the recent recession. However, since 2009 visitor numbers have continued to rise. Due to the proximity of the State Park to Elmore Village, these visitors represent a potential market for village based businesses that could be further developed.

Year	Number of Visitors
1991	35,696
1996	32,039
2001	34,595
2006	24,142
2011	30,605
Source: Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation, 2012	

**Table 7:** Elmore State Park Visitors from 1991-2011

### **Rural Off Shore Areas (East and West)**

This area covers most of Elmore. Small businesses and industries, home businesses, outdoor recreation, farming and forestry, including value-added operations, and small scale hospitality establishments such as Bed and Breakfasts and agri-tourism are encouraged in this area. However they must have a minimal environmental or aesthetic impact. Rural offshore areas in Elmore provide a unique opportunity to expand the hospitality market, while tapping into the area's peaceful rural environment. Converting existing structures into cabins or a Bed and Breakfast represent financial opportunities for local home and business owners.

#### *Agri-tourism*

Rural areas provide an opportunity to increase agricultural sales by promoting agri-tourism. Agri-tourism activities may include hosting annual food and music festivals to support local farming operations. Another approach to supporting a town's agricultural economy is to host apprenticeships, internships and volunteer days or weekends to allow visitors and seasonal workers to work on local farms.

### **Goal**

Elmore should have a balanced and diverse local economy.

### **Objectives, Policies and Recommendations**

#### *Local Employment*

Objective: Elmore should have local employment opportunities that provide rewarding jobs at a livable wage.

#### Policies:

- Home occupations are encouraged and supported provided they do not conflict with existing uses in the neighborhood.

- Elmore recognizes that small businesses are critical to future economic development in town as they employ a majority of workers.
- The town supports organizations and programs that provide workforce training to improve opportunities for residents.

Recommendations:

- The Planning Commission should monitor labor statistics in town including wage and unemployment figures.
- Land Use Regulations should be reviewed to ensure that they support the establishment of home-based businesses, while providing necessary safeguards for abutters.

### *Agriculture and Forestry*

Objective: Elmore should encourage the development of forestry, agriculture, and local food-based commercial enterprises.

Policies:

- Elmore supports economic activity that strengthens the viability of farming, forestry, and related activities, including harvesting farm and forestry resources to create new product opportunities and economic gains for property owners.
- Elmore supports industries which produce value-added products from agricultural and forest products. Local-processing of raw materials should be encouraged over exporting these raw materials.

Elmore promotes the protection of important agricultural and forestry land through the use of Planned Unit Development provisions and voluntary land conservation.

Recommendations:

- The Planning Commission should review current regulations to determine their impact on agricultural and forestry based-value added endeavors. Consider revising regulations to allow for on-farm processing that may not fall under the State definition of "agriculture."
- The Planning Commission should consider developing standards to reduce conflicts between existing and future agricultural operations and new residential development, such as requiring new developments in rural areas to include "right-to-farm" language in deeds, use of vegetative buffers, or other similar measures.

### *Recreation and Tourism*

Objective: Allow for responsible natural resource based recreation and tourism which enhances Elmore's reputation as the "Beauty Spot of Vermont."

Policies:

- Ensure that development does not degrade important natural features, such as shorelines and Elmore Mountain and the Worcester Range.
- Work to maintain the character of Elmore Village while enhancing its attractiveness to small businesses
- Promote Elmore based businesses to visitors at Elmore State Park.

Recommendations:

- Continue to provide protections for shoreland and Forest Reserve Areas in the Land Use Regulations. Strengthen these protections as warranted.
- Work with regional business and economic development agencies to promote Elmore based businesses.
- Consider applying for Village Center Designation for Elmore Village.

## Energy Sources

### *Electricity*

Electricity can be generated from a variety of sources including hydro, nuclear, and fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas). Other potential alternative sources of electricity include solar, wind, biomass (wood burning), and methane recovery (from landfills or farms).

Currently, there is no commercial electricity generating facility in Elmore. All power is purchased from other electrical facilities. Neighboring communities of Morristown and Hardwick generate hydroelectric power from a dam located in Wolcott. Power generated by the Wolcott dam is used in Elmore to provide electricity for homes and businesses. Both Hardwick Electric and Morrisville Water and Light purchase power for customers from a variety of sources including hydro (Hydro-Quebec) and biomass (McNeil wood burning). Roughly only 20% of the electricity used in Elmore originates from fossil fuels.

Wind power may have promise as a local source of electricity. According to a 2004 study conducted by the Vermont Environmental Research Associates, the Worcester range has sufficient wind potential for commercial generation. However, this area has also been identified for protection from development due to the presence of sensitive wildlife habitats and aesthetic concerns.

Outside the preserved Forest District there are other suitable residential and agricultural areas in town where small-scale private wind generation or other types of renewable energy facilities would be feasible. Small-scale wind and solar projects are encouraged provided concerns related to natural resources, safety and aesthetics are addressed, as outlined in the policies for Siting of Alternative Energy Facilities found on pages 59-60.

### *Heating*

The heating of homes and businesses is an important sector in energy plans, especially in northern Vermont. One local renewable source for heat in Elmore is wood. Domestic Solar Hot Water systems have also been used effectively to heat water in private residences and businesses. Other sources of home heating fuel include oil, gas, kerosene, and electricity.

According to the 2010 Census, 37% of homes in Elmore are heated with wood, 30.5% with Liquid Propane gas, and 25% use Kerosene. An additional 1.9% of residents residing in Elmore heat their homes using utility gas (oil). Electric heat is highly discouraged due to the inefficiency of electric heating systems and the high demand it places on local utilities to provide power. This discouragement has resulted in only 2.7% of residents utilizing electric heat in Elmore.

### *Siting of Alternative Energy Facilities*

State statute dictates that municipalities may not regulate small renewable energy structures, including the height of wind turbines with blades less than 20 feet in diameter, or rooftop solar collectors less than 10 feet high. Due to potential negative impacts on the town's natural and scenic resources, large scale wind installations—defined as one or more turbines with a nameplate capacity greater than 100 kilowatts, or height of more than 170 feet—are not supported by the town.

### *Transportation*

Other than walking, biking or utilizing other means of travel by foot (skate boarding), all power for transportation used in Elmore is generated from fossil fuels (oil). Residents are encouraged to reduce fossil fuel consumption and carbon emissions by carpooling or using an alternative mode of transportation such as walking or biking. To encourage both residents and visitors to carpool frequently the Town of Elmore should consider working with local business owners and Elmore State Park to provide Park and Ride parking spaces. Currently, only a few parking spaces at the Elmore Store and church are available for park and ride users. To increase Park and Ride opportunities, local professionals are encouraged to take advantage of online networking resources such as Go Vermont ([www.connectingcommuters.org](http://www.connectingcommuters.org)) to assist in finding potential carpool partners in the Elmore area. In the case of promoting biking and walking, a variety of strategies may be employed to provide sufficient, safer, bike and pedestrian infrastructure such as working with adjacent communities and Vtrans to assess the feasibility of incorporating a bike lane along Route 12 or installing sidewalks in the downtown area. For further discussion regarding alternative transportation opportunities and policies in Elmore please refer back to the Transportation Chapter (pages 27-32) in this plan.

## **Energy Providers**

### *Electricity*

Elmore residents are served by either Morrisville Water & Light or the Hardwick Electric Department. Currently, there are no plans for a municipal power company in Elmore. Additionally, as a result of having no major transmission lines, Elmore currently lacks the supporting infrastructure to maintain a municipal power system.

### *Home Heating*

Heating fuel is provided entirely through private individuals and companies. There are several locally accessible heating fuel companies that provide residents with options for service. This helps keep pricing competitive. For 37% of Elmore residents, heat is generated by burning wood, purchased either locally or harvested from an individual's private land.

### *Transportation*

Fuel for transportation is provided locally by privately owned and operated service stations.

## **Energy Consumers**

### *Municipal Facilities and Services*

Public facilities and services require significant expenditures of tax dollars for energy. According to the 2011 Town Report, last fiscal year the school spent \$1,386 for electricity and \$2,406 for oil to heat the facility. Additionally, from 2010 to 2011 the Town of Elmore spent \$1,547.59 on street lighting, \$7,714.37 for heat and light in the Town Garage, and \$43,875.17 in truck fuel. While these figures are low compared to surrounding towns, continuing to purchase efficient equipment and facilities saves tax dollars over the lifetime of the product.

## Energy Efficiency Improvements

### *Residential, Commercial and Industrial*

Residential, commercial and industrial land uses can save energy by installing more efficient heating, improving insulation, replacing inefficient lighting, appliances and windows, and being sited to take advantage of passive solar heating. Energy efficiency improvements on average can yield up to a 10-20% or greater return on your investment. Efficiency improvements in both municipal and private buildings not only save money on utility bills, but can improve indoor air quality and comfort. According to Vermont Energy Smart and the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation, returns on energy efficiency investments are the greatest when addressing the building envelope first. In other words, sealing up your home, business or a public building through proper insulation will give you the biggest “bang for your buck”. As the cost of heating fuels such as oil rises to \$4.00 per gallon, both residents and local public officials are encouraged to consider energy efficient improvements for residential, commercial and municipal buildings. To appropriately identify the next steps to improving energy efficiency in public and private buildings in Elmore, visit [www.energysmartvt.com](http://www.energysmartvt.com) or [www.efficiencyvermont.com](http://www.efficiencyvermont.com) for a list of BPI (Building Performance Institute) certified energy auditors.

### *Strategies for Financing*

Although energy efficiency improvements can yield significant long-term savings, upfront costs can be expensive. However, there are a variety of methods for financing efficiency improvements for municipal facilities and services (street lighting) including using grants, efficiency incentives, budgets/capital reserves, loans, bonds, performance contracts and a tax-exempt lease purchase. At the state level, energy conservation programs and funding fall under the purview of Efficiency Vermont. Efficiency Vermont was created in 1999 by the Public Service Board to consolidate former utility energy programs into one statewide energy efficiency utility company.

#### Grants and Efficiency Incentives

Two potential grant funding sources for municipal building improvements include the Clean Energy Development Fund (CEDF) and Efficiency Vermont. The Clean Energy Development Fund offers a grant program that finances cost effective environmentally sustainable electric and thermal (geo thermal) energy technologies. CEDF grants are available to both individuals and organizations. For more information regarding CEDF grants please visit:

[www.publicservice.vermont.gov/energy/ee\\_files/cedf/CEDF%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf](http://www.publicservice.vermont.gov/energy/ee_files/cedf/CEDF%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf)

Efficiency Vermont provides both technical assistance and financial incentives to Vermont businesses, municipalities, and households. Efficiency Vermont can assist in reducing energy costs through energy efficient equipment and lighting, and by offering energy conservation approaches to construction and building renovations. Additionally, Efficiency Vermont incentives provide a “seal of approval” ensuring that measures installed are cost effective. For more information on efficiency incentives call 1-888-921-5990 or visit [www.efficiencyvermont.com](http://www.efficiencyvermont.com).

Additionally, Efficiency Vermont sponsors the Vermont Energy Star Homes Program. This program provides energy incentives and rebates for new home builders and buyers that build energy efficient homes through the use of reliable clean technologies and energy saving practices. For more information on the Energy Star Homes Program please visit: [www.efficiencyvermont.com/for\\_my\\_home/ways-to-save-andrebates/building\\_buying\\_new\\_home/vt\\_energy\\_star\\_homes/general\\_info/overview.asp](http://www.efficiencyvermont.com/for_my_home/ways-to-save-andrebates/building_buying_new_home/vt_energy_star_homes/general_info/overview.asp).

In addition, the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund offers small grants to community based groups pursuing environmental work, such as community energy efficiency projects. NEGEF offers two types of grants; SEED Grants and Grow Grants. SEED Grants are targeted towards small community projects costing under \$10,000. Small grants available range from \$250 to \$1,000. Community groups may apply for SEED Grants at any time. Grow Grants are available for communities/local groups engaging in capacity building or program development for community-based environmental programs.

#### Budgets/Capital Reserves

Inserting a line item in a town's budget is one of the most common strategies for financing municipal building efficiency improvements. Town budgets can effectively communicate to residents the work scope, cost, and benefits of proposed improvements. This financing strategy is most feasible when dealing with moderate amounts of funding.

#### Loans

Towns and individuals are encouraged to take advantage of low interest rate loans from local banks and credit unions to finance energy efficiency projects with a short payback period and/or a sizable return on their investment. The Town of Elmore is also eligible to receive low interest rate loans through the US Department of Agriculture's Community Facilities loan program for energy efficiency improvements to public buildings.

#### Bonds

When considering efficiency projects that will cost a substantial amount, bonding may be the most appropriate financial approach. When issuing a bond for efficiency improvements, the most common approach is to finance through general obligation bonds. With this type of bond, payments are issued in annual increments out of general revenues. Bonds can offer fixed low interest rates and longer repayment periods.

#### Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE District)

Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing effectively allows property owners to borrow money to pay for energy improvements on a property, including energy efficiency/conservation retrofits as well as on-site renewable energy generation. The amount borrowed is typically repaid via a special assessment on the property's tax bill over a period of up to 20 years. As a result, the loan runs with the property, rather than the individual. Due to the fact that PACE financing is administered through the local property tax system, municipal approval is needed to create a PACE District.

#### Performance Contracts



Energy Saving Performance Contracting is more commonly used in larger communities. This form of contracting involves entering into an agreement with a private energy service company (ESCO) that will identify and evaluate energy savings opportunities and recommend a variety of improvements that would be paid for over time through cost savings. ESCO's will ensure that actual energy cost savings are equal to or greater than annual payments. ESCO contract terms usually extend through a time period of 7-10 years. To ensure energy savings are met, ESCO's offer staff training and perform long-term maintenance services during the contract term.

#### Tax-exempt Lease Purchase

Tax-exempt leasing is one financial tool that several municipalities already use and could be used to fund energy efficiency improvements in municipal buildings. This method of financing can assist municipalities in overcoming high upfront project costs, by funding up to 100% of an energy efficiency improvement project. Additionally, leasing periods can be set to a time range that will allow for positive cash flow from energy savings.

#### *Weatherization Programs*

In association with Vermont Energy Smart, the Central Vermont Community Action Council (CVCAC) offers weatherization services free of charge to families who meet low income specifications or other qualifying factors such as persons on disability. For more information on the CVCAC Weatherization Program and qualification specifications please call 1-877-919-2299 or visit [www.energysmartvt.com/about-us/cvcac/weatherization/](http://www.energysmartvt.com/about-us/cvcac/weatherization/).

#### **Goal**

To promote energy conservation in the delivery of public services, the use of public facilities, and the design of new and/or renovated industrial, commercial and residential structures.

#### **Objectives, Policies and Recommendations**

##### *Energy Sources*

Objective: For citizens to generate energy locally from renewable sources, whether for heating, electricity, or transportation, so as to reduce dependence on outside sources.

##### Policies:

- Planning for the construction of any power generating facilities in the future should consider the overall Town Plan objectives.
- Elmore supports the use of small-scale wind and solar for generating electricity locally.
- Commercial wind towers shall not be located within the Forest Reserve District.
- Large scale wind installations—defined as one or more turbines with a nameplate capacity greater than 100 kilowatts, or height of more than 170 feet—are not supported by the town.

##### Recommendations:

- The Planning Commission should conduct an inventory of renewable energy opportunities for municipal buildings including upgrades to current HVAC and electrical systems.



- Evaluate the creation of a Property Accessed Clean Energy District in Elmore to allow property owners to access long-term loans tied to their property to fund energy efficiency improvement projects in the residential sector.

### *Energy Providers*

Objective: Energy should be provided in a safe, reliable and efficient manner.

Policy:

- All planning for power transmission lines (including subdivisions) in the future should be strongly weighted in favor of underground placement in order to serve the other objectives of the overall Town Plan.

Recommendation:

- The Planning Commission should consider requiring utilities be buried, when subdivision regulations are revised.

### *Energy Consumers*

Objective: To promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design, construction, and use of municipal, industrial, commercial, and residential structures.

Policies:

- The town should use energy efficient appliances in municipal facilities.
- Outdoor lighting, especially for parking areas, should use cutoff fixtures to reduce light pollution and to allow lower wattage bulbs and LED lighting upgrades.
- Elmore recommends builders and developers check with Efficiency Vermont for energy standards and conservation opportunities.

Recommendations:

- Complete energy audits in all municipal buildings.
- Include low cost energy efficiency retrofits as part of the annual town budget, particularly those with a payback period of two years or less. Pursue resources such as grants, bonds, and low interest loans to increase funds available for retrofits.
- Consider exempting alternative energy adaptations (e.g. solar collectors) when developing bylaws.
- Make information on energy efficient home siting and design available through zoning administration as building permits are issued.
- Make information regarding home weatherization options available through the Town Office.
- Review existing zoning, subdivision regulations, and other town bylaws to ensure that Elmore's current regulations promote the use of alternative energy technologies in residential and commercial development.

## **CHAPTER 10: Land Use Plan**

## Forestland

### *Overview*

The region's forests provide both economic and recreational benefits to the people of Elmore. Loggers, hunters, hikers, skiers, snowmobilers and others enjoy these benefits. Both residents and visitors enjoy the beautiful vistas provided year-round. Most importantly, the forest provides critical habitat for a diverse array of plants and animals.

In Elmore, approximately 80% (25,056 acres) of land in the town is forested (VNRC, 2011). According to the 2011 Lamoille County Forest Stewardship Plan, the Atlas Timber Company owns close to 5,000 (25%) acres of forested land in the town (**See Map 6 in Appendix A**).

### *Benefits*

Recreational opportunities are abundant throughout town forestlands and are the driving force for why the majority of people in Elmore spend time in the forests. Residents and visitors enjoy the forests for hiking, fishing, hunting, skiing and other activities.

Game and non-game wildlife live in the forests. Deer, bear and moose require large, contiguous tracts of land for critical habitat needs, provided by Elmore's forests. Additionally, a variety of plant life reside in the forests. Existing plant life serve as a crucial food source for deer, rabbits, beavers, insects and other herbivore species.

Currently, some animals and plants in Elmore have been documented as rare or endangered species. The 2011 Lamoille County Forest Stewardship Plan identified the northwest wetlands surrounding Lake Elmore as designated rare plant communities. Additionally, rare bird species reside in higher elevation forests across Lamoille County. These endangered bird species include the Blackpoll warblers, Swainson's thrush and the Bicknell's thrush. The forest habitat must be protected if these species are to survive, and if the survival of others is not to be threatened.

Forests also protect our water supply. Trees hold in place soil, which in turn provides a base for important plant growth. As a result, forests prevent erosion and limit flooding by absorbing water and releasing it gradually.

### *Economic Benefits*

Two industries that thrive from Elmore forest resources include both non-manufactured (firewood) and manufactured wood products and maple syrup production.

In Vermont nearly 9,000 people, or about 3% of the state's labor force, work in the forestry industry. Forestry products generate a major source of income for the state of Vermont. In Lamoille County, over 300 people work in the manufacture of lumber and wood products.

In 1995, Lamoille County forests produced 17.5 million board feet (MBF) of saw and veneer logs. Production has risen since the 1990s, when Elmore's forest plan was written. In 2010, approximately 11% (8,232 MBFs) of Vermont's hardwood timber harvest came

from Lamoille County. Currently, the Lamoille Region is the second highest contributor to hardwood timber harvesting in the state. There are five major mills in the county, although none currently exist in Elmore.

Individuals also log firewood from the forest to heat their own homes or to sell to other people. Additionally, Christmas trees are grown in Elmore, but on a significantly smaller scale than regional timber harvesting.

For generations Vermonters have tapped maple trees. Maple syrup is both an integral part of Vermont's culture and its economic base. In Elmore, a number of families produce and sell maple syrup.

### *Forest Resource Challenges*

Development and unsustainable logging practices can dramatically change a forest and threaten the many benefits we currently enjoy from the forests. Typically, economic interests lead a landowner to develop or clear-cut their land. Efforts to reduce that economic incentive have been made at the state level.

To reduce economic pressures felt by landowners from high property taxes, in 1977 the state established the Use Value Appraisal/Current Use Program. This program aims to keep forests and farmlands in production by appraising these lands on the value of their current use (e.g. for agriculture or logging), not on their potential value if sold and developed. In turn, this reduces property tax on working landscapes. According to the Vermont Department of Taxes, in Elmore currently 14,628 acres and 72 parcels are enrolled in the Current Use Program.

Elmore's goal is to retain the existing forestland use. Forestland uses are anticipated in any district in town. Timber management should be conserved where environmental factors such as steep slopes and wetlands are not adversely affected and where existing development is not negatively impacted. While portions of Elmore Mountain are inappropriate for timber harvest such as above 1,500 feet in the Forest Reserve District, due to steep slopes, the remainder of the Forest Reserve District and large portions of the Rural East district, especially in the southern part of town, should be maintained in active forestry.

## **Agriculture**

### *Overview*

Across Vermont, both the number of farms and the acreage of land being farmed have dropped by nearly two-thirds since the mid 1950s. From 1985 to 2001 the number of farms in Elmore continued to drop from 5 to 4. Since then farming operations in Elmore have slowly increased. Currently the town is home to 8 operating farms.

Agriculture remains an important part of Elmore's culture and local economy. Many people supplement their living from agricultural practices, and while dairy farming has declined, other types of farming have appeared in the town. Townspeople value the

presence of farmers, and the recent community survey indicates strong support for continued agricultural land use.

Similar to forestry, Elmore would like to see farming continue as a land use into the future. The farms that exist in town are currently in the Rural East and Rural West districts. Factors that are beyond the control of the town will likely determine the fate of dairy farms. State policies on property taxes and national milk prices will have more impact on its future than local actions. Elmore encourages all types of farming, wherever appropriate, based on site conditions. To this end, value added agriculture and agri-tourism are supported, as described in the economic development section of this plan.

## Residences

### *Overview*

Three types of residential land uses exist in Elmore. A higher density of residential use occurs in Elmore Village and around the shore of Lake Elmore. Many of the houses around the lake are summer camps, which are sometimes converted into year-round residences. Rural residential areas exist along Class 3 roads. Subdivision building is occurring in Elmore, primarily on Elmore Mountain Road. **See Map 7 in Appendix A** for local zoning boundaries.

Most of the residential land use in Elmore consists of single family homes. . There are many seasonal camps and second homes. Every year more camps are being converted to year-round residences. Montpelier and Stowe markets raise the demand for housing in Elmore.

In 1991, the Walden Natural Resources Consulting firm conducted a land use mapping project assessing the suitability of Elmore parcels for forestry, development and conservation/passive recreation uses. The Elmore FLESA and Land Use Mapping Project was not intended to be used as a regulatory tool. The criteria used in assessing land for development suitability were access and soil type and slope. There are other factors that contribute to suitability or unsuitability for development, such as the presence of critical habitat, which were not included in the FLESA mapping criteria. The FLESA study maps demonstrated that most parcels along existing roads are suitable for development. However, parcels that have no road access with shallow soils on steep slopes are not suitable for development.

Residential development is appropriate where services can be safely delivered and environmental factors such as flood hazard areas, shorelines, and steep slopes are protected to mitigate the impact of erosion, flooding, and protect sensitive habitats. The current zoning bylaws limit future residential development in the Forest Reserve District, shoreline and flood hazard areas. Higher residential densities are anticipated in the village district and medium, rural residential densities are expected in the East and West districts.

## Commercial

### *Overview*

Businesses currently located in Elmore include a convenience store with gasoline, car repair shop, non-medical health center, pottery shop, plant nursery and various home occupations. The convenience store is located in the village, while all other businesses are located away from the village center.

Small businesses are vital to creating a strong local economy. Home businesses and occupations are recognized for their importance in town. Elmore would like to see these types of ventures continue into the future provided they do not conflict with neighboring existing uses. The zoning bylaws permit commercial enterprises of various sizes in the Village, Rural East and Rural West Districts. In general, businesses such as retail stores, restaurants, and professional offices, should be focused in the Village district, provided the uses are designed to be compatible with existing development with regard to building styles, materials, scale and orientation. Commercial uses in the Rural East and West Districts may consist of home-based businesses, agriculture and forestry based businesses, and small-scale hospitality businesses such as bed and breakfasts.

## **Industrial**

### *Overview*

It is unlikely that Elmore will attract any medium to heavy industry due to a variety of development limitations the town currently faces. These limitations include 1) the lack of municipal, potable water supply, 2) the high expense of designing, installing and maintaining on-site sewage and wastewater systems, 3) a lack of high electrical power supplies and alternative sources of power, and 4) the remote location of Elmore.

However, should an industry wish to locate in Elmore, it is likely that industry would gravitate to Route 12 where the only large tracts of open, level land are located, allowing easy road access. Any industry located in this area would be part of the watershed of Lake Elmore. Elmore should allow industrial development provided the use preserves the natural environment, rural character of the town and water quality of Lake Elmore.

"Cottage Industries" operated by a homeowner and small employers are allowed subject to conditional use review in the Village, Rural-East, and Rural-West Districts. Larger, "rural industries" are conditional uses in the Rural-East and West Districts.

## **Floodplains and Wetlands**

### *Overview*

Flood plains help to absorb excess floodwater and prevent flood damage further downstream. Flood plains are often wetland areas. Wetlands serve as water pollution filter areas for watersheds. These areas are usually important wildlife habitat. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has prepared National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Rate Maps; Elmore and other Lamoille County towns are recommending that the NFIP maps be updated. In order to protect the safety of residents and to maintain clean water, Elmore has adopted flood hazard area bylaws and provisions in the zoning bylaws to protect wetlands.

- **Goals** To maintain existing forestland and agricultural uses.  
To encourage development in areas where the town economically and environmentally can afford it, (i.e. in areas which have access to Class 1, 2, and 3 roads, have power, have suitable soils, and do not have excessive slopes).
- To allow commercial development which will maintain the rural character of Elmore.
- To allow industrial development which preserves the environment and rural character of Elmore.
- To protect the safety of residents from flood and erosion hazards, and to maintain water quality.

## **Objectives, Policies and Recommendations**

### Forestland

Objective: To maintain forestry and forestland use by protecting incompatible uses from conflicting with forestry efforts, and by making forestry as economically viable as possible.

#### Policy:

- Elmore supports economic activity that strengthens the viability of forestry and related activities including value added manufacturing.
- Maintain large tracts of unfragmented forestland, especially at higher elevations in the Worcester range.

#### Recommendations:

- Residents should write annually to the state representative and senator expressing support for full funding of the Current Use Program (UVA).
- The Planning Commission should review existing zoning bylaws to determine whether they further the goal listed above and propose revisions if needed.
- Distribute information about the Vermont Land Trust and other land conservation options to land owners of large tracts of productive forestland in town.

Maintain existing regulations which limit development in higher elevations and prohibit development above 1,500 in elevation.

### Agriculture

Objective: To maintain agriculture and farming by protecting incompatible uses that conflict with agricultural efforts and by making farming as economically viable as possible.

#### Policies:

- Elmore supports private groups in their efforts to negotiate private voluntary agreements for the protection and management of farmlands.
- Elmore encourages diverse agricultural enterprises.

#### Recommendations:

- The Planning Commission should review existing zoning bylaws to determine whether they further the goal listed above and propose revisions if needed.
- Distribute information about the Vermont Land Trust and other land conservation options to land owners of large tracts of productive farmland in town.
- The Planning Commission should examine whether subdivision regulations further the above goals.
- The Planning Commission should explore zoning/subdivision tools which allow landowners to maintain large blocks of working agricultural and/or forest land while creating smaller building lots on the most appropriate areas of a property.

### *Residences*

Objective: Residential development should be sited and constructed in a safe and accessible location.

#### Policies:

- Residential development should be compliant with current bylaws and zoning guide lines.
- Residential development is encouraged near access roads.
- Support development in the Village Center along Rte. 12 to increase activity near the town hub.
- Residential development should not occur in the flood hazard areas without strict compliance with the Flood Hazard Area Zoning bylaws.
- Residential development should not occur in the Forest District

#### Recommendation:

- The Planning Commission should examine whether subdivision regulations further the above goals.
- The Planning Commission should consider subdivision tools such as "density averaging," transfer of development rights, and expanded use of PUDs which allow landowners to develop portions of their property while maintaining important natural resources.

### *Commercial*

Objective: Elmore should have commercial development at a scale and location consistent with the neighborhood in which it is located.

#### Policies:

- Cottage industries are encouraged and supported provided they do not conflict with existing uses in the neighborhood.
- Commercial and retail development should have a low environmental impact.

#### Recommendation:

- The Planning Commission should review existing zoning bylaws to determine whether they further the goal listed above and propose revisions if needed.

### *Industrial*

Objective: To allow industrial development provided the use preserves the environment and rural character of Elmore.

Policies:

- Clean industries, especially those that add value to local resources are encouraged.
- Home industries are encouraged and supported provided they do not conflict with existing uses in the neighborhood.

Recommendation:

- The Planning Commission should review existing zoning bylaws to determine whether they further the goal listed above and propose revisions if needed.

*Floodplains and Wetlands*

Objective: Development should be limited or prohibited from the flood hazard area to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the entire community.

Policy:

- Residential development should not occur in the flood hazard areas without strict compliance with the Flood Hazard Area Zoning bylaws.

Recommendations:

- Retain current flood plain designations on zoning maps until more recent FEMA maps are adopted.
- Revise zoning permits to indicate responsibility of the applicant to obtain all necessary permits if wetlands are suspected on the development site.
- Continue to revise the zoning regulations to address the protection of identified wetlands and flood hazard areas.
- Update Flood Hazard Area zoning bylaws to incorporate current fluvial erosion science and research to guide development in the Town of Elmore.



## CHAPTER 11: Implementation Recommendations

### Overview

The following list of recommendations is designed to guide growth in the Town of Elmore in a manner which will achieve its overarching goals and community vision statement listed on pages 3-4 of this plan. These recommendations address strategies to maintain and protect the town's rural character, scenic beauty, historic resources, productive working landscapes, and the quality of natural habitats and water resources. Land use and economic development implementation strategies aim at preserving important natural and cultural resources while exploring local employment and new business opportunities, especially in the industries of agriculture, forestry, recreation, hospitality and family child care.

### Elmore Town Plan Recommendations

#### *Population Growth*

- With regard to population and growth, the Elmore Planning Commission believes that the existing zoning and subdivision bylaws are effectively furthering the town's desired vision for the future. In the ensuing Town Plan cycle, the Planning Commission should monitor demographic and population trends to ensure this continues to be the case.

#### *Historical Resources and Structures*

- The Elmore Historical Society should work with the town and state Division for Historic Preservation to identify a secure and safe place for the long-term storage of items intended for preservation.
- The Elmore Historical Society should develop a plan to identify and preserve Elmore's historic resources.
- Elmore should compile a comprehensive listing of historical areas and structures in town.
- The Historical Society should research avenues and sources of funding for historic preservation projects in town.
- The zoning bylaws should continue to recognize the historic significance of the Elmore Village District.

#### *Archeological Resources*

- Elmore should map existing archeological sites found in town.
- Incorporate the importance of preserving archeological sites in Elmore's Zoning Bylaws.

- The Elmore Historical Society should host events and workshops to educate the public on the importance of preserving archeological sites.

### *Earth and Agricultural Resources*

- Continue to enforce local zoning regulations with regard to earth extraction and processing operations. Where the provisions are found not to achieve the goals of this plan, the bylaws should be amended.
- Continue to maintain a Forest Reserve District in the Worcester Range to regulate development above 1,300-feet in elevation.
- Elmore should review existing subdivision regulations to ensure compatibility with the goals of this plan, in relation to the fragmentation of agricultural and forest lands.
- The Planning Commission should assess the benefits of amending local zoning regulations to discourage or restrict the fragmentation of large tracts of productive, prime agricultural soils.

### *Water Resources*

- Continue to monitor lakes in town for evidence of Eurasian Milfoil and other invasive species.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing shoreline zoning in maintaining appropriate setbacks from ponds and protecting/re-establishing shoreline vegetation.
- Maintain the current setbacks and buffers found in the zoning bylaws to protect streams and rivers.
- Complete a revision of the flood hazard regulations to include a fluvial erosion overlay and ensure the town's continued compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

### *Forest Resources*

- The Planning Commission should distribute information about land trust programs, other conservation options, and statewide resources (including the Vermont Land Trust and Vermont Coverts) to land owners of large tracts of productive forest and farmlands in town.
- The Planning Commission should also distribute information on the Staying Connected Initiative and the importance of preserving critical wildlife corridors.

- The Planning Commission should review existing Planned Unit Development (PUD) provisions to determine if they are effective in promoting conservation of large parcels of working forestland. The Planning Commission may consider techniques such as revised PUD standards, density averaging, and/or density transfers to accomplish this objective.
- Along the Worcester Range, additional development above 1,500-feet in elevation is prohibited.

### *Scenic Resources*

- The town should codify policies pertaining to the siting of telecommunications and alternative energy facilities contained within this plan into the zoning bylaws.

### *Local Highways*

- The Elmore Highway Department should plan and maintain a budget for capital expenditures over a five-to-ten year period.
- Elmore should revise its existing town highway standards; any new road accepted into town ownership should be built to the new minimum standards.
- Elmore's town highway standard should prioritize mitigation measures, such as increasing minimum culvert diameters, to protect roads from future flooding events.
- The Planning Commission and Selectboard should consider developing additional standards in Road Standards and/or Zoning and Subdivision Regulations (such as conditional use review) for the construction of roads on steep slopes within important natural areas and wildlife habitats. This action will allow the location of roads in Elmore to be modified to avoid sensitive habitat areas.

### *Alternative Transportation*

- The town should work with AOT to establish a crosswalk across Route 12, from the Elmore Store to the Lake School.
- The Planning Commission should help promote "Go Vermont" and other programs that encourage carpools and ride-sharing ([www.connectingcommuters.org](http://www.connectingcommuters.org)).
- The town should work with LCPC to identify potential sites for transit stops or additional park-and-ride lots, along with accompanying shelter areas, where feasible.
- As the AOT plans future improvements to Route 12, Elmore and the LCPC should advocate for wider shoulders, to accommodate bicyclists and other alternative forms of transportation.

- The town should contact AOT regarding the feasibility of installing sidewalks between Elmore State Park and the Elmore Store.
- Elmore should advocate for the development of a recreational trail between Lake Elmore, south through the Putnam State Forest trails network and onward to a trailhead on Route 12.

### *Public Buildings and Facilities*

- The town should develop a maintenance plan and capital budget to preserve public property and equipment.

### *Water Supply*

- Zoning and subdivision regulations should require the identification of existing and proposed water supply locations to ensure water quality is protected.

### *Sewage and Refuse Disposal*

- The Planning Commission and Selectboard should discuss the future of wastewater treatment and permitting in town to address the permitting changes that took effect in 2007.
- The Planning Commission should evaluate how the introduction of new “alternative” wastewater treatment systems may impact future land use and development patterns in Elmore.
- The Planning Commission should consider having a decentralized wastewater feasibility study conducted for Lake Elmore and Elmore Village properties.
- The 2011 Elmore Junk Storage Ordinance will be consistently implemented as written to manage junk storage.

### *Public Safety*

- The town should consider options to improve water rescues including budgeting for the purchase of a rescue boat, portable defibrillator or other life saving equipment to aid the Elmore Fire Department in rescue operations on Lake Elmore.
- The Selectboard should consider adopting access and driveway standards that would ensure emergency vehicles would be able to safely reach residences and businesses.

### *Recreation*

- The Planning Commission should continue to participate in the state’s process to update the Putnam Forest Management Plan by attending and raising Elmore forestry issues at public meetings held by the Department of Forestry and Recreation.

- The town should secure funding to map and mark all town rights-of-way.
- The Selectboard should review alternatives to create a legal right-of-way to provide access to Little Elmore, if one does not exist.
- The Planning Commission should meet annually with the Lake Elmore Association for sharing information and to address concerns if they arise.
- The Planning Commission and Selectboard should explore potential free access to the beach for Town residents.
- The town should talk with relevant property owners and the Department of Fish and Wildlife to consider requesting that the State renew its former lease to allow fishing access on Little Elmore.

### *Communication Towers*

- Periodically review the telecommunications provisions in the zoning bylaws to ensure the above goals and policies are supported.

### *Education Facilities and Services*

- The School Board and Planning Commission should meet periodically to address issues and concerns regarding growth in town and future educational programs and facilities.
- The School Board should continue to monitor the needs of students and assess the most effective way of meeting those needs to ensure students have access to high quality education.
- The School Board should invite parents and community members to review the current safety policies for all schools accessed by Elmore children and address areas found to be inadequate.

### *Housing Development*

- The Planning Commission should monitor development trends in various areas of town and neighboring communities.
- Elmore should work to promote Home Sharing options among town residents.
- The Planning Commission should work with the Lamoille Housing Partnership to find ways to ensure working residents have housing they can afford.
- The Planning Commission should continue to maintain the option in the zoning bylaws for landowners to create Accessory Dwellings.
- The Planning Commission should consider revisions to encourage greater use of Accessory Dwellings as a tool for creating additional housing in Elmore. Options

include, but are not limited to, allowing new accessory dwellings which results in the expansion of the height or floor area of a principal single family dwelling as a permitted rather than conditional use in some districts, and/or expand the definition of an accessory dwelling to include one-bedroom and efficiency dwellings.

- Maintain and promote the option in zoning regulations of utilizing Planned Unit Developments to cluster development on the least sensitive portion of a property and away from steep slopes, agricultural soils and critical habitat areas. PUDs shall not be permitted to create development above 1,500 feet in elevation.
- Consider developing mechanisms to allow “transfers of development rights” from areas with important natural resources to areas that are more suitable for development.

### *Economic Development*

- The Planning Commission should monitor labor statistics in town including wage and unemployment figures.
- Land Use Regulations should be reviewed to ensure that they support the establishment of home based businesses, while providing necessary safeguards for abutters.
- The Planning Commission should review current regulations to determine their impact on agricultural and forestry based-value added endeavors. Consider revising regulations to allow for on-farm processing that may not fall under the State definition of “agriculture.”
- The Planning Commission should consider developing standards to reduce conflicts between existing and future agricultural operations and new residential development, such as requiring new developments in rural areas to include “right-to-farm” language in deeds, use of vegetative buffers, or other similar measures.
- Continue to provide protections for shoreland and Forest Reserve Areas in the Land Use Regulations. Strengthen these protections as warranted.
- Work with regional business and economic development agencies to promote Elmore based businesses.
- The Selectboard should consider applying for Village Center Designation for Elmore Village.

### *Utilities and Energy*

- The Planning Commission should conduct an inventory of renewable energy opportunities for municipal buildings including upgrades to current HVAC and electrical systems.
- Evaluate the creation of a Property Accessed Clean Energy District in Elmore to allow property owners to access long-term loans tied to their property to fund energy

efficiency improvement projects in the residential sector.

- The Planning Commission should consider requiring utilities be buried, when subdivision regulations are revised.
- Complete energy audits in all municipal buildings.
- Include low cost energy efficiency retrofits as part of the annual town budget, particularly those with a payback period of two years or less.
- Pursue resources such as grants, bonds, and low interest loans to increase funds available for retrofits.
- Consider exempting alternative energy adaptations (e.g. solar collectors) when developing bylaws.
- Make information on energy-efficient home siting and design available through zoning administration as building permits are issued.
- Make information regarding home weatherization options available through the Town Office.
- Review existing zoning, subdivision regulations, and other town bylaws to ensure that Elmore's current regulations promote the use of alternative energy technologies in residential and commercial development.

### *Land Use*

- Residents should write annually to the state representative and senator expressing support for full funding of the Current Use Program (UVA).

The Planning Commission should explore zoning/subdivision tools which allow landowners to maintain large blocks of working agricultural and/or forest land while creating smaller building lots on the most appropriate areas of a property.

The Planning Commission should consider subdivision tools such as "density averaging," transfer of development rights, and expanded use of PUDs which allow landowners to develop portions of their property while maintaining important natural resources.

- The Planning Commission should review existing zoning bylaws to determine whether they further the commercial development goals listed in chapter 9 and propose revisions if needed.
- The Planning Commission should review existing zoning bylaws to determine whether they further the industrial development goals listed in chapter 9 and propose revisions if needed.
- Continue to revise the zoning regulations to address the protection of identified wetlands and flood hazard areas. Applicants are responsible to obtain all necessary permits if wetlands are suspected on the development site.

## **How the Elmore Town Plan Relates to Adjacent Municipalities and the Regional Plan**

### **Adjacent Municipalities**

*Wolcott:* Two main roads travel from Elmore to Wolcott; Symonds Mills Road and Elmore Pond Road. The areas along these roads are primarily rural residential. At present, Wolcott has a 2-acre minimum lot size zoning requirement for new construction in the Rural Residential District and a 1-acre minimum lot size requirement along the Route 15 Corridor. Many of the residents of Wolcott who live on the Elmore Pond Road regard Elmore as their community center.

*Hardwick:* Elmore and Hardwick touch corners, only. Elmore residents living on Brown Hill use Kate Brook Road in Hardwick to travel to and from their homes when the roads are in poor condition due to inclement weather.

*Woodbury:* Elmore and Woodbury share the entire length of one side of each Town. Eagle Ledge Road in Elmore parallels the Woodbury Mountain Road in Woodbury. Both are connected by Brown Hill Road and at least 3 cross trails. These areas in both towns are undeveloped and are used primarily for recreation and timber.

*Calais:* Elmore also touches corners with this Town in undeveloped areas of both Towns.

*Worcester:* Both these Towns share a border the length of the Town. They are connected by Route 12, known as "Moose Alley." This is a large tract of undeveloped timberland. There is no power through this area which is considered one of the most scenic drives in the State.

*Stowe:* Although Stowe only touches corners with Elmore, it affects Elmore more than Elmore's other neighbors. The Elmore Mountain Road runs from Stowe to Elmore and Route 12, with a portion extending through Morristown. The Stowe portion of the Elmore Mountain Road contains expensive residences, many of which are seasonal. This has caused the Elmore section of the road to be desirable to those who wish to be connected with Stowe, but do not wish to spend the amount for housing that a Stowe residence would cost them. This has caused land prices and building activity in this portion of Elmore to increase in relation to the remainder of Elmore. Residential development pressure stemming from Stowe was the reason Elmore advocated for 7-acre lot zoning in West Elmore.

*Morristown:* Morristown shares a full-length-of-the-Town boundary with Elmore. This includes the Elmore Mountain Road area and numerous side roads which connect to Randolph Road in Morrisville. This is primarily a residential area of Morristown, with 2-acre minimum lot size zoning for single-family dwellings. Some of the farms in this area are being sub-divided and currently there is a moderate amount of developmental pressure.

### **The Regional Plan**

The Elmore Town Plan falls within the parameters of The Lamoille County Regional Plan.



The Lamoille County Regional planners proceed under the assumption that Lamoille County Regional Planning will be individual town-generated, not imposed by the Lamoille County Regional Planning Commission.

Appendix A: Maps 1-7

