

September 28, 2012

Faith Ingulsrud, Planning Coordinator
Vermont Department of Economic, Housing & Community Development
National Life Building, 6th Floor
One National Life Drive
Montpelier, VT 05620

Dear Faith,

I am writing to you to provide you and the Downtown Board with a report for the 5-Year Review of the Town of Williston's Growth Center Designation as specified under 24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e). This report will summarize some of the key components of the town's planning program to illustrate how the growth center designation fits within the overall structure and goals of the town's *Comprehensive Plan*, and will detail the progress the town has made in implementing its town plan in accordance with the requirements and conditions of the state's Growth Center Designation.

Williston was granted Growth Center Designation status by the Expanded Downtown Board on October 22, 2007. In rendering its decision, the Downtown Board imposed seven findings and conditions of approval. Some of these conditions were to be met within one year, and several were scheduled to be met within five years after the awarding of the Growth Center designation. The report includes a listing of the Downtown Board's conditions and findings of fact, and how the town has addressed each of these over the past five years. As required by statute, the report also includes maps and tables depicting new development activity:

- 1) outside the growth center,
- 2) inside the growth center but outside the designated downtown/village center
- 3) inside the designated downtown/village center, and
- 4) total number of development permits in the town and growth center and percentage located within the growth center.

*New development should be categorized as: dwelling units, enterprises, structures, and subdivisions, understanding that there will be some overlap between these categories. Permits for additions and improvements like outdoor walls and ponds that are not living or working space, or do not result in residential or employment capacity, should not be included.

Please let me know if you will need any additional information for the Downtown Board review of Williston's Growth Center Designation prior to the board's October 22, 2012 meeting.

Very truly yours,

Ken Belliveau, AICP
Director of Planning and Zoning

C: Rick McGuire, Town Manager

Town of Williston, Vermont

5-Year Review

of

Growth Center Designation

1. Overview

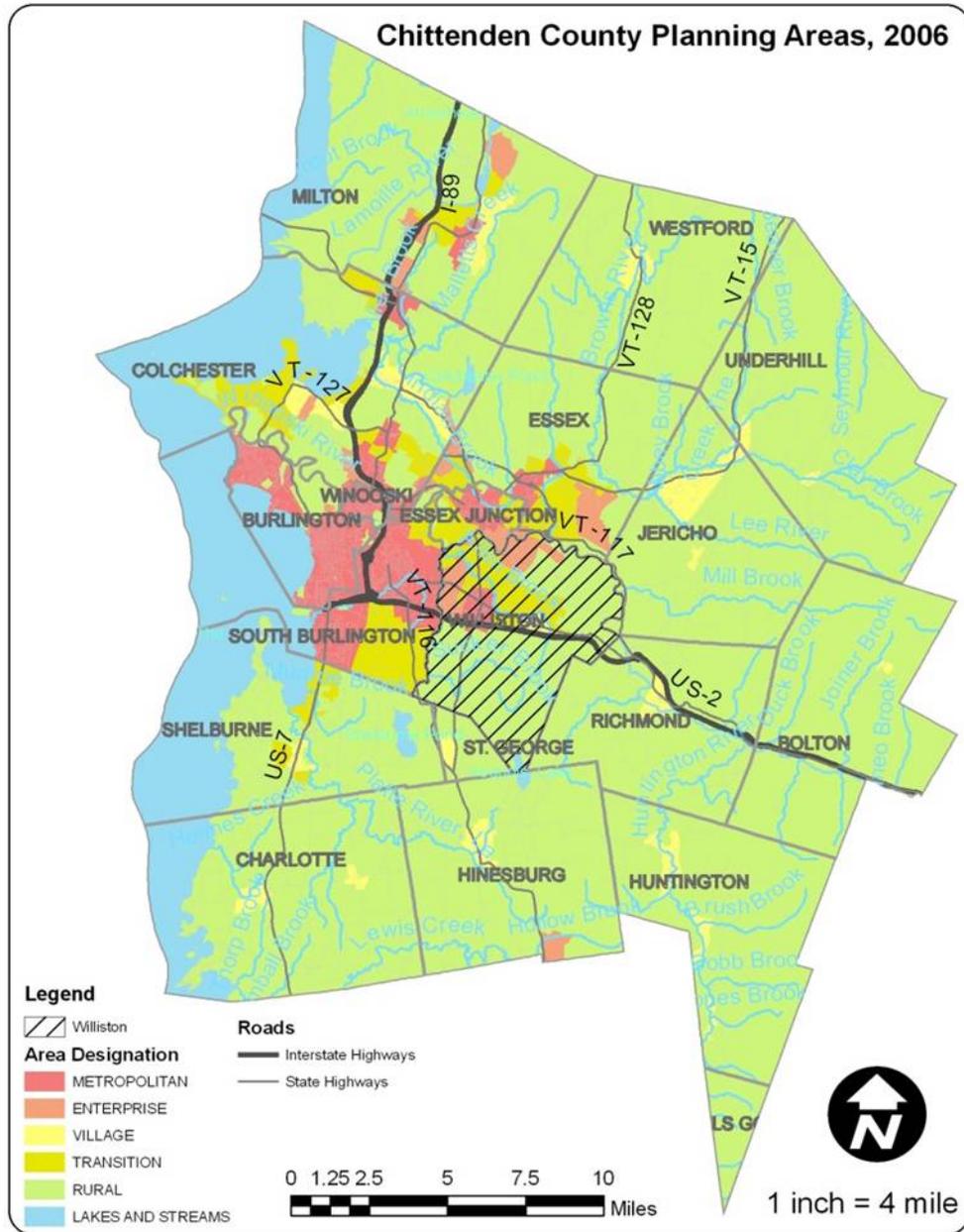
The Town of Williston was granted Growth Center Designation by the Vermont Expanded Downtown Board as provided by 24 V.S.A. § 2791 on October 22, 2007. In making its determination, the board noted that the town has been working towards developing a land use pattern of compact development within its growth center with an aim of accommodating the majority of the Town’s new growth over the next 20 years. The Downtown Board conditioned the approval of the Growth Center Designation on the town accomplishing a number of measured in service of implementing the full intent and goals of the state’s growth center program, and required the Town to report on progress in implementing the growth center vision within five years from the date of the Growth Center Designation. The purpose of this report is to document and comment upon the Town’s implantation progress over the past five years as specified under 24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e).

2. Town of Williston in Context

Williston is located in the heart of Chittenden County, in the northwest portion of Vermont. The Town is located approximately 6 miles to the east of the City of Burlington, the state’s largest city (see Map 1). Chittenden County which contains the Greater Burlington region is the largest and the fastest growing county in the state, and the largest center of economic activity in Vermont. Over the years, Williston has become an important part of the regional economy, and represents an important part of the region’s growth.

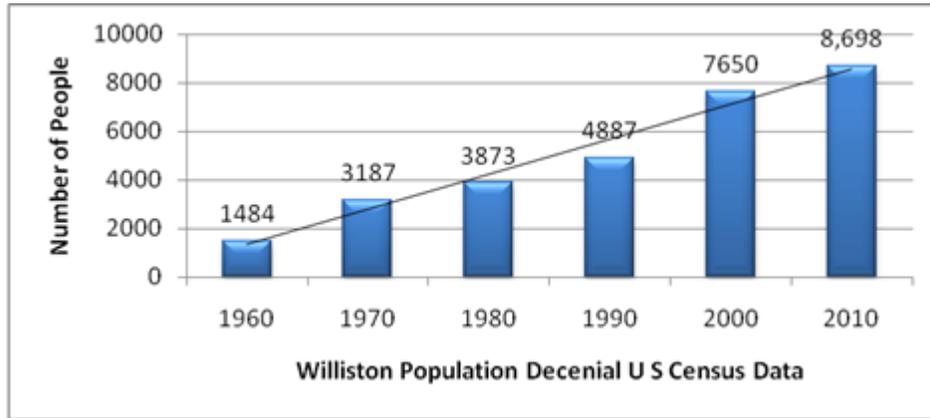
Williston is tied to the region by several important state highways which run through major portions of the Town; including I-89 with an interchange in Williston (Exit 12), VT 2A and U.S. 2. The Burlington International Airport in located just to the west on the Town’s border with the city of South Burlington. The Town’s proximity to Burlington, the regional airport, and its location on some of the state’s major roadways have all factored into the Town’s growth and development, especially over the past 20 years.

Map 1: Williston in the Region



Williston has experienced several decades of significant and persistent growth pressure. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Williston had a population of 8,698 people, representing a four-fold increase in the population of the Town in the past 50 years (see Figure 1). Since 1990, the Town’s population has grown by approximately 72%, compared to the region’s growth of 16% and an increase of 10% for the State of Vermont (see Table 1).

Figure 1: Population of Williston, 1960-2010



The most recent data from the U.S. Census indicates that Williston’s population continues to grow. As shown in Table 2.A, between 2000 and 2010, the town’s population increased by more than 1,000 people. This was significantly less than the pace of growth observed during the 1980s and 1990s, however population growth in Williston outpaces the growth rates of Vermont as a whole and Chittenden County, which is the fastest growing county in Vermont between 2000 and 2010.

Table 1 – Population and Population Growth of Williston Since 1960

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	1990-2010
Williston	1,484	3,187	3,873	4,887	7,650	8,698	
10 year rate of change		115%	22%	26%	57%	13.7%	72%
Chittenden	74,425	99,121	115,534	131,761	146,571	156,545	
10 year rate of change		33%	17%	14%	11%	6.8%	16%
Vermont	389,811	444,732	511,456	562,758	608,827	625,741	
10 year rate of change		14%	15%	10%	8%	2.8%	10%

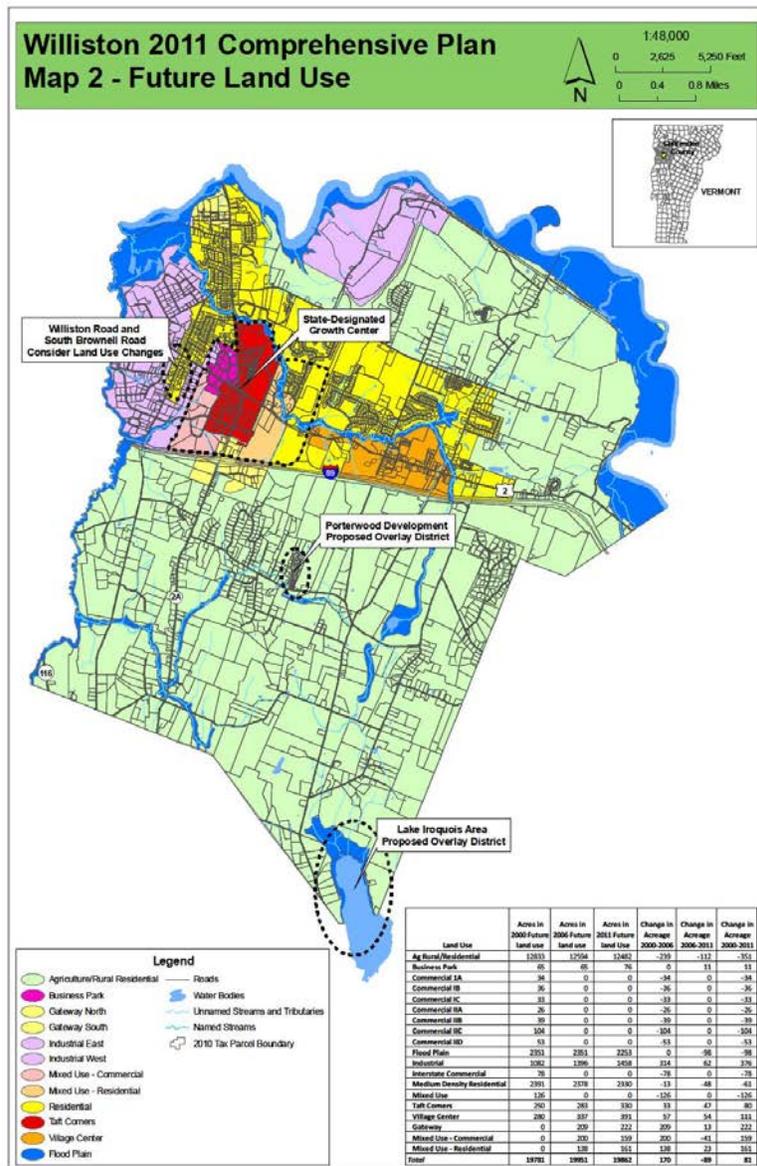
Source: Bureau of the Census.

3. Williston Growth Center and the Williston Planning Effort

Williston has a land area of approximately 19,862 acres, of which approximately 63% has been designated for agricultural and rural residential uses (see Map 2). The Town’s designated growth center is located in what is known as the Taft Corners area, centered on the intersection of VT 2A and U.S. 2, and extending northward from I-89 and Exit 12. The Town’s growth center

comprises 987 acres, or approximately 5% of the Town's land area. This area contains a number of large retail commercial developments, including a regional shopping center (Maple Tree Place) and several "big box" national retail stores. While the growth center makes up only a fraction of the Town's land area, it is the hub of commercial and development activity in Williston and the focus of much of the town's planning emphasis.

The growth center concept is an integral component of the Town's overall planning program. As stated in the *Williston 2011-2016 Comprehensive Plan*, the Town envisions "...a design-conscious, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use development and redevelopment pattern..." within the growth center. The Town's development standards for the growth center call for compact, mixed use development tied together by an emerging network of pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit systems. At the same time, only low density development and agricultural uses are allowed in the vast majority of the Town's land area.



4. Managing Growth in Williston

As a town which has wrestled with the demands of dealing with rapid growth and development pressure, Williston has developed and employed a number of measures over the years aimed at helping the town regulate the type, intensity, and pace of new development. These include the following:

- **Paying for Growth**

- Development Impact Fees
- Local Option sales Tax
- Capital Improvement Plan and Budget
- **Regulating Development**
 - Zoning and Subdivision Regulations
 - Design Review
 - Caps or limits on the construction of new dwellings
 - Limiting where municipal water and sewer service will be provided
 - Residential Growth Management
 - Purchasing land and/or development rights

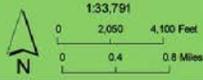
The first group of techniques is most directly related to the funding and provision of municipal services. The second group, however, is tied directly to shaping how and where new development occurs.

Sewer Service

One technique the town has employed in shaping the location and intensity of new development is by limiting in which portions of town municipal water and sewer service will be available. A component of the Town's *Comprehensive Plan*, is a map that defined where municipal sewer service will be available, identified as Map 7 from the *Williston 2011-2016 Comprehensive Plan*. The area included in the Town's sewer service area corresponds to zoning districts where higher intensity development is allowed. Areas zoned as Agricultural rural Residential are not generally included in the sewer service area with only a few exceptions granted for pollution abatement purposes.

Limiting the availability of municipal sewer service has also been a practical necessity for Williston; the Town has a limited amount of sewer capacity available. The town shares the wastewater treatment capacity of the Essex Junction Wastewater Treatment Facility with Essex Junction and the Town of Essex, and capacity at the plant is limited.

**Williston 2011 Comprehensive Plan
Map 7 -Sewer Service Area**



In the mid-2000s when growth pressures in Williston were intense, it was apparent to the Town that allocating the capacity of the plant available to the town was imperative in order to insure that some capacity would continue to be available for future needs. In 2007 when the Town received its growth center designation, the Town had approximately 980,000 gallons per day (GPD) of wastewater treatment capacity reserved at the Essex Junction treatment plant. During the previous calendar year (2006), the average daily flow of waste water from Williston into the plant was over 700,000 GPD, or 72% of available capacity, with no end to the rate of utilization in sight (see Figure 2 and Table 2).

Since 2007 two notable things have happened affecting the amount of wastewater capacity available for future use in Williston:

1. The Town has begun purchasing an additional 50,000 GPD of the plant's capacity from the Village of Essex Junction (Table 2), and,
2. The pace of capacity utilization has decreased (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Average Daily Flow of Wastewater 1996-2006

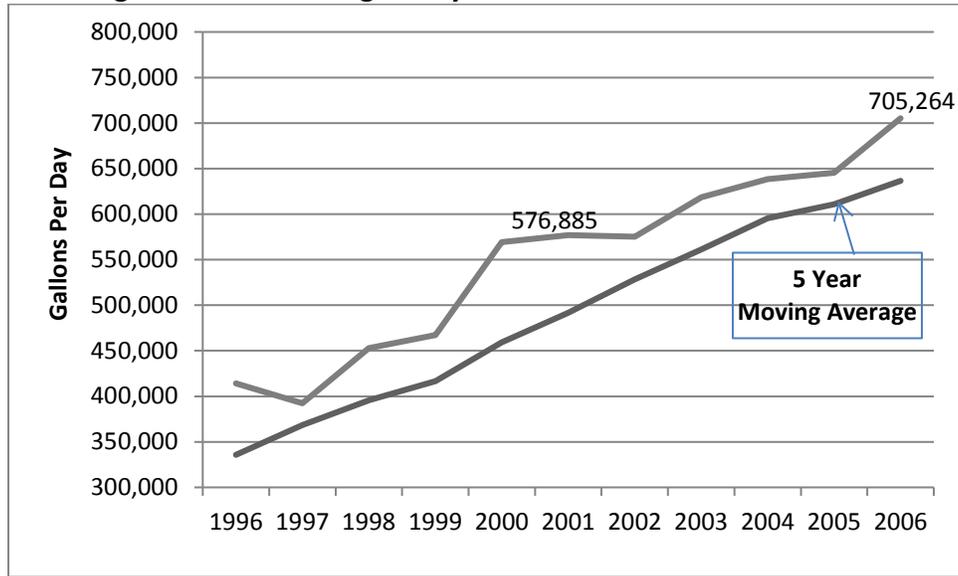


Figure 3: Average Daily Flow of Wastewater 2001-2011

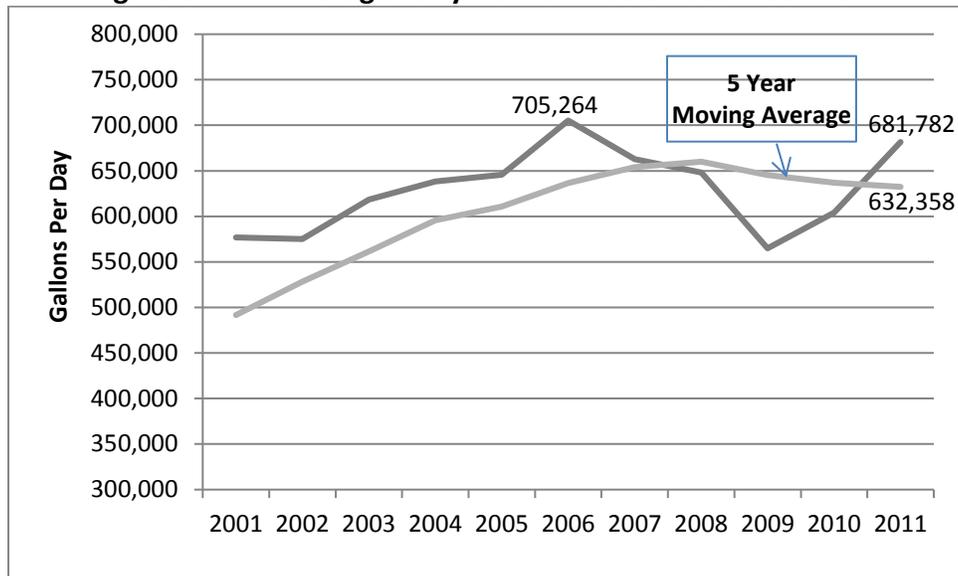


Table 2: Wastewater Treatment Capacity Utilization, 2007 and 2011

	2006		2011	
	Capacity	Percent	Capacity	Percent
Total Capacity	980,000	100	1,030,000	100
Average Flows	705,264	72	681,782	66
Remaining Capacity	274,736	28	348,218	34

Open Space Preservation

The Town’s Land Use Plan calls for most new development to take the form of compact, design conscious form and a mixed use pattern dominating the Town’s growth center. Higher intensity development in other parts of the Town is limited and discouraged through zoning and the availability of infrastructure, such as municipal sewer service. In the rural parts of Williston, land parcels of 10.5 acres or greater seeking subdivision approval for residential development must designate a minimum of 75% of parcel as permanently protected open space. In addition, the town also purchases land and/or the development rights of land when appropriate.

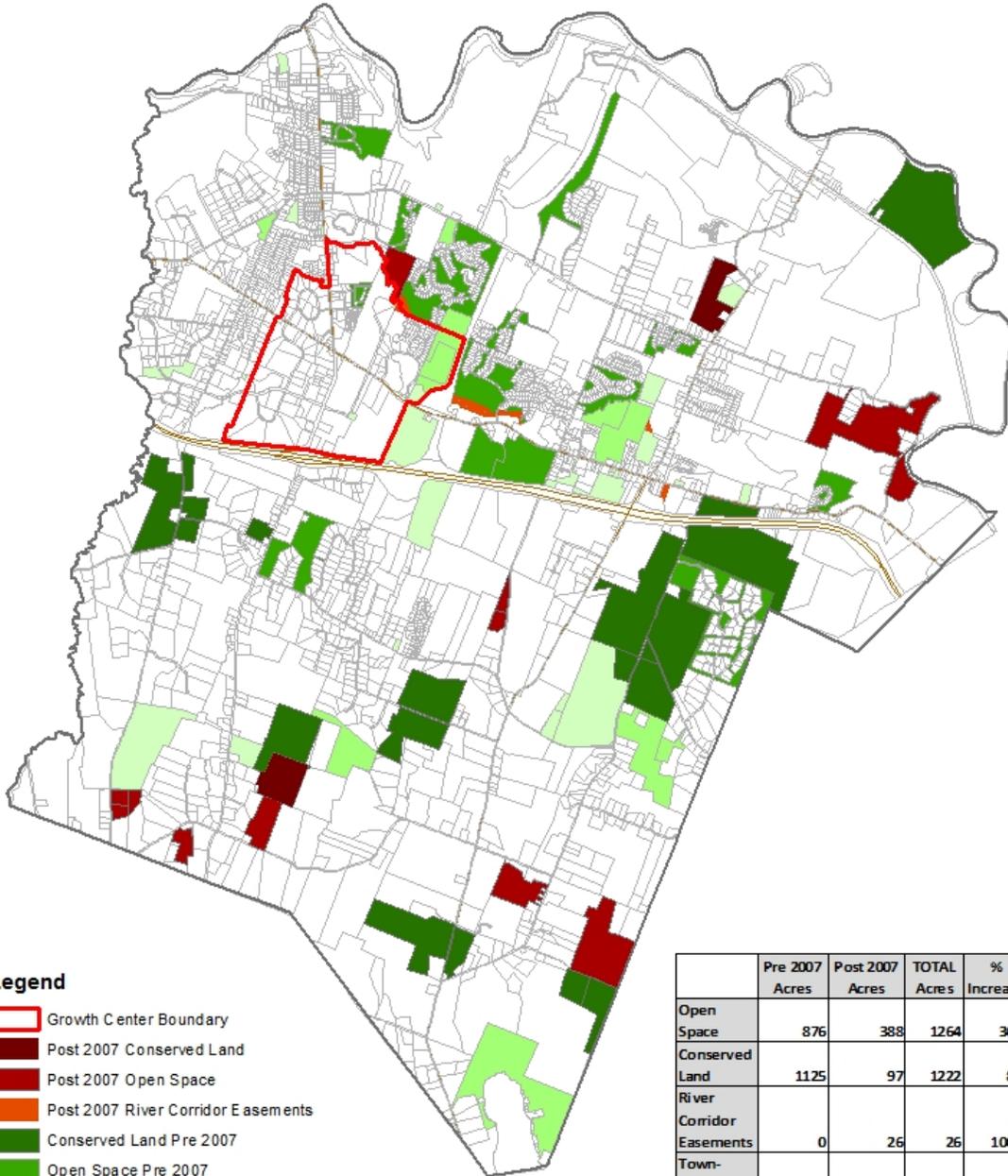
Limiting the future development of land through the purchase of the land itself or its development rights in Williston has been an ongoing effort for some time, and these efforts continued over the past five years. Map 4 displays parcels of land that have some form of development restriction, either because of town ownership and designation as park land or some other open space designation, conservation easement, or regulated open space designation. Those land areas that have been protected since 2007 are displayed in the red-orange color shades. Over 500 additional acres of land have been permanently protected in various ways since 2007, all outside of the Town’s designated growth center.

Map 4

Conserved & Protected Open Space Lands, Williston, VT
Pre and Post October, 2007



0 0.5 1 2 Miles



Legend

- Growth Center Boundary
- Post 2007 Conserved Land
- Post 2007 Open Space
- Post 2007 River Corridor Easements
- Conserved Land Pre 2007
- Open Space Pre 2007
- Public Parks Pre 2007
- Town-Owned Pre 2007
- Parcels

	Pre 2007 Acres	Post 2007 Acres	TOTAL Acres	% Increase
Open Space	876	388	1264	30%
Conserved Land	1125	97	1222	8%
River Corridor Easements	0	26	26	100%
Town-Owned Land	816	0	816	0
Public Parks	455	0	455	0

Residential Growth Management

The Town has developed and utilized a growth management system regulating the number of dwellings that may be issued permits on an annual basis. The current version designed to run from FY 2005-FY 2015 places limits on the number of new dwellings that may be authorized through the subdivision approval process based on designated allocation areas. The Town's growth management system is integrated into the subdivision approval process. Under the current system, the limits are as follows:

Table 3: Residential Growth Management Allocation of Dwelling Units

Allocation Area	Number of Dwellings	Percent of Total
Growth Center	56	70
Other Sewer Service Area	12	15
Outside Sewer Service Area	12	15
Total	80	100

As can be seen from the table above, the Town's designated growth center in a central aspect of how the town regulates the pace and number of new residential units. New residential development is clearly limited, both by zoning as well as by growth management. All new residential developments and subdivisions in Williston must receive allocation for any newly proposed dwelling units. The allocation process is competitive, with newly proposed developments evaluated and compared against other developments from the same growth management allocation area.

The steps in the subdivision approval process are as follows:

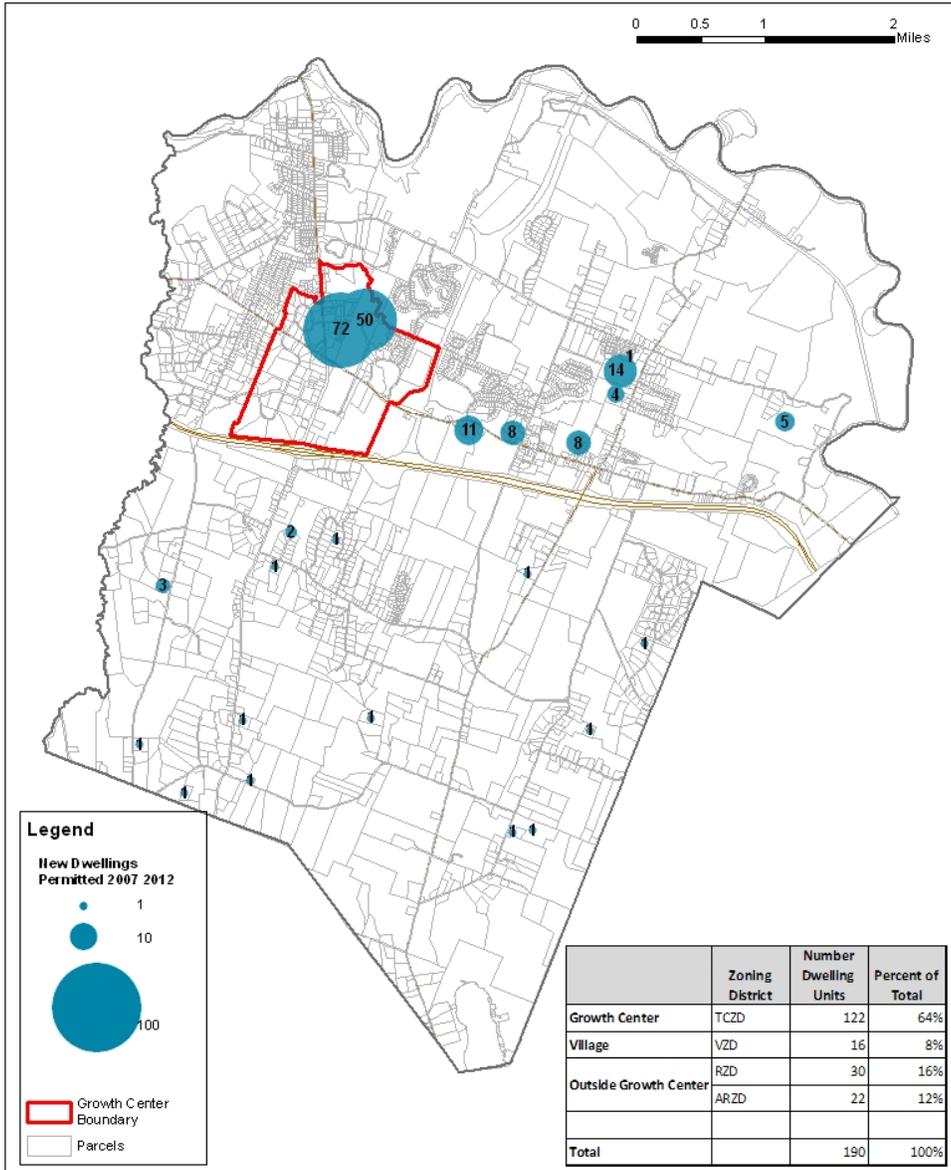
- **Pre-Application.** Similar to sketch plan in other municipalities. The project is reviewed in concept, and development options are explored and discussed. The DRB votes to allow a proposal to move forward to growth management review or repeat pre-application.
- **Growth Management.** All proposed residential development determined to move forward by the DRB from Pre-application are reviewed and scored in comparison to other developments within the same growth management allocation area.
- **Discretionary Permit.** Proposed developments receiving growth management allocation are reviewed in detail against bylaw requirements and standards. Projects are approved (or denied) with conditions of approval defined.

- **Final Plans.** Plans reviewed for compliance with conditions of Discretionary Permit approval

5. Permit Activity, 2007-2012

In the five-year period since the approval of Williston's growth center designation, the town has issued permits for 190 new dwelling units. These 190 new units do not include permits issued for dwellings replacing an already existing dwelling on a property; rather this only represents the number of new additional dwellings built in Williston between October 2007 and September 2012. Of the 190 new dwellings issued permits, 122 or 64 percent were in the designated growth center, and 16 or 9 percent were in the Town's Village Zoning District (VZD). Permit activity is summarized and depicted visually in Map 5.

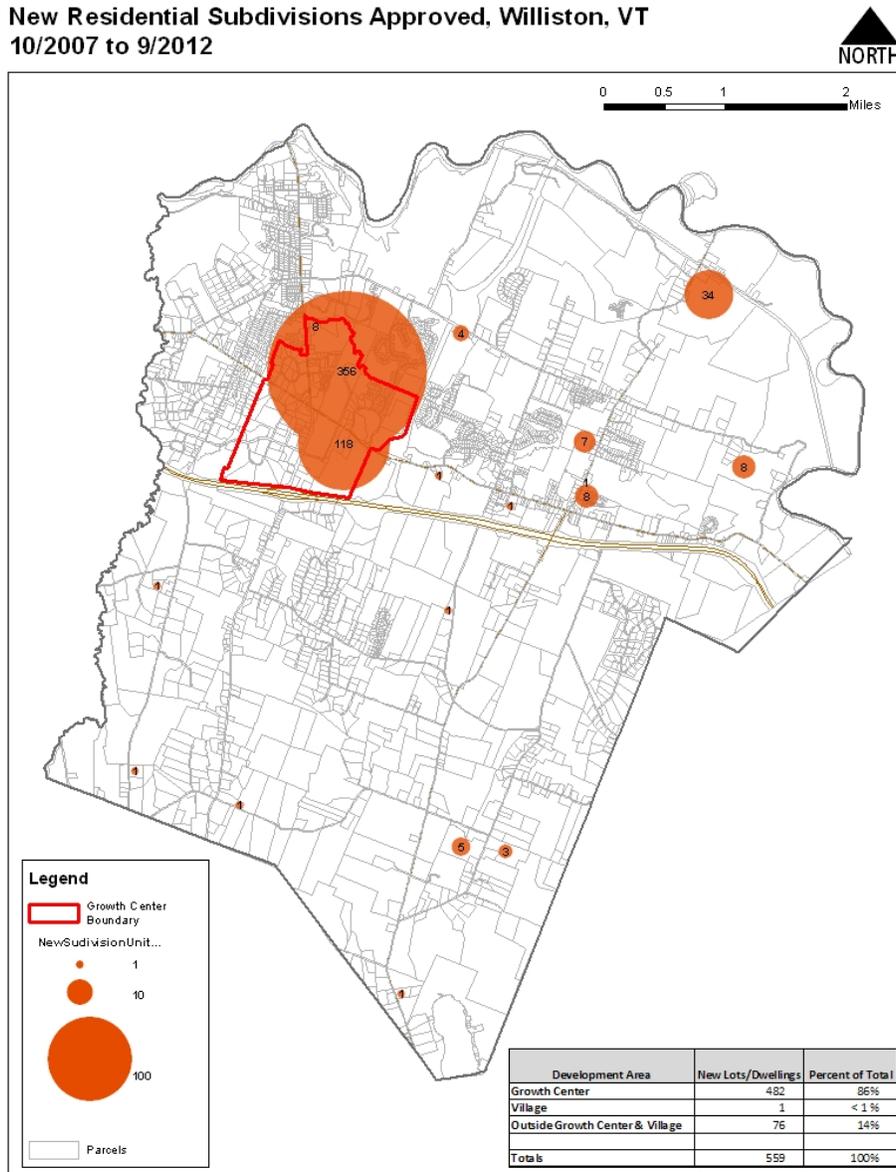
New Dwelling Units Permitted, Williston, VT, 10/2007 to 9/2012



Subdivision Activity

Over the past five years since Williston received its growth center designation, there were a total of 559 new lots or potential new dwellings approved by the Town's Development Review Board (DRB) through the subdivision process. Of these, 482 or 96 percent of the total approved were located in the growth center. Only one new lot was approved in the VZD. The remaining 76 additional lots or dwellings were on properties either in the Town's Agricultural Rural Residential Zoning District (ARZD), or in the Residential Zoning District (RZD). These are summarized and depicted in Map 6.

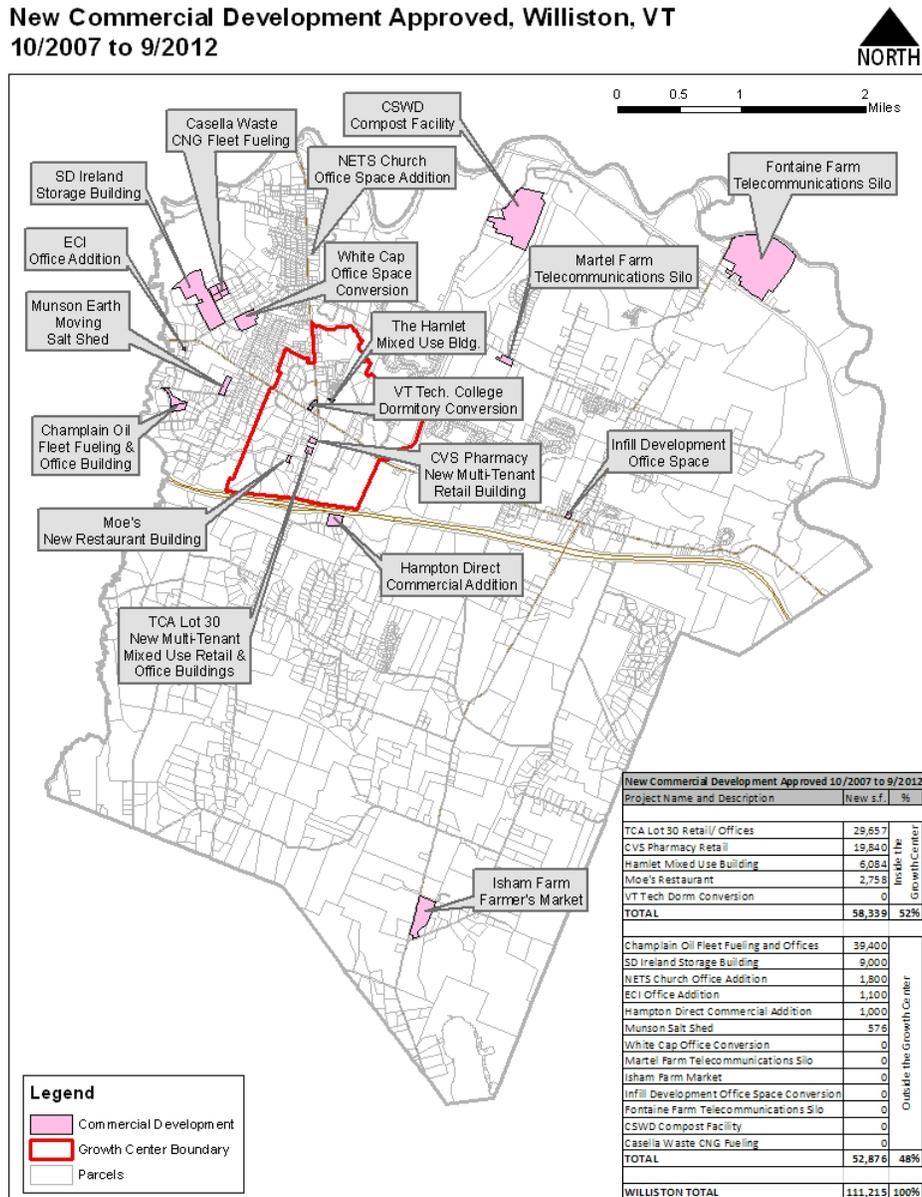
**New Residential Subdivisions Approved, Williston, VT
10/2007 to 9/2012**



Commercial Development

Describing the extent and nature of commercial and industrial development over the past five years is more difficult than describing residential development. There has been a great deal of permitting activity since October 2007, but only a small number of new buildings accounting for most of the new development, coupled with several significant remodels of existing buildings and spaces. In the past five years, there was approximately 111,000 sq. ft. of new commercial space constructed in Williston, of which 52% was in the growth center.

**New Commercial Development Approved, Williston, VT
10/2007 to 9/2012**



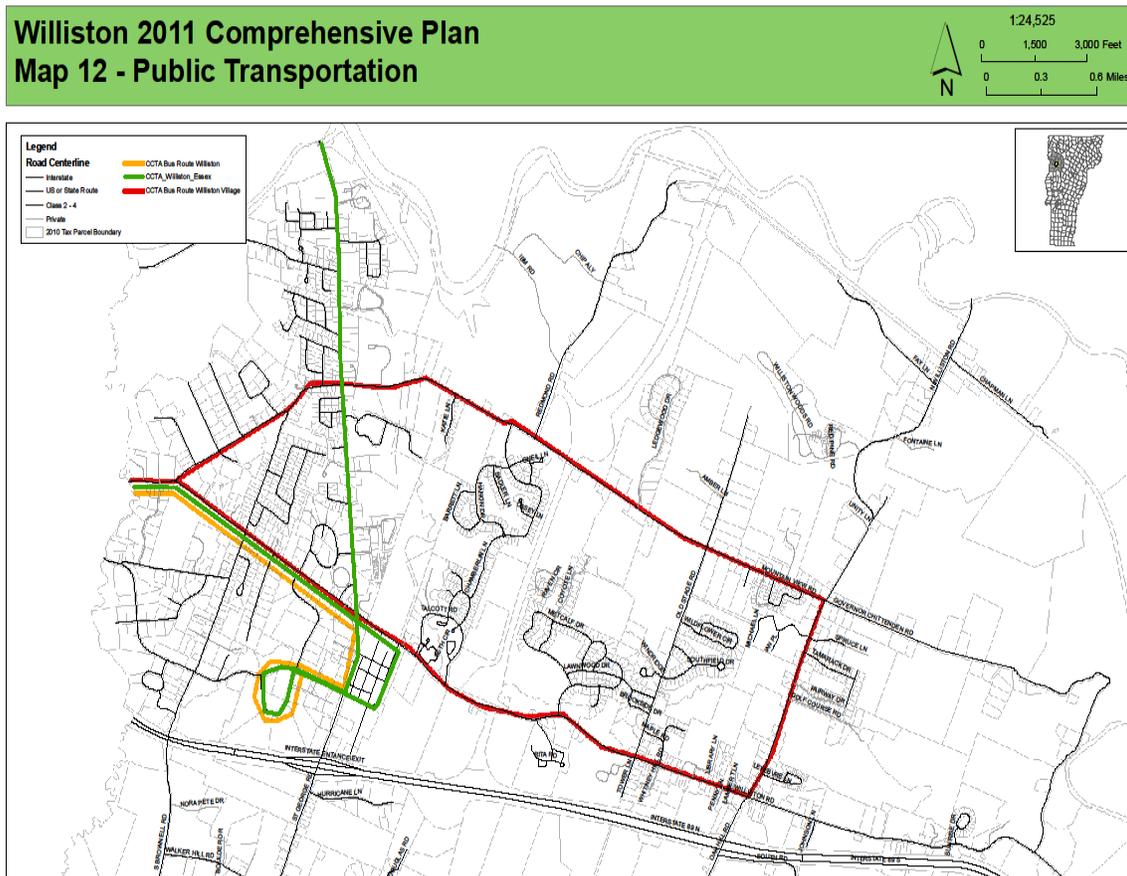
6. Other Developments

There were several transportation issues that were discussed as part of the consideration of Williston's growth center designation. These included a condition that Williston become a member of the Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA), and that the Town work with VTrans to find solutions to some of the traffic congestion problems along the VT 2A corridor.

CCTA

The Town joined CCTA in 2008, and there are now three separate lines of transit service available in Williston. These include the following:

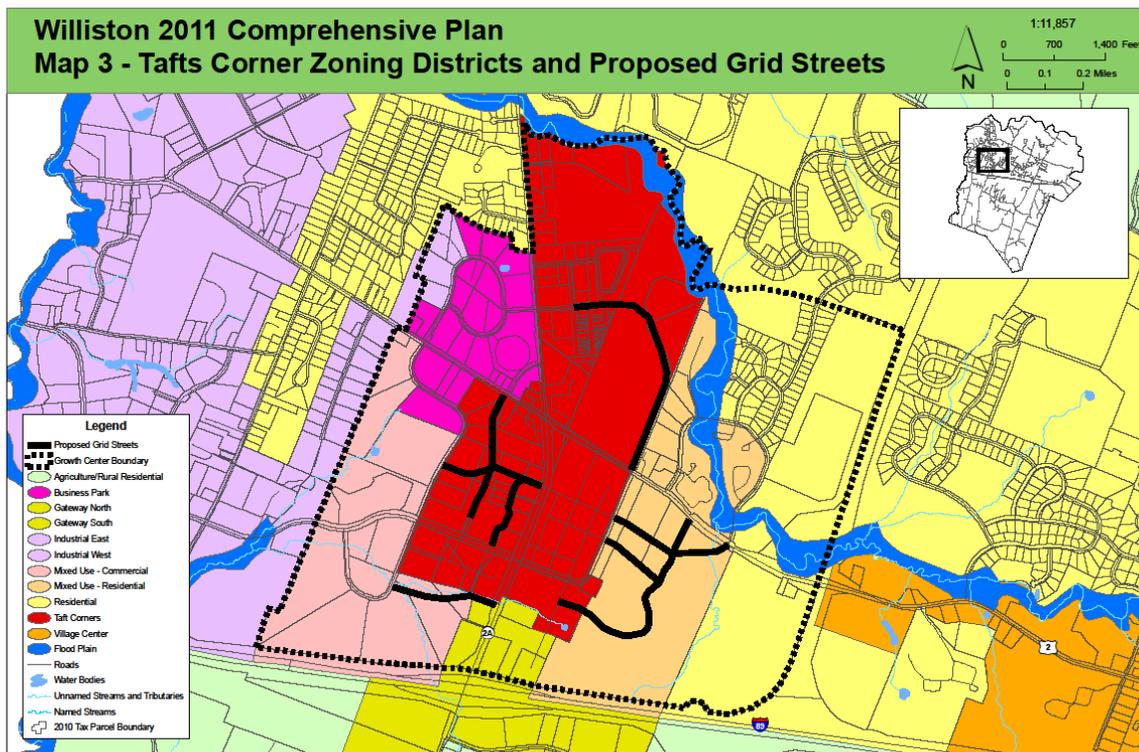
1. Regular service linking the Williston Growth Center to Essex and Burlington
2. Regular service from the Williston growth center and Burlington
3. M-F morning and evening commuter service between the Williston Village and Burlington



Grid Streets

For many years, the Town has been working towards the development of a network of grid streets in the Taft Corners area which lies in the heart of the Town's growth center. Some of the congestion that exists in the area can be attributed to the lack of meaningful alternatives for motorists, coupled with the broken up land use development. Together, this network of streets has been envisioned to provide a more complete and robust transportation system in the area by distributing traffic over additional streets, providing important connects, and facilitating a more compact development pattern.

In 2012, the town issued permits for the first sections of the grid street network to be built. This includes the grid street running parallel to VT 2A between Marshall Avenue on the south and Wright Avenue on the north, as well as a small portion of Zephyr Road as part of the Finney Crossing development north of Williston Road.



Other Traffic Congestion

In May 2011, Governor Shumlin announced that the state would no longer be pursuing the completion of the long anticipated Circumferential Highway (the Circ). The Circ as it was envisioned was to link I-89 in Williston northward across the Winooski River to the existing segment of the Circ in Essex that terminates at VT 117. It had been hoped that this new road would provide significant traffic congestion relief to the VT 2A corridor. The Governor instead asked the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) to head up a task force of the affected Circ communities of Williston, Essex, Essex Junction, and Colchester to look for some alternative measures to address some of the transportation and congestion issues along the corridor. Williston has been actively participating on this task force and is hoping that some meaning transportation strategies and improvements will come from this effort.

Target

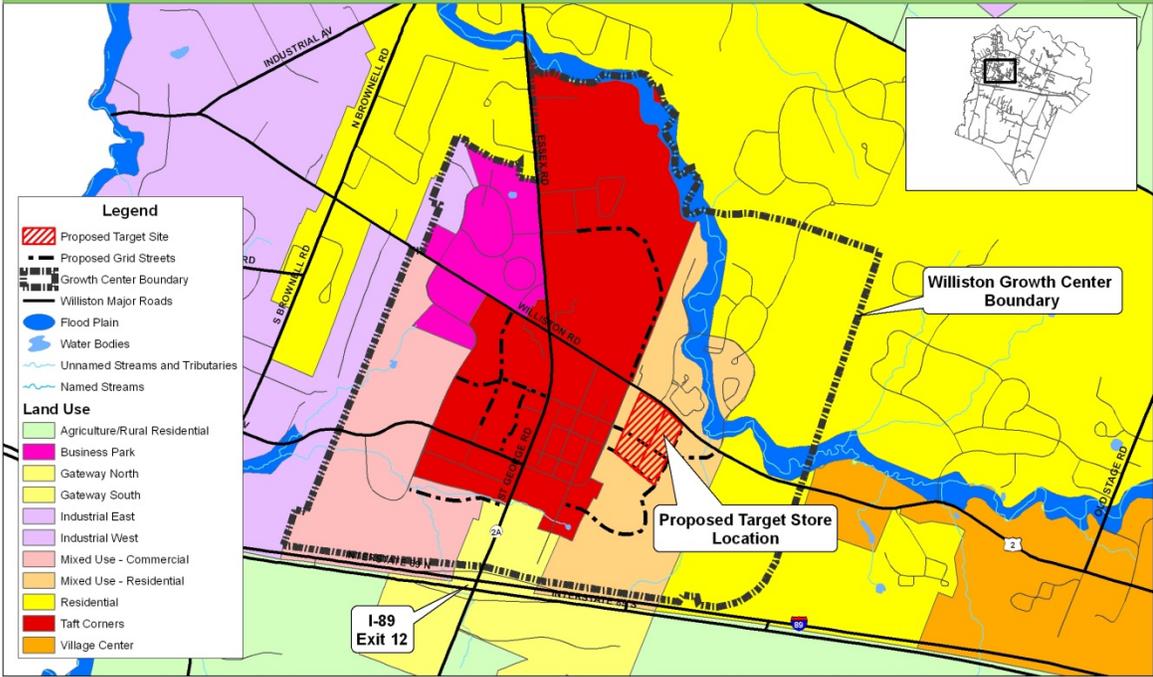
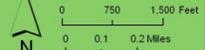
One of the most frequently asked questions of the planning office in Williston is about the prospects of Target building a store in Williston. In the spring of 2011, the Town was approached by representatives from the Target Corporation about the idea of building a 136,500 sq. ft. store in Williston on a property located on the south side of Williston Road to the east of Maple Tree Place. To be successful in this pursuit, the zoning on the proposed site would have to be changed (it is currently zoned Mixed Use Residential).

The public planning commission held an informal public meeting with the Target representatives and the general public in January 2012. To date, there has not been an application submitted for this proposal and the company has been non-committal with the town about whether it plans to move forward.

For the purposes of this report, it is worth noting that the location that Target has identified is in the Town's growth center, but clearly there would be many, many issues to discuss and consider should an application for this proposal actually be submitted.

Proposed Target Store Location Zoning Districts and Grid Streets

1:13,000



- Legend**
- Proposed Target Site
 - Proposed Grid Streets
 - Growth Center Boundary
 - Williston Major Roads
 - Flood Plain
 - Water Bodies
 - Unnamed Streams and Tributaries
 - Named Streams
- Land Use**
- Agriculture/Rural Residential
 - Business Park
 - Gateway North
 - Gateway South
 - Industrial East
 - Industrial West
 - Mixed Use - Commercial
 - Mixed Use - Residential
 - Residential
 - Taft Corners
 - Village Center

Williston Growth Center Boundary

Proposed Target Store Location

I-89 Exit 12

Five – Year Review of Growth Center Designation Town of Williston, Vermont

Findings of Fact from Vermont Expanded Downtown Board Growth Center Designation Decision of October 22, 2007.

Findings and Conditions	Implementation Progress
<p>1. Williston shall prepare and submit the final growth center boundary map reflecting the decision of the Board to include the Southwest section as discussed in the Introduction of this document. This submission shall include supporting materials that provide a revised description of the growth center, including acreage, amount of projected development, and other significant information</p>	<p>Revised map completed November 22, 2007.</p>
<p>2. Williston shall develop a comprehensive plan, including financing mechanisms, for the expansion of the Town’s sewage treatment plant capacity before the first five-year review following formal growth center designation. The Town shall also continue to implement its growth management program consistent with maintaining adequate reserve capacities. The Town shall monitor wastewater flows over the next five years and shall report its findings to the Expanded Board and provide a plan for future sewage treatment capacity.</p>	<p>The town has recently entered into an agreement with the Village of Essex Junction to purchase an additional 50,000 gallons per day (GPD) of wastewater treatment capacity (to 10,000 GPD over five years). This will increase Williston’s treatment capacity from 980,000 GPD to 1,030,000 GPD its residential growth management system.</p> <p>The town continues to implement its residential growth management system, and continues to limit where municipal sewer service will be available.</p>
<p>3. Williston shall make every effort to join CCTA (which includes actually applying to join) and work with CCTA on developing a new route that connects the two centers within two years of designation.</p>	<p>The town joined CCTA in 2008. There are currently two routes of bus service in Williston, including a commuter line linking Williston’s village with the designated growth center and the larger regional system.</p>
<p>4. Williston shall adopt its proposed unified development bylaw that will more comprehensively implement the provisions in the Town Plan that pertain to the designated growth center within one year of obtaining designation. The Town shall evaluate the successful implementation of the unified development bylaw and achieving its purposes and report to the Expanded Board at the time of the first five year review.</p>	<p>A Unified Development Bylaw was approved and adopted by the Williston Selectboard on June 22, 2009.</p>

Five – Year Review of Growth Center Designation Town of Williston, Vermont

Findings and Conditions	Implementation Progress
<p>5. Williston shall adopt a new traffic impact fee schedule and ordinance consistent with consultant recommendations within one year of obtaining designation in order to generate revenues to address future infrastructure needs.</p>	<p>The town’s transportation impact fee schedule was approved and adopted by the Williston Selectboard as part of the <i>Unified Development Bylaw</i>. This increased the transportation impact fee from \$300 per PM peak hour trip end to \$700 per PM peak hour trip end.</p>
<p>6. Williston shall continue to work with VTrans and the CCMPO to explore what improvements can be made to mitigate the traffic conditions on the Route 2A corridor and surrounding area. These improvements may include, but are not limited to, improvements at Exit 12, expanded public transit and bicycle & pedestrian improvements. A plan for improvements should be developed that includes performance standards that can be used for monitoring. The Town and MPO should continue to monitor traffic conditions as well as progress in alternative forms of transportation and report back to the Board in five years. They should also report on what has been accomplished and what is proposed in the plan.</p>	<p>The first of the grid streets planned for the Taft Corners area have been approved and are under construction. Zephyr Road, which is the major street within the Finney Crossing development, is anticipated to be under construction within the next two years.</p>
<p>7. Williston shall develop a policy, and incorporate it into their Town Plan, calling for the identification and protection of archaeological resources prior to the first five-year review of its growth center designation by the Expanded Board.</p>	<p>The Town has not yet accomplished this goal but will be addressing this as part of a comprehensive management plan for dealing with natural resources that will include watershed protection areas, wetlands, wildlife habitat areas, and sensitive archaeological sites. This should be accomplished in the next year.</p>