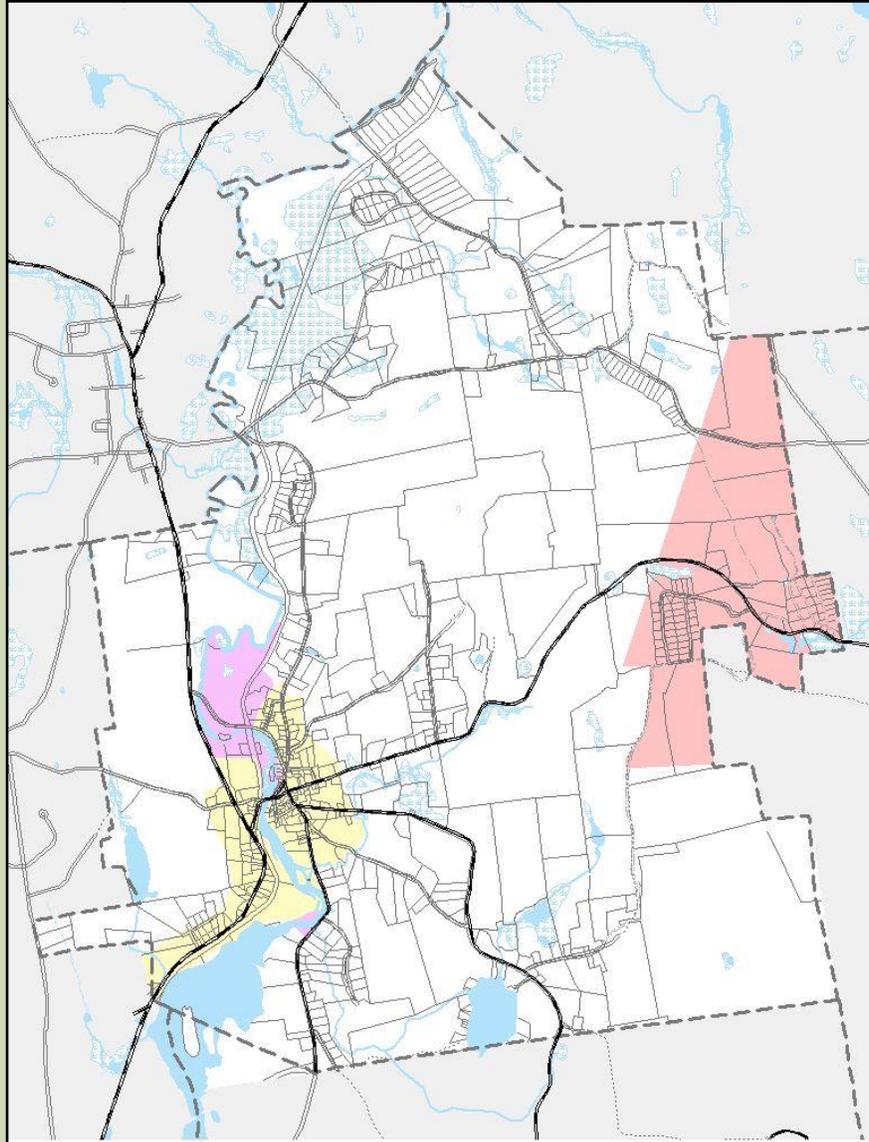


2016 MASTER PLAN FOR THE TOWN OF BENNINGTON, NH



PREPARED BY THE BENNINGTON PLANNING BOARD

This 2016 Bennington Master Plan was created through extensive updates, revisions, and additions to the previous Master Plan, from 2005. Copy editing and document formatting were performed by Planning Board member Sam Cohen.

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VISION STATEMENT

Bennington, New Hampshire is regarded by its residents as a charming small rural town. Residents value its good schools, friendly and community-spirited people, and the availability of a wide range of housing types. The natural environment, scenic beauty, and many opportunities for recreational activities help to make Bennington a nice place to live.

Most town-provided services are highly regarded, with the current level of funding considered adequate. However, road-service repair (potholes) is thought to be in need of increased funding.

There is no consensus on the desirability of future population growth. Citizens favor green spaces and maintaining Bennington's rural and historical character. More recreation programs and neighborhoods conducive to walking and talking are deemed desirable. Improved access to childcare is desired.

Support for business, particularly existing businesses, is strong. Attracting domestic and small businesses is favored, particularly along State Route 202, the main highway through the town. However, major changes are narrowly opposed. Residents express strong support for small-scale farms. "Alternative energy sources" are considered worthwhile.

In summary, opinion favors maintaining a rustic and historic atmosphere with increased availability of recreational activities to enjoy the town's natural environment and scenic beauty.

BASIC STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

New Hampshire state law mandates planning boards to “*prepare and amend from time to time a master plan to guide the development of the municipality.*”¹ The sole purpose of the master plan is to aid the planning board in the performance of its duties. The duties of the planning board are varied, but the only duty specifically required² is the maintenance of the town’s master plan.

The statute goes on to say that the master plan may include consideration of any areas outside of the town which, in the judgment of the planning board, bear a relation to or have an impact on the planning of the town.

■ WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

The master plan may be comprised of a collection of reports, statements, land use and development proposals, with accompanying maps, diagrams, charts and other descriptive matter that shows as fully as is possible and practical the planning board’s recommendations for the desirable development of the town. The master plan shall include, at a minimum, the following required sections³ :

- (a) “A vision section that serves to direct the other sections of the plan. This section shall contain a set of statements which articulate the desires of the citizens affected by the master plan, not only for their locality but for the region and the whole state. It shall contain a set of guiding principles and priorities to implement that vision.”
- (a) “A land use section upon which all other sections shall be based. This section shall translate the vision statements into physical terms. Based on a study of population, economic activity, and natural, historic, and cultural resources, it shall show existing conditions and the proposed location, extent, and intensity of future land use.”

The master plan may also include the following sections (RSA 674:2.III):

- (a) Transportation Section;
- (b) Community facilities section;
- (c) Economic development section;
- (d) Natural resources section;
- (e) Natural hazards section;
- (f) Recreation section;
- (g) Utility and public service section;
- (h) Cultural and historic resources section;
- (i) Regional concern section;

¹RSA 674:1.

²Other planning board duties, such as subdivision and site plan review, etc., are actually allowed only if the voters at town meeting authorize the planning board to take on these responsibilities.

³RSA 674:2.

- (j) Neighborhood plan section;
- (k) Community design section;
- (l) Housing section;
- (m) Implementation section.

Where appropriate, the plan may contain appendices or separate reports that contain the underlying scientific and statistical data that support the various elements of the plan.

■ **WHAT WILL THE MASTER PLAN ACCOMPLISH?**

The Master Plan provides a framework for the Planning Board in particular and the town as a whole to use in shaping the future over a period of years (5-10 years is recommended for master plan updates⁴). The Planning Board should be able to refer to the town's Master Plan whenever a development proposal comes before it, to determine whether development that is being proposed is consistent with the Master Plan.

Most important, in order for any municipality in the State of New Hampshire to adopt a zoning ordinance, a Planning Board must have adopted, at a minimum, a general statement of goals and objectives and the land use section of a master plan. In Bennington's case, the town does have a zoning ordinance. And, the current Master Plan was completed in 2005; in the ensuing 10 years, many changes have occurred in town. Therefore, it is incumbent on the Planning Board to bring the Master Plan up to date with current conditions.

This Master Plan represents — to the best ability of the Planning Board to determine — the wishes of the residents of Bennington regarding the present and future vision of the town for the next 5-10 years. Throughout this process, the Planning Board has informed the public and solicited comment in order to reach the concluding recommendations.

■ **A BRIEF HISTORY**

The major portion of Bennington was originally known as "Society Land," which consisted of a land grant made to a group of merchants in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The first settler was Joseph Putnam, who purchased land beside the "Great Falls of the Contoocook" in 1790 and shortly thereafter purchased land immediately east of the river which comprised most of the area of the village.

The major growth of the area in the early 1800s was water powered industry based on the Contoocook River. Joseph Putnam erected a grist mill and later a sawmill at a dam constructed in the area of the present Pierce Dam. Other industries along the river included a cotton mill, powder mill, paper mill, and a cutlery and farm implement shop. The area became known as Factory Village, and was then a part of Hancock. Bennington petitioned the state legislature and was incorporated in 1842 from Factory Village and land from Antrim, Deering, and Francestown.

By the mid 19th century, Bennington was a highly industrialized small community along the river, with the typical farming settlements outside the village. As the 19th century grew to a close, agriculture sharply declined, no longer able to compete with the larger midwestern farms. However, Bennington did

⁴RSA 674:3.II.

not suffer the large decreases in population that other small industrial communities had, primarily because of its relatively diverse economy.

In the early 1900s a small seasonal population developed, with people using the railroad during the summer months as transportation into the area. Gradually, as the use of water power declined and transportation by road improved, the town evolved around the Monadnock Paper Mill. Bennington had begun to be a bedroom community serving the region. By the 1950s the local grocery store closed, no longer able to compete with the supermarkets of surrounding towns. Commercial activity gradually became more convenience- and tourist-related — convenience stores, garages, restaurants, camping areas, and ski areas.

POPULATION AND HOUSING

■ INTRODUCTION

The examination of population and housing statistics is a critical element of a master plan. By understanding Bennington's past growth and expected future it is possible to estimate the level of town services necessary to serve the population and to guide change in an orderly manner.

An analysis of population and housing statistics also enables the Planning Board to determine whether amendments to the zoning ordinance might be required to address any inequities made apparent through the analysis. Following two important NH Supreme Court cases,⁵ the concept of equal opportunity housing is now firmly established in the master plan process. In short, every town must, through its Master Plan, address the current and future housing needs of all its residents - and in doing so must consider the housing situation in its neighboring towns as well.

■ POPULATION TRENDS

According to the 2010 Census, Bennington's total population was 1,491. This represents a 21% increase in population over the past 20 years. The decade of the 1990s saw the greatest increase in population within this time period. The percent change in population for the period 2000-2010 slowed somewhat.

POPULATION TRENDS, 1990 - 2010

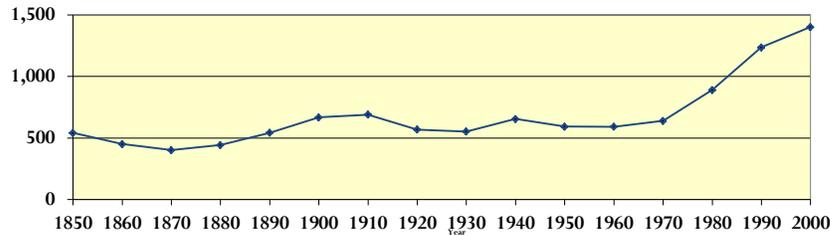
| YEAR | POPULATION | % CHANGE |
|------|------------|----------|
| 1990 | 1236 | -- |
| 2000 | 1401 | 13.3% |
| 2010 | 1,491 | 6.4% |

SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

From 1850 through 1970 Bennington's population was punctuated by periods of growth and decline, nevertheless remaining relatively stable over time. Population peaked in 1910 at 690 persons; declined through the 1930's to 552 persons, rose slightly in the 1940's to 655, and stabilized through the 1960's. From 1970 to 2000, Bennington witnessed population increases never before experienced; population more than doubled during this period with a 119% increase (762 persons). The percent change for the period 1980-2000 was just under 40%.

⁵ *Soares v. Atkinson*, 128 NH (1986) and *Britton v. Town of Chester*, 134 NH (1991). In both cases, the court held that the local zoning ordinance did not provide reasonable housing opportunity for low and moderate-income residents.

BENNINGTON'S POPULATION, 1850 - 2000



SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Population projections conducted by the Office of State Planning (OSP) suggest a 7% increase in population over the next 20 years. An increase of 52 persons is projected for the period 2010-2020 and 57 persons for the period 2020-2030.

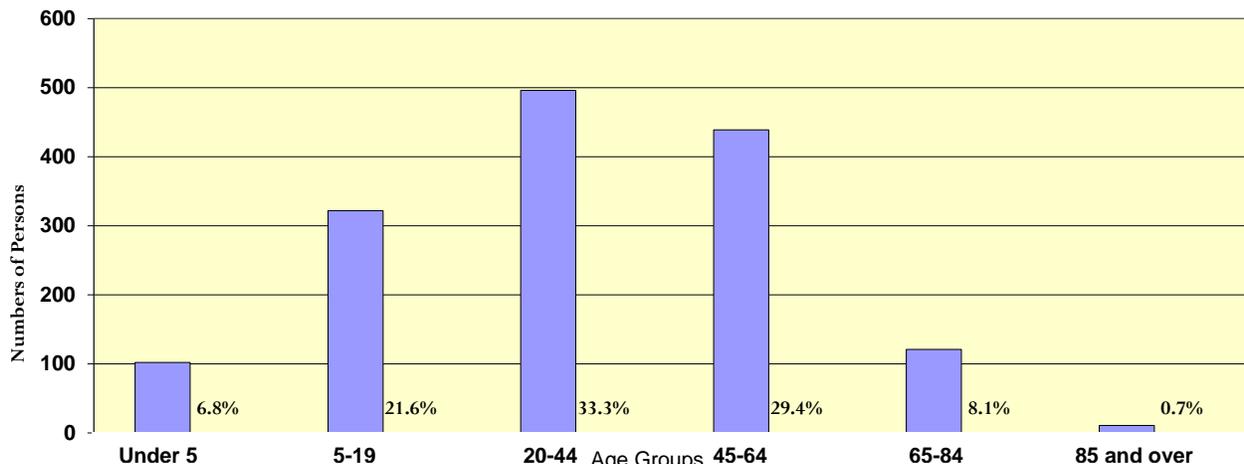
The majority of Bennington's residents are less than 45 years of age (968 persons); the most populous age group being the 35 to 59 year-olds, accounting for 40% of the total population. The second most populous group is the school-age population (5-19) accounting for 22% of the population. Persons 45-64 make up 29% of the population and persons 65 and over total 9% of the population. Children under five years of age account for only 7% of the population. The median age in Bennington in 2010 was 38.1 years.

**POPULATION PROJECTIONS
2010-2030**

| YEAR | PROJECTED POPULATION | % CHANGE |
|---------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 2010 | 1,476 | |
| 2020 | 1,528 | 3.5% |
| 2030 | 1,585 | 3.7% |
| Total Change | 2010 - 2030 | 7.4% |

SOURCE: NH OFFICE OF ENERGY AND PLANNING, FALL 2013

2010 POPULATION BY AGE GROUP



SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU

A. POPULATION CHANGE

Population change is affected by two factors: natural increase due to an excess of births over deaths in any given time period; and migration, the movement of people into or out of the community. For every year during the period 1990-2000 births exceeded deaths, resulting in a natural increase of 89 persons.

Population increase attributed to in-migration for the period 1990-2000 was 76 persons or 46%. Natural increase played a slightly greater role in affecting population than in-migration, accounting for 54% of population increase. More recently, Bennington’s population declined from 1,476 in 2010 to 1,357 in 2014. During this period, births exceeded deaths by 29 individuals, indicating that the net out-migration from the town during this period was 148 people.

B. POPULATION MOBILITY

Slightly over half of Bennington’s population lived in the same house five years prior to each of the 1990 and 2000 Census counts (52% and 58% respectively). Only 14 percent of Bennington residents lived in another state prior to 1990 and 9 percent prior to 2000.

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Population, 2010 | 1,476 |
| Natural increase, 2010-2013 | 29 |
| Population in 2013, if no migration | 1,505 |
| Actual 2013 population | 1,357 |
| Therefore, increase due to in-migration | 148 |

SOURCES: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, BENNINGTON ANNUAL REPORTS, NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR STATISTICS

PLACE OF RESIDENCE, PERSONS 5 YEARS AND OVER

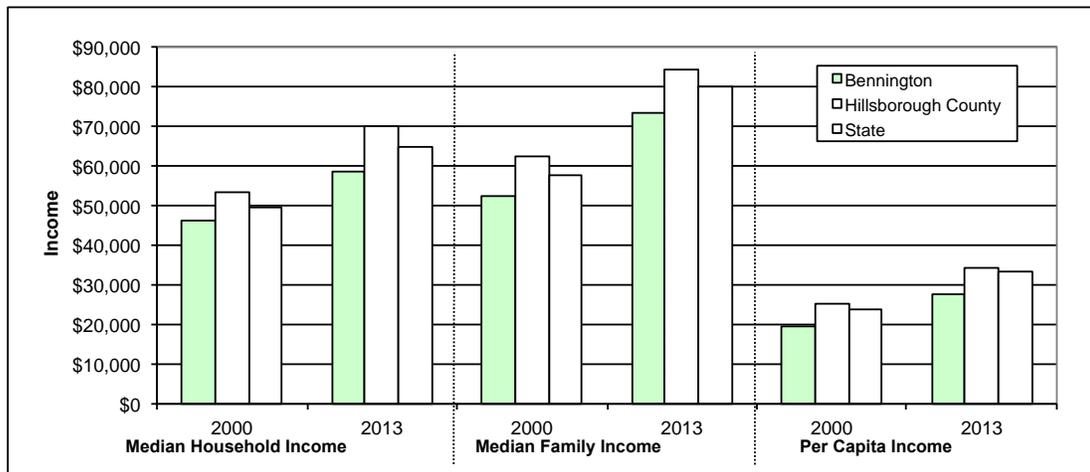
| PLACE OF RESIDENCE | 1990 | % OF TOTAL | PLACE OF RESIDENCE | 2000 | % OF TOTAL |
|------------------------------|------|------------|------------------------------|------|------------|
| Same House in 1985 | 622 | 52% | Same House in 1995 | 760 | 58% |
| Different House, Same County | 283 | 23% | Different House, Same County | 542 | 41% |
| Different County, NH | 51 | 4% | Different County, NH | 121 | 9% |
| Different State | 170 | 14% | Different State | 123 | 9% |
| Different Country | 0 | 0% | Different Country | 13 | 1% |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

C. INCOME

Bennington's median household income, median family income and per capita income have all increased between 2000 and 2013 - 27%, 41%, and 40% respectively. The rate of increase is comparable to Hillsborough County and the state.

Despite the increases, median and per capita income levels in Bennington remain lower than those in Hillsborough County and the state. Bennington's median and per capita income levels in 2013 were 13 to 20 percent less than the county, and 8 to 20 percent less than the state; median household income was \$7,324 less than the county average and \$3,317 less than the state average in 2000. By 2013, the differences were \$11,079 and \$6,166 respectively. In 2000, median family income in the county was \$10,210 higher than in Bennington; by 2013 the difference was \$11,097. Bennington's per capita income in 2000 was \$5,523 less than the county average and \$4,169 less than the state; in 2013, the differences were \$6827 less than the county average and \$5571 less than the state average.



SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

| | 2000 | | | 2013 | | |
|-------------------------|------------|---------------------|----------|------------|---------------------|----------|
| | Bennington | Hillsborough County | State | Bennington | Hillsborough County | State |
| Median Household Income | \$46,150 | \$53,384 | \$49,467 | \$58,750 | \$69,829 | \$64,916 |
| Median Family Income | \$52,153 | \$62,363 | \$57,575 | \$73,333 | \$84,430 | \$79,886 |
| Per Capita Income | \$19,675 | \$25,198 | \$23,844 | \$27,563 | \$34,390 | \$33,134 |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

In 2013, the percentage of people below the poverty level decreased for Bennington. The percentage of people age 65 and over below the poverty level decreased substantially since 2000 in Bennington, although statistics are relatively lacking, and only percentage data are available for 2013. Comparison with the Hillsborough County and the state are summarized in the following table.

POVERTY LEVELS – BENNINGTON, HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, AND STATE: 2000 & 2013

| PERSONS FOR WHOM POVERTY STATUS IS DETERMINED: | BENNINGTON 2000 | COUNTY 2000 | STATE 2000 | BENNINGTON 2013 | COUNTY 2013 | STATE 2013 |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Above Poverty Level | 1,290 | 357,483 | 1,157,256 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Below Poverty Level | 111 | 23,258 | 78,530 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| % Below Poverty | 9% | 6% | 7% | 6% | 9% | 9% |
| Age 65 and Over: | | | | | | |
| above poverty | 98 | 37,401 | 137,978 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| below poverty | 15 | 3,125 | 9,992 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| % Below Poverty | 15% | 8% | 7% | 6% | 6% | 6% |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

| Percent Change 2000 - 2013 | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| | Bennington | Hillsborough County | State |
| Median Household Income | 27% | 31% | 31% |
| Median Family Income | 41% | 35% | 39% |
| Per Capita Income | 40% | 36% | 39% |

D. NEIGHBORING POPULATION COMPARISONS

An analysis of population is not complete without a comparison of Bennington's population with that of its neighboring towns – Antrim, Deering, Frankestown, Greenfield, Hancock, and Peterborough. The table below presents this information for the last two decades, 1990 – 2010.

NEIGHBORING POPULATION COMPARISONS, 1990 – 2010

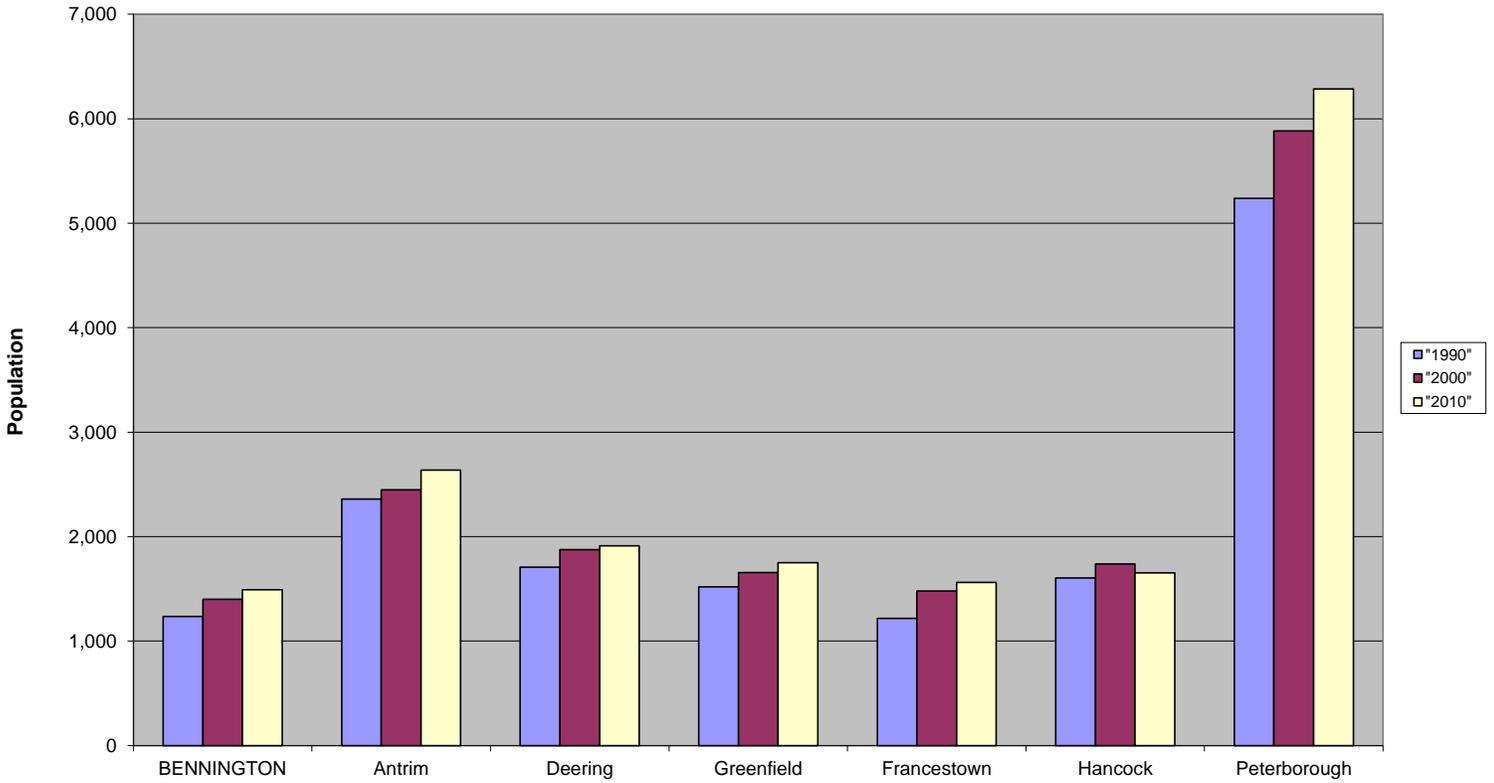
| POPULATION | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Antrim | 2,360 | 2,449 | 2,637 |
| Bennington | 1,236 | 1,401 | 1,491 |
| Deering | 1,707 | 1,875 | 1,912 |
| Greenfield | 1,519 | 1,657 | 1,749 |
| Frankestown | 1,217 | 1,480 | 1,562 |
| Hancock | 1,604 | 1,739 | 1,654 |
| Peterborough | 5,239 | 5,883 | 6,284 |
| Cheshire County | 70,121 | 73,825 | 77,177 |
| Hillsborough County | 336,073 | 380,841 | 400,721 |
| State of New Hampshire | 1,109,952 | 1,235,786 | 1,316,470 |
| % CHANGE | 1990-2000 | 2000-2010 | 1990-2010 |
| Antrim | 3.8% | 7.7% | 11.7% |
| Bennington | 13.3% | 6.4% | 20.6% |
| Deering | 9.8% | 2.0% | 12.0% |
| Greenfield | 9.1% | 5.6% | 15.1% |
| Frankestown | 21.6% | 5.5% | 28.3% |
| Hancock | 8.4% | -4.9% | 3.1% |
| Peterborough | 12.3% | 6.8% | 20.0% |
| Cheshire County | 5.3% | 4.5% | 11.0% |
| Hillsborough County | 13.3% | 5.2% | 19.2% |
| State of New Hampshire | 11.3% | 6.5% | 18.6% |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

The table above shows that all seven towns in this “subregion,” with the exception of Antrim, had more growth in the 1990s than they did in the 2000s. This is consistent with the growth experienced by Cheshire and Hillsborough counties as well as the State of New Hampshire. The towns of Frankestown, Bennington, and Peterborough experienced the greatest growth in the 1990s (21.6%, 13.3%, and 12.3%). The town of Antrim experienced the least amount of growth during the 1990's (3.8%).

During the decade of the 2000s, the towns in the subregion showed growth similar to that of Hillsborough County as a whole, with the exception of Deering, which had only 2.0% growth, and Hancock, which had a population decline of 4.9%. Between 1990 and 2010, Frankestown showed the greatest growth, 28.3%, while Hancock had only 3.1%.

SUBREGIONAL POPULATION, 1990 - 2010



SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

The NH Office of Energy and Planning population projections for Bennington and surrounding towns are presented below in five-year intervals up to the year 2035, beginning with the Census count from the year 2010.

NEIGHBORING POPULATION PROJECTIONS

| | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 | 2025 | 2030 | 2035 | # Increase | % Change |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| | | | | | | | 2010-35 | 2010-35 |
| Antrim | 2,637 | 2,698 | 2,789 | 2,848 | 2,893 | 2,916 | 279 | 10.6% |
| Bennington | 1,491 | 1,494 | 1,528 | 1,560 | 1,585 | 1,598 | 107 | 7.2% |
| Deering | 1,912 | 1,903 | 1,914 | 1,955 | 1,985 | 2,001 | 89 | 4.7% |
| Francestown | 1,562 | 1,583 | 1,620 | 1,654 | 1,680 | 1,694 | 132 | 8.5% |
| Greenfield | 1,749 | 1,772 | 1,814 | 1,853 | 1,882 | 1,897 | 148 | 8.5% |
| Hancock | 1,654 | 1,584 | 1,529 | 1,561 | 1,585 | 1,598 | -56 | -3.4% |
| Peterborough | 6,284 | 6,405 | 6,595 | 6,734 | 6,840 | 6,896 | 612 | 9.7% |

SOURCE: NH OFFICE OF ENERGY AND PLANNING

The average population projection for this subregion is much lower than the actual population growth experienced by these towns from 1980 to 2000 (51.9% experienced over the 1980-2000, with approximately 8% projected for 2010-2035). For Bennington individually, population increased by 57.4% from 1980 to 2000, with only 7.2% projected for 2010-2035.

■ HOUSING ANALYSIS

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE HOUSING STOCK

According to the 2010 US Census, Bennington's housing stock totaled 685 units, 50 units more than in 2000.

BENNINGTON’S HOUSING SUPPLY & TENURE, 1990 -2010

| | <u># of Units</u> | | | <u>% Change</u> | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------|------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 1990-00 | 2000-10 | 1990-10 |
| Owner Occupied | 349 | 378 | 434 | 8% | 15% | 24% |
| Renter Occupied | 117 | 174 | 140 | 49% | -20% | 20% |
| Total Occupied Units | 466 | 552 | 574 | 18% | 4% | 23% |
| Vacant Units | 177 | 83 | 111 | -53% | 34% | -37% |
| Total Housing Units | 643 | 635 | 685 | -1% | 8% | 7% |
| Seasonal Units | 125 | 50 | 49 | -60% | -2% | -61% |
| % vacant | 28% | 13% | 16% | | | |
| % owner-occupied | 75% | 68% | 76% | | | |
| % renter-occupied | 25% | 32% | 24% | | | |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

The percent increase in the total number of housing units from 1990 to 2010 was less than the population percent increase over the same time period. This is reflected in a decrease in the percentage of vacant housing units. The large fraction of vacant units in 1990 reflects overbuilding in the 1980s.

The percentage of renter-occupied units increased between 1990 and 2000, but by 2010 this percentage was very slightly below the 1990 percentage. The majority of housing units remain owner-occupied. The average household size for renter-occupied units is 2.60 persons and 2.55 persons for owner-occupied units. Seasonal units account for 7% of the total housing stock, down from 19% in 1990.

Like most towns in the region, Bennington has more single-family housing than multi-family housing. The ratio of single- to multi-family housing showed little change between 1990 and 2013, while the percentage of manufactured housing decreased appreciably between 2000 and 2013.

BENNINGTON’S HOUSING SUPPLY BY TYPE, 1990 – 2013

| | <u>1990</u> | | <u>2000</u> | | <u>2013</u> | | <u>% Change</u> | |
|---------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|---------|
| | Number | % of Total | Number | % of Total | Number | % of Total | 2000-13 | 1990-13 |
| Single Family | 381 | 59% | 401 | 59% | 472 | 65% | 18% | 24% |
| Multi-Family | 183 | 28% | 190 | 28% | 197 | 27% | 4% | 8% |
| Man. Housing | 79 | 12% | 85 | 13% | 53 | 7% | -38% | -33% |
| Other | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | | | |
| Total | 643 | | 676 | | 722 | | | |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

The age of the housing stock is useful in gauging its probable condition. There is a presumption that homes built prior to 1940 are more likely to be dilapidated or have outdated heating, water and septic systems.

The decade of the 1980’s saw the greatest surge in construction; 39% of Bennington’s housing stock was built between 1980-89. Approximately 22% of the housing stock was constructed prior to 1940. Units constructed between 1940-1979 accounts for another 24% of the housing stock. Only 15% of units were constructed between 1990 and 2013.

**AGE OF HOUSING STOCK BY
DECADE OF CONSTRUCTION**

| YEAR BUILT | NUMBER | % OF TOTAL |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1939 or earlier | 160 | 22.2% |
| 1940 to 1959 | 63 | 8.7% |
| 1960 to 1969 | 22 | 9.4% |
| 1970 to 1979 | 86 | 11.9% |
| 1980 to 1989 | 282 | 39.1% |
| 1990 to 1999 | 45 | 6.2% |
| 2000 to 2009 | 64 | 8.9% |
| 2010 to 2013 | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 722 | |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

| | <u># of Units</u> | |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| | <u>2000</u> | <u>2013</u> |
| Lack Complete Kitchen | 3 | 2 |
| Lack Complete Plumbing | 4 | 0 |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

| | <u>Median # of Rooms per Dwelling Unit</u> | |
|--|--|-------------|
| | <u>2000</u> | <u>2013</u> |
| | 5.2 | 5.1 |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

The number of housing units without complete plumbing and kitchen facilities is minimal. Fewer than 1% of units lacked complete plumbing and kitchen facilities in 2013. The median of 5.2 rooms per dwelling in unit in 2000 was virtually unchanged, dropping to 5.1 rooms per unit in 2013.

B. OTHER HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Additional factors to consider in assessing housing conditions are overcrowding and affordability.

Overcrowding

Persons per unit and per room are two measures the Census relies on to determine whether or not dwelling units are overcrowded. The Census defines an overcrowded unit as one that is occupied by more than one person per room. Data for Bennington indicate that overcrowding is not an issue. In all three Decennial census counts examined here, nearly 100% of the housing stock had a measure of 1.00 person per room or less.

OCCUPIED UNITS BY PERSONS PER ROOM, 1990 – 2013

| | 1990 | % of Total | 2000 | % of Total | 2013 | % of Total |
|--------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1.00 or less | 458 | 98% | 541 | 98% | 565 | 97% |
| 1.01 – 1.50 | 7 | 2% | 11 | 2% | 19 | 3% |
| 1.51 or more | 1 | 0.2% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

The average number of persons per unit has fluctuated around 2.60 between 1990 and 2010. The average number of persons per unit in 2000 was 2.54, down from 2.65 in 1990. Single-person and two-person households experienced the greatest percent increase between 1990 and 2000, in keeping with the nationwide trend toward smaller households. Details are not available for 2010.

OCCUPIED UNITS BY NUMBER OF PERSONS

| | 1990 | | 2000 | | 2010 | | % Change 2000-2010 |
|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Number | % of Total | Number | % of Total | Number | % of Total | |
| 1 person | 101 | 22% | 148 | 27% | 144 | 25% | 43% |
| 2 persons | 154 | 33% | 191 | 35% | N/A | | |
| 3 or 4 persons | 166 | 36% | 156 | 28% | N/A | | |
| 5+ persons | 45 | 10% | 57 | 10% | N/A | | |
| Total | 466 | | 552 | | 574 | | |
| Persons per Unit | 2.65 | | 2.54 | | 2.60 | | |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Affordability

Indicators of housing affordability include median housing cost, percentage of income spent on housing, and available income.

Housing costs for both owners and renters have increased over the years, as they have in the region and state. The median house value in Bennington increased by 69% between 1990 and 2013, and median rents increased by 92%. Throughout the period Bennington’s housing costs have been lower than the regional costs. This is particularly true of house values, which have been only about 70% of those in Hillsborough County since 2000, while median rent is only slightly below the County value.

COST OF HOUSING, BENNINGTON AND REGION, 1990 – 2013

| Median Housing Cost | Cost of Housing in Bennington | | | % of Regional Median Cost | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------|------|------|
| | 1990 | 2000 | 2013 | 1990 | 2000 | 2013 |
| House Value | \$105,000 | \$95,600 | \$177,800 | 91% | 69% | 71% |
| Contract Rent | \$505 | \$630 | \$972 | 111% | 91% | 93% |
| Regional Value | \$114,986 | \$139,100 | \$249,900 | | | |
| Regional Rent | \$453 | \$694 | \$1049 | | | |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Housing affordability is gauged by the percentage of household income spent on housing. According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, housing is affordable when no more than 30% of household income is spent on housing costs. As of 2013, approximately 56% of owner-occupied units in Bennington, where the owner had a mortgage, were considered affordable; this is a decrease from the 1999 figure of 78%. The percentage of renter-occupied units meeting the affordability criterion was more than the owner-occupied percentage. In 2013 79% of renters were paying less than 30% of household income on housing.

% OF INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING IN BENNINGTON, 1999 AND 2013

| | OWNERS | | RENTERS | |
|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 1999 | 2013 | 1999 | 2013 |
| Less than 20% | 117 (41%) | 71 (23%) | 65 (39%) | 71 (44%) |
| 20.0 to 24.9% | 54 (19%) | 41 (13%) | 15 (9%) | 21 (13%) |
| 25.0 to 29.9% | 49 (17%) | 66 (21%) | 9 (5%) | 36 (22%) |
| 30.0 to 34.9% | 18 (6%) | 25 (8%) | 6 (4%) | 9 (6%) |
| 35.0 to or more | 45 (16%) | 113 (36%) | 59 (35%) | 25 (15%) |
| Not Computed | -- | -- | 14 (8%) | -- |
| Total | 283 | 316 | 168 | 162 |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

The possibilities for home ownership in Bennington are examined in the table below based on the assumption that no more than 30% of a household’s income should be spent on housing to be considered affordable. The property tax calculation is based on the 2013 tax rate of \$25.40 per \$1,000. The median value of a home in Bennington in 2013 was \$177,800. The median household income in 2013 was \$58,750.

HOME OWNERSHIP AFFORDABILITY IN BENNINGTON, 2013

| 2013 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME | \$58,750 | 80% OF MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME | \$47,000 | 50% OF MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME | \$29,375 |
|--|------------------|--|------------------|--|------------------|
| 30% of monthly income | \$1,469 | 30% of monthly income | \$1,175 | 30% of monthly income | \$734 |
| Monthly Property Tax (Median Home) | \$376 | Monthly Property Tax (80% Median Home) | \$301 | Monthly Property Tax (50% Median Home) | \$188 |
| Available for mortgage | \$1093 | Available for mortgage | \$874 | Available for mortgage | \$546 |
| Mortgage affordable at 4.0% for 30 years | \$230,810 | Mortgage affordable at 4.0% for 30 years | \$184,560 | Mortgage affordable at 4.0% for 30 years | \$115,300 |
| Plus 5% downpayment | \$11,540 | Plus 5% downpayment | \$9230 | Plus 5% downpayment | \$5765 |
| PROJECTED AFFORDABLE HOME | \$242,350 | PROJECTED AFFORDABLE HOME | \$193,790 | PROJECTED AFFORDABLE HOME | \$121,065 |

Under the three scenarios examined above, households earning at least 80 percent of the median household income could afford Bennington's median priced home. Those earning 50 percent of the median household income could not afford such a home.

The last two measures examined to complete the picture on housing conditions and the ability of residents to maintain their homes are duration of occupancy and age of home owners.

Duration of Occupancy

At the time of the 2000 Census, almost 60% of people in Bennington had lived in their homes for 10 or fewer years. The number of people staying in their homes for more than 10 years has increased significantly from 2000, suggesting a trend toward longer-term residency.

DURATION OF OCCUPANCY

| Number of Years in Unit | 2000 # of Units | 2013 # of Units | % Change 2000-2013 |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 0-5 years | 248 (45%) | 151 (26%) | -39% |
| 6-10 years | 66 (12%) | 132 (23%) | 100% |
| 11-20 years | 136 (25%) | 138 (24%) | 1% |
| More than 20 years | 102 (18%) | 163 (28%) | 60% |
| Total | 552 | 584 | |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Data on ownership by age indicate that, as of 2000, more than half of the units in Bennington are owned by people between 35 and 54 years of age. The proportion of home ownership among the remaining cohorts is divided evenly.

HOME OWNERSHIP BY AGE, 2000

| | # of Units | % of Total |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| 15-34 years | 55 | 15% |
| 35-54 years | 208 | 55% |
| 55-64 years | 55 | 15% |
| 65 years and over | 60 | 15% |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

C. NEIGHBORING HOUSING COMPARISONS

Most of the growth seen in the Monadnock region, in terms of both population and housing, occurred in the 1980s. Overall, growth in the housing supply 2000s was similar to that in the 1990s for the sub-region and for Hillsborough County as a whole.

| Housing units | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | Percent Change | |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| | | | | 1990-2000 | 2000-2010 |
| Peterborough | 2,242 | 2,509 | 2,956 | 11.9% | 17.8% |
| Antrim | 1,162 | 1,160 | 1,329 | -0.2% | 14.6% |
| Deering | 757 | 827 | 932 | 9.2% | 11.4% |
| Hancock | 723 | 814 | 864 | 12.6% | 6.1% |
| Francestown | 580 | 656 | 755 | 13.1% | 11.4% |
| Greenfield | 517 | 640 | 699 | 23.8% | 9.2% |
| Bennington | 643 | 635 | 666 | -1.2% | 11.6% |
| Sub-Region Total | 6,624 | 7,241 | 8,201 | 9.3% | 13.3% |
| Hillsborough County | 137,100 | 149,961 | 166,053 | 9.4% | 10.7% |

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

In the 2000's growth in the housing supply was reasonably uniform across the sub-region, with Bennington closely following the sub-region and the Hillsborough County averages.

D. HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The enabling statute that addresses the development of master plans (RSA 674:2) requires that the housing section address current and future housing needs of all residents, at all income levels, of the town and the region in which it is located. In order to do that, opportunities for housing development in Bennington are examined, as well as population projections that give some indication as to what the town can expect in terms of housing needs for new population.

Housing Opportunity

Bennington's zoning provisions relative to opportunities for various housing types in the town, specifically which types are permitted and what the minimum lot requirements for those dwelling units, are presented below.

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES IN BENNINGTON

| ZONING DISTRICT | PERMITTED HOUSING TYPES | LOT AND YARD STANDARDS |
|---|---|--|
| Village District | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Single Family Dwellings – Permitted by right. 2. Two-family Dwellings – Permitted by right. 3. Multi-family Housing – Permitted by right. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ ½ acre with 100 feet of frontage ◆ 30-foot front setback ◆ 15-foot side setback |
| Rural/Agricultural District | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Single Family Dwellings – Permitted by right. 2. Two-family Dwellings – Permitted by right. 3. Guest Cottages – Permitted by Special Exception | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 2 acres with 200 feet of frontage ◆ 50-foot front setback ◆ 30-foot side setback |
| Commercial/Recreation District | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Single Family Dwellings – Permitted by right. 2. Condominium Development – Permitted by right. 3. Two-family Dwellings – Permitted by right. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 2 acres with 200 feet of frontage ◆ 50-foot front setback ◆ 30-foot side setback |
| Industrial District | Residential Development Not Permitted. | |
| <p>* In addition to the above housing provisions, one (1) accessory dwelling unit to a primary dwelling unit is permitted in Village District and the Rural/Agricultural District subject to special exception approval by the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Cluster Development is permitted in the Rural/Agricultural Zone and the Commercial/Recreational Zone pursuant to the conditions of Article XII of the Zoning Ordinance. In addition, the Water Resource Protection Zone overlays most of the Village District and part of the Rural Agricultural District. In parts of the Water Resource Protection District that are not served by both public water and public sewer, the minimum lot size for development is 3 acres, and cluster development is prohibited.</p> | | |

SOURCE: TOWN OF BENNINGTON ZONING ORDINANCE, 2015

Three of Bennington's four zoning districts accommodate a variety of residential types at varying scales. Nevertheless, there are other housing types that the town may want to consider that are not addressed by the current zoning provisions; in particular, housing for the elderly.

Based on 2000 Census information, the country was expected to see a dramatic increase in the number of elderly residents (those aged 65 and over); by the year 2010, this number was projected to increase from 1 in 8 (approximately 12.5%) to 1 in 5 persons. Data from the 2010 census show that this increase did not materialize. In 2010 the County percentage of elderly residents was 11.9%, only a small increase from 2000. In the case of Bennington, the 2000 percentage of elderly residents was less than 8%, and this increased only to 8.8% by 2010. The challenges of elderly housing are less than were expected in the 2005 update of the Bennington Master Plan.

Aside from the elderly housing issue, the provision of multi-family housing adds to the range of available housing types for other segments of the population. For example, with the declining household size indicated by the Census data, there will presumably be more need for smaller living units for one, two and three person households.

Future Housing Needs

Future housing needs can be estimated from the OEP (NH Office of Energy and Planning) population projections for the period 2010 to 2035 or from the past population change for the 20-year period between 1980 and 2000. The future population values are then divided by an average person per unit estimate, resulting in a housing unit estimate.

Between 1990 and 2000 Bennington experienced a decline in housing stock and an increase in population, -1.2% and +13.3%, respectively.

BENNINGTON'S POPULATION PROJECTIONS

| 2010 | 2015 | 2020 | 2025 | 2030 | 2035 | # Increase 2010-35 | % Change 2010-35 |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1,476 | 1,494 | 1,528 | 1,560 | 1,585 | 1,598 | 122 | 8.3% |

SOURCE: NH OFFICE OF STATE PLANNING (NOW OFFICE OF ENERGY AND PLANNING), MARCH 2003

Population increased 57% during the period 1980-2000. A review of the housing and population data for Bennington indicates that an oversupply of housing was built during the 1980s, which reflects the decline of new housing stock in the 1990s. The Census data show that, in general, Bennington’s housing stock is in good condition and the incidence of overcrowding of dwelling units is very low.

The NH Office of Energy and Planning population projections suggest a 8.3% increase in population over the next twenty-five years. This is a much more modest increase than was projected in 2000 (30%).

To calculate housing need, a reasonable person per unit figure for the future must be assumed; an average of 2.65 is used here. The assumed per person value is an average of the per person values reported in the 1980, 1990 and 2000 US Censuses (in 1980 it was 2.76; in 1990 it was 2.65; and in 2000 it was 2.54).

| | Population Increase | Projected Population | Persons/ Unit | = | Total Housing Units 2035 |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------|---|--------------------------|
| OEP Projections | 8.3% (2010-2035) | 1,598 | 2.65 | | 603 |
| Past Population | 20.6% (1990-2010) | 1,876 | 2.65 | | 708 |

If, in the period 2010-2035, Bennington grows at the rate experienced in 1990-2010, the town would have to add 42 housing units to its 2010 stock of 666, a rate of 1.7 units per year. If the OEP population projections prove correct, no housing units at all would have to be added.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

■ MUNICIPAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES

An essential function of town government is to provide residents and property owners with a level of service commensurate with taxes and fees paid that meets the current needs of the populace. The degree to which these facilities are developed has a significant impact on the quality of life and general character of a community. This section of the Master Plan presents an inventory of such facilities and services, an assessment of the adequacy of the current level of service, and any plans or recommendations to expand or improve an existing facility or service.

A. TOWN HALL/TOWN GOVERNMENT

Bennington's administrative services are located at 7 School Street in a two story wood frame building that was constructed in 1871. Town Hall houses the offices of the Selectmen, Town Clerk, Police Department, Tax and Water Bill Collector, Building Inspector, and Emergency Management. The basement serves as storage for the Police and Fire Departments. The second floor gym is available for public functions of 49 or fewer people, including regularly scheduled recreational activities and programs. The second story loft is used for municipal records storage. The conference room is also available for inter-municipal meetings.

Future Needs and Plans

Space at Town Hall to accommodate the Selectmen, Town Clerk, Police Department, Tax Collector, Building Inspector, Welfare Director, and Emergency Management is at a premium.

The Police Department, located in the rear of the building, shares the same entrance as town hall customers. There are no appropriate means to secure juveniles in custody. There is only one access in/out of each office within the Police Department. Currently the police officers transport all juveniles and potentially hostile individuals in custody to the Antrim Police Department where their facilities conform to safety standards.

Office space at town hall is also at a premium. The Town Clerks report that they are outgrowing their space. Placement of electrical outlets limits the Town Office configuration to the outer walls.

Meeting space at town hall is extremely limited. The Selectmen, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Adjustment meet in the town office area where seating can be arranged for up to 20 attendees at a meeting or hearing. The conference room is small and can seat only ten attendees. The town's Emergency Operations Center currently operates out of the conference room where there is access to the internet and multiple phone lines if needed.

The layout of the first floor does not allow for much reconfiguration; the center part of the first floor houses the public restroom, furnace room, and the Town Administrator's office. The public restroom is not ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant; the furnace room may not be fire code compliant, and the Town Administrator's office is drafty due to air leaks around an old door in the office.

The second floor of town hall is the old gymnasium, which can safely accommodate up to 49 people (per fire code). The space is currently used by the Recreation Department. There is no elevator service to the second floor, which prevents those with physical disabilities from accessing any function or service provided there.

The second floor loft of the Town Hall is used for records storage. This space is not ideal for storage of important and historical documents — from both a document integrity standpoint and a building construction/structural integrity standpoint. Access to the storage area is not secure. Files are currently filed in non-locking, non-fire proof filing cabinets purchased from second-hand office equipment stores.

The town is in need of funding to adequately store our documents in a digital format. All of the town's records are stored in hard copy form because we do not have the software or scanning equipment to do so electronically. Creating digital records will allow us to catalogue our information and refine our searches in a time efficient manner when requests are made under the Right to Know Law. Staff currently have to manually look through extensive files to ensure we have completed our search in compliance with state law.

Parking space at 7 School Street (the Town Hall/Police Department building) is extremely limited. There are only five regular parking spots and one handicapped parking spot. When parking at 7 School Street is full, cars park on nearby streets.

Voters at the 2008 Town Meeting overwhelmingly voted to accept the gift of real estate from the Brown and Knight VFW Post 8268, which included the land and building (formerly the Bennington Train Depot) at 9 Hancock Road. The building's primary use is for the continuation of Post 8268; when the building is not in their use, the town uses the building for community functions, classes, and the occasional rental by insured applicants. The town would like to be able to use the building as a voting venue, but it is currently not up to State standards for such use. At the March, 2016 town meeting, the Select Board offered the voters three options on the future rehabilitation or upgrade of the building, in a non-binding referendum: minimal repairs, rehabilitation and upgrade so that the building is a suitable voting venue, and historical preservation using matching grants. None of the three choices received overwhelming support, but a solid majority of the responses favored more than minimal repairs.

B. TOWN CLERK

Among the Town Clerk's responsibilities are the registration of motor vehicles and boats and the issuing of dog licenses, marriage licenses, and fishing and hunting licenses. In addition, the Town Clerk keeps vital statistics for the Town.

Future Needs and Plans

The Town Clerk's office has identified the following items as priorities in the next five to ten years.

1. The ability to process credit cards: We are currently in the process of changing to the State System to accept one check made out to the Town to cover both Town and State payments. One-check payment is expected to be in place before the end of 2016.
2. Computerized dog program: We have just obtained a spreadsheet program that will allow us to input the dog and owner information to produce dog licenses as well as renewal letters and back-

up lists that can be used by both the Town Clerk's office and the Police. As 2016 is the first year using the new program, we will be inputting the dog owner information as part of the 2016 dog registration process.

3. Replace voting booths: The current voting booths are old, and many have become unusable due to the risk of collapse. We have put off the purchase of new booths partly because of the cost and partly because of the possible upcoming change of the voting venue. If we will be voting in a new place, we want to be sure that the new booths can be configured to fit the new location.
4. Separate office space for the Town Clerk.

C. POLICE PROTECTION

Police protection in Bennington is provided by a full-time Chief, one full-time officer, and five part-time officers (four positions currently filled). This gives us the ability to cover the town seven days a week, 24 hours a day (with 60+ on-call hours from the staff). The station is currently set up with two offices and an evidence room, within the Town Hall. The basement area of the building is also used for records, large pieces of evidence, and storage. The department uses Hillsborough Police for 24-hour dispatch needs. We have two cruisers, and both offices are equipped with computers and the necessary tools needed to properly complete our tasks.

Future Needs and Plans

After speaking with a representative from the State of New Hampshire during an audit we found that we are in violation of our youth detention area (room). We currently do not have a designated area to hold or detain juveniles. Our station needs a separate area to hold juveniles, as they are not allowed by law in a "booking room," which is our entry area in the station. This needs to be addressed very soon. The entrance into the station is also a concern. To bring an intoxicated or violent person into the building where citizens and children are waiting in the lobby presents a high risk of someone being injured. We currently rely on Antrim Police for use of their station in these situations, but this option is not always available.

Finding and keeping good part-time officers is always a challenge. Keeping wages current and competitive is something we are working on for the 2016 budget. With that said, the Town of Bennington should consider the hiring of a third full-time officer in the near future.

The station is in need of repairs. The carpet is old and ripping and needs to be replaced, and the walls are in need of new paint. The equipment is current and in good shape. This is something that needs to be monitored each year.

D. FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

Bennington Fire and Rescue is located at 8 School Street, across from the Town Hall. The Station was built in 1975 by the membership. The original building was built to accommodate three pieces of apparatus, with a function hall and kitchen upstairs. In the early 1990's a single-bay addition was added

with an office area above. The station has parking designated for five vehicles although nine can be accommodated without obstructing any apparatus.

The Fire Department maintains a fleet of five vehicles, including a 1998 International 4900 tanker, a 2004 International 4400 engine, a 2009 Ford F550 medium duty rescue vehicle, a 1996 Ford F350 brush/utility Unit, and a 1998 TC utility trailer that houses an eight-bottle cascade system as well as HAZMAT containment supplies.

The fire service nationwide is governed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). NFPA advisory committees put forth codes and standards for municipal fire departments to comply with and enforce to the best of their ability while still being able to provide services to the communities they protect. If an injury or death occurs while conducting firefighting or emergency services, OSHA will hold fire departments to the standards set forth by NFPA. NFPA building codes and standards are adopted by the State and/or local agency enforcing them. NFPA advisory committees are made up of a combination of career, paid call, and full time fire service members and administrators so that standards are proposed and enforced with realistic considerations to funding, staffing and feasibility from the City of New York to the rural Town of Bennington. Bennington Fire is committed to making every effort possible to be NFPA compliant while still providing exceptional service to Town of Bennington.

Fire Department staffing includes one part-time Fire Chief, with scheduled office hours, a part-time Deputy Chief, a Captain, and a Lieutenant, and in 2016 the addition of a Rescue Lieutenant is expected. The rest of the membership is part-time or paid per call and consists of twelve members. With the exception of the Chief, the members all have full-time employment outside the Town of Bennington.

The Fire Department is contracted with Southwest New Hampshire District Fire Mutual Aid in Keene, New Hampshire for dispatching services. The Fire Department and Select Board collectively contracts with the Antrim Fire Department for ambulance services.

Nationwide, fire and rescue service has seen increasing call volume. As referenced in the 2002 Town of Bennington Master Plan, 1990 saw 105 calls for service, 2000 saw 126 calls, and 2001 saw 155 calls. Since then there has been a significant jump in call volume with 235 calls in 2014 and 231 calls in 2015. The reopening of Crotched Mountain Ski and Ride in the winter of 2003-2004 accounts for an increase of around 30 calls per year on average. The Fire Department responds with mutual aid to surrounding towns as necessary, accounting for approximately 20 calls per year.

Future Needs and Plans

The Department has been committed to maintaining, service-testing, and replacing all of its equipment and apparatus. This provides optimum life safety for responders as well as uninterrupted services for the community we serve. An annual maintenance/testing schedule has been created to space out costs. Items that are not included in this schedule are self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and cascade cylinders. Those are on a five-year cycle. Maintaining this schedule assures us that there will be no surprises with equipment losses or critical downtime.

Historically the equipment replacement frequency has been 20 years on the engine and tanker, 10 years on the rescue vehicle and retrofitting the rescue chassis to accommodate the brush truck. NFPA and insurance company recommendations dictate that frontline apparatus (the first due apparatus) is no more than 20 years old, regardless of usage. Engine One was a rush purchase and was not built to meet the department's needs for 20 years. It has been plagued with mechanical breakdowns and downtime. It is slated for replacement in 2025 but is unlikely to last that long. Tanker One is expected to outlive its 20-

year rotation. Besides normal wear and tear items, it has been a solid truck and has appropriate storage. It is slated for replacement in 2018. These two trucks are the biggest-ticket items that we have to replace. With the 20-year rotation we could replace one every ten years and have time to raise funding in-between. This year the Bennington Fire Department is researching a lease/purchase option on a new engine to get out from under its current one. If this replacement plan is approved, Tanker One could be replaced in 2027 making it 29 years old. With the proper specifications, the replacement tanker could last another thirty years and we could continue the 20/30 year rotation, making funding easier.

Rescue One and Brush One are both reaching equipment capacity. Rescue One has had minor downtime due to manufacturer's defects with the body installation. The Brush truck (the old rescue vehicle) has been having a happy semi-retired life as a brush/utility vehicle and has had no serious issues. The advances in the automotive industry for safety purposes have made motor vehicle extrication more difficult and require more specialized equipment. As call volumes increase and equipment storage is limited, in the future EMS calls could be handled with a fly car (SUV) instead of a rescue truck, providing more space with less wear and tear in a cost-effective way. As the cost of ambulance contracting increases, a cost/benefit analysis will determine whether the Town should have its own transport service.

Staffing is a constant struggle in the fire service, and even more so in Bennington. There are limited workplaces within the town. As a result most of the staff leaves town for work during the day. There is no foreseeable easy fix to this matter. A centralized day shift shared with a few abutting towns would certainly help the matter, but that comes with a price tag. There is currently no plan in place to increase daytime staffing. Between abutting towns, shared staffing and different incident dispatch procedures have been put in place, but there is significant room for improvement.

The station is at maximum capacity. The apparatus floor has very little room to walk around apparatus and minimal storage area. We have been improving life-safety components within the bay areas over the last few years, but, other than a larger facility, there is no way to satisfy all of the safety requirements. Another issue with the small area is apparatus selection. As it stands now, the department's trailer sits outside with no cover. The trailer sitting there is not a huge issue, but when temperatures fall below freezing and an airpack is filled off of the trailer, the firefighter gets a rude awakening of cold air. Bennington is in a central location for regional responses with abutting towns for specialized equipment. We respond to five different communities on an initial assignment and usually are the second piece of apparatus on scene. Any specialized equipment that could be considered from a regional resource standpoint would have to be tailored to our station. We may have sufficient space to add one additional bay on the east end of the station, but that would require a variance to setback ordinances and is a costly temporary solution to a long-term problem. For a new fire station that is compliant with local codes and ordinances, estimated project costs would well exceed \$750,000. Any Federal grant funding available requires that the project be shovel-ready before the application is submitted. Through the years, nationwide recommendations have suggested that fire stations be constructed to stand fifty years into the future with no major renovations or upgrades.

The department's contracted dispatch service operates in Keene, New Hampshire. Southwest Fire dispatches over seventy communities throughout New Hampshire and Vermont. This can be problematic with multiple agencies operating on the same frequency and competing for air time. Southwest Fire also has a large overhead that continues to rise as towns back out of the system. There have been plans for Peterborough to start their own dispatch center in the next five years. If that program is successful, it could be a viable option for Bennington to join their system. Capital Area Dispatch dispatches communities to the north of us and is also a viable option. There would be less competition for air time and also a lower cost. No plans to move are currently in place as Capital Area is making major upgrades to their system. On a local operational level, Fire Department and Emergency Management are looking

into a fix for town-wide communications. There are multiple dead spots that limit radio communication across town. Some basic testing will be achieved over the summer of 2016.

Bennington has a hydrant system that covers about three square miles in the center of the town. For other areas water is trucked in from fill sites. There is a plan in place to equip certain locations with dry hydrants. A dry hydrant is a piping system that provides safe, frost-free access to an existing water source. Dry hydrants are faster and safer than trucking in water, and can be utilized more effectively if placed strategically along the river for year-round access. Currently there is no funding for these projects. Locations include four dry hydrants along the river, two at local small ponds, and one at Powder Mill Pond. In addition to the hydrants, the Planning Board has required the developer of a housing project on Gillis Hill Road to install a cistern. This provides enhanced fire safety for these homes and is a good model for future developments that lack Town water supply and are not situated in proximity to water bodies.

Bennington Fire conducts life safety inspections of places of assembly annually and residential and commercial facilities by request. Each year BFD plans to add commercial properties and multifamily housing incrementally to incorporate them in the annual inspections. By 2020 all facilities that require an inspection should be incorporated into the program.

Similarly to the maintenance and testing schedule, equipment replacement is also spaced out so costs are minimal each year. Through Capital Reserve Funding, two sets of gear per year as well as SCBA bottles are purchased, and appropriate funding for apparatus is provided. The department's turnout gear has a ten year service life. Damaged gear can also be costly to replace. Spacing the purchases out yearly makes the burden on the budget minimal and keeps our fire fighters safe while operating in emergencies. The only type of equipment that has not been supported with a replacement schedule is radios. We hope that in 2017 there will be funding available to start replacing a few at a time. The chart below breaks down, by equipment location, the frequency and year of the next scheduled maintenance, service, or testing (A=annual, B/A=biannual, M=monthly).

Fire Department Annual Service/Testing Schedule 2016

| Engine | | | Rescue | | |
|------------------|-----|---------|------------------|-----|------|
| Engine One Pump | A | 2016 | Rescue 1 Service | A | 2016 |
| E1 Service | A | 2016 | R1 Inspection | A | 2016 |
| E1 Inspection | A | 2016 | R1 Airpacks | A | 2016 |
| E1 Gas Meter | M | 2016x12 | R1 Generator | B/A | 2017 |
| E1 Airpacks | A | 2016 | R1 Jaws | A | 2016 |
| E1 Ladders | B/A | 2017 | R1 Saw | B/A | 2017 |
| E1 Hose | B/A | 2016 | R1 Extinguishers | A | 2016 |
| E1 Generator | B/A | 2017 | | | |
| E1 Saw | B/A | 2017 | Brush | | |
| E1 Extinguishers | A | 2016 | Brush One Pump | B/A | 2017 |
| | | | B1 Service | A | 2016 |
| Tanker | | | B1 Inspection | A | 2016 |
| Tanker 1 Pump | A | 2016 | B1 Generator | B/A | 2017 |
| T1 Service | A | 2016 | B1 Hose | B/A | 2017 |
| T1 Inspection | A | 2016 | B1 Saw | B/A | 2017 |
| T1 Airpacks | A | 2016 | B1 Extinguishers | A | 2016 |
| T1 Ladders | B/A | 2017 | | | |
| T1 Hose | B/A | 2016 | Station | | |
| T1 Smoke Ejector | B/A | 2017 | Alarm System | A | 2016 |
| T1 Saw | B/A | 2017 | Cascade | A | 2016 |
| T1 Extinguishers | A | 2016 | Furnace | A | 2016 |
| | | | Garage Doors | B/A | 2017 |

E. HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

The Highway Department is located on North Bennington Road at the site of the Transfer Station. The Department's staff — two full-time employees including the Road Agent, and one part-time employee — are responsible for maintaining Bennington's 16.244 miles of Class V roadways. Our equipment has been upgraded since the previous (2005) Master Plan. The 1989 grader is still in good condition, but finding parts is difficult. It may be necessary to upgrade or replace it in the next decade. We now have two dump trucks (2007 and 2015) set up for grading and sanding and a 2008 1-ton truck, also set up for winter. In addition, we have a 2011 loader/backhoe and a 1984 loader.

Future Needs and Plans

The garage is at its limits, having to house three trucks and a loader/backhoe. Space problems are particularly acute in the winter as the vehicles need to be kept ready to go in cold weather. Adding on to the building can easily be done only on the north side. On the west is the septic system; on the south is a well; and on the east is a three-bay building used for storage. Any additions should be well thought out and good for the long term. The Department recommends that a new sand shed be constructed in the next decade.

Routine road maintenance and road improvements are critical to extending the life cycle of roadways and protecting the public's financial investment in the road network. Maintaining the large amount of equipment listed in the first paragraph is likely to require an adjustment in Capital Reserve Funding. In addition, the survey conducted by the Planning Board prior to developing the Master Plan found that residents of Bennington felt that increased funding should be devoted to summer road maintenance. This need is incorporated into the resulting Vision Statement that is in the Introduction to this Master Plan.

F. Solid Waste Disposal

The Town of Bennington operates a transfer station/recycling center located next to the Highway Department on North Bennington Road. Structures on site consist of an office, recycling building, compactor/collection bins, and containers.

The center is open Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays and is staffed by two part time employees. Highway Department staff also assist with management and maintenance of the facility. Residents are not charged fees to use the facility, with the exception of the disposal of tires, refrigerators, air conditioners, and other fee-service household goods.

Materials recycled include plastics, cardboard, metals, aluminum cans, newspapers, tires, waste oils and filters, and batteries. The center also provides space for discarded items offered to the public for reuse. The Town contracts with Monadnock Disposal Service., to dispose of recyclables and trash collected at the town facility.

Future Needs and Plans

The physical plant is adequate and capable of handling the volume of waste expected over the next decade. The waste compactor was replaced in 2012 and should give us twenty years of service. The

buildings are showing their age, with rot around the windows of the office building being of particular concern.

G. SEWER AND WATER SYSTEM

Bennington's sewer system was built in response to a state order in the early 1970's requiring the town to address pollution of the Contoocook River caused by development adjacent to the river. The system was constructed in 1985 and serves approximately 60 households in the village center. Monadnock Paper Mills Inc. installed its own industrial waste treatment facility in the early 1970's.

As part of the system, the town maintains a grinding station and a separator located on Starrett Rd. Sewage is pumped to Antrim for treatment at their sewage treatment facility. By contract, Bennington can use up to 50,000 gallons per day of the treatment capacity of the treatment plant in Antrim. The Sewer Commissioners of Antrim find their treatment system overloaded and have indicated that any major addition to this volume may require expansion of the treatment facility. The towns of Antrim and Bennington jointly raise monies through capital reserves for periodic dredging of the facility.

The supply and distribution of water falls under the jurisdiction of the Sewer and Water Commissioners. The system was acquired by the town in 1923 from private ownership. The source of water was originally a surface water reservoir, but was switched to a well in 1967. The well has a total estimated capacity of 1.73 million gallons per day, but the pump currently has a normal use capacity of 375,000 gallons per day. The aquifer supplying the well has significantly more capacity than the 1.73 million gallons per day, so the actual water supply should never be a limiting factor in Bennington.

The addition of a 330,000 gallon standpipe in 1981 provides ample water for fire protection as well as an emergency water supply for the residents of the system. The distribution system covers the major built up portion of the Town. Users are billed on a quarterly basis by means of meter readings.

In 1995, the towns of Antrim and Bennington interconnected their water supply sources and signed an agreement which permits use by either town of the other's water in the event of an emergency.

Future Needs and Plans:

1. The completion of the Eaton Avenue main line project. This project was on our last updated plan for five years. The project has been started and, if all goes according to plan, will be completed in 2017.
2. Replacement and update of water meters. Some of the meters are still original. The commissioners would like to replace all of these meters in the next five years, or sooner if possible. As part of this effort, billing software updates will be needed.
3. Update our build-as plans. The state asked us in May 2015 to plan on future records and drawings updates. This will be a costly expense. The commissioners plan to start this process as soon as funding is available and to complete it within five years.
4. Maintenance of the well. This is a state requirement and must be completed every ten years. We are scheduled to do this cleaning in 2016. The first maintenance was completed in 2006. The commissioners have requested a capital reserve funding increase to assure that there is enough money for the next cleaning.
5. Perform a water audit. A basic audit was performed in 2009 when there were bacterial issues. Nothing major was found. The commissioners feel that this should be a scheduled procedure every ten years, making the next audit due in 2019. This would enable them to identify possible major problems before they happen.

6. The Antrim treatment plant lagoons were dredged in 2015 at a substantial savings to Bennington. The commissioners feel that we are up to good operational practices. No major expenses in this area are expected in the next five to ten years.
7. No major changes to the Bennington sewer system are planned at this time.

H. LIBRARY

The G.E.P. Dodge Library is located on Main Street in a small brick and granite building constructed in 1906 for this purpose, and which has been used continuously as a library ever since. The building houses the Library's extensive collection of 25,051 books, 28 periodicals, 1 newspaper, 686 audiobooks, and 1,687 DVD's. The collection is complemented by an additional 12 periodicals and 7981 downloadable audiobooks available from the New Hampshire downloadable (NHDB) collection and 560 DVD's available through the Nubanusit Cooperative, an association of 30 libraries in southwestern New Hampshire. All library materials are now accessible through an on-line card catalog (<https://dodgeliibrary.biblionix.com/catalog/>). In 2015 the library's patron population was 1,405.

The Library is open to the public 30 hours a week and is staffed by one full-time and one part-time employee. Public meetings and programs including the Summer Reading Program are also held at the Library. The library runs several programs, including youth and adult book groups, story times, holiday programs, and the summer reading program. Some of these programs are held outside the library's scheduled hours of operation. Attendance at all children's programs in 2014 totaled over 2000. The G.E.P. Dodge Library was the first in New Hampshire to provide wireless internet service and provides free Wi-Fi to patrons and residents 24 hours a day, year round. In addition, the library has two desktop computers available for patrons for general personal use and a third that is available to search the library's online catalog. A photocopier makes black and white and color copies and can be used to scan documents and print from the library's public computers or wirelessly from patrons' own devices. A public-access fax machine is also available. The library makes reduced-price or free passes to five museums available to patrons.

Future Needs and Plans

Due to the building's age, the library is not ADA compliant. Some of the library's collection, and the only restroom, are located in the basement, where patrons are not permitted entry, by request of the town's insurers. The library's collection, programs, and services are generally limited to within its 940 usable square feet. Many improvisations have been made to accommodate large groups for programs and for storage of the main collection. The children's reading room can just accommodate 10 to 15 children without their parents, but most of the children's programming attracts between 35 and 50 attendees, frequently forcing programs to be presented outside during fair weather or in shifts indoors. Too often, wonderful programs have to be passed up, since there would be neither adequate nor ADA-compliant space to hold them.

In short, the G.E.P Dodge Library needs an addition. The added space would provide seating for readers, researchers, students, and wireless users. There would be space for multiple computer workstations and for on-line catalog access. There would be a safe and separate children's area away from adults, and a meeting space for informational meetings, programs, presentations, workshops, clubs, organizations, movies, and crafts. There would be adequate shelving for the collection and display cases. Most important, the building would be ADA compliant.

I. RECREATION

Bennington's public recreational facilities include:

- Newhall Youth Field located on Bible Hill Road - two ballfields, a skatepark, playground, and soccer field;
- Sawyer Field located on US 202 West - a ballfield, playground, winter sliding, and ice-skate park;
- Whittemore Lake Beach on NH 31 - swimming area, fishing, and boat launch;
- Cold Spring Pond on Bible Hill Road - youth fishing; and
- Gymnasium facilities on the second floor of the Town Hall.

A host of recreational programs are offered throughout the year. Recreational programs are administered by the Recreation Committee and the Little League Group. Most activities are run by volunteers or by independent providers who are allowed to use the facility because they provide a reduced rate for Bennington residents.

Future Needs and Plans

Staffing: The Bennington Recreation Committee is currently run by very dedicated volunteers, who are increasingly difficult to find. The addition of a part-time Recreation Director would allow for an increase in recreational activities and better management of the volunteer pool.

Sawyer Field Future Improvements: One of Bennington's oldest playing fields, which is open to all ages, is in need of upgrading. New scoreboard, additional tot lot equipment, availability of permanent power for all events, and the restoration of the fireplace to its original beauty are the primary upgrades needed.

Whittemore Beach Future Improvements: The boat launch and beach area are both in need of new sand fill.

Cold Spring Pond Future Improvements: The existing building needs to have the windows repaired. The wood trim needs to be painted and the roof shingles should be inspected yearly. The bridge over the dam should be inspected yearly and any deformations should be mended or replaced. The Recreation Committee would consider the future use of this building for storage of recreation supplies.

Future Trail Network Mapping: Although the Town of Bennington does not have a formal trail network, the Committee recognizes the future need to map the town's trails. Existing trails, such as the ATV/Snowmobile trail on the old railroad bed and the Boy Scout trail from Mountain Road to the top of Crotched Mountain, need to be mapped for walkers, runners, bike riders, horseback riders, snowmobiles, ATVs, etc. Maps of the Bruce Edes trail are available at the trail head at the old railroad station ("the VFW Building"). Mapping the trails is also important for search and rescue operations. Accordingly, the Conservation Commission has begun to work with the Fire Chief to map the town's trails.

Town Hall Gymnasium: The second-floor restroom should be renovated into a working facility. Several youth organizations meet in the gymnasium, and having a restroom in working order on the same floor would allow children to use the facility without having to go downstairs, where the restroom is right next to the outside doors. If the restroom renovation cannot be accomplished in the short term, removal of the existing fixtures to allow for storage space would be ideal. In addition, renovations should be made to the stage area, which is currently unsafe for public use and is primarily used for storage.

J. HEALTH AND WELFARE

The Human Services Department administers the rental assistance and fuel assistance programs for the town. Town welfare is available for short-term emergency assistance for basic living needs to qualified residents through a voucher system. Assistance is available with rent, food, utilities, and medication. Welfare is intended to fill a temporary need. In order to qualify for town assistance, there are non-financial as well as financial criteria. A client must stay in compliance with town and state (when appropriate) welfare guidelines if assistance is to continue. If the town is able to provide financial assistance, reimbursement is expected when the client is no longer experiencing a hardship.

The Town of Bennington supports a number of regional human service organizations, in addition to providing a certain amount of direct assistance to families in town. The organizations to which the Town contributes include: The Grapevine Family and Community Resource Center and Teen Center, The American Red Cross, the Contoocook Valley Transportation Company, the Court Appointed Special Advocates, the Contoocook Housing Trust, and the Child Advocacy Center of Hillsborough County. Support for these organizations is provided pursuant to annual ballot warrant articles, which the voters have consistently supported.

Future Needs and Plans

New Hampshire towns and cities are experiencing reductions in state-funded Health/Welfare programs at the same time that a major portion of the state's populations are reaching old age — the years in which those programs are most needed. A significant slice of both state and local budgets will be needed to support elderly services.

K. CEMETERIES

Town cemeteries include Evergreen Cemetery (est. 1792) located on Old Stagecoach Road, Sunnyside Cemetery (circa 1810) located in the center of town, and Mount Calvary Cemetery (circa 1910) located on Old Stagecoach Road.

Future Needs and Plans

For the next five to ten years, the Cemetery Trustees have identified the following items as priorities.

1. Sunnyside fence: The fence around Sunnyside is deteriorating and is in need of significant repair. The Trustees will be collecting quotes and advice from wrought-iron specialists in order to determine the best plan of action. It is the Trustees' desire to preserve the historical integrity of the fence, but we know that it may come with an increased price. It may be possible to have the fence repaired over a series of years.
2. Cremation lots in Evergreen Cemetery: The Trustees are in the process of identifying areas in Evergreen Cemetery that would be designated as cremation-only lots. There will be costs associated with the payout of these lots.
3. Stone maintenance in Evergreen and Sunnyside Cemeteries: At this time the Cemetery Trustees have a charity fund for Sunnyside Cemetery that has been set up by an individual. We have been able to use money from this fund to begin the process of restoration and maintenance of cemetery stones that are in disrepair, in order to preserve history and as a safety precaution for individuals who visit the cemetery. Work also began in 2015 in an older section of Evergreen Cemetery. It is the desire of the Trustees to continue this project in both Town Cemeteries. For the 2016

budget, we have requested a \$1000 increase in our Stone/Tree/Maintenance line item to support this work.

L. EDUCATION

Bennington is a member of the nine-town Contoocook Valley School District (ConVal). The District owns and operates an elementary school in eight of its nine towns (excluding Sharon), and operates both a middle school and a high school in Peterborough and a middle school in Antrim. The Region 14 Applied Technology Center (ATC), mainly located at ConVal High School, offers a variety of AT courses to students at ConVal and Conant High Schools.

The Pierce Elementary School located on Main Street in Bennington was constructed in 1928. The original building is a two-story brick structure with a full basement. In 1997, a new addition was added to the school consisting of a one-story addition with vinyl siding. The Pierce Elementary School consists of 7 classrooms, a library/media center, a multi-purpose room, a conference room, an office, a nurse’s room, a cafeteria, and a teacher’s room.

The school provides education for kindergarten through fourth grade. Pupils attend the Great Brook Middle School in Antrim for grades five through eight, and ConVal High School in Peterborough for grades nine through twelve. Pierce School has twelve full-time-equivalent staff members, including a shared principal, classroom teachers, an educational support teacher, an administrative assistant, and the following shared personnel: nurse, school counselor, Title I teacher, library media specialist, art/music teacher, PE teacher, health teacher, and shared student services support staff. The nurse visits the school each week on Monday morning and Wednesday afternoon.

As of November 2015 Bennington's Pierce Elementary School had 67 pupils enrolled, including in kindergarten, representing 3% of the total ConVal student population. Information on school enrollments and costs per pupil for ConVal and its neighboring school districts is presented below:

SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENTS, 2014 – 2015

| GRADE LEVEL: | School Districts | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| | ConVal | Jaffrey-Rindge | Wilton-Lyndeb. | Monadnock |
| Pre-Kindergarten | 64 | 47 | 15 | 72 |
| Kindergarten | 131 | 113 | 39 | 122 |
| Elementary | 624 | 568 | 224 | 727 |
| Middle School | 635 | 301 | 119 | 259 |
| High School | 820 | 428 | 195 | 546 |
| TOTAL | 2,274 | 1,457 | 592 | 1,726 |

SOURCE: NH DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Within its immediate region, ConVal is the largest school district, followed by Monadnock Regional and Jaffrey-Rindge. In the ConVal District, the largest group of students is in the high school. With the exception of Wilton-Lyndeborough, all districts have experienced decreased enrollment since the 2000-2001 school year: Monadnock Regional -33.5%, ConVal -29.5%, and Jaffrey-Rindge -14.1%. Wilton-Lyndeborough's enrollment increased by 48.3%. That district had only a middle school and a high-school in 2000-2001. Wilton-Lyndeborough's middle and high school enrollment decreased by 21.3% between 2000-2001 and 2014-2015.

COST PER PUPIL, 2013-2014

| SCHOOL DISTRICTS | | | | | |
|------------------|----------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|----------|
| GRADE LEVEL | ConVal | Jaffrey-Rindge | Wilton-Lynde. | Monadnock Regional | State |
| Elementary | \$18,064 | \$13,268 | \$17,780 | \$16,374 | \$14,200 |
| Middle School | \$15,891 | \$14,010 | \$18,137 | \$16,372 | \$13,321 |
| High School | \$16,333 | \$14,652 | \$15,674 | \$16,993 | \$14,109 |
| All | \$16,806 | \$13,850 | \$17,124 | \$16,568 | \$14,001 |

SOURCE: NH DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Per pupil costs for education for all districts within this selected sub-region range have more than doubled since the 2000-2001 school year. The statewide average has also more than doubled. ConVal's per pupil total costs are comparable to those for the Wilton-Lyndeborough and Monadnock Regional districts and are well above the statewide average..

In addition to Bennington's Pierce Elementary School, Antrim's middle school and Peterborough's ConVal high school, residents of Bennington have access to dozens of childcare/learning centers in the area; private schools in Dublin, Jaffrey, Peterborough, and Wilton; and post-secondary education offered by two colleges in Keene (Antioch New England and Keene State College) and one in Rindge (Franklin Pierce University), as well as Project Running Start, which offers high school students the opportunity to take college-level courses and receive college credit in a cooperative program between the New Hampshire Technical Institute (Concord's Community College) and high schools, including ConVal.

■ NON-GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

A. HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bennington's Historical Society museum is located on Main Street in a 15' x 20' cape with a 26' x 36' attached hall. A later 26' x 16' addition includes a kitchen, office space, and storage and display space. The Society is open to the public on Saturdays, May through September, and is at other times available to the elementary school on an as-needed basis. New members are always welcome. The building is also used to host NH Historical Society meetings and social events.

The Bennington Historical Society continues being active and dedicated to preserving and collecting artifacts and researching historical information of our town. Keeping the society active is a way for future generations to know and enjoy Bennington's history.

A Bennington history book was completed in 2009. Titled "A History of Bennington, New Hampshire," it contains 414 pages and includes photographs. Copies are available at the Historical Society building.

All artifacts in the building are listed in a computerized inventory organized by museum-management software. The building also houses a map of cemetery plots in Sunnyside Cemetery, including names and dates, so that visitors can locate family members interred there.

Future Needs and Plans:

The back roof was replaced with new shingles and the front will need to be shingled in the near future.

The building needs a new heating and cooling system. Right now the museum is battling a problem with mildew. The winter project in 2016 will be removing mildew from furniture and artifacts. In the next year or so we plan to have a new computer system installed. The computer being used now is more than ten years old and not able to install programs such as Quicken. At some point in the future we would like to set up a computer station for visitors to use to look up old homes, cellar holes, family history, cemetery plots, etc. There are many projects and tasks the Society would like to accomplish in the next few years, including compiling genealogies, the histories of homes, and the location and histories of cellar holes. We also hope to complete the scanning of historical documents and the cataloging of these and other artifacts in the museum. We continue to dream of a gazebo and park at some location in town.

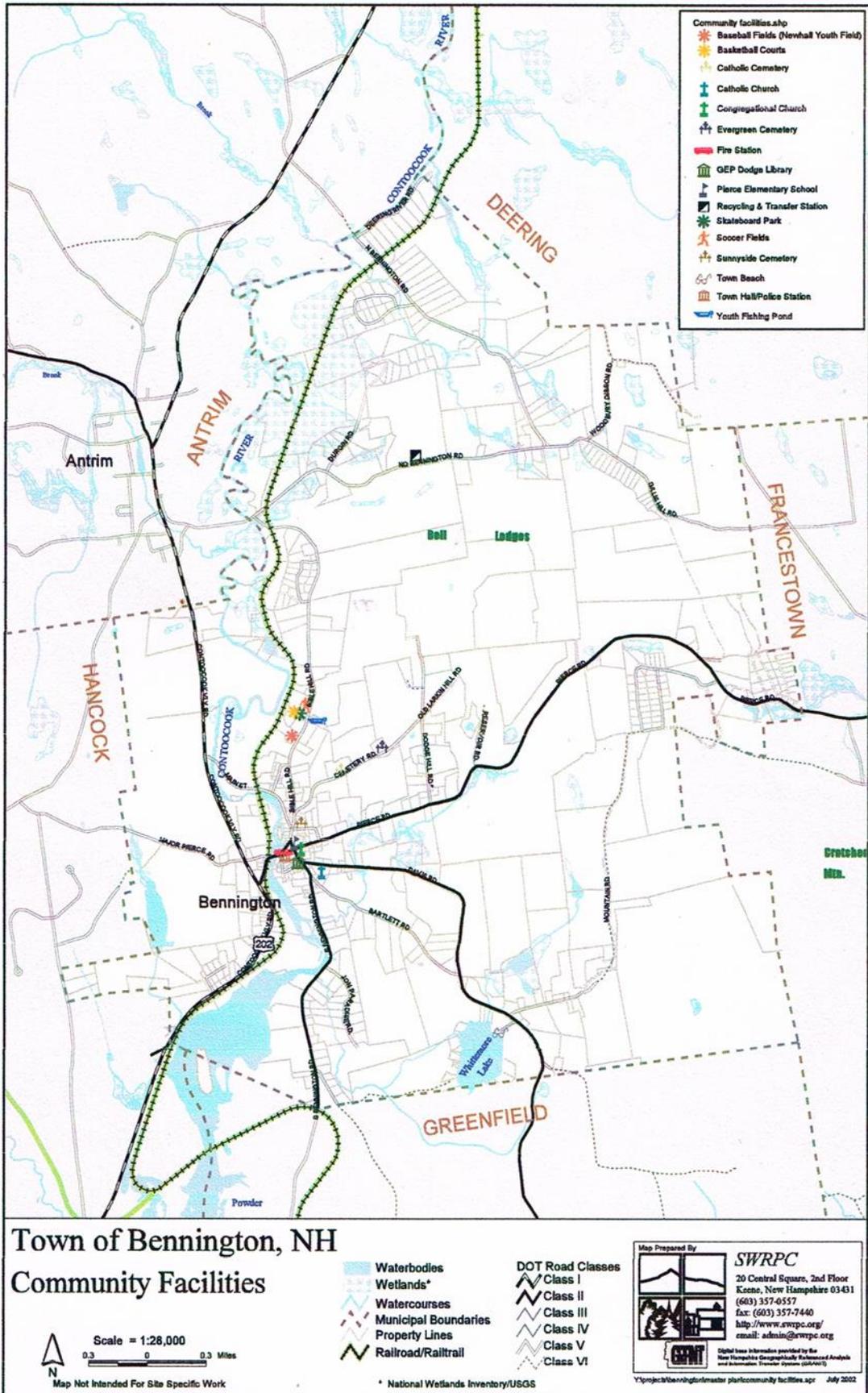
There is a sidewalk project in the future which will mean tearing up a portion of our yard to update the underground drainage system and install new sidewalks. The society hopes that we can continue to use the parking space across the street.

B. CHURCHES

There is one church in Bennington. The Bennington Congregational Church located on Main Street and Francestown Road was built in 1839. The Church is used for weddings, funerals and other public functions. Other facilities in town include the Immaculate Conception Grotto outdoor shrine for private and public prayer.

C. VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

The VFW meets in the former Bennington train depot located next to the Contoocook River at Pierce Hill Road and Hancock Road. The VFW formerly owned the building, but conveyed it to the Town of Bennington in 2008. In addition to providing services and support to veterans, the VFW involves itself in community service programs and local projects.



TRANSPORTATION

■ INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the transportation section of the Master Plan is to analyze current transportation conditions in town and provide information for considering the roles and needs regarding transportation in Bennington's future.

Every town's transportation system has several parts:

- **infrastructure:** roads, bridges, drainage, sidewalks and trails;
- **managers:** town and state highway departments and those offices responsible for public spending decisions;
- **users:** people and vehicles moving on the infrastructure; and
- **trip generators:** the homes, businesses and other land uses attracting the users and served by the infrastructure

The ability of the infrastructure and managers to support the demand created by users and trip generators for safe, efficient travel depends on many variables. This Master Plan will address three variables that the municipality can control: condition of the infrastructure, land use patterns, and public funds.

An important principal in transportation planning is that long term plans must account for the relationship between the four system parts named above, or more simply, the relationship between transportation and land use. Poor highway conditions can stifle development; unmanaged growth can overwhelm the infrastructure and public funds; uncoordinated highway development can foster undesired development — and each of these situations erodes safety, mobility, and quality of life.

■ TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Bennington's transportation infrastructure comprises 30.054 miles of road, 8 bridges and culverts, 1.7 miles of the inactive state-owned Hillsborough Branch Rail Line, 3 miles of abandoned state-owned rail line, and a network of sidewalks on Francestown Road, Main Street, Antrim Road, Greenfield Road, School Street, Cross Street and Hancock Street. Designated state and regional bike routes include US 202, NH 31 and NH 47.

The Contoocook Valley Transportation Company provides “no-fee” transportation for people who do not have access to transportation because of age, disability, economic circumstances, or other limiting conditions. Trip purposes include non-emergency medical and social service appointments, as well as trips to the grocery store or pharmacy.

■ ROADWAY CLASSIFICATION

There are two classification schemes used in New Hampshire to identify roads and highways by type and ownership: the New Hampshire State Roadway Classification system and the Federal Functional Classification system.

A. STATE ROADWAY CLASSIFICATION

Through New Hampshire state law (RSA 229:5), all public roads in the state are placed in one of seven classes, defined by ownership and maintenance responsibilities. This system is familiar to most local officials and is used in the allocation of state highway block grants to towns. Bennington's state classified road mileage as of January 2001 is shown in the table below and on the *Transportation Infrastructure/Functional Classification* map found at the end of this chapter. A table presenting classified road mileage for all Southwest Region towns is included at the end of this chapter for reference and comparison. Roadway classification and mileage information is gathered and managed by Southwest Region Planning Commission under contract with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NH DOT), through consultation with municipal Road Agents and by approval of Boards and Selectmen.

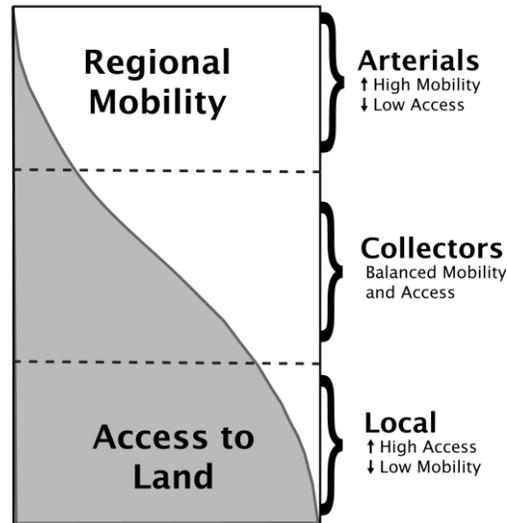
BENNINGTON'S STATE ROADWAY CLASSIFICATION BREAKDOWN - 2001

| State Road Classification System | Mileage (2001) | Maintenance |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Class I - State Primary System | 2.511 | State |
| Class II - State Secondary System | 6.950 | State |
| Class III - Recreational Roads | 0.000 | State |
| Class IIIa - Access to Public Waters | 0.000 | State |
| Class IV - Town Roads within Urban Compact | 0.000 | Municipality |
| Class V - Town Roads | 16.244 | Municipality |
| Class VI - Town Roads, Not Maintained | 4.349 | Not Maintained |
| Total | 30.054 | |
| Total State Mileage | 9.461 | |
| Total Municipal Mileage | 20.593 | |
| Source: NH DOT Classified Road Mileage, January 2001. | 30.054 | |

B. FEDERAL FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

The Federal Functional Classification system reflects the role of the road in a regional and statewide road network. Roads providing the highest level of mobility (conveying high traffic volume at high speed for long distances) with little emphasis on access to individual properties are classified as *arterials*. On the other end of the spectrum, roads with the highest level of local access are classified as *local roads*. In between, *collectors* provide connection between local roads and arterials and also a balance of access and mobility.

**FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION'S RELATION
TO MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY**



Separate functional classification system hierarchies have been developed to differentiate rural and urban areas. The rural area hierarchy, applicable to Bennington's road network, is as follows:

- ***Principal Arterials - Interstate:*** a series of continuous interstate routes that have trip lengths and volumes indicative of substantial statewide or interstate travel.

There are no Principal Arterials - Interstates in Bennington.

- ***Other Principal Arterials:*** provide corridor movement suitable for substantial statewide or interstate travel between larger population centers.

There are no Other Principal Arterials in Bennington.

- ***Minor Arterials:*** link cities and larger towns and form an integrated network providing interstate and inter-county service. They provide service to corridors with trip lengths and travel density greater than those served by rural collectors and local roads and with relatively high travel speeds and minimum interference to through movement.

US 202 is a Minor Arterial serving to provide efficient movement between communities and connections to other state highways.

- ***Major Collectors:*** serve county seats not on arterial routes, larger towns not directly served by higher systems, and more important intra-county travel corridors.

NH 31 is a Major Collector serving to provide connections to the arterial system and regional traffic generators such as schools, parks, commercial and industrial areas, and surrounding towns.

- **Minor Collectors:** provide service to smaller communities and link locally important traffic generators with the arterial system.

NH 47 is a Minor Collector serving to collect traffic from local roads, providing access to surrounding communities, and linking locally important traffic generators such as schools, parks, commercial and industrial areas.

- **Local Roads:** Local roads provide access to adjacent land and provide service to short distance trips. Un-maintained local roads (Class VI) are not included in the Federal Functional Classification scheme.

All other roads (excluding Class VI roads) serve as Local Roads. These roads provide access to individual properties and circulation within neighborhoods and town.

Bennington's road mileage by functional classification is presented in the table below and on the *Transportation Infrastructure/Functional Classification* map at the end of this chapter.

BENNINGTON ROAD MILEAGE BY FEDERAL FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

| Functional Road Classification System: | Mileage 2001 | Significance |
|--|---------------|-------------------------|
| Minor Arterials | 2.510 | State, Regional & Local |
| Major Collectors | 2.390 | Regional & Local |
| Minor Collectors | 3.160 | Regional & Local |
| Local Roads | 17.643 | Local |
| Total Classified Mileage | 25.703 | |
| Unclassified | 4.349 | |

Source: NH DOT, Road_Inv.dbf

C. ACCESS CONTROL

Managing how traffic moves between the highway and adjacent properties is an effective means of preserving the safety of existing roadways and preserving or expanding traffic capacity to support municipal and private development goals without the need for extensive new investments in roads, including building new roads on new routes. This approach to transportation management is known as “Access Management.”

NH DOT (Department of Transportation) manages access to and from any segment of a **state** highway by one of three means:

1. **Limited access:** the most restrictive, by state statute (RSA 230:44) is “*designed for through traffic, and over, from or to which [abutters] or other persons have no right or easement or only a limited right or easement of access, light, air, or view...*” This requires a finding by the NH Governor and Council that the denial of access and required property acquisition is in the public interest. Limited access is used almost exclusively on new major arterial roads.
2. **Controlled access:** predetermined points of access are negotiated between NH DOT and property owners. NH DOT purchases frontage for the remainder of property to delimit access points. Very large properties may be permitted only one or two points of access and required to provide internal

circulation. Controlled access is acquired by the state as part of most new road construction or major reconstruction of existing roads.

3. All other access to state highways is managed through the **state driveway permitting** process. The principal criterion for permitting driveways is safety as a function of visibility, posted speed, and functional classification. Determinations for permitting are carried out by NH DOT Maintenance District personnel following application to NHDOT by property owners or developers.

Currently there are no limited or controlled access highway segments in Bennington. Access to and from state highways in Bennington is controlled through the state permitting process. Access to local roads is managed through the **municipal driveway permitting process**.

Balancing the need for safe access to properties with the need for mobility requires special attention to land use decisions adjacent to the roadway and the physical layout of access between land of various uses and the highway. This can be achieved through inclusion of access management strategies in local zoning and site standards which, among other things, regulate distances between driveways, corner lot access, and location of off-street parking relative to driveways, and promote shared driveways and interconnections between developments. To better support local efforts to manage access on state highways, the NH DOT has developed a model Memorandum of Understanding which formalizes the state's willingness to coordinate the NH DOT driveway permitting with local land use and access management standards and goals.

■ ROADWAY AND BRIDGE CONDITIONS

Following is a general description of physical and operational road and highway conditions in Bennington:

A. PAVEMENT CONDITIONS & ROADSIDE DRAINAGE

State Roads

Pavement conditions are good on US 202, NH31, and NH47.

Town Roads

In 1997, Bennington's roadways were inventoried for surface conditions by personnel from the Technology Transfer Center, University of New Hampshire. The results of the twenty-five page report and ten-page summary are available at the Town Hall, in printed form and on compact disk. Each roadway is rated for alligator cracks, long transverse cracking, edge cracking, patching/potholes, rutting, roughness, and drainage.

The summary provides maintenance advice and prioritizes work needed on identified road sections. The recommended strategies include deferred maintenance, routine maintenance, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. The Board of Selectmen and Road Agent have been following that plan since 1998, within constraints of the annual Highway Department Budget.

Ongoing issues include poor conditions on North Bennington Road to the Deering Town Line and on Whittemore Lake Road. The pavement on North Bennington Road has been replaced since the last Master Plan update, but is again in poor condition.. The seasonal Whittemore Lake Road which provides access to the Town Beach and a state fishing site is also in need of reconstruction. Pine Meadows Circle was resurfaced with pugmill material in 2015, Bible Hill Road was stoned and oiled, and South Bennington Road, maintained by the town in the winter and by the state in the summer, was skim-coated by NHDOT in 2015 at the request of a local resident who presented them with photographs of potholes. Despite the recent re-alignment of North Bennington Road away from the Contoocook River, erosion remains an issue; the long-term fate of the highway is unknown and is dependent on the annual rate of erosion.

B. SAFETY

State Roads

According to NH DOT's analysis of traffic accidents for the year 2000, accident rates on US 202 and NH 31 do not warrant further investigation at this time. Accident rate analysis is unavailable for NH 47.

Town Roads

Traffic control and safety are issues at several intersections and roadway segments in Bennington. Safety issues for pedestrians and vehicular traffic alike at the junction of Main, Cross, and School Streets have been addressed by the Traffic Enhancement Project. The Project has also addressed Main Street from Cross Street to the intersection with South Bennington Road and Greenfield Road. Traffic control and safety are currently being addressed by reconfiguring the intersection at the junction of Eaton Avenue/Bible Hill Road and Antrim Road. Vehicle safety is a concern at the intersection of US 202 and Hancock Road, the curves on North Bennington Road east of Durgin Road, and West Deering Road along the river. Pedestrian safety is a concern on the steep, curving portion of Antrim Road and the curves on North Bennington Road. The town has developed plans to address the safety issues on North Bennington Road.

Congestion

NH DOT uses traffic volume data to monitor traffic congestion on state highways. Congestion is reported by Level of Service (LOS) for peak hours, ranging on a scale from A through F. Level of Service A indicates free flow traffic and F indicates excessive delays. Based on 2000 traffic volumes, US 202 experiences moderate congestion during the p.m. peak hour traffic with a LOS of C-D. NH 31 operates under free flow conditions during the p.m. peak, indicating little to no delay.

Bridges

There are eight bridges and culverts in Bennington, four of which are municipally owned and maintained. Four additional bridges/culverts over the Contoocook at the Antrim/Bennington Town Line are owned and maintained by Antrim.

Bennington's Bridges and Culverts

| ID | Location | Owner | Type |
|---------------|--|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 088/095 | Antrim Road over Contoocook River (<i>Functionally Obsolete</i>) | Bennington | Concrete Arch |
| 091/094 | Antrim Road over Mill Trail Race | Bennington | I-Beams with Concrete Deck |
| 095/093 | Antrim Road over Monadnock Mill Canal | Bennington | Concrete Tee Beam |
| 100/072 | South Bennington Road over Whittemore Lake Outlet (Cooper Brook) | Bennington | Concrete Box |
| 096/087 | NH 31 over Contoocook River | NHDOT | Concrete Rigid Frame |
| 099/080 | South Bennington Road over Carkin Brook (<i>Red-Listed</i>) | NHDOT | Concrete Box |
| 106/085 | NH 31 over Carkin Brook | NHDOT | Metal Pipe |
| 093/094 | BMRR (ABD) over Antrim Road (<i>Red-Listed</i>) | Railroad | Timber Bridge |
| Antrim | | | |
| 181/071 | Depot Street over Relief | Antrim | Concrete Arch |
| 183/071 | Depot Street over Relief | Antrim | Concrete Slab |
| 184.071 | Depot Street over Contoocook River | Bennington/Antrim | I-Beams with Concrete Deck |
| 193/100 | Bypassed Historic over Contoocook River | Antrim | High Truss |

Source: NHDOT Bridge Design 2001 Bridge Design Summary

NH DOT monitors bridge conditions regularly as part of their bridge maintenance program. Bridges are categorized as either being in good condition, structurally deficient, functionally obsolete, and/or red-listed. Structurally deficient bridges no longer meet current highway standards while functionally obsolete bridges do not meet the functional needs of the current highway system. Red listed bridges require more frequent inspections due to known deficiencies, weight restrictions, or type of construction.

All of the bridges and culverts in Bennington are in good condition, except for the South Bennington Road bridge over Carkin Brook, which is red-listed and included in the Transportation Improvement Plan (2017-2026), and the railroad bridge over Antrim Road, which is also red-listed. The structurally deficient and functionally obsolete Depot Street bridges at the Antrim Town Line and a culvert on the north end of Bible Hill Road were replaced through the State Aid Bridge Program in 2014-15 (See *Transportation Infrastructure/Functional Classification Map* at the end of this chapter).

■ TRAFFIC VOLUMES

The NH DOT in conjunction with the SWRPC operates a traffic counting program throughout the region. Traffic volumes are collected at five locations in Bennington (see *Traffic Counter Location Map* at the end of this chapter), and are reported in terms of average annual daily traffic (AADT). Volumes are typically measured on a rotating schedule of about once every three years.

Historic traffic counts indicate relatively lower traffic volumes in 2014 than in 2008 over Bennington's highways except for US202. The table below shows available traffic count data in Bennington since 2008.

Bennington Traffic Counts 2008-2014

| Counter Location | Counter ID | Functional Classification | 2008 | 2011 | 2014 |
|--|------------|---------------------------|------|------|------|
| US 202 South of Junction NH 31 | 41011 | Minor Arterial | 5300 | 5900 | 5600 |
| NH 47 (Bennington Rd) at Francestown town line | 41050 | Minor Collector | 1200 | 1200 | 1100 |
| Antrim Road at Railroad Overpass | 41051 | Local | 3400 | 2500 | 2700 |
| NH 31 (Cross Street) over Contoocook River | 41052 | Major Collector | 1800 | 2500 | 1600 |
| South Bennington Road over Carkin Brook | 41053 | Local | 570 | 590 | 470 |

Source: NHDOT Traffic Volume Reports

■ **COMMUTING TRENDS**

Of the 760 residents of Bennington who were employed in 2010, 95.8% (728) commuted to work. The average commute time for Bennington residents increased by 9.2 minutes between 1980 and 2010 to an average of 31.7 minutes. This increase in travel time is slightly larger than that experienced in surrounding towns. The breakdown of commuter activity in Bennington and surrounding communities is presented below.

COMMUTER ACTIVITY IN BENNINGTON AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES - 2010

| | Bennington | Antrim | Hillsborough | Peterborough |
|-----------------------------------|------------|----------|--------------|--------------|
| Residents employed | 760 | 1,297 | 2,623 | 3,439* |
| Commuting | | | | |
| Residents commuting | 728 | 1,271 | 2,570 | 3,439* |
| Car, truck, or van – drove alone | 76.8% | 87.3% | 78.5% | 78.3% |
| Car, truck, or van – carpooled | 12.6% | 9.0% | 10.1% | 8.6% |
| Public transport (excluding taxi) | 0.5% | 0.7% | 0.0% | 0.3% |
| Walked | 0.4% | 0.7% | 4.4% | 1.9% |
| Other | 0.3% | 0.6% | 0.0% | 1.3% |
| Residents worked at home | 9.3% | 1.8% | 7.0% | 9.5% |
| Travel Time: | | | | |
| Avg. commuting time (1980) | 22.5 min | 22.2 min | -- | 17.2 min |
| Avg. commuting time (1990) | 22.7 min | 27.4 min | 24.3 min | 19.5 min |
| Avg. commuting time (2000) | 23.7 min | 28.5 min | 32.4 min | 23.3 min |
| Avg. commuting time (2010) | 31.7 min | 29.1 min | 27.9 min | 25.2 min |

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES 2009-2013

* (Note error in Peterborough residents employed/residents commuting)

■ ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS, PLANNED PROJECTS, AND STUDIES

A. STATE ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

The Governor's Recommendations for the 10-year Transportation Improvement Plan 2017-2026 lists one project in Bennington: rehabilitation or replacement of the South Bennington Road Bridge over Carkin Brook. The Plan schedules the work for 2021-2024. The state has also red-listed the railroad bridge over Antrim road and has recommended removal, but this is not part of the Transportation Improvement Plan.

B. TOWN OF BENNINGTON ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

The Bennington Highway Department is responsible for maintenance and improvements to all town roads. The following projects have been completed on town roads in 2012-15:

- Pine Meadow Circle was resurfaced with pugmill material
- Bible Hill Road was stoned and oiled
- The Transportation Enhancement Project in the downtown area (described above)
- (2016) Reconfiguring the junction of Eaton Road with Bible Hill Road and Antrim Road

Approximately seven miles of paved road are in poor condition, including parts of North Bennington Road and Old Greenfield Road. North Bennington Road along the Contoocook River to the Deering Town Line is of particular concern, with river erosion of the land placing the roadway in danger. In addition, a six-foot culvert on Old Greenfield Road should be replaced.

MUNICIPAL HIGHWAY EXPENDITURES BY ROAD MILEAGE - SOUTHWEST REGION

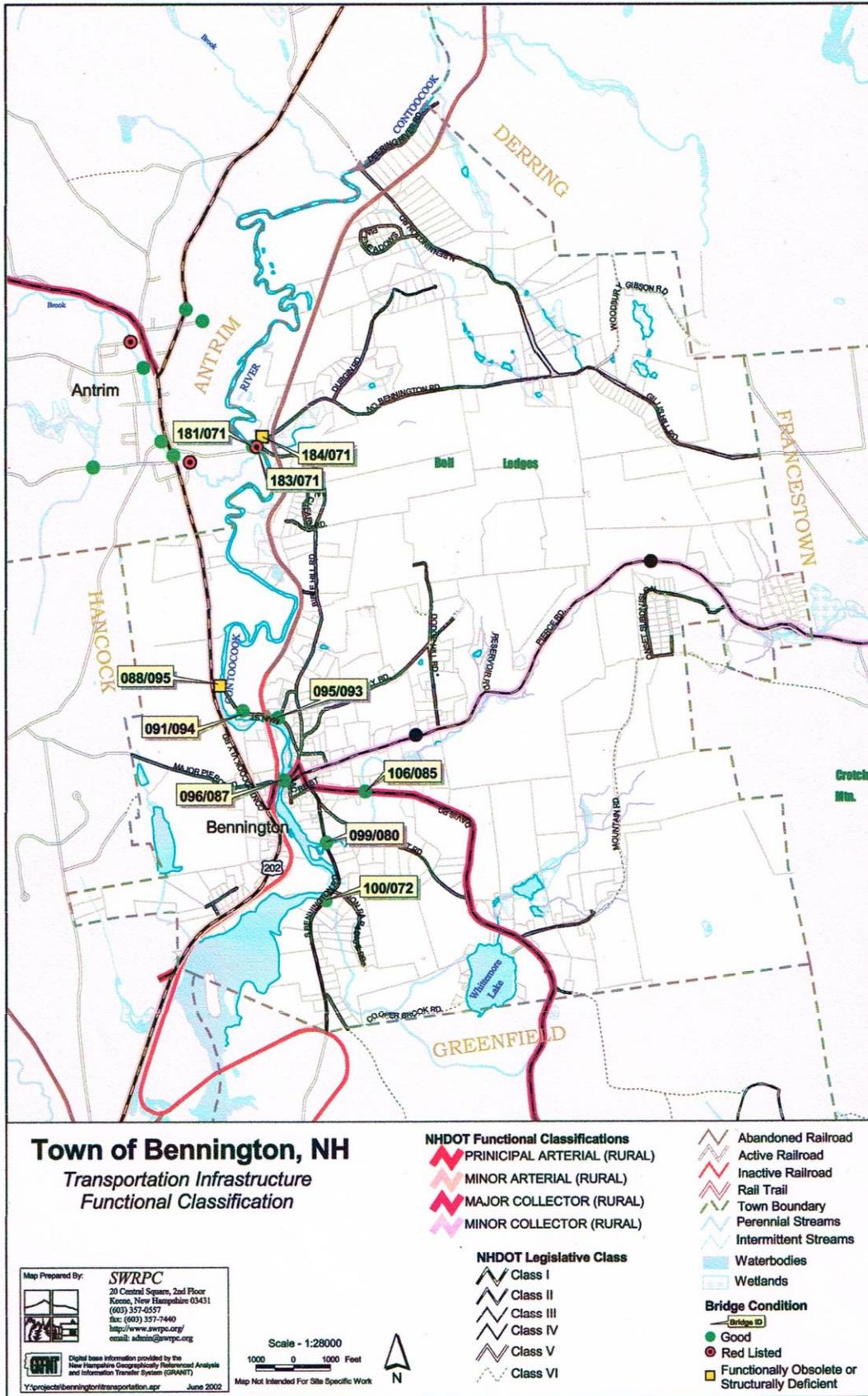
| Town | Class IV and V Road Mileage ^ | | Highway Spending * (1,000's) | | Highway Spending per Capita | | Highway Spending per Road Mile | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 |
| Alstead | 46.69 | 45.87 | \$263 | \$276 | \$153 | \$142 | \$5,643 | \$6,022 |
| Antrim | 43.4 | 42.27 | \$331 | \$466 | \$140 | \$190 | \$7,636 | \$11,021 |
| Bennington | 15.68 | 16.42 | \$163 | \$192 | \$132 | \$137 | \$10,374 | \$11,703 |
| Chesterfield | 63.64 | 66.48 | \$626 | \$801 | \$201 | \$226 | \$9,843 | \$12,056 |
| Dublin | 40.73 | 40.73 | \$174 | \$528 | \$118 | \$358 | \$4,267 | \$12,956 |
| Fitzwilliam | 48.5 | 49.79 | \$306 | \$401 | \$152 | \$188 | \$6,306 | \$8,064 |
| Francestown | 53.62 | 52.71 | \$314 | na | \$258 | | \$5,862 | |
| Gilsum | 16.51 | 15.67 | \$151 | \$163 | \$203 | \$210 | \$9,144 | \$10,388 |
| Greenfield | 35.95 | 35.13 | \$184 | \$264 | \$121 | \$159 | \$5,119 | \$7,505 |
| Greenville | 11.13 | 11.13 | na | \$182 | | \$82 | | \$16,396 |
| Hancock | 49.01 | 49.34 | \$202 | \$308 | \$126 | \$177 | \$4,126 | \$6,244 |
| Harrisville | 29.86 | 29.86 | \$197 | \$195 | \$201 | \$181 | \$6,599 | \$6,524 |
| Hinsdale | 28.47 | 29.08 | \$186 | na | \$47 | | \$6,518 | |
| Jaffrey | 62.83 | 60.60 | \$698 | \$637 | \$130 | \$116 | \$11,105 | \$10,507 |
| Keene | 123.62 | 123.70 | na | na | | | | |
| Landgon | 23.45 | 23.45 | na | na | | | | |
| Marlborough | 32.7 | 31.68 | \$161 | \$199 | \$83 | \$99 | \$4,916 | \$6,287 |
| Marlow | 25.41 | 23.98 | na | \$326 | | \$437 | | \$13,612 |
| Mason | 36.59 | 38.82 | na | \$444 | | \$387 | | \$11,445 |
| Nelson | 22.51 | 23.19 | \$156 | \$169 | \$292 | \$267 | \$6,944 | \$7,305 |
| New Ipswich | 49.37 | 49.44 | \$256 | \$299 | \$64 | \$70 | \$5,190 | \$6,042 |
| Peterborough | 69.37 | 69.92 | \$765 | \$1490 | \$146 | \$253 | \$11,027 | \$21,308 |
| Richmond | 27.08 | 26.56 | \$84 | \$100 | \$96 | \$93 | \$3,105 | \$3,783 |
| Rindge | 62.81 | 60.82 | \$456 | na | \$92 | | \$7,253 | |
| Roxbury | 13.07 | 13.07 | \$28 | na | \$112 | | \$2,117 | |
| Sharon | 11.04 | 10.96 | na | na | | | | |
| Stoddard | 14.37 | 16.50 | \$153 | \$215 | \$246 | \$232 | \$10,657 | \$13,054 |
| Sullivan | 20.85 | 18.73 | \$126 | \$157 | \$179 | \$211 | \$6,059 | \$8,391 |
| Surry | 10.65 | 10.84 | na | na | | | | |
| Swanzey | 55.45 | 59.69 | \$508 | \$561 | \$82 | \$82 | \$9,166 | \$9,394 |
| Temple | 35.72 | 35.85 | | \$466 | | \$359 | | \$13,005 |
| Troy | 19.09 | 17.82 | \$109 | \$250 | \$52 | \$127 | \$5,708 | \$14,017 |
| Walpole | 60.94 | 61.60 | na | na | | | | |
| Westmoreland | 39.97 | 40.22 | \$117 | \$319 | \$73 | \$183 | \$2,930 | \$7,933 |
| Winchester | 58.06 | 55.16 | \$420 | \$722 | \$104 | \$174 | \$7,239 | \$13,093 |
| Windsor | 1.04 | 1.04 | \$4 | \$9 | \$38 | \$46 | \$3,863 | \$8,863 |
| Region TOTAL | 1,359.18 | 1,358.09 | \$7139 | \$10141 | | | | |
| Region AVERAGE | 37.76 | 37.72 | \$264 | \$376 | \$135 | \$192 | \$6,619 | \$10,256 |

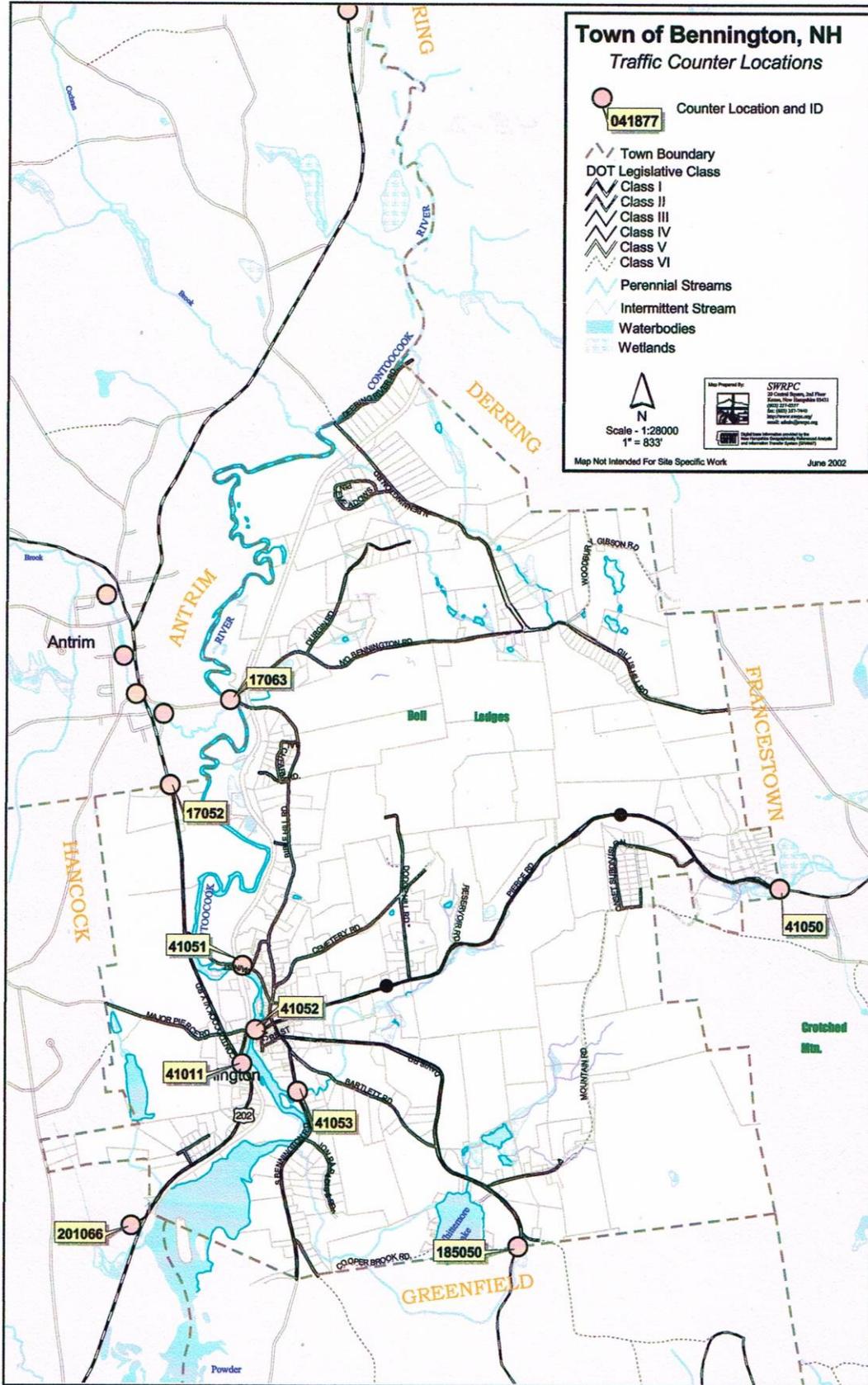
^ NH DOT Classified Road Mileage Report

* Source: Town Reports - excludes lighting

■ CLASSIFIED ROAD MILEAGE - SOUTHWEST REGION

| Southwest Region Classified Road Mileage: January 1, 2001 | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| TOWN | State Roads | | | Total State | Local Roads | | | Total Local | Other | Total Miles | % of Total |
| | Class I | Class II | Class III | | Class IV | Class V | Class VI | | | | |
| Alstead | 1.824 | 13.366 | 0.000 | 15.190 | 0.000 | 45.865 | 18.453 | 64.318 | 0.000 | 79.508 | 3.71% |
| Antrim | 11.962 | 5.210 | 0.000 | 17.172 | 0.000 | 42.273 | 5.849 | 48.122 | 0.000 | 65.294 | 3.04% |
| Bennington | 2.511 | 6.950 | 0.000 | 9.461 | 0.000 | 16.244 | 4.349 | 20.593 | 0.000 | 30.054 | 1.40% |
| Chesterfield | 10.650 | 11.020 | 0.000 | 21.670 | 0.000 | 66.480 | 2.071 | 68.551 | 0.000 | 90.221 | 4.21% |
| Dublin | 9.350 | 6.510 | 0.000 | 15.860 | 0.000 | 40.730 | 3.290 | 44.020 | 0.000 | 59.880 | 2.79% |
| Fitzwilliam | 7.937 | 7.492 | 0.200 | 15.629 | 0.000 | 49.960 | 16.088 | 66.048 | 0.000 | 81.677 | 3.81% |
| Francestown | 0.000 | 10.140 | 0.000 | 10.140 | 0.000 | 52.705 | 9.923 | 62.628 | 0.000 | 72.768 | 3.39% |
| Gilsum | 7.009 | 4.523 | 0.000 | 11.532 | 0.000 | 15.674 | 6.171 | 21.845 | 0.000 | 33.377 | 1.56% |
| Greenfield | 0.000 | 13.803 | 0.000 | 13.803 | 0.000 | 35.133 | 7.602 | 42.735 | 0.000 | 56.538 | 2.64% |
| Greenville | 0.000 | 9.813 | 0.000 | 9.813 | 0.000 | 11.129 | 3.112 | 14.241 | 0.000 | 24.054 | 1.12% |
| Hancock | 3.870 | 14.772 | 0.000 | 18.642 | 0.000 | 49.340 | 8.841 | 58.181 | 0.000 | 76.823 | 3.58% |
| Harrisville | 0.000 | 12.780 | 0.000 | 12.780 | 0.000 | 29.860 | 3.060 | 32.920 | 0.000 | 45.700 | 2.13% |
| Hinsdale | 5.957 | 11.478 | 0.000 | 17.435 | 0.000 | 29.079 | 2.768 | 31.847 | 0.000 | 49.282 | 2.30% |
| Jaffrey | 4.662 | 16.349 | 0.792 | 21.803 | 0.000 | 60.599 | 10.537 | 71.136 | 1.250 | 94.189 | 4.39% |
| Keene | 26.029 | 2.982 | 0.000 | 29.011 | 83.318 | 40.386 | 8.464 | 132.168 | 0.000 | 161.179 | 7.51% |
| Langdon | 2.600 | 5.769 | 0.000 | 8.369 | 0.000 | 23.450 | 1.830 | 25.280 | 0.000 | 33.649 | 1.57% |
| Marlborough | 5.850 | 8.288 | 0.000 | 14.138 | 0.000 | 31.683 | 5.863 | 37.546 | 0.000 | 51.684 | 2.41% |
| Marlow | 8.622 | 4.181 | 0.000 | 12.803 | 0.000 | 23.976 | 16.482 | 40.458 | 0.000 | 53.261 | 2.48% |
| Mason | 0.000 | 7.342 | 0.000 | 7.342 | 0.000 | 38.816 | 9.828 | 48.644 | 0.000 | 55.986 | 2.61% |
| Nelson | 3.451 | 6.150 | 0.000 | 9.601 | 0.000 | 23.192 | 5.140 | 28.332 | 0.000 | 37.933 | 1.77% |
| New Ipswich | 0.030 | 15.702 | 0.000 | 15.732 | 0.000 | 49.439 | 7.160 | 56.599 | 0.000 | 72.331 | 3.37% |
| Peterborough | 15.376 | 8.231 | 0.000 | 23.607 | 0.000 | 70.479 | 6.478 | 76.957 | 0.000 | 100.564 | 4.69% |
| Richmond | 2.617 | 10.949 | 0.000 | 13.566 | 0.000 | 26.561 | 11.989 | 38.550 | 0.000 | 52.116 | 2.43% |
| Rindge | 12.509 | 4.480 | 1.238 | 18.227 | 0.000 | 60.815 | 18.030 | 78.845 | 0.000 | 97.072 | 4.53% |
| Roxbury | 1.525 | 1.520 | 0.000 | 3.045 | 0.000 | 13.070 | 6.800 | 19.870 | 0.000 | 22.915 | 1.07% |
| Sharon | 0.000 | 11.271 | 0.000 | 11.271 | 0.000 | 10.955 | 1.870 | 12.825 | 0.000 | 24.096 | 1.12% |
| Stoddard | 6.805 | 9.613 | 0.000 | 16.418 | 0.000 | 16.500 | 3.202 | 19.702 | 0.000 | 36.120 | 1.68% |
| Sullivan | 1.850 | 4.618 | 0.000 | 6.468 | 0.000 | 18.729 | 1.953 | 20.682 | 0.000 | 27.150 | 1.27% |
| Surry | 0.828 | 8.437 | 0.000 | 9.265 | 0.000 | 10.844 | 3.895 | 14.739 | 0.000 | 24.004 | 1.12% |
| Swanzey | 9.025 | 19.765 | 0.000 | 28.790 | 0.000 | 59.690 | 15.813 | 75.503 | 0.000 | 104.293 | 4.86% |
| Temple | 3.409 | 7.280 | 0.000 | 10.689 | 0.000 | 35.845 | 3.769 | 39.614 | 0.000 | 50.303 | 2.35% |
| Troy | 3.925 | 5.207 | 0.000 | 9.132 | 0.000 | 17.816 | 3.661 | 21.477 | 0.000 | 30.609 | 1.43% |
| Walpole | 13.977 | 8.707 | 0.000 | 22.684 | 0.000 | 61.595 | 15.438 | 77.033 | 0.000 | 99.717 | 4.65% |
| Westmoreland | 6.193 | 7.442 | 0.000 | 13.635 | 0.000 | 40.219 | 9.633 | 49.852 | 0.000 | 63.487 | 2.96% |
| Winchester | 14.921 | 7.622 | 0.000 | 22.543 | 0.000 | 56.602 | 10.865 | 67.467 | 0.135 | 90.145 | 4.20% |
| Windsor | 0.000 | 2.760 | 0.000 | 2.760 | 0.000 | 1.040 | 0.000 | 1.040 | 0.000 | 3.800 | 0.18% |
| Southwest Region | 205.274 | 312.522 | 2.230 | 520.026 | 83.318 | 1,276.773 | 270.277 | 1,630.368 | 1.385 | 2,151.779 | 100.32% |





ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

■ INTRODUCTION

Bennington has transformed from a mill town to primarily a bedroom community since the turn of the century. Like many small towns in New Hampshire, Bennington has a limited amount of commercial and industrial development. Most goods and services including medical and professional services are provided elsewhere in regional economic centers such as Keene, Peterborough, Hillsborough, Milford, Nashua, and Concord. These towns and cities also serve as major employment centers.

Economic issues facing the town include the increasing school tax burden and the limited commercial and industrial tax base upon which to draw. Today the proportion of residential to industrial and commercial valuations is extremely disproportionate. Monadnock Paper Mills remains the only industry in town; residential development dominates. It has been demonstrated across the nation that residential development alone does not generate the tax base necessary to fund the service demands which accompany such development.

Following are highlights of Bennington's economic environment:

- Bennington's population increased by 885 residents (150%) between 1960 and 2010, with the most significant increases occurring during the 1970's and 1980's. This can be compared to an average percentage increase of towns in the region of 178%, and for the state of New Hampshire of 117%, and for the United States of 73%.
- Between 1980 and 2010, the number of employed Bennington residents has increased by 88%, an increase that exceeded the population growth rate of 66% during the same time period. Since 1980, the number of Bennington residents classified as managerial/professional sector employees has increased by 359%.
- Bennington's major employer continues to be the Monadnock Paper Mills Inc., with 235 employees. Other top employers include Alberto's Inc. with 26 employees, the Town of Bennington with 60 employees and Pierce School with 11 employees.
- Bennington's 2010 per capita income of \$27,563 trails the average incomes in Cheshire County (\$27,874), Hillsborough County (\$34,390) and New Hampshire (\$33,134).
- Since 2003, Bennington's unemployment rate has consistently remained near or below the average rates for Cheshire County, Hillsborough County, and the State of New Hampshire. All four jurisdictions suffered sharply increased unemployment in 2009 because of the world-wide recession.
- In 2014, 83% of Bennington's total valuation came from residential property and buildings. The remaining 17% came from commercial and industrial properties, utilities, and land in current use. Bennington's gross valuation per acre of \$13,959 is higher than the corresponding rates found in the adjacent towns of Antrim (\$9,597), Frankestown (\$9,817), Greenfield (\$7,911), and Hancock (\$12,346).

- Bennington's 2014 equalized tax rate of \$29.20 was the 27th highest among 260 communities in the State.
- In terms of defining labor market influences, Bennington is located in the Peterborough Labor Market Area. However, the Concord, Keene-Brattleboro, and Manchester Labor Market Areas all border closely to Bennington and their influences can be seen in commute patterns into and out of Bennington. As of the 2014 Census, 82% of employed Bennington residents commuted to another town for work. The most common destination was Peterborough. 62% of the jobs in Bennington are held by employees who live in another town. The most common residences for Bennington employees that commute from other towns are Hillsborough, Antrim, and Greenfield.

▪ **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Between 1960 and 2010, Bennington's population increased by 885 residents. This growth represents an increase of 150% during those five decades. Bennington's population has increased more slowly than surrounding towns, except for Antrim and Peterborough. Bennington experienced significant population growth in the 1970's and 1980's with average annual growth rates of 3.4% and 3.3% per year, respectively. During the 1990's Bennington's average annual population growth slowed to 1.3% per year. In terms of population density, Bennington grew from a density of 51 persons per square mile in 1960 to 127 persons per square mile in 2010.

**COMPARISON OF POPULATION GROWTH RATES
1960 - 2010**

| | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Deering | 345 | 578 | 1,041 | 1,707 | 1,875 | 1912 |
| Greenfield | 538 | 1,058 | 972 | 1,519 | 1,657 | 1749 |
| Francestown | 495 | 525 | 830 | 1,217 | 1,480 | 1562 |
| Hancock | 722 | 909 | 1,193 | 1,604 | 1,739 | 1654 |
| Bennington | 591 | 639 | 890 | 1,236 | 1,401 | 1476 |
| Antrim | 1,121 | 2,122 | 2,208 | 2,360 | 2,449 | 2637 |
| Hillsborough | 2,310 | 2,775 | 3,437 | 4,498 | 4,928 | 6011 |
| New Hampshire | 606,400 | 737,681 | 920,610 | 1,109,252 | 1,235,786 | 1,316,470 |
| Peterborough | 2,963 | 3,807 | 4,895 | 5,239 | 5,883 | 6284 |
| United States | 179,323,175 | 203,235,298 | 225,349,264 | 248,709,873 | 281,421,906 | 309,347,057 |

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU

■ **EMPLOYMENT**

Between 1980 and 2010, the growth rate for total employed Bennington residents outpaced the growth in total population. In this period, population grew by 66%, while the number of employed residents over age 16 increased by 88%. This increase can be partially attributed to a greater percentage of the population joining the workforce. In 1970, about 46% of Bennington's population was in the workforce. By 2000, this rate had increased to over 51% workforce participation.

A. OCCUPATIONAL TRENDS

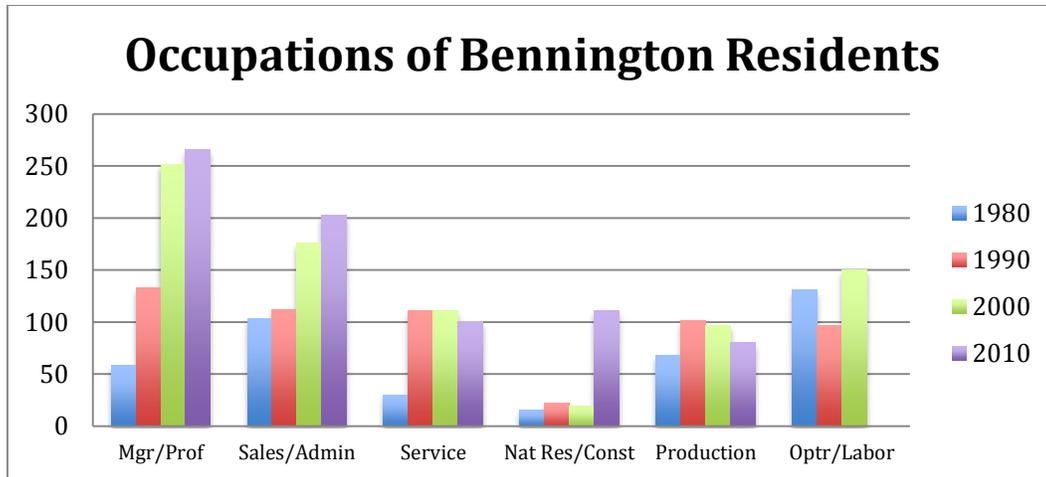
Looking at the occupation of Bennington residents over time, the largest occupational sector increases since 1980 have occurred in the managerial/professional and service sectors. In 1980, one out of every fifteen residents was employed in the managerial and professional fields. By 2010, this rate has grown to one in six residents. This growth in "white collar" employment witnessed in Bennington is typical throughout the region and across the country. Regional labor market projections forecast these trends to continue into the foreseeable future. Another trend projected to grow with the spread of high-speed telecommunications availability is home-based employment. In 2010, 68 Bennington residents conducted home-based business (2010 US Census estimate).

**OCCUPATION OF BENNINGTON RESIDENTS
AGES 16 AND OLDER (1980-2010):**

| | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | % Change 1980-2010 |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Managerial / Professional | 58 | 133 | 251 | 266 | +359% |
| Sales / Administrative | 103 | 112 | 176 | 203 | +97% |
| Service | 30 | 111 | 111 | 100 | +233% |
| Natural Resources, Construction | 15 | 22 | 19 | 111 | N/A* |
| Precision / Production | 68 | 101 | 97 | 80 | N/A* |
| Operators / Laborers | 131 | 97 | 150 | N/A* | N/A* |
| TOTAL: | 405 | 625 | 804 | 760 | +88% |

* Breakdown in occupations was different in 2010 census from previous years.

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU



SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU

Although there are a few relatively large employers in Bennington, the majority of businesses have fewer than three employees.

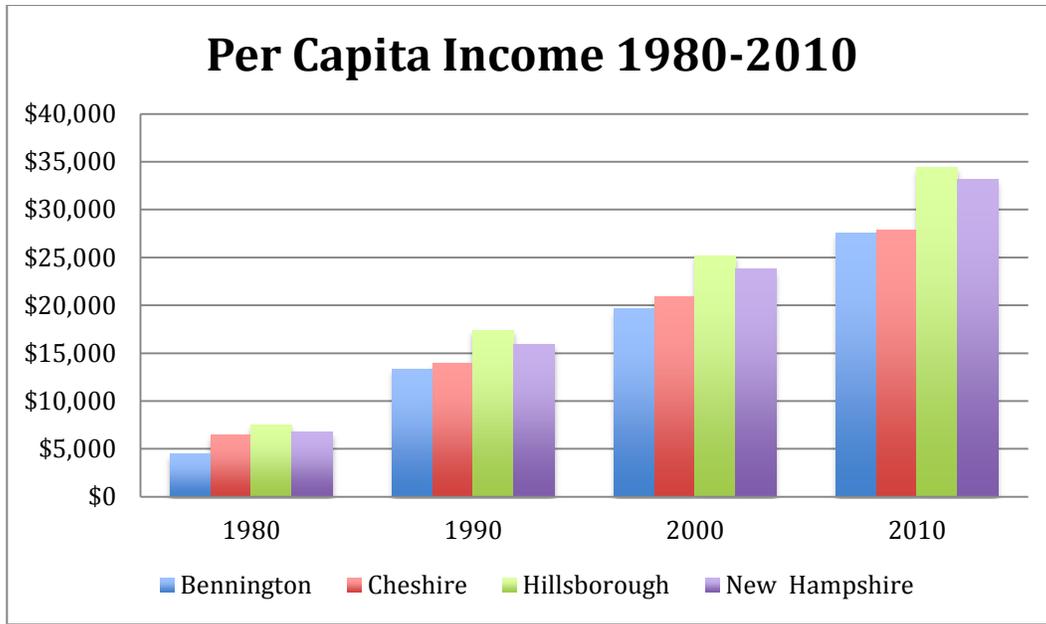
B. PER CAPITA INCOME

In unadjusted dollars, Bennington's per capita income has increased from \$4,437 in 1980 to \$27,563 in 2010. Bennington's per capita income was significantly below the averages for Cheshire and Hillsborough Counties and the State of New Hampshire in 1980. Between 1980 and 2010, incomes increased in the region and across the state. Bennington's per capita income was slightly less than the Cheshire County average and significantly below the Hillsborough County and State of New Hampshire averages in 2010.

PER CAPITA INCOME 1980-2010

| | Bennington | Cheshire County | Hillsborough County | New Hampshire |
|------|------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1980 | \$4,437 | \$6,442 | \$7,451 | \$6,747 |
| 1990 | \$13,357 | \$13,887 | \$17,404 | \$15,959 |
| 2000 | \$19,675 | \$20,685 | \$25,198 | \$23,844 |
| 2010 | \$27,563 | \$27,874 | \$34,390 | \$33,134 |

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU

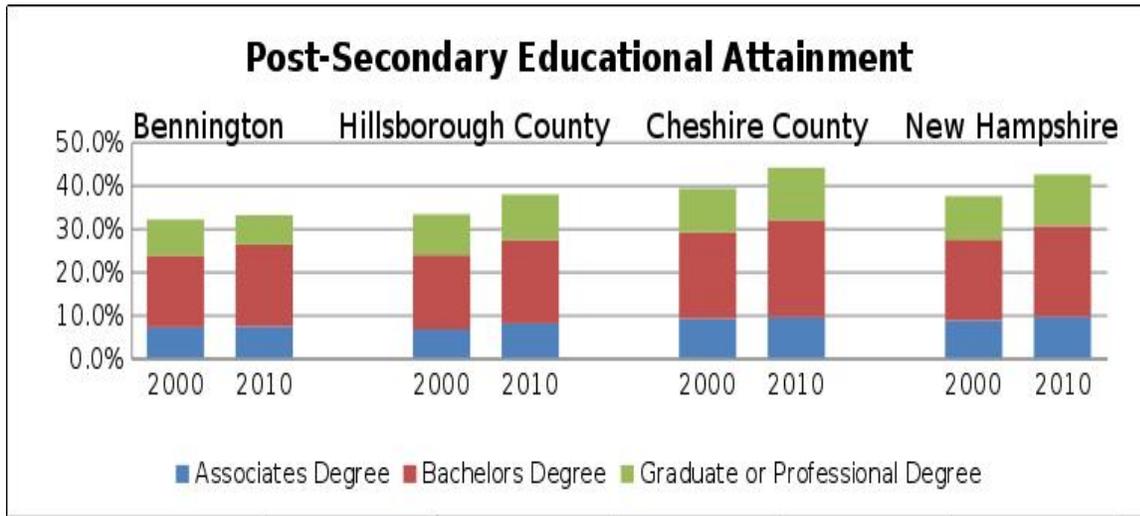
C. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

A well-educated workforce is an important resource for both existing and new businesses. As the comparison below shows, the educational attainment of Bennington residents increased significantly between 1990 and 2000. The percentage of Bennington residents over twenty-five with a high school diploma went from 70% in 1990 to over 87% in 2000. Other similar increases were seen during the 1990's in residents holding associates, bachelors, and graduate degrees.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
(% of ages 25 and Older)

| | Bennington | Cheshire County | Hillsborough County | New Hampshire |
|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| High School Grad - 2000 | 87.1% | 86.2% | 87.0% | 87.4% |
| High School Grad - 2010 | 93.0% | 89.9% | 90.5% | 91.9% |
| Associates Degree - 2000 | 7.1% | 6.6% | 9.1% | 8.7% |
| Associates Degree - 2010 | 7.3% | 8.0% | 9.4% | 9.5% |
| Bachelors Degree - 2000 | 16.6% | 17.2% | 20.0% | 18.7% |
| Bachelors Degree - 2010 | 18.9% | 19.3% | 22.5% | 21.0% |
| Graduate Degree - 2000 | 8.3% | 9.4% | 10.1% | 10.0% |
| Graduate Degree - 2010 | 6.8% | 10.5% | 12.1% | 11.9% |

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



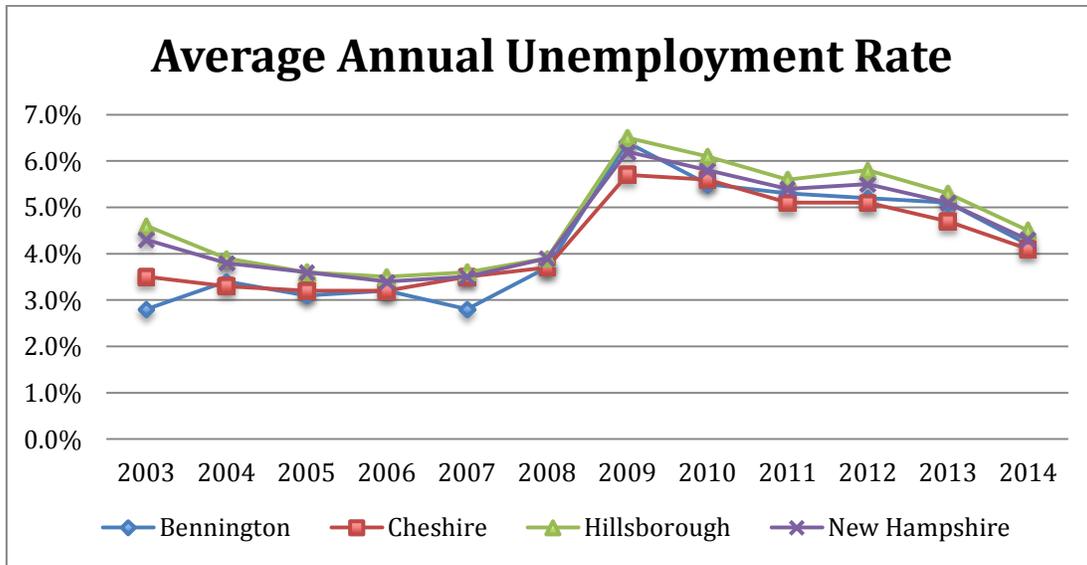
D. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

Between 2003 and 2014, Bennington's unemployment rate has remained near or below the average rates for Hillsborough County, Cheshire County and the State of New Hampshire. Over the last twelve years Bennington's unemployment rate has generally followed the regional and statewide trend with a peak in the early 2009 followed by a declining rate that continues to the present.

**AVERAGE ANNUAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
BY LABOR MARKET AREA (LMA) 2003-2014:**

| | Bennington | Cheshire County | Hillsborough County | New Hampshire |
|------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| 2003 | 2.8% | 3.5% | 4.6% | 4.3% |
| 2004 | 3.4% | 3.3% | 3.9% | 3.8% |
| 2005 | 3.1% | 3.2% | 3.6% | 3.6% |
| 2006 | 3.2% | 3.2% | 3.5% | 3.4% |
| 2007 | 2.8% | 3.5% | 3.6% | 3.5% |
| 2008 | 3.7% | 3.7% | 3.9% | 3.9% |
| 2009 | 6.4% | 5.7% | 6.5% | 6.2% |
| 2010 | 5.5% | 5.6% | 6.1% | 5.8% |
| 2011 | 5.3% | 5.1% | 5.6% | 5.4% |
| 2012 | 5.2% | 5.1% | 5.8% | 5.5% |
| 2013 | 5.1% | 4.7% | 5.3% | 5.1% |
| 2014 | 4.2% | 4.1% | 4.5% | 4.3% |

NOTE: VALUES NOT SEASONALLY ADJUSTED
SOURCE: US BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS



SOURCE: US BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

■ **LAND VALUATION AND TAXATION**

A. LAND VALUATION

Municipal property taxes are levied as a percentage of the assessed value of buildings and land in the community. Between 2000 and 2014, Bennington's total valuation rose 66% to over \$103 million. This increase occurred in just about all sectors with commercial and residential building values seeing the largest increases.

Looking at a breakdown of valuation by use, 83% of Bennington's valuation comes from residential buildings and land, 13% from commercial and industrial uses, 3% from utilities, and 1% from properties in current use. In general terms, a community with 35-40% of its valuation coming from the combination of commercial and industrial property and utilities reflects a robust and relatively strong municipal tax base. Bennington at 16% falls far short of this benchmark, placing a heavy tax burden on residents.

BENNINGTON VALUATION BY LAND USE - 2014

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Residential | | |
| Land Value | \$21,065,300 | 20% |
| Building Value | 65,529,100 | 63% |
| Commercial / Industrial | | |
| Land Value | \$2,220,300 | 2% |
| Building Value | \$11,106,600 | 11% |
| Current Use - Land Value | \$322,231 | 1% |
| Utilities - Land Value | \$3,221,200 | 3% |
| Gross Valuation | \$103,465,731 | 100% |

SOURCE: NH DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

REGIONAL PROPERTY VALUATION STATISTICS - 2014

| | Bennington | Antrim | Francestown | Greenfield | Hancock | Peterborough |
|--|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Gross Valuation | 103,465,731 | 224,289,121 | 190,833,846 | 136,895,598 | 246,916,354 | 595,603,014 |
| Residential % of Gross Valuation | 83% | 88% | 93% | 89% | 94% | 76% |
| Commercial & Industrial % of Gross Valuation | 13% | 7% | 5% | 8% | 2% | 22% |
| Utilities % of Gross Valuation | 3% | 4% | 1% | 1% | 3% | 1% |
| Current Use - % of Gross Valuation | 1% | <1% | 2% | 2% | <1% | <1% |
| Gross Valuation / Acre | \$13,959 | \$9,597 | \$9,817 | \$7,911 | \$12,346 | \$24,228 |

SOURCE: NH DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

B. TAXES

In order to levy a fair and proportional statewide property tax and county tax, the imbalance created by varying municipal assessments must be resolved. This process, called “*equalization*,” involves the adjustment of a town's local assessed value, either upward or downward, in order to approximate the full value of the town's property. The equalized tax rates can then be better compared from town to town.

Between 2012 and 2014, Bennington's local tax rate increased by \$4.30 per \$1,000 of assessed value. A breakdown of Bennington's taxes by source for this time period is shown in the table below. Bennington's total tax commitment for 2014 was \$2,959,638.

TOTAL TAX RATES 2012-2014 – BENNINGTON
(per \$1,000 of assessed value)

| | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Municipal Tax Rate | \$10.22 | \$9.93 | \$11.78 |
| Local Education Tax Rate | \$11.50 | \$12.21 | \$13.57 |
| State Education Tax Rate | \$2.17 | \$2.17 | \$2.59 |
| County Tax Rate | \$1.01 | \$1.09 | \$1.26 |
| Total Tax Rate | \$24.90 | \$25.40 | \$29.20 |

SOURCE: NH DEPT. OF REVENUE

Bennington's 2014 equalized tax rate of \$29.20 is higher than those of neighboring towns. Comparing equalized tax rates statewide, Bennington is ranked 206 out of 230 (with 1 representing the lowest equalized tax rate in the State).

2014 TAX RATE COMPARISON – BENNINGTON AND NEIGHBORING TOWNS
(per \$1,000 of assessed value)

| | Bennington | Antrim | Francestown | Greenfield | Hancock |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Municipal Tax Rate | \$11.78 | \$12.52 | \$8.14 | \$7.73 | \$5.48 |
| Local Education Tax Rate | \$13.57 | \$11.76 | \$13.25 | \$14.87 | \$13.27 |
| State Education Tax Rate | \$2.59 | \$2.53 | \$2.45 | \$2.77 | \$2.50 |
| County Tax Rate | \$1.26 | \$1.19 | \$1.22 | \$1.26 | \$1.25 |
| Equalized Tax Rate | \$29.20 | \$28.00 | \$25.06 | \$26.63 | \$22.40 |
| State Ranking (1 = Low, 228 = High) | 206 | 202 | 159 | 186 | 110 |

SOURCE: NH DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

■ COMMUTING PATTERNS

Of the 757 residents of Bennington who were employed in 2014, 82.0% (621) commuted into another town for work. The most common commute of Bennington's working residents is to Peterborough. 222 employees commute into Bennington for work. The average commute time for Bennington residents increased by 7.7 minutes between 1990 and 2014 to an average of 30.4 minutes.

REGIONAL COMMUTER ACTIVITY – 2014

| | Bennington | Antrim | Hillsborough | Peterborough |
|---|------------|----------|--------------|--------------|
| Residents Employed | 757 | 1,322 | 2,781 | 3,539 |
| Jobs in Town (2000) | 358 | 331 | 1605 | 4,653 |
| Residents Employed in Town | 136 | 200 | 982 | 1,777 |
| Commuting Out of: | | | | |
| Residents commuting out of Town | 621 | 1122 | 1,799 | 1,762 |
| Commuting rate outbound | 82.0% | 84.9% | 64.7% | 49.8% |
| Commuting Into: | | | | |
| Non-residents commuting in | 222 | 131 | 623 | 2,876 |
| Commuting rate inbound | 62.0% | 39.6% | 38.8% | 61.8% |
| Travel Time: | | | | |
| Avg. commuting time (1990) | 22.7 min | 27.4 min | 24.3 min | 19.5 min |
| Avg. commuting time (2000) | 23.7 min | 28.5 min | 32.4 min | 23.3 min |
| Avg. commuting time (2014) | 30.4 min | 31.3 min | 28.6 min | 27.4 min |
| Increase in avg. commute time (1990-2014) | 7.7 min | 3.9 min | 4.3 min | 7.9 min |

SOURCE: 1990 CENSUS, 2000 CENSUS, 2010 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (US CENSUS BUREAU)

NATURAL FEATURES

■ INTRODUCTION

The natural features section of the Master Plan uses the environmental criteria of topography, soils, and water resources to evaluate the town's land area and its potential for various types of development. Although natural features can often enhance a particular development site, they just as often pose significant barriers to development; this can be seen by examining locations where existing development has occurred. It is true that transportation routes are another factor in the location of development; however, to a great degree, the natural features of the land also determine the location of roads and railroads.

This section enables the Planning Board to address areas of the town that are most suitable for development and high intensity land uses, and evaluate the existing limitations of the land that would have to be accommodated. Environmental limitations may include steep slopes, seasonally wet soils, wetlands, floodplains, shallow bedrock, and underground aquifers.

This section also identifies the areas of town that deserve special protection due to the environmental function of the land, for example, a specific wetland area that provides flood water storage during times of heavy rain. In addition, this section notes specific areas the town may wish to conserve for future community use due to their aesthetic or historic qualities. Not all open spaces need to be steep slopes or wetlands. Some areas may be prime lands set aside for future school sites, parks, intensive farming operations, or other limited low intensity land uses that add value to the overall community.

Bennington has many natural features that make the town a very desirable place to live. Outside of the downtown area, the town is still quite rural with many rolling hills, green fields, streams and water bodies. Bennington is also in close proximity to Peterborough, Hillsborough and Milford, three regional economic and employment centers. Outside of the downtown area, lots are often twenty acres or more in size, with some being over one hundred acres in size. As the value of land increases, there is greater motivation to subdivide larger parcels and sell smaller lots. This natural features/conservation analysis can assist the town and the Planning Board in establishing appropriate locations for growth to occur, while at the same time preserving the natural environment that the residents currently enjoy.

At the 2016 town meeting, voters approved funding for a natural resources inventory, to be carried out by the Southwest Regional Planning Commission. The inventory will be useful for both conservation and economic purposes.

■ TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of Bennington is dominated by Bell Ledges in the north-central part of town and Crotched Mountain to the south. The highest elevation of Bell Ledges, which falls entirely within Bennington, is 1,220 feet above sea level. Crotched Mountain falls within the three towns of Bennington, Francestown, and Greenfield. The mountain's highest elevation is actually in Francestown (2,020 feet above sea level); in Bennington the highest elevation is 1,980 feet; in Greenfield the highest elevation is 1,500 feet above sea level.

The northern and southwestern parts of town have the lowest elevations, ranging from 700 to 900 feet above sea level. The lower elevations are found along the Contoocook River, which flows north through Powder Mill Pond and the town.

▪ SOILS

Soils information is an important consideration in land use planning since the various characteristics of soils — such as steepness, wetness, flood susceptibility, etc. — are a major consideration for land use opportunities. Soil information for Bennington has been obtained from the following sources:

1) Soil descriptions and mapping: *Soil Survey of Hillsborough County, New Hampshire, Western Part*, published by the US Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service, October 1985.

2) Soil development capability: *Soil Potential Ratings for Development; Hillsborough County, NH*, prepared by the Hillsborough County Conservation District in August 1984.

According to the above-referenced soil survey, the landscape in western Hillsborough County is hilly and characterized by large areas of loamy soils with numerous stones on the surface. The area in which Bennington is located is drained by the Contoocook River and the Piscataquog River, both of which flow into the Merrimack River. The generalized soil map for this area indicates that much of Bennington's land area — along the eastern portion of town from north to south — is comprised of excessively drained soils.

A. STEEP SLOPES

Generally speaking, the steeper the land the greater the possibility for erosion and sedimentation, and the more problems that can be encountered in siting wells and septic systems. Steepness is measured in terms of slope, which is defined as the change in elevation (vertical distance) over horizontal distance; the more abrupt the change in elevation, the steeper the slope. Slope is measured and expressed as a percentage that represents the relationship between elevation and horizontal distance.

Typical categories that might be seen on a slope map are 0-8%, 9-15%, 16-24%, and over 25%. Land in the 0-8% slope category is generally preferred for all types of development. Gradual slopes are most favorable for building roads, and public water and sewer facilities can be installed at the least cost to the community. Also, excavations for most structures can be done at a minimal cost and the erosion associated with such work can be reduced easily on site. The exceptions to this would be wetland areas and floodplains because they occur primarily in the 0-5% slope range. An examination should be made as to the environmental function of such wetland and floodplain areas, as well as the risks that might be inherent in development before such lands are utilized for building sites.

As slopes increase to 8-15%, the land is more suited to less intensive forms of development. Carefully placed residential dwellings and some agricultural uses (orchards and field crops) may be suitable for this terrain. As slopes approach a 15% gradient, more careful consideration is required for all types of development. Once a slope exceeds a 15% gradient, all forms of development are considered unsuitable, although it is really at the 25% slope and above that development becomes very problematic. Areas having 25% or greater slope have benefits as conservation areas for low intensity recreational uses and wildlife habitats. Also, their disturbance can create serious erosion problems, washing out topsoil and

even roadways downhill. Forestry practices on such slopes must be confined to low-impact operations, with proper erosion controls in place. Other important controls for forestry uses include minimal basal area cutting, and skid roads designed for steep slope harvesting.

When developing steep terrain, the potential for environmental damage increases as the slope gradient increases. Overly steep slopes consisting of sands and gravels left after the excavation of an area will quickly gully and erode. Erosion control barriers should be in place at the time of excavation and prompt reseeding and regrading should take place afterwards. Surface water run-off rates and erosion factors increase as the slope steepens. This will cause sedimentation of the surface waters downslope and will clog stream channels and rivers if no erosion controls are in place.

Bennington has eight soil types associated with steep slopes, which are primarily found on the sides of hills, along ridgetops, and as rocky outcrops void of soil cover:

STEEP SLOPE SOIL TYPES

| Symbol | Soil Type | Characteristics | Slope | Suited For | Not Suited For |
|--------|--|---|--------|--|---|
| 57D | Becket Stony Fine Sandy Loam | Moderately steep, well drained | 15-25% | Tree Farming; source of sand & gravel for construction | Building site development, septic systems, recreation |
| 77D | Marlow Stone Loam | Moderately steep to steep, well drained | 15-35% | Tree Farming | Building site development, septic systems, recreation |
| 143D | Monadnock Stony Fine Sandy Loam | Moderately steep to steep, well drained | 15-35% | Tree Farming; source of sand for construction | Building site development, septic systems, recreation |
| 145D | Monadnock Very Bouldery Fine Sandy Loam | Moderately steep to steep, well drained | 15-35% | Tree Farming; source of sand for construction | Building site development, septic systems, recreation |
| 160D | Tunbridge-Lyman-Monadnock Complex, Stony | Moderately steep, well drained | 15-25% | Tree Farming; source of sand for construction | Building site development, septic systems, recreation |
| 161D | Lyman-Tunbridge-Rock Outcrop Complex | Moderately steep to steep, exposed bedrock | 15-35% | Tree Farming | Building site development, septic systems, recreation |
| 22E | Colton Loamy Sand | Moderately steep to very steep, excessively drained | 15-50% | Tree Farming; source of sand and gravel for construction | Building site development, septic systems, recreation |
| 36E | Adams Loamy Sand | Moderately steep to very steep, excessively drained | 15-50% | Tree Farming; source of sand for construction | All types of recreation development |

SOURCE: SOIL SURVEY OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, NEW HAMPSHIRE, 1985

Examination of the *Steep Slopes Map* found at the end of this chapter indicates that the north central, western and eastern areas in Bennington are the ones most affected by 15% or greater slopes. The eastern area is of course Bennington’s part of Crotched Mountain, which also lies in Greenfield and Frankestown, with an elevation rising up to 2,020 feet above sea level. The area in the northern part of town is Bell Ledges, with elevations rising to 1,220 feet above sea level.

B. WETLAND SOILS

Wetland soils in Bennington are those that the soil survey categorizes as being poorly drained (Hydric A) and very poorly drained (Hydric B); the location of these soils is illustrated on the *Wetlands and Hydric Soils Map* found at the end of this chapter. The wetland areas in Bennington are predominantly situated in the western part of town, along the Contoocook River corridor and Powder Mill Pond.

A fairly large deposit of wetland soils directly abuts Powder Mill Pond; in addition, there are several smaller pockets of wetland soils distributed around town, some to the north of the Whittemore Lake and some located north of Bell Ledges.

The soil types and characteristics that make up the wetland soils are described below:

WETLAND SOIL TYPES

| Symbol | Soil Type | Characteristics | Suited For | Not Suited For |
|--------|--------------------------|---|---|--|
| 15 | Searsport Muck | Nearly level and very poorly drained | Habitat for wetland wildlife. Probable source of sand for construction | Building site development, septic systems, recreation development, and farming |
| 105 | Rumney Loam | Nearly level and poorly drained | Habitat for openland, woodland, and wetland wildlife. Probable source of sand for construction | Building site development, septic systems, some types of recreation development, and farming |
| 197 | Borohemists, ponded | Nearly level and very poorly drained | Habitat for wetland wildlife | Most uses |
| 214A | Naumberg Fine Sandy Loam | Nearly level and somewhat poorly drained and poorly drained | Habitat for openland, woodland, and wetland wildlife. Probable source of sand for construction | Building site development, septic systems, recreation development, and farming |

(TABLE CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

WETLAND SOIL TYPES, CONTINUED

| Symbol | Soil Type | Characteristics | Suited For | Not Suited For |
|--------|----------------------|--|--|--|
| 247B | Lyme Stony Loam | Nearly level to gently sloping and poorly drained | Habitat for woodland wildlife | Building site development, septic systems, recreation development, and farming |
| 295 | Greenwood Mucky Peat | Nearly level and very poorly drained | Habitat for wetland wildlife | Most uses |
| 395 | Chocorua Mucky Peat | Nearly level and very poorly drained | Habitat for wetland wildlife. Probable source of sand for construction | Most uses |
| 549 | Peacham Stony Muck | Nearly level and very poorly drained | Habitat for wetland wildlife | Building site development, septic systems, recreation development, and forest management |
| 647B | Pillsbury Stony Loam | Nearly level to gently sloping, somewhat poorly drained and poorly drained | Habitat for woodland wildlife | Building site development, septic systems, and recreation development |

SOURCE: SOIL SURVEY OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, NEW HAMPSHIRE, 1985

C. AGRICULTURAL SOILS

The 1986 Master Plan indicated that agriculture was widespread throughout the town with the greatest concentrations contained in the western sector along Route 202, the Antrim-Bennington Road, and the road network feeding into the town center. In 1986, 29 percent of the developed areas in town were for agricultural purposes. As of 2002, there were three active farms in town.

The Hillsborough County Soil Survey also designates prime farmland, which is land of major importance in meeting the nation’s needs for food and fiber. Of the nine soil types that are considered to be prime farmland, six of them are found in Bennington. Furthermore, they represent a very small area of land, and are scattered about the town in such a way as to preclude the possibility of any type of large-scale farming.

Agricultural soils cover most of the town. Some of these soils, however, may be suitable for only specific crops. The LESA (Agricultural Lands Evaluation and Site Assessment) manual should be consulted when a choice needs to be made regarding the use of one particular farmland over another, depending on whether the use is for farming or general development.

■ FLOODPLAINS

Floodplains are land areas that are susceptible to flooding. These areas actually have two parts: the floodway and floodway fringe. The floodway includes the channel and an additional area that often carries excess flow. The floodway fringe (more commonly known as the 100-year floodplain or the Special Flood Hazard Area) is a broader area over which floodwater may spread, but where the flow velocity is slower. This is an important distinction for land use planning, since some uses can safely occur in the Special Flood Hazard Area, but not in the floodway.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has mapped the floodplains for all relevant municipalities; the boundaries of the floodplains were computed at cross sections interpolated between cross sections, based on hydraulic information and past experience of flooding. Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) define the 100-year floodplain (meaning there is a 1 out of 100 chance of flooding in any given year; over long periods of time, base floods will occur on the average once every 100 years), and the 500-year floodplain (a 1 out of 500 chance of flooding in any given year).

The Flood Insurance Rate Maps for Bennington became effective April 18, 1983, and the town then entered into the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which permits homeowners who live in the floodplain and the rest of the community to purchase flood insurance for their property. However, in order for landowners to be able to purchase this insurance, the town needed to adopt a Floodplain Management Ordinance, which it has done. This ordinance requires the town to keep track of all development in the Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) and ensure that if any new construction or substantial improvements to a home are proposed for the SFHA, the lowest enclosed floor must be at or above the base flood elevation.

The purposes of this requirement are to minimize the potential for flood damage, to avoid damage-prone uses in the floodplains, and to reduce development pressure of flood hazard areas. Communities that do not maintain and/or enforce their floodplain regulations may be suspended from the insurance program, which could have serious consequences for any affected landowners if their mortgage holders wished to cancel the mortgage. For these reasons, it is very important for the town to keep the floodplain management ordinance up to date by amending it as necessary, and to monitor all development within these areas.

Bennington has a fair amount of floodplain, primarily located on the western side of town along the Contoocook River, as well as in the south central part of town near Whittemore Lake and a stream that flows into the Contoocook River near Powder Mill Pond. These areas are also consistent with much of the wetland soils identified by the County Soil Survey.

■ WATER RESOURCES

Bennington has a land area of approximately 11.5 square miles, or 7,267 acres. Surface water accounts for only approximately 210 acres. Aquifers, or groundwater, are also included in this analysis, since they provide an important source of water for private and community wells. A description of the town's watersheds, waterbodies, watercourses, and aquifers is presented below.

A. WATERSHEDS

The watershed is the principle focus in describing a surface water system. A watershed is the land area made up of a series of connecting higher ridges that drain surface water to the lowest point, which is where a stream or a river flows out of the watershed.

Bennington is situated within portions of two major watersheds: the Upper Contoocook River and the South Branch Piscataquog River Watersheds, both of which lie within the Merrimack River Basin; the location and extent of these watersheds can be seen on the *Stratified Drift Aquifers with Watersheds/Basins, Southwest Region* map found at the end of this chapter.

B. WATERBODIES

Bennington's two major waterbodies are:

Powder Mill Pond: 435 acres, on the border with Greenfield and Hancock, of which 95.1 acres are in Bennington. (Powder Mill Pond can be considered a widened part of the Contoocook River.)

Whittemore Lake: 40.5 acres in the south central part of town, just north of the Greenfield town line.

Both of the waterbodies listed above are classified by the NH Department of Environmental Services as Public Waters, which means that they are subject to the State's Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (RSA 483-B). This law was enacted in 1991, and establishes standards for the subdivision, use and development of the land around the state's public waters, defined as all land located within 250 feet of the water.

C. WATERCOURSES

Bennington's most significant watercourse is the Contoocook River (60.7 acres located within Bennington), running north-south along the western border of town. The Contoocook River forms the town's northern border with the Town of Antrim, which therefore shares the river. There are several streams in the town as well, two running north from Bell Ledges, and two running east to west from Crotched Mountain.

D. AQUIFERS

Aquifers are concentrations of groundwater, found where saturated layers are permeable and the storage and transmission of water can take place. Aquifers are resupplied through precipitation, surface water, wetlands, lakes and streams. The water then moves to a saturated zone (aquifer) where the pore spaces between soil particles are filled by the water. It is very important that the surface of the earth be able to transmit water so that a certain percentage can be stored underground. Excessive compaction or extensive covering of the land surface reduces the volume of groundwater, which affects the supply of water to aquifers and therefore to wells.

Aquifers of medium to high potential occur in Southwest New Hampshire as unconsolidated deposits of sand and gravel, or in bedrock fractures (known as consolidated deposits). The unconsolidated deposits, also called stratified drift deposits, contain sorted layers of gravel, sand, silt and clay, occurring chiefly

in valley bottoms. These materials have abundant pore space to store water, and pore space may amount to more than 30 percent of the total volume of the deposit. Consequently, these stratified deposits of sand and gravel have become good sources of medium to high volume aquifers.

Consolidated deposits, or bedrock fractures, are a more productive water source when the bedrock is overlaid by a layer of sand and gravel, which allows the recharge to occur directly from above. They are usually adequate for domestic wells. In contrast, a till aquifer will typically have a lower-yielding well life due to its mixture of clay, silt, gravel and boulders that tend to compact. The transmission and storage of water is greatly decreased in this type of aquifer. The water table (the top of the saturated zone) can fluctuate, depending on the volume of recharge to aquifer material.

Groundwater in saturated soils is generally vulnerable to pollution because surface contamination can infiltrate directly into it. It is possible, however, to trace the source of pollution by finding the watershed boundary. Once a pollutant enters an aquifer, it may remain in place for an indeterminate period of time. While pollutants can enter an aquifer easily because sand and gravel are porous and transmit water rapidly, once in the aquifer their movement is then governed by groundwater flow, which moves very slowly through the tiny pore spaces of the glacial till.

Sources of aquifer pollution are frequently located on the ground surface directly above or contiguous to the aquifer: septic tank effluent, landfill refuse, leakage from sewer lines or ruptured fuel tanks, agricultural fertilizers, and pesticides are among the many possible sources of pollution for an aquifer. In addition to these potential contaminants are materials such as fuels, lubricants or other toxic materials associated with earth excavation, an activity that is, of course, directly associated with sand and gravel aquifers.

The US Geological Survey provides aquifer delineation maps for the entire state. The map is essentially a surficial geology map, showing the distribution of unconsolidated (not bedrock) geologic material on the land surface. There do exist bedrock aquifers, but these were not part of this particular study. This study identifies areas of sand and gravel and measures the rate of transmissivity — that is, the speed with which water passes through the materials, in increments of 1,000 feet squared per day.

The *Stratified Drift Aquifer* map for Bennington found at the end of this chapter identifies areas of these stratified drift deposits. The map shows that most of the western side of Bennington, primarily along the Contoocook River, contains stratified drift aquifers. This is significant, considering the discussion above about the potential effects of covering over the ground under which aquifers lay.

▪ OPEN SPACE/RECREATION

Providing open space and recreational opportunities is an important aspect of town planning. Open space provides many benefits to a community:

- ◆ Maintenance of rural character and pleasant scenery.
- ◆ Provides buffers between developments.
- ◆ Wildlife habitat protection.
- ◆ Groundwater protection, water retention, and groundwater recharge.
- ◆ Flood control.
- ◆ Food production.
- ◆ Air purification and the production of oxygen.
- ◆ Recreational opportunities.

A. FEDERAL, STATE AND LCIP PROPERTIES

The following table shows the amount of federal- and state-owned open space lands, as well as all parcels protected under the Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP) in Bennington and surrounding towns:

NEIGHBORING OPEN SPACE COMPARISONS

| TOWN | OPEN SPACE IN ACRES | % OF TOTAL AREA | % OF SUBREGIONAL TOTAL |
|--------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| BENNINGTON | 96 | 1.3% | 0.7% |
| Antrim | 2,703 | 11.6% | 18.6% |
| Deering | 2,691 | 13.5% | 18.5% |
| Greenfield | 2,058 | 11.9% | 14.2% |
| Francestown | 1,319 | 6.8% | 9.1% |
| Hancock | 5,669 | 28.3% | 39.0% |
| Total | 14,536 | 100% | 100% |

SOURCE: SOUTHWEST REGION PLANNING COMMISSION GIS

Bennington has a significantly lower percentage of Federal, State and LCIP lands in terms of both the total area of the town and the subregional total (1.3% and 0.7% respectively). The Town of Hancock has the highest percentage of open space (28.3% and 39.0%).

B. RECREATION

Recreation facilities for citizens of all ages are an essential element of the services provided by a well-planned community. A variety of public structured and unstructured recreational activities are available to Bennington residents. In 1986, recreational land use consisted of 300 acres or four percent of the total acreage of the Town. In 2000, recreational land use was 305 acres (still four percent of the total acreage). Public recreation facilities include Newhall Youth Field, Sawyer Field, Whittemore Lake Beach, and Cold Springs Pond.

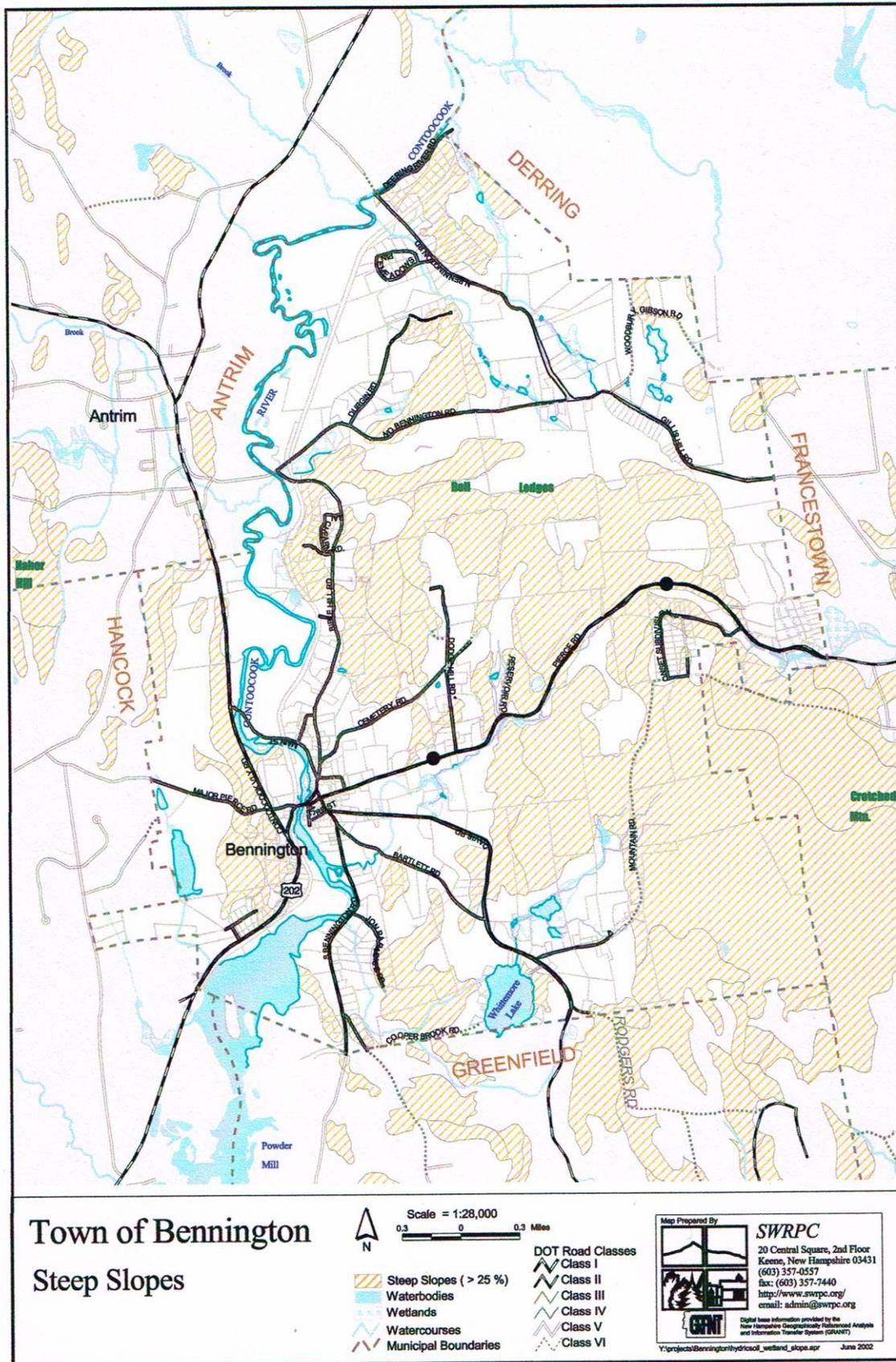
C. CURRENT USE

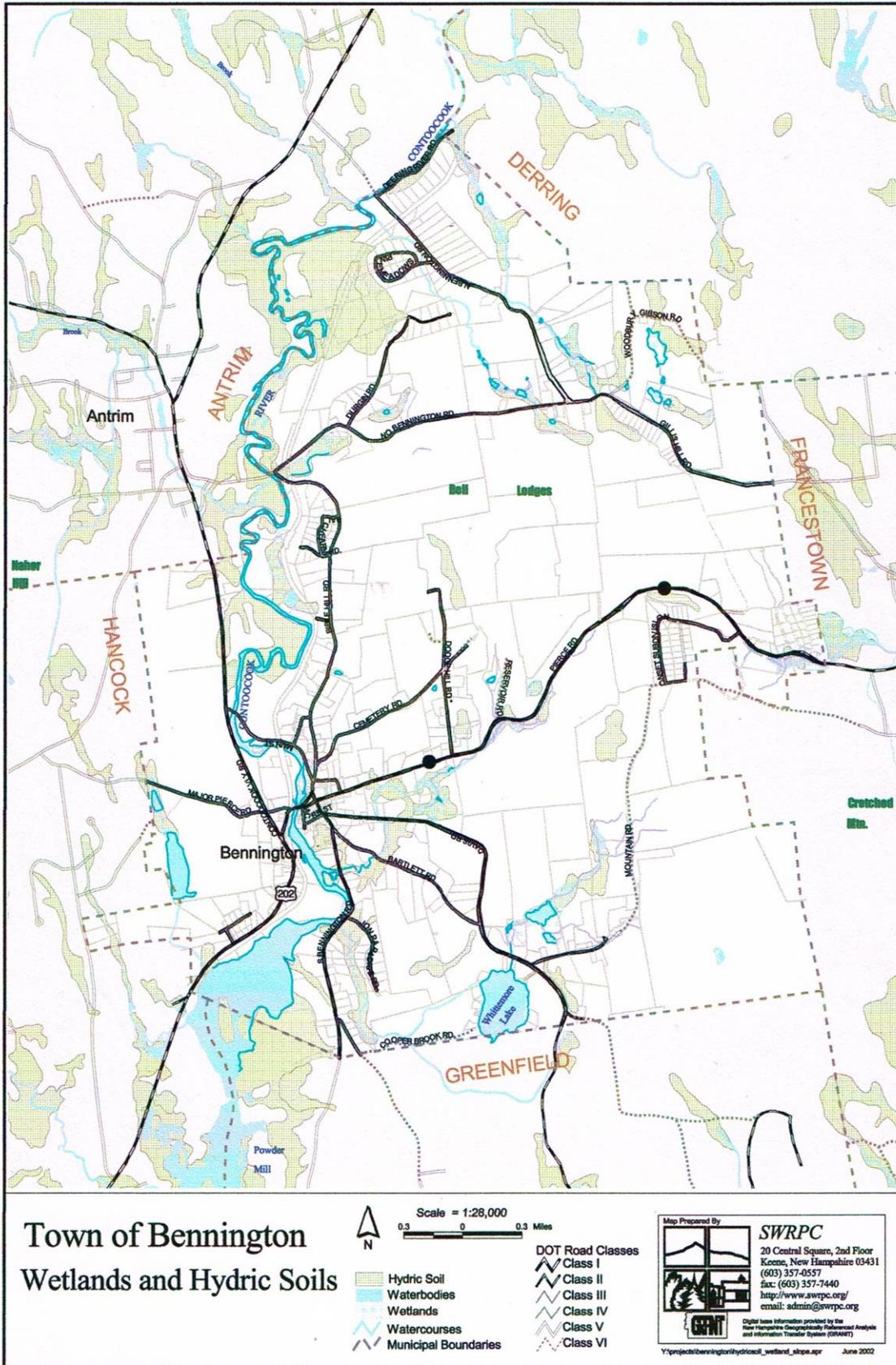
The Current Use Taxation program was enacted in 1973 to promote the preservation of open land in the state by allowing qualifying land to be taxed at a reduced rate based on its current use value as opposed to a more extensive use. The minimum land area currently needed to qualify is ten acres. The price of this favorable treatment is a 10 percent penalty tax (10% of the sale price) when the property is later changed to a non-qualifying use.

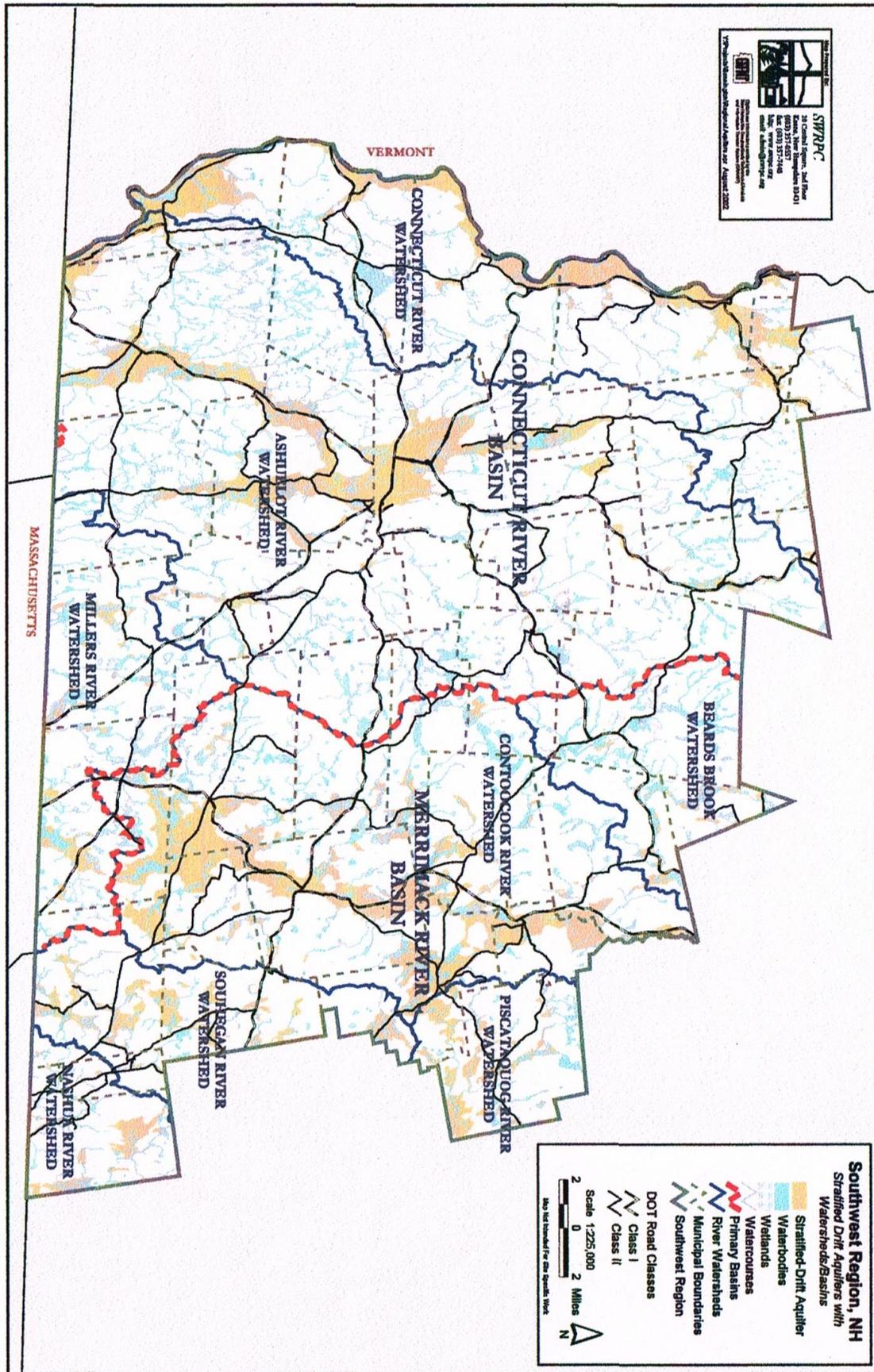
In comparing conservation easements to current use taxation, easements are permanent, while current use may be reversed by change to a non-qualifying use and payment of the Use Change Tax. Thus, current use may satisfy the goals of a landowner who cannot afford to permanently abandon future development value, but desires current property tax relief. If it becomes financially necessary to subdivide, the use change tax becomes an element of the development costs.

In Bennington, 50% of monies collected from the Use Change Tax (10% of the sales price of a piece of land taken out of current use and sold for development) goes to the Conservation Commission for the acquisition of land and/or conservation easements. The Town of Bennington has a total land area of 7,267 acres, of which 4,652 (64%) were in current use, as of 2012 (Source: New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration).

The current use designation, authorized by RSA 70-A, provides the town other benefits as well: it encourages landowners to maintain traditional land-based occupations such as farming and forestry; promotes open space, preserving natural plant and animal communities, healthy surface and groundwater; and provides opportunities for skiers, hikers, sightseers, and hunters.







CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

■ INTRODUCTION

The primary source for identifying sand and gravel resources is the *Soil Survey of Hillsborough County*, which was completed in 1985⁶ by the USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS). The document includes a table entitled “Construction Materials” that lists four types of material by soil category; these are roadfill, sand, gravel, and topsoil.

This section addresses Bennington's opportunities for earth excavation as defined by RSA 155-E. Amendments made to this law in 1989 and 1991 made it incumbent on towns to ensure that their zoning ordinances provide for excavation. Otherwise “*excavation shall be deemed to be a use allowed by special exception . . . in any non-residential area of the municipality, . . .*”⁷ and the zoning board of adjustment shall grant the special exception upon a finding by the board that the excavation would not diminish property values, unreasonably change the character of the neighborhood, create traffic hazards, or create any health or safety hazards.

■ THE SOIL SURVEY

Soil categories are identified in the Soil Survey of Hillsborough County by number and letter; the number represents the composition of the soil, and the letter designates the steepness, “A” being the flattest and “E” the steepest. Note that the maps developed for this report show the soil unit boundaries but not the identifying number and letter, as the scale of the maps would render this information illegible. The complete designation is, however, provided in the following tables.

The classifications used to designate the construction materials are based on a number of factors, including observed performance of the soil, soil properties, and site features that affect the removal of the material and its use as a construction material.

Roadfill is defined by the Survey as soil material that is excavated in one place and used in road embankments in another place. Only soils suitable for low embankments (under six feet) were rated by the Survey.

Roadfill is rated as being “good,” “fair,” or “poor”. “Good” soils are those that are comprised of significant amounts of sand or gravel or both, and have slopes of 15% or less. “Fair” soils have in excess of 35% silt and clay-sized particles, and slopes of 15-25%. “Poor” soils contain many stones, or have slopes of more than 25%.

Topsoil is defined in the Survey as material used to cover an area in order to establish and maintain vegetation. For the purposes of the Survey, only the upper 40 inches of soil were evaluated for its use as topsoil.

⁶ *Soil Survey of Hillsborough County, New Hampshire*, US Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, 1984. (The SCS is now the Natural Resource Conservation Service.)

⁷ RSA 155-E: 4, III.

Topsoil is also rated as being “good,” “fair,” or “poor”. Soils rated as “good” contain no stones or cobbles, have little or no gravel, and have slopes of less than 8%. “Fair” soils are sandy, have considerable amounts of gravel or stone, or have slopes of 8-15%. “Poor” soils are comprised of a lot of sand or clay, have a large amount of gravel or stone, and have slopes of more than 15%.

Sand and gravel are defined in the Survey as natural aggregates suitable for commercial use with a minimum of processing. The Survey evaluated only the probability of finding materials in quantities large enough as to be suitable for removal.

The properties used to evaluate sand and gravel soils include the thickness of the material, the size of the grain, and the content of rock fragment. A soil rated as “probable” has either a layer of clean sand or gravel, or a layer of sand or gravel with up to 12% silty fines. In addition, the material must be at least three feet thick and have less than 50%, by weight, of large stones.

▪ CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS IN BENNINGTON

The four types of construction materials found in Bennington are described below; maps at the end of this chapter illustrate the extent and location of these materials. “Good,” “fair,” and “poor” roadfill and topsoil are identified; for sand and gravel, both the “probable” and the “improbable” soil units are identified. The source for all four tables is the Hillsborough County Soil Survey of 1985 (SCS).

Note that the survey assumes that all of the land area in Bennington is comprised of some amount of these four soil types. Therefore, when roadfill, for example, is calculated, the total of the “good,” “fair,” and “poor” roadfill soils equals the total land area of the town, based on the SCS study. Using the cumulative areas of the various soil types, Bennington has 7,424 acres of land area, and 210 acres of surface water.

A. ROADFILL

Roadfill materials in Bennington are primarily of the “poor” classification, with much smaller areas of “good” and “fair” identified. About 50 percent of the land area in Bennington, or 3,710 acres, is of the “poor” classification of roadfill material. Areas of good roadfill soils range in size from several large concentrations to numerous smaller pockets distributed all over town in no particular pattern. The larger areas are primarily located in the north-central part of town. There are approximately 2,234 acres or 30 percent of the land area in Bennington containing “good” roadfill material.

The fair materials are also distributed all over town, with the largest concentrations located in the east-central portion of town, as well as along the west side of Route 202. The remaining soils in Bennington are classified as poor roadfill material. There are approximately 1,109 acres or 15 percent of the land area in Bennington containing “fair” roadfill material.

B. TOPSOIL

Ninety percent of the soils in Bennington are rated as “poor” for topsoil material. Approximately 385 acres (about 5% of total land area) are rated as “fair” topsoil, with the majority of acreage distributed along the Contoocook River corridor through town. There is also a fairly large concentration of “fair” topsoil located to the northwest of Bell Ledges.

C. SAND

The probable sandy soils are concentrated in the southwest portion of Bennington, the majority of which is found south of NH Route 47. There are smaller pockets scattered throughout town. Probable sandy soils are not found in the east-central part of town, which is the area of Crotched Mountain. There are approximately 4,482 acres (60% of total land area) in Bennington in which there is a high probability of finding sandy materials in quantities large enough as to be suitable for removal.

D. GRAVEL

Gravel deposits in Bennington follow almost the same disbursement pattern as the sand, but there are fewer acres deemed probable for the presence of this material, approximately 1,239 acres or 17% of the total land area.

The table below presents the calculated acreages for all four construction material types. Based on the SCS information, Bennington has more sand and gravel than roadfill or topsoil. “Good” or “fair” topsoil is virtually non-existent in town. Sand is much more in abundance than gravel, estimated at 60 and 17 percent of the land area, respectively.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS BY TYPE AND ACREAGE

| CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL | AREA (in acres) | % OF TOTAL LAND AREA |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Roadfill | | |
| Good | 2,234 | 31% |
| Fair | 1,109 | 15% |
| Poor | 3,710 | 51% |
| Topsoil | | |
| Good | -- | -- |
| Fair | 385 | 5% |
| Poor | 6,668 | 92% |
| Sand | | |
| Probable | 4,482 | 62% |
| Improbable | 2,571 | 35% |
| Gravel | | |
| Probable | 1,239 | 17% |
| Improbable | 5,815 | 80% |
| Total Land Area – 7,267 Acres | | |

SOURCES: SOIL SURVEY OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY,
US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, 19854

▪ GROUNDWATER IDENTIFICATION

To further refine the identification of sand and gravel deposits in town, aquifer delineation studies are examined and compared to the SCS soil survey. Aquifer studies identify soils known as stratified drift, typically composed of sand and gravel that was deposited on valley floors by glaciers.

The *Stratified Drift Aquifer* map and the *Stratified Drift Aquifers with Watersheds/Basins, Southwest Region* map found at the end of the Natural Features chapter depict stratified drift aquifers at the local and regional levels and are based on the results of a statewide aquifer-mapping project by the NH Department of Environmental Services in cooperation with the US Geological Survey, begun in 1985.

Examination of the region-wide map shows that Bennington lies within portions of two major watersheds: the Upper Contoocook River to the west and the South Branch Piscataquog River to the east. The more detailed aquifer map for Bennington identifies a fairly large stratified drift aquifer deposit along the western portion of town, underlying areas that are considered probable for sand and gravel.

▪ EXCAVATION OPERATIONS IN BENNINGTON

As part of this report, all known existing and abandoned sand and/or gravel pits in town were identified. They are listed in the table below.

ACTIVE EXCAVATION SITES IN BENNINGTON, NH

| Site Location | Pit Area (Acres) | Zoning District | Status | Removal Volume 2001 (Cubic Yards) |
|---|------------------|------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Greenfield Road Map 3; Lot 1 | 5 | Rural/ Agricultural | Active | 15,890 |
| 2. Francestown Road Map 11; Lot 12 | 3 | Rural/ Agricultural | Active | 136,186 |
| 3. Francestown Road Map 11; Lot 16 | 5.5 | Rural/ Agricultural | Active | 18,350 |
| 4. No. Bennington Road Map 21; Lot 1 | 4.9 | Rural/ Agricultural | Active | 27,115 |

SOURCE: BENNINGTON PLANNING BOARD

Bennington has four active and one inactive excavation site ranging from 2.25 acres to 5 acres in size. All five sites are located in the Rural/Agricultural Zoning District.

▪ **OPPORTUNITIES IN BENNINGTON FOR EXCAVATION**

The Town of Bennington is zoned into four districts, the largest being the Rural/Agricultural District. As described in the Introduction, RSA 155-E now requires that a local zoning ordinance must address excavations in some manner, i.e., that opportunities for some of these resources must be allowed in at least some, but not necessarily all, areas in town. If this is not the case, excavations shall be considered to be a special exception use in a “non-residential area” of town, upon a finding by the zoning board of adjustment of the following four criteria (all four must be met). The excavation:

- Will not cause a diminution in area property values or unreasonably change the character of the neighborhood;
- Will not unreasonably accelerate the deterioration of highways or create safety hazards in the use of the highways;
- Will not create any nuisance or create health or safety hazards; and
- The excavation complies with any other special exception set forth in the local zoning ordinance.

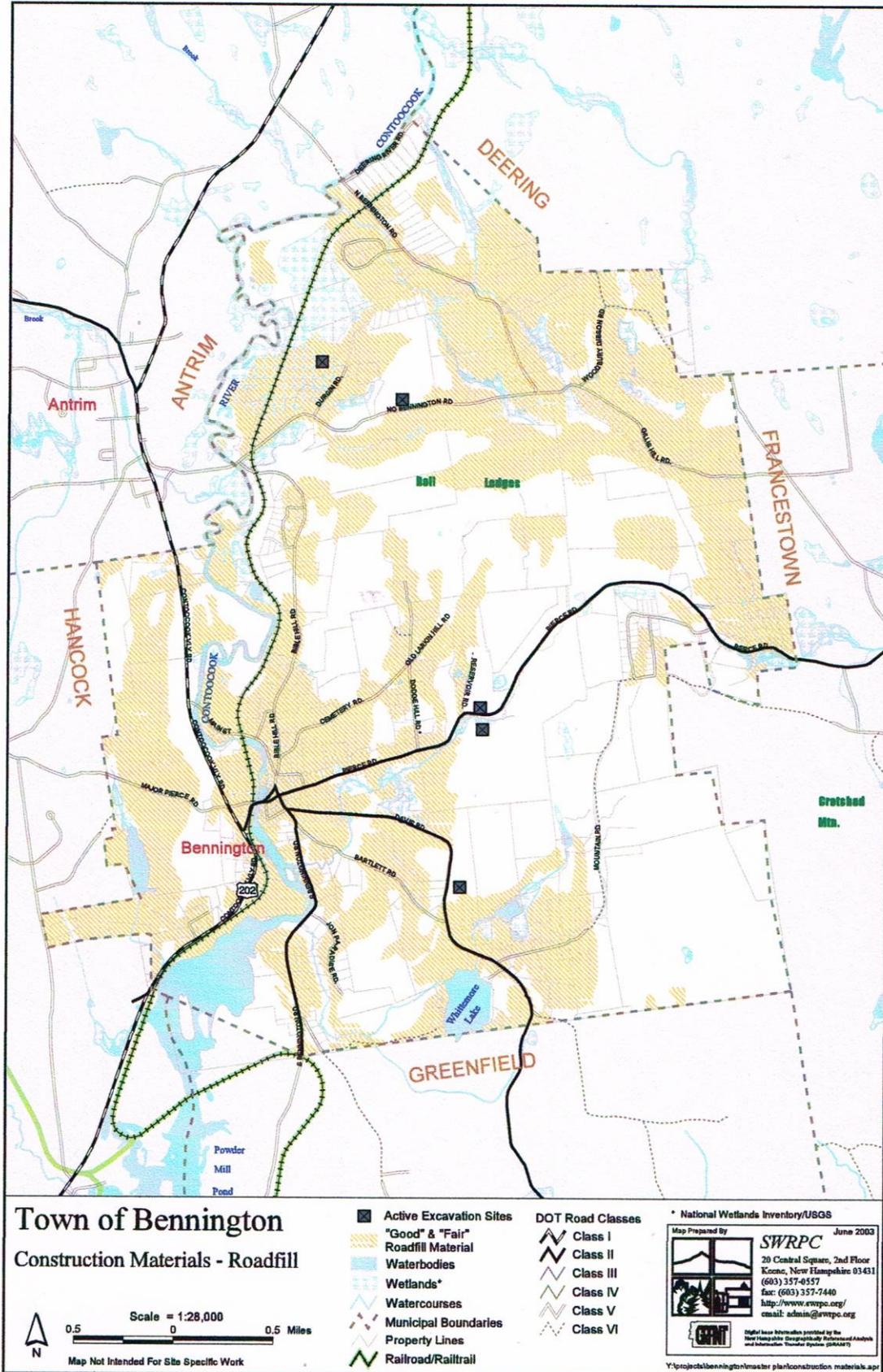
Bennington’s Zoning Ordinance allows the Planning Board to grant a special use permit for excavation provided that certain conditions, including those listed above, are met. Excavations are permitted only in the Rural/Agricultural and the Commercial/Recreation Zones.

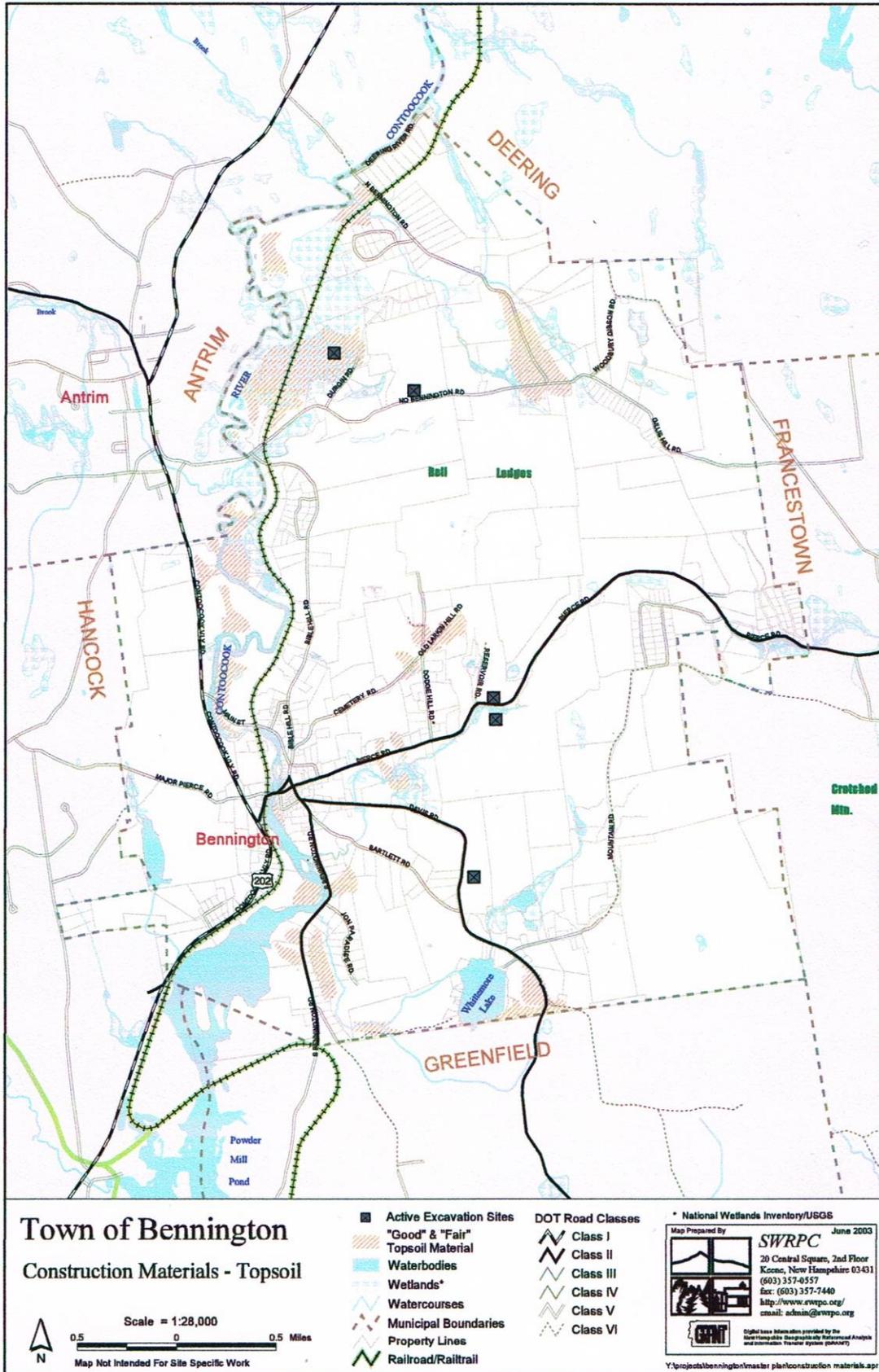
The law also allows towns that have adopted a Water Resource Management and Protection Plan to include in their local excavation regulations provisions that are aimed at protecting water resources. Bennington has a Water Resource Protection overlay zone that imposes requirements and restrictions that are in addition to those of the underlying districts. Excavations are not allowed in the Water Resource

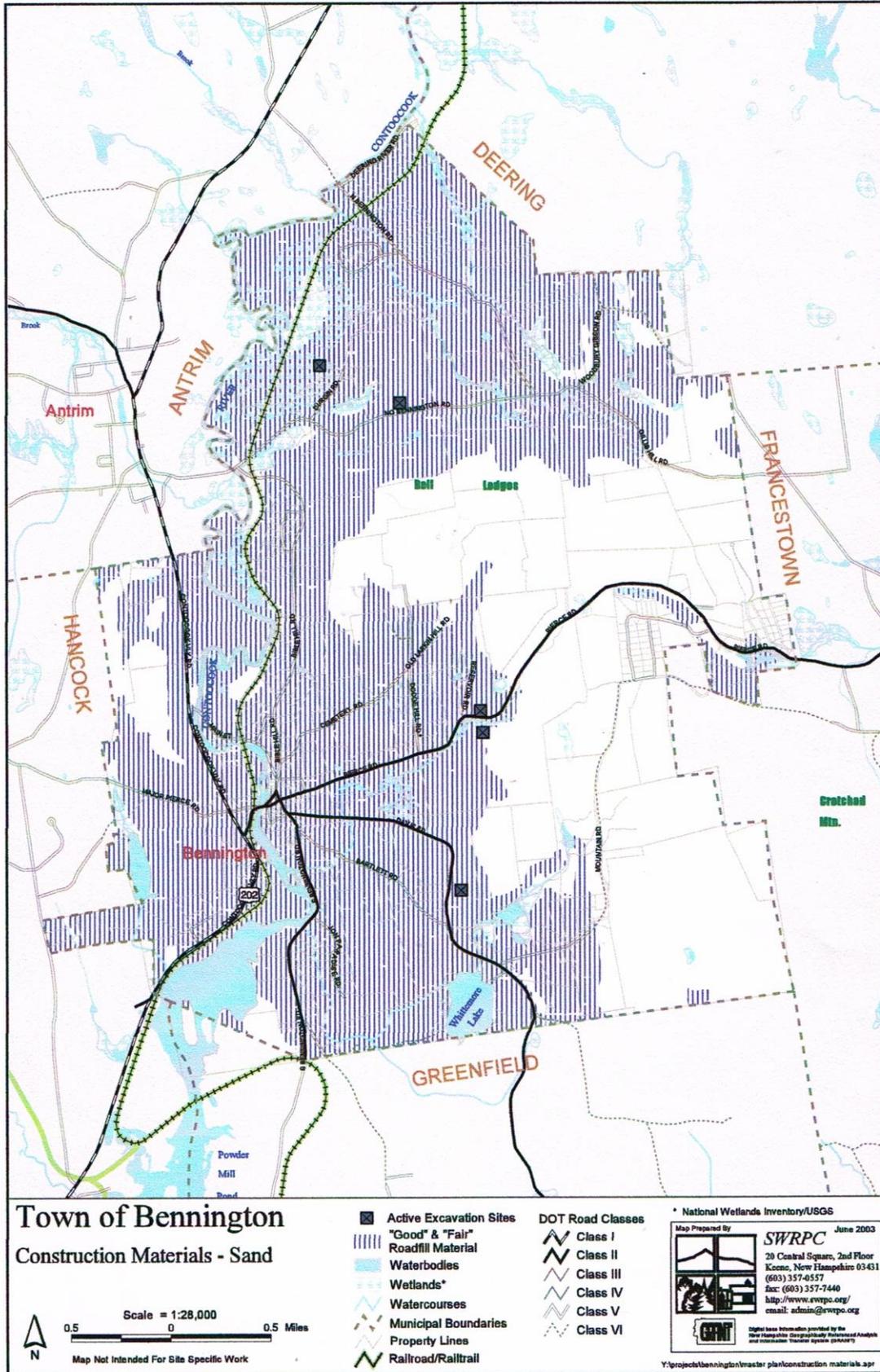
Overlay District. None of Bennington's five excavation sites is located within this district (see the *Zoning Map of Bennington* found at the end of this chapter).

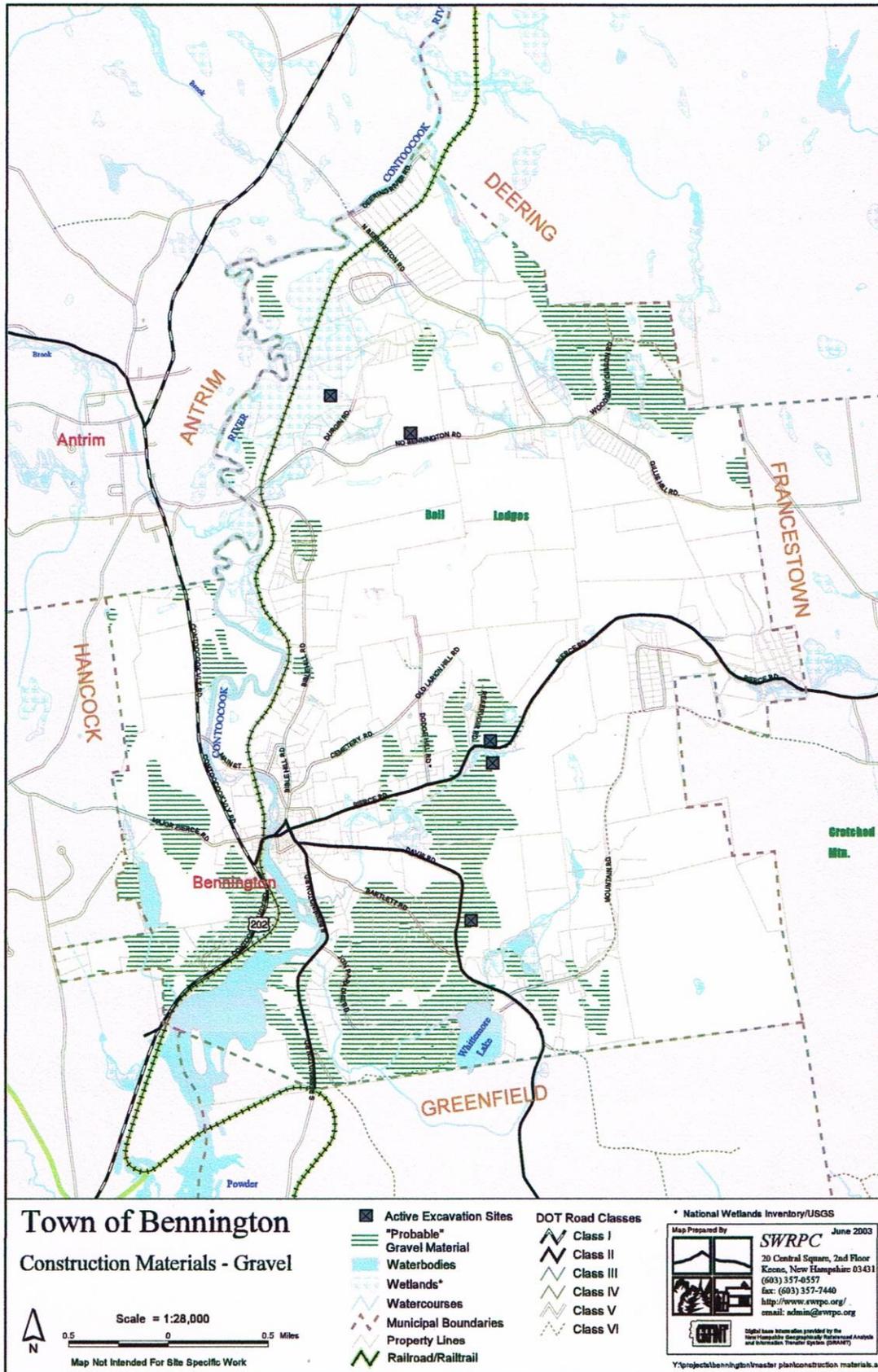
▪ **CONCLUSION**

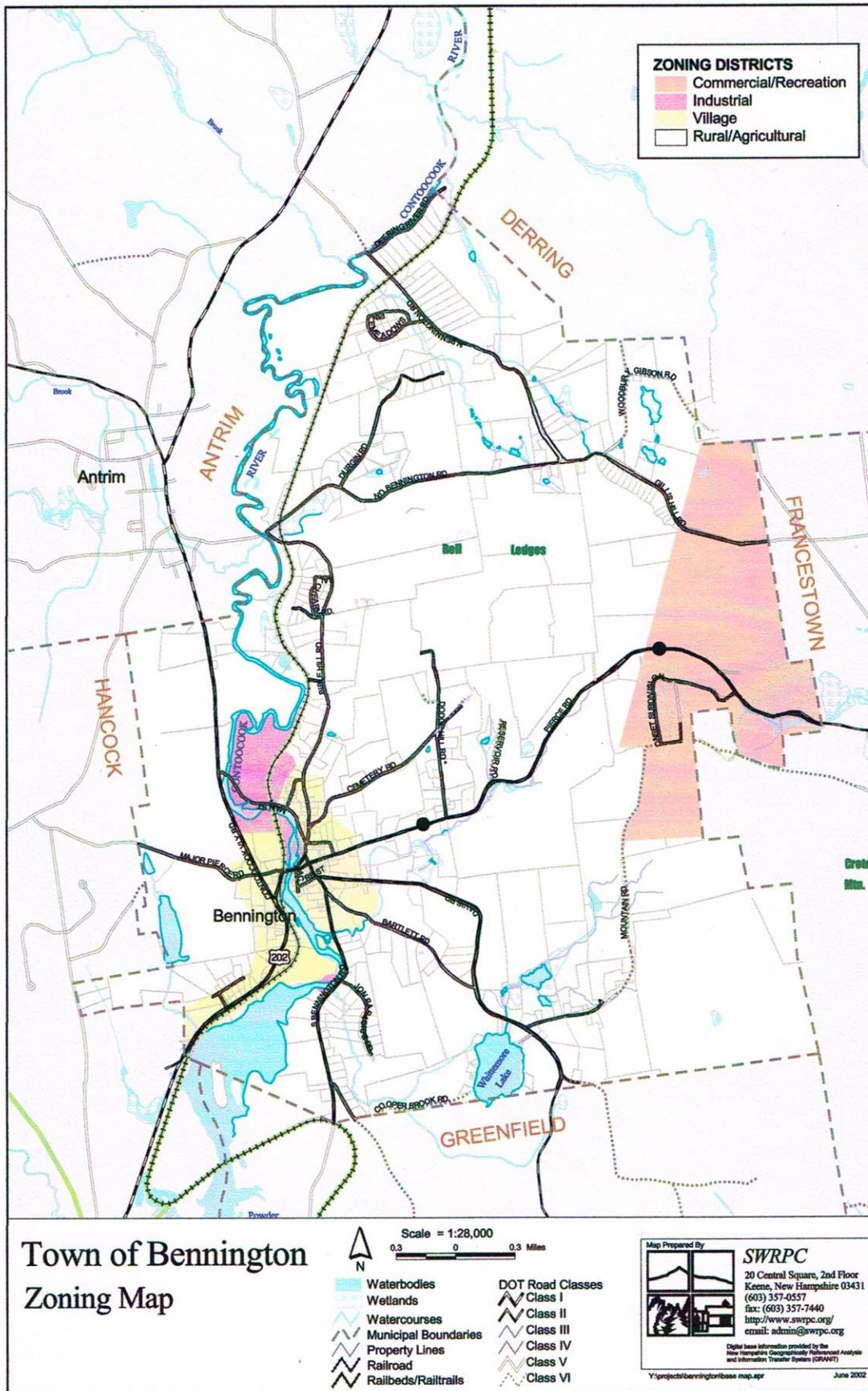
Bennington appears to have sufficient resources of construction materials located throughout town. There is a limited amount of good or fair topsoil in town; ninety percent of the town is rated as having poor topsoil. The location of the five active excavation sites in Bennington is consistent with the location of roadfill and sand and gravel materials as indicated by the Soil Survey of Hillsborough County.











LAND USE

PRESENT LAND USE

■ INTRODUCTION

Land use analysis is an important element of community planning. Once raw land is converted to a particular use, it is usually committed to that use for a very long time, if not indefinitely. It is extremely difficult to change a pattern of development once it takes hold. Therefore, decisions about future land use should be made carefully, with a studied eye to the potential ramifications of those uses. A well-conceived land use plan allows for new growth and development while it protects and preserves the integrity of neighborhoods, businesses, transportation routes, and the environment.

This chapter describes the pattern of existing land uses in Bennington and analyzes the changes that have taken place in the land use pattern since 1986, the date of the last land use analysis for Bennington. Maps are used to identify the areas of town that have been developed, the kind of development that has occurred, and the relationship of one land use to another. This information provides the baseline necessary to evaluate the appropriateness of future development and the availability of suitable land for such development.

The development of a land use plan forms the basis of land use regulations, which are effected through zoning ordinances and subdivision and site plan review regulations. The land use plan describes the goals and objectives envisioned by the town; the ordinances and regulations are the means to put these goals into place. For instance, if in the process of describing present land use patterns in Bennington, recommendations are made to encourage more commercial activity in a particular area, the zoning ordinance should be amended to permit that kind of activity in that location, if it does not already do so. Or, by the same token, the land use plan might recommend that the zoning ordinance be made more restrictive in particular areas, for the purpose of protecting and preserving certain natural features in town.

■ LAND USE CATEGORIES

The first step in the land use analysis is to classify the various land uses that exist in Bennington. A classification system describes these activities. The second step is an analysis of tax assessing data from Bennington using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. Existing land uses and activities are recorded on a map to illustrate an interpretation of the land use pattern.

In general, land is classified according to its physical characteristics and/or the present activity that occurs on it. The two major divisions in a land use classification system are "Developed" and "Undeveloped" uses. Each of these divisions can be further subdivided into specific land uses. The following is a listing and description of the standard land use categories used to prepare a land use plan:

- ◆ **Residential:** All land and structures used to provide housing for one or more households. These include site-built single family homes, manufactured homes (previously known as mobile homes), factory-built modular homes, duplexes, apartment buildings, condominiums, and seasonal residences.

- ◆ **Public/Semi-public:** Establishments and facilities supported by and/or used exclusively by the public or non-profit organizations, such as fraternal, religious, charitable, educational and governmental facilities.
- ◆ **Agricultural:** Lands that are utilized for the cultivation of crops, the raising of livestock and poultry, or nurseries for horticultural purposes.
- ◆ **Commercial:** All lands and structures that supply goods and/or services to the general public. This includes such facilities as restaurants, motels, hotels, service stations, grocery stores, and all kinds of other retail stores and shops, as well as establishments which are primarily oriented to providing a professional and/or personal service to the public, such as medical offices, banks and financial institutions, personal care establishments, etc.
- ◆ **Industrial:** Land and facilities used for mining, construction, manufacturing, treatment, packaging, incidental storage, distribution, transportation, communication, electric, gas, and sanitary services, and wholesale trade.
- ◆ **Home-Based Business:** A residential property that houses a home occupation or home-based business. The residence continues to be the principle use of the land, and the occupation is by definition secondary and incidental.
- ◆ **Road network:** All public and private rights-of-way that are designated for carrying vehicular traffic. This includes Class VI roads that are no longer maintained by the town and do not carry public traffic.
- ◆ **Protected Lands:** Included in this category are all federally-owned lands and facilities, all state parks and forests, land protected under the State Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP), land protected and/or owned by the town, sensitive land and wildlife habitats protected by the NH Audubon Society, and land held by the Society for the Protection of NH Forests and the Monadnock Conservancy.
- ◆ **Undeveloped:** All lands that are not developed for any of the above uses, regardless of the reason, whether because the land is not usable due to environmental constraints, or there has been no demand to develop it, or it is in current use per RSA 79-A.

■ FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE LAND USE

Various factors influence growth and development in a town. The major physical and topographic features are the primary factors that influence the initial as well as the subsequent development of land. Secondary factors usually consist of man-made features such as roads, railroads, utilities, and major commercial, industrial or recreational facilities that attract and/or stimulate new or expanded development. The following factors have played an important role in the development of Bennington:

A. WATER POWER

Bennington is home to two major waterbodies, Powder Mill Pond and Whittemore Lake. Both of these waterbodies are classified by the NH Department of Environmental Services as Public Waters, which means that they are subject to the State's Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (RSA 483-B). This law was enacted in 1991, and establishes standards for the subdivision, use and development of the land around the state's public waters, defined as all land located within 250 feet of the water.

Bennington's most significant watercourse, however, is the Contoocook River (60.7 acres located within Bennington), running north-south along the western border of town. The Contoocook River forms the Town's northern border with the Town of Antrim, which therefore shares the river. There are several streams in the town as well, two running north from Bell Ledges, and two running east to west from Crotched Mountain.

Bennington's major employer, which continues to be Monadnock Paper Mills, Inc. with 235 employees, is located on the Contoocook River near the center of town. Several mills throughout Bennington's history have located on the Contoocook to take advantage of the power generated from the river's fast flowing waters.

B. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Settlement in Bennington has been influenced by three primary roads: US Route 202, NH Route 31, and NH Route 47. US 202 is a minor arterial running north and south on the western side of town serving to provide efficient movement between communities and connections to other state highways. Minor arterials link cities and larger towns and form an integrated network providing interstate and inter-county service. They provide service to corridors with trip lengths and travel density greater than those served by rural collectors and local roads and with relatively high travel speeds and minimum interference to through movement.

NH Route 31 is a major collector running south from the center of town, serving to provide connections to the arterial system and regional traffic generators such as schools, parks, commercial and industrial areas, and surrounding towns. Major collectors serve county seats not on arterial routes and larger towns not directly served by higher systems, and serve as more important intra-county travel corridors.

NH 47 is a minor collector running south from the town center serving to collect traffic from local roads, provide access to surrounding communities, and link locally important traffic generators such as schools, parks, and commercial and industrial areas. Minor collectors provide service to smaller communities and link locally important traffic generators with the arterial system.

The other transportation system that influenced the settlement pattern of Bennington is the railroad. Until the summer of 1986, Bennington was served by the Hillsborough Branch of the Boston & Maine Railroad, which provided freight service to local industries. The industries impacted by the closing of this rail line had to find alternative means of transport. The railroad initially served a much greater role in moving people and goods around and through Bennington than did the road network. Thus, the demise of rail travel and the establishment of major transportation routes outside of Bennington's boundaries set in place certain parameters that have dictated the rate and type of development experienced in Bennington over the last several decades. What is changing this landscape in Bennington and elsewhere is the introduction of telecommuting and internet commerce, which do not require concrete and asphalt for people to travel to their places of work or, in some cases, to places to shop. The effect this is having on development in Bennington remains to be seen.

C. TOPOGRAPHY & SOILS

To some extent, topography and soils also play a role in any town's development. Historically, people built houses and roads on land that was most easily accessed; and soil type and characteristics influence what kind of development will occur — farming, for example — and where that development will take place.

The topography of Bennington is dominated by Bell Ledges in the north-central part of town and Crotched Mountain to the south. The highest elevation of Bell Ledges, which falls entirely within Bennington, is 1,220 feet above sea level. Crotched Mountain falls within the three towns of Bennington, Francestown, and Greenfield. The mountain's highest elevation is actually in Francestown at 2,020 feet above sea level; in Bennington the highest elevation is 1,980 feet.

The northern and southwestern parts of town have the lowest elevations, ranging from 700 to 900 feet above sea level. The lower elevations are found along the Contoocook River, which runs south-to-north into and through town, entering at Powder Mill Pond. It is in areas of lower elevation where most of the development in Bennington has occurred.

■ **PRESENT PATTERNS OF LAND USE**

An analysis of the present land use pattern in a town is one of the first steps in the formulation of a land use plan. Since the type and intensity of existing land uses have a strong influence on future development patterns, it is important to understand how land and other resources are used within a given area before recommendations can be developed for future land uses.

The development of the Town of Bennington's land has gone through several changes as economic emphasis has shifted from one period to another. The early agrarian society of the town dominated the land use pattern of Bennington in its formative years. However, as the potential of the water power of the fast flowing Contoocook River was realized and harnessed to service the mill development in Bennington center, and the railroad provided access to the area, the village center burgeoned. A town which had been a collection of farmsteads became a bustling community with an active and varied town center. The community services, including the town hall, fire station, churches, library, and school, soon gave the village center the visual impact of a typical early New England town.

This is the image of Bennington which persists to this day, and one which the residents of town are so desirous of maintaining in the face of anticipated growth.

Many New Hampshire towns have developed in a manner similar to Bennington's. Our towns and cities were established when living patterns were less complex than they are today. Travel was difficult, and people lived close to their work and to the services they required. The village center of Bennington is typical of this clustering of homes, businesses, and services. The automobile changed the traditional patterns of development, bringing strip development and mini-malls. Bennington has avoided this type of development to a great extent, but has seen a gradual filling in of the suitable lands along the major roads.

Bennington has a land area of approximately 11.5 square miles, or 7,424 acres. Surface water accounts for approximately 210 acres. Of this land area, less than 34 percent is presently developed for one of the uses described earlier in this text. The following table compares the estimates of land use between 2002 and 2015.

Attempting to calculate exact acreages for land uses, particularly residential usage, is difficult and time-consuming. Therefore, a commonly-used methodology is simply to assume two acres per each dwelling unit for use other than public/semi-public and vacant land. For residential uses, this takes into account that multi-family units will typically occupy much less than an acre and most single family homes much more than an acre. It is common for more of a lot to be taken up by a non-residential use than is generally observed for residential uses. The analysis of existing land use in Bennington in 2002 was performed

using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology with 2002 tax assessing data from the town. The 2002 tax assessing data from the Town of Bennington breaks land uses into the following categories:

- ◆ Commercial/Industrial
- ◆ Exempt – State
- ◆ Exempt – Municipal
- ◆ Four-Family Residential
- ◆ Three-Family Residential
- ◆ Two-Family Residential
- ◆ Single-Family Residential
- ◆ Vacant

The land area taken up by roads and highways is calculated by assuming a 50-foot right-of-way, multiplied by the number of miles of road.

This methodology was used to develop the 2002 portion of the following table. An attempt has been made here to compare the uses of land in 2002 to that of 2015. Data for 2015 were not available in the same form as the data for 2002. Therefore a direct comparison is not possible, due to differences in methodology. The largest percentage of land in Bennington remains undeveloped and, based on certain criteria, remains undevelopable. As of 2015, 4648 acres are in current use, accounting for most of the undeveloped land in town. Developed acreage is therefore 7424 total, minus 210 surface water, minus 4648 in current use, minus approximately 60 undevelopable acres other than the preceding, equaling 2506 acres, the figure used in the following table for total acres in use for the year 2015.

EXISTING LAND USE IN BENNINGTON, 2002 AND 2015

| LAND USE | TOTAL ACRES | | % OF ACRES IN USE | | % OF TOTAL LAND | |
|--|--------------|--------------|-------------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | 2002 | 2015 | 2002 | 2015 | 2002 | 2015 |
| DEVELOPED: | | | | | | |
| Residential (Single & multi-family) | 930 | 1775 | 48.3 | 70.8 | 12.5 | 23.9 |
| Commercial/Industrial | 46 | 244 | 2.3 | 9.7 | 0.1 | 3.3 |
| Public/Semi-Public | 462 | <0.1 | 24.0 | <0.1 | 6.2 | <0.1 |
| Recreational | 305 | 305 | 15.8 | 12.1 | 4.1 | 4.1 |
| Roads and Highways | 182 | 182 | 9.5 | 7.3 | 2.5 | 2.5 |
| TOTALS | 1,925 | 2,506 | 100 | 100 | 25.6 | 33.8 |
| TOTAL AREA | 7,424 | 7,424 | | | 100 | 100 |
| TOTAL DEVELOPED LAND | 1,925 | 2,506 | | | 25.9 | 33.8 |
| TOTAL SURFACE WATER | 210 | 210 | | | 2.8 | 2.8 |
| TOTAL UNDEVELOPED LAND | 5,289 | 4,708 | | | 71.2 | 63.4 |

SOURCES: 2002 AND 2015 TAX ASSESSING DATA FROM THE TOWN OF BENNINGTON

The greatest concentrations of land uses and the greatest mixture of these uses occur in the general area considered to be the village center. The intersection of the many roads and highways, the route of the railroad (although no longer in operation), and the proximity of the river all had their influence on the development of this area of town. The remaining development occurs along road frontage, fairly evenly disbursed around town. The *Existing Land Use* map found at the end of this section presents the land use pattern for Bennington as of September 2002.

The predominant land use in Bennington is residential, which includes both single family and multi-family housing. Most of this development is in year-round single family homes, with some multi-family use in the village center and some two family homes in the northeast corner of town. Residential use is located throughout the town, but again generally concentrated in the village center. There are lesser concentrations occurring in the south along Route 31, South Bennington Road, and Gillis Hill Road, and in the east around the Crotched Mountain Ski Area.

In 1986, agricultural development was widespread throughout the town with the greatest concentrations contained in the western sector along the northern part of Route 202 that connects Bennington with Antrim, and the road network feeding into the town center. Much of this farmland has been converted to residential use or is no longer actively farmed. The remaining agricultural activity in town consists primarily of haying, light dairy, sheep farming, and the keeping of llamas and horses.

Public and semi-public uses are clustered in the village center and consist of the Town Hall/Police Station, the Fire Station, the Transfer Station/Recycling Center, the Library, the elementary school, one church, and three cemeteries. These uses are identified on the *Existing Land Use* map as being tax exempt.

Commercial activity in Bennington is sparse, with a few uses located in the village center, a small concentration at the northern limit of town on Route 202, a few scattered mixed uses in residential areas, plus a few on the southern end of Route 202.

Industrial activity is primarily represented by the Monadnock Paper Mills in the village center and the four sand and gravel pits that are still operating in town.

Public recreation facilities include Newhall Youth Field, Sawyer Field, Whittemore Lake Beach, and Cold Springs Pond. Private recreation facilities include the properties of Crotched Mountain in the eastern section of town (288.9 acres).

Roads and highways, while not typically thought of as a "use" per se, do take up nearly 182 acres of land.

The Current Use Taxation program was enacted in 1973 to promote the preservation of open land in the state by allowing qualifying land to be taxed at a reduced rate based on its current use value as opposed to a more extensive use. The minimum land area currently needed to qualify is ten acres. The price of this favorable treatment is a 10 percent penalty tax (10% of the sale price) when the property is later changed to a non-qualifying use.

In comparing conservation easements to current use taxation, easements are permanent, while current use may be reversed by change to a non-qualifying use and payment of the Use Change Tax. Thus, current use may satisfy the goals of a landowner who cannot afford to permanently abandon future development value, but desires current property tax relief. If it becomes financially necessary to subdivide, the use change tax becomes an element of the development costs.

In Bennington, 50% of monies collected from the Use Change Tax (10% of the sales price of a piece of land taken out of current use and sold for development) goes to the Conservation Commission for the acquisition of land and/or conservation easements. The Town of Bennington has a total land area, excluding water bodies, of 7,214 acres, of which 4,648 (64%) are in current use as of 2015.

The current use designation, authorized by RSA 79-A, provides the town other benefits as well: it encourages landowners to maintain traditional land-based occupations such as farming and forestry; promotes open space, preserving natural plant and animal communities, healthy surface and groundwater; and provides opportunities for skiers, snowmobilers, hikers, sightseers, and hunters.

■ **LIMITATIONS TO DEVELOPMENT**

The data concerning the existing land use pattern reveals that roughly 35 percent of Bennington's total land area of 7214 acres (not including surface water) is currently developed, leaving some 4,708 acres undeveloped. Not all of this land, however, is suitable for development. Limiting factors to development include steep slopes, certain soil types, wetlands, aquifers, floodplain areas, and other sensitive lands or features. In addition to these physical constraints, development is limited by the public's desire to protect the quality of life and property values of existing residents. This public will is ideally expressed in the town's land use regulations, guidance for which is the central purpose of this planning document.

Four maps have been created using Geographic Information System technology showing limitations to development in Bennington: *Stratified Drift Aquifers*, *Steep Slopes*, *Wetlands & Hydric Soils*, and *Development Constraints*. These maps identify the constraints to development that are related to the ability of the soil to accommodate construction of septic systems, roads, or buildings. The *Existing Land Use* map and the *Development Constraints* map can be found at the end of this section. The following table illustrates the factors that limit land development. The total percentage is greater than 100% because some parcels are limited by more than one factor.

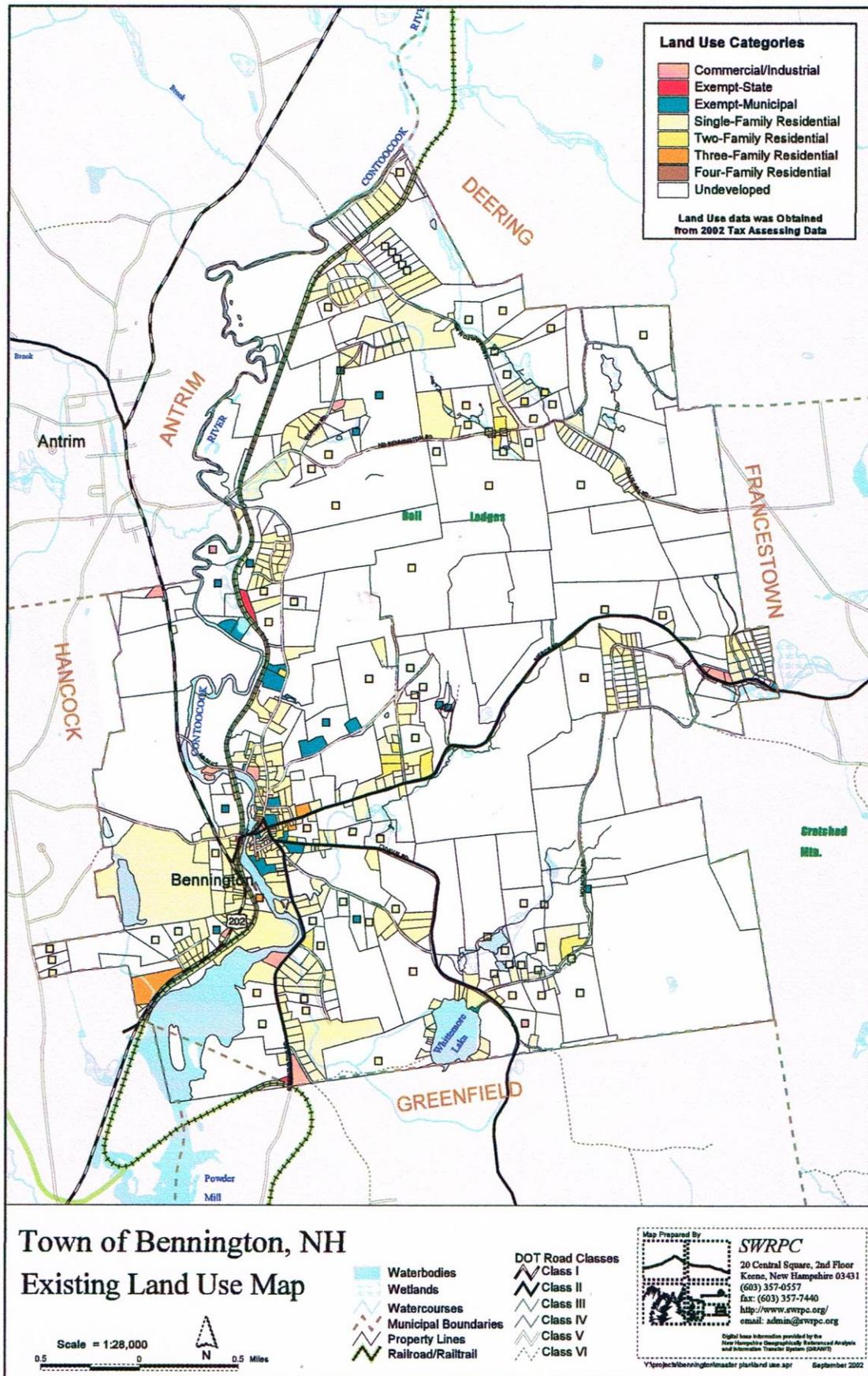
LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT

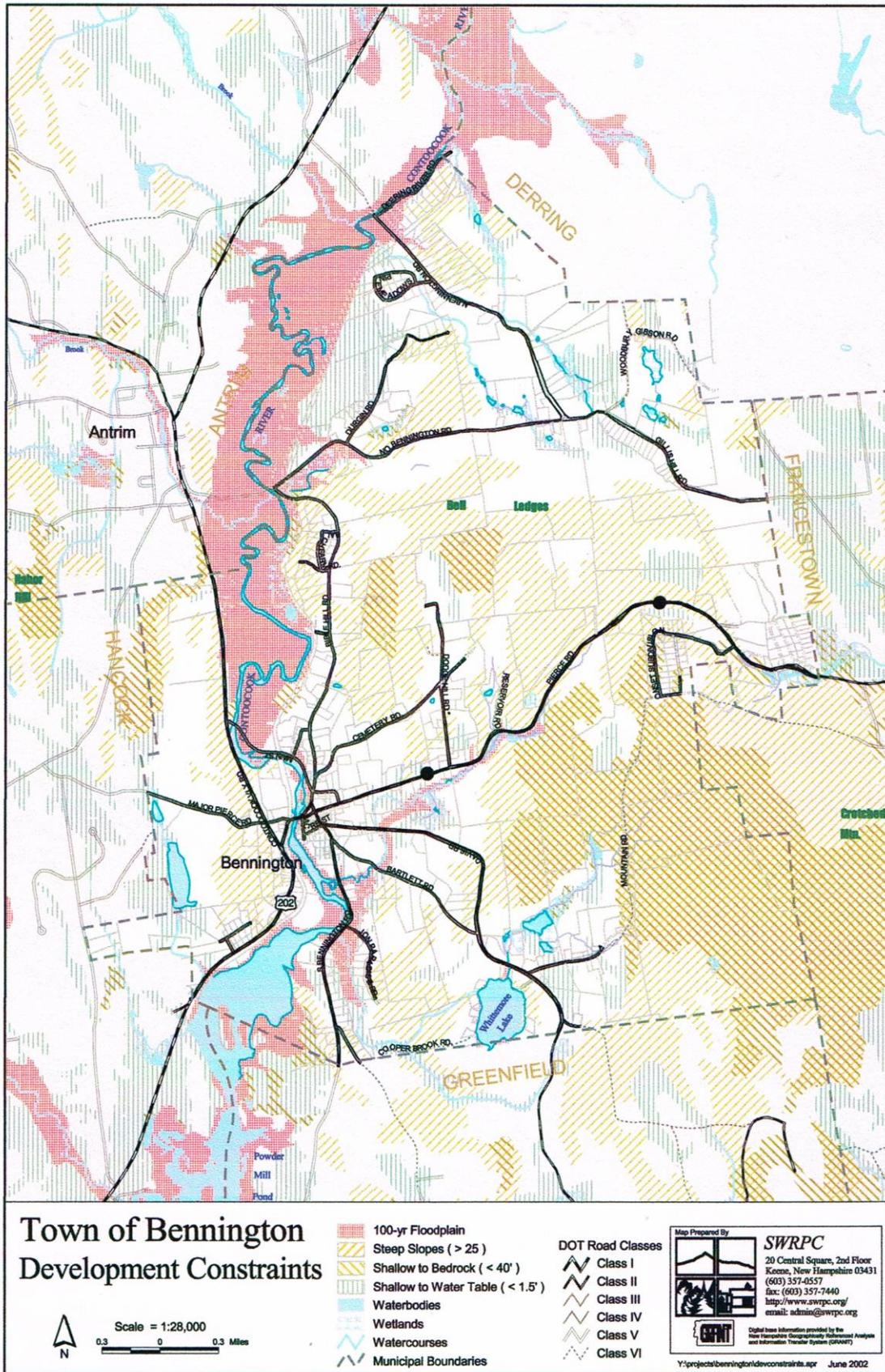
| Constraint | Acres | % of Undeveloped Land Area |
|---|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Total undeveloped land area (as of 2015) | 4708 | -- |
| Slopes greater than 25% | 1,999 | 42.4% |
| Poorly and very poorly drained soils (Hydric soils) | 487 | 10.3% |
| Wetlands | 267 | 5.7% |
| Floodplain | 384 | 8.2% |
| Aquifer | 1,198 | 25.4% |
| Shallow to bedrock soils (Less than 40 inches) | 935 | 19.9% |
| Shallow to water table (Less than 1.5 feet) | 699 | 14.8% |

SOURCE: SWRPC GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM USFWS NATIONAL WETLANDS INVENTORY (NWI) & USGS DATA

Reference to the maps illustrates that one *or more* of these development constraints exists virtually all over town. There are in fact, only a few areas on the map that appear to have no limitations at all. It is interesting to note that the built up area of the village center is one of the areas in town with few limitations to development, which was probably a primary reason why the area was in fact built out. The central and southeast portions of town have many steep slopes due to the location of Crotched Mountain. There are areas in northern Bennington with few limitations to development that have not been developed at this time.

In comparing limitations to development to the *Existing Land Use* map, it can be seen that, while the development does follow almost every road in town, the areas shown as having the greatest constraints have not been developed. How much of this pattern is due to the natural constraints of the land or to other factors such as road access is not known.





LAND USE PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

▪ INTRODUCTION

Land and water are Bennington's most basic resources. As such, their use determines the character and quality of community life. The rate of growth, type, and location of development all directly affect the physical appearance of the town, the need for certain public services and facilities, and the cost of providing these services. Change is inevitable, so Bennington must be prepared to face future development.

Thus, in creating a Master Plan to guide Bennington's growth, it is the Future Land Use Plan that is the core of a comprehensive planning program. It is this section of the Master Plan that reflects the best thinking and wishes of Bennington residents, as interpreted by the Planning Board, regarding all future development in town.

Certain assumptions are made in anticipating future development in Bennington. Based on the data collected and analyzed in the preceding sections:

- ◆ If the past 20 years can serve as an indicator, Bennington should continue to experience a slow rate of growth in population.
- ◆ The road network in and through Bennington will remain unchanged over the next 10-15 years, aside from regular maintenance and improvements. The roads carrying traffic through Bennington, i.e., NH Routes 31 and 47 and US Route 202, will continue to serve as subregional major collectors.
- ◆ Bennington residents will continue to participate at a high level in the labor force and regional economy; managerial and professional occupations will expand, with increased reliance on telecommuting and internet commerce.
- ◆ Commercial agriculture will not be a notable land use, nor will it be a significant contributor to the local economy.

In any planning process, it is inevitable that some goals will conflict with others. Residential and commercial development, for example, invariably conflicts with agricultural use and open space preservation. One of the purposes of this Plan is to set policies and establish clear objectives, where appropriate, that will guide future growth in a manner that best accommodates both protection and development.

In small towns such as Bennington, it is sometimes more appropriate to base future land use decisions on development policies, rather than specific objectives. In such towns, where a great degree of future growth is not anticipated, the form in which most growth takes place is the development of individual properties. The Plan, then, expresses a general concept of development and is considered to be a realistic means of managing future growth.

▪ LAND USE PATTERNS

Overall, land use patterns in Bennington are dominated by residential development, which includes both single family and multi-family housing. Most of this development is in year-round single family homes, with some multi-family use in the village center and some two family homes in the northeast corner of town. Much of the town's farmland has been converted to residential use or is no longer actively farmed. The remaining agricultural activity in town consists primarily of haying, light dairy, sheep farming, maple sugaring, and the keeping of llamas and horses. This general pattern is not expected to change.

▪ COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Based upon the information collected in the Basic Studies section, Bennington currently meets the community facilities needs of its residents, and expects to do so into the near future. Parking is a concern for the Town Hall, Police Department, fire station, and library. Town facilities continue to undergo gradual improvements, with no major expenditures anticipated other than renovation of the former train depot (recently conveyed to the town by the VFW, the Veterans of Foreign Wars) as a community building.

The town could, however, expect to have a large proportion of its population in need of services for seniors. Reference to the *Population and Housing Analysis* illustrates that the largest age category as of 2010 was the 40-60 year-olds.

It is expected that the voters of Bennington will continue to support the varied local and regional educational, historic, and cultural activities.

▪ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The existing land use analysis demonstrates that Bennington has a limited amount of commercial and industrial development. Bennington is predominantly a rural, residential, somewhat agricultural community. Most of its working residents commute out of town. A large proportion of the people that work in Bennington are employed by Monadnock Paper Mills, Inc. A trend projected to increase with the spread of high-speed telecommunications availability and internet commerce is home-based employment. In 2013, 68 Bennington residents worked at home. In addition, all reasonable efforts to support existing businesses and attract new business are encouraged.

▪ TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

Bennington's road network is long established; virtually every road in use in town today has been in existence for the better part of a century or longer. Analysis of the transportation system, both in and around Bennington, does not identify any particular problems that require either dramatic changes in the way roads are improved and maintained in town, or the construction of any new roads. The second half of the downtown transportation enhancement project (sidewalks, roadway, speed table, etc.) was started in March, 2016. This also includes reworking of the road intersection of Antrim Road, Eaton Avenue, and Bible Hill Road.

As mentioned previously, Bennington does have one road (U.S. 202) that is classified as a Major Collector, which is designed to move medium traffic volumes at low speeds between or within communities, so the town may experience an increase in through traffic, especially truck traffic, which can be heavy at times.

Development in remote or inaccessible areas of town should be monitored and discouraged, where appropriate. State law prohibits building on Class VI roads, unless specific conditions are met and the Select Board agrees. Further, the Planning Board should closely scrutinize all development proposals to determine their possible impact on the roads in the area, and the ability of the town adequately to maintain them.

The Southwest Regional Planning Commission conducted a survey and analysis of all culverts under the roads in Bennington. One culvert in particular, located on Old Greenfield Road, has partially collapsed and is in need of repair.

▪ **HOUSING**

There are two primary functions of the *Housing Analysis*: (1) respond to the statutory requirement that local master plans address current and future housing needs of residents at all income levels; and (2) guide the location of development, while at the same time minimize impacts of the development not only on the character and environment of the town, but also on town services and facilities. In addressing the first function, that of the statutory requirement, reference here is made to two documents: the Regional Housing Needs Assessment, and the Bennington Zoning Ordinance.

Municipalities in New Hampshire are prohibited from using planning and zoning powers to discourage or disallow housing that is affordable to people of low and moderate income (RSA 672:1). The Workforce Housing Law (RSA 743: 58-61) requires municipalities to provide reasonable and realistic opportunities for development of homes that are affordable to low- to moderate-income families. Workforce housing is defined as housing for which costs are less than 30% of the income of households of four people with 100% of the local median income for owner-occupied homes and less than 30% of the income of households of three people in which household income is 60% of the local median. The charts on pages 16 and 17 of this document indicate that the criterion for owner-occupied homes is easily met in Bennington but the affordable rent would be \$881 per month, which falls short of the median rent of \$972 per month (2013 figures). Implementation of SB146, which mandates easing of restrictions on accessory dwelling units attached to single-family residences, can provide increased low- to middle-income housing.

Examination of the Bennington Zoning Ordinance reveals the following provisions relative to housing opportunity:

- ◆ Single family homes are permitted by right in all districts except the Industrial District.
- ◆ Duplex dwellings are permitted in all districts except the Industrial District.
- ◆ Multi-family housing is permitted in the Village District.
- ◆ Manufactured housing is permitted in the Rural/Agricultural and Commercial/Recreational Districts.

- ◆ Guest cottages in association with primary dwellings may be permitted in the Rural/Agricultural District subject to certain conditions.
- ◆ Accessory Dwelling Units are permitted in all districts where single-family housing is permitted.
- ◆ Backlot development is permitted in the Rural/Agricultural District subject to certain conditions.
- ◆ Cluster development is a development option.

A review of the zoning ordinance shows that there are provisions for the development of a variety of housing types to meet a range of income levels and needs. The establishment of provisions for accessory apartments increasingly provides a means for the elderly to stay in their homes, either by renting the accessory apartment for income or for services in kind, or by moving into the apartment and renting the larger house. Accessory dwelling units may also offer opportunities for low- to moderate-income housing and workforce housing.

Municipalities use various methods to guide residential development, from complete prohibition in designated areas to the administration of performance standards for construction. In Bennington, as in most New Hampshire towns, the customary approach has been to allow residential development in most areas of town, subject to certain conditions or the meeting of certain standards. For example: no construction is allowed in a wetland; driveways, septic systems and building sites must conform to set standards; and development around shorelands must conform to state regulations.

Attempting to limit the location of development based on information such as that on the *Development Constraints* Map is impractical, due to the scale and general margins of error in mapping of this type. Rather, maps such as these can indicate where (or where not) one might expect problems, and guide institution of appropriate regulations. This allows each site to be developed based upon its particular characteristics, as determined by on-site examination.

■ CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION

The Visioning Exercise and Community Survey that were conducted for this Plan show that conservation and open spaces are very important to the residents of Bennington. Preserving critical open space areas is vital to maintaining not only the environmental health of Bennington, but also the natural identity and recreational opportunities that are so closely connected to the town. This Plan recommends continued support of the efforts of the Conservation Commission to preserve and protect significant and sensitive lands and water bodies in Bennington.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

▪ INTRODUCTION

The Future Land Use Plan set forth in this document and its accompanying maps envisions a comprehensive program for the Town of Bennington to direct the development of the town in an orderly and thoughtful manner. Unless the proposed goals, policies, and objectives are adopted and implemented, the Plan will probably not accomplish its purpose.

Bennington's municipal affairs are managed by a three-member Board of Selectmen, aided by a Town Administrator. The Town Meeting is the legislative body of the town, and the Selectmen represent the executive, or administrative, arm of that body. In addition to the Selectmen, other local boards participate in municipal government, e.g., the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment, Conservation Commission, and other appointed or elected entities. This form of government relies heavily on part-time officials serving in a wide range of capacities. Some of these functions relate directly to the goals, policies, and objectives of this Master Plan, others less so.

The Future Land Use Plan contains three levels of planning components:

1. Broad, general *goals* to be followed for the town's future development.
2. *Policies* related to the Basic Studies in:
 - Land Use
 - Community Facilities
 - Economic Development
 - Transportation
 - Housing
 - Natural Features (Conservation and Preservation)
3. Specific *objectives* for action that will help the town achieve the goals and policies.

Implementation of the goals, policies, and objectives can be accomplished in a number of ways; some items would require no more than official endorsement by the Selectmen. Others, however, would require amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and/or the Subdivision and Site Plan Review Regulations in order to be realized.

▪ PURPOSE

The purpose of this Plan is to make and document recommendations for the desirable development of the community, including:

- ◆ Streets and transportation facilities.
- ◆ Location of public buildings, properties, and utilities.
- ◆ A zoning plan for control of the uses and siting of private, commercial, and public structures, and of population density.
- ◆ Steps necessary to preserve valued features, clean water, and a safe environment.

The Plan provides guidance for the accomplishment of coordinated and harmonious development in order to promote:

- ◆ Health, safety, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare.
- ◆ Efficiency and economy in the process of development.
- ◆ Good civic design.
- ◆ Wise and efficient expenditure of public funds.

Today, southern New Hampshire is experiencing slow growth. Predictions are that Bennington's population will increase by approximately seven percent over the next twenty years. This would appear to be a very manageable growth rate. Only by a comprehensive planning effort can all of these factors be taken into account to preserve Bennington as the town its citizens want it to be.

The collection of maps and reports accompanying this plan represents a database from which to visualize long-range growth in Bennington. By understanding past trends and future potentials, solutions to the problems of growth become clearer.

This Plan is intended to serve as a guide for the community as a whole to use in shaping its future over a period of years to come. It is therefore sufficiently general to permit wide interpretation without damage to its basic intent, sufficiently flexible to allow modification as conditions change, and reasonable enough to encourage good, enforceable legislation with due respect to the rights of all.

The Master Plan is not a town regulation, and has no power in law. However, if well-framed and practicable, it should suggest regulations or ordinances which may serve to carry out its prime purposes. It does not embody solutions to all municipal problems; rather it is a guide to aid town officials in attacking these problems. Unless it is understood and used, and unless it is consulted often and amended when necessary, it will be of little value to the town's future generations.

■ GENERAL POLICIES

1. Protect the health, safety, security, and welfare of all inhabitants of Bennington.
2. Accommodate growth and development in such a manner as to preserve and enhance the rural character, charm, and visual appeal of Bennington.
3. Assure that development occurs in an orderly, progressive manner, considered in relation to its impact on the services and economy of the town.
4. Assure that the town's government is conducted in an efficient and economical manner, and in the best interest of its residents.
5. Encourage the greatest possible public awareness of, and citizen participation in, town affairs.
6. Encourage cooperation and coordination of planning efforts with surrounding communities.

▪ **LAND USE ACTIVITIES**

GOAL: *Promote land use activities that accommodate the needs of the residents of Bennington while at the same time protect and preserve the natural, cultural, scenic, and historic resources of the town.*

POLICIES:

1. Ensure that Bennington has a diverse mix of residential, recreational, agricultural, commercial and light industrial uses consistent with the goals, policies and objectives of this Master Plan.
2. Ensure that the downtown area allows for a mix of residential and commercial uses at the building, site, and neighborhood levels.
3. Ensure that development occurs at a rate consistent with the capability of the land to support it and the town's ability to provide services.
4. Balance new development with protection of Bennington's sensitive and significant natural, cultural, and historic resources.
5. Ensure that telecommunications facilities have the least possible visual and environmental impact, while providing adequate opportunity for these facilities.
6. Ensure the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for storm water runoff.
7. Encourage the use of shared driveways and interconnecting driveways between developments where feasible.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Assess each subdivision and site plan proposal regarding the scale and location of the proposed development in order to evaluate impacts on the town. (PLANNING BOARD)
2. Review the Zoning Ordinance on an annual basis, in conjunction with the other town boards, to ensure that it reflects goals and objectives of the Master Plan and meets the needs of current local conditions. (PLANNING BOARD, SELECTMEN)
3. Review and amend the Zoning Ordinance as necessary to ensure that "sprawl development" is minimized and mitigated. (PLANNING BOARD)
4. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to permit a mixture of residential and commercial uses on a single lot within the Village and Commercial/Recreation Districts. (PLANNING BOARD)
5. Enable the use of shared driveways and interconnecting driveways between developments. (PLANNING BOARD)

▪ **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

GOAL: *Ensure that all residents of the Town of Bennington have access to effective local services and facilities, and that the administration of local government is responsive to the needs of the residents.*

POLICIES:

1. Coordinate the operations and expenditures of town governance through routine communication among department heads, in order to provide services in a cost-effective manner.
2. Support the buying or sharing of equipment, materials, and services with other towns, as feasible.
3. Anticipate the demands that new growth will place on town services and facilities, and plan accordingly.
4. Locate community facilities in the downtown area, design such facilities to reflect traditional character, and encourage the re-use of existing structures/lots rather than developing additional sites for public uses.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Conduct an annual review of municipal operations. (SELECTMEN, DEPARTMENT HEADS)
2. Ensure adequate staffing and support for municipal government regarding maintenance of infrastructure and facilities, including training and establishment of “best practice” procedures. (SELECTMEN)
3. Develop and implement annual and long-range plans for all departments of municipal government regarding the administration and duties of each department. (SELECTMEN, DEPARTMENT HEADS)
4. Routinely analyze the need and opportunities for the future addition and/or expansion of municipal services and facilities with public input. (SELECTMEN, PLANNING BOARD, DEPARTMENT HEADS, PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS)
5. Establish and maintain a municipal Capital Improvement Program with a minimum planning horizon of six years. (PLANNING BOARD)

▪ **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

GOAL: *Promote economic development in Bennington as a way to protect and enhance the town's quality of life in a manner consistent with the Master Plan and Bennington's history.*

POLICIES:

1. Create and maintain a balanced tax base by increasing the overall commercial and industrial base to reduce the tax burden borne by individual property owners.
2. Enhance the appearance and economic vitality of the village center by upgrading its public infrastructure and encouraging fuller utilization of more Main Street properties.
3. Promote a wide range and number of local employment opportunities.
4. Increase educational opportunities for Bennington residents to promote a more educated work force.
5. Encourage home occupations and home-based businesses.
6. Encourage agricultural and forestry businesses.
7. Ensure that adequate public and private infrastructure is in place to support economic development in Bennington.
8. Ensure the housing stock and residential development opportunities in Bennington support Bennington's economic development goals.
9. Recognize the essential role that telecommunications plays in today's economy.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Continually monitor the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that it reflects the changing nature of home occupations and businesses. (PLANNING BOARD, SELECTMEN)
2. Evaluate parcels town-wide to identify sites suitable for future industrial and/or commercial development. Consider any rezoning, as necessary. (CONSERVATION COMMISSION, PLANNING BOARD)
3. Review zoning and other land use regulations of neighboring towns to assure that Bennington's industrial/commercial zones can accommodate the same businesses as the towns Bennington competes with for new businesses and industries. (PLANNING BOARD)
4. Develop partnerships between regional educational institutions and local businesses to develop training and re-training programs to build appropriate skills for employment in the local economy. (SELECTMEN)
5. Take under consideration improvements of municipal facilities, infrastructure, services, or other publicly funded activity as may be recommended by various town departments in the development of the town's Capital Improvement Program. (PLANNING BOARD)

▪ **TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION**

GOAL: *Ensure that the transportation system in and through the Town of Bennington functions as efficiently as possible.*

POLICIES:

1. Develop a transportation system/network that accommodates walking and cycling.
2. Coordinate management of the transportation system within the town of Bennington with regional travel and development trends.
3. Discourage development on Class VI roads.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Provide for pedestrian walkways wherever warranted by traffic and development. (PLANNING BOARD, SELECTMEN)
2. Create a pedestrian-friendly village center, through the development of pedestrian and bicycle facilities and the management of motorized-traffic behavior. (PLANNING BOARD, SELECTMEN)
3. Ensure, through site plan review, that adequate off-street parking is provided for in all future developments and that future parking for downtown properties is designed in coordination with existing parking. (PLANNING BOARD)
4. Use the State of New Hampshire's Transportation Enhancement Program (through the auspices of the Southwest Region Planning Commission) to fund future downtown improvements. (SELECTMEN, PLANNING BOARD)
5. Ensure long-range planning for the maintenance of all town roads and bridges. (SELECTMEN, ROAD AGENT, CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM COMMITTEE)
6. Evaluate the road standards in the subdivision regulations to ensure the development of safe roads without creating urban or suburban community character. (PLANNING BOARD, ROAD AGENT)
7. Review standards of design and operating procedures for the maintenance, improvement and construction of municipal roads to protect the rural character of Bennington while providing a safe and efficient road network, including protection of roadside trees, preventing destruction of stone walls, and minimizing roadway width and changes in the radius of vertical and horizontal curves. (SELECTMEN, ROAD AGENT, CONSERVATION COMMISSION)
8. Support the continued participation by the town in the transportation improvement program planning process carried out by the Southwest Region Planning Commission and the State of New Hampshire. (SELECTMEN, ROAD AGENT)

▪ **HOUSING**

GOAL: *Ensure that adequate, safe, and sanitary housing for all existing and future residents is achievable in Bennington.*

POLICIES:

1. Implement and administer the land use regulations so that there are no regulatory barriers to the provision of a range of housing types in a variety of price categories.
2. Support the preservation and maintenance of existing and future housing.
3. Encourage the private sector to remove or rehabilitate all substandard housing.
4. Support the development of adequate elderly housing.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Periodically conduct a housing inventory within Bennington, including characteristics such as the number of single and multi-family houses; the age and condition of houses; trends in the area real estate market; and rental versus ownership rates. (SELECTMEN, PLANNING BOARD)
2. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow congregate housing for the elderly as a permitted use in all residential areas of town. (PLANNING BOARD)

■ **CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION**

GOAL #1: *Balance new development with protection of the town's sensitive and significant natural, cultural, and historic resources.*

POLICIES:

1. Preserve and protect agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive lands to enhance the open space characteristics of the town.
2. Promote good stewardship of forested private land through public education regarding the benefits to the owners and the community of forest management and of professional and technical resources available to land owners for forest management.
3. Support the development of long-range plans for the various large tracts of forestland, in preparation for any potential change in ownership.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop and maintain a Natural Resource Inventory. (CONSERVATION COMMISSION)
2. Promote the connection of the publicly owned trail system to the regional trail network. (PLANNING BOARD, CONSERVATION COMMISSION)
3. Develop and maintain an Open Space Plan for the town. (CONSERVATION COMMISSION)

GOAL #2: *Protect presently used aquifers and other potential water sources from pollution and overuse to assure a continuing source of high quality municipal water.*

POLICIES:

1. Limit the population density and the allowable amount of impermeable surfaces (pavement and buildings) in aquifer recharge areas.
2. Monitor existing possible pollution sources such as liquid petroleum tanks, landfills, and potential industrial wastes to prevent or limit pollution at the source.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Establish a program of water-quality monitoring for Whittemore Lake and Powder Mill Pond. (BOARD OF SELECTMEN, CONSERVATION COMMISSION)
2. Form a committee to study alternative well sites for future municipal water supply. (BOARD OF SELECTMEN, CONSERVATION COMMISSION, PLANNING BOARD)
3. Consider alternate municipal well sites and protect them as possible future sources in case of problems at the current well site. (SELECT BOARD, WATER COMMISSION, CONSERVATION COMMISSION)

GOAL #3: *Strive to improve the aesthetic quality and visual impact of the man-made environment as well as preserve and enhance the attractive visual features of the natural environment.*

POLICIES:

1. Protect the scenic elements of the town's natural environment such as steep slopes, hilltops, waterbodies, streams, rivers, and viewsheds.
2. Encourage the use of aesthetically pleasing landscaping practices to enhance the visual quality of the man-made environment. In appropriate cases, the Planning Board may request landscaping plans to be submitted as part of development applications.
3. Encourage the underground placement of utilities when and where practical; and when underground placement is not practical, utilize design and landscaping techniques to blend such facilities with the natural environment to minimize their obtrusiveness.
4. Encourage aesthetics and attractive designs of signs in terms of number, type, size and location, as well as appropriate lighting and noise control standards.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Consider the adoption of a Steep Slopes Ordinance. (PLANNING BOARD, CONSERVATION COMMISSION)
2. Consider the adoption of a Scenic View Protection Ordinance. (PLANNING BOARD, CONSERVATION COMMISSION)
3. Amend the Bennington Subdivision and Site Plan Review Regulations to require the underground placement of utilities where practical — and when underground placement is

not practical, utilize design and landscaping techniques to blend such facilities with the natural environment to minimize their obtrusiveness. (PLANNING BOARD)

4. Consider adopting engineering construction specifications for parking lots that allow for porous pavements where appropriate. (PLANNING BOARD, CONSERVATION COMMISSION)
5. Conduct a critical review of the town's existing sign, lighting, and noise standards. (PLANNING BOARD, SELECTMEN)

CERTIFICATION BY PLANNING BOARD

The Bennington Planning Board hereby certifies that the preceding document, adopted on July 18, 2016, is the true Master Plan of the Town of Bennington, New Hampshire, and was prepared and adopted in accordance with the provisions of RSAs 674:2-4, 675:6, and 675:7.

David McKenzie, Chairman

David L. McKenzie

Christopher Maple, Vice-Chairman

Christopher M. Maple

Sam Cohen, Member

UNDER PROTEST AGAINST GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF PRIVATE PROPERTY. - Sam Cohen

Donald Trow, Member

Donald A. Trow

Jeffrey Rose, *Ex-officio*

Jeffrey D. Rose

Certified on July 18, 2016