

# ***TOWN OF READSBORO VERMONT***

## ***TOWN PLAN***

*Approved by Planning Commission - July 11, 2023  
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# **Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Purpose of the Town Plan**

The purpose of this Plan is to chart a course, which will benefit the people of the Town of Readsboro and its future generations by avoiding actions which cannot later be adequately corrected and by encouraging actions that are in the best interest of the Town.

The Plan for the Town of Readsboro is intended to provide planning policies to assure that decisions made at the local, regional and state levels are in harmony with the objectives and policies of the Town. This Plan reflects the wishes of the residents as well as the physical capabilities of the land. No Plan can continue to work without change. The planning process must be continuous in order to guide the Town's development and utilization of its resources.

The Town Plan should be used in a variety of ways. The Plan should be a basis for community programs and decision-making. It should influence Readsboro's capital expenditures, community development efforts, and natural resource protection initiatives. As required by law, the Plan serves as the foundation for local land use regulations such as zoning, subdivision, and health regulations. In addition to serving as a good source of information about the Town, the Plan should be looked at as a source of topics for further research.

The Town Plan serves as a regulatory document in Act 250 proceedings and other state proceedings such as Section 248. Act 250 requires that development projects are in conformance with the Town Plan. Therefore, although the Plan's recommendations may be for the long term, they may be used in a decision-making process at any time. In addition to Act 250, the Town Plan is used in the Section 248 process. This is the review process by which the Public Service Board determines if a public utility project is in the public good. The Section 248 process was established via 30 V.S.A. § 248 and incorporates most of the review Act 250 criteria.

## **1.2 Statutory Authority and Requirements**

The Readsboro Town Plan has been prepared under Subchapter 5 of Vermont Planning and Development Act (Chapter 117 of Title 24 V.S.A.) as amended. This section of law specifies not only what a Plan may or must contain, it also specifies how a Plan must be adopted. The Readsboro Town Plan was prepared in conformance with all of the requirements in the Vermont Statutes.

This Town Plan becomes effective upon adoption by the Selectboard after required public hearings held first by the Planning Commission and then by the Selectboard. It replaces the Town Plan that was adopted in 2015. As required by law, copies of the Plan have been sent to neighboring towns, the Windham Regional Commission, and the Agency of Development and Community Affairs for review and comment.

Under Vermont law, a Town Plan expires eight years from the date of adoption. The Town Plan's evaluation is an ongoing process. The Plan can be amended as needed by the Planning Commission in accordance with 24 V.S.A. 4384. Upon expiration of the Town Plan, the Town may readopt the Town Plan or replace the expired Town Plan with a new Town Plan. Prior to any readopting, the Planning Commission shall review and update information on which the Plan is based, and shall consider this information in evaluating the continuing applicability of the Plan [24 V.S.A. 4387].

### 1.3 Preparation of the Town Plan

The Planning Commission began work on this update to the 2015 Town Plan in 2021. The Readsboro Planning Commission has provided the principal direction for the update of the Town Plan. Input and background information from various community members and municipal officials has been received during the process. Professional assistance for preparing the 2015 Town Plan was provided by the Windham Regional Commission with funding in 2015 from a State Municipal Planning Grant. A series of new maps was also developed as part of the Plan update.

### 1.4 Structure of the Town Plan

The Town Plan consists of descriptive material concerning natural resources, current land use, public facilities, the economy, transportation, housing and governmental services. *Goals* are statements of the end results or conditions desired by Readsboro. They are also expressions of the community's environmental, cultural, and social values. Each chapter also contains *Policies* which help define the direction the Town will take any *Action Steps* which provide the Town a method of implementing the specific policies.

Throughout the text of this Town Plan many of the policy statements and action steps include imperative verbs. "Should" or "may" means that a requirement is encouraged but not mandated, whereas "must" or "shall" means that the Town has strong intentions of ensuring a requirement is accomplished. "Policy" is defined herein as a guideline for achieving short-term and long-term goals.

### 1.5 Making Plan Policies Effective

Effective implementation of the Plan requires careful consideration and action by the townspeople, the Selectboard and Planning Commission, the Development Review Board and other local organizations. Among the many available methods which should be considered are the following:

- a. Zoning Regulations. Zoning bylaws are the most common method of implementing and enforcing the policies and programs set forth in a town plan. Zoning determines the type and density of development allowed, directly influencing future land use patterns. The Town Plan provides direction for zoning changes and the Readsboro Planning Commission will follow-up on these recommendations through a thorough revision of Readsboro's zoning regulations.
- b. Act 250 and Section 248 Reviews. The Town is automatically a party to Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings involving development in the community. Participation in the Act 250 development review process and Section 248 process provide a significant opportunity to shape large-scale development projects. Act 250 helps ensure that development does not have an undue, adverse impact on important environmental resources and community facilities, and is in conformance with local and regional plans. Section 248 is the statutory review process by which the Public Service Board reaches a policy determination as to whether a given utility project will promote the general good of the State of Vermont, including providing an economic benefit to the State and its residents. If a project is found to satisfy the criteria pursuant to the sections in the statute, then a certificate of public good is issued.
- c. Village Designation. The State of Vermont passed the Second Downtown Development Act in 2002 to create the Village Center Designation. Those village centers that apply for and receive this designation become eligible for benefits including tax credits and priority consideration from other state programs and agencies. Readsboro applied for and received Village Center Designation in 2006 and last renewed

its application in 2016. A new application will need to be filed in 2024. It would then need to meet any new criteria established by the State of Vermont to retain its Village Center status.

- d. Funding and Grants. Obtaining grants is an important way to fund planning and implementation projects. The Town should actively seek grants as a means for implementing the Town Plan. State funding opportunities include, but are not limited to, Municipal Planning Grants, Community Development Block Grants, VTrans Transportation Enhancement Grants, and Vermont Recreational Trails Grants. In addition, there are several private foundations and federal government entities that finance projects.
- e. Taxation. Vermont's Use Value Appraisal Program enables landowners who choose agriculture or forestry as long-term uses of their property to have that land taxed accordingly. The Program encourages the maintenance of undeveloped land of 25 acres or more for farming, forestry, and public recreation.
- f. Voluntary Action. The following methods would ensure Plan implementation:
  - 1. Privately-agreed restrictive covenants binding on purchasers of land;
  - 2. Special attention and consideration given by private landowners to the objectives of the Plan and its policies when they decide to build or subdivide;
  - 3. Formation of non-profit conservation land trusts to acquire lands that have productive agriculture and forestry use;
  - 4. Participation in the Act 250 review process by abutting landowners; and
  - 5. Participation in the town planning process and in organizations concerned with the future of Readsboro.
- g. Planning Commission Work Program. Many of the Town Plan Policies and Priorities for Action can be accomplished through the activities of the Readsboro Planning Commission. The Plan can and should be used to form the framework of the Planning Commission's Work Program during the duration of the Plan.

## 2.1 Community Background

Readsboro is a small rural town of approximately 702 residents (2020 U.S. Census) located in central southern Vermont on the Green Mountain plateau. The Town is relatively isolated by rough terrain from the closest large Vermont towns of Brattleboro and Bennington.

## 2.2 History

Readsboro was originally established and organized in 1769 by John Reade on behalf of himself and 29 associates. The grant contained 20,480 acres in the southeast part of Bennington County, "about 30 miles eastward of the Hudson River to be continued and remain and by the name of Readsborough forever hereafter to be called and known." In 1780, Joseph Hartwell from Massachusetts and a group from Connecticut came to settle in what is now Heartwellville. The first town meeting was held in 1786 and at the time, the taxpayers numbered 36. Due to a fire at the Elisha Bailey store in 1793, early Town records were destroyed and the oldest Town records now date to 1794.

The first gristmill was built by John Walker in 1787, on the site of the former Vermont Hardwoods. The first meetinghouse and schoolhouse were erected in the Village near the present Historical Society building. The oldest cemetery is on North Hill. In 1812, the first militia, with its own band, was organized and led by Capt. Henry Holbrook, a resident and businessman of South Readsboro. The First Baptist Church was also organized that same year. The first factory, a woolen mill, was built in 1832 on the site of Walker's gristmill but burned just 10 years later. The site then became a tannery in 1849. A gristmill was constructed by Ambrose Stone in 1838 on what today is known as Grist Mill Hill. In 1854 Joshua Howe built a sawmill on the pond which now bears his name, and which later became the Village water supply source. The Wesleyan Methodist Church was organized in 1840. In 1911, its members disbanded and transferred the building to the Town for use as a Town Hall. A lock-up was put in the rear of the building in 1914 to serve as a local holding cell for the Town's constable. Town Offices were transferred to the new school building in 1962 and the former building has been the home of the Historical Society since 1972. The Union Church in South Readsboro was erected in 1844; the Union Church in Heartwellville in 1876; the Baptist Church in the Village in 1890; and the St. Joachim's Catholic Church in 1892. The Town of Readsboro was incorporated in 1886, and the Village of Readsboro was incorporated in 1892.

Heartwellville was a prospering community through the years with its own post office and school. There was a boarding house, three hotels, and several lumber mills and houses lined the main highway to Stamford, VT and North Adams, MA. The lumber mills are now gone, two of the hotels burned down, the schoolhouse was moved, and the post office moved to the Village of Readsboro. The one remaining hotel, the Old Coach Inn, built in 1783, is a landmark today located at the intersection of Routes 8 and 100. This hotel catered to tourists and skiers who frequented the Dutch Hill Ski Area and had the added attraction of providing its guests with the only 18-hole golf course in the area. When Dutch Hill Ski Area closed in the mid 1980's the Old Coach Inn soon became a private residence for the owners.

The mountainous steep terrain and the Deerfield River provided the backdrop for Readsboro's history. During its first century, Readsboro was a small agricultural and lumber town. Readsboro became a mill town in the late 1800's through the efforts of the Newton Brothers from Gardner, Massachusetts, who built mills and the Hoosac Tunnel and Wilmington Railroad, ending the isolation of the Town's residents. It was during this time that Tyroleans from the border towns of Austria and Italy moved into the area. These and other immigrants who came to work on the Newton Brothers' projects found the hills and valleys of Readsboro much like their native homelands and settled in the Town to work and raise their families. During this construction period the Town's population soared to approximately 1,200 and by the late 1800's settled toward 900.

The Hoosac Tunnel and Wilmington Railroad, also known as the Hoot, Toot, and Whistle, was built in 1884 by the Newton Brothers. This railroad connected Readsboro to other cities and towns and provided shipping to the industries along its route from Wilmington through Readsboro, through the Hoosac Tunnel and into North Adams, MA.

In 1880, the 57-foot-high Newton Dam, probably the highest in the U.S. at the time, was constructed along with the Deerfield River Pulp and Paper Mill on the Deerfield River. Logs harvested in the surrounding hills were moved by the river and the canal to the Saw and Pulp Mill, the mill itself being powered by the river. The Pulp and Paper Mill was sold to the National Metal Edge Box Co. in 1889, manufacturing cigar and other cardboard boxes from wood pulp. The Box Company was leveled by fire in 1922 and never rebuilt. Remnants of the hand-laid stone foundation are still visible along the banks of the Deerfield. In the 1920's the Deerfield River was diverted by the building of the Harriman Dam, reducing the flow of the river to a mere trickle. The Readsboro Chair Co., a thriving business built in 1911 by Moses Newton on the banks of the West Branch of the Deerfield River, was the livelihood for many local and surrounding area residents. During its heyday, the Readsboro Chair Co.'s buildings stretched for two blocks. Over the years, the company manufactured folding chairs and tables, church and school furnishings, children's furniture and lawn and park furniture and, in its later years, pine and hardwoods household furniture until it closed in 1988, leaving the last remaining old, huge building vacant. The Town acquired the property by Quit Claim Deed in lieu of foreclosure several years later. In February 1995, with the help of a state grant, the old building was demolished, creating a site for future establishments. In 1996, the site was divided into three lots and two of these were put out for bid. The selectmen accepted bids from citizens and a grocery/general store, engine repair shop, office rental space and a beauty salon were then built.

The Dutch Hill Ski Area, one of the first in the East, was started by area residents in the early 1940's. In the mid-1960's large tracts of land were purchased by outside speculators joining the recreation industry boom in nearby Wilmington and Dover. Alpenwald Village, a 400-acre tract across from the Dutch Hill Ski Area, was designed to eventually accommodate 200 vacation chalets. Site limitations have prevented many of these lots from being developed and many of the "vacation" homes already built are now permanent residences. In the mid 1980's, due to several consecutive seasons with lack of snow, Dutch Hill Ski Area closed.

In 1986, the Town and Village merged governments to become the Town of Readsboro. The Town celebrated its Bicentennial that year with a three-day celebration. The Town of Readsboro still remains a classic New England village geographically divided into seven sections. The Village

features a school, inn, general store, post office, and other family-owned business, and community services such as water, electric, and sewer in the village section. The North, South, and West hill sections consist of rural highlands and mountains and one remaining farm. These, with the Readsboro Falls, Heartwellville, and Alpenwald Village sections provide a quiet, country atmosphere for its permanent residents and vacation/retirement community members.

### **2.3 Geography**

Readsboro is located in the southeastern corner of Bennington County on the Massachusetts state line. It is bordered by six towns: Searsburg, Woodford and Stamford in Bennington County; Whitingham and Wilmington in Windham County; and Monroe in Franklin County, Massachusetts. State Routes 100 and 8 are the main roads serving the community. Readsboro is located 35 miles from Brattleboro and I-91, 24 miles from Bennington and RT-279, 14 miles from Wilmington, and 17 miles from North Adams Massachusetts; making these cities and towns the most convenient and accessible places for the residents to work and shop. The Town is somewhat removed from the Route 100 ski corridor, being approximately 25 miles from the Mt. Snow/Haystack area.

The Green Mountains are the principal element of the physical geography of Readsboro. Much of the northern portion of the Town is part of the Green Mountain National Forest. Readsboro is located in the southeastern portion of the Green Mountain spine with the terrain consisting of many low mountains and hills. The Green Mountain National Forest owns approximately 36 percent of the land in Readsboro. The highest point in town is 3,119 feet above sea level.

The Deerfield River is also an important physical feature. Readsboro Village is located at the confluence of the West Branch of the Deerfield River and the Deerfield River. The South Branch flows through the southern part of town while Route 100 follows the West Branch. This portion of the river is a visible and important scenic part of the landscape.

### **2.4 Population**

Readsboro's population has fluctuated (see Figure 1). The population increased between 1940 and 1950 and then steadily declined between 1950 and 1980. This decline took place when the Windham Region as a whole was experiencing a 10.3% increase in population. Following this period of decline, the population increased to a total of 762 people in 1990. Between 1990 and 2000, Readsboro experienced a further 5.6% increase in population to 805. From 2000 to 2010, however, the population declined 5.2% to 763. From 2010 to 2020, the population declined 8% to 702.

**Figure 1: Readsboro Population** (Source: U.S. Census)

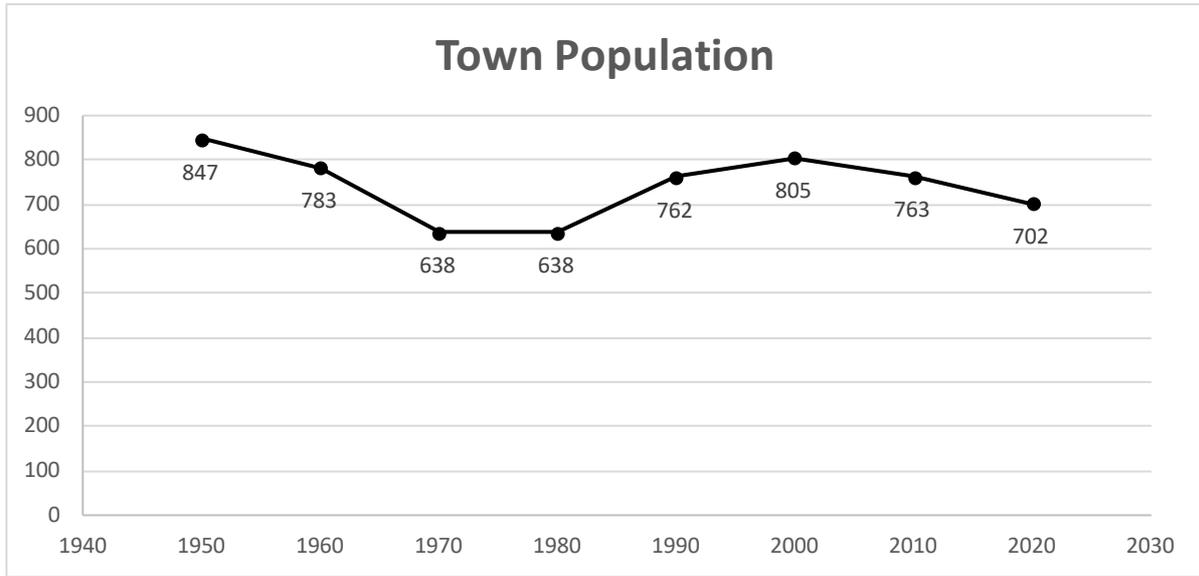


Table 1 shows Readsboro's growth as compared with data from nearby towns in Vermont and Massachusetts, Windham and Bennington Counties, and the State of Vermont over the last 20 years. When compared to four out of the five other Deerfield Valley towns (Whitingham, Dover, Searsburg, and Stamford), Readsboro is experiencing negative growth. (Wilmington, the fifth Deerfield valley town, first gained and then ultimately lost population over the same 20 years.) Readsboro's slow growth was a reversal from the decade between 1980 and 1990 when Readsboro was the second fastest growing town with a 19.4% increase in population.

**Table 1: Population Trends in Nearby Towns and Comparative Areas** (Source: U.S. Census)

Town/Area	2000	2010	2020	Increase 2000 - 2020	% Change 2000 - 2020
Readsboro	805	763	702	-103	-12.8%
Whitingham	1,298	1,357	1344	46	3.5%
Searsburg	96	109	126	30	31.3%
Wilmington	2,225	1,876	2255	30	1.3%
Dover	1,410	1,124	1798	388	27.5%
Stamford	813	824	861	48	5.9%
Rowe, MA	351	393	424	73	20.8%
Monroe, MA	93	121	118	25	26.9%
Windham Co., VT	44,216	43,857	45,905	1689	3.8%
Bennington Co., VT	36,994	36,659	37,347	353	1.0%
State of Vermont	608,827	626,562	643,077	34250	5.6%

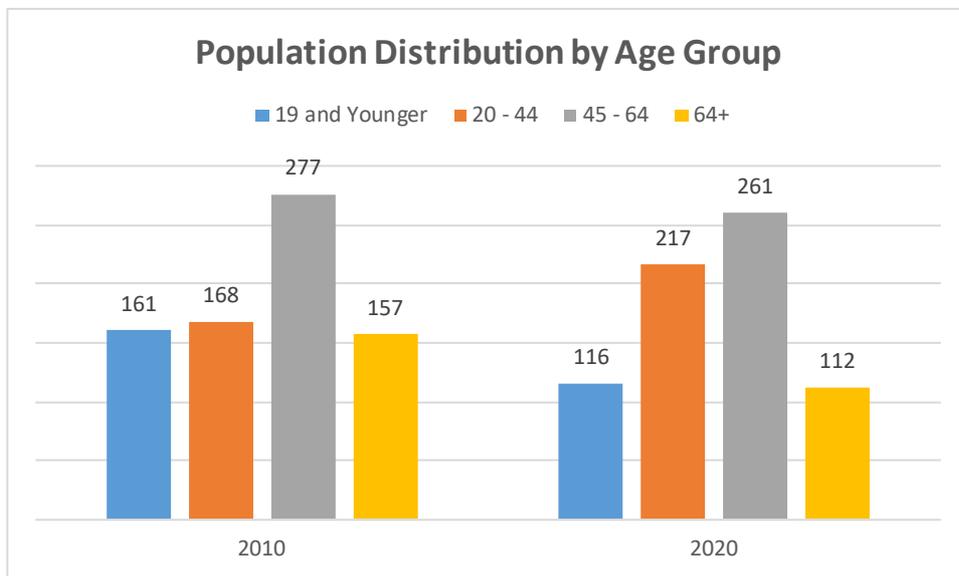
The composition of households in Readsboro has not changed significantly from 1990 to 2010. The average household size in 1990 was 2.47, in 2000 it was 2.44, and in 2010 it was 2.27. The 2017-2021 ACS estimates the average household size to be 2.35. There has not been significant

change to the population and social structure of Readsboro; data on the town's estimated 300 households (ACS) shows the following:

- An estimated 40.3% of households are comprised of people living alone.
- An estimated 0% of households are single-parent households.
- An estimated 14.3% of all households have "own" children under the age of 18.

Figure 2 shows changes in the age distribution for Readsboro over the past 10 years. The most striking observation is that there has been an increase in people aged 20-44 indicating that young families are moving to Readsboro. In 2021, the median age of the town was estimated to be 48, down one year from 2010. (ACS).

**Figure 2: Readsboro Population by Age Group (Source: U.S. Census)**



Developing population projections for small communities is difficult. Various population projection models differ in their estimates of whether the population will increase or decrease over the next 10 years. In either case, the change in population will likely be very small, if not decrease. Any increase in population will occur incrementally over time and is not predicted to result in a rapid change.

## 2.5 Housing

Table 2 shows the occupancy of Readsboro’s housing along with trends in the total number of housing units from 2000 to 2021. Of note, vacant housing has substantially increased and seasonal housing has also increased. Overall, there was a 7 percent increase in housing units in Readsboro between 2000 and 2020. From 2010 to 2020, the number of housing units in Readsboro is estimated to have increased from 496 to 499, equal to 1%, while total households were estimated to have decreased from 336 to 289, a 10% decrease.

**Table 2: Housing by Type of Unit (Source: 2020 American Community Survey)**

Unit Type	2000	2010	2020	% change 2010-2020	% change 2000-2020
owner occupied	229	274	241	-12%	5%
renter occupied	92	62	48	-23%	-48%
Seasonal	109	124	156	26%	43%
Vacant	36	36	54	50%	0%
total units	466	496	499	1%	7%
Avg household size	2.44	2.27	2.33	3%	-5%
Number of households	321	336	289	-14%	-10%

As shown in Table 3, about one-half of Readsboro’s housing stock was built prior to 1939. This is a reflection of Readsboro’s history as a thriving mill town. It was not until the 1980’s that home construction picked up again. Since then, home construction has slowed.

**Table 3: Age of Housing (Source:2010 U.S. Census)**

Year Built	Number of Houses	Percentage
Prior to 1939	209	45%
1940-1959	26	5.60%
1960-1969	11	2.40%
1970-1979	54	11.60%
1980-1989	126	27.20%
1990-2000	38	8.20%
2000-2010	30	6.40%

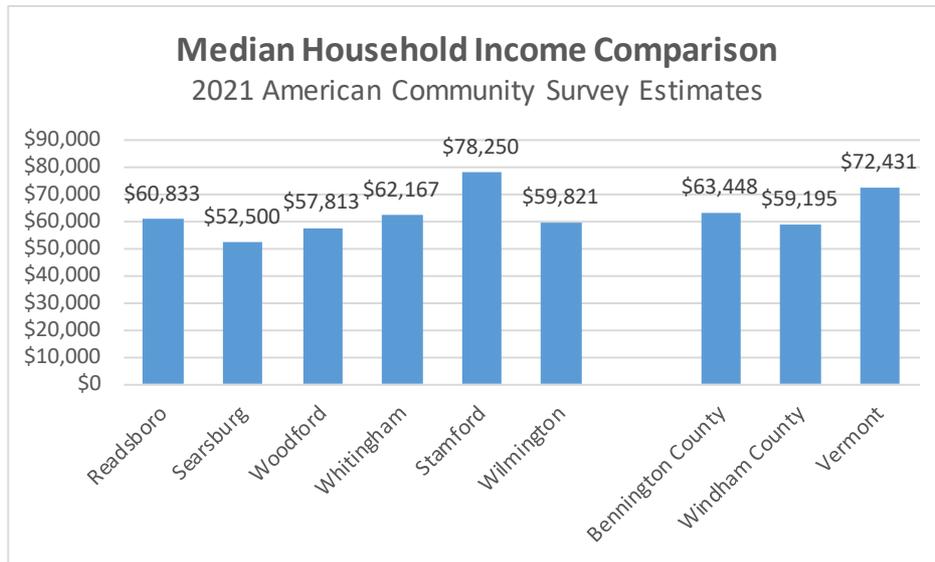
## 2.6 Income and Employment

According to the American Community Survey, the estimated median household income in 2021 is \$60,833, an increase of 47% since the 2008-2012 estimate.

American Community Survey data are 5-year estimates and do not reflect actual counts like population, age, or sex. These estimates are useful when analyzing trends in small populations but should be used cautiously when making direct comparisons; they are estimates over a period from 2008 to 2012 and have a relatively large margin of error. The American Community Survey is conducted year-round to gather "period" data, unlike the decennial census which is only conducted every ten years and collects "point-in-time" data.

See Figure 3, below, for a comparison of Readsboro's median household income with those of neighboring towns, Bennington and Windham Counties, and the state of Vermont.

**Figure 3: Income in the Last Twelve Months (in 2021 inflation-adjusted dollars) (Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey)**



Readsboro's economic base is restricted by the town's inaccessibility. The town is distant from major transportation links in Brattleboro and Bennington, and from VT Route 9, the major east/west corridor in the southern part of the State. As a result, economic growth in Readsboro does not mirror what has occurred in other parts of the region (large industrial or service firms locating along major transportation corridors or recreation industry locating near accessible ski mountains).

As of February 2023, the Vermont Department of Labor reported 343 Readsboro residents in the labor force, of which 17 were unemployed. The 2017 - 2021 ACS estimates that 412 Readsboro residents aged 16 and over were in the local regional work force, of which 13 were unemployed at the time of the Census. This compares to 319 in the 2000 Census. This compares to 319 in the 1990 Census.

In 2021, an estimated 32 people, 8% of Readsboro's workforce, reported being self-employed. The average commuting time in 2021 was estimated to be 32 minutes, indicating that many Readsboro residents ages 16 and over are traveling further to find employment. Nearby job centers include Brattleboro, Bennington, and the Wilmington area in Vermont and Pittsfield, Greenfield, North Adams, and Williamstown in Massachusetts.

**Table 4: Readsboro Covered Employment** (Source: VT Dept. of Labor, Economic and Labor Market Information)

Industry	Establishments
Construction	6
Manufacturing	0
Retail Trade	1
Truck Transportation	1
Real Estate	0
Professional and business services	7
Healthcare and social assistance	1
Accommodation and food services	1
Other services, except public administration	3
Federal Government	1
Local Government	1
Total	22

According to the Vermont Department of Employment and Training, in 2021 there were 22 reported businesses in Readsboro, employing 62 people, with an annual average wage of \$35,915. There has been a 39% decrease in the number of jobs in the community since 2010 when 102 jobs were reported. It is important to note that although these figures provide some insight into the number of jobs in Readsboro, this data refers only to employees and their wages in firms subject to unemployment laws.

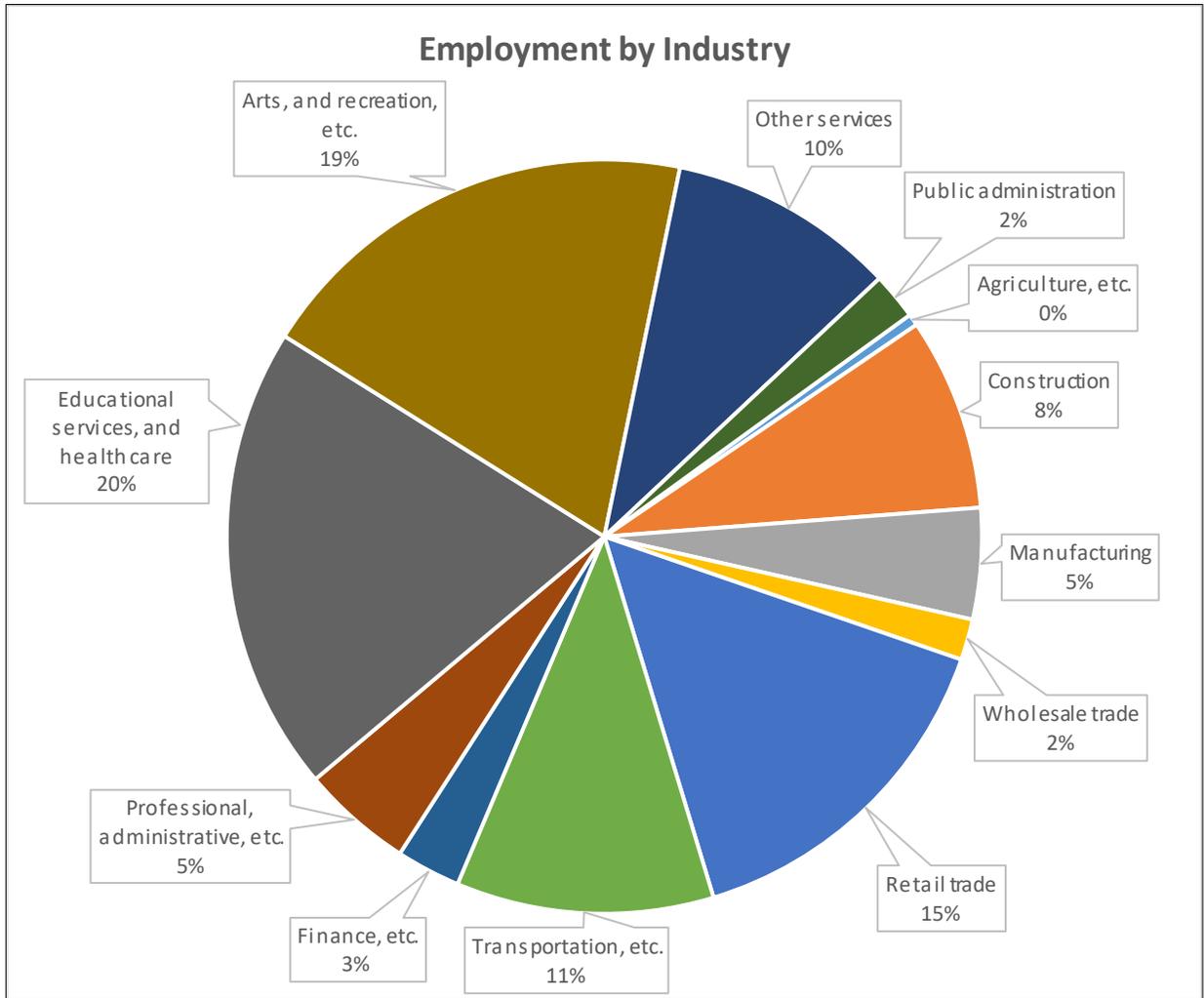
Workers not necessarily included are the self-employed, elected officials, employees of certain non-profit organizations, unpaid family members, some agricultural workers and railroad workers. Table 4 shows the Covered Employment for Readsboro in 2021. In 2021, there were 41 businesses reported in Whitingham and 25 in Stamford.

The Readsboro workforce diversified from 2010 to the 2017-2021 period, employment in the arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation and food services increased, along with jobs in education and healthcare services, transportation, and other services. Employment in construction, manufacturing, professional and scientific fields saw substantial decline. Figure 4 shows the current Readsboro workforce by industry.

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<sup>1</sup> Annual Average Wage is a figure computed from total wages and average employment (total annual wages/annual average employment). It is an average of aggregate data.

**Figure 4: Employment by Industry** (American Community Survey 2021 5-Year Estimates)



## **Chapter 3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Community facilities are either owned or maintained by the Town of Readsboro and include land, structures, and equipment. Community services are either provided directly by the Town or provided by others under contract with the Town. Readsboro has a well-developed infrastructure for a small town with municipal water, sewer, and electric service in the Village area. The development of these services is largely due to the historic, dense, mixed-use settlement pattern. This chapter includes an inventory of present status and an assessment of future needs in Readsboro.

### **3.1 Town Government Administration**

The Village of Readsboro and the Town of Readsboro merged in 1986 to form the present Town of Readsboro. An annual Town Meeting is held in early March. The governing body of the Town of Readsboro consists of a three-member Selectboard. They meet regularly to conduct the Town's official business throughout the year. Other elected and/or appointed offices with responsibilities are: Town Clerk/Treasurer, Delinquent Tax Collector, Fire Chief, School Directors (3), Certified Assessing Firm, Trustees of the Public Library (5), Community Library Directors (5), Cemetery Commissioners (5), Road Commissioner (at present the Selectboard), Town Agent, Justices of the Peace (5), Planning Commissioners up to (9), representatives to the Windham Regional Commission up to (2), Development Review Board up to (5), Emergency Response Director, Zoning Administrator, Sanitation Officer, Health Officer, and Fire Warden.

Local revenue is generated through property taxes, State funds, Federal revenues, permits and licenses, fees and charges for services, and other miscellaneous reimbursements. Expenditures are made in the following categories: general government, highway, appropriations, cemeteries, water, sewer, and education. Both the Town and School District develop annual budgets and have reserve accounts for future capital expenditures.

#### **Goal 1: To enhance the effectiveness of local government**

##### **Policies:**

- 1.1. The Town should not take over privately owned facilities unless it is in the interest of the public good and does not significantly burden the municipal budget.
- 1.2. The Town should take necessary actions to become and remain eligible for municipal, state, and federal grants, which may provide a means to supplement other sources of Town revenue and assist in the satisfaction of future needs identified under each of the following headings.
- 1.3. Strengthened local government with technical assistance from appropriate state and regional agencies.
- 1.4. The Town shall ensure an effective and efficient local government by making every effort to ensure that voluntary Town committee and service positions are filled.
- 1.5. The Town shall encourage citizen participation by making meetings and procedures (where appropriate) open and accessible to all.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 1.1. Encourage the Selectboard to hire a full time Town Manager/Administrator as voted for at the March 2009 Town Meeting (Selectboard by authority of the Readsboro Town Charter can hire and fire a Town Manager/Administrator without a vote of the people).
- 1.2. Begin dialogue with the Selectboard to encourage the implementation of a Capital Budget Program and Plan to help resolve current budget issues and long-term budget and project planning.
- 1.3. Design a “Welcome to Readsboro” informational packet that includes information on town offices, town services, and various civic organizations in town and is disseminated to new residents and businesses.
- 1.4. Develop techniques to promote volunteerism and recruit to fill vacancies on Town committees as appropriate.

**3.2 Town Facilities**

Publicly owned buildings and structures associated with the day-to-day operations of town government are the Town Office, Electric Barn, Town Storage Yard, Town Garage, Fire Station, Sewage Treatment Plant, Water Treatment Plant, and the Historical Society building. The school gymnasium is an important, constantly used facility of the Town. It provides the space for public meetings as well as the location for Town Meetings. In 2006, the Town was awarded a Municipal Planning Grant to undertake the *Readsboro Municipal Facilities Master Plan* which the town’s existing facilities, documented their condition, and studied options to improve workspace. This information in the document has been used to characterize the existing facilities.

**Town Office**

The Town Office is located in the Central School building. It has a separate entrance, but it uses the same driveway and parking as the school. The Town Office consists of one, approximately 350 square foot room, with two workspaces and a small conference table for Selectboard meetings. The Town Office provides an office for the Town Clerk/Treasurer and Utility Clerk. There is a 7’ x 10’ vault. In 2023, it was estimated to be at capacity; however, there are many documents that do not fit in the vault that are currently stored in the Lister’s Office, in storage at the Public Works Office, in filing cabinets in the hallway for the Town Office, or off-site with the person in charge of them. State statutes require that all deeds and land conveyances be recorded in the town clerk’s office.

Municipal facilities require space for public access/egress, storage of Town records, and meeting space. The Town Office is inadequate in meeting those needs. The lack of a central and secure storage space not only leads to inefficiency, but has been judged to be a factor in the loss of important municipal records.

*Review of Facility Needs*

There is no counter space or areas for the general public in the Town Office. When visitors enter the Town Office they are immediately in the work space of town staff. This poses a security risk. Town boards often have to use meeting space in the school building. This has the potential to cause conflict with school functions. The vault is overcrowded and nearly full, to the point where documents are held offsite in violation of Vermont statutes. This method of storage is a liability to the town.

### **Town Garage**

The existing Town Garage has is a 2,500 square foot building with three bays. It houses 9 pieces of equipment required by the town (plow trucks, grader, loaders, and the like). The metal roof is rapidly deteriorating and poses ice and water issues at the garage doors due to it configuration. There is no office space or facilities for staff.

#### *Review of Facility Needs*

The Town is aware of the need of a new Town Garage. Design plans have completed along with setting the location and obtaining ANR permits. The Town is currently assessing funding options.

#### *Review of Equipment Needs*

Equipment needs are reviewed annually for replacement, maintenance and general repairs.

### **Electric Barn**

The Electric Barn on Railroad Alley is currently vacant. Key beams have been removed to gain interior height. The building site allows no room for expansion. It is sited on a very narrow road within 12 feet of an adjacent building. To the south, the property drops off sharply to the salt shed.

#### *Review of Facility Needs*

The building is in need of repair and refurbishment. Currently, the building is vacant and no long-term use of the building has been determined.

### **Salt Shed**

Readsboro's salt storage shed is located on an alley behind the old Village Office building. The shed currently functions adequately, however it is not near the Town Garage. A new structure was installed in 2016 over the salt pile to mitigate runoff during precipitation events.

### **Village Office / Garage**

The Village Office building is located on the corner of Main Street and Railroad Avenue. The Public Works Department currently occupies the former Village Offices. The consolidation of town departments and offices into one building could free up the Electric Barn and the old Village Office building for other uses.

### **Readsboro Historical Society**

The Readsboro Historical Society is located on Main Street in a building that formerly housed the Wesleyan Methodist Church and then the Town Hall. The building is owned by the Town, but maintained by the Historical Society.

<p><b>Goal 2: To ensure that Town staff and users of these Town facilities are conducting their business in well maintained, safe, secure, and efficient buildings that meet their needs.</b></p>
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### **Policies:**

- 2.1. Provide as efficient, effective, and convenient governmental services as is possible keeping within the financial capabilities of the Town.
- 2.2. Maintain town facilities in such a manner to ensure long term use by staff and users of these facilities.
- 2.3. Maintain public records securely and efficiently, and in a manner that assures convenient access.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 2.1. Consolidate the assessment of space needs of various town departments.
- 2.2. Explore possible locations for expansion or relocation of Town Offices, especially in existing municipal-owned buildings, as shown to be advantageous by the assessment of space needs.
- 2.3. Analyze ways to generate potential revenue from municipal facilities.
- 2.4. Address ADA accessibility issues in all town offices to ensure that the town is serving all residents.
- 2.5. Develop and implement a maintenance plan for town owned property.
- 2.6. Assign one town crew member the responsibility to maintain and upkeep the ground around the village facilities.

### **3.3 Fire Department**

The Readsboro Fire Department is a volunteer organization with approximately 25 members plus auxiliary and junior members. It is funded by Town taxes and Fire Department fundraising efforts. The Fire Department serves the entire Town and responds to fires and emergency situations such as automobile accidents, search and rescue, and assists ambulance calls when necessary; the Department has a mutual aid relationship with surrounding towns. There is a 24-hour dispatch system tied directly to the 911 locatable address system.

The Readsboro Fire Station is located in the center of town, one block south of Main Street. It is a 2,900 square foot building that is essentially divided in half with one side dedicated to equipment and truck storage and the other for personnel space. The fire station has three 10' wide garage doors for truck storage, an exposed water heater, and firefighter's turn-out gear along one wall. On the other side there is a large meeting space, an office, kitchen, and two restrooms.

*Review of Facility Needs*

The existing fire station is inadequate in size to accommodate the existing and projected space needs of the facility, including the office space, equipment, accommodation for firefighters, and new fire trucks. Currently the utility truck is parked outside making it unusable during the winter months. The space between the truck mirrors and garage door frame is about 2 inches on each side. The exposed mechanical systems would violate current building codes. The location of the firefighter's turn-out gear causes a number of problems, one of which is slower response time due to crowding.

The existing lot size, setback requirements, and topography make it difficult to enlarge the building.

### *Review of Equipment Needs*

Through utilization of two FEMA AFG grants, all hose, nozzles and SCBA equipment have been undegraded since 2014. Meeting the goals of NFPA 10-year life expectancy for turnout gear is a constant struggle. Upgrading existing equipment like the apparatus is accomplished on a revolving replacement schedule setup by the Fire Dept and Selectboard. Currently one apparatus (Engine 3) is due for replacement. The needed design and cost dialogue has already begun.

### *Review of Staffing Needs*

Daytime coverage is an issue that the Fire Department struggles with as many of the volunteers may be out of town during the day for work. Future needs of the Department include upgrading existing equipment and accommodating future space needs by either adding on to the existing Fire Station or moving to another building.

**Goal 3: To ensure that Readsboro has a sufficient and effective fire protection.**

### **Policies:**

- 3.1. Provide timely and effective fire protection to all areas within the Town borders.
- 3.2. Support surrounding towns by providing Mutual Aid assistance when needed.
- 3.3. Provide facilities and effective equipment for fire protection within the financial capabilities of the Town.
- 3.4. All construction and development shall be designed to minimize the risks of fires and to maximize the Fire Department's ability to combat fires. Common fire protection features such as fire ponds, water storage facilities and/or dry or charged hydrants should be constructed as necessary.
- 3.5. All development shall comply with all applicable State and Federal fire regulations.

### **Priorities for Action:**

- 3.1. Develop a plan for recruiting and training new members.
- 3.2. Develop a plan for working with residents to inform them of fire prevention and safety.
- 3.3. Forward all Certificate of Compliance Permits and Change of Use Permits that are issued by the Zoning Administrator to the Fire Department.

## **3.4 Emergency Management Planning**

Readsboro encourages emergency planning and disaster preparedness. Planning and preparedness may help to reduce risk to life and health, the damage to public and private property and the environmental damage that often occurs as a result of a disaster. Also, this encourages the Town to prepare calmly and realistically for likely emergencies; to know the location of resources and equipment that will be needed; to inform residents of the potential dangers and ways to avoid these potential dangers; and to quickly arrange for help when it is needed. Readsboro participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), has adopted town road and bridge standards and has conducted a Bridge and Culvert inventory.

The Readsboro Emergency Management Department consists of one Town appointed position assisted by volunteers. The department is funded through town taxes. The Emergency

Management Director is responsible for coordinating the Town's response to emergency situations.

### **3.4.1 Inundation Flood Hazards**

Readsboro participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Maps published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 2011 show flood information for town, including Special Flood Hazard Areas. These are defined as locations that have a 1% chance of flooding in any given year (i.e., they are expected to be inundated by a 100-year flood).

NFIP is a Federal program enabling property owners in participating communities to purchase insurance protection against losses from flooding. This insurance is designed to provide an insurance alternative to disaster assistance to meet the escalating costs of repairing damage to buildings and their contents caused by floods. Participation in the NFIP is based on an agreement between the Town and the Federal Government that states if a community adopts and enforces a floodplain management ordinance to reduce future flood risks to new construction in Special Flood Hazard Areas, the Federal Government will make flood insurance available within the community as a financial protection against flood losses.

### **3.4.2 Fluvial Erosion Hazards**

In addition to inundation hazards, flooding can cause fluvial erosion hazards. While some flood losses are caused by inundation (i.e., waters rise, fill, and damage low-lying structures), most flood losses in Vermont are caused by "fluvial erosion," erosion caused by rivers and streams, which can range from gradual bank erosion to catastrophic changes in river channel location and dimension during flood events. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) notes that NFIP "floodway" and "flood fringe" areas are often inadequate as an indicator of flood hazards, especially erosion.

Areas subject to fluvial erosion hazards, from gradual stream bank erosion to catastrophic channel enlargement, bank failure, and change in course, due to naturally occurring stream channel adjustments, can be identified and mapped in accordance with accepted state fluvial geomorphic assessment and mapping protocols. The VT Agency of Natural Resources has developed maps of River Corridors and River Corridor Protection Areas depicting areas that should be designated to protect people and structures from potential fluvial erosion hazards. These areas should be included in the town's flood hazard area regulations to protect the public and the river corridor environment from adverse consequences of development there.

### **3.4.3 Addressing flood resilience**

This plan identifies as flood hazard areas the Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) shown on the NFIP FIRMs and identifies fluvial erosion hazard areas as those shown on the ANR River Corridor maps. Further, this Plan designates both those identified areas as areas to be protected, including floodplains, river corridors, and land adjacent to streams, wetlands, and upland forests, to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and improved property. In addition, this plan incorporates by reference Readsboro's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan approved under 44 C.F.R. § 201.6. Finally, this plan recommends the following policies and strategies to protect the designated areas to mitigate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and municipal investments.

**Goal 4: To ensure that Readsboro has sufficient emergency planning and disaster preparedness to help to reduce risk to life and health, the damage to public and private property and the environmental damage that often occurs as a result of a disasters.**

**Policies:**

- 4.1. Require that all new public and private roads and driveways be properly constructed so that they do not contribute to the damage of Town or State roads from run-off.
- 4.2. Encourage the improvement of existing roads and design culverts and bridges to carry a 25-year flood event without damage.
- 4.3. Encourage the development and improvement of emergency evacuation plans.
- 4.4. Update the State Rapid Response Plan on an annual basis.
- 4.5. Continue in the National Flood Insurance Program.
- 4.6. Design and site development so that it can be accessed by public safety response agencies.
- 4.7. Land subject to periodic inundation flooding and fluvial erosion hazards shall be limited to development which will not restrict, accelerate, or divert the flow of flooded waters and thereby endanger the health, safety, and welfare of the public during flooding.
- 4.8. It is the policy of the Town to protect floodplains, river corridors, land adjacent to streams, wetlands, and upland forests through adoption and administration of flood hazard area regulations governing development in designated Special Flood Hazard Areas and River Corridors, in order to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure, improved property, people, and the environment.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 4.1. Hold a community meeting on emergency preparedness.
- 4.2. Work to identify at-risk populations.
- 4.3. Work to protect the Town's historic assets from disasters.
- 4.4. Work with State and local emergency preparedness organizations.
- 4.5. Adopt an all-hazards pre-disaster mitigation plan.
- 4.6. Adopt the regional multi-jurisdictional pre-disaster mitigation plan.
- 4.7. Review 911 process and make sure records are maintained.
- 4.8. Continue to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program.
- 4.9. Identify fluvial erosion hazard areas and add protections for them to the existing Inundation Hazard Area Regulation adopted in 2013.
- 4.10. Work to preserve forested areas at higher elevations to protect settled areas.
- 4.11. Work on a plan of safe sites for when people are temporarily displaced during an emergency.

**3.5 Police Protection**

Emergency Police protection is provided on an as needed basis by the Shaftsbury Barracks of Vermont State Police. The Bennington County Sheriff's Department also provides services to the

**Goal 5: To ensure police protection for Town residents.**

Town in the form of process administration (serving legal documents) and contracted patrol services. The lack of police presence in Town and concern over response times have been expressed as areas that could be improved.

**Policies:**

- 5.1. Ensure that timely and effective police services are provided for Town residents.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 5.1. Assess the need for regular police coverage. This may be accomplished via a local police force or contracted services and up to as much as 24 hour coverage.
- 5.2. Enforce posted speed limits within the Town of Readsboro
- 5.3. Enforce the Readsboro Parking, ATV, and Snowmobile Ordinances.
- 5.4. Install street lighting over the gazebo and nearby parking area.

**3.6 Health and Emergency Services**

Health Care Services in the Town of Readsboro are limited and are more readily available in the neighboring towns. Medical care is obtained in the facilities of other towns, the nearest being 17 miles away from Readsboro Village. Area hospitals include: Berkshire Health North in North Adams, MA, Southern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC) in Bennington, Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield, MA, and Brattleboro Memorial Hospital. Berkshire Health North is currently only an emergency care facility.

Other health services in the area include a school nurse (shared with neighboring school systems) and the Visiting Nurse and Hospice for VT & NH which provide skilled nursing, home health aide services, and physical therapy. The SVMC Wilmington Campus provides primary healthcare provider services, periodic clinics for blood pressure, flu shots, and the like. Hospice care services are provided by either Bennington Hospice or Brattleboro Hospice.

The Southeastern Vermont Council on Aging holds a congregate dinner on the second Tuesday of every month at the First Baptist Church. Hot meals are available to Readsboro residents three days a week either by way of attending the congregate dinner in Jacksonville or through Meals on Wheels home delivery. Frozen meals are available for the days in which hot meals are not available. Through the Council on Aging, the MOOVER, operated by the Deerfield Valley Transit Association, provides transportation for seniors to the meal sites, Bennington, North Adams, and for individual medical appointments.

Emergency services are provided by Northern Berkshire EMS (division of North Adams Ambulance Service, Inc) which is stationed in North Adams, MA and has been serving Readsboro since 2012. Northern Berkshire EMS provides 24/7 Paramedic Coverage for ten cities and towns in Northwestern Massachusetts and Southern Vermont spanning over 265 square miles. Due to the distance from NBEMS to Readsboro, the Readsboro Volunteer Fire Dept. provides EMR level service under the VT EMS District 12 to assist NBEMS as a first response agency while awaiting the arrival of NBEMS.

**Goal 6: To ensure availability of health and emergency services to all Readsboro residents.**

**Policies:**

- 6.1. Encourage the availability of appropriate health care services for people of all ages and particularly the senior population of Readsboro.
- 6.2. Encourage that timely and effective emergency ambulance services are available.

**Priorities for action:**

- 6.1. Provide the community with comprehensive up-to-date information on services available and how to obtain them.
- 6.2. Seek financial support to ready the Town's emergency shelters.
- 6.3. Provides maps and/or publications showing the emergency shelters for public distribution.
- 6.4. Work with neighboring Towns in the VT EMS District 12 service area to develop a plan for recruitment and training of volunteers.

**3.7 Cemeteries**

There are four cemeteries in the Town of Readsboro. They are the Heartwellville Cemetery on Route 100, the North Hill Cemetery located high above the Village on Potter Hill Road, the Village Cemetery located on East Main Street on a hill closer to the Village, and the South Readsboro Cemetery located in the southern part of the Town on Bosley Hill Road. The five-person Cemetery Commission is responsible for the administrative duties and the maintenance of all four cemeteries. Funding for the cemeteries is provided by the Town and interest earned from several trust accounts. The Cemetery Commission adopted new cemetery Rules and Regulation in 2004. These new Rules and Regulations incorporated changes that were approved at regular meetings from 1997 to 2004. The Cemetery Commission sets the budget for the ensuing year and then submits it to the Selectboard for the Town Budget. At that time, all anticipated projects and contracts for maintenance are considered.

In 2001, new blacktop was laid on all driveways in the Village Cemetery. Trees and brush on adjacent land purchased from the James Sprague farm has been cut to begin the expansion of the cemetery along with the installation of a new access road to it. The Cemetery Commission was awarded a grant through the Vermont Old Cemetery Association to restore and repair broken monuments in the South Hill Cemetery. Attractive signs have been installed at the entrance of each cemetery giving its name and opening and closing times.

**Goal: To Maintain and improve all aspects of Readsboro's cemeteries.**

**Policies:**

- 7.1. Maintain current support of all cemeteries.
- 7.2. Maintain all records on the Town of Readsboro cemeteries in the town office.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 7.1. Secure and straighten monuments at all cemeteries, fill in sunken graves and pin grave lots.
- 7.2. Perform site work to prevent continued soil erosion at Village cemetery.
- 7.3. Continue to monitor space available for all cemeteries.
- 7.4. Catalogue and store properly all historic cemetery records.
- 7.5. Begin planning for expansion of existing cemeteries.
- 7.6. Mapping of all grave sites.

**3.8 Community Library**

The Readsboro Library was organized in 1899. In 1987, the Town of Readsboro consolidated the school library and the Readsboro Community Library. The Library is located in the Readsboro Central School on Phelps Lane. In recent history due to changes in laws revolving around schools and safety, the Community Library is not open during school hours. While the two libraries are the same in terms books and materials, this essentially split merger of the two. During the hours the school operates, it is the school library and is funded by school taxes. The Library is governed by the Community Library Directors and one member is appointed by the Selectboard from the community at large. The library is staffed by a part time librarian, one part time assistant, and one part time substitute. The Readsboro Community Library is funded through the Town, grants, and fundraising efforts.

The Readsboro Community Library has continuously met state standards. This entitles the facility to a variety of services from the state library system. Services include access to the Vermont Automate Library System (VALS), online access to library systems throughout Vermont, interlibrary loans (ILL), admission to the VT Union Catalog (which is part of the ILL system), and state cataloging. These services enable Readsboro’s small library to offer a world of possibilities to its students and residents.

The Readsboro Community Library only has access through the school interior. Due to heightened security protocols at the school, the library is only accessible to the public after school hours of operation which severely limits its ability to be effective.

The Readsboro Community Library offers many programs to the children and adult residents of Readsboro. It sponsors an annual Grandparent’s Day, a performance by the VT Theater Co., an annual Perennial Swap Day, an educational program from the VT Institute for Natural Science, an annual summer reading program, an annual Christmas lighting, and various adult information programs.

**Goal 8: To provide access to library services for Readsboro’s residents.**

**Policies:**

- 8.1. Provide as much access to the most complete library services as is possible while keeping within the financial capabilities of the Town.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 8.1. Continue to encourage community use and support of the library.
- 8.2. Review the community library’s space needs and as part of this review consider moving the library.
- 8.3. Install a public access door on the outside of the building to gain public access while maintaining security at the school.

**3.9 Parks and Recreation Facilities**

Community recreation facilities in Readsboro include two ball fields, a school gymnasium, and a park. The Town ball field is located on land next to the Deerfield River. Bleachers were purchased in 2021 to be used at the Town Ball field for community events like the Independence Day celebration. Historically it has been used for Little League and adult softball league games. The Readsboro Central School offers a playground and ballfield during the summer months.

A 400-acre Readsboro Family Park is located along the western side of Vermont Route 100 just west of the Village. This park is open to the public and it is maintained by the Readsboro Lions Club. It is used for picnicking, hiking, nature appreciation, and forest and wildlife management. There is also a playground for the children. The park can also be rented out for family reunions, parties, and other activities.

Outdoor recreational activities in Readsboro include, but are not limited to, hunting, fishing, hiking, primitive camping, canoeing, kayaking, snowmobiling, skiing, snowshoeing, ATV riding, and biking. These activities are important for residents and visitors to the Town. The Catamount Trail, North America’s longest cross-country ski trail that runs the entire length of the State of Vermont, begins in Readsboro. Both the VT ATV Sportsman’s Association and VT Association of Snow Travelers have trail systems around Readsboro and into the Village for amenities. The Dutch Hill Association of Skiers and Hikers have reopened many of the trails on the old Dutch Hill ski area for non-motorized recreation.

**Goal 9: To provide a safe and pleasant recreational environment for residents of Readsboro and surrounding communities.**

**Policies:**

- 9.1. Continue to foster a supportive relationship with the Lions Club and other organizations.
- 9.2. Encourage non-polluting family friendly recreations and experiences.
- 9.3. Encourage off road trail growth on public lands like GMNF and private lands enrolled in programs like VT Land Trust to minimize the impact on residential areas.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 9.1. Access community recreation needs, including the need for a day camp at the Readsboro Family Park for children during the summer months.
- 9.2. Encourage membership in all the local recreational clubs.
- 9.3. Identify trails that are suitable for biking and walking.

- 9.4. Investigate ways to capitalize on Readsboro’s trails for recreation (*i.e.*, bike trails connecting the Catamount Trail system, upgrading the Catamount Trail system from the Massachusetts state line to the Whitingham Dam;
- 9.5. Pursue funding to identify and mark trails in the Readsboro Family Park.

**3.10 Educational Services**

Educational services in the Town of Readsboro are provided by Readsboro Central School. Prior to the beginning of the 2022 school year, the 7 & 8<sup>th</sup> grades were eliminated in favor of school choice. The school provides education for children from preschool through sixth grade. The Town of Readsboro does not belong to a regional high school or middle school but does provide transportation to Twin Valley Middle and High school in Whitingham, and both Drury Middle and High school and McCann Tech in North Adams, MA. Transportation home is only provided from Drury and Twin Valley. Middle and high school students wishing to attend other accredited high schools must provide their own transportation. Schools that students have chosen to attend include: Twin Valley, Mt. Greylock, McCann’s Technical School, Windham Regional Career Center, and several private schools.

Readsboro Central School was built in 1960. Enrollment has diminished over the last couple years. The current building capacity is 135 children with 2022’s enrollment at just 27% of its capacity.

**Table 1: Readsboro Central School Enrollment**

	2001	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2021	2022
<b>Readsboro Central School</b>	92	68	65	78	63	64	48	37

The School Directors are working to completely revise the School Policy Book. A committee of community members has been appointed to help with this task.

Readsboro Central School has updated its technology by adding a new network of terminals in all classrooms with access to the Internet with the network server located in the principal’s office. The School Directors recently approved and oversaw the completion of the installation of a computer center and a telephone/intercom system in connecting the classrooms.

**Goal 10: To provide the highest quality education as is possible while keeping within the financial capabilities of the Town of Readsboro.**

**Policies:**

- 10.1. Work with the Department of Education, educators, legislators, parents, and others to assess the quality of education in Town.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 10.1. Implement after-school programs that encourage physical activity.
- 10.2. Regularly take advantage of such regionally available cultural opportunities such as the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, MA, Mass MOCA and others which offers free transportation for guided tours of its collection to school groups.

10.3. Implement Readsboro’s Safe Routes to School priorities.

### 3.11 Child Care

In addition to education for school-aged children, child care and early childhood education are important components of the Readsboro community and its future. Ensuring accessible, affordable, quality childcare is vital. Availability of childcare services in Readsboro will have a direct effect on the growth and vitality of the Town by encouraging young families to locate and remain in Readsboro, bringing more employees to local businesses, and creating a local source of information on parenting, nutrition and development.

Readsboro Central School offers early education opportunities for children aged three to five. The State of Vermont provides an early education to children of special needs in the Town of Readsboro through an Early Education Express (EEE) Grant. Those children in this age group who through annual screenings are found in need of assistance are visited regularly by an early education instructor.

In addition to the program that the Town provides one private Registered Family Child Care Home, Sirean LaFlamme, where preschool, and childcare services are available for toddlers to school-age children. There are five registered childcare facilities and homes in Wilmington and Stamford.

**Goal 11: To encourage efforts to provide child care for the residents of Readsboro.**

#### Policies:

- 11.1. Support town and regional efforts to increase the affordability of child care.
- 11.2. Encourage community programs to collaborate with child care providers to provide beneficial and educational experiences to children and others.
- 11.3. Encourage schools to stimulate interest in early education careers through community service and apprenticeship programs.

#### Priorities for Action:

- 11.1. Identify opportunities in Readsboro for child care providers to enhance their programs.
- 11.2. Monitor the demand for child care in Readsboro.
- 11.3. Improve pedestrian safety near childcare centers (*i.e.*, crosswalks, warning signs, etc.).

### 3.12 Solid Waste Disposal

The Town of Readsboro is a member of the Windham Solid Waste Management District (WSWMD). Solid waste is handled at one centrally located transfer station on Phelps Lane. Waste at the transfer station moves in three streams: recyclables, trash, and other items. Recyclables, including paper and cardboard, cans, bottles, and some plastics, are collected in containers and processed for commercial recycling at the WSWMD facility in Brattleboro. Tires are disposed of commercially through a cooperative effort of the WSWMD. With the latest phase of the Universal Recycling Law (Act 148) that went into effect in 2020, food scraps and compost are a separate stream and accepted at the transfer station.

The second stream of trash is municipal solid waste, bulky goods and construction and demolition debris. These are collected at the transfer station and then the Town pays a commercial trucker to dispose of the items through legal commercial channels. Other waste is disposed of in a variety of ways. Periodic household hazardous waste collections are held throughout the district. Scrap metal is collected and sold commercially. Clean wood is separated and made available to residents or burned. Non-recyclable, non-disposal items such as gas tanks and batteries are collected at the transfer station and disposed of through commercial vendors for a fee.

The Town of Readsboro participates in Vermont Green Up Day, traditionally held on the first Saturday in May. Volunteers participate in a wide range of activities designed to clean up highways and roads of trash and litter.

**Goal 12: To work to minimize the amount of waste needing to be disposed.**

**Policies:**

- 12.1. Meet the requirements of all appropriate State and Federal Solid Waste regulations.
- 12.2. Support and encourage local recycling efforts.
- 12.3. Work with appropriate Agencies to encourage environmentally sound practices.
- 12.4. Encourage residents to maximize responsible waste disposal.
- 12.5. The Town should continue to work with the WSWMD, through representation on the Board of Supervisors, to maximize cost effectiveness of recycling.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 12.1. Explore ways to promote more efficient operation of the transfer station.
- 12.2. Impress upon officials the need to address solid waste and recycling issues on an ongoing basis, not just when problems arise.
- 12.3. Find addition ways to promote Green Up Day.
- 12.4. Encourage and promote resident recycling to maximize removal from the waste stream.
- 12.5. Establish a more efficient and local hazardous materials disposal option.
- 12.6. Pursue reduction, consolidation and possible regionalization of trash stream to reduce costs.

**3.13 Electric Service**

In 2009, there were two attempts to get voter approval to sell the Readsboro Electric Company to Central Vermont Public Service Corp. Both attempts failed to obtain the 60 percent majority of town voters. The Town Meeting vote in March of 2010 gave the Selectboard the authority to sell the electric company at their discretion and soon after they did. Green Mountain Power currently serves the Town of Readsboro.

**Goal 13: Provide efficient, cost effective electrical service for all residents**

**Policies:**

- 13.1. Monitor other electrical service providers in the Town of Readsboro for cost effectiveness and efficiency.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 13.1. Work with the Regional Energy Coordinator to implement a program, which provides electric efficiency and conservation information to the Town.

**3.14 Water Department**

The Village area of Readsboro has its own water system. The source of the water is the watershed of Howe Pond Brook, which is fed by Howe Pond. The land surrounding the municipal water source is part of the Readsboro Municipal Forest and the watershed for the source is zoned as the Watershed District. In 1989, Readsboro built a water treatment facility to correct an existing water quality problem. This treatment facility has a design capacity for a population of 600. Currently, 125 units are hooked into the system with approximately 350 people being served. Considering current population trends in the Village of Readsboro, the water treatment capacity should be adequate for many more years. The treatment facility was paid for by a bond, which has been incorporated into the Town tax rate. Normal operating expenditures are paid for through the water system’s user rates. The Water Department has one supervisor/operator position that is shared with the Sewer Department five days a week. In addition, there is one part-time assistant for weekends and one part time clerical position. The Board of Selectmen implemented Water By-laws and Regulations in 1996, which are still in effect today.

In 2013 the water treatment facility was rebuilt along with the installation of a 12” water main from the storage tank to halfway down Main St near 6999 Main Street. In 2019 an 8” main was installed up East Main St.

*System Needs:*

There is a portable generator along with a manual transfer switch on site at the Water Treatment Facility. This provides enough backup power to run what is needed to produce finished water. It would be ideal to have a standby generator with an automatic transfer switch to be able to power everything in the plant and the bridge heater. Also could use electrical service brought up to the storage tank on Grinka Farm Dr. to eliminate the need for battery and solar charging for the tank reader.

*Staffing Needs:*

One (1) State Licensed Operator half time hours (20 hours per week); One (1) Backup Operator as needed must become licensed.

**Goal 14: To ensure clean, efficient and well maintained water system.**

**Policies:**

- 14.1. Maximize water conservation.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 14.1. Monitor development pattern in the Howe Pond Watershed District.
- 14.2. Continue to require sewage disposal systems of any new development within the watershed district to conform to state design standards.

- 14.3. Provide water conservation information to Town residents.
- 14.4. Develop a maintenance, replacement and expansion plan for Town water lines, which includes a policy regarding proposed development.
- 14.5. Finish upgrading old lines and create loops where dead end lines exist in the system, wherever possible.
- 14.6. Develop a repair and/or replacement plan for the Readsboro Water Treatment Facility.
- 14.7. Install an automatic standby generator at the treatment plant capable of powering all of the needs supplied from that site and the bridge heater
- 14.8. Install an electrical service to the water storage tank.

### **3.15 Wastewater Treatment**

The Town of Readsboro provides secondary wastewater treatment for approximately 375 residents in the Village area. There are currently 137 units hooked up to the Wastewater Treatment facility. The Sewage Treatment Facility currently handles only domestic sewage. The Town has adopted a Sewer Use Ordinance to protect the system from harm caused by industrial wastes. The treatment has a design flow of 75,000 gallons per day. The current uncommitted reserve capacity is 32,152 gallons per day. This represents the equivalent of approximately an additional 388 people using the system. Considering the population trends, this capacity should be adequate for the foreseeable future. Operation of the sewage treatment plant is paid for through sewer system rents. One supervisor/operator is involved in the system maintenance five days a week. In addition, there is one part-time weekend assistant and a part-time clerical position. Tests are required to be performed daily and the system is manned seven days a week.

The system is comprised of two (2) aerated lagoons, which produces relatively little sludge. In 1991, the Town disposed of 60,000 gallons of lagoon sludge by spreading it on a state-approved site, located on the Town lands adjacent to the wastewater treatment plant. In 2020 lagoon 1 was cleaned of sludge, lagoon #2 currently has very little sludge and is not expected to have to be cleaned out for many years. The aeration system of both lagoons was upgraded in 2020/2021. Sludge disposal is projected on operational test results and sludge layer. Auto dialer alarm systems are installed at all lift stations. A standby generator has been installed at the Tunnel St. pump station and a portable generator along with manual transfer switches allows for individual back up power for the other 4 stations and the sewer plant. There is also a small portable generator onsite at the Sewer plant which provides 110 power for heat, lights and chemical pumps The Readsboro Wastewater Treatment plant is required to re-license every five years. The next license will be issued this year (2023).

#### *Facility Needs:*

Automatic standby generators and auto transfer switches should be installed at the 3 ejector stations and the sewer plant properly sized to run all of the equipment.

#### *Staffing Needs:*

One (1) State Licensed Operator half-time hours (20 hours per week; One (1) Backup Operator as needed, must become licensed.

**Goal 15: To ensure clean, efficient and well maintained wastewater treatment system.**

**Policies:**

- 15.1. Work with neighboring towns and the Windham Regional Commission to develop a long-term solution for sludge and septic disposal.
- 15.2. Maintain a pollution control, maintenance and replacement plan for Town sewer lines.
- 15.3. The municipal treatment facility shall meet all State requirements in preventing contamination of groundwater and local streams, and shall dispose of its sludge materials in conformance with State regulations.
- 15.4. Private, on-site wastewater disposal systems shall meet all applicable State and local standards.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 15.1. Meet concerns of the State for backup power for chemical pumps.
- 15.2. Continue to develop and maintain a pollution control, maintenance replacement plan on the new computerized maintenance program and plan for future hook ups to the existing Town sewer lines.
- 15.3. Monitor the sludge disposal situation.
- 15.4. Install automatic standby generators and automatic transfer switches at the 3 ejector stations and the sewer plant

**3.16 Communications**

The existing communications network in Readsboro consists of private and public systems of various kinds including telephone, television, radio, newspaper, and internet services. Encouraging a diversity of communication systems and new technology are extremely important for community and economic development. However, some of these new technologies come with new equipment and facilities that can change the character of the Town.

Currently, Consolidated Communication Incorporated (CCI) provides landline telephone service and DSL internet for new and existing residences and businesses in Readsboro. Another option for internet and telephone soon to be available will be the newly constructed Fiber Optic Network from DVFiber (see below). Federal law regulates the placement of cellular towers in a given community; however, emphasis has been placed on balancing the need for telecommunications infrastructure with a community's desire to maintain community character. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 preserved state and local regulatory authority for the placement, construction, or modification of wireless facilities.

As of 2019, Cellular Telephone service was available in the Village via a temporary transmitter and receiver located on the Firehouse radio tower. In 2021 a 100 FT. Monopole was erected behind the Firehouse by Wireless Partners, LLC in agreement with the Town. This provides Cell service to the Village area for several carriers. Due to the terrain, Cellular service in the rest of Town is spotty with East and South facing hillsides getting the best service from Towers in surrounding

towns. Fixed Wireless Internet service is also available in the Village from “Trail Runner” (affiliated with Wireless Partners, LLC) and in certain other parts of Town from VTel Wireless.

The lack of availability of high-speed internet access is also judged to be a disincentive factor to the Town’s development. Based on this issue Readsboro joined the Deerfield Valley Communications Union District (DVCUD), known as DVFiber in April 2020. DVFiber is a Publicly Owned entity with the intent to serve its 24 member towns with High-Speed Fiber Optic Broadband service. In December 2022 a pilot program was launched in Readsboro bringing a handful of residences online with Fiber Optic internet provided by DVFiber and their partner Great Works Internet (GWI). Construction for the remainder of the town is planned for 2023 and 2024.

**Goal 16: To encourage the development of state-of-the-art communication facilities of all types to meet the long-range needs of the community and for economic development.**

**Policies:**

- 16.1. Require that all applicants for cellular telecommunication towers comply with all Federal, State and Town ordinances, bylaws, and/or regulations.
- 16.2. Preserve the character and appearance of the Town while allowing adequate wireless telecommunication services to be developed.
- 16.3. Minimize the adverse visual effects of towers and other facilities through careful design and siting standards.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 16.1. Advocate the position that telephone, cable, and fiber optic companies serving the Town use the public right-of-way for communication purposes.

## **Chapter 4. TRANSPORTATION**

### **4.1 Roads**

The public road network in the Town of Readsboro consists of State highways and Town roads. ATV’s and snowmobiles under their ordinances utilize the traveled lane and crossings on certain sections of these roads. The closest interstate highway is I-91, which passes through Brattleboro. Readsboro can be reached from: Route 8 which connects with Route 9 in Searsburg and travels south through Readsboro to connect with Route 2 in North Adams, Massachusetts; Route 100 which intersects Route 9 in Wilmington and travels south through the Village of Readsboro, joining Route 8 in Heartwellville and continuing as Route 8/100 south to the Massachusetts line; and River Road which comes north from Rowe intersecting with Route 100 in the Village of Readsboro. Three smaller roads also enter the Town directly from Massachusetts.

Readsboro’s roads fall into three functional categories: Arterial Highways are used for through travel; Collectors are roads used to get from rural/residential areas to arterial highways; Local Roads are rural/residential streets and roads that make up most of the system. Routes 8 and 100, the State highways that traverse Readsboro, are categorized as major collectors. Collector roads in

Readsboro are Branch Hill Road, Bosley Hill Road, Tunnel Street, East Main Street/Potter Hill Road and Bailey Hill Road.

The State of Vermont has developed a classification system for Town Highway Mapping and Inventories, maintenance schedules, and State Aid. The classes are defined in Title 19, Section 302 of the Vermont Statutes. Readsboro's public roads are classified as follows:

**Table 2: Classification of Town Highway/Roadway** (Source: Readsboro, VT General Highway Map, 2021)

<b>Class</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Total Mileage Class 1-3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Legal Trails</b>
Town Roadways	0.529	1.970	33.05	35.549	7.53	7.21
State Highways				10.016		
Total				45.565		

## 4.2 Road and Bridge Infrastructure

The 2007 State Bridge Inventory lists 23 long and short structures in Readsboro. A short structure is 6'-20' in length while a long structure is greater than 20'. These are further categorized as State or Town structures. There are nine State structures; four of these are culverts and five are bridges. Of the 14 Town structures, six are culverts and eight are bridges.

### *Current needs:*

- Assess the culvert for replacement at the intersection of Goldmine Rd & West Hill Rd
- Assess the replacement or refurbishment of the bridge on Bill T Rd (Bridge 19)
- Assess the replacement or demolition of the bridge on Howe Pond Road (Bridge 21)
- Reconstruction of Route 100 in between Whitingham and Readsboro
- Replacement of Green Bridge on RT 100 (Bridge 25)
- Repair washout on Bosley Hill
- Repair road sloughing of Phelps Ln
- Assess the replacement or demolition of the culvert on Old County Lane

It is important to note that just because these projects are listed on the Capital Program does not mean that they will be funded or completed in the near future. For example, the project to reconstruct a portion of VT Route 100 in Readsboro and neighboring Whitingham has been in the State's Capital Improvement Plan for many years but has not moved forward. This project remains important to Readsboro as this is a critical access route into and out of town. Given financial constraints, the project will need to be re-scoped to find ways to scale down the project in the hopes of making it a more attractive project to the State.

The Readsboro Falls Bridge (Bridge 21) is structurally deficient and closed to all vehicular and pedestrian traffic. There are state requirements that must be addressed if this bridge is to be

replaced. Replacing this bridge has not been a priority for the Town because there is little development that would access this bridge and there is an alternative means to access the land. In the past the voters of the Town voted down its replacement as originally designed. A bailey bridge could be installed to allow seasonal passage at a lower cost than direct replacement as originally designed.

Readsboro has entered pavement conditions into the Road Surfacing Management System Inventory (RSMS) software. The main function of RSMS is to store and analyze data, and to generate reports that will assist town officials in making cost-effective decisions. The RSMS process includes taking an inventory of, assessing the condition of the roads, developing maintenance and rehabilitation alternatives, weighing those alternatives, prioritizing maintenance needs, and generating reports budgets, work schedules, and work orders. The Town is using this system to maintain records of highway maintenance expense, but not with a detail sufficient to be a quantitative guide to decisions as to which portions of the Town highway systems it would be cost-effective to pave. Along with RSMS, Readsboro has an electronic list of all the culverts in Town, including condition, material, and dimension of each one. By having up-to-date RSMS and Bridge and Culvert Inventory, Readsboro can potentially reduce the required local funding match on road projects by up to one half. To mitigate fluvial erosion, the State has mandated ditch rock be installed on roads with an 8 degree or greater pitch.

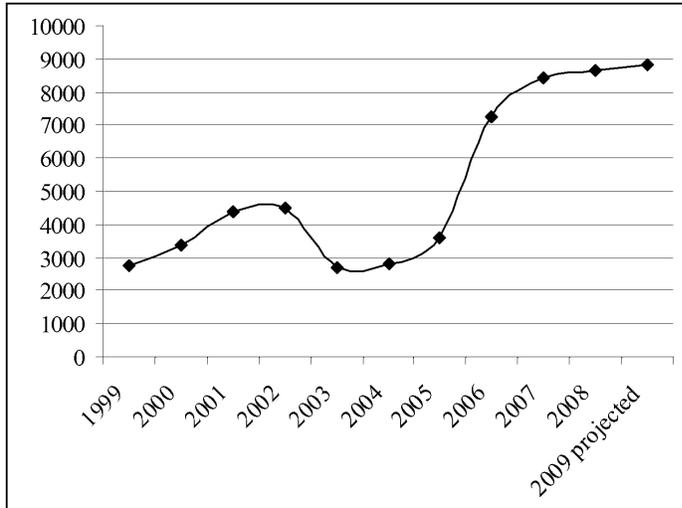
### **4.3 Scenic Roads**

No Town highways in Readsboro have been designated as scenic under Vermont's 1977 Scenic Highway Law. The State has designated RT 100 as a Scenic Byway.

### **4.4 Public Transit**

The Deerfield Valley Transit Authority (DVTA) operates a free public transit system (MOOver) within the towns of Readsboro, Whitingham, Wilmington, Dover, Wardsboro, Halifax, Newfane, Townshend, Dummerston, and Marlboro. Direct connection service to

**Figure 1: DVTA Ridership** (Source: DVTA, 2009)



Brattleboro is available via Wilmington. A fixed route service to and from Readsboro has been operating since 1999, generally offering one trip to and from Readsboro in both morning and evening. As figure 3 illustrates, ridership in the last three years has been at its highest levels since the service began. The schedule and service hours did not change during this time however, gasoline prices did rise dramatically and this may have contributed to the increase in ridership.

Elderly and disabled transit service also is provided for the Town by the DVTA. This service began in 2000 and is used for a variety of purposes including shopping trips, meal service, and medical service. There is a weekly trip to Bennington every Wednesday for seniors. Some residents have expressed the desire for additional trips to Bennington.

#### 4.5 Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

A sidewalk network exists in the village. On Main Street (Route 100) it extends from the bridge on the south end of the village north to the intersection of Branch Hill Road and Route 100. The sidewalk also extends along one side of Tunnel Street from the intersection with Main Street to the Senior Housing, switching sides of the Street at the Roman Catholic Church. There is also a sidewalk on one side of School Street.

VTrans is responsible for maintaining the sidewalk on the Route 100 Bridge. They will not clear it of snow during the winter months. Snow removal on the town sidewalks is performed as needed by the DPW. New sidewalks on Main St, School St, and Tunnel St were installed in 2018.

Since 2006, Readsboro Central School has participated in the Safe Routes to School program, a federally funded program designed to encourage children to walk and bike to school and to identify infrastructure projects that will make doing so safer. The school is located within walking/biking distance of approximately 60% of its students. The Safe Route to School program has been instrumental in making some changes to increase safety such as new signage and the Walking School Bus. Future changes include a bulb out at the crosswalk at Route 100 and Phelps Lane and the construction of a multi-use path down Phelps Lane to the school.

Surveys taken by students and parents in the fall 2006 and spring 2007 at the Readsboro Central School have indicated the following barriers to walking and bicycling that, if changed or improved, would impact parent's decision "to allow or not allow your child to walk or bike to school."

- **Lack of path/sidewalk:** The town sidewalk network currently ends on Route 100 across from Phelps Lane. The students must travel a 0.3 mile distance without any sidewalk or path infrastructure.
- **Traffic Speed** – A traffic study conducted the Windham Regional Commission in November 2006 indicated that nearly 71% of all traffic exceeded the 25 mph speed limit on Phelps and over 20% exceeded 35 mph.

Several actions have already been taken to address pedestrian/bicycle safety concerns. There is now a designated crossing area for walkers and bikers to use when entering the School property and bike racks have been placed at a school. New signage has replaced the old faded signs. Tree limbs have been cut back to improve visibility. Efforts are also being made to mow the grass along the side of Phelps Lane so that walking can be more safely accommodated.

The town was awarded a Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Grant totaling \$33,420 to:

- purchase a speed radar feedback sign,
- construct the bulb-out, and
- conduct a sidewalk feasibility study on Phelps Lane

Purchasing of the speed radar sign is the only part of the grant yet to be completed.

#### **4.6 Parking**

One formal off-street public parking area is located near the Bandstand and the Readsboro Inn. Other municipally owned property that does serve as parking areas includes the old Chair Shop parking lot (across Branch Hill Road from the General Store) and on Canal Street. The Town does have a Parking Ordinance which regulates on-street overnight parking from November to April. Parking in the village is a problem, particularly in winter when overnight on-street parking is prohibited and the municipal lots are not plowed in a timely manner. In 2012 a park and ride was installed at the old Chair Shop parking lot which included pavement and enclosed bus stop for DVTA.

The parking requirements in the Zoning Bylaw are viewed as a limitation to redevelopment. The regulations currently require onsite parking. Many of the lots in the village are too small to accommodate on-site parking at the levels required.

#### **4.7 Speed and Traffic Calming**

Speeding on Route 100 and Tunnel Street in the village area is a serious problem and threat to the safety of residents. The speed limit for vehicles going east at the bandstand crosswalk was 35 mph. The Town had asked VTrans to extend the 25 mph speed limit to include this crosswalk. Instead, they increased the speed limit at the bridge (immediately after the crosswalk) to 40 mph. As such, this particular location remains a concern. Due to the fact that this area is a crossing location for

children going to school and the fact that this is a gateway to the village area, the speed limit should be decreased.

Speed on all roads in town has been issue. In Spring 2009, a Speed Ordinance Committee recently reviewed speed limits on town roads and set new speed limits ranging from 25-35 mph. New signs were installed as part of this work.

#### 4.8 Access Management

The development of access management standards and guidelines is believed to offer an additional and practical way to promote safe, efficient traffic operations and avoid undesirable development practices along town highways. The standards to be developed might include requirements for minimum separation distance between driveways or between driveways and a corner or intersection, driveways that serve more than one lot, parking areas that serve more than one lot/business, circulation/access between two lots and, where appropriate, providing access from secondary streets, rather than main arterials.

Readsboro’s present Zoning Bylaw requires the Planning Commission and the Development Review Board to consider certain traffic-related criteria in Site Plan Reviews and Conditional Use Reviews. Once access management standards tailored to each Zoning District have been developed, those standards should be added to the criteria to be used in the future by the appropriate municipal panels.

#### 4.9 Recommended Transportation System Improvements

Location	Issue	Need
Phelps Lane	speed	Radar Feedback Sign
Phelps Lane	Pedestrian safety	Path or sidewalk
Route 100 Bridge	Speed is posted by VTrans at 40 mph	Reduction in speed limit

**Goal 1:** Provide and maintain a safe and efficient transportation network that mitigates fluvial erosion and runoff.

#### Policies:

- 1.1. The general priorities in regards to the town transportation system are, in the order of importance:
  - 1) Preservation and maintenance of the existing road network
  - 2) Safety improvements and enhancements
  - 3) Capacity enhancements
- 1.2. Maintain bridges and structures to promote safety and maximize useful life.
- 1.3. Use routine and preventive maintenance, when appropriate, to extend the serviceability of the pavement and town bridges.

- 1.4. Provide an acceptable level of surface maintenance on gravel roads to maintain reasonable passage and general safety.
- 1.5. Ensure that vegetation along roadways does not create site distance obstructions at intersections and does not obscure views of roadway signage or intersecting accesses.
- 1.6. Widen highways and remove healthy trees from the right-of-way only when necessary to improve visibility, to maintain utility corridors, to provide necessary plowing room, or to eliminate safety hazards.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 1.1. Develop a consistent rationale for when Town roads will be upgraded or downgraded to a different roadway class.
- 1.2. Inventory available parking spaces in the Village and determine constraints and opportunities to meeting parking needs, if such exist.
- 1.3. Review, select and implement traffic calming techniques to reduce traffic speed and improve bicycle and pedestrian safety in the Village.
- 1.4. Pursue any appropriate state, federal and private grants for the maintenance and improvements of the Town's Street and highway system, sidewalks, and other transportation infrastructure improvements.
- 1.5. Improve monitoring of maintenance costs of individual sections of Town highway, including use and updating of the Road Surface Management System program.
- 1.6. Installing pavement on sections of roads that require ditch rock due to steep grades to further mitigate fluvial erosion which creates a buildup of sediments in the waterways.
- 1.7. Consider re-scoping the Route 100 reconstruction project.

<b>Goal 2: Promote alternative modes of transportation.</b>
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**Policies:**

- 2.1. Support efforts to develop sidewalks or off-street multi-use path, particularly where they connect trip generators to attractors.
- 2.2. Consider the impacts that transportation projects have on bicycling and pedestrian activities.
- 2.3. Actively ensure that designated bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and other heavily used paved shoulders, are clean and free of debris.
- 2.4. Support Deerfield Valley Transit Association's bus service to and from Readsboro.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 2.1. Construct a sidewalk or path along Phelps Lane.

## Chapter 5. NATURAL RESOURCES

### 5.1 Water Resources

#### Surface Waters

The surface waters of Readsboro are an important element in the town's landscape. The Deerfield River and Deerfield River West Branch flow along Route 100 and through the village area and contribute greatly to the scenic quality of the town. The South Branch of the Deerfield River rises on the east side of the Hoosac Range of mountains and flows rapidly for its entire length of 5.5 miles. Other important brooks include Lamb Brook and Howe Pond Brook.

The Deerfield River has been developed extensively for hydropower. Under the current operating policy, water is diverted from the Harriman Dam in Whitingham to a Great River Hydro generating facility downstream in Whitingham, bypassing the Deerfield River in Readsboro. With the recent re-licensing, a minimum flow level was established for the formerly bypassed reach of the Deerfield River in Readsboro.

Howe Pond is an important surface water resource in Readsboro. This 52-acre pond is the source of municipal drinking water. Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation considers Howe Pond as significant because it is wilderness-like and is noteworthy for its natural sand beaches.

Recent reports show the majority of surface waters in Readsboro generally appear to be in good condition. A 3.5 mile stretch of the lower Deerfield River below Harriman Reservoir in Whitingham and Readsboro has been listed on Vermont's 2008 Priority Water List for aquatic life support impairment by low flows. The deep water release at the Harriman Reservoir, agreed to in the under FERC license, was to allow for the enhancement of a cold water Brook and Brown trout fishery. However, the very cold temperature may be limiting the fishery.<sup>1</sup> VT DEC is currently monitoring this issue. Water quality is also an issue at Howe Pond where the water body is extremely sensitive to episodic atmospheric deposition of acid.

Litter and debris is a concern in some sections of the river in Readsboro. There is some metal debris in the West Branch of the Deerfield River at Readsboro Falls. This is a danger for recreational users of the river. Litter is also visible when looking down from the Route 100 bridge in the Village. Efforts to clean up the rivers should be undertaken.

There is a source protection area of approximately 2,420 acres for Howe Pond. This area is vital watershed land that requires protection in order to maintain and preserve a safe, healthy, and reliable water supply. The Zoning Bylaw has limited development in this area to a low density by creating a minimum lot area of 10 acres.

Adjacent to the watercourses are floodplains, relatively flat areas that experience occasional or periodic flooding. These areas represent inherent hazards to human life and property. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has mapped the flood hazard areas that have a one percent chance of flooding in any given year. Readsboro participates in the National Flood

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<sup>1</sup> *State of VT 2008 303(d) List of Waters*, October 2008, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

Insurance Program and has adopted a Flood Hazard Bylaw. By doing so, property owners are able to obtain federal insured flood insurance at affordable rates and flood disaster assistance is available to the town. The Flood Hazard Bylaw regulates development within the FEMA-defined flood hazard areas by imposing design standards that are intended to minimize property damage during flood events. There are mapped flood hazard areas located along West Branch Deerfield River and the Deerfield River, in the area around the ponds in Heartwellville, and around Howe Pond. The official maps should be consulted to determine whether or not a property is in the flood hazard area.

While some flood losses are caused by inundation (i.e., waters rise, fill, and damage low-lying structures), many flood losses in Vermont are caused by “fluvial erosion.” *Fluvial erosion* is erosion caused by rivers and streams, and can range from gradual bank erosion to catastrophic changes in river channel location and dimension during flood events. Without flood plain access, which serves the essential purposes of slowing flood waters and storing sediment, stream banks are subject to the full power of floods leading to extensive fluvial erosion. The NFIP “floodway” and “flood fringe” areas are often inadequate as an indicator of flood hazards, especially erosion, because they do not recognize the danger present in unstable channels which may be undergoing a physical adjustment process. During Tropical Storm Irene, for example, the West Branch of the Deerfield River severely eroded the banks behind School Street.

ANR River Management Program has developed tools to understand dynamic river systems and identify appropriate management activities. A major component of this effort is the Fluvial Erosion Hazard (FEH) risk assessment and mapping process. FEH maps identify the location and intensity of fluvial erosion hazards, as well as the area needed by a river to maintain equilibrium.

The FEH risk assessment and mapping process provides a sound scientific and technical basis for determining the boundaries of an FEH overlay district. Because overlay district boundaries do not shift as a river channel changes position, this approach can provide a consistent tool for mitigating fluvial erosion hazards over a wide geographic area, minimizing human/river conflicts and limiting losses caused by fluvial erosion.

Limiting development within an overlay district based on the boundaries of FEH maps has two major functions. First, it prevents development in hazardous areas, reducing costly flood losses and increasing public safety. Second, it prevents river corridor encroachment that would increase overall fluvial erosion hazards and impede a river’s natural tendency to adjust toward a more stable, equilibrium condition. ANR has recently released maps identifying FEH areas; called River Corridor and River Corridor Protection Area maps; these should be incorporated in the town flood regulations.

Shore land areas are important features of surface waters. These areas provide shading, shelter, and sources of food and travel corridors for aquatic and water life. They also contribute to the prevention and control of water pollution. Readsboro does not currently have a stream setback in the Zoning Bylaw but should. The maintenance of a natural vegetated buffer along shorelines will help to maintain natural water temperatures and preserve fish and wildlife habitats.

The State uses a basin planning approach to managing the water quality in rivers and streams. Readsboro is in the Deerfield River Basin. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources is responsible for writing basin plans for all seventeen basins that it has designated. To date, basin planning activities are behind schedule statewide. It is important for Readsboro to participate in

these activities so that water quality problems are identified and that the recommended solutions make sense for the Town.

### **Wetlands**

Important wetland areas include a 70-acre wetland adjacent to Howe Pond that was surveyed by the State, a wetland area along Route 100 in Heartwellville, and wetlands adjacent to the Beaver Meadows off of Beaver Road. Wetland areas serve several functions. They store large quantities of water during periods of high runoff and gradually release water during low flow periods. Loss of the storage capacity will not only adversely affect stream behavior but also will also increase floods and reduce stream flow during crucial low flow periods. Wetlands are also important for the maintenance of water quality. The biological activity of a wetland area enables the absorption and assimilation of nutrients and thus purifies, to some extent the water, which is discharged. Wetlands also support many kinds of wildlife.

Regulatory methods of protecting wetlands from pollution and destruction include requirements for erosion and sedimentation control plans and enforcement of those plans, minimum setbacks for buildings and septic system leachfields, and minimum vegetative buffer requirements. Currently, Readsboro relies on the state's regulations to protect wetlands. These include a 100-foot buffer on Class I wetlands and 50 foot buffer on Class II.

### **Ground Water**

Groundwater is a critical resource because it provides the primary source of potable drinking water for residents who live outside the Readsboro Water District. Bedrock fractures, saturated sand and gravel deposits, and springs are the most common source of groundwater. At this time aquifer recharge areas in Readsboro have not been mapped.

The development of land for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes increases the amount of impervious surface area within any given site due to the construction of buildings, roads, driveways, parking lots, and other improvements. Impervious surfaces reduce the natural infiltration of stormwater into the ground, thereby reducing the recharge of groundwater resources. Where increased imperviousness results in direct stormwater discharge into streams or rivers, the result is often the alteration of the natural flow of the stream, causing erosion and sedimentation, loss of aquatic wildlife habitat, and increased flood hazards and potential pollution.

## **5.2 Air Quality**

The State of Vermont only monitors air quality in five locations in Vermont, the closest of which to Readsboro is in Bennington. According to the Windham Regional Plan, adopted October 2006, air in the region generally meets national ambient air quality standards. Due to small population and industrial base, local sources of air pollution are primarily the necessary combustion of fuels for heating and car and truck emissions. Uses of renewable heat sources like burning wood should be encouraged as long as they meet VT air quality standards.

## **5.3 Soils and Topography**

Soils are the most important determinant of the land's development capability, especially in unsewered areas. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has developed soil septic suitability ratings based on Vermont regulations. Concentrations of soils that are generally not

suited to support septic systems are found along the Route 100 corridor between Readsboro Village and Heartwellville, as well as near the Dutch Hill Ski Area. Well-suited soils are found in scattered pockets throughout town and along some of the river corridors.

Primary agricultural soils have a high potential for growing food or forage crops because they are sufficiently well drained and fertile or responsive to the use of fertilizer. They have been identified by the NRCS and are found in pockets throughout Town. Concentrated pockets are found in Heartwellville, at the base of Alpenwald residential development, in southwest portion of Town along West Hill Drive, and along King Hill Road and Potter Hill Road. Developments subject to Act 250 review are evaluated for their impact to primary and secondary agricultural soils on the site.

Topography can be described in terms of elevation and slope. Elevations in Readsboro range from 1,106 feet to 3,110 feet. Although elevation alone does not constrain development, higher elevations tend to coincide with thinner soils and steeper slopes. Areas above 2,500 feet are often fragile areas with vulnerable natural environments because of generally thin soils, sensitive vegetation, important wildlife habitats, and often greater than average precipitation and wind. There are several areas in Readsboro that are above 2500 feet including: several peaks along the Hoosac Range which runs along the town's western border with Stamford, the peak of Dutch Hill, an area surrounding "The Dome" and a large part of the Green Mountain National Forest in the north, central part of town.

The slope of the land is an important determinant of development capability. Slopes of less than 8 percent are generally most suitable for building. The erosion potential of such slightly sloping land is low, their ability to absorb runoff is high, and soils are usually of adequate depth and composition for septic systems. Exceptions are extremely flat areas, some of which may be classified as wetlands, where drainage is poor. As slopes increase, the suitability of the land for development decreases. In areas of steep slopes, the velocity of runoff, and therefore the potential for erosion, increases. The ability of the soil to filter septic leachate is decreased. Overcoming site constraints becomes increasingly costly. Slopes of 15 to 25 percent present significant constraints and slopes exceeding 25 percent are often considered unbuildable.

#### **5.4 Minerals and Earth Resources**

Sand and gravel deposits of varying quality are located along the South Branch Deerfield River and West Branch Deerfield River. A fairly large gravel deposit is located in and around Heartwellville.

The presence of known mineral deposits in Readsboro is limited to sulfides, limestone and iron ores. These deposits are not currently being mined and there are no operating quarries in Town.

#### **5.5 Enduring Features and Special Natural Areas**

There are several special natural areas with landscape features that have ecological, educational, scenic, and contemplative value. These natural areas are important to the natural heritage of Readsboro:

- The **Howe Pond Park** is recognized as a unique area having an "unspoiled pond with boggy edges grading into wet woods and surrounding northern hardwood-conifer forest (second growth). Azalea is common, making the woods particularly attractive in flowering season." (Vermont Atlas and Gazetteer, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, page 21). The Howe Pond Park is deed restricted to having zero development with the exception of the water treatment facility and temporary log roads.
- A geological formation known as "**The Freezing Hole**," located at the end of Freezing Hole Drive, is a bowl formed by three mountain peaks which remains frozen well into the spring.
- The **Balance Rock** is an unusual rock formation located behind the American Legion Post in the Village Area.
- The **Glacial Rock** on Lord's Peak is said to be the second largest erratic in New England.
- The **Lamb Brook** area within the Green Mountain National Forest is a special natural area that is host to a variety of wildlife - moose, bear, deer and migratory birds - and should be protected from development and preserved in its natural state.
- The **Goldmine**, located off Goldmine RD has large deposits of quartz that once held a goldmine. Whether or not gold was ever found is uncertain.

## 5.6 Fish and Wildlife

As a result of the 40-year license that was issued to New England Power Co. in 1997, several items were addressed to provide benefits to fisherman along the Deerfield River in Vermont and Massachusetts. These included the establishment of a minimum flow of the Harriman Bypass to create a year-round cold water trout fishery, reduction of seasonal water fluctuation in Harriman and Somerset Reservoirs to protect a stable habitat for spawning bass, smelt and nesting water fowl, and the future construction of fish passage facilities at three hydro-electric dams downstream to allow for restoration efforts of Atlantic salmon.

The Basin 12 Assessment Report issued by the Water Quality Division of the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation in March 2003 provides some information on the fish populations in Readsboro. Fish survey efforts in the Deerfield River have focused on brook and brown trout. Surveys indicated that the trout populations have increased but that the size of the fish has been depressed. The likely cause of this is the cold water discharged from Harriman Dam (Basin 12 Assessment Report, March 2003). The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife does not have much current data on the fish populations in the streams of the West Branch of the Deerfield River. Generally, there appears to be low productivity of fish population in part due to summer water temperature stress, especially from Heartwellville south. The river flows in a fairly wide and open channel with little canopy to cool the water. The most current fish population data for the South Branch of the Deerfield is 1994 and shows that the stream supports both brown and brook trout.

Readsboro's sparsely settled, hilly, forested terrain provides a rich habitat for wildlife. There are several areas recognized by the VT Department of Fish and Wildlife as winter deer range and as bear habitat. In addition, moose, coyote, bobcat, fox, flocks of wild turkeys, geese and several blue herons inhabit the rural woodlands. Numerous bald eagles regularly winter on the steep slopes along the Deerfield River near the Harriman Power Plant. Ospreys have been sighted at the Lion's Club Park.

## 5.7 Nongame and Natural Heritage

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's Nongame and Natural Heritage Program track rare plants and animals and exemplary natural communities. Using a ranking system, the inventory assesses the rarity of species on a global and statewide level. There are four plant occurrences listed as species of special concern: Dwarf Bilberry, Snail-seed Pondweed, Humped Bladderwort, and Musk Flower.

## 5.8 Forest Resources

Of Readsboro's 23360(+/-) acres, approximately 95 percent is forested. This includes both privately owned land, town-owned land including the municipal forest, and the land owned by the National Forest Service. Forests provide wood products, maple syrup, recreational areas, wildlife habitat, scenic areas and serve as a vital component in the natural water cycle. The principal commercial trees are sugar maple and yellow birch. There are still many large contiguous tracts of forestland in Readsboro, however, many tracts of land in private ownership have already been subdivided into smaller building lots.

The National Forest Service also has considerable land holdings in Readsboro. The 2021 Grand List indicates that the Green Mountain National Forest holds about 8807 acres, constituting about 38% of the land in Readsboro. In recent history, they have bought about 1,000 acres including the Dutch Hill Ski Area and significant land that lies between the Readsboro Family Park and Heartwellville. Readsboro receives Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) from the Forest, but the amount is less than that which would likely be received in taxes if that land were privately owned and managed.

As with all national forests, the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) is managed for multiple uses. In 2006, the Green Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan was adopted by the USFS. The purpose of the Forest Plan is to provide direction to make sure that ecosystems in the GMNF provide a steady flow of goods and services to the public. Management plans are generally updated every 10 years and currently it is out of date. More emphasis on allowing additional motorized usage should be expressed. While the current management plan allows for motorized usage, summertime usage has been constantly denied. The Management Alternative selected classifies land in Readsboro as the following:

**Table 3:** (Source: 2006 Green Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan)

<b>Classification</b>	<b>General Locations</b>	<b>Major Emphasis</b>
Diverse Forest Use	Remaining GMNF land	Emphasizes a variety of uses. Managed for production of high quality sawtimber on a sustained yield, full range of recreational opportunities (including motorized and non-motorized trails to dispersed and developed campgrounds), and a mix of wildlife habitats including deer wintering.
Remote Wildlife Habitat	Area north of Lamb Brook	Provide a mix of forest habitats to benefit diverse wildlife species. Recreation uses are de-emphasized to minimize disturbance to wildlife.

Diverse Backcountry	Northwest corner of town, north of 100 and west of Route 8	Predominantly natural or natural appearing environment managed to provide mix of backcountry recreational experiences from low use foot trails to motorized use trails. Timber harvesting on longer rotations (150 years or more) to provide a more mature forest.
Remote Backcountry	Northeast corner of town bordering Searsburg and Wilmington	Large expanses of relatively natural landscapes developed under natural disturbance regimes. Management actions are limited to those that help restore natural processes, natural communities, and associated species. Non-motorized trail recreational opportunities that provide a sense of isolation and remoteness.

Local residents have relayed anecdotal evidence in the decline of game in the Lamb Brook area. The town encourages the USFS to use appropriate timber management activities to better manage the wildlife.

Careful consideration must be given to the sustainability of this resource in the Town planning process. While it is important to track the resources or potential resources in each forest parcel, it is also critical to look beyond parcel lines and understand the forest landscape without divisions. Below are the important aspects that Readsboro must protect:

- **Wildlife habitat** - Diversity of forest type is essential in preserving wildlife habitats. It is important to evaluate existing wildlife habitats and to consider those in the forest planning process so as to avoid forest use conflicting with wildlife preservation. Key habitat components include hard mast, soft mast, den trees, small herbaceous openings, and ledges, rocks, and outcrop.
- **Recreation** - Readsboro’s natural environment is a tremendous resource in regards to outdoor recreation. Residents have use of forestland belonging to the Town and the National Forest Service and many private landowners. Recreational use requires tracts of connected land. Readsboro’s forested land offers recreational opportunities such as snowmobiling and ATV riding, camping, hunting, and fishing. Informal and formal trails provide for hiking, biking, skiing, snowmobiling, and other recreational pursuits.
- **Aesthetic Values** - Scenic landscape is an important resource for the Town. Distance (foreground, middle, and background), topography (slope, ridgelines, contrasts providing shape and texture); forest cover, special features, visibility and protective screening are aesthetic criteria that need to be considered.
- **Forest based industry** - Readsboro has a sustainable forest resource, which can and does provide quality forest products. A forest-based economy supports employment and provides landowners with financial returns through planned timber harvesting. Readsboro has access to state, county, and private foresters to assist with planning.

Act 171 was signed into law in June of 2016 amending the planning statutes to encourage and allow municipalities to address protection of forest blocks and habitat connectors, while also supporting the local forest products industry. This created four new forest planning definitions:

❖ **FOREST BLOCK:** a contiguous area of forest in any stage of succession and not currently developed for non-forest use. A forest block may include recreational trails, wetlands, or other natural features that do not themselves possess tree cover, and uses exempt from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of this title.

❖ **FOREST FRAGMENTATION:** the division or conversion of a forest block by land development other than by a recreational trail or use exempt from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of this title.

❖ **HABITAT CONNECTOR:** land or water, or both, that links patches of wildlife habitat within a landscape, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants and the functioning of ecological processes. A habitat connector may include recreational trails and uses exempt from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of this title. In a plan or other document issued pursuant to this chapter, a municipality or regional plan commission may use the phrase "wildlife corridor" in lieu of "habitat connector."

❖ **RECREATIONAL TRAIL:** a corridor that is not paved and that is used for hiking, walking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, all-terrain vehicle riding, horseback riding, and other similar recreational activity.

## **5.9 Agriculture**

There are very few farms in Readsboro. The types of agricultural activity that take place in town include maple sugaring, haying, and raising livestock and poultry. For Census purposes, a farm is any place where \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the Census year.

The 2021 Grand List (which categorizes properties based on their highest and best use) has zero properties listed as a farm. This difference in numbers indicates that hobby farming, producing supplemental income from agricultural activity, is occurring in Readsboro.

### **Goal 1: Maintain and improve the quality of air, water, and land resources.**

#### **Policies:**

- 1.1. Retain watercourses, ponds, wetlands, and shorelines in a natural state to maintain their water quality and ecological, scenic, and recreational values.
- 1.2. Support surface water classification and management strategies that will effectively maintain or enhance existing water quality.
- 1.3. Protect public safety and private property from flood hazards by maintaining the natural functions of the town's floodplains.
- 1.4. Preserve the functions and prevent loss of Readsboro's wetlands.
- 1.5. Protect the aquifers and groundwater that are the sources of present and future drinking water supply.
- 1.6. Maintain the town's steep slopes in a manner that prevents erosion, changes to natural drainage patterns and loss of scenic character.

- 1.7. Encourage the preservation of primary agricultural soils and viable tracts of productive farmland.
- 1.8. Discourage uses and practices that generate unnecessary air pollution
- 1.9. Ensure the responsible extraction of gravel and sand resources so as to provide long-term benefits to the Town.
- 1.10. Incorporate River Corridor protection into Readsboro's Inundation Hazard Area Regulation.
- 1.11. Encourage the use of wood burning heat that is a renewable heat source that Readsboro's forests can support.
- 1.12. Readsboro forestlands should be managed so as to maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors

**Priorities for Action:**

- 1.1. Implement stream and wetland setback requirements or overlay districts to prevent degradation of the riparian environment and water quality. Consideration should be given to restrictions on uses and the maintenance of natural vegetated buffers.
- 1.2. Participate in Deerfield River Basin Planning efforts.
- 1.3. Participate in and meet the requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program so that property owners are eligible for flood insurance.
- 1.4. Regulate development in order to prevent loss of life or property by prohibiting further significant development within identified floodways and floodplains.
- 1.5. Evaluate the functions of significant wetlands and educate landowners about their values.
- 1.6. Develop/implement wetland protection regulations.
- 1.7. Use the zoning bylaw to restrict development on slopes greater than 25 percent and minimize earth disturbance, grading, and clearing of vegetation on slopes over 15 percent.
- 1.8. Require all applicants for resource extraction operations prepare, submit, and implement erosion control, stormwater management, and site restoration plans.
- 1.9. Require all applicants for resource extraction operations to operate in a manner that avoids or minimizes impacts to natural, scenic and historic resources, public infrastructure and quality of life for nearby residents to the greatest extent feasible. All extractions must be in legal standing with State and MSHA rules.
- 1.10. Acquire ANR River Corridor and River Corridor Protection Area maps for use in incorporating River Corridor protection into the Inundation Hazard Area Regulation.

<b>Goal 2: Protect and enhance biological diversity.</b>
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**Policies:**

- 2.1. Protect natural areas from development.
- 2.2. Sites or areas with rare species of wild flora or fauna shall not be used or developed in a manner that will destroy, diminish, or imperil those species.
- 2.3. Mountaintops and ridges should not be used or developed in any manner that will cause undue adverse impact to their natural and scenic beauty.

- 2.4. Avoid fragmentation of large blocks of significant wildlife habitat and maintain connectivity between habitat blocks as corridors for wildlife migration.
- 2.5. Protect important wildlife corridors from encroaching development and incompatible activities.
- 2.6. Encourage the US Forest Service to use timber harvesting methods that increase wildlife habitat in Lamb Brook and all their forest's.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 2.1. Support the protection of the identified special natural areas through conservation easements or other means of permanent protection.
- 2.2. Define, identify, map, and document Readsboro's significant wildlife and plant habitats.

**Goal 3: Balance the economic, environmental, and social benefits of forest and agricultural land.**

**Policies:**

- 3.1. Promote the use of Best Management Practices on private lands. Timber harvesting practices should protect surface waters, shorelines, and stream banks; and should minimize all adverse environmental impacts. Landowners anticipating harvesting are encouraged to follow a professionally prepared management plan, which encourages proper forest management practices.
- 3.2. Encourage participation in the Use Value Appraisal Program (also known as Current Use).
- 3.3. Harvest timber on town-owned property in accordance to the County Forester's recommendations within the restrictions of the Howe Pond deed.
- 3.4. Support forest and agricultural based industries and enterprises.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 3.1. Make information on Vermont's Use Appraisal Program available at convenient locations.
- 3.2. Promote the use of Agricultural Best Management Practices and Accepted Agricultural Practices for all farming operations.
- 3.3. Encourage additional summertime motorized use in the next USNF management plan.

## Chapter 6. HISTORIC, RECREATIONAL AND SCENIC RESOURCES

### 6.1 Historic Resources

There are numerous historic sites and structures in Readsboro, which are important to the Town's history and development. A 1974 Historic Sites and Structures Survey conducted by the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation identified the following structures as having local historical value and as deserving protection, maintenance, or renovation. These structures are noteworthy because of the architectural style or contribution to the character of Readsboro.

- Methodist Church, Heartwellville
- Old Coach Inn, Heartwellville
- First Baptist Church, Readsboro Village
- Old Wesleyan Methodist Church (presently the Historical Society building), Readsboro Village

The Readsboro Historical Society remains an active organization that preserves and celebrates the Town's history. The Historical Society operates a museum located in the converted Methodist Wesleyan Church on Main Street. There are 19th- and early 20th-century artifacts, furnishings, and photographs. The Historical Society also organizes guest speakers and summer programs

The center of the Town has changed very little in over 120 years. The following is excerpted from a 1997 memo from Robert McCullough, VTrans Historic Preservation Coordinator:

*The decline in Readsboro's industries over the past half-century has caused the corresponding decline in integrity of the community's built environment...The ragged state of many of the buildings – eroded by neglect and alteration – adds to the community's overall physical deterioration.*

*Nevertheless, the structure of the village remains substantially intact and relatively free of modern intrusion....The list of New England towns that once thrived from early 20<sup>th</sup> century timber product industries is probably a long one, but well preserved examples are undoubtedly scarce. There is much in Readsboro that would aid our understanding of this industry and period and the village is clearly an historic district that warrants eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. Indeed, recognition of the village's historic resources should be an initial step in any effort to reverse community fortunes.*

Almost all the buildings in the center are considered historically significant. A 1997 study of select buildings in Readsboro Village indicated that the following buildings would possibly be eligible for the National Register as individual structures:

- Readsboro Inn and Hardware Store
- E. J. Bullock Building
- Old Bee Hive – home to the Titus Stowe family, original owners of the site on which was founded the Readsboro Chair Manufacturing Company
- Tunnel Street Tenement

The benefits of being on the National Register include: eligibility for federal funding for rehabilitation; tax benefits for rehabilitation; limited protection from state or federal projects that may damage historic properties; and general recognition.

Unfortunately, many historical sites have disappeared. The “old firehouse” has been torn down and the Fred Boyd house, probably the oldest true saltbox architecture in Town, no longer stands. In addition, the Carrier Sawmill in Readsboro Falls has collapsed.

## **6.2 Recreational Resources**

Readsboro offers a wealth of recreational activities for those that enjoy informal, outdoor recreational activity. These opportunities include hunting, fishing, hiking, primitive camping, canoeing, kayaking, snowmobiling, ATV riding, skiing, snowshoeing, and biking. The Catamount Trail, North America’s longest cross-country ski trail that runs the entire length of the State, begins in Readsboro. The existing Catamount Trail from Readsboro to Whitingham has been targeted by various hiking and cross country skiing groups as an excellent place to further improve the trail connection. Major snowmobile corridors that are maintained by VAST cross Readsboro and connect to trails maintained by local residents that also provide winter recreation.

Community recreation facilities include two ball fields, a school gymnasium and a park. The Town ball field is located on land next to the Deerfield River. Historically, it has been used for Little League and adult softball league games. The Readsboro Central School offers a playground and ball field during the summer months.

A 400 acre Readsboro Family Park is located along the western side of Vermont Route 100 just west of the Village. This park is open to the public and it is maintained by the Readsboro Lions Club. It is used for picnicking, ATV riding, hiking, nature appreciation, and forest and wildlife management. There is also a playground for the children. The park can also be rented out for family reunions, parties, and other activities.

## **6.3 Scenic Resources**

Readsboro’s special scenic resources include:

- Readsboro Village
- West Branch of the Deerfield River
- King’s Farm on King Hill RD and its vistas of the Harriman Reservoir
- Lord’s Peak Overlook located in the South Hill area with views of the Village
- The rock ledge area in the Readsboro Family Park which overlooks the Village and has views of the Deerfield River Valley,
- The view of Harriman Reservoir from the former Boyd Farm on Potter Hill Road
- The open plateau on West Hill near the corner of West Hill Drive and Wiley Mountain Drive with views south to Massachusetts and east to New Hampshire
- The windmills on the Deerfield Wind Project in Heartwellville offer 360 degree views of the surrounding towns and states.
- While not located in Readsboro, some of the windmills from the Hoosac Wind Power Project located in Florida, MA are visible from Readsboro.

**Goal 1:** To be stewards of Readsboro’s recreational, scenic, and cultural resources.

**Policies:**

- 1.1. Preserve and protect historic properties.
- 1.2. Encourage creative and adaptive reuse of historic buildings.
- 1.3. Accept pertinent artifacts and recorded history of the Town of Readsboro and provide a safe environment for the preservation of artifacts, records and photographs. Provide an attractive display site for all of the above.
- 1.4. Create a connection from Readsboro Village to the Catamount Trail.
- 1.5. All new structures shall be sited and designed to minimize adverse impacts on scenic resources by:
  - Encourage these areas to be enrolled in current use to minimize development and protect the scenic views.
  - Promote revitalization of agricultural uses where they have historically been.
  - Exterior lighting shall be minimized

**Priorities for Action:**

- 1.1. Investigate the value of and impact of nominating Readsboro Village to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.
- 1.2. Work cooperatively with the Windham Regional Commission, Vermont Division of Historic Preservation and the Preservation Trust of Vermont.
- 1.3. Expand exhibits of the Readsboro Chair Factory, Hoosac Tunnel and Wilmington Railroad because of their importance to the development of the town.
- 1.4. Add to files of the Annual Town, and School Reports, and Village Reports as valuable research resources.
- 1.5. Preserve photo albums and wall photographs.
- 1.6. Seek grant funding for preservation of records, photographs and other important records and artifacts.
- 1.7. Formulate and actively pursue a plan to connect the Catamount Trail with Readsboro Village.

## Chapter 7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As a rural community the Readsboro has a local economy based primarily on local services and home occupations. The Economy section of the Community Profile provides some income and occupation data that can be used in conjunction with this Chapter.

Since the late 1980's, Readsboro has struggled to revitalize its village. In 1988, the town experienced a setback in its economy when the Vermont Chair Company which had been built in 1911 closed. During its heyday, the Chair Company buildings stretched for two blocks. In the 1990's, Yankee Atomic Rowe located across the border in Massachusetts closed as did Deerfield Specialty Paper and the Hoot Toot and Whistle. All of these companies had been major employers for Readsboro residents.

Readsboro's economic base is restricted by the town's inaccessibility. As a result, economic growth in town has not mirrored what has most often been seen in other parts of the Region. The median household income remains lower than those for Bennington County, Windham County and the State of Vermont.

To address the relatively low wages and lack of economic growth, a Comprehensive Revitalization Plan was developed in 1998. The main issue that prompted the plan was (and remains today) the need to encourage investment in the village. Reinvestment in villages can promote compact settlement and add to the vibrancy.

In May 2006, to spur on the revitalization of Readsboro Village, the Town applied for and received Vermont Village Center designation. Village Center designation is a tool that can be used to support economic vitality in the village and become eligible for a number of benefits, including tax credits for building rehabilitation and improvements as well as priority consideration for state programs.

Readsboro's natural beauty, forested areas, historic village, and arts community are important assets that should be utilized as part of an overall economic development strategy. The type of economic development that is most suitable for Readsboro is the type that meets the social and economic needs of its residents while preserving the environment's ability to support it. Community based economic development approaches encourage local economic activity to ensure that the investment and wealth generated from these activities can be retained in the community.

Most recently, the local non-profit Readsboro Hometown Redevelopment has purchased and begun to work on rehabilitating and redeveloping the E.J. Bullock Building, a building viewed as the centerpiece of the village and that was once the core hub of activity for the Town. As of 2023 the building's rehabilitation continues but has not been completed to allow for any long-term use. In March 2008, Readsboro Hometown Redevelopment in partnership with Readsboro Arts Group held a public meeting to discuss effort to rehabilitate and redevelopment the Bullock Building and to discuss what uses the community would support in the building. Over 80 community members and town officials attended. The types of uses that the community supported for the building included:

- Meeting space
- Multi-purpose space for movies or performances
- Office space
- Studio and display space
- Retail space for local merchants

Home occupations, activities that can be carried on within a minor portion of a residence, continue to serve an important role in Readsboro by allowing for local economic development, encouraging the creation of new businesses, and providing flexible or accessible working conditions for residents. The Town recognizes the need of some residents to use their place of residence for limited non-residential activities. However, this must be balanced with the need to protect the character of its residential areas and to protect neighborhoods from nuisance. Most lots within the village center and its surrounding district have been built out requiring the need for growth in other zoning districts like the Rural Residential

Readsboro has suitable water and sewer infrastructure to support economic growth in the Village. However, the town lacks telecommunications infrastructure. Telecommunications technology provides an important opportunity to allow residents to work from home.

**Goal 1:** To support and promote the town’s current economic base to retain existing employment opportunities and increase availability of good quality employment opportunities.

**Policies:**

- 1.1. Encourage home occupations that do not disrupt neighborhood character.
- 1.2. Support the development of high speed internet service to all properties.
- 1.3. Utilize financial, physical, and technical resources to facilitate economic development, including the creative use and revitalization of suitable existing space for manufacturing and industrial activities, commerce, housing, and the arts.
- 1.4. Focus economic development activities in Readsboro Village, Expanded Village, and Hamlet districts.
- 1.5. Support recreational activities that bring in tourism to facilitate economic development.

**Priorities for Action:**

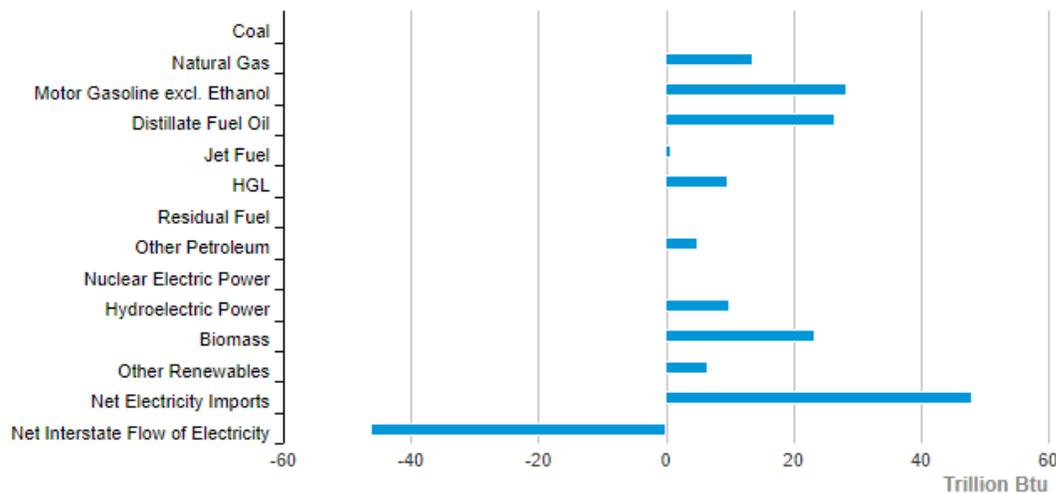
- 1.1. Invest in public improvements.
- 1.2. Maintain a list of sites for commercial/industrial development.
- 1.3. Develop a fact sheet and make available existing material on resources for small businesses.
- 1.4. Begin to work on a recreational activities and tourism marketing plan to promote Readsboro.
- 1.5. Work to market the Deerfield River as a recreation area.

## Chapter 8. Energy

### 8.1 Energy Uses

Readsboro's energy use patterns closely match those of Vermont, which are shown in Figure 8.1. In Readsboro, natural gas is not available, so the proportion of oil, propane, and electricity might be slightly higher than that shown for the entire state. According to the *Vermont Draft Energy Plan (2008)* the per capita demand for energy in Vermont has shown steady growth. Between 1990 and 2004, per capita energy demand rose roughly 30%.

**Vermont Energy Consumption Estimates, 2020**



**Figure 8.1: Vermont Energy Consumption Estimates 2020,**

Source: Energy Information Administration

Home heating and automobiles account for the greatest energy use. According to the 2000 Census, residents heat their homes primarily with fuel oil (52.4%) and secondarily with wood (18.2%). According to the 2000 Census, the majority of housing units were used fuel oil (52.4%) as the primary heating fuel. The remaining heat fuel sources include wood (18.2%), propane (16.6%), electricity (11.9%), and other fuels (<1%). coal or coke (0.6%), solar energy (0.4%), and other fuel (0.4%). Solar, hydro, wind and photovoltaic energy sources are little used locally at a residential scale. These figures only represent the primary heating source and do not illustrate whether or not there are multiple fuel sources being used. In addition, given the volatility of fuel oil prices over the last 5 years, it is possible that more homeowners are using wood as the primary fuel source which is encouraged.

As a rural state, Vermont continues to show a reliance on petroleum based fuels with a high number of vehicle miles traveled. The U.S. Department of Transportation estimated the per capita vehicle miles traveled in Vermont was 12,379 in 2005. Because there are very few industries or businesses in Readsboro, nearly all workers who live in the Town commute to work. According to the U.S.

Bureau of the Census (2000), of the 409 workers residing in Readsboro, only 82 commuted to work via carpool or public transportation.

Energy use for the Town government is much easier to quantify, since the Town budget includes energy line items. Energy line items for certain departments in recent years are shown in Table 8.2. Price increases in heating and transportation fuels have accounted for approximately a 70% increase in the past two years.

**Table 4.2: Annual Energy Costs for Town Facilities and Services**

FY21	Highway	Fire Dept	Solid Waste	Totals
Electric	\$ 4,320.71	\$ 3,229.23	\$ 1,048.12	\$ 8,598.06
Heat	\$ 5,105.24	\$ 2,185.83		\$ 7,291.07
Gas	\$ 59.24	\$ 377.91		\$ 437.15
Diesel	\$ 22,623.40	\$ 327.00		\$ 22,950.40
subtotal	<b>\$ 32,108.59</b>	<b>\$ 6,119.97</b>	<b>\$ 1,048.12</b>	<b>\$ 39,276.68</b>
FY22	Highway	Fire Dept	Solid Waste	Totals
Electric	\$ 3,464.91	\$ 1,218.18	\$ 1,061.48	\$ 5,744.57
Heat	\$ 9,328.52	\$ 3,622.05		\$ 12,950.57
Gas	\$ 94.73	\$ 534.09		\$ 628.82
Diesel	\$ 36,268.25	\$ 856.04		\$ 37,124.29
subtotal	<b>\$ 49,156.41</b>	<b>\$ 6,230.36</b>	<b>\$ 1,061.48</b>	<b>\$ 56,448.25</b>

Source: Town Reports

## 8.2 Electrical Infrastructure

One electric company, Green Mountain Power Corporation provides service to the Town. There are two electric transmission lines that run through town.

While not located in Readsboro, the Harriman Dam and Station are significant to Readsboro. Together, the Dam and Station feature three hydroelectric generating units capable of producing 40 megawatts of electric power. Harriman Station is located just over the border in Whitingham and is accessed by way of Readsboro.

According to the Vermont Department of Public Service, Readsboro Electric Department served 417 customers in 2006. Most of the system's energy is purchased from other systems. A small percentage of the system energy comes from hydro and other renewable sources. Concerns over managing the system in the face of increasing maintenance and repair costs prompted the Selectboard in 2008 to enter into an agreement with Central Vermont Public Service to purchase the system. Two Town Meeting votes in 2009 failed to ratify the sales agreement. The Town Meeting vote in March of 2010 gave the Selectboard the authority to sell the electric company as

their discretion. Shortly thereafter the Selectboard did sell. A few years later, CVPS was purchased by GMP to become the sole provider in Readsboro and many surrounding towns.

### **8.3 Energy Sources**

Energy sources within Readsboro are all renewable resources: wood, solar, hydro, and wind. In order to reduce dependence on conventional energy sources, of which the costs and availability are outside residents' control, the use of alternative energy sources is encouraged. Net metering is one way for a customer to realize savings from their individual energy production. Under net metering, the customer is permitted to connect suitable generating equipment to the public power grid. During periods when more energy is generated than the property is using, the metered amount of electrical energy provided to the grid reduces electric bills. In order to net meter, the customer must receive a Certificate of Public Good from the Public Service Board. Readsboro supports net metering, and does not view it as commercial use.

#### **Wood**

Wood is a relatively low-cost source of renewable energy. The Vermont Department of Public Service reported in 2000, the last time the state reported the data, that approximately 50% of the households in the region contained at least one wood-burning appliance.<sup>2</sup> Rising oil and electric costs have likely spurred new growth in the use of wood as a home heating fuel, both in the form of traditional cordwood and wood pellets. Readsboro has a large amount of woodland that, if effectively managed, could supply a reliable, local source of wood for heating purposes. The Town of Readsboro has a Forest Management Plan in place for the forest in the Howe Pond Watershed District.

#### **Solar**

Solar energy offers the greatest untapped, long-term energy potential. Solar energy can be used in a number of different ways, but the most likely for widespread use are passive solar heating, natural day lighting, and solar electric generation (photovoltaics), and for domestic hot water. In new home design, passive solar can decrease heating requirements by more than 50 percent. Also, there are big Vermont incentives and US tax credits for solar thermal and solar photovoltaic systems and availability of net metering.

#### **Geothermal**

Geothermal power is power extracted from heat stored in the earth. This alternative energy source, through a geothermal heat pump or ground source heat pump (GSHP), is a central heating and/or cooling system that pumps heat to or from the ground. It uses the earth as a heat source (in the winter) or a heat sink (in the summer).

#### **Hydropower**

Great River Hydro operates a system of hydroelectric facilities, dams and reservoirs on the Deerfield River. Power that is generated from these facilities is sold to New England's competitive market, perhaps some making its way back to Readsboro. The expansion of hydroelectric power

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<sup>2</sup> Vermont Residential Fuel Wood Assessment 1997-1998, Vermont Department of Public Service, December 2000.

is not anticipated at this time due to the fact that the majority of feasible sites have already been developed.

The potential for micro-hydro systems that generate between 5 and 100 kWh and do not dam rivers or streams is unknown in Readsboro. Their utility depends on the dynamic head, amount of water flow, and the efficiency of the turbine.

## **Wind**

Although their economic viability has been marginal in most situations, wind energy systems are beginning to be used as an energy source on a residential scale. Currently there is a 34.2 kW wind electric power system planned for installation in Readsboro on private property down the ridgeline from The Dome. Given the elevations and recorded wind speeds in Readsboro, there is a possibility that these could become a viable energy generation source for residents. The Town supports the use of residential wind energy systems subject to specific Site Plan Review standards that ensure the safety of the structure.

Ridgelines in and near Readsboro are capable of economic commercial-scale wind energy production, some of which have already been utilized as such. The potential economic and environmental benefits of wind as a clean and local energy supply must be balanced by analysis and mitigation of possible locally adverse impacts of large-scale installations in undeveloped areas of the Town.

Preparation through local planning for the location and design of large-scale wind energy facilities in the community is important. The Town must consider and address all factors related to such developments to decide what is best for the community. Opportunities for Readsboro to influence wind energy developments exist through the Town's party status in the Title 30 Section 248 Review mandated by Vermont Statutes before a Certificate of Public Good can be issued to a developer.

The Town considers the following among the most important issues to consider:

- **Economic benefit to the Town** - unlike commercial development on private land, a commercial wind energy development on GMNF land would add taxable value to the Readsboro Grand List and would increase federal revenues only marginally; local employment and business opportunities should be addressed with the developer during and after facility construction
- **Aesthetic** - concern for impact on scenic views and rural landscape character because of wind turbine location and height and a likely FAA requirement for night lighting of structures
- **Environmental** - necessity for ridge-line development, access road construction and maintenance, and possible detriment to important wildlife habitat and migration routes
- **Operational and safety issues** –proper attention to setback distances essential to deal with safety issues such as blade breakage and ice throw, automatic braking devices, trajectory of falling objects from the tower and sound reduction engineering to address noise-related concerns of nearby residences

In 1997 an 11 turbine wind generation facility was built in Searburg. In April 2009, the Vermont Public Service Board issued a Certificate of Public Good (CPG) for the construction of the Deerfield Wind project further down that same ridgeline. This project became operational in 2017 and is a 15-turbine, 30 MW wind generation facility built on 80-acres in the Green Mountain National Forest in Readsboro and Searsburg. Owned and operated by Iberdrola Renewables.

The Hoosac Wind Power Project is a commercial wind farm on Crum Hill in Monroe, Massachusetts and on Bakke Mountain in Florida, Massachusetts. Owned and operated by Iberdrola Renewables, it is the largest wind farm in Massachusetts, with 19 GE 1.5 MW wind turbines and a total installed capacity of 28.5 MW. The Hoosac Wind power project became fully operational in 2012, and provides enough electricity to power 10,000 homes annually. Some turbines are visible from Readsboro.

## **8.4 Conservation**

Readsboro is dependent upon energy generated or imported from outside its borders. Energy conservation is one way to reduce this dependency and develop more efficient use of energy. Recent significant increases in the cost of energy (*e.g.*, gasoline, heating fuels) have increased local interest in conservation measures.

Conservation can improve the quality of life for residents. For example, an energy efficient home can be more affordable over time; and ride sharing or non-motorized transportation can reduce air pollution and wear on bridges and roads. As shown in the Transportation chapter of this plan, Deerfield Valley Transit Authority ridership to and from Readsboro has more than doubled from 2003 to 2008.

Effective land use planning can promote energy conservation. Targeting new development towards areas located close to the community's major roads and existing settlements will minimize the energy consumed by residents commuting and will reduce the energy required to deliver essential services to residents and businesses. Decisions concerning capital expenditures on roads and other municipal infrastructure should be mindful of energy conservation.

The siting, design, and construction of buildings strongly influences the amount of energy needed for heating as well as the amount of electricity needed for lighting. Proper subdivision design, building orientation, construction and landscaping provide opportunities for energy conservation such as less vehicular travel, and by designs incorporating passive solar space and domestic hot water heating, natural lighting and photovoltaic electricity production. Readsboro regulates subdivisions through the Zoning Bylaw. There are provisions for Planned Unit Developments that encourage the clustering of buildings.

Additional energy savings can be realized by retrofitting existing buildings with insulation, more efficient doors and windows, weather-stripping, compact fluorescent lights, and more efficient appliances. The Bennington-Rutland Opportunities Council (BROC) offers many programs that can help income-eligible homeowners and renters. An example is BROC's Weatherization and Energy Conservation Assistance Program. BROC also offers fee-based services for residents who do not meet income eligibility guidelines.

Other programs that residents can avail themselves of include residential energy audits from Central Vermont Public Service, certification as an Energy Star Home by meeting strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the EPA and U.S. Department of Energy, taking advantage of rebates on Energy Star lighting and appliances from Efficiency Vermont, sales tax exemptions, and rebates from other programs such as the Vermont Solar and Small Wind Incentive Program. In addition, there are Vermont approved private companies that can do home weatherization and meet federal guidelines for rebates. Many factors may account for the fact that more Readsboro residents don't take advantage of available assistance and rebate programs. Efforts to publicize and explain them more widely and effectively seem warranted.

The reduction of the waste stream and recycling of solid waste are also important measures for conserving energy. The Town of Readsboro is a member of the Windham Solid Waste Management District (WSWMD). The Town of Readsboro recycles at the centrally located transfer station on Phelps Lane. Recyclables, including paper, cardboard, cans, bottles, compostable material, and some plastics are collected in containers and processed for commercial recycling at the WSWMD facility in Brattleboro. It is estimated that using recycled rather than raw materials often provide up to 50% energy saving. Education can help achieve knowledge and understanding of energy conservation techniques and may eventually lead to the acceptance of conservation measures.

<b>Goal 1:</b> Reduce energy consumption.
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**Policies:**

- 1.1. Support the use of individual on-site energy sources.
- 1.2. Residential connection of individual wind energy and photovoltaic systems to the electric power grid under "net-metering" shall not be considered commercial use.
- 1.3. With regard to all energy generation, transmission, and distribution projects:
  - Adhere to high environmental standard that includes avoiding negative environmental impacts to the extent possible and adequately minimizing or mitigating those that cannot be avoided;
  - Conduct thorough and proper studies and analyses of all anticipated socioeconomic and environmental impacts;
  - Adequately address all areas of concern related to facility operation and reliability; and
  - Effectively address all issues related to facility operation and reliability.
- 1.4. Participate in the hearing process for wind energy applications under Title 30, Section 248 of the Vermont Statutes and, for any application on US Forest Service Lands, in the Special Use Authorization public hearings.
- 1.5. Encourage energy efficient subdivisions and buildings.
- 1.6. Encourage the use of renewable energies like solar, to be installed on town buildings to offset municipal utility costs.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 1.1. Evaluate, and as appropriate, propose amendments to the bylaws to regulate the siting of systems that make use of renewable energy, such as solar panels and wind energy systems. Such regulations may allow for flexibility in the application of setback, height,

- and other requirements, and they should also allow for building design and placement that maximize passive solar energy use.
- 1.2. Encourage landowners with woodlots to participate in sustainable management programs.
  - 1.3. Explore the use of the former landfill as a potential future energy source.
  - 1.4. Encourage developers to maximize the local economic benefits by advocating the use of local businesses (trucking companies, contractors, etc.) during the construction and operation of the commercial wind facility.
  - 1.5. Develop a fact sheet of local business and resources
  - 1.6. Update the Planned Unit Development provisions in the bylaw to provide density bonuses as an incentive to clustering development.
  - 1.7. Promote the reduction of transportation energy use by supporting carpooling, public transit, and the use of energy efficient vehicles.
  - 1.8. Support the programs of BROOC and Efficiency Vermont.
  - 1.9. Consider energy use and efficiency when making municipal investment and expense decisions.

## **Chapter 9. HOUSING**

### **9.1 Housing Supply**

While there is a variety of housing types and living options available in Readsboro, the predominant living unit is the single-family detached dwelling. Approximately three-quarters of Readsboro residents (75.2%) live in this type of housing. Two to four family dwelling (11.5%) and 20 or more unit dwellings (6%) are the next most prevalent accommodation types. Included in the balance are mobile homes, which accommodate approximately 4 percent of Readsboro residents. Readsboro's multi-family housing tends to be located within the Village center.

With the exception of the densely settled Village center, most recent residential development has occurred in a dispersed development pattern. Readsboro's newer houses (164 between 1980 and 2000) have been built outside the Village center. The subdivision of land has occurred in a random manner, with a small number of lots being subdivided at a time rather than large developments.

Almost half of Readsboro's housing was constructed prior to 1940. These older housing units add to the Town's historic character but also can present a challenge to property owners. Having a high percentage of older housing is not unusual for a Vermont town. However, common problems in housing that pre-dates World War II include dated electrical wiring, poor energy efficiency, and the possibility of lead paint, a health issue particularly in homes with small children. Windham Housing Trust operates a regional rehabilitation program that provides loans for home rehabilitation for low-income households in Readsboro. The Bennington-Rutland Opportunities Council operates a Weatherization program.

There are a total of 499 housing units in Readsboro, according to the 2020 ACS. Of the total housing units, approximately 58 % (289) of them are occupied. Owner-occupied housing accounts for 83% (241) of the occupied housing units with the remaining 17% (48) of occupied-housing units being renter-occupied. Of those 92 units, 24 units are restricted, meaning that they are reserved for elderly, disabled or low and moderate-income households.

### **9.2 Housing Affordability Analysis**

Traditionally, housing is considered affordable when a household spends no more than 30 percent of its gross income on housing. Housing costs for renters include rent and utilities (heat, hot water, trash disposal, and electricity). Housing costs for homeowners include mortgage principal and interest, property taxes, property insurance and utilities. Since affordability is determined by monthly costs, interest rates, the age of the home, and maintenance costs are factored into the overall costs. In addition, Readsboro, due to its location and limited number of jobs available within the town, the cost for travel to and from medical appointments, jobs and shopping increases the household spending on transportation related costs.

There are several factors that have contributed to these increased housing costs, including higher costs of labor and building supplies, costs related to building permits, and costs related to providing waste and water systems and utilities that meet applicable standards. An additional factor which made a significant contribution toward high housing costs in the late 1980's and that is still felt

today<sup>3</sup> is the inflationary effect caused by the demand for second homes in Vermont by non-residents.

The hourly wage a household must earn in order to afford a rental unit at Fair Market Rent<sup>4</sup> and only pay 30% of its income towards housing costs varies depending on the number of bedrooms in a unit. Fair Market Rent in 2022, for a two bedroom unit in Bennington County,<sup>5</sup> is \$1018. This monthly cost requires a renter to earn an hourly wage of \$19.57 (assuming a 40 hour work week) to afford. This would equal an annual income of \$40,720. Table 10 helps put the affordability gap for rental units in perspective by showing the top 12 most common jobs in Southern VT.

**Table 5: Occupational Wage Estimates for the Southern Balance of Vermont, 2021**

Occupation	Mean Hourly Wage	Mean Annual Income
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	20.60	42,850
Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	27.36	56,910
Sales and Related Occupations	19.18	39,890
Production Occupations	20.63	42,910
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	16.36	34,030
Management Occupations	42.53	88,460
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	44.01	91,530
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	19.02	39,560
Construction and Extraction Occupations	23.36	48,580
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	18.52	38,520
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	25.58	53,210
Healthcare Support Occupations	17.14	35,640

Data provided by Vt Dept of Labor, Economic & Labor Market Information

The cost of homeownership continued to rise in 2022. According to the Vermont Department of Taxes, the median purchase price for a primary residence < 6 acres in Readsboro in was \$120,700, with an average purchase price at \$122,887<sup>6</sup> To purchase a home with < 6 acres at the median price, an annual household income of \$42,840 would be needed.<sup>7</sup> The median purchase price for a primary residence 6+ acres in Readsboro in was \$130,550, with an average purchase price at \$161,433<sup>8</sup>. To purchase a home with 6+ acres at the median price, an annual household

<sup>4</sup> Fair Market Rent is the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile and what is commonly used by US Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD). Median rent would be the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile.

<sup>5</sup> HUD calculates county values only.

<sup>6</sup> The median price of primary residences sold is the middle of selling price of all primary residences sold in ascending order for the given year.

<sup>7</sup> This has been calculated using the Vermont Housing Data online Home Mortgage Calculator ([www.housingdata.org](http://www.housingdata.org)). It assumes a 5% down payment, average interest rates, average property taxes, average property and private mortgage insurance premiums, average closing costs, and that a homebuyer can afford to spend 30% of their income for housing expenses.

<sup>8</sup> The median price of primary residences sold is the middle of selling price of all primary residences sold in ascending order for the given year.

income of \$45,412 would be needed.<sup>9</sup> According to the American Community Survey, the estimated median household income in 2021 is \$60,833, an increase of 47% since the 2008-2012 estimate.

In addition to home prices rising, homeownership costs are also increasing. According to Vermont Department of Public Service’s Fuel Price Report on April 4, 2023, No. 2 Fuel Oil (commonly used for home heating) was on average \$3.629 per gallon. This has risen from an average \$2.409 per gallon on Jan 2, 2017, an increase of 66% in five years.

One subset of Readsboro’s population that may be struggling to afford housing in the community is elderly on a fixed income and single parent families. The 2020 ACS data indicated that Readsboro had 84 householders of whom were over the age of 65. There were 38 single heads of family household in Readsboro in 2020. If each of these groups continues to show an increase by 2030, it may result in an increased demand for more affordable housing.

### 9.3 Home Ownership

In 2021 the average sales price for a residential home in Readsboro is \$137,507. This amount is below the average sales price of a similar home in many of the surrounding areas as shown in table 10.

**Table 6: 2021 Average Sales Price of a Home on < 6 acres and of a Home 6+ Acres**

(Source: Vermont Department of Taxes)

<b>Town</b>	<b>Average Sales Price in 2021</b>
Readsboro	\$137,507
Whitingham	\$270,928
Wilmington	\$512,333
Stamford	\$307,104
Searsburg	\$253,333

Combining this information with the median household incomes, the average Readsboro household should be able to purchase the average home in Readsboro.

### 9.4 Future Housing Needs

#### Homeownership Opportunities

U.S. Census data reveals that from 2010-2020 Readsboro’s population decreased by 8% and the number of owner-occupied housing increased by 19.7%. It appears that the Town’s supply of owner-occupied housing has kept pace with population increases. Should this trend continue, it appears that there will be adequate housing supply to meet the needs of the population who desire homeownership.

<sup>9</sup> This has been calculated using the Vermont Housing Data online Home Mortgage Calculator ([www.housingdata.org](http://www.housingdata.org)). It assumes a 5% down payment, average interest rates, average property taxes, average property and private mortgage insurance premiums, average closing costs, and that a homebuyer can afford to spend 30% of their income for housing expenses.

What is striking about the housing in Readsboro is that the prices of homes are selling at significantly less than the surrounding towns. This seems to indicate Readsboro is an island of affordability as compared to the surrounding towns. The long-term effect of this is that Readsboro could experience growth pressures from people who move to town because of the lower housing prices, thereby creating a lack of affordable housing.

### **Rental Housing**

Census data indicate that the number of households in Readsboro has increased by 32% between 1980 and 2000, but decreased -10% from 2000-2020. Census data for 2010-2020 also shows a 23% decrease in the number of rental units. This data suggests that rental housing development exceeded the growth of the number of households.

The 2020 ACS data puts Readsboro's vacancy rate for rental properties at 0% available. This is lower than the Bennington County vacancy rate of 5.3%. Vacancy rates for rental housing relative to rental rates are a determining factor in identifying the need for additional rental units. Generally, apartment supply and demand are considered in balance with a vacancy rate in the 5% range. Readsboro's rental housing market appears to be insufficient at this time. However, the fact that the median year rental structures were built was 1948 may be an indication that preservation and renovation of these structures may be needed in order to maintain the rental unit supply.

### **Housing for the Elderly**

Persons aged 64 and above are considered as elderly population. In Readsboro, approximately 16% of the total households are elderly people. Nationally, the elderly population is expected to grow and require special housing needs such as smaller housing units or community care units.

Given the aging population, it is apparent that the elderly population will be on the rise. To the extent that these individuals are able to live on their own and are not in need of significant care, their housing needs are not significantly different than the rest of the community. There is a noticeable increase in the special needs of people over the age of 75. The ability for an elderly person to stay in their home depends on connections to the community and services. Having a variety of housing options in the Village may help address the housing needs of people as they age.

## **GOAL 1: To Ensure the Availability of Housing for all Residents of Readsboro**

### **Policies:**

- 1.1. Support a range of residential development that meets the diverse housing requirements of a variety of household types and income groups.
- 1.2. Support housing, which meets the needs of special groups, such as low income, elderly and handicapped.
- 1.3. Require housing development to be coordinated with the adequate provision of public services, facilities and utilities. The Town shall consider vacation or seasonal homes by the same standards as permanent homes.

- 1.4. Support the rehabilitation of housing in Readsboro.
- 1.5. Preserve the rural qualities of Readsboro, including areas of low-density development..
- 1.6. Promote affordable and reasonably priced housing in the Village Zoning District and in areas outside of the Village where due consideration is given to important natural resources.
- 1.7. Support the coordination of housing rehabilitation and historic preservation when appropriate and feasible.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 1.1. Consider density bonuses as part of Planned Unit Developments as an effective tool to encourage the development of affordable and reasonably priced units.
- 1.2. Identify property owned by the Town where housing would make sense and promote such development with non-profit and for-profit housing developers.
- 1.3. Investigate using funds yielded from tax sales of delinquent properties for a revolving fund for creating housing rehabilitation opportunities.
- 1.4. Encourage eligible property owners to apply for BROOC Weatherization assistance program and Windham Housing Trust regional rehabilitation program.

## Chapter 10. LAND USE

### 10.1 Existing Land Use

The Town of Readsboro is 23,360 acres. Readsboro Village functions as the center of civic and commercial activity. Lot sizes are varied and there is a diversity of densities in housing and commercial activities. While several single-family homes remain, many of the larger homes have been divided into apartments and several businesses have created apartments in their buildings. The combination of residential and commercial in close proximity have helped spur renewed investment and interest in the Village.

Heartwellville, located at the crossroads of Routes 8 and 100, was historically a prosperous community with a mix of commerce and residences. Today, residential development is the predominant form of development. These homes depend on individual water and wastewater systems.

A small residential development, known as Alpenwald Village, exists near the former Dutch Hill Ski Area. This subdivision was created when Dutch Hill was a viable ski area for vacation use. Many of the homes in this area are now full-time residences. Lot sizes in Alpenwald Village vary in size. A similar subdivision exists on Heartwellville View Road.

The majority of residential development has occurred as low-intensity residential development along Readsboro's secondary roads. Some small-scale commercial activity is co-located with this residential development. These commercial activities are generally categorized as some sort of home occupation. Continued growth of low impact commercial development to include but not limited to offices and childcare facilities is encouraged.

Readsboro has several extensive land areas that are in public ownership. Lands under the jurisdiction of the United States Forest Service, and therefore part of the Green Mountain National Forest include: Lamb Brook, the area between Route 8 and the George Aiken Wilderness Area, the former Dutch Hill Ski Area, and lands along the Hoosac Range Ridge.

Other publicly conserved lands include the Howe Pond Forest and the Readsboro Family Park. All of these are forested. Table 12 provides further information about the lands that are conserved in Readsboro.

Development on municipal lands must meet local regulations. Development on federal lands does not usually require local permits, since federal authority supersedes local regulation. However, the GMNF is becoming much better at working with municipalities on making proposed development compatible with local planning.

In addition to the publicly conserved lands, there are several pieces of land that have private conservation easements on them. Most notably are the TransCanada lands that are located just south of the village area along Harriman Station Drive. These lands have a conservation easement held by the Vermont Land Trust that allows economic development associated with hydroelectric power generation.

**Table 7: 2009 Conservation Lands in Readsboro** (Source: GIS Data)

<b>Public Conservation Lands</b>		
Owner/Manager	Acreage	Percent of Total Town Acreage
United States Forest Service	8807	38%
Town (Howe Brook Forest)	631	2.7%
Readsboro Family Park	400	1.7%
<b>Private Conservation Easements</b>		
Great River Hydro	305	1.3%
Private Landowners	298	1.3%

In the late 1970's, the State of Vermont created the Use Value Appraisal Program, better known as Current Use. The Current Use Program is administered by the VT Department of Taxes and offers landowners use value property taxation based on the productive value of land rather than the traditional "highest and best" use of the land. In 2009, 2,203 acres of land in Readsboro were enrolled in the program. In 2022, 4944.67 acres are enrolled which is over double since 2009.

For the most part, Zoning Districts in Readsboro correspond with existing land use patterns and have helped shaped the pattern of development that exists. Last updated in 2021, the Readsboro Zoning Bylaw provides the following Land Use Districts: Village, Hamlet, Rural Residential, Rural Residential Alpenwald, Watershed, and Conservation. Although the Town Zoning Bylaw contains provision for techniques such as Planned Unit Development that could conserve open space, this has not been widely used. The subdivision of land has largely been done on a parcel-by-parcel basis, as there has not been a large demand for new housing in Readsboro, with the exception of rental properties.

## **10.2 Future Land Use**

The assessment and classification of lands is important as it illustrates how the objectives and policies stated elsewhere in the Plan can be applied within the Town. Unplanned, poorly designed, and unwise development of land that is marginal, unsuitable or has a high resource value may result in public nuisance, unnecessary expense, unsafe or unhealthy conditions, and may diminish resource values important to the Town. The following future land use areas are based on information currently available. The future land use descriptions and policies represent a vision for the use and development of the lands in the Town of Readsboro, and the means to realize this vision. The Future Land Use Map depicts the areas that are described below. These descriptions are for planning purposes only. Specific zoning districts are designated in the Zoning Bylaw.

### **Village**

The Village area of Readsboro is the most densely settled part of the Town. The current mix of retail uses, public facilities and institutions, and residential uses should be continued and supported as much as possible. A major portion of Readsboro's economic development should occur in the Village, as it has sewer and water, is centrally located, and historically has been the Town's economic center. Appropriate reuse of vacant or underused existing structures or in-fill development is the preferred means by which new growth should be accommodated. Infill development should respect the historic character and function of the area. Efforts to enhance the pedestrian-friendly character are encouraged. The existing density should be maintained or even increased in order to support the vitality of the Village. Permit requirements in the Village should

be designed to facilitate ease of commercial redevelopment while ensuring that the character and quality of the Village setting is enhanced.

In May 2006, Readsboro Village became designated as a Vermont's Designated Village Center. This designation lasts for five years and is a tool that can be used to support economic vitality in the village core. Villages that receive this designation are eligible for a number of benefits, including tax credits for building rehabilitation and improvements as well as priority consideration for state programs. It is important to note that this designation is limited to historic structures, sites and businesses located within a specified boundary proposed by the Planning Commission, and by the Downtown Board within the guidelines provided by the State of Vermont. Readsboro reapplied in 2011 and received designation renewal and intends to reapply in 2016. The addition of the Route 100 Scenic Byway (now in the final stages of approval) through our historic Village Center Designation and our Main Street should enhance our application.

Industrial development may be compatible in some portions of the Village. Readsboro currently lacks a cohesive area for industrial development. Town owned property in the Village should be encouraged to be reused for industrial development. The Great River Hydro lands located along Harriman Station Drive have been identified as an area where industrial development would be appropriate, however, conservation easements on the property will likely restrict future development in that area.

### **Hamlet**

The Hamlet area, known as Heartwellville, is an area where mixed-use development is encouraged. The Hamlet lacks public utilities and is settled at a lower density than the Village; nonetheless, it is an appropriate node for mixed-use development due to its history and location at a crossroads of State highways. It should accommodate a broad range of development that is consistent with the principles of compact, human-scale design that will maintain the traditional social and physical character, as well as scale of the existing development. A mix of uses such as low-impact retail uses (antique shops, bed and breakfasts and inns, professional offices, personal service shops), various housing types, and civic uses are encouraged. Development in this small community should not sprawl along the highway corridors. Consideration should be given to a somewhat higher residential density, as long as the capacity of the soil to handle wastewater is not exceeded.

### **Expanded Village**

This designation is intended to promote moderate density residential and light commercial development consistent with existing land uses and sensitive to the limitations of the land outside of the current village district. This designation recognizes that there are already areas committed to a pattern of small rural lots that are easily accessible by the existing road system. In general, these lands do not contain significant natural resource values (agricultural soils, productive forest, wildlife habitat, etc.). Due to the small lot sizes, residential and commercial development and its accessory uses are appropriate for this district. Expanding the sewer district into this district would spur compact development.

### **Residential**

This designation is intended to promote moderate density residential development consistent with existing land uses and sensitive to the limitations of the land. This designation recognizes that there

are already areas committed to a pattern of small rural lots and that are easily accessible by the existing road system. In general, these lands do not contain significant natural resource values (agricultural soils, productive forest, wildlife habitat, etc.). Due to the small lot sizes, residential development and its accessory uses are appropriate for this district.

### **Rural Residential**

This designation is intended to promote low to moderate density residential development consistent with existing land uses and sensitive to the limitations of the land. This area is appropriate for semi-rural to rural private residences. Rural Residential land uses such as agriculture, forestry, recreation, home industries, and light commercial uses (retail, bed and breakfasts, personal services, etc.) are appropriate as long as they relate satisfactorily to neighboring land uses and the land is capable of supporting the intended development.

### **Resource Lands**

The objective of this designation is to promote low-density development that is in keeping with the rural character while at the same time protecting the environmental features located in the district. Environmental features include significant visual, historic, natural features (as identified in this Plan); wildlife corridors; wetlands, floodplains, streams and adjacent critical areas; land with elevations of 2,500 feet; aquifer recharge areas; and slopes in excess of 25 percent. Development in the designated Resource Lands should be at low densities which can be sustained by minimal infrastructure improvements, cause minimal environmental degradation, and which will not cumulatively create the future necessity or expectation of increased levels of municipal services.

### **Forest Resource**

Forest Resource lands are defined as lands in Readsboro that are either publicly or privately conserved or are enrolled in the Current Use Program with an approved forest management plan in place. They are large, essentially undeveloped areas, which may lack access to improved public roads or public utilities and services. They are predominantly forested with substantial physical limitations to development. Most of the land in the Forest Resource District is owned by the Green Mountain National Forest. Significant parcels of land are also owned by Town. Also in this district is the Readsboro Family Park which is managed by the Lions Club on behalf of the children of Readsboro. Development within this district is discouraged and should be highly regulated.

It is the goal of this designation to promote a sustainable ecosystem, prosperous and sustainable forest industry, and abundant recreational opportunities including motorized use. Therefore, residential, commercial, and industrial uses are not encouraged in this district.

### **Other Land Use Considerations**

The Water Resources Map identifies two other important planning and design concerns, which should be considered by landowners in their own planning as well as further studied by the Planning Commission to determine if regulatory approaches are warranted.

Riparian Areas: Areas located within 50 feet of a stream are identified as being sensitive. Riparian areas have value as habitat and travel corridors and serve important functions such as protecting

the physical and scenic quality of streams. Riparian corridors include areas subject to flood hazards, of both inundation (FEMA/NFIP) and fluvial erosion hazard (FEH) nature. Regardless of the land use district, new uses that are proposed must respect the sensitive nature of the stream and sites should be designed to enhance the values of the riparian areas.

Watersheds: This Howe Pond watershed is an important part of the public water supply for the Town. The watershed should be carefully regulated to maintain low-density development and high standards for sewage disposal systems. Streams that are over 2,500 feet in elevation are classified to be designated Class A by Vermont Statute. Potential water quality impacts are closely regulated. Water quality issues of concern in Class A Watersheds include runoff, erosion, and sedimentation. Both of these watersheds are delineated on the Natural Areas and Wildlife Resources Map and the Water Resources.

**Goal 1:** To promote a compact village and a hamlet surrounded by rural countryside.

**Policies:**

- 1.1. Manage growth and development in a manner that protects Readsboro's natural resources, preserves the area's rural and village character, and does not strain municipal facilities and services.
- 1.2. Encourage both in-fill development and the appropriate reuse of vacant or underused existing lots and structures in the Village.
- 1.3. Expand municipal wastewater services outside the current village to areas that can support gravity flows. Creating a new expanded village that promotes compact settlement.
- 1.4. Concentrate development so as to maintain a compact pattern that makes more efficient use of land, existing infrastructure, and municipal services.
- 1.5. Require that commercial and industrial development in the Village is planned with regard to available services and facilities.
- 1.6. Continue to encourage economic development in the Town of Readsboro, which is compatible with the Town's character, and the Town Plan.
- 1.7. Encourage new development to strengthen the desirable characteristics and historic character of the Village and Hamlet.
- 1.8. Promote pedestrian travel, in the Village and Hamlet, by keeping development compact.
- 1.9. Allow and encourage home based business and industries in rural areas of the Town provided that such activities are compatible with the site and will not have undue adverse effect on the area.
- 1.10. Require that, where possible, public utilities and transportation facilities use the same corridors in order to minimize the impact on the environment and to assist desired development patterns.
- 1.11. Areas which provide water supplies, shall be protected from any disturbance, which affects the quantity or quality of clean water for public use.

**Priorities for Action:**

- 1.1. Review the existing Readsboro Zoning Bylaw to:
  - Refine and implement the Future Land Use Map;

- Provide a waiver on site dimensions for developing as a Planned Unit Development
  - Develop techniques to protect riparian, watershed and other natural resource areas.
- 1.2. Investigate non-regulatory approaches to protect identified natural areas such as watershed areas and shore lands.
  - 1.3. Study and identify areas suitable for industrial and commercial development.
  - 1.4. Develop guidelines for in-fill and reuse of vacant or underused existing lots and structures in the Village.

## Chapter 11. COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER PLANS

When Vermont's Growth Management Law, Act 200, was passed in 1988, Vermont set up a system for communities to work in concert with their neighbors, and with agencies of state government, to shape the future. As envisioned, decisions on local growth issues are to be made by the local communities; decisions of regional significance are to be made by the region's communities acting in consort. Town Plans are to be compatible with the regional plan and compatible with approved plans of other municipalities in the region.

### 11.1 Compatibility with Neighboring Town Plans

Readsboro shares borders with the Vermont towns of Whitingham, Wilmington, Searsburg, Stamford, and Woodford. Searsburg does not have an adopted Town Plan.

Wilmington: The Town of Wilmington adopted its current Town Plan in 2018. Located to the northwest of Readsboro, the two towns are separated by topography. There is no direct road connection between the two towns. Both towns are generally compatible with their land use designations along the border due to the fact lands are extensively in public ownership by Green Mountain National Forest or, in the case of Wilmington, under private ownership by the utility companies.

Whitingham: Whitingham lies to the east of Readsboro. Whitingham adopted its current Town Plan in 2018. The two towns are linked by VT Route 100. For the majority of the border, Whitingham has designated its lands so that they will essentially be undeveloped. The majority of the land is owned by the power company and is maintained for the purpose of power generation. In Readsboro, low density and low intensity uses are proposed. Both towns have similar viewpoints regarding protecting natural resources and the need to coordinate transportation improvements along Route 100.

Searsburg: Searsburg does not have a Town Plan or zoning regulations.

Stamford: Stamford is located to the west of Readsboro. The Town Plan was adopted in 2017. Readsboro and Stamford have compatible future land use districts along the border. The Alpenwald Village section of Readsboro stretches into Stamford and both towns have designated this area to accommodate residential development. The remaining areas have a compatible land use classification that is consistent with the conditions of the rugged terrain.

Woodford: Readsboro shares a boundary in the northwest corner of Town. Woodford re-adopted their Town Plan in 2015. The National Forest Service owns much of the land along the border in Woodford and in Readsboro. As such, compatible districts are proposed.

### 11.2 Compatibility with the Regional Plan

The Regional Plan is intended to provide guidelines for the planning and coordination of change and development, which will, in accordance with present and future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the Region. As proposed, the Readsboro Town Plan is compatible with the Windham Regional Plan that was adopted in 2021.

## **Chapter 12. RESPONSE TO VERMONT PLANNING GOALS**

The Town's response to the Vermont Planning Goals can be found throughout this document. Often times the goals, and therefore the responses, overlap from section to section. Our specific responses to the goals will be listed as they are found in our goals, policies, and priorities for action. The following should be viewed as a representative sampling of Readsboro's responses to the Vermont Planning Goals.

**Goal 1:** To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.

Chapter 3 Communication Policy – 16.2

Chapter 3 Communication Priority – 16.1

Chapter 6 Historic, Recreation and Scenic Resources Policy – 1.1, 1.2 and 1.5

Chapter 6 Historic, Recreation and Scenic Resources Priorities – 1.1

Chapter 7 Economic Development Policy – 1.4

Chapter 7 Economic Development Priority – 1.1

Chapter 9 Housing Policy – 1.6

Chapter 10 Land Use Policies – 1.1 through 1.8

Chapter 10 Land Use Priorities – 1.1, 1.2 and 1.4

**Goal 2:** To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities, that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.

Chapter 3 Communication Policy – 16.2

Chapter 5 Natural Resources Policies – 1.7, 3.1 and 3.4

Chapter 7 Economic Development Policies – 1.1 through 1.5

Chapter 7 Economic Development Priorities – 1.1 through 1.5

Chapter 8 Energy Priorities – 1.4 and 1.5

Chapter 10 Land Use Policies – 1.2, 1.6 and 1.9

Chapter 10 Land Use Priorities – 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4

**Goal 3:** To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.

Chapter 3 Community Library Policy – 8.1

Chapter 3 Education Policy – 10.1

Chapter 3 Education Priorities – 10.1 and 10.4

Chapter 3 Child Care Policy – 11.3

Chapter 3 Child Care Priority – 11.1

Chapter 7 Economic Development Policy – 1.2

**Goal 4:** To provide for safe, convenient, economic, and energy efficient transportation systems that respects the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.

Chapter 3 Emergency Management Planning Policies – 4.1 and 4.22  
Chapter 4 Transportation Chapter Policies 1.1 – 1.7  
Chapter 4 Transportation Chapter Priorities 1.1 – 1.7  
Chapter 6 Historic, Recreation and Scenic Resources Policy – 1.4  
Chapter 6 Historic, Recreation and Scenic Resources Priority – 1.7  
Chapter 7 Economic Development Policy – 1.2  
Chapter 7 Economic Development Priority – 1.4  
Chapter 8 Energy Policy -1.7  
Chapter 10 Land Use Policies – 1.8 and 1.10

**Goal 5:** To identify, protect, and preserve important natural and historic features of the Vermont landscape, including significant natural and fragile areas; outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shore lands, and wetlands; significant scenic roads, waterways and views; important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites and archaeologically sensitive areas.

Chapter 5 Natural Resource Chapter Policies 1.1-1.11, 2.1-2.6, 3.1-3.4  
Chapter 5 Natural Resource Chapter Priorities 1.1-1.10, 2.1-2.2, 3.1-3.2  
Chapter 6 Historic, Recreation and Scenic Resources Chapter Policies 1.1-1.5  
Chapter 6 Historic, Recreation and Scenic Resources Chapter Priorities 1.1-1.7  
Chapter 8 Energy Policies – 1.3 and 1.4  
Chapter 8 Energy Priority – 1.2  
Chapter 10 Land Use Policies – 1.1, 1.9 and 1.11  
Chapter 10 Land Use Priorities – 1.1 and 1.2

**Goal 6:** To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, and land resources.

Chapter 5 Natural Resource Chapter Policies 1.1-1.11, 2.1-2.6, 3.1-3.4  
Chapter 5 Natural Resource Chapter Priorities 1.1-1.10, 2.1-2.2, 3.1-3.2  
Chapter 10 Land Use Policies – 1.1, 1.9 and 1.11  
Chapter 10 Land Use Priorities – 1.1 and 1.2

**Goal 7:** To encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources.

Chapter 8 Energy Chapter Policies 1.1-1.6  
Chapter 8 Energy Chapter Priorities 1.1-1.9  
Chapter 10 Land Use Policies –1.8

**Goal 8:** To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors.

Chapter 3 Parks and Recreation Facilities Policies 9.1-9.2  
Chapter 3 Parks and Recreation Facilities Priorities 9.1-9.5  
Chapter 4 Transportation Policy – 2.1  
Chapter 4 Transportation Priorities – 2.1 and 2.2  
Chapter 6 Historic, Recreation and Scenic Resources Chapter Policy – 1.4

Chapter 6 Historic, Recreation and Scenic Resources Chapter Priorities – 1.3 and 1.7  
Chapter 7 Economic Development Priorities – 1.3 and 1.5

**Goal 9:** To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries.

Chapter 6 Natural Resources Policies – 1.7 and 3.1  
Chapter 6 Natural Resource Priorities – 3.1 through 3.4

**Goal 10:** To provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.

Chapter 4 Transportation Policy – 1.6  
Chapter 4 Transportation Priority – 1.6  
Chapter 5 Natural Resource Chapter Policies - 1.1-1.11, 2.1-2.6, 3.1-3.4  
Chapter 5 Natural Resource Chapter Priorities - 1.1-1.10, 2.1-2.2, 3.1-3.2  
Chapter 6 Historic, Recreation and Scenic Resources Policies – 1.1 and 1.5  
Chapter 6 Historic, Recreation and Scenic Resources Priorities – 1.2 and 1.8

**Goal 11:** To ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters.

Chapter 9 Housing Chapter Policies - 1.1-1.7  
Chapter 9 Housing Chapter Priorities - 1.1-1.4

**Goal 12:** To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.

Chapter 3 Community Facilities and Services All Policies and Priorities  
Chapter 4 Transportation Policies – 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 2.1  
Chapter 4 Transportation Priorities – 1.5, 1.5 and 2.1  
Chapter 10 Land Use Policies – 1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 1.10, and 1.11

**Goal 13:** To ensure the availability of safe and affordable childcare and to integrate childcare issues into the planning process, including childcare financing, infrastructure, business assistance for childcare providers, and childcare work force development.

Chapter 3 Child Care Policies 11.1-11.3  
Chapter 3 Child Care Priorities 11.1-11.3

**Goal 14:** To encourage flood resilient communities.

(A) New development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas should be avoided. If new development is to be built in such areas, it should not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.

(B) The protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion should be encouraged.

(C) Flood emergency preparedness and response planning should be encouraged.

Chapter 3 Emergency Management Planning- Policies 4.7 and 4.8  
Chapter 3 Emergency Management Planning - Priorities 4.8-4.10  
Chapter 4 Transportation Priorities – 1.6  
Chapter 5 Natural Resources - Policy 1.10  
Chapter 5 Natural Resources - Priority 1.10

## Chapter 13. TOWN PLAN MAPS AND EXPLANATIONS

A series of maps has been prepared to assist planners, public officials and citizens to understand the geo-physical, natural and man-made attributes of Readsboro and to assist in the planning process, governmental and business decisions. These maps are for planning purposes only. The goals, policies, actions, and associated narrative discussions in the body of the Town Plan prevail as the guidelines for the Town's future growth.

1. **Community Facilities and Utilities Map:** This map shows the location of existing community facilities and Town-owned facilities.
2. **Community Facilities and Utilities, Inset Map:** This map is an enlargement of the Village area with more detailed information.
3. **Transportation System Map:** This map shows the existing transportation network including the classification and surface type of roadways.
4. **Natural Areas and Wildlife Resources Map:** This map shows the lands over 2,500 feet in elevation, the approximate location of rare or uncommon plant species, bear travel corridors, deer wintering areas, and highest priority interior forest blocks and connectivity blocks.
5. **Water Resources Map:** This map shows surface waters, wetland locations, river corridors, special flood hazard areas, lands over 2400 feet, and watershed areas.
6. **Existing Land Use Map:** Shown on this map are general categories of land uses in the Town of Readsboro in 2022 and 2023. They include public and private conservation lands, land enrolled in the Current Use Program, and residential development. Existing structures and Readsboro's Designated Village are also located on the map.
7. **Future Land Use Map:** The general categories and locations for future land uses are shown on this map. The categories and their delineations are general guides. Complete descriptions of these future land use categories are included in the Land Use section.

