

# Swanton Town and Village Municipal Plan



**Swanton – “Cradled by the River”**

*Throughout history the development of Swanton has been greatly influenced by the Missisquoi River. “Missisquoi”, according to tradition, means “much grass” or “much water-fowl”, either name being expressive of the low marshy lands near its mouth in the heart of the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. The river has provided an excellent fishing source and transportation route for Native American passing through and settling here. To this date the river has provided the “Sound of Falling Water” at the site of the dam in the heart of the Village. This dam at Swanton Falls, formerly “Taquahunga Falls” became an emblem of the role of waterpower in Vermont’s early development. More recently the river has provided opportunities for boating, fishing, swimming, ice harvesting and fire protection above the dam.*

**Adopted by the Joint Legislative Body  
September , 2015**

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# Swanton Town and Village Municipal Plan

Prepared by the  
Swanton Planning Commission  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
FORWARD	8
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	10
A. .... PURPOSE .....	10
B. .... AUTHORITY .....	10
C. .... ADOPTION PROCESS .....	11
D. .... HISTORY OF THE PLANNING PROGRAM AND PLAN DOCUMENT .....	11
CHAPTER 2 – BACKGROUND	14
A. .... BRIEF HISTORY .....	14
CHAPTER 3 – SWANTON TODAY	16
A. .... POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS .....	16
B. .... HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS .....	19
C. .... NATURAL RESOURCES .....	24
D. .... PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES .....	31
E. .... EDUCATION .....	39
F. .... ENERGY .....	40
G. .... TRANSPORTATION .....	42
H. .... ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT .....	45
I. .... HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES .....	49
CHAPTER 4 – SWANTON’S VISION	51
A. .... VISION STATEMENT .....	51
B. .... LAND USE .....	53
C. .... TRANSPORTATION .....	60
D. .... PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES .....	62
E. .... NATURAL RESOURCES .....	67
F. .... HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES .....	70
G. .... ENERGY .....	71
H. .... HOUSING .....	72
I. .... ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT .....	73
CHAPTER 5 – IMPLEMENTATION	76
A. .... INTRODUCTION .....	76
CHAPTER 6 - COMPATIBILITY	83
A. .... COMPATIBILITY WITH ADJOINING COMMUNITIES .....	83
B. .... REGIONAL PLAN .....	85
APPENDIX A - SWANTON HISTORIC SITES AND STRUCTURES	87
APPENDIX B – SWANTON COMMUNITY VISIT REPORT	92

**LIST OF TABLES****PAGE**

3.1 Population Trends for Swanton Town and Village, Franklin County and Vermont.....	17
3.2 Population by Age Group as a Percentage of Total Population in Swanton and Franklin County (1960 – 2000).....	18
3.3 Housing Characteristics in Swanton and Franklin County (1990 – 2000).....	19
3.4 Housing Units by Type in Swanton and Franklin County (1990 – 2000).....	20
3.5 Year-Round and Seasonal Swellings in Swanton, 1970 – 2000.....	21
3.6 Percent Owner Occupied Housing Units by Value in Swanton and Franklin County.....	21
3.7 Household Income, 2013.....	22
3.8 Affordability Gap for Homeownership in Swanton.....	23
3.9 Rental Affordability in Swanton.....	23
3.10 List of State and Federally Owned Public Access Areas.....	30
3.11 Park and Recreation Areas in Swanton.....	37
3.12 House Heating Fuel in Swanton.....	41
3.13 Sufficiency Ratings of State Structures 20 ft and Over in Swanton (2014).....	44
3.14 Composition of Swanton’s Grand List, 2014.....	45
3.15 Occupation of Swanton Town Residents in 2013, Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Older.....	46
3.16 Industry of Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Older in 2013, Swanton, VT .....	47
3.17 Where Swanton Workers Live (2011).....	48
3.18 Where Swanton Residents are Employed (2011).....	48

**LIST OF FIGURES****PAGE**

1.1 History of Swanton Town Plan.....	12
3.1 Population Trends in Swanton Town and Village (1940 – 2010).....	17
3.2 Percent Population Growth,(1990 – 2010).....	18
3.3 Swanton Town Organization Chart.....	32
3.4 Swanton Village Organization Chart .....	33
3.5 Total School Enrollment in Swanton (2000 – 2008).....	30
3.6 Composition of Swanton’s Grand List, 2014.....	45

**LIST OF MAPS****PAGE**

Map 2.1 Current Land Cover.....	115
Map 3.1 Natural Areas.....	24
Map 3.2 Watershed.....	25
Map 3.3 Primary Agricultural Soils.....	27
Map 3.4 Wetlands and Flood Zones.....	28
Map 3.5 Septic Suitability.....	28
Map 3.6 Public Water Supply Source Protection Areas.....	29
Map 3.7 Public Facilities and Utilities.....	34
Map 3.8 Transportation.....	443

Map 3.9 Historic District.....49  
Map 4.1 Town and Village of Swanton Proposed Land Use.....53

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This plan is reflective of the thought and insight of the Swanton Planning Commission, the Swanton Village Trustees, the Swanton Town Selectboard, the Village Manager, the Town Administrator, and the Swanton Zoning Administrator.

The quality of this plan also reflects the superb work of the planning committees from the 2005 and 2010 plan updates, which were staffed by volunteers from Swanton Town and Village. The committee members added important local insight that helped this plan better reflect the interests and values of the entire community. Swanton encourages local participation at all levels of the planning process.

The Swanton Planning Commission:

James Hubbard  
Ross Lavoie  
Edward Daniel  
Andy Laroque

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## **FORWARD**

***The following letter was written to the municipality of Swanton by Kikata, Junne, Hirooka, Yoshiro Edward, and Tatsuya Utsuni, "Lasting Impressions", presented as part of the UVM/Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music, Historic Preservation Exchange at a public meeting held on October 12, 1993 at the Mary Babcock Elementary School, Swanton, Vermont translated from Japanese by Joy Seeley.***

To the People of Swanton:

"When you look at a town for the first time, and want to understand its essence, you must ask yourself "Why is it here, and not somewhere nearby?" You must look at its human activities, as its inhabitants interact with their natural setting, and you must pay close attention to clues that help you understand past activities as well as present ones. Among these various interactions of people with their environment will be one or two primary sources of a town's vitality and unique characteristics. We call this DORYOKUGEN, and this is what we looked for as we walked through your town yesterday.

Although a number of factors have had strong influences on Swanton's establishment and development, we found that Swanton's key DORYOKUGEN are its natural resources, specifically the river, which has provided transport, energy, etc., and the abundant limestone and marble available here which you and your ancestors could sell for income as well as use as building materials for the Town. Because of the river and quarries, people settled here, industries developed, railroads were put in, and Swanton flourished.

Throughout your town are many clues and indications which clearly point to the history of the human activities of those who lived here before you. Some of these, we photographed. Some, we sketched. Why are these signs of your past important? Because now, at the end of the 20th century, and on into the next one, they will be a fundamental source of identity and pride for present and future residents in Swanton. During the latter half of this century, transportation and communication systems changed dramatically. This resulted in enormous changes in the way humans interact with the immediate environment, the one in which they live. Before transport systems became super-high-speed and communication systems instantaneous, the identity of a town was readily apparent. One knew why it was there by watching its inhabitants make use of nearby natural resources to live and work and play. Now, a multitude of complex, invisible factors affect the character, activities, and even the very existence of the towns, making less clear that relationship of humans to their environment. This is true throughout the world, including our country of Japan.

Unfortunately, this often results in the loss of a town's original character, of what helps its residents love it and identify with it and with each other. This in turn results in loss of community spirit, of the willingness to contribute one's energies for the town's good.

Please do not let this happen to Swanton. You have a beautiful town that has retained all that is best about American culture and society: hard work, creativity, and a warm, openhearted community spirit. You have a rich, fascinating history that is closely related to your environment, and that history is clearly visible throughout the Town. Please preserve these traces of your past. They will remind you of who you are, and where you came from. They will provide you and your descendants with an ongoing source of inspiration as you work together towards the future. Thank you.”

# **CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION**

## **A. PURPOSE**

The purpose of a municipal plan is to help guide decision-makers in charting the future of a community. The Swanton Town and Village Municipal Plan contains a vision of the communities' future. Goals and objectives within the plan will help to guide the Town and Village to implement that vision. The plan also includes a brief reflection of the past and an examination of existing conditions.

As required by statute, this plan was developed from an established planning program. The planning program for this plan involved the public in a variety of ways. Through this collective effort the vision and recommendations were developed with the best interests of the community as a whole in mind. Particularly valuable to this plan was public input gathered from the Community Visit process, a program administered by the Vermont Council on Rural Development as a way to engage community residents to set common goals. Much of the community vision developed during the Community Visit has been incorporated into this plan.

It is anticipated that if recommendations of the Plan are implemented, the quality of life in Swanton will be positively affected. The Plan addresses topics including: land and land use patterns, population, housing, community facilities and services, transportation, education, natural resource features, historic, cultural and archaeological resources, energy, and economic development.

Recommendations within this Municipal Plan are based on an analysis of current conditions, the input of many residents, projections of housing and population, and development trends in the Town, Village, and surrounding region. The goals and recommendations of this plan are long-term and it is expected that Swanton will re-examine them periodically and amend the Plan as needed.

Beyond managing the Swanton Town and Village planning program and maintaining the municipal plan, the Planning Commission is charged with the following specific tasks:

- Developing the Zoning and Subdivision bylaws.
- Developing a Capital Budget and Program
- Providing additional information and data to guide decision-makers in developing new policies.
- Identifying areas where additional study is needed.

## **B. AUTHORITY**

The Town of Swanton is authorized to prepare and adopt a Municipal Plan via Chapter 117, Title 24 of the Vermont Statutes (Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act). Section 4302 of the Act specifies the statutory requirements of the law to be incorporated in a plan. The intent of the law is to encourage a municipality to "engage in a continuing planning process that will further several stated goals". The Act further states that municipal plans shall be re-examined, updated and re-adopted every five years. This process should be ongoing, whereby the Plan is continually reassessed and revised to meet the changing needs of the community. Consequently, there will be future opportunities to review and amend the Plan.

### **C. ADOPTION PROCESS**

The adoption of this Plan will be in accordance with Sections 4385 and 4387 of Vermont's Planning and Development Act (24 VSA 117). Prior to submission to the Joint Legislative Body, the Planning Commission shall hold at least one public hearing within the municipality after public notice on the amended Plan. At least 30 days prior to the first public hearing, the Planning Commission must deliver a copy of the amended Plan to: 1) the chair of the Planning Commission of each adjoining municipality; 2) the Executive Director of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission; 3) the Department of Housing and Community Affairs; and 4) any business, conservation or other interest groups that have requested a copy.

Following adequate opportunity for the public to comment on the draft Plan, the Planning Commission shall make any desired changes and then file a copy with the Town Clerk for public review. At the same time a copy is forwarded to the Joint Legislative Body for review. The Plan may then be adopted at a meeting by a majority of the members of the Joint Legislative Body after no less than two separate public hearings.

### **D. HISTORY OF THE PLANNING PROGRAM AND PLAN DOCUMENT**

In February of 1993, the Swanton Planning Commission requested a proposal for assistance from qualified planning consultants to assist them with establishing a planning program for updating the 1988 Municipal Development Plan for Swanton Town and Village. A month later, the Swanton Planning Commission interviewed several consultants and selected Research and Evaluation Specialists of Vermont (RESV), a planning consulting firm to assist them in updating the Plan. RESV worked with the Planning Commission to write this original Plan, which was revised in 1999, 2004, 2005, and most recently in 2010.

The Planning Commission decided on a planning program that would assess the existing conditions of the Town, involve the public throughout the process, and develop a vision for the future of Swanton that includes a series of goals, objectives and recommendations to implement the Plan. For the first edition of this Plan, the Planning Commission conducted a windshield survey of the Town whereby all existing buildings in Swanton were mapped.

Residents were asked to complete a planning questionnaire. They were also invited to participate in several public forums and Planning Commission work sessions. Residents were then asked to join a subcommittee and participate in drafting specific goals and recommendations for the Plan. The 2005 revision of the Plan also used the work of subcommittees to involve the community in updating goals and recommendations of the Plan. Figure 1.1 below lists the history of developing this Town Plan.

<b>Figure 1.1 History of the Swanton Town Plan</b>	
<b>1988</b>	Planning Commission created the Municipal Development Plan for Swanton Town and Village
<b>1994</b>	With a Municipal Planning Grant the Planning Commission sent out request for proposals to update the 1988 Plan. A new Town Plan was written by Research and Evaluation Specialists of Vermont (RESV) and adopted by the Town.
<b>1999</b>	General updates to the Town Plan were made to reflect changes in the community and its vision.
<b>2004</b>	General updates to the Town Plan were made to reflect changes in the community and its vision.
<b>2005</b>	Town Plan updated to assess current conditions in the town and to develop goals, objectives and recommendations that would lead to the implementation of the Plan. During this process Residents were asked to complete a questionnaire, participate in Public Forums and to join Sub-Committees as avenues to provide input.
<b>2010</b>	The Plan was updated once again to reflect general changes in the community
<b>2015</b>	The Plan is updated with the assistance of a Municipal Planning Grant. The Plan is restructured to incorporate language regarding flood resiliency, a new statutory requirement, and the incorporate public input collected from the Vermont Council on Rural Development’s Community Visit process. Northwest Regional Planning Commission aided the Town and Village of Swanton in this update.

This Plan contains a vision of Swanton fifteen years from now. It includes goals, objectives and recommendations to ensure that the goals of the Town are achieved. Before discussing the Town's existing condition, the Plan describes its future goals for a variety of areas including: land use; transportation; community facilities and services such as fire and police protection and park improvements; educational facilities and services; significant natural features; historic, cultural and archeological resources, energy and economic development.

The Plan then presents a set of implementation strategies (Chapter 5) to ensure that the goals and vision of Swanton are obtained. These strategies are based on the input of residents,

various local interest groups, public officials, members of the Planning Commission and Select Board and staff of regional and state organizations.

The Plan then provides a summary of existing conditions. It presents population and housing trends, discusses significant natural features, and examines local government including revenue and expenditure trends. This section of the Plan is supported by referenced material and data (some of which has been placed in the appendices).

The plan also contains a summary of the compatibility of the proposed land use areas in the plan with proposed land use areas for adjoining communities. It is important to remember that the changes that occur over the next several years may have an impact on adjoining communities. Swanton is sensitive to its neighbors and committed to cooperate mutually on regional planning issues.

A list of the historic sites and structures as recorded with the Division for Historic Preservation has been added as an appendix to the plan.

## **CHAPTER 2 – BACKGROUND**

### **A. BRIEF HISTORY**

Swanton Town and Village are situated on the Missisquoi River and Lake Champlain near the New York and Canadian borders. Swanton has a rich cultural heritage--with evidence of Native Americans camping in the area as early as 6,000 B.C. The Abenakis hunted, fished and camped near the Missisquoi River. The earliest confirmed date for an Abenaki village is 1682. The French were next to settle this area in pursuit of the rich marble deposits and timber resources.

Swanton is a typical early settlement--the town grew around the area of the Taquahunga Falls (site of the current dam in Swanton) on the Missisquoi River. The settlement patterns today are largely attributed to the natural features and the past hunting and gathering practices of early settlers. Until the mid 1800's, water transportation was the primary means of moving goods and services to Burlington, Montreal, and New York City.

Sawmills were established along the waterways to process and transport lumber products. In 1860, a railroad was constructed through Swanton to Maquam Bay and a facility was constructed for the interchange of goods from water to rail. Through the late 1800's several railroad lines provided important links to Canada and other parts of Vermont. These railroads were used to transport freight as well as passengers. Rail continued to be the major form of transportation until Interstate 89 was completed in the early 1970's, but rail travel is still part of Swanton today. The main line of the Central Vermont Railway follows the Route 7 and 78 corridors. Both passengers and freight are transported on this line. Wood chips also are transported from Swanton to Burlington Electric.

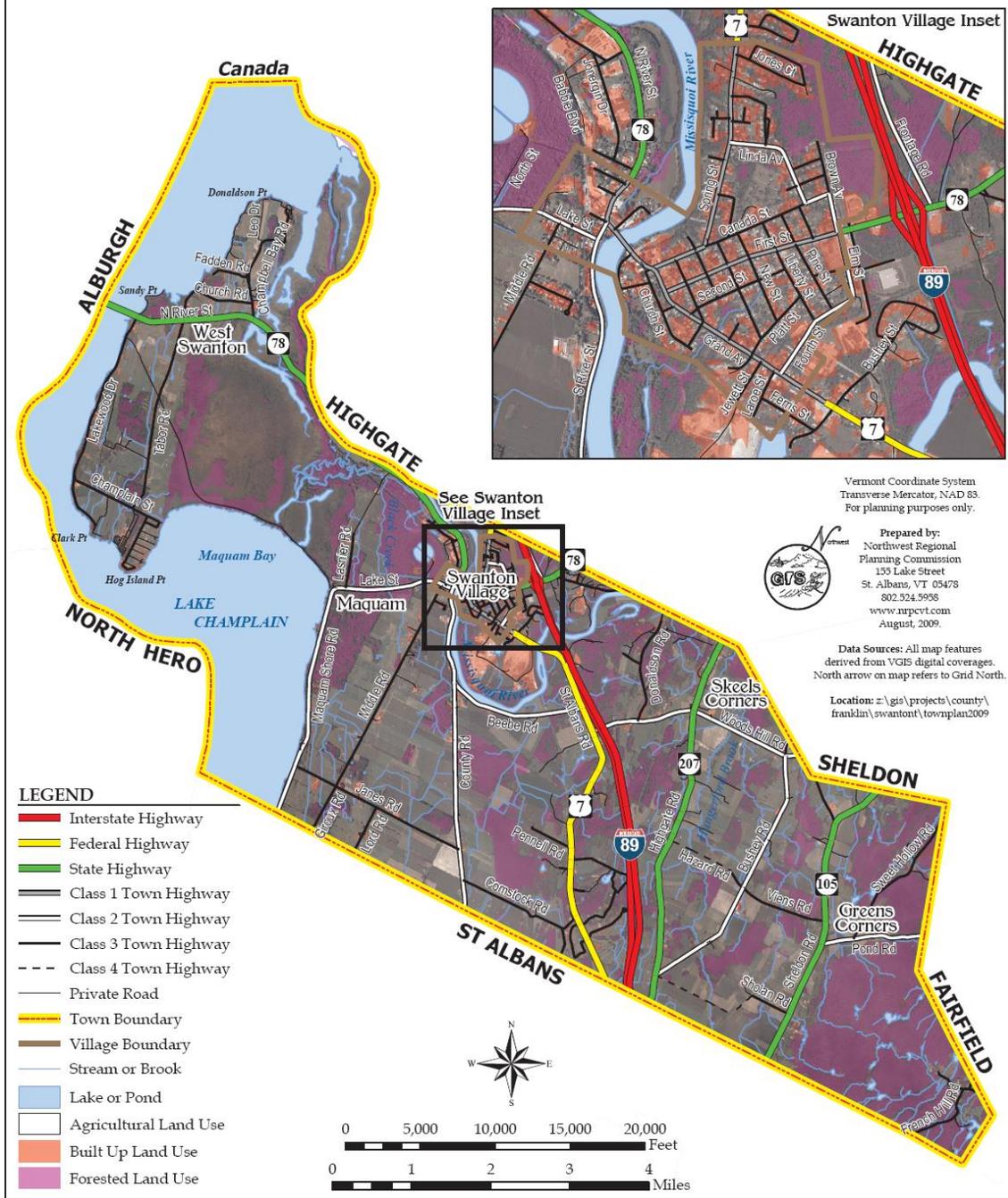
Today, Swanton is a rural community relying heavily on its agricultural and manufacturing heritage, natural features including Lake Champlain, the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, and the Missisquoi River, and increasingly upon tourism. The Town is at the hub for the transport of goods and services to Canada, New York, and other areas of Vermont. Swanton has a variety of business and industry, including cheese production, food products, machine tools, mining, castings, and computerized labeling.

The population of Swanton is diverse. A high proportion of the seasonal population resides in West Swanton. Swanton is the home of the Abenaki Nation of Vermont. The Abenakis continue to play a strong role in community activities. The Abenaki Tribal Council and the Abenaki Self Help Association have established a Learning Center and a Housing Project. Recent efforts include a health center, an employment program, and a summer lunch and activity program.

Swanton is working hard to bring additional industrial development to appropriate locations in the Town. Volunteerism and a strong sense of community spirit are prevalent throughout.

Map 2.1

# CURRENT LAND COVER TOWN & VILLAGE OF SWANTON



## **CHAPTER 3 – SWANTON TODAY**

To effectively chart the future, it is important to understand the existing conditions, issues, and opportunities of Swanton today. The primary purpose of this section is to provide the reader with an adequate understanding of various characteristics and trends of the Town such as population, housing and fiscal characteristics. This discussion will also provide a solid foundation for the goals and recommendations presented elsewhere in this Plan.

### **A. POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS**

#### **Population Trends**

The population in Swanton has doubled between 1940 and 2010. Swanton Village had fewer persons than the balance of the Town in 1940. Between 1940 and 1950, the Village annexed an area and associated population so that by 1950, the Village contained more persons than the balance of the Town. From 1950 to 1960, the Village and the balance of the Town grew by equal amounts. Beginning in 1960, Village growth began to level off, while Town growth started to steadily increase. Between 1980 and 2010 the Town increased by almost 1,400 people, while the Village population decreased. The growth in the Town as opposed to the Village might be attributed to several factors including the availability of land area in the Town to accommodate additional residential growth, the desire to have larger lots, and improved ability to commute to employment centers since the 1970s. Another factor slowing growth in the Village is the lack of undeveloped land.

Based on census data, Swanton increased by 224 people or by about 3.6% from 2000 to 2010. This is a much slower rate than has been seen in previous decades, but reflects a statewide trend. Population estimates from the 2009-2013 American Community Survey indicate that Swanton's population has remained stagnant since 2010. However, it should be noted that the Census is a much more accurate than the estimates provide by the American Community Survey. The population estimate from the 2009-2013 American Community Survey contains a considerable margin of error (plus or minus 20 persons).

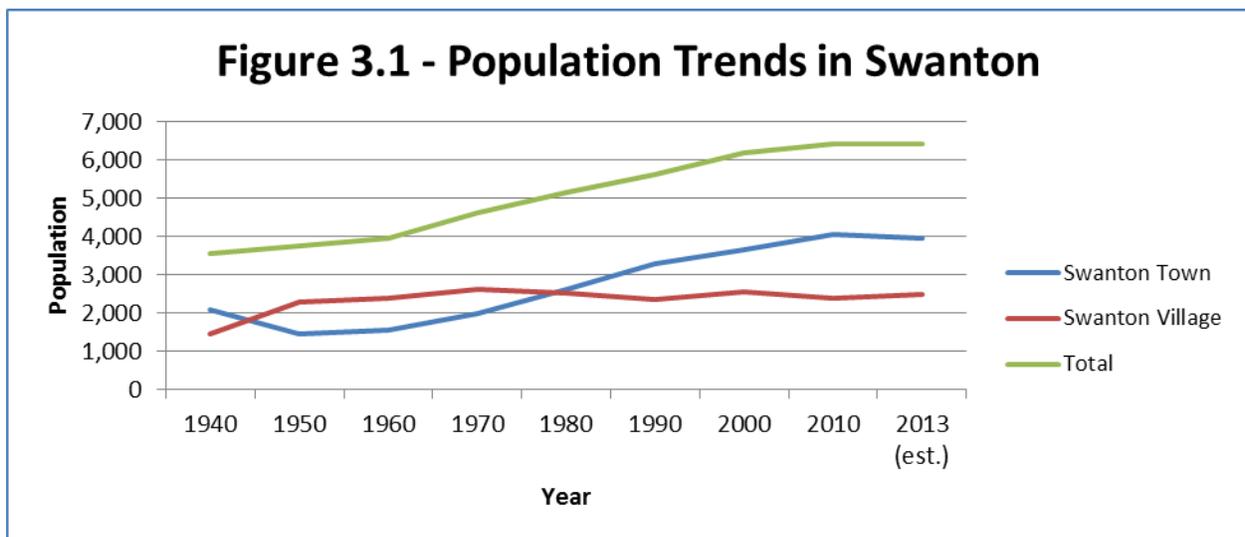
Population projections from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development indicate that Swanton will grow at a higher rate through 2030 at approximately five percent each decade.

**Table 3.1 - Population Trends for Swanton Town and Village, Franklin County and Vermont (1940 - 2030)**

Year	Swanton Town	Swanton Village	Total Town and Village	Swanton Total % Change	Franklin County	% of County Population	Vermont
1940	2,082	1,461	3,543	x	29,601		359,231
1950	1,465	2,275	3,740	5.6%	29,824	12.5%	377,747
1960	1,556	2,390	3,946	5.5%	29,474	13.4%	389,811
1970	1,992	2,620	4,622	16.9%	31,282	14.8%	444,732
1980	2,621	2,520	5,141	11.5%	34,788	14.8%	511,456
1990	3,276	2,360	5,636	9.6%	39,980	14.1%	562,758
2000	3,655	2,548	6,203	10.1%	45,417	13.7%	608,827
2010	4,041	2,386	6,427	3.6%	47,746	13.5%	625,741
2013 (est.)	3,943	2,480	6,423	-0.1%	48,019	13.4%	625,904
2020. (proj.)	x	x	6,773	5.4%	51,810	13.1%	653,575
2030 (proj.)	x	x	7,101	4.8%	55,647	12.8%	670,073

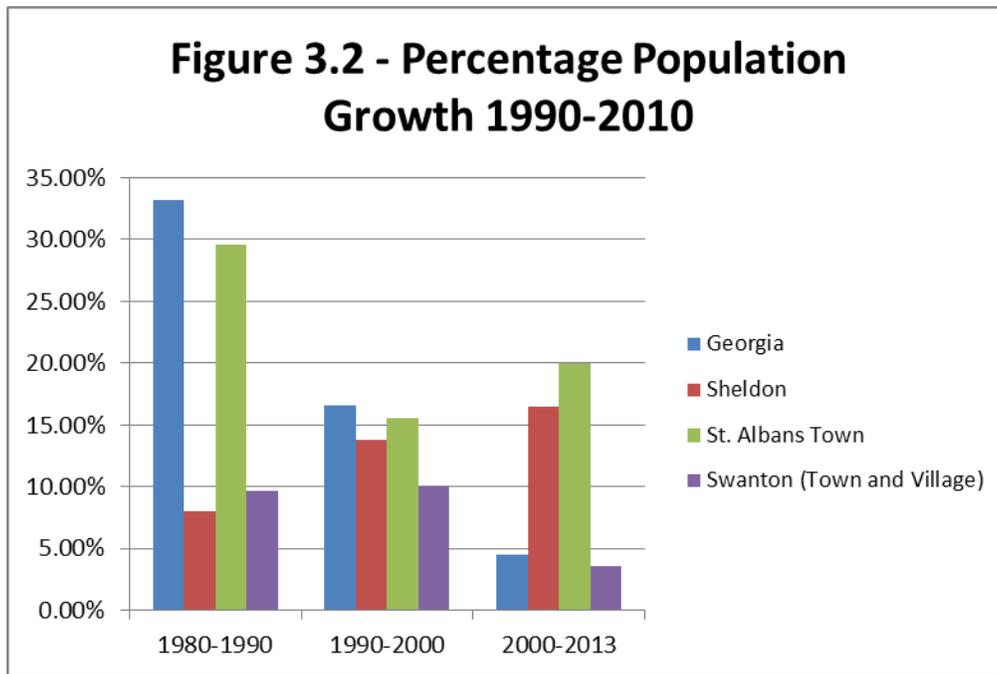
Source: 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 U.S. Census. 2009-2013 American Community Survey (ACS). Vermont Population Projections 2010-2030 (Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development - Scenario A)

Swanton Village had fewer persons than the balance of the Town in 1940. Between 1940 and 1950, the Village annexed an area and associated population so that by 1950, the Village contained more persons than the balance of the Town. From 1950 to 1960, the Village and the balance of the Town grew by equal amounts. Beginning in 1960, Village growth began to level off, while Town growth started to steadily increase. Between 1980 and 2010 the Town increased by almost 1,400 people, while the Village population decreased. The growth in the Town as opposed to the Village might be attributed to several factors including the availability of land area in the Town to accommodate additional residential growth, the desire to have larger lots, and improved ability to commute to employment centers since the 1970s. Another factor slowing growth in the Village is the lack of undeveloped land.



During the summer months, Swanton sees an influx of seasonal residents. Although it is impossible to accurately estimate seasonal residents, the 2010 Census notes that there are 253 seasonal housing units in the community used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. This influx of seasonal residents has a significant impact on Swanton's local economy.

As shown Figure 6.2, Swanton has not experienced the extreme growth spurts like some nearby towns in Franklin County. Growth spurts in the Region diminished between 2000 and 2010, yet there is continued, steady growth in Swanton and in Franklin County.



### Age Distribution

Swanton, like the County and State, has seen a decline in the population of school age children between 2000 to 2013. This has affected school enrollment numbers. Simultaneously, Swanton has seen a rise in the percentage of the population above 45 years of age, and particularly those over 65 years of age. Again, this reflects trends in Franklin County and in Vermont. The median age in Swanton in 2013 was over 40 years old.

**Table 3.2: Population by Age Group as a Percentage of Total Population in Swanton and Franklin County (1960 to 2000)**

Age Group	Swanton		Franklin County	
	2000	2013	2000	2013
Under 5 years	7.20%	6.20%	7.10%	6.20%
5 - 9 yrs	8.40%	5.60%	8.20%	6.50%
10 - 14 yrs	7.20%	7.00%	9.20%	6.90%
15 - 19 yrs	7.20%	7.30%	7.00%	6.90%
20 - 24 yrs	5.00%	5.60%	4.80%	5.10%

25 - 29 yrs	5.70%	4.40%	6.00%	5.60%
30 - 34 yrs	6.60%	5.80%	7.60%	6.30%
35 - 39 yrs	8.70%	7.80%	9.10%	6.90%
40 - 44 yrs	8.10%	7.20%	8.70%	7.30%
45 - 49 yrs	7.10%	8.10%	7.70%	8.20%
50 - 54 yrs	7.40%	7.50%	6.40%	8.30%
55 - 59 yrs	5.80%	8.10%	5.10%	7.40%
60 - 64 yrs	3.50%	4.90%	3.40%	5.90%
65+ yrs	12.20%	14.30%	10.90%	12.70%
Median Age	35.7	40.2	36.7	39.7
Data Source: 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing; 2009-2013 American Community Survey (ACS)				

## B. HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS

### Household Characteristics

In 2013, Swanton had a total of 2,576 households (Table 6.3). Seventy percent of the occupied housing is owner occupied while approximately 30% is renter occupied. Swanton, similarly to other towns in Franklin County and Vermont, has experienced a decline in the number of persons per occupied housing unit between 1970 and 2013. In 1970, the average was 3.3 persons per occupied housing unit. This has declined to an average of 2.49 persons per occupied housing unit in 2013.

Table 3.3: Housing Characteristics in Swanton and Franklin County (1990 - 2013)						
Housing Characteristic	1990		2000		2013	
	Swanton	Franklin County	Swanton	Franklin County	Swanton	Franklin County
Total Housing Units	2,423	17,250	2,689	19,191	2,934	21,687
Total Households	2,026	14,326	2,329	16,765	2,576	18,616
Person per Occupied Unit	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.49	2.55
Owner Occupied Units	1,533	10,390	1,750	12,582	1,827	14,170
Renter Occupied Units	493	3,936	579	4,183	749	4,446
Family Households	1,572	10,705	1,701	12,194	1,757	12,880
Source: 1990, 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing; American Community Survey 2009-2013.						

According to the 2009-2013 American Community Survey, of the 2,576 households, 1,757 or 68% are family households (2 or more persons living together as a housekeeping unit).

The median household income in Swanton in 2013 was \$54,551. This is slightly below Franklin County's median of \$56,240. The median family income in Swanton in 2013 was \$64,495, which is below the County figure of \$68,408. Non-family households in Swanton reported a median household income of \$40,087. This is greater than the County figure of \$34,213.

Approximately 12.8% of all families in Swanton Town and 13% of all families in Swanton Village had incomes in 2013 below the poverty level. The County had 7.7% of families reporting incomes below the poverty level in 2013. Families below the poverty level only account for 6.3% of families in the Town and 8.5% of families in the Village in 1999.

## Housing Stock

Swanton has a variety of housing unit types including single family detached and attached units, multi-family units, mobile homes, camps and travel trailers. Single-family detached units make up the largest portion (69.67%) of total dwelling units (Table 6.4). The second largest dwelling unit type is the 2-4 unit structures at 11.45%, with mobile homes following close behind at 11.11%.

**Table 3.4: Housing Units by Type in Swanton and Franklin county (1990 - 2013)**

	Swanton						Franklin County					
	1990		2000		2013		1990		2000		2013	
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%
Single unit detached	1,516	62.6%	1,891	70.3%	2,044	69.7%	11,456	66.4%	13,581	70.8%	15,635	72.1%
Single unit attached	12	0.5%	27	1.0%	52	1.8%	161	0.9%	363	1.9%	552	2.5%
2-4 unit structure	315	13.0%	302	11.2%	336	11.5%	2,571	14.9%	2,353	12.3%	2,214	10.2%
5-9 unit structure	48	2.0%	52	1.9%	99	3.4%	495	2.9%	450	2.3%	604	2.8%
10+ unit structure	32	1.3%	57	2.1%	0	0.0%	336	1.9%	346	1.8%	682	3.1%
Mobile Home	500	20.6%	309	11.5%	326	11.1%	1,817	10.5%	1,957	10.2%	2,000	9.2%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0.0%	51	1.9%	0	0.0%	414	2.4%	141	0.7%	0	0.0%
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>2,423</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,689</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,934</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>17,250</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>19,191</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>21,687</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: 1990, 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing Summary File 3, based on a sample population and configured to represent the total population

The number of mobile homes in Swanton has a sizable influence on the County numbers—16% of the mobile homes in the County are located in Swanton. The number of mobile homes in Swanton more than tripled between 1970 and 1990, from 164 to 500; Since then, the number of mobile homes being added to the housing stock has slowed and mobile homes have decreased as a percentage of the total housing stock.

As presented in Table 6.5, Swanton's housing stock has steadily increased over the last two decades. Total housing units equaled 1,674 in 1970. This has increased to 2,934 total housing units in 2013. According to the 2009-2013 American Community Survey, 128 units of Swanton's housing stock is reported to be seasonal dwellings. This is a dramatic decrease from the 308 seasonal units documented in the 2000 Census. This severe difference may be due in part to the large margin of error associated with the American Community Survey (+ or – 84 units). The number of seasonal units is one of the few pieces of housing data that was still collected in the 2010 Census. According to the 2010 Census, there were 253 seasonal units in Swanton. This appears to be more accurate than the 2009-2013 American Community Survey data.

Year	Year-Round Units		Vacant Units for Seasonal, Recreational or Occasional Use		Total Units
	Units	%	Units	%	Units
1970	1,435	85.7%	239	14.3%	1,674
1980	1,831	84.5%	336	15.5%	2,167
1990	2,123	87.6%	300	12.4%	2,423
2000	2,381	88.5%	308	11.5%	2,689
2010	2,700	91.4%	253	8.6%	2,953
2013	2,806	95.6%	128	4.4%	2,934

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1970 – 2010; American Community Survey 2009-2013

Table 6.6 reports the value of owner occupied housing units in Swanton and Franklin County in 2000 U.S. Census and the value of a sample of owner occupied housing units in Swanton between 2009-2013 according to the American Community Survey. Owner occupied housing unit values have risen substantially since 2000. Approximately 48.8% of the owner occupied housing units in Swanton were valued between \$50,000 and \$99,000 in 2000. This decreased to 4.1% in 2013. The plurality of homes are in Swanton are now worth between \$150,000 and \$199,999 (31.6%). Additionally, 30.2% of homes in Swanton are worth between \$200,000 and \$299,999 in 2013, substantially higher than the 7% of homes within the same price range in 2000.

Value	Swanton			Franklin County		
	2000	2013	% Change	2000	2013	% Change
Less than \$50,000	1.90%	8.00%	321.05%	4.40%	6.10%	38.64%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	48.80%	4.10%	-91.60%	47.00%	6.00%	-87.23%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	34.80%	11.40%	-67.24%	35.30%	12.00%	-66.01%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	8.80%	31.60%	259.09%	9.00%	24.00%	166.67%
\$200,000 - \$299,999	7.00%	30.20%	331.43%	3.50%	37.40%	968.57%
\$300,000+	0.70%	14.80%	2014.29%	0.90%	14.50%	1511.11%
Total	100.00%			100.00%		

Source: 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing; American Community Survey 2009-2013

The proportion of owner occupied housing units valued at below \$150,000 declined between 2000 and 2013, while the proportion of housing above \$150,000 increased during the same period.

### **Housing Costs and Personal Income**

The price of housing in Swanton has generally followed the regional and statewide trends, increasing sharply over that last 13 years. According to the information from the Vermont

Department of Taxes available on the Vermont Housing Data website, the the median sale price of a primary residence in Swanton in 2014 (\$168,000) was below that of Franklin County (\$177,000) and the state as a whole (\$195,000). The Swanton median sale price increased by over 8.4% between 2004 to 2014. This is a considerably lower than the increase in median sale price between 1999-2009 (55.4%). Median sale prices in the County and the State both increased by 14.2% and 18.5% respectively during the 2004-2014. The median sale price in 2014 was higher in St. Albans Town (\$213,450) than Swanton. However, Swanton had a higher median sale price in 2014 than neighboring town of Sheldon (\$150,750), and Highgate (\$150,000).

Table 6.7 displays Swanton households by annual income. It is interesting to note that there are approximately 565 households making less than \$25,000 per year. This income level is below 50% of the median household income. Conversely, the number of households making over \$200,000 has more than doubled between 2000 (23 households) and 2013.

#### Affordable Housing

High housing costs place a greater strain on lower income households. Affordable housing programs emphasize the importance of providing affordable housing to households that are substantially below the median income of the area.

Table 3.7: Household Income		
Median income (dollars)	\$54,551	
Income	Number	Percent
Less than \$10,000	178	6.9%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	129	5.0%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	258	10.0%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	183	7.1%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	399	15.5%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	600	23.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	252	9.8%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	402	15.6%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	59	2.3%
\$200,000 or more	116	4.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,576</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey		

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

All municipalities in Franklin County are deemed part of the Burlington-South Burlington Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The figures for median income, however, do not paint an accurate picture for many of the municipalities within Franklin County, including Swanton. The 2014 median household income for the Burlington-South Burlington MSA was \$61,763, while it was \$56,240 in Franklin County (2009-2013 ACS). In addition, median household income for Swanton from ACS (\$54,551) was not used in recognition that housing markets do not exist in a bubble and but rather exist on a regional level. For this reason, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission uses the county median household income to compute housing affordability .

Table 6.8 shows the affordability gap – the difference between the maximum affordable mortgage and the median sale price for primary residences in Swanton. According the analysis, Swanton provides affordable homeownership opportunities for those making 100% of the

**Table 3.8: Homeownership Affordability in Swanton**

Percent of Franklin County Median Household Income	30% of Income			Taxes and Insurance	Income Available for Housing/Month	5% Down Payment	Maximum Affordable Mortgage	Median Sale Price for Primary Residences in Swanton (2014)	Affordability Gap
	Per Year	Per Month							
100%	\$56,240	\$16,872	\$1,406	\$451	\$955	\$8,425	\$193,243.50	\$168,000	\$25,244
80%	\$44,992	\$13,498	\$1,125	\$451	\$674	\$8,425	\$133,862.16	\$168,000	-\$34,138
50%	\$28,120	\$8,436	\$703	\$451	\$252	\$8,425	\$44,790.14	\$168,000	-\$123,210
30%	\$16,872	\$5,062	\$422	\$451	-\$29	\$8,425	-\$14,591.20	\$168,000	-\$182,591

Data Source: Median income based ACS 2009-2013 estimates; taxes and insurance are an estimate; median sale price for primary residences in Swanton was obtained from the Vermont Department of Taxes; Taxes and Insurance estimates are from the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA); all other figures computed by the NRPC. Maximum affordable mortgage rates include a 4% mortgage rate.

County median income purchasing a home at the median sale price. However, for those families making 80% or less than the median income, a home in Swanton at the median sale price is not affordable.

A similar affordability analysis can be completed for rental housing affordability (Table 6.9). According to the analysis, median gross rent (including utilities) is affordable for those making both the county median income and 80% of the county median income. The median gross rent has risen sharply since 2000 when it was reported at \$541 meaning that median gross rents have increased by over \$300 in 13 years.

**Table 3.9: Rental Affordability in Swanton**

Percent of Franklin County Median Household Income	30% of Income			Income Available for Rent/Month	Median Gross Rent - Swanton	Affordability Gap
	Per Year	Per Month				
100%	\$56,240	\$16,872	\$1,406	\$1,406	\$845	\$561
80%	\$44,992	\$13,498	\$1,125	\$1,125	\$845	\$280
50%	\$28,120	\$8,436	\$703	\$703	\$845	-\$142
30%	\$16,872	\$5,062	\$422	\$422	\$845	-\$423

Data Source: Median income and median rent based on ACS 2009-2013 estimates; all other figures computed by the NRPC.

## Senior Housing

Currently, Swanton has 68 units of housing dedicated to seniors located within 4 complexes. Three complexes have rental assistance available through USDA Rural Development or the Vermont State Housing Authority. Twelve of the units are handicap/wheelchair accessible. Per the Vermont Housing Needs Assessment release by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, there is anticipated to be an increased need for senior housing in Franklin County, and in the rest of Vermont, in the near future due to the aging of the babyboom generation. Steps should be taken to ensure that there is adequate and affordable housing available for senior citizens.

### C. NATURAL RESOURCES

Swanton is fortunate to have some of the most diverse natural environments found in this region.

The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, a 6,000 acre wildlife preserve, is predominantly located in West Swanton but also extends into the Town of Highgate. Much of Swanton is relatively flat with several wetland areas. The upland areas of Swanton converge to several valleys and tributaries feeding into the Lake Champlain Basin. The southeastern corner of Swanton is somewhat hilly and forested. Much of the center of Swanton both east and west of I-89 and in West Swanton remains in active farming. Approximately 60 percent of the soils in Swanton meet the State's definition of primary agricultural soils. The following is a discussion of the various natural features in Swanton.

#### Natural Areas and Wildlife Habitat

Biological diversity can be found in a number of habitat areas in Swanton. Selected habitats are regarded by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources as biological areas of statewide significance. Map 6.1 illustrates critical habitat for statewide rare, threatened, or endangered species. For the most part, these areas are under state or federal jurisdiction including such areas as the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, the Missisquoi River, the Fairfield Swamp State Wildlife Management Area, and Lake Champlain. The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

Map 3.1



is one of the largest and most significant wildlife protection areas in the northeast. The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department controls approximately 2.5 miles of Maquam Bay shoreline (Lake Champlain). Several miles of the shoreline on the Missisquoi Bay fall under protection of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Map 6.1 also shows several deer wintering yards mapped by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife.

**Water Resources – Rivers**

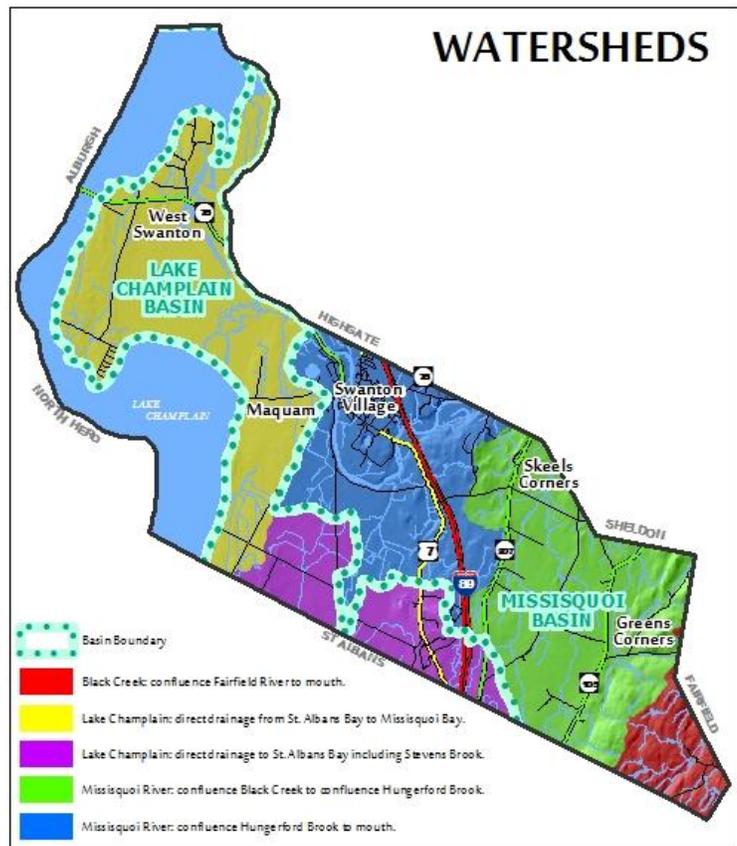
Swanton is situated within the Lake Champlain and Missisquoi Basins. The local rivers and streams which feed into Lake Champlain and Missisquoi Bay include the Missisquoi River, Jewett and Hungerford Brooks, Maquam, First and Charcoal Creeks and Fairfield Pond. The Missisquoi River is the largest river in Swanton. There is a large delta at the mouth of the Missisquoi River where it empties into Missisquoi Bay, which is rich in biological diversity and contains critical habitat areas. The watersheds in Swanton are shown in Map 6.2.

River flooding is a concerning in Swanton. Swanton directly address flooding in its Land Development Regulations. The regulations control development in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), or 100-year floodplain, as delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on the Town’s Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). These regulations are designed to minimize the impact of flooding due to inundation caused by flood waters.

It is important to note that the existing FIRMs are dated as effective on March 16, 1983 in the Village of Swanton and on April 18, 1983 in the Town of Swanton. Both maps may no longer be accurate and need to be updated. The FIRMs have been digitized by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission to assist in planning efforts and are used to determine approximate locations. The digital version is not used for regulatory rulings.

All adopted flood hazard regulations within the Swanton Land Development Regulations meets or exceeds minimum requirements set by the National Flood Insurance Program. Adoption of flood hazard regulations and the FIRM allows the Town to be a member of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and enables all residents of Swanton to purchase flood insurance.

**Map 3.2**



Swanton has also addressed fluvial erosion in the Swanton Land Development Regulations. Fluvial erosion is erosion caused by rivers and streams that can lead to bank erosion and changes to river and stream channel location. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has provided Swanton with Fluvial Erosion Hazard Maps for the Missisquoi River and Hungerford Brook, a river and a stream that are susceptible to fluvial erosion. The maps provided by the Agency of Natural Resources were used as the basis for establishing vegetated buffers from all rivers and streams in Swanton per the Swanton Development Regulations adopted in 2014. A 50 foot vegetated buffer is required from all rivers and stream in Swanton. The required buffer is larger for the Missisquoi River (100 foot buffer) and Hungerford Brook (75 foot buffer). The buffers were adopted to mitigate future risk to structures and humans due to fluvial erosion. The buffers will also minimize future erosion of stream and river banks and enable rivers room to meander and function in their natural state.

At present, Swanton has not adopted regulations protecting River Corridors as defined by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. River Corridors are “the land area adjacent to a river that is required to accommodate the dimensions, slope, planform, and buffer of the naturally stable channel and that is necessary for the natural maintenance or natural restoration of a dynamic equilibrium condition” according to 10 V.S.A 752. River Corridors are meant to provide additional protection of fluvial erosion hazards in a community. River Corridors in the state have been mapped by the Agency of Natural Resources. Regulations to protect River Corridors can be incorporated into local bylaws. The Swanton Planning Commission plans to study the mapped River Corridors before incorporating the maps and any associated regulation into the Swanton Development Regulations.

### **Water Resources – Lake Champlain**

The water quality of Lake Champlain and its tributaries are threatened from nutrient and sediment loading from various sources including stormwater and farm run-off and failing wastewater systems. Improving the water quality of Lake Champlain, particularly in the Northern bays of the lake, has become a priority at local, state and international levels. Current nutrient levels have increased the frequency and the extent of blue-green algae in Lake Champlain, particularly Missisquoi Bay. Blue-green algae can be harmful to both humans and pets.

On August 26, 2002, the Missisquoi Bay Agreement was signed between Vermont and Quebec regarding phosphorus reduction in the Missisquoi Bay Watershed. The agreement states that Vermont holds 60% of the responsibility for reducing phosphorus loads in the Bay, while Quebec holds 40%. The target phosphorus load for Vermont is 58.3 metric tons per year (mt/yr) and the target load for Quebec is 38.9 mt/yr. These amounts were based on a report by the Quebec-Vermont Missisquoi Bay Phosphorus Reduction Task Force. The agreement was a priority of the Lake Champlain Management Plan, *Opportunities for Action*, which is being implemented by the Lake Champlain Basin Program; and the Lake Champlain Phosphorus Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Plan, which establishes maximum allowable phosphorus loads from each sub-watershed of Lake Champlain. The TMDL plan outlines a

range of actions that will be necessary in the Vermont portion of the Missisquoi Bay to achieve maximum phosphorus loads. As of 2015, the target phosphorus loads outline in the Missisquoi Bay Agreement have not been achieved.

The State of Vermont, in coordination with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is currently developing a revised TMDL for Lake Champlain. The revised TMDL will include a new restoration plan that will address the increased phosphorus levels in Lake Champlain. It is anticipated that the TMDL will be approved by the EPA in June 2015.

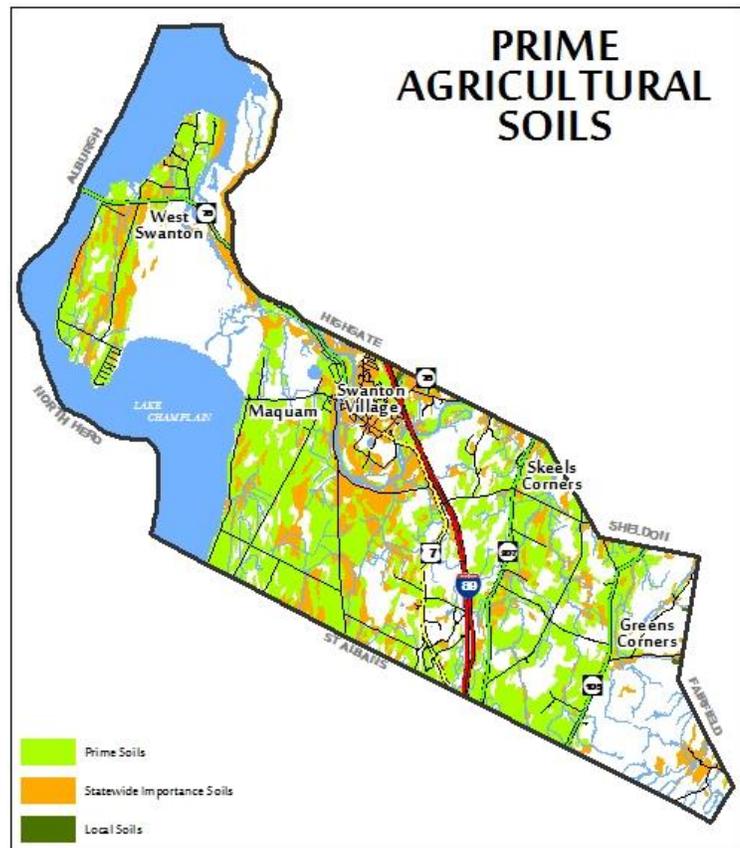
Severe flooding in the spring of 2011 on Lake Champlain has created increasing concern about flood resiliency in Swanton. During the spring of 2011, flood waters on Lake Champlain reached a height of 103.27 feet above sea level (ASL) as measured at the USGS gage at the Echo Center in Burlington. This is the highest lake elevation ever recorded and is considerably higher than the base flood elevation (BFE) delineated by FEMA (102 feet). Lake Champlain was above the base flood elevation for approximately two months. Flood damage was exacerbated by waves caused by high winds which at times increased lake levels to approximately 106 feet.

Per the Swanton Development Regulations, a 50 foot buffer is required from all lakes and ponds. The buffer is to remain vegetated in its natural state (except on Lake Champlain). These local buffer regulations are in addition to the buffer requirements enacted by the State Agency of Natural Resource in 2014 (the Vermont Shoreline Protection Act). State buffer requirements apply to all lakes and ponds greater than 10 acres in size. Lakes in Swanton greater than 10 acres in size include Lake Champlain, Fairfield Pond and Fairfield Swamp Pond.

### Prime Agricultural Soils and Farmlands

Large proportions (60%) of the soils in Swanton are regarded as primary agricultural soils by the State of Vermont. While areas are classified as primary agriculture soils, seasonal wet conditions can affect their productivity. For the most part, the primary agricultural soils are contiguous, forming large pockets of soils that support large quantities of agricultural products.

Map 3.3

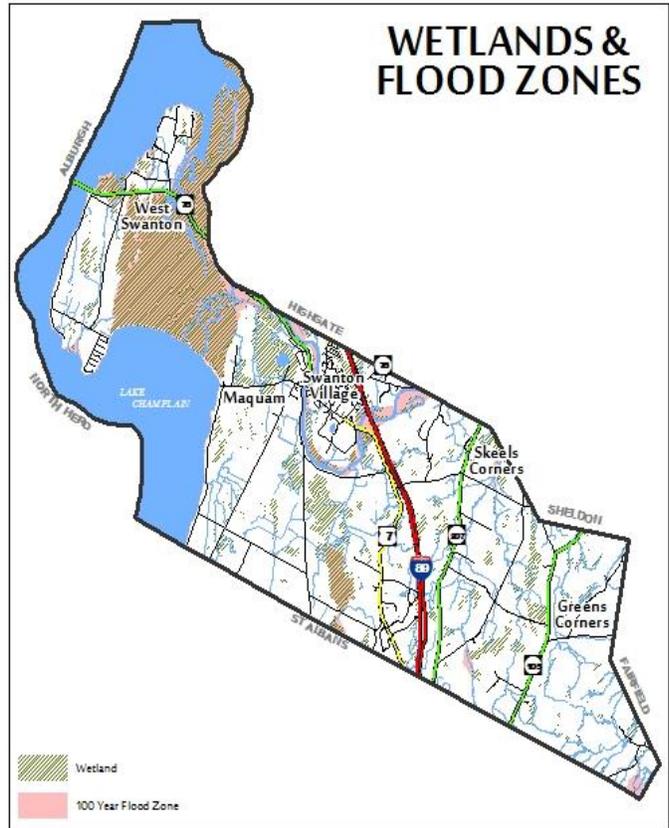


Map 6.3 presents the primary and statewide significant agricultural soils in Swanton. These soils are located in three general areas: 1) West Swanton (running along Lake Champlain on both sides of Tabor Road and north to Campbell Bay; 2) on the west Route 7 and west to Maquam Road; and 3) in the vicinity of Highgate and Sheldon Roads running north and south to the Town boundaries.

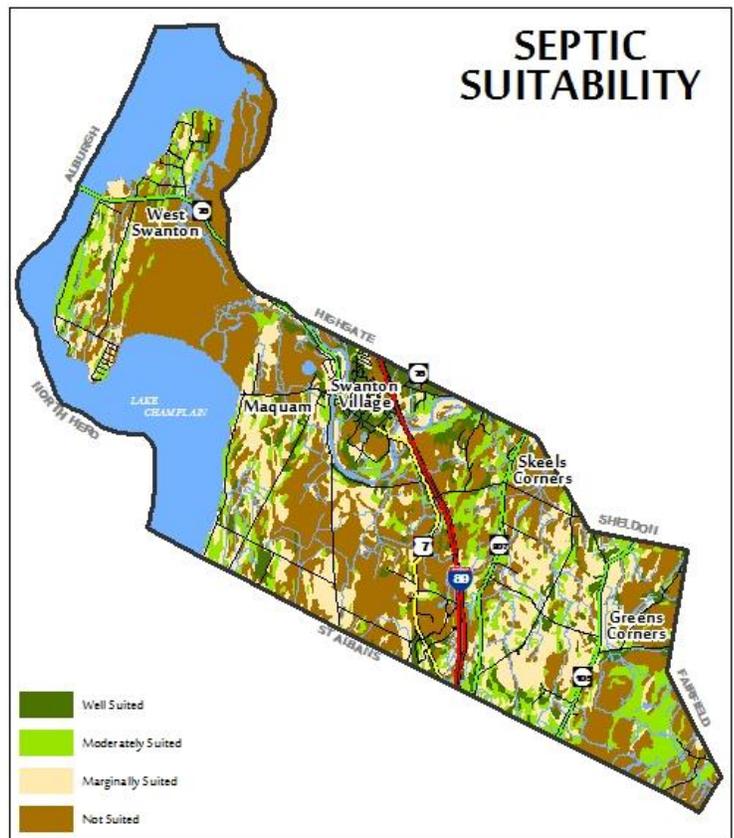
The majority of the productive cropland in Swanton is located in the Middle Road area, while large woodland tracts and areas in pasture were located in the eastern parts of Swanton Town. According to the 2014 Grand List, there were 48 parcels of land categorized as farms within the Town. Given that some parcels are likely used by the same farm, the number of farms is estimated to be fewer than 48. As a comparison, there were 82 parcels in Swanton enrolled in the Current Use Appraisal program in 2014. This includes parcels that are enrolled in the program as that are composed as either forest or agriculture. Approximately, 12,687 acres are currently enrolled in the program including 9,809 acres enrolled as agriculture. The Town of Swanton should continue to support the Current Use Program as a way to conserve agricultural lands.

Agriculture plays a major role in Swanton's economy. Consequently, the Town should continue its efforts to preserve and maintain agriculture as a viable economic activity and should also assist in the protection of significant open land resources by collaborating with land management and protection organizations such as the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

**Map 3.4**



**Map 3.5**



## Wetlands

Wetlands are areas inundated by ground and surface waters, which support diverse vegetation dependent on wet or saturated conditions. Much of Swanton's soil is hydric and consequently meets the Vermont Wetland Division's criteria for Class II wetlands. In several Swanton locations, the water table is perched and soil conditions are wet year-round. Map 6.4 illustrates an inventory of Class II wetlands in Swanton as identified by the Vermont Significant Wetlands Inventory.

The largest and most significant wetland area (considered by many as the most significant wetland in the northeast) is the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. There are other large wetland areas located near major tributaries such as the Missisquoi River and Jewett and Hungerford Brooks.

This wetland inventory does not represent all of the wetland areas that are present in Swanton. Citizens are cautioned that any areas suspected of being a wetland should be verified by a wetlands coordinator at the Vermont Division of Water Quality, Wetlands Division.

## Soil Potential for On-Site Septic

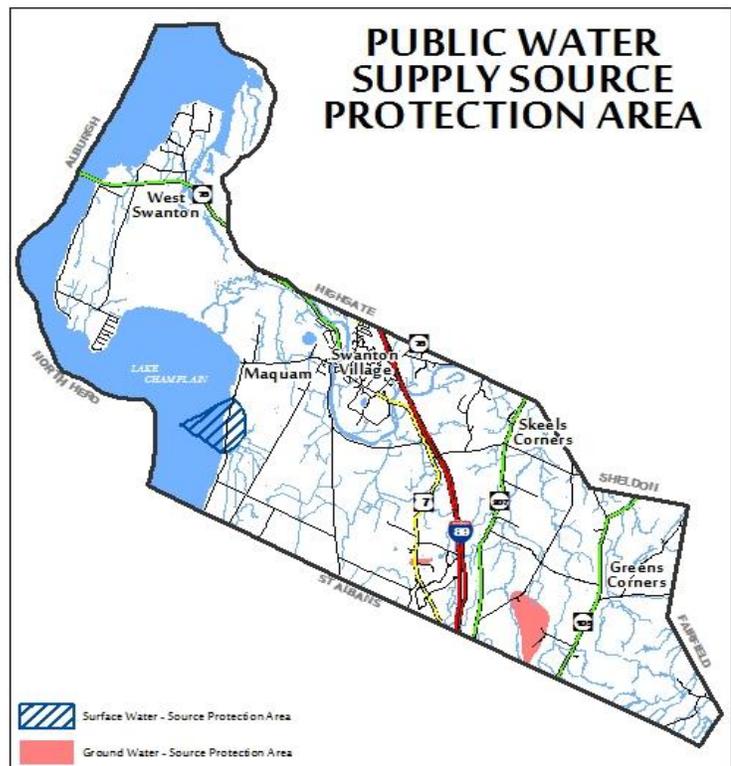
Many of the soils suitable for on-site septic disposal are also considered primary or very good agricultural soils. As depicted on Map 6.5, Septic Suitability, a majority of Swanton Town is not suitable for on-site septic systems. Much of this land area will only support a mound system. Much of this area is clustered

around I-89 and on the east side of Route 7. It should be pointed out that the highest proportions of soils suitable for conventional septic systems are located within the Village limits where municipal water and sewer services are available.

There is a fair amount of land with soils that are suitable for mound systems on the west side of Sheldon and south side of the Pond Road area. This relatively hilly area of Town is predominantly forested and contains some scattered wetlands.

## Public Water Supplies

Map 3.6



The Town of Swanton has three areas that are identified as Source Water Protection areas for public water supplies, as defined by the Agency of Natural Resources. Two of these areas (identified on Map 6.6) protect the public water systems for the Sunset Terrace Estates on Route 7 (serving 12 mobile homes) and Homestead Acres Mobile Home Park on Bushey Road. The third area protects the public water supply at Maquam Shore.

### Earth Resources

There have been a number of quarries over the course of Swanton’s history, including the legendary Swanton Red Marble Quarry. Vermont Mineral Resource Data System (MRDS) has records of these resource areas, which show that the resources extracted include limestone, dolomite, limonite, hematite, and magnetite (MRDS, 1998). The only active operation as of 2015 there are several active quarries in Swanton: Swanton Limestone located on Jewett Street, Swanton Marble Mill and a limestone quarry on Pond Road..

### State and Federally Owned Recreation and Natural Areas

There are a number of state and federally owned properties in Swanton that provide access to Lake Champlain, the Missisquoi River, the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, and the Fairfield Swamp and Management Area (as illustrated on Map 6.1). These areas have been designated for protection of natural resources and critical habitat, in addition to providing recreation opportunities. These areas provide boat access, as well as many other passive and active recreational opportunities. The Refuge provides a wealth of opportunities for hunting, fishing, bird watching, walking, canoeing, and environmental education.

Table 6.10 contains a list of the state and federally owned areas in Swanton. Together with locally owned parks and recreation areas, approximately 4,668.15 acres in Swanton is publicly owned. This represents 17% of Swanton's total land area.

<b>Table 3.10: List of State and Federally Owned Public Access Areas</b>	
<b>AREA</b>	<b>ACREAGE</b>
<b>State of Vermont Public Lands</b>	
1. Fish and Wildlife Access Areas	
a. Tabor Point	5.90
b. West Swanton	0.88
c. Charcoal Creek	1.23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8.01</b>
1. Wildlife Management Areas	
a. Maquam Bay Wildlife Area	895.33
b. Swanton Hatchery	2.46
c. Fairfield Swamp	187.83
d. Carmans WMA	64.17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,149.79</b>
<b>Federal Public Lands</b>	

1. Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge	3,510.35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,510.35</b>
<b>TOTAL PUBLIC LANDS</b>	<b>4,668.15</b>

**D. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

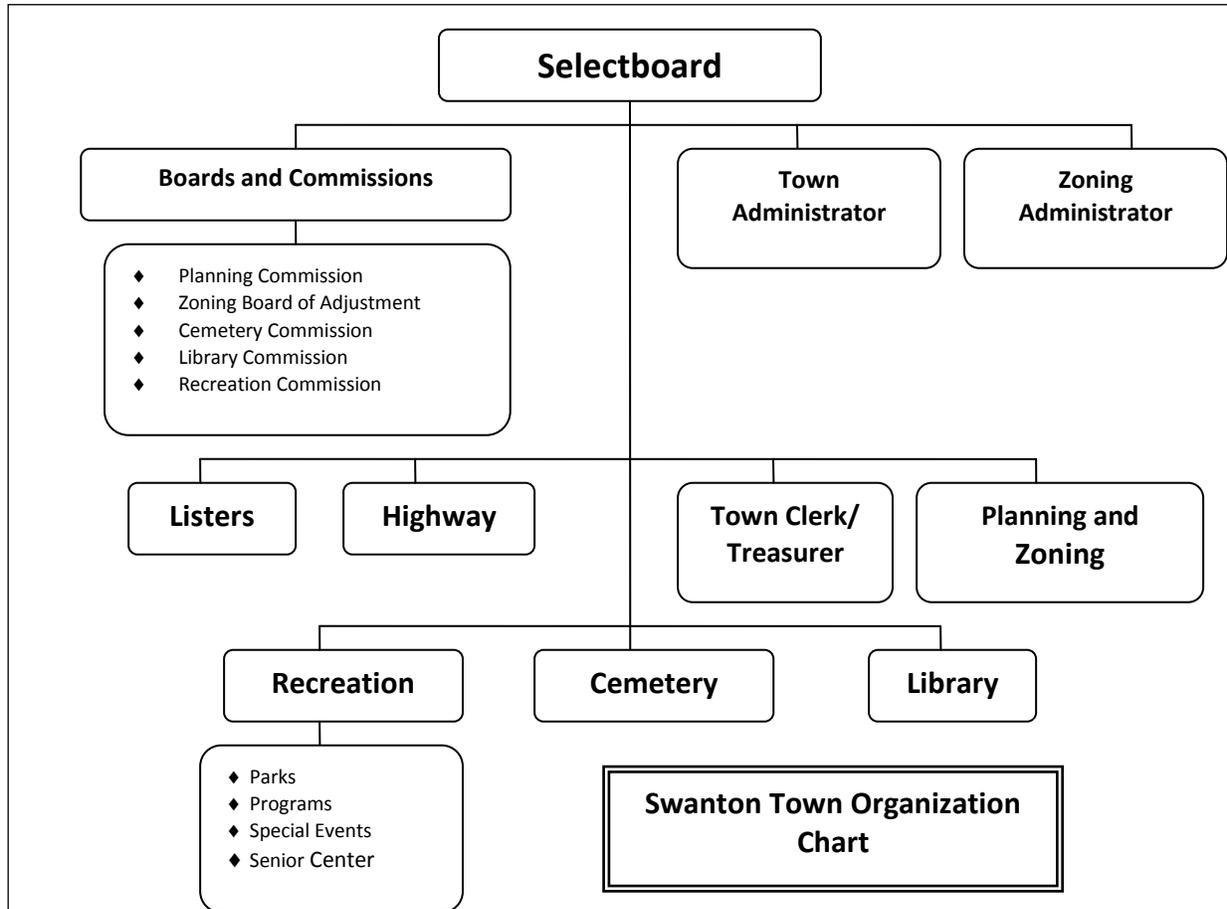
**Organization of Government**

Swanton is one of a few Vermont towns that include an incorporated Village. Swanton's Charter was signed on August 17, 1763. The Village of Swanton was established in 1888, more than 100 years after the Town was formed. Swanton Town and Swanton Village maintain two governments, each providing a variety of services to residents.

The cost of providing certain services is shared between the Village and Town residents, such as fire protection and recreation. Services provided to Village residents include: highway, police, fire, and recreation. The Village also provides sewer, water, and electricity and maintains these services by user revenues. Town residents also receive a variety of services, including highways, rural fire protection, recreation, and schools.

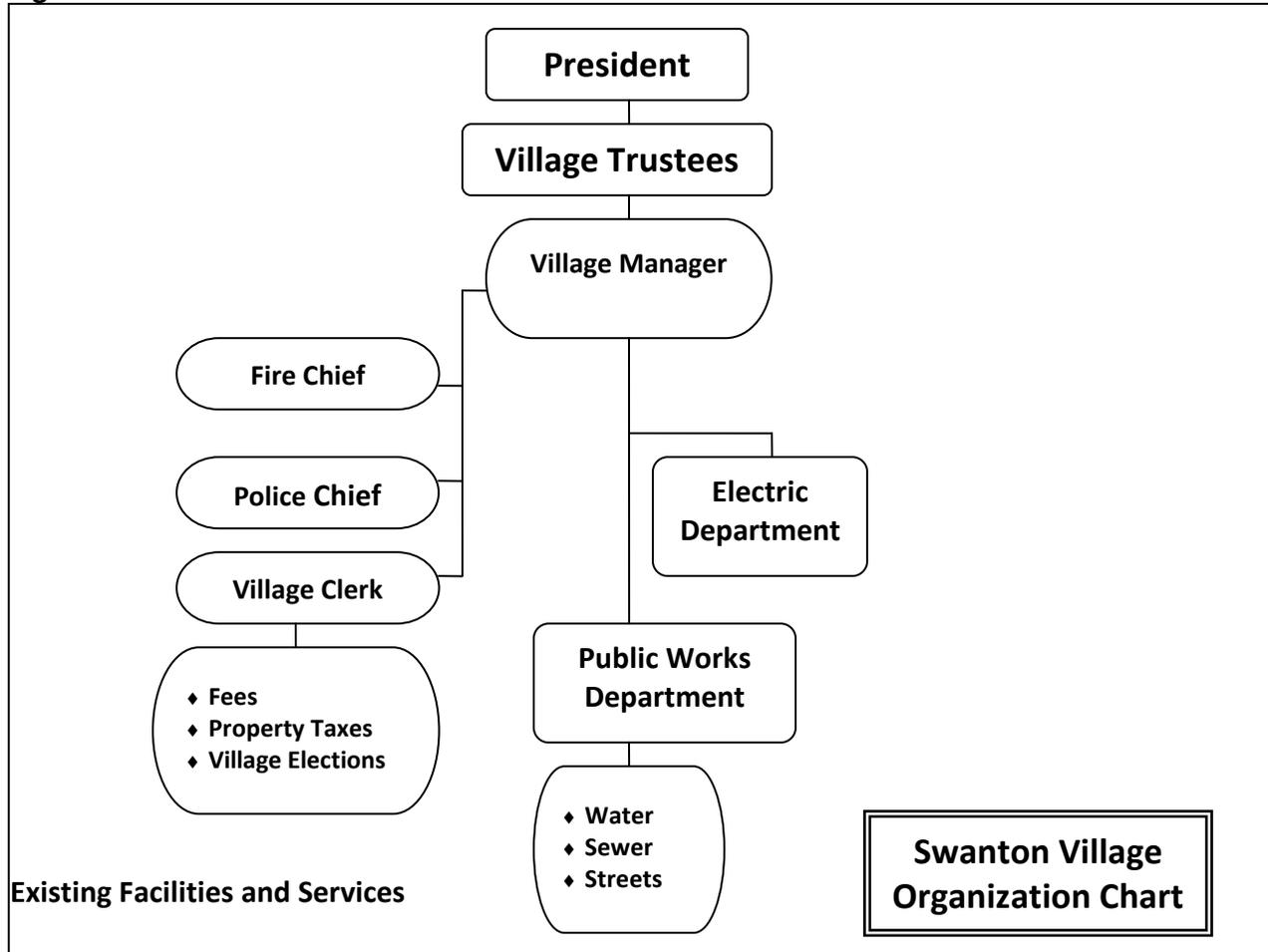
Swanton Town is governed by a Selectboard form of government. Figure 6.3 is an organizational chart depicts the various Town officials and the functions they provide.

**Figure 3.3**



Swanton Village is governed by a President who acts as chair of a three member Board of Village Trustees. The Trustees appoint a Village Manager to oversee the Village Sewer, Water, Highway and Electric Departments and other activities. The Village Manager appoints a Police and Fire Chief to direct public safety. Figure 6.4 is an illustration of the Village organization and its functions.

**Figure 3.4**



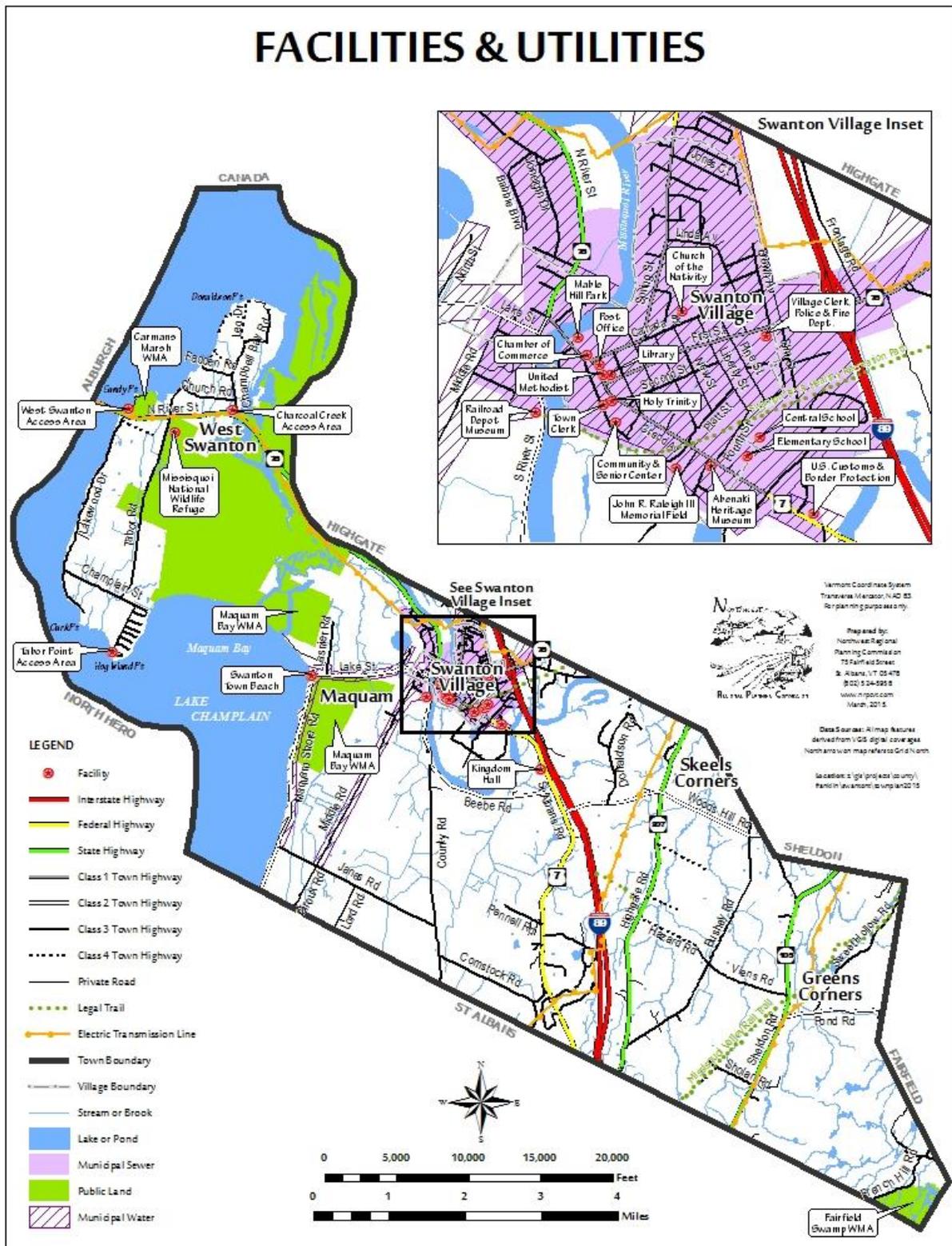
The following is a brief discussion of the existing facilities and services provided by the Town and Village. The location of public services and facilities are shown on Map 6.7. As mentioned above, some services are provided by the Village to both Village and Town residents such as electric, sewer, water, fire protection and recreation programs.

***Police Protection***

The Swanton Village Police Department currently serves Swanton Village residents. The Swanton Village Police Department also has a contract to provide patrol services to the Town of Swanton. The Department works closely with the Vermont State Police and the Border Patrol. The police force currently has eleven total staff members (including part-time employees) with 6 full-time officers and one full-time dispatcher. The remaining staff is part-time officers.

The service demands of the Police Department have steadily increased. The Police Department feels that they are able to adequately meet the demands for service in Swanton at this time.

Map 3.7



### ***Fire Protection***

The Village Fire Department is located within the Village Complex on First Street and is supported by both Town and Village residents. The quality and condition of this equipment is well-maintained. The Fire Department's ability to provide adequate services at present and in the future is excellent. A new fire engine was purchased in 2013. The department has several other pieces of equipment including several fire engines, a ladder truck, and a boat. The department is staffed by 35 volunteer firefighters.

The Department has noted issues in the past associated with fire protection in rural areas beyond the water service area. However, at this time there are water supply ponds, sufficient road access and systems in place that are adequate to service these areas.

### ***Health Care/Emergency Services***

Missisquoi Valley Rescue (MVR) is located at the Village Municipal Complex on First Street and serves Swanton Town and Village residents as well as the surrounding areas. The service is supported through private donations and tax dollars. The current inventory of MVR's major equipment is worth approximately \$300,000.

MVR currently has 23 paid employees. The total number of employees includes 2 paramedics, 9 EMTs and 7 Advanced EMTs. There are 5 other individuals in classes to for certification.

The quality and ability of MVR to provide service at this time is excellent. MVR purchased a new ambulance in 2010. However, the ability of MVR to continue providing quality services is hindered by the size of the current facility.

Northwestern Medical Center, located in St. Albans is the closest hospital to Swanton. Northern Tier Center for Health (NOTCH) is a local non-profit health care provider with doctor's offices and a dental clinic located in Swanton Village. NOTCH hopes to open a new facility in the former Aubochon's building in the near future.

### ***Municipal Wastewater***

The Village maintains both a storm and wastewater sewer system. The systems were separated in in 1996. The design capacity of this system is 0.90 Million Gallons per Day (MGD) and the average flow is 0.57 MGD. The system is adequate to meet current needs. The system currently serves most of the area within the Village limits and a few areas of the Town. The wastewater systems is currently staffed with 1.5 employees (this includes an employee split with the water treatment facility).

### ***Municipal Water***

The Village has maintained a water treatment facility since 1978. The facility located near Maquam Shore was originally designed to supply 1.5 million gallons per day (MGD) with three

filters, but only two filters were installed, reducing its capacity to less than 1.0 million gallons per day. The treatment facility underwent substantial renovations in 2012. The renovations included new filters and pumps. The average demand was approximately 500,000 gallons per day in 2012. The water treatment facility is staffed with 1.5 employees (this includes an employee split with the water treatment facility).

At present, the water system currently serves portions of the Village and selected areas of the Town including: Jonergin Drive (Swanton Industrial Park); Middle Road to the limits of the current R-4 zoning district; Grand Avenue to the former Lamoille Valley Railroad; the Abenaki Acres on Bushey Street; and Route 78 to the Missisquoi Valley Union High School (See Map 6.7).

When the system began to reach capacity in 1993, the Village replaced the flat rate system with a metered system by installing water meters for all customers. This reduced demand substantially.

### ***Solid Waste***

Both the Village and the Town are members of the Northwest Vermont Solid Waste District (NWSWD). In March 2009, the town voted to join (NWSWD) and became a member as of July 1, 2009. NWSWD is a legislatively chartered Municipal Corporation charged with planning, implementing, and regulating waste management strategies for member communities. The NWSWD has a regional solid waste management plan. The NWSWD provides many services to member communities, including drop-off sites for trash and recyclables, household hazardous waste collections, special trash collections, and collection of electronic waste. A drop-off station located at the St. Albans City Wastewater Treatment plant on Rewes Drive accepts household trash and recycling, while transfer stations in Alburgh and Highgate accept household trash and recycling in addition to larger items, scrap metal, and construction debris.

### ***Swanton Electric Utility***

The Swanton Electric Department, a publicly owned utility, has been providing electricity since 1894. The plant is located in Highgate and serves Swanton Town and Village, Highgate and portions of St. Albans. The existing plant (hydro dam) generates about 10 MW of electricity which covers peak demand on the system in all but extreme cases. There are 5 operators employed at the plant.

Swanton Electric serves the majority of Swanton residents, but Green Mountain Power and Vermont Electric Cooperative also provides service to a small portion of Swanton residents. Swanton Electric has the ability to provide service for anticipated growth.

### ***Town Highways***

Swanton Town maintains several miles of Town highways. Highway equipment is stored in the Town Garage built in 2013. The new Town Garage has provided more space for storage of

equipment, salt and sand than the previous Town Garage on Fourth Street. The previous Fourth Street facility has since been demolished. There are 5 full time employees in the Town Highway Department. The Town has several pieces of heavy equipment that aid in its work including a new single axle plow/dump truck. All equipment is valued at \$824,911.

**Village Highway Department**

The Village Highway Department maintains Village streets and sidewalks. The Department also maintains the equipment to upkeep the streets and sidewalks. Demand for services is expected to continue to be met with the current equipment and personnel. There are currently 5 employees in the Village Highway Department. The Village and Town Highway Departments share frequently share heavy equipment.

A sand and salt shed was built in 2005. The Village recently received several grants to construct stormwater retention pond at Grand Avenue and Academy Street and to install updated stormdrain and underground stormwater storage. These systems will reduce the amount of sediment released into the watershed by 46% to 56%. Improvements will continue to be made as the budget allows for them.

**Parks and Recreation**

At present, a total of 20.5 acres of parkland is provided by the Village (Table 6.11). In the fall of 2008, 9.5 acres of land adjacent to the John Raleigh Memorial Field Complex was donated to the Town by Shelburne Limestone Corporation and will provide an opportunity for expansion of facilities.

The Swanton Recreation Commission manage a variety of programs, and

community events to meet the recreation needs of the community. Youth programs for swimming, softball, baseball, soccer, basketball, skiing, and gymnastics are offered, in addition to an annual summer camp program. Adult programs include basketball and volleyball leagues, and zumba classes. The Recreation Committee also organizes community events, including dodge ball tournaments and the Spring Carnival.

Swanton is also host to several trails, which provide walking, running, biking, and horse back riding routes for residents. The Missisquoi Valley Railtrail, a 26.4 mile recreation trail, begins in

Table 3.11: Park and Recreation Areas in Swanton		
Recreation Areas	Acreage	Current Condition
John Raleigh III Memorial Field (recreation ball fields), Jewett Street	14.5	Good
Marble Mill Park	3.0	Fair to Good
Swanton Beach, Route 36	2.5	Fair to Good
Village Green	0.5	Good
Flat Iron Park	.15	Good
Goose Point Park	1	Good
Total Acres	21.65	

St. Albans and passes through Swanton on its way to Richford. A second railtrail will soon be open in Swanton. The 96 mile Lamoille Valley Railtrail will begin in Swanton and end in St. Johnsbury. In July of 2009, a scenic 1-mile recreation trail (called the Swanton Fit and Healthy Trail) was opened as a first segment to the Lamoille Valley Railtrail. It links the restored railway depot museum, ballfields, and the elementary school.

Swanton is home to a private golf course, Champlain Country Club. Maquam Shore in Swanton is renowned as an excellent windsurfing location.

The former Municipal Auditorium (located next to Blouin's IGA), is currently owned by the Village and the second floor is leased for industrial uses. The bottom floor is now being used by The Swanton Teen Center. Opened in late 2002, it is the largest teen center in the State. Activities at the Center include bowling, pool, pinball, and other games. There is also a computer room and a soda/ice cream fountain.

### ***Library***

The Swanton Public Library is located on the corner of First Street and Grand Avenue. The building was donated to the Town in 1993 by the Kings Daughters for use as a public library. The building underwent a major renovation in 1998, thanks to the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon and Barbara Winters, including a new addition that doubled the size of the building. A handicap accessible entrance with an elevator was added. There is also a public meeting and function room. The Historical Society shares the building with the Library.

The Swanton Public Library is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015 and will be commemorating by holding several special events during the year.

### ***Town and Village Offices***

Swanton maintains two centers of government--the Town Offices and Village Office Complex. The Town Offices are located on Academy Street in Swanton Village. The Village Office Complex is located on Route 78 (First Street) near I-89.

#### **Town Office**

Within the Town Office are the Town Administrator and the Zoning Administrator Offices, the Clerk's Office, the Lister's Office, and Planning and Zoning Offices. The building recently completed renovations that included more storage space, handicap accessibility and a meeting/research room. The Clerk's Office maintains records, issues licenses, collects taxes, and manages local elections. The Planning and Zoning Office manages all building permit and development activity for both Swanton Town and Village. Additionally, the office staffs a five (5) member Development Review Board and a five (5) member Planning Commission.. The Town Administrator acted as the Zoning Administrator until 2003 when the Town hired a part-time Zoning Administrator and adjusted the Town Administrator to a full-time position. The Town is hoping to renovate the second story of the Town Offices to provide even more space for public use.

#### **Village Municipal Complex**

Within the Village Complex are the Village Manager and Clerk's Office; fire, police, and rescue departments; electric, sewer, and water departments; and a large meeting space.

The primary functions of the Village Clerk's Office are collection of water, sewer and electric fees and Village property taxes. Special Village elections are also managed out of the Village Clerk's Office. At present, the office is adequate to provide service to the community. The computers are up to date and there are internet capabilities.

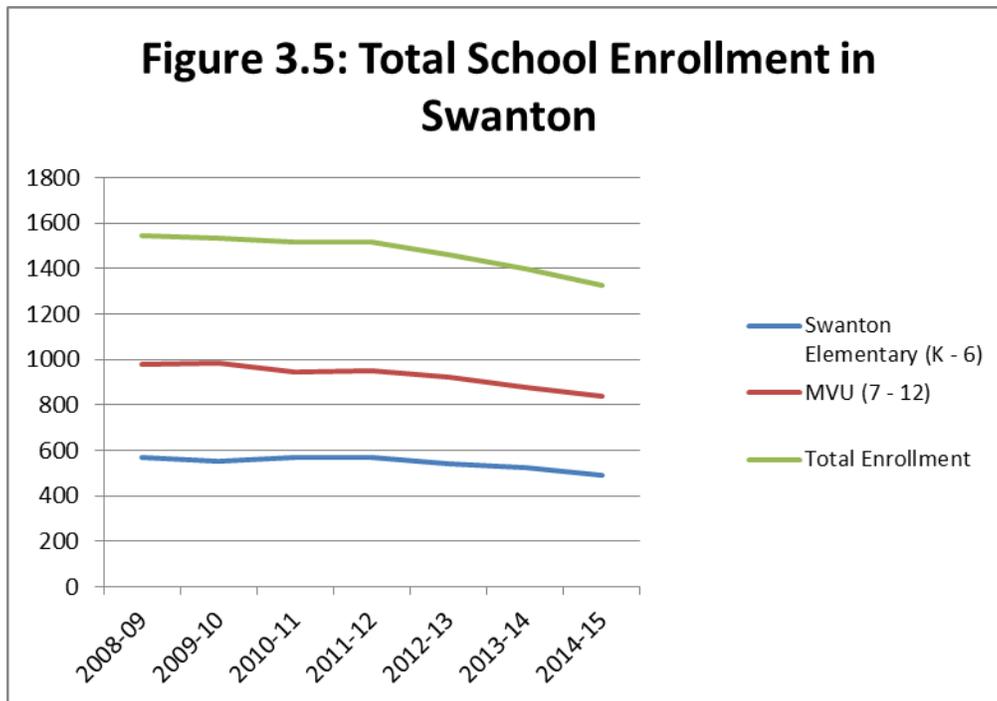
It is anticipated that service will continue with appropriate updates from time to time. The current facilities and equipment are adequate for anticipated demand for services in the future. There are no immediate plans to replace or expand existing facilities.

## **E. EDUCATION**

Swanton currently provides high quality education to members of the community. The municipality and its residents take pride in the educational opportunities and give high priority to maintaining a strong academic reputation in the area. The schools strive to provide an education that incorporates advanced technology, learning strategies and subject matter that will meet the needs of all students and will be a strong foundation for future opportunities. Many of the students who receive their initial schooling experience in Swanton go on to succeed in their post-secondary education and in a wide-variety of careers.

Providing educational opportunities for all ages inspires residents to be life-long learners and to actively pursue their interests. As the municipality experiences development and population growth it is important to continually assess if education is keeping pace with these changes. The public schools in Swanton are part of the Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union.

Swanton Elementary School is comprised of two buildings, Swanton Central building, which houses 2<sup>nd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades and the Mary S. Babcock building, which houses pre-kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The Town sends its high school and middle school students to Missisquoi Valley Union High School (MVU), which enrolls students from the towns of Franklin, Highgate, and Swanton, in addition to tuitioned students from other surrounding towns. Swanton's total student enrollment (including the enrollment of MVU) decreased between 2008 and 2015 from 1,545 to 1,323 students. This continues a pattern in decline of enrollment since the 1990s. Enrollment in 1999 was 1,788 students.



Several opportunities exist for higher and continuing education in the Swanton area and greater region. Community College of Vermont has a campus in St. Albans on South Main Street, offering a variety of courses and support for students. The University of Vermont has an Extension office in St. Albans that also provides a number of resources, support services to the community and opportunities to engage in programs. Approximately 44 students at Missisquoi Valley High School Class of 2014 continued their education at an institution of higher learning in the fall of 2014.

There are several higher education institutions in Burlington, about 40 minutes south of Swanton, including the University of Vermont, Champlain College, St. Michael’s College, Community College of Vermont, Vermont Technical College, and Burlington College. Johnson State College and Lyndonville State College are also located in Northern Vermont.

Childcare is a growing concern for existing and prospective families, whether in regards to finding quality services or the cost of securing these services. According to State data, Swanton currently has 22 registered childcare homes and 2 licensed providers with a total capacity of 243 children. This is a decrease in capacity from a capacity of 252 calculated during the last town plan update in 2010. Data on other options, such as stay at home parents, family care providers, un-registered childcare homes, or other in-home childcare options is unavailable. Given these data limitations, it is difficult to make a conclusion about whether or not Swanton’s childcare needs are adequately met.

**F. ENERGY**

Vermont planning law provides that municipal plans must include an energy program for the community. Such a program is intended to promote the efficient and economic utilization of

energy. Practical energy planning and implementation results in positive environmental and economic returns to the community and energy providers. Conservation of energy lessens the demand for expensive new sources, and allows utilities to defer capital investments necessary to provide for additional capacity. This has benefits for residents, businesses, and ratepayers.

While it is recognized that energy supply and demand are directed largely by economic forces at the state, federal, and international levels, the manner in which the Town plans for future growth can have an impact on energy. For example, a highly dispersed and unplanned pattern of land use can waste both land and energy resources. The need for additional infrastructure and fuel consumption can be reduced with proper planning that includes job locations, public services and housing near the growth centers. The sighting and design of buildings as well as the selection of appropriate energy systems can influence the efficiency and conservation of energy.

### Current Use and Renewable Energy

According to the American Communities Survey (2009-2013), the major heating fuels consumed in Swanton are fuel oil or kerosene (45.6%), natural gas (28.5%), bottled, tank, or LP gas (13.2%), wood (9.4%), other fuels (1.4%), and electricity (1.2%). In Vermont State, the major heating fuels consumed are fuel oil or kerosene (46.5%), wood (16.3%), natural gas (15.9), Bottled, tank, or LP gas (14.9%), electricity (4.6%), and other (1.2%). State energy officials estimate that almost 80 percent of residential energy is dedicated to space heating and domestic hot water.

About half of all energy used in Vermont is for transportation, according to the 2005 Vermont Comprehensive Energy and Electric Plan. Over 50% of this is for residential users who drive private cars. Public transportation opportunities in Swanton are limited to bus service, with regional service provided by the Green Mountain Transit Authority.

The use of renewable/alternative energy resources, such as wood, wind, biomass, methane

digesters and solar power, can provide cleaner, safer, and potentially more locally available alternatives to traditional fuels and nuclear power. As the state continues to pursue alternative energy resources and local interest increases, Swanton may find they need to revise their bylaws to accommodate the changes.

Swanton Electric currently derives 100% of its power from renewably hydropower sources. Despite data from ACS 2009-2013, there are 3 property owners that own solar panels and are net metering power onto the regional grid according to the Vermont Energy Atlas. Swanton supports the development of additional renewable energy resources in the community.

Table 3.12: House Heating Fuel in Swanton		
Fuel Type	Housing Units	%
Fuel Oil, Kerosene, etc.	1,175	45.6%
Utility Gas	733	28.5%
Bottle, Tank, or LP Gas	339	13.2%
Wood	241	9.4%
Other Fuel	35	1.4%
Electricity	31	1.2%
No fuel Used	22	0.9%
Solar	-	0.0%
Coal or Coke	-	0.0%
Occupied Housing Units	2,576	100.0%
Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey		

## **G. TRANSPORTATION**

### **Transportation System**

The transportation of goods and services in Swanton began on the waters of Lake Champlain and the Missisquoi River. Water travel was the predominant form of transportation until the establishment of railroads in the mid 1800's. By the late 1800's several railroads were established in Swanton carrying passengers and freight to larger urban centers such as Montreal, Burlington and New York and points east such as Morrisville and St. Johnsbury, and west to New York state. Map 6.8 illustrates the existing transportation system in Swanton including railroads, selected trails, and private rights-of-way.

Use of many of the railroads, including the Lamoille Valley Railroad and portions of the Central Vermont Railway, were discontinued after completion of the interstate highway system. Today, the main railroad through Swanton is the New England Central Railway. Though rail travel continues to be an important mode of freight transportation in Swanton, the construction of Interstate 89 dramatically changed the way goods and services were transported. The existing road network is used by truck traffic, tourists, and commuters. Roads in Swanton Village and Town have experienced continually increasing traffic levels. The following provides a brief summary of various transportation facilities and their existing conditions.

### **Highways**

Swanton is served by several regional routes including: Interstate 89, U.S. Route 7, and Vermont State Routes 36, 78, 207 and 105. The Town and Village maintain a number of Class 1, 2 and 3 highways. According to the Vermont Agency of Transportation 2013 Pavement Assessment, the majority of the state highways in Swanton have ratings of fair or higher. However, Interstate 89 and VT Routes 78 and 105 have segments with poor ratings. It should be noted that the Class 1 Highway portion of VT Route 78 will be rebuilt in 2016.

The first section of Autoroute 35, a limited access highway, in Canada opened in 2014 and will eventually connect to Interstate 89 at the Highgate Border Crossing. The effects of current completed section of the highway are still being assessed.

It should be noted that Swanton has become a local cycling hub. Cyclists have increasingly used Swanton's highways in recent years because of the relatively flat terrain and accessibility to several popular biking locations (the Lake Champlain Islands, the Lake Champlain Byway and the Missisquoi Valley and the Lamoille Valley Rail Trails).

Map 3.8

# TRANSPORTATION



## Bridges

The Vermont Agency of Transportation provides sufficiency ratings for all state owned bridge structures 20 feet and greater in length. The sufficiency ratings are categorized by the State into three deficiency status categories: 1) not deficient (ND); 2) functionally deficient (FD); and 3) structurally deficient (SD). Three of the twelve listed structures in Swanton are functionally deficient and two are structurally deficient, The Missisquoi Bay Bridge that connects Alburg to West Swanton was on the State's list of structurally deficient bridges until it was replaced in 2008 Table 6.13 provides a summary of sufficiency ratings of all State owned structures 20 feet and over in Swanton.

Table 3.13: Sufficiency Ratings of State Structures 20 ft and over in Swanton - 2014					
Principle Route	Bridge Number	Location	Feature Crossed	Federal Sufficiency Rating	Deficiency Status
I-89	094N	3.1 mi. S. Exit 21	I-89 over TH 3	0956	ND
I-89	094S	3.1 mi. S. Exit 21	I-89 over TH 3	0976	ND
I-89	096N	0.6 mi. S. Exit 21	Missisquoi River	0805	ND
I-89	096S	0.6 mi. S. Exit 21	Missisquoi River	0805	ND
I-89	097N	0.3 mi. S. Exit 21	I-89 over LVRR	0654	FD
I-89	097S	0.3 mi. S. Exit 21	I-89 over LVRR	0775	FD
I-89	098N	I-89 Exit 21	I-89 over VT 78	0730	FD
I-89	098S	I-89 Exit 21	I-89 over VT 78	0406	SD
US7	0178	1.0 mi. S. Jct. VT78E	Missisquoi River	0970	ND
VT78	00002	3.0 mi. E Jct. US2	Missisquoi Bay	0837	ND
VT78	00006	0.2 mi. W Jct. US7	Missisquoi River	0792	ND
C2003	0004	0.5 mi. to Jct. W. CL2 TH4	Hungerford Brook	0572	FD
Source: Vermont Agency of Transportation, 2014 Deficiency Status: ND=Not Deficient, FD=Functionally Deficient, and SD=Structurally Deficient					

## Rail

The main line of the New England Central Railway (NECR) parallels the Route 7 and 78 corridors through Swanton Town and bypasses the Village. The rail in recent years has been upgraded to welded rail to enable smoother ride and faster travel. The former train stations in Swanton were located on Depot Street (relocated to South River Street and preserved as a museum), East Station (on the south end of Robinhood Lane) and in Fonda (formerly Swanton Junction). American and Canadian officials have continued to work towards reinstating Amtrak train service between St. Albans and Montreal.

## Air

The Franklin County Airport is located just east of Swanton in Highgate. This general aviation airport currently provides charter passenger service. Residents have access to commercial air travel primarily through Burlington, Plattsburgh, or Montreal.

## Pedestrian Paths

Swanton Village and Town maintain several miles of sidewalks and pedestrian paths. An important goal of Swanton is to plan for alternative modes of transportation that provide safe and efficient access to services. There are several opportunities to encourage non-vehicular modes of transportation, including the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail, the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, and Swanton Fit and Healthy Recreation Trail.

## Public Transit

The Green Mountain Transit Authority (GMTA) is responsible for public transit in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. GMTA operates a shuttle bus service between Alburg and Georgia with several stops in Swanton including at the Swanton Industrial Park on Jonergin Drive, at the senior housing/independent living complex in the old Swanton Central School, at Farrar Street and Grand Avenue, at St. Marie's and First Street, and at Missisquoi Valley Union High School. GMTA also operates a St. Albans City loop, and a shuttle route from Richford to St. Albans. Additionally, they coordinate the Ride Share Program, Medicaid, and elderly transportation services.

## H. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

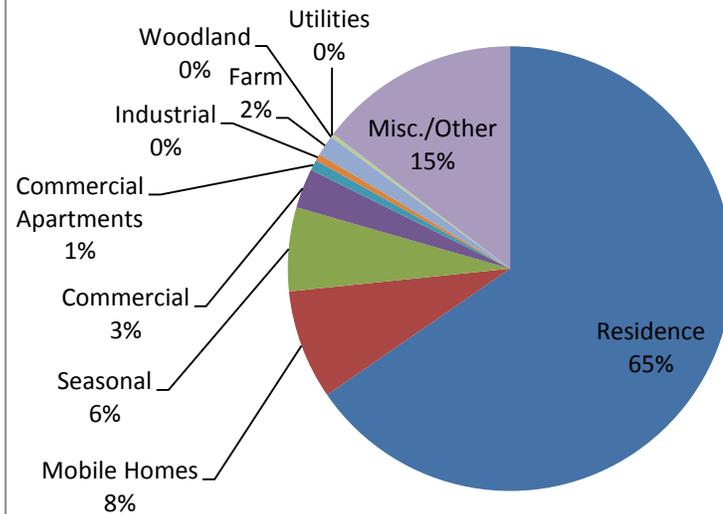
### Current Situation

Swanton derives a significant proportion of its revenues from property taxes. Looking inside Swanton's grand list reveals that 72% is derived from year-round residents. Table 6.14 shows a summary of the various grand list components such as residential, seasonal, industrial and commercial uses. It is interesting to note that seasonal uses (6%) account for a larger proportion than industrial uses (less than 1%) in the total Grand List. Figure 6.6 is a graphic depiction of the 2014 grand list by category.

Table 3.14: Composition of Swanton's Grand List, 2014		
Revenue Type	No. of Parcels	Listed Value
Residence	2,084	\$455,905,700.00
Mobile Homes	254	\$14,389,500.00
Seasonal	194	\$40,676,500.00
Commercial	92	\$35,154,400.00
Commercial Apartments	24	\$10,391,500.00
Industrial	16	\$14,834,000.00
Farm	48	\$14,393,600.00
Woodland	0	0
Utilities	8	\$23,411,300.00
Misc./Other	467	\$19,832,800.00
TOTAL	3,187	\$628,989,300.00

Source: Swanton Grand List, 2014 and VT Department of Taxes  
(Municipal Listed Values and Equalized Values by Category)

**Figure 3.6 - Composition of Swanton's Grand List - 2014**



In 2013, there were 3,314 Swanton residents age 16 years and over who were employed. Table 6.15 provides a breakdown of the occupations held by residents of Swanton in 2013 (2009-2013 ACS). Thirty-one percent of these residents are in an occupation of management, professional, and related occupations. Another 27% are in sales and office occupations. Seventeen percent of Swanton residents work in service occupations.

Swanton has a variety of businesses. Some of the larger employers include Poulin GrainMyland Technologies, Leader Evaporator, and VT Precision Tools Inc. There is also a burgeoning maple industry. These businesses are a part of the diversity of employment opportunities available to Swanton residents and residents from around the county (Table 6.16).

**Table 3.15: Occupation of Swanton Town Residents in 2013,  
Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Older**

Occupation	Total	Percent
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	1,043	31%
Sales and office occupations	883	27%
Service occupations	572	17%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	463	14%

Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	353	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,314</b>	<b>100%</b>
Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

According to the 2009-2013 American Community Survey, 23% percent of the total workforce works in educational, health, and social services. This is followed closely by those working in manufacturing (19%) and retail (11%).

Table 3.16: Industry of Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Older in 2013, Swanton, VT		
Economic Sector	Total	Percent
Educational, health, and social services:	773	23%
Manufacturing:	638	19%
Retail:	380	11%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services:	280	8%
Public Administration:	261	8%
Construction:	252	8%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services:	243	7%
Transportation:	127	4%
Other services (except public administration):	115	3%
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing:	88	3%
Information	81	2%
Wholesale trade:	54	2%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining:	22	0.70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,314</b>	<b>100%</b>
Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

According to the US Census Bureau “On the Map” service, approximately 490 Swanton residents work in Swanton. These residents make up 32.9% of the workforce for Swanton businesses. This percentage is only surpassed by “All Other Locations” at 35.4%, a category that reflects the small size of Vermont towns and the wide area that Swanton workers commute from. Generally, workers in Swanton commute from other parts of Franklin County and Grand Isle County.

Table 3.17: Where Swantons Workers Live - 2011		
Town	2011	
	Count	Share
Swanton (town and village)	490	32.9%
Highgate town	114	7.7%
St. Albans city	87	5.8%
Sheldon town	71	4.8%
St. Albans town	64	4.3%
Alburgh town	56	3.8%
Franklin town	40	2.7%
Georgia town	40	2.7%
All Other Locations	528	35.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,490</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2011).		

The US Census Bureau “On the Map” service also provides information regarding where Swanton residents commute for employment. Table 6.18 shows that Swanton is the most common place that Swanton residents are employed. Swanton is followed by St. Albans Town (14.6%), St. Albans City (11.3%), and several Chittenden County municipalities (33%). It should be noted that “All Other Locations” composed 19.3% of the destinations of Swanton workers again noting the wide area that Swanton residents travel for employment.

Table 3.18 - Where Swanton Residents are Employed - 2011		
Town	2011	
	Count	Share
Swanton town	490	17.2%
St. Albans town	417	14.6%
St. Albans city	324	11.3%
Burlington city	226	7.9%
South Burlington city	190	6.7%
Essex town	161	5.6%
Williston town	132	4.6%
Colchester town	107	3.7%
Milton town	98	3.4%
Highgate town	80	2.8%
Sheldon town	79	2.8%
All Other Locations	551	19.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,855</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2011).		

## I. HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Swanton is rich in cultural and historic resources, reflecting thousands of years of Native American movement and settlement and almost 300 years of postcolonial settlement. Swanton's physical features and natural resources play a dominant role in Swanton's history.

### Pre-colonial History

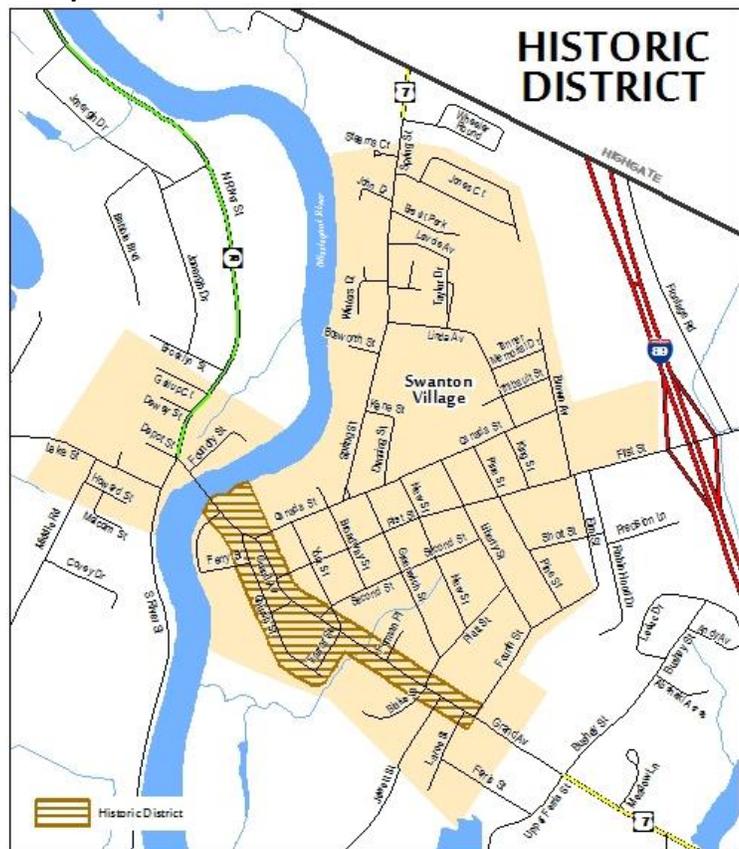
There is evidence from pre-historic sites that the Champlain Valley was permanently occupied at least 8,000 years ago. These sites also confirm that people settled along the Missisquoi River. Native peoples have lived in the area for at least 10,000 years. Abenakis continue to live and work in Swanton today. Thus, there is a rich cultural heritage in Swanton that has been conserved.

The Historic Sites and Structures Survey conducted in 1982 by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation identified approximately 220 sites and structures in the Town and Village, not including an undetermined number of unmarked archeological sites or sacred Native American sites. A listing of these historical sites and structures is contained in Appendix B. Several new sites were recently excavated in preparation of projects to reconstruct VT Route 78 and to construct a new water line from the reservoir in Highgate to Swanton Village.

A list of archeological areas in Swanton is on file with the Division for Historic Preservation. A composite map of the sensitive archeological areas has been prepared for the Town by the Division. In order to plan for the protection of these areas, the approximate locations of the sites should be identified and added to the Historic Sites and Structures maps (on file in the Swanton Zoning and Planning Office or the Swanton Public Library).

### Post-Colonial History

Map 3.9



Early business and industry included lumbering, iron mining and manufacturing. The limestone industry, still active today, dates back to 1800. In the Town, marble was extracted. In the Village, marble was polished and finished and prepared for shipment to points south. Boats, carriages, and sleighs were manufactured as well as powder and ammunition. To support the growing commercial center several inns and hotels were established. The Swanton Historical Society recently opened a museum at the Depot Street Railroad Station (relocated to South River Street) that chronicles some of the early history of the community and the coming of the railroad.

Swanton Village contains a Historic District which includes 89 structures and the Village Green (Map 3.9). Only nine of the 89 structures are listed as non-contributing to the historical context of the District. Again, a series of maps of the historic sites and structures and the Swanton Village Historic District is on file in the Swanton Zoning and Planning Office or the Swanton Public Library.

Swanton's cultural resources include a variety of groups, organizations, books, special collections of documents, and artifacts. These resources include the Swanton Historical Society, the Swanton Public Library, the Swanton Public Schools, the Abenaki Self-Help Association, Inc., Swanton Chamber of Commerce, Town and Village offices, the King's Daughters, Masons, Knights of Columbus, scouting organizations, senior citizen organizations, service clubs, important religious sites, cemeteries and burial grounds, churches, and the Orrin Batchelder photograph collection which can be viewed at the Railroad Depot Museum.

### **Current Issues**

As Swanton experiences increased growth, the significant historical and cultural resources become more vulnerable. Consequently, preserving and maintaining the rich inventory of historical and cultural resources has become more challenging. Though Swanton has done a good job at preserving the historic structures, several historic and archeological sites have been threatened or lost to development. As stated in the Forward, it is important to preserve the character of Swanton Village as a traditional New England settlement.

The following are a list of current pertaining to historic and cultural resources:

- The current delineated Village Historic District boundaries omits key sites and structures including the Church Street Cemetery, the old Central School East of the river, the dam on the Missisquoi River and the historic structures west of the river along Depot Street, Scott Street, River Street and Lake Street.
- Heavy truck traffic threatens the integrity of the historic structures within the Historic District in the Village.
- The loss of important historic and cultural resources threatens the traditional customs of the native peoples. The native peoples of Swanton help maintain an understanding of the significance of the historical features in Swanton. It is important to recognize the inherent diversity of conservation perceptions. Understanding our past is integral to understanding our future. By working together, the rich historical and cultural diversity in Swanton can be maintained.

## CHAPTER 4 – SWANTON’S VISION

### A. VISION STATEMENT

In the winter and spring of 2015, Swanton and Swanton Village were fortunate to work in conjunction with the Vermont Council on Rural Development to complete a “Community Visit.” A Community Visit is a process “designed to help communities come together, review major issues, develop priorities, and line up for action,” while encouraging “new volunteerism and encouraging more local folks to get involved in moving the community forward.” Community visits also connect the community to build connections to the “human, technical, and funding resources from lead agencies and organizations in the state.”<sup>2</sup>

Over 200 people participated in the Swanton Community Visit process. About 70 volunteers continue to work with the 5 task forces created as a result of the Swanton Community Visit. The task forces are:

1. Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, River Access, Bike-ability, and Bike Tourism
2. Create an Arts Council
3. Build a Swanton Economic Development Committee
4. Unite the Community to Reduce Substance Abuse
5. Improve Traffic, Walkability, and Parking Downtown

At the second meeting held during the Community Visit held on March 5, 2015, the residents of Swanton created a vision for the community. This vision, supported by the majority of participants during the Community Visit, represents the aspirations of the Swanton community:

*Swanton residents look to a future for the community where:*

*Swanton is a vibrant, diverse, and thriving community where local businesses, culture, and assets are highlighted. People are waiting in line to buy homes here because of the strong sense of community, a recreational facility that serves young and old, and a good night life with a good public restaurant, bar, or community meeting place.*

*Swanton is a safe community for children, families, and seniors, where children have safe places to play beyond their backyards and seniors feel they can get around and participate in activities safely.*

*Swanton is a community that cares about its children and families and works hard to strengthen families. Our schools are seen as the best in the region – and even in the entire state.*

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<sup>2</sup> Swanton Community Visit – Report and Action Plan ~ May 2015

*Swanton is a prosperous town with plenty of water resources that attracts appropriate retail development bringing good paying jobs to the town.*

*There is a sense of belonging in Swanton. There is an effective vehicle for communicating all of the good things going on for residents and visitors, and a community calendar to share events. The Town and the Village collaborate respectfully and effectively.*

*Swanton is a town where visitors come for activities ranging from biking, to paddling and fishing, and visiting the Historical Society. The town is recognized for artistic achievement and visitors come to see the work created and displayed by local artists. Swanton is much more than just a place that traffic passes through, it is a destination<sup>3</sup>.*

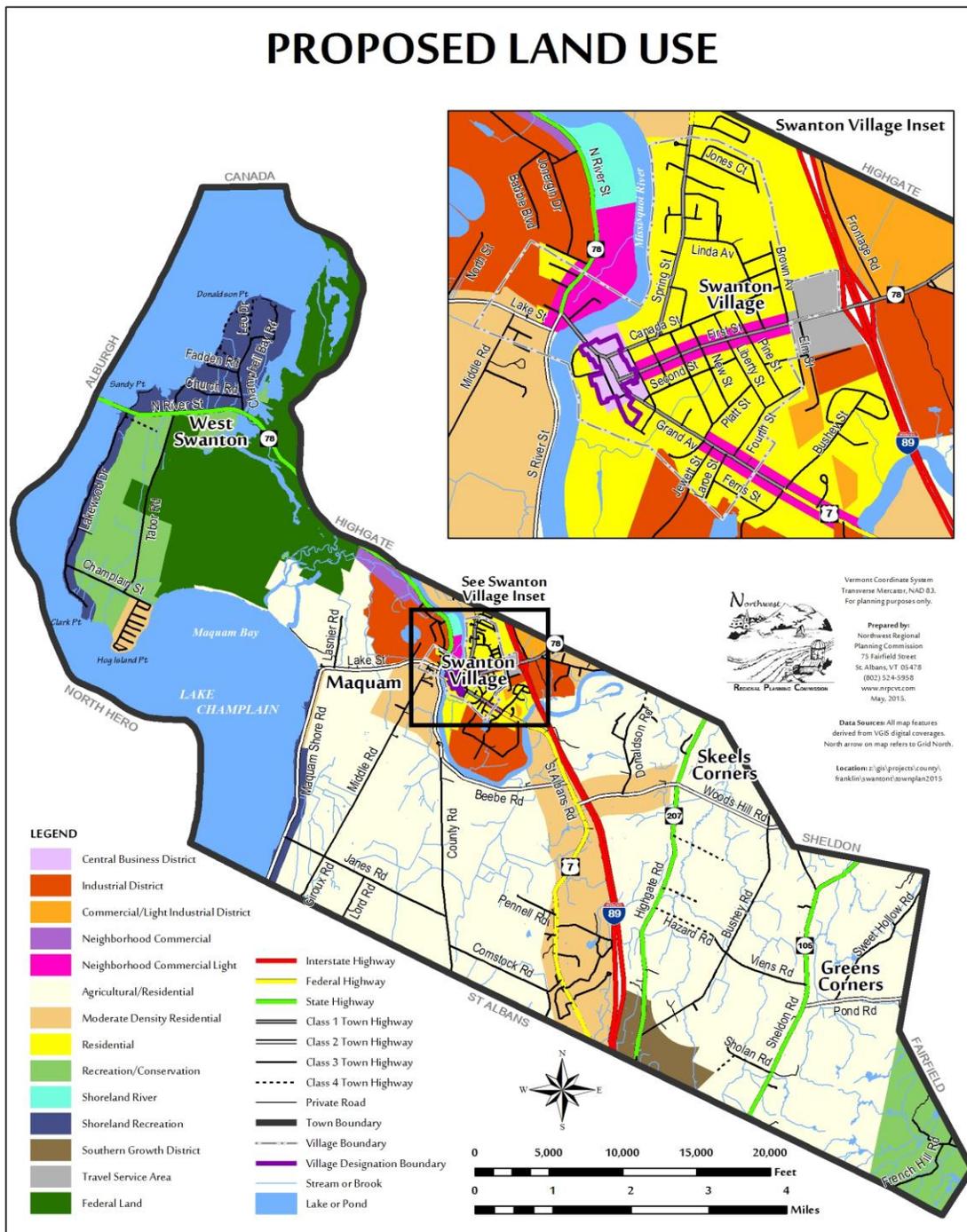
More information about the Swanton Community Visit process can be found in the “Swanton Community Visit – Report and Action Plan ~ May 2015” which can be found in Appendix B.

The following chapter is a culmination of the vision of the Swanton community. The chapter focuses several key areas that will guide the future of Swanton: land use, transportation, public facilities and services, natural resources, historic and cultural resources, energy, housing and economic development.

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<sup>3</sup> Swanton Community Visit – Report and Action Plan ~ May 2015

Map 4.1



**B. LAND USE**

Swanton plans to direct growth to appropriate areas of the Town and Village by establishing various land use areas as shown on Map 4.1 - Swanton Town Proposed Land Use. The Proposed Land Use Plan is based on existing land use patterns, traffic patterns, the intensity of proposed

uses, physical constraints of the land, the resident's vision for the community, and several long range planning goals and objectives. Traffic generation, the intensity of the proposed uses, and ability of the community to provide facilities and services were also considered in the establishment of the proposed land use districts. The following is a brief description of the land use areas depicted on the Proposed Land Use Plan.

Swanton community planners are cautious of strip development and recommend that future growth be clustered near the existing Village Center. In response to development constraints around the Village and a desire to accommodate well-planned development in the southern part of Town, Swanton is also encouraging clustered, mixed use development within the Southern Growth District near Exit 20. The rural open lands covering the majority of the Town should be preserved and agriculture should be kept viable by promoting growth in designated areas. Future commercial and industrial growth in Swanton should be environmentally sound and in balance with existing uses.

### **Shoreland Recreation District (SR)**

The purpose of this District is to provide for the significant seasonal recreation industry that has evolved along the shoreline of Lake Champlain. This District is established to direct future growth of that sector in a manner that is environmentally sound and consistent with other goals and objectives of this Plan. The intensity of land uses should be such that erosion resulting from human activity is minimized and that water quality (both surface and ground water) is not negatively impacted.

Three Shoreland Recreation Districts are shown: 1) Campbell Bay south to the centerline of Route 78 and west to Lake Champlain; 2) the shoreline properties along Maquam Shore Road from the water treatment plant south to the town line to include all properties on the lake shore and 600' from the centerline east of Route 36 (Maquam Shore Road); and 3) on Lakewood Drive for a distance 600' east of the centerline Lakewood Drive. The types of land uses allowed in this area shall be seasonal and year-round residential, agriculture, outdoor recreation including beaches, campgrounds, picnic areas, boat launch areas and marinas, and limited commercial uses associated with public and private recreation.

This District should have a maximum density of one dwelling unit per acre. Future development must ensure that there is adequate land area for on-site septic disposal and on-site water supply.. Future mobile home parks should be limited to no more than 100 mobile home sites. Development in these Districts should be clustered whenever possible, provided that adequate setbacks and environmental considerations are observed.

### **Recreation/Conservation District (RC)**

The Recreation/Conservation District is designated to protect and conserve the unique wetlands, floodplains, wildlife areas, and natural and archeological sensitive areas of Swanton. Provided the soil conditions allow, future uses in this District should include agriculture, forestry, and outdoor recreation. Additional development requiring structures should be discouraged or

prohibited. All land uses should maintain proper setbacks and buffers to avoid erosion and/or negative impacts on water quality.

This District contains the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge and a large wetland located east of the Refuge, which extends to the Neighborhood Commercial District (on Route 78) and the Industrial District on Jonergin Drive. Along the Missisquoi River, the District fluctuates in width to include significant wetlands and other natural resources including prime agricultural soils and sensitive archeological areas. The Recreation/Conservation District also contains the Fairfield Swamp and Management Area (located on the southeast corner of Swanton Town).

A significant portion of the land area in this District is in public ownership. However, a portion along the Missisquoi River is in private ownership. Some of the privately owned areas are developed while portions near Highgate remain open. Land uses that are compatible with the existing uses such as farming, forestry, and outdoor recreation should be allowed.

### **Shoreland/River District (S2)**

The Shoreland River District is intended to allow residential and seasonal recreational uses adjacent to the Lake Champlain shoreline in a manner that protects surface and ground water quality and shoreland vegetation, minimizes adverse impacts to the lakeshore environment, limits encroachments into public waters, and preserves both visual and physical access to and from the Lake. The District should have a maximum density of one dwelling per acre and a minimum lot size of one acre.

### **Agricultural Residential District (Low Density) (R1)**

Agriculture shall be the dominant land use in this District. There are three large sections contained in this District: 1) the area east of the Wildlife Refuge and west of the Swanton Industrial Park; 2) the area between Maquam Shore Road and the R3 District along Route 7; and 3) the majority of the area east of I-89. This District contains large contiguous areas of primary agricultural soils and many active farms. Farming is a major component of Swanton's local economy and, in order to maintain and enhance this industry, residential development in these areas shall be limited.

In this District, development has been occurring primarily on private development roads accessed off existing rights-of-way. Due in part to the significant economic pressure on Swanton's agricultural units, several farmers are no longer actively farming. One goal of the Plan is to relieve the pressures of development by encouraging growth to occur near the existing Village and in the Southern Growth District instead of the Agricultural Residential District. The maximum density in this District should not exceed 1 dwelling unit per acre.

### **Moderate Density Residential District (R3)**

To provide for greater densities and smaller lot sizes near the existing Village, several Moderate Density Residential Districts are located near the Village and along Route 7. In general, soils in

these areas are suitable for on-site septic and have good access to services. The proposed density of the District is one dwelling unit per acre. Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) that cluster dwelling units should be encouraged. The following is a description of the R3 District.

- 1) Northeast Route 78--On the south side of Route 78, the R3 District follows the centerline of the Waugh Farm Road intersection and extends east to the Highgate border.
- 2) North Route 7--This District follows the centerline north to the Highgate border and west along the centerline of Monument Road. The southern boundary of this District follows the Recreation/Conservation District for a distance of 200 feet from the edge of the Missisquoi River.
- 3) East (Woods Hill Road)--From the Woods Hill Road and I-89 intersection, this District extends 4,900 feet from the intersection of Route 7 and Woods Hill Road. The District extends north and south from the centerline of Woods Hill Road for a distance of 1,400 feet.
- 4) West (Route 36/Middle Road)--From the intersection of the Village Treatment Plant Road (leading to the lagoons) and Route 36, the western boundary of this Moderate Density Residential District is a line 2,000 feet from the centerline of Middle Road. The District extends south a distance of 4,700 feet and 1,500 feet west of the centerline of Middle Road. The southern boundary of this District is a line perpendicular to Middle Road 1,500 feet from the centerline and the southeast corner is at a point where the Central Vermont Railroad crosses the County Road. The eastern boundary follows the proposed Recreation/ Conservation District (along the Missisquoi River).
- 5) West (Maquam Shore Road)--From the Town Beach to the Water Treatment Plant 300' east of the centerline including all properties on the lakeshore.
- 6) Tabors Point from the centerline of Champlain Street south to Lakewood Campground and to the Point, and east to Maquam Bay.

### **Residential District (High Density) (R5)**

The Residential District shall contain relatively high densities of residential development. The proposed Residential Districts are characteristic of the compact neighborhoods that exist outside the Village Central Business District. To accommodate future residential development on smaller lots, two R5 Districts are proposed outside the Village corporate limits.

The first is located on the northern boundary of the Village east of the centerline of Route 7, extending north to the Highgate border, and east to the centerline of I-89.

The second District is located on the southeast boundary of the Village corporate limits on both sides of Route 7. The area to the south of Route 7 extends in a straight line 500 feet southwest from the southeast corner of the Village corporate limits, then southeast in a straight line parallel with Route 7 for a distance of 1,000 feet, then northeast for a distance of 900 feet, then southeast in a straight line parallel with Route 7 for a distance of approximately 1,200 feet to the western edge of the industrial lot that adjoins the former railroad then north to the centerline of Route 7, then northwest following the centerline of Route 7 to the Village boundary, then following the Village boundary southwest to the point of beginning. The area north of Route 7 is bounded on east by the proposed Recreation/Conservation District and I-89, on the north by the

Neighborhood Commercial Light District, on the west by the Village corporate limits and on the south by Route 7.

The purpose of these Districts is to provide for greater densities near the existing Village with easy access to the Central Business District, municipal services, schools, and highways. Residential development should not exceed a density of one dwelling unit per acre unless served by municipal services whereby smaller 1/4 or 1/2 acre lots may be allowed.

### **Central Business District (CB)**

The Central Business District located in the Village includes a variety of municipal, professional, business, and retail uses. The Central Business District also includes much of the Village historic area and several historic structures that front Church Street, Farrar Street, Academy Street, Grand Avenue, and the Village Green. The Central Business District shall also include the block of First Street, York Street, Canada Street and back to Grand Avenue.

The Central Business District is the historic and cultural heart of the community. New development shall be in keeping with the historic qualities of the Village. Decisions to improve intersections or road improvements shall also consider the impacts on the Village character. Decisions shall also consider traffic safety. A mixture of business uses shall be maintained and encouraged.

The Central Business District incorporates most of the area located within Swanton's Designated Village Center (see Map 4.1). This designation is granted by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development to support historic villages. Enrollment in the program provides landowners within the district to receive preference when applying for state grants (ex. tax credits for restoring historic structures). This designation furthers the plan's goals by promoting revitalization of the compact, traditional village of Swanton and by ensuring that the village remains a walkable center of the community with mixed uses and diverse housing options. At the writing of this plan, there have been no properties that have undergone revitalization efforts as a part of this designation, nor are there any planned revitalization efforts. Swanton shall make a greater effort to promote the benefits of village designation and urge private property owners to participate associated programs.

### **Neighborhood Commercial District (NC)**

The Neighborhood Commercial District is located on the outskirts of the Village just beyond the Swanton Industrial Park. The purpose of this District is to provide support services to the Swanton Industrial Park and to the travelers on Route 78. Appropriate uses in this District include automobile service stations, convenience stores, and small motels or hotels. The District is limited in size for a number of reasons including: 1) to reflect soil and slope limitations; 2) to encourage a buffer between the Village built environment and the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge; and 3) to avoid adverse impacts to the existing businesses and services provided in the Village.

The Neighborhood Commercial District is located on the south side of Route 78 just northwest of the Swanton Industrial Park and extends for a distance of 1,700 feet along Route 78. The District is bounded on the south by the centerline of the Central Vermont Railroad and on the north by the centerline of Route 78. The minimum lot size in this area should be 1/2 acre. The number of driveway cuts should be limited and if possible, new development should front on minor roads.

### **Neighborhood Commercial Light District (NCL)**

In order to strengthen the area just east of the Village corporate limits on First Street/Route 78 and the area around the Village Complex, a Neighborhood Commercial Light District is proposed. The purpose of this District is to encourage uses that strengthen the area aesthetically and provide limited services to nearby neighborhoods.. Professional offices, clinics, neighborhood parks, and small retail shops to service the nearby neighborhoods shall be encouraged. This District shall also include more dense residential development. Strip development and heavy industrial uses shall be discouraged.

The District is bounded on the south by the former Lamoille Valley Railroad, on the east by the centerline of I-89, on the north by a line parallel with Route 78 that is located 2,500 feet from the centerline of Route 78, and on the west by a line 200 feet from the centerline of Brown Avenue. The line then runs south along the centerline of Elm Street and continues south to a point where it intersects with the former Lamoille Valley Railroad.

The minimum lot size in this District shall be 1/4 acre. New development shall front minor roads whenever possible and clustering shall be encouraged. Appropriate setbacks along the Route 78 corridor shall be observed and driveway cuts should be limited, combined, or shared. This district should be studied to evaluate its effectiveness and future public input should be gathered by the Planning Commission regarding the future vision of this district.

### **Travel Service Area District (TSA)**

In order to provide convenient services to the traveling public there is a Travel Service Area District located appropriately near the I-89 interchange. Service associated with travel are permitted in this area including auto service and repair, gas stations, transit facilities, restaurants and lodging. Retail and other mixed use may also be included in this district. PUDs are specifically prohibited in this district. Structures and additions to single family dwellings that were already in existence at the time the regulations were adopted are allowed on conditional basis. Lots adjacent to residential districts shall be landscaped to provide visual privacy.

### **Industrial District (IND)**

There are three (3) Industrial Districts, two (2) of which have existing industrial parks. The three Districts are located: A) outside the Village limits including the area of Jonergin Drive and the Village sewage treatment lagoons; B) the Depot Street area in the Village off Route 78; and C) an area south of the Village corporate limits, Route 7, and a proposed Residential 2 area surrounded

by the Recreation/Conservation District that flanks the Missisquoi River. The purpose of this district is to promote properly scaled industrial development.

These Districts shall be serviced by municipal sewer and water. Lots shall not be less than 1/2 acre. Appropriate setbacks to buffer industrial activities from residential uses, the Missisquoi River, and major rights-of-way shall be observed.

### **Commercial/Light Industrial District (CLI)**

The Commercial/Light Industrial District is intended to serve as a transition between the Industrial District and the nearby Residential Districts. The Commercial/Light Industrial District allows for a range of light industrial and commercial uses. These uses protect the quiet, residential character of the adjacent neighborhoods.

There are three areas designated commercial/light industrial. One is along Frontage Road bounded by Route 78, I-89, and the Highgate border. Another is located along the southwest end of Robin Hood Drive and includes the lands of the former Robin Hood Factory. A third is located on the east side of the Lamoille Valley Railroad bed just north of where it intersects Route 7.

### **Southern Growth District (SG)**

The purpose of the Southern Growth District is to provide an area for future residential and commercial growth in a compact and well-designed pattern of development that is complementary, rather than competitive, to Swanton Village and other growth centers in adjacent towns. It will provide for growth of an efficient system of roads and other infrastructure and create connections between transportation modes. The design and development of this district shall be accomplished in such a manner that historic, aesthetically pleasing, and environmentally appropriate patterns of development are created and visual impacts to surrounding roads and highways are avoided. The maximum density in this District should not exceed 1 dwelling unit per acre.

The Southern Growth District starts at the intersection of the Swanton/St. Albans Town line at Interstate 89 and then proceeds north along the eastern boundary of I-89 approximately 4,500 ft. It then turns east parallel to the Swanton/St. Albans Town line about 2,000 feet where it swings in a southeasterly direction approximately 500 feet off Route 207 crossing Bushey Road, and maintaining an approximate 800 foot buffer north of the old Class 4 Road. When it meets the Bourbeau/ Pilon Farm parcel and follows the Rail Trail back to the Swanton/St. Albans Town line.

### **Land Use Goals and Objectives**

#### ***A. To preserve and enhance the rural qualities of Swanton Town and Village.***

Objectives:

1. Maintain the historic settlement pattern of the compact village and clustered residential development separated by rural countryside.
2. Concentrate development in the Village area and the Southern Growth District, while requiring lower densities of development in the rural areas of Town. Strip development shall be discouraged.
3. Encourage the type, location, and intensity of land uses to be compatible with the environmental, infrastructural, and economic capabilities of the community.
4. Support actions of federal and state governments and land trusts to ensure that Swanton's primary agricultural soils are protected and conserved.
5. Community infrastructure shall be planned so as to minimize development pressure on agricultural and forest land.
6. Require the development of multi-use paths/sidewalks to provide increased pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to existing municipal infrastructure and to proposed development.

***B. To live with respect for the land; make wise and efficient use of it, and preserve the Town's working landscape.***

Objectives:

1. Promote and protect the long-term productivity of land for agriculture and forestry.
2. Protect important natural features, including Lake Champlain, the Missisquoi River and other tributaries, the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, and significant natural, historical, and archeological areas

### **C. TRANSPORTATION**

Swanton is at the hub of major north/south and east/west transportation corridors. These corridors move motor vehicles, boats, pedestrians, bicycles, and trains. Lake Champlain and the Missisquoi River provide important recreational transportation opportunities, while Interstate 89, U.S. Route 7, and VT 78 provide easy access to highways. Good transportation access is critical to the Town's industrial and commercial enterprises and is also important to a robust seasonal tourist economy.

Swanton is unique in that it is close to the major highways of the northeastern US and southeastern Canada, which provide for easy travel by its citizens. Yet this same ease of access has made truck traffic a burden to the community as it is located between Interstates 89 and 87, which are major north-south routes between the metropolitan centers of New York City, Boston, and Montreal, QC. The impacts of the recently extended Autoroute 35 south of Montreal to the Vermont border have yet to be evaluated. Swanton shall work with VTrans and Quebec

authorities to evaluate impact to traffic in Swanton, especially as Canadian authorities continue to work towards the connection of Autoroute 35 to Interstate 89.

Growth and development along the Routes 7 and 78 corridors have introduced additional traffic and access management problems. As noted during the 2015 Swanton Community Visit, these roads are dangerous, especially for bicyclists and pedestrians. The heavy traffic through the central business district and the Village historic area is causing congestion, safety problems, and detrimental impacts on historic buildings. It is also negatively affecting the Village's character. To maintain current levels of service and to accommodate anticipated growth, several intersections and roadways in the Town and Village will need improvement.

A task force was created during the Community Visit that is focusing on the transportation issues affecting the Village. The Downtown: Traffic, Walkability, Bikeability Task Force has determined that there is a need to gather information before thoughtful and impactful changes can be made in the Village. The task force has suggested that the Community conduct a traffic and parking study to look at transportation issues in the Village. This study should look at signage, parking availability and location, traffic circulation, and traffic safety (including vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles) within the Village. There historically has been a desire in the community to re-route truck traffic around the center of Swanton Village. However, this issue has been studied for many years; no feasible option has ever been identified and a "bypass" should no longer be the focus of the community's efforts.

In the future, Swanton shall strive to provide for the movement of goods and people using safe and efficient methods. Swanton shall continue to focus its transportation efforts on improving traffic safety, particularly for bicycles, and solving current problems related to truck traffic and traffic circulation in the Village.

### **Transportation Goals and Objectives**

***A. To provide a transportation system that offers convenient access to all parts of the Town and accommodates various types of travel (i.e., motor vehicles, bicycles, boats, and pedestrians).***

Objectives:

1. Create a transportation system that promotes efficient land use patterns, economic development, and the other goals and objectives of this plan.
2. Encourage use and development of intermodal transportation (i.e., Franklin County Airport, railroad and ferry service to Canada) as a means of promoting tourism.
3. Support improvements and expansion of the sidewalk network in Swanton Village to ease pedestrian travel and safety in Swanton.

**B. To ensure that Swanton's transportation system promotes efficient land use patterns, supports local economic development and is coordinated and compatible with the regional transportation network.**

Objectives:

1. Cooperate with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission on the development of a regional Transportation Improvement Plan, and promote the improvements identified in this Plan.
2. Cooperate with adjoining communities and the State of Vermont Agency of Transportation on the planning, design and implementation of multi or shared use bike paths and other non-motorized transportation facilities.
3. Encourage improvements to bicycle and pedestrian safety within the Village and along VT Route 78.
4. Support planning for a town-wide network of pedestrian/bicycle paths connecting major destination points and linkages to similar facilities in adjacent towns.
5. Work with GMTA to study public transit routes and to expand routes when needed.
6. Monitor the availability and adequacy of parking in the Central Business District.
7. Improve traffic patterns and traffic safety in the Village.

**D. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Swanton Town and Village provide a wide range of public facilities and services for residents. As the town grows in population, demand for community facilities and services increases. Capital budgeting is an important tool used for planning large capital expenditures often required for maintaining or increasing service levels. Capital budgeting should be strongly considered in both communities in the future.

The following is a detailed discussion about future public facility and service needs and improvements:

**Town and Village Municipal Offices**

In 2004-2005, the Town Office building underwent extensive renovations to increase space and make overall improvements in structure and appearance. The Town is now assessing the possibility of expanding the Town Office to incorporate the second story to the current Town Office building. The second story will hopefully accommodate a much larger meeting space.

**Town Highway Garage**

The equipment and services of the Town Highway Garage and Town Highway Department meet current needs and it is anticipated that they will continue to do so in the future. The Town Highway budget reflects a capital improvement fund that is used to upgrade the Town Highway Department fleet of trucks and equipment as needed. The Town of Swanton is converting the truck fleet to all larger tandem dump trucks as existing trucks are replaced.

### **Fire and Police Protection**

The Village Fire Department provides fire protection in the Village and Town. The Fire Department's ability to provide quality services at present and in the future is excellent. The Department's equipment inventory is adequate and the ability of the equipment to provide adequate service is excellent. Residents of Swanton are very satisfied with fire services and do not feel that the facilities need to be improved. Additional firefighters and additional equipment shall be added to the department as the community grows.

The Village Police Department currently occupies a portion of the Village Municipal Complex located on First Street. The Department provides service to Swanton Village residents. Upon request, the Department also participates in mutual aid to surrounding towns, including Swanton Town. The Sheriff's department is contracted on a part-time basis to provide police protection to Swanton Town as well. The current level of police service shall be maintained as the community continues to grow.

### **Public Water System**

The Village has maintained a water treatment facility since 1978. . See Map 6.7 for the municipal water service area. The Village is planning to construct a new water transmission line from the Swanton Reservoir to the Village. The line will be 16" in diameter. Construction on the water transmission line is planned to start in the fall of 2015.

### **Public Sewer System**

The sewer system effectively handles the current demand and has capacity to accommodate new connections. There are no current plans for system expansion.

### **Public Stormwater System**

There has been increasing concerns in the community about stormwater management over the last several years. Stormwater affects water quality in our lakes and rivers. It also can cause flooding if insufficiently managed. The community should continue consult the several studies that have been completed in recent years to better understand the existing stormwater system and to help evaluate how to improve the stormwater system. The community should actively seek grants to continue to upgrade the stormwater system.

### **Swanton Electric Department**

There are no current plans to make significant changes to the generating or transmission facilities

owned by Swanton Electric. Existing generation is sufficient. The community continues to support Swanton Electric and hopes to continue to have the lowest electrical rates in the State.

### **Solid Waste**

Swanton will continue to be a member of the Northwest Vermont Solid Waste Management District in the future. Swanton will work with the District to ensure community compliance with future state requirements regarding recycling and composting.

### **Parks and Recreation Areas**

Swanton maintains a variety of parks, recreation areas, and programs. During the 2015 Community Visit, Swanton residents identified expanding outdoor recreation activities as a community priority. A task force was created to work on outdoor recreation issues with a focus upon river access, bikeability, and bike tourism. The task force identified that increased river access should be a priority at the Depot Museum and Marble Mill Park to better provide access to the calm stretch of water above the dam. Collaboration and increased communication between the community and the Swanton Recreation Department was also identified as a priority. Other task force ideas included promotion of the Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge, the creation of primitive camp sites in collaboration with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, exploring opportunities for new bike paths, creating an outdoor gear rental program and improving connection between the end of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and downtown.

### **Swanton Public Library and Historical Society**

The Swanton Public Library, governed by a Board of Trustees, adequately provides the community with library services, now and into the future. The Library shares its building with the Swanton Historical Society. The Swanton Historical Society should work closely with the Library in maintaining and preserving Swanton's inventory of historical and cultural resources. Additionally, the Library and the Historical Society should continue to cooperate and promote "cultural tourism" by conducting guided tours and educational workshops, developing maps and brochures and other resource materials.

### **Educational Facilities**

Swanton currently maintains two public schools serving grades K-6--the Elementary School and the Mary Babcock Elementary School located on Grand Avenue. Grades 7-12 are provided by the Missisquoi Valley Union High School located in Highgate and Swanton. There are no private schools offering K-12 education in Swanton. There are no current plans for expansion of these facilities.

### **Childcare Facilities**

Childcare is growing concern for existing and prospective families, whether in regards to finding quality services or the cost of securing these services. The Town and Village, in

collaboration with the School District, shall continue to monitor the availability of child care in the community to ensure that safe and affordable child care is available in the community.

### ***Public Health/Health Care/Emergency Services***

Missisquoi Valley Rescue (MVR) services Swanton and the surrounding areas. MVR is a non-profit organization based in Swanton. Swanton residents are very satisfied with MVR's current services and, according to representatives of the MVR, they are able to provide excellent service for expected increased demands. MVR keeps their fleet of rescue vehicles up to date. The community shall work with MVR to ensure that the community keeps the current level of service as the community grows.

Northwestern Medical Center, located in St. Albans is the closest hospital to Swanton. Northern Tier Center for Health (NOTCH) is a local non-profit health care provider with doctor's offices and a dental clinic located in Swanton Village. The Village and the Town shall work with each organization to ensure that the public health needs of the community are properly addressed.

During the 2015 Community Visit, a task force was created to address increasing concerns in the community about substance abuse, particularly addiction to opiates and prescription drugs. The task force is currently working to create more family friendly events in the community and to increase awareness about addiction. The task force is also looking to gather ideas from other communities, such as Rutland, that have been aggressive in coordinating community and social service organizations to combat local substance abuse. Lastly, the task force will evaluate whether or not there is enough need in the community to warrant opening a local recovery center.

### **Public Facilities and Services Goals and Objectives**

#### ***A. To provide public services and facilities adequate to meet the needs of present and future residents in an efficient and environmentally sound manner.***

Objectives:

1. Plan for, finance, and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs of the community.
2. Ensure that the all municipal departments have the equipment necessary to provide adequate service and acceptable response times to the entire community.
3. Ensure that adequate water for fire protection is available throughout the year in all parts of the community.
4. Continue mutual aid and cooperation among all emergency service groups.
5. Encourage efficient use of treated municipal water in order to make the most of the available capacity.

6. Support efforts to educate residents about solid waste disposal options, currently available through Northwest Vermont Solid Waste District, in order to reduce junk and hazardous materials from being disposed of improperly.

7. Maintain representation on the Northwest Vermont Solid Waste District Board of Supervisors.

***B. Maintain and enhance existing recreation facilities and programs to meet the current and future needs of the population.***

Objectives:

1. Promote the utilization of existing community recreational facilities for recreational uses including the Library and Maquam Beach.

2. Ensure that there are sufficient recreational facilities for all ages.

3. Encourage private enterprise to enhance public access to lakeshore and other recreational amenities in the community.

4. Improve public access to Lake Champlain and Missisquoi River including at the Depot Museum and Marble Mill Park.

5. Install public restrooms downtown.

***C. To provide for quality educational facilities that meets the needs of the current and future residents.***

Objectives:

1. Coordinate new partnerships with various groups and organizations including, but not limited to: Friends of the Library, Swanton Historical Society, the Swanton Chamber of Commerce, Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, Friends of Northern Lake Champlain, Swanton Recreation Commission, and the Abenaki Self Help Association to provide community activities and educational opportunities for young and old.

2. Maintain and expand cooperation and coordination between the Swanton School District, the Swanton Village and Town governments, the other members of the Missisquoi Valley Union School District and the School Board to ensure that the District's long term plans are consistent with those of the community.

3. Encourage local educational institutions to broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities for all age groups to the greatest extent possible.

***D. Ensure that the Swanton Development Regulations allow for sufficient availability of safe and affordable child care.***

Objective:

1. Ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and integrate child care issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development to the greatest extent possible.

***E. To identify and address the public health needs of all community residents.***

Objectives:

1. Support the gathering of data and information about substance abuse and substances abuse treatment in the community.

2. Support efforts to create and expand access to substance abuse treatment in Swanton.

3. Engage with local non-profits, health care providers, and local emergency services to ensure that the needs of the community's homeless are adequately addressed and that the community's homeless are made aware of the resources available in the community.

**E. NATURAL RESOURCES**

Swanton has a number of natural resources. Some of these resources are managed by federal, state, and/or local agencies. Lake Champlain is a resource of international concern. Swanton is committed to the future protection and conservation of these significant resources and is interested in cooperating at all levels. To maintain and encourage a functional, interconnected system of habitats and recreation areas within the Town, region, and state, land uses in Swanton should be directed to appropriate areas.

There are significant natural resources in private ownership including primary agricultural soils, scenic areas, wetlands, and wildlife habitats. Map 3.1 depicts important areas for wildlife habitat including threatened, endangered and rare species. It is important that these significant resource areas are maintained. Many of these features are part of the working landscape. To protect the landscape, Swanton should ensure that agriculture is adequately protected. Swanton should also investigate the identification and protection of scenic viewsheds within the community.

Vermont Statute enables municipalities to create conservation commissions to make inventories and conduct studies of the natural resources of the municipality and, historic, educational, cultural, scientific, architectural, or archeological resources which the public has an interest; amongst other duties outlined in Title 24, Chapter 118. Creation of Swanton Conservation Commission should be considered in the future to protect these resources in Swanton.

It is vital that the water quality of Lake Champlain be protected. The community will continue to identify ways to mitigate the effects of point and non-point source pollution on the water quality of Lake Champlain. The community will continue to work with the State of Vermont, Missisquoi River Basin Association, Friends of Northern Lake Champlain, and other organizations to plan and implement water quality improvements. The community will also continue to cooperate with state and the regional planning commission to ensure that Swanton is a flood resilient community and to investigate additional steps that the community can take to protect people, structures, and the environment from the dangers of flooding. One step shall be to review River

Corridor maps created by the Vermont Agency Natural Resources and to assess whether such maps should be incorporated into the Swanton Development Regulations.

An additional community concern involves the Missisquoi Bay Bridge which was replaced in 2008. However, because of permitting issues surrounding a state threatened species, the spiny soft-shell turtle, all but 330 feet of the causeway on the existing structure will remain in place. Long term monitoring of the turtle and the impacts of this new bridge is ongoing. Many residents support removing the existing causeway to return the natural flow of the Lake and help improve the water quality of Missisquoi Bay. Scientific data from studies conducted by the Agencies of Transportation and Natural Resources show a water quality improvement in Missisquoi Bay of 1% to 8% with full causeway removal. Swanton should continue to be involved in this project to ensure that causeway removal continues to be a project of major importance.

### **Natural Resources Goals and Objectives**

#### ***A. To protect and maintain the important natural features of Swanton including: Lake Champlain, the Missisquoi River and its tributaries, the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, archeological sites, and scenic areas.***

Objectives:

1. Cooperate with and participate in the efforts of state and local groups to ensure that the water quality of Lake Champlain is protected.
2. Promote the use of low impact development (LID) through educational programs to minimize the negative impacts of stormwater.
3. Protect important vistas and scenic views of Swanton which are worthy of protection.
4. Establish a Conservation Commission (24 VSA 4407) to assist the Planning Commission in identifying important natural resources of Swanton and in reviewing applications that affect those resources.

#### ***B. To protect public access to important natural features of Swanton.***

#### ***C. To identify, maintain, and protect significant wetlands.***

Objectives:

1. Prohibit all development in Class I and II wetlands and associated buffer areas to protect the value, functions, and biological diversity of wetlands.
2. Prohibit development in significant wetlands such as the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge and the Fairfield Swamp Management Area.2. Inform and educate the public about the importance of wetlands to wildlife and plant habitat, and the value wetlands have as a local resource.

3. Ensure that the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge’s resource management plan and the Swanton Town and Village Municipal Plan are consistent and compatible with the goals and objectives of each plan.

***D. To identify and protect ground and surface water resources.***

Objectives:

1. Maintain and protect high quality ground water (particularly wellhead protection areas) and ensure sufficient yields to adequately serve current and future residents.
2. Provide safe, healthy conditions for boating and other water-based recreation.

***E. To maintain and improve native biological diversity.***

Objectives:

1. Identify the important habitats of Swanton and work cooperatively with other groups and organizations to ensure their continued protection.
2. Regulate new development so as to maintain a functional, interconnected system of habitats within the Town and region.
3. Protect and enhance the quality of rivers and streams for fish and wildlife habitats, feeding areas, and travel corridors.

***F. To provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources including the extraction of earth resources, and to ensure the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the surrounding area.***

Objective:

1. Ensure existing reclamation requirements are adequate and that the aesthetic qualities of the surrounding area are taken into account.

***G. To protect the long- term productivity of prime agricultural soils for the production of agricultural products.***

Objectives:

1. Allow for higher density of development in appropriate areas near the Village Center and in the Southern Growth District.
2. Explore various tools including transfer of development rights (TDR) or purchase of development rights (PDR) programs to provide farmers with alternatives from the pressure to develop primary agricultural soils.

***H. To ensure that Swanton is a flood resilient community.***

Objectives:

1. Discourage development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas. If new development is to be built in such areas, it shall not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.
2. Protect and restore floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.
3. Encourage flood emergency preparedness and response planning.

#### **F. HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Swanton is rich in cultural and historic resources. The community is fortunate that its historical resources have been so well preserved. However, there are a number of challenges ahead for the continued protection of these resources. As Swanton experiences increased growth historical and cultural resources become more vulnerable. Preserving and maintaining this rich inventory has become more challenging over the past few years and will only continue to become more difficult. Though Swanton has done a good job at preserving historical structures, several historical and archeological sites have been threatened or lost to development, fire or demolition. It is important that the community dedicate itself to preserve the charm of Swanton Village as a traditional New England settlement. It is also important to preserve lower Swanton dam and Native American cultural sites in the community.

Culturally, Swanton is thriving. The Swanton Arts Council, a group of local artists and craftspeople, emerged from the 2015 Swanton Community Visit as a unique task force. The Council hopes to enhance the exposure and recognition of local artists and promote artistic collaboration in the community. The Council has been highly successful at recruiting new members, a testament to the untapped artistic potential of the Swanton community. The efforts of the Swanton Arts Council and other groups promoting the arts should continue to be supported.

The following outlines a series of goals and policies directed to enhance and protect the historical and cultural richness in Swanton:

#### **Historic and Cultural Goals and Objectives**

##### ***A. To protect the historic qualities of Swanton Village as a traditional New England settlement and recognize that these resources contribute to the Town's economic well-being.***

Objectives:

1. Preserve the historic traditions and values that give Swanton its special rural character (i.e., its small size and its quiet sense of place) and investigate the use of form based code in the Village.
2. Establish a Village Historic District in the Development Regulations. The Development Regulations shall address issues related to exterior architectural and aesthetic guidelines.

3. Maintain our strong community spirit and reputation for being friendly, and cooperative.
4. Explore ways in which Swanton's historic and cultural resources can become an element of an economic development strategy. This could include the preservation, development, and utilization of the Swanton Dam and the Fish Hatchery at Sandy Point in West Swanton.

***B. To encourage greater appreciation of Swanton's history and Native American heritage.***

Objectives:

1. Identify and protect significant archeological sites by maintaining and encouraging communication between the municipalities, the Swanton Historical Society, and the Abenaki Community. Such communication may expedite various local projects because the issues and needs are of common interest.
2. Promote use of the Swanton Public Library as an important cultural, educational, and recreational facility.

***C. To encourage recognition and appreciation for the local arts community.***

1. Support the growth and work of the Swanton Arts Council.

**G. ENERGY**

Virtually everything involves the use of energy. Energy is used in production of the food we eat and the clothes we wear. Yet our supply of energy is not unlimited. Most energy sources used are non-renewable energy resources such as oil, coal, and gas. As we use more and more of these energy resources, it becomes ever more difficult to extract and use such resources without causing detrimental effects on our environment. The community should continue to support local energy conservation and weatherization efforts that reduce reliance on non-renewable energy resources. The community should also be mindful of how land use decisions affect future energy usage.

The majority of Swanton is fortunate to be within the service area of Swanton Electric, the electric utility with the lowest rates in Vermont. Swanton is also fortunate that Swanton Electric generates all of its power from renewable hydropower sources. The community should continue to support the development of renewable energy sources in the community in the future. However, the community should also consider if there should be policies in place that direct the siting of renewable resources, particularly solar and wind resources. This is of considerable importance bearing in mind future State renewable energy goals that call for 90% of the state's energy needs (electric, heating, and transportation) to be met with renewable energy resources by 2050.

**Energy Goals and Objectives**

***A. Make more efficient use of energy from all sources, encourage the availability of a diversity of energy types, and reduce reliance on energy from nonrenewable energy resources.***

Objectives:

1. Promote energy efficiency in homes, businesses and municipal buildings.
2. Expand the energy chapter within this Plan for use in assessing current and future energy needs.
3. Promote the development of renewable energy resources in the community.
4. Encourage clustered development and development in existing dense areas to ensure greater conservation of energy.
5. Support efforts of Efficiency Vermont and the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO) to increase awareness about energy conservation and weatherization programs.

**H. HOUSING**

Swanton is fortunate to have a variety of housing types at a wide range of prices. It is very important to continue to have housing that is affordable and accessible to new families and to the elderly. New homes should be concentrated near the Village.

Based on housing data (presented in Chapter 3 – Swanton Today), housing costs have increased in recent years in Swanton and Franklin County. However, there are some housing options available for low-income residents as well as residents that are seniors and/or disabled. Swanton shall continue to support the development of affordable housing in the community that serves low-income, senior, and disabled residents.

**Housing Goals and Objectives**

**A. To provide for a diversity of housing types and ownership options in a variety of settings and ensure that housing continues to be affordable to present and future residents of Swanton.**

Objectives:

1. Explore new partnerships and funding options with groups and organizations including the Champlain Housing Trust, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and the Vermont Housing Finance Agency to preserve and enhance the supply and diversity of housing opportunities and ownership options at all affordability levels.

2. Explore the needs of special population groups, including the mentally disabled, physically handicapped, single parent households, and elderly and homeless persons, and work to ensure the continued provision of appropriate housing for these groups.
3. Review zoning and subdivision bylaws to allow for higher density housing in appropriate locations in and near the Village.
4. Promote and incentivize the creation of accessory dwellings units as a strategy to create additional affordable housing in the community.

## **I. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Swanton has historically served as a major center for the transport of goods and consequently the community enjoys a variety of business and industry while being able to maintain a strong agricultural base economy. Major assets of the community include prime location, access to Interstate 89, municipal services, excellent education programs, enthusiastic workforce, and scenic quality.

Despite the advantages Swanton has, many residents expressed at the 2015 Community Visit that economic growth in the community is occurring too slowly. A task force was created build a Swanton Economic Development Committee and to create a plan for economic development in the community. The task force hopes to investigate the success of other economic development committees in the county, like Enosburgh and Richford and to work with Franklin-Grand Isle Workforce Investment Board to define strategies to build the workforce. The task force has already identified that there is no “point person” in the community to coordinate economic development efforts. The task force hopes to explore the possibility of creating and funding a position for a Community and Economic Development Coordinator in the coming months.

Swanton does have a history of promoting commerce and industry by working closely with groups such as the Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation and the Swanton Chamber of Commerce. As a commitment to maintain and enhance Swanton's economy, the community shall continue to actively maintain, pursue and establish a broad base of business and industry. Swanton is flexible and open to broadening its tax base by attracting a variety of business types and sizes, including cottage industries.

Swanton shall continue to support the preservation and maintenance of agriculture as a viable business. Swanton shall take actions to provide farmers with support to continue agricultural businesses and the help new farmers start agribusinesses.

Additionally, Swanton shall continue to promote itself as a recreation and tourism center, based on its significant natural resources including Lake Champlain, the Missisquoi River, the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, scenic vistas, rural countryside, and small Village atmosphere. Swanton depends on these natural features to attract tourists. Swanton encourages groups like the Swanton Historical Society, the Swanton Chamber of Commerce, and the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, to expand the tourist industry in Swanton.

## **Economic Development Goals and Objectives**

### ***A. Promote new business and industry startups within the Town's village, commercial, and industrial areas.***

1. Support Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation to implement recommendations of the Franklin County Strategic Economic Development Plan.
2. Work with the Franklin-Grand Isle Workforce Investment Board to better understand and support local workforce needs and programs.
3. Support organizations that provide training and retraining of experienced workers.

### ***B. To foster a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities while maintaining high environmental and social standards.***

Objectives:

1. Maintain and enhance Swanton's role as a commercial center.
2. Maintain and enhance municipal services to accommodate a variety of businesses.
3. Encourage the rehabilitation of local brownfields and underutilized properties.

### ***C. To maintain and support a viable agricultural economy including agriculture, forestry, agritourism, and other related activities.***

Objectives:

1. Support farmers by identifying financial resources that might assist in maintaining, expanding and/or diversifying their business.1. Encourage local businesses to manufacture products and source materials or ingredients from local farms.
2. Promote development of smaller farm tracts via required open space in planned residential developments.
3. Support farmers in continuing acceptable agricultural practices in accordance with the "Best Management Practices", a Vermont Department of Agriculture program.

### ***D. Strengthen tourism in Swanton.***

Objectives:

1. Encourage and support various groups and organizations including the Swanton Chamber of Commerce, Swanton Historical Society, Friends of the Library, Abenaki Self Help Association, Tribal Council, Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, service clubs, churches, senior citizen organizations and clubs to enhance Swanton as a cultural, recreational, and tourist center.

2. Support the work to develop a welcome center and increased wayfinding signage by the Swanton Interstate exit.

3. Promote the work of the Swanton Historical Society and highlight the community's historical assets (Depot Museum, cemeteries, etc.) to encourage more local and regional tourism.

***E. To enhance the vitality of Swanton's historic downtown center and chart a path for future investment and promotion to capitalize on its unique assets and geography.***

Objective:

1. Encourage both public and private development, enhancements, and improvements in the Village.

2. Encourage private landowners to utilize benefits of the Village Center Designation program.

## CHAPTER 5 – IMPLEMENTATION

### A. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important aspects of a planning process is to identify how the goals and policies contained in this Plan will be implemented. To aid the community in implementation, an Implementation Plan has been created. The Implementation Plan identifies actions that the community should take over the next several years to implement the goals and policies in Chapter 4 – Swanton’s Vision. Many actions will require funding and it may take time to obtain financial resources. Some actions may require several years to implement. The Planning Commission shall reevaluate this Implementation Plan each year to measure progress and to establish priorities of the coming year.

### B. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>
<b>Land Use</b>	
Maintain Swanton Development Regulations that implement the goals and polices in the Swanton Municipal Plan.	Planning Commission
Maintain enrollment in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).	Planning Commission and Joint Legislative Body
Amend the Swanton Development Regulations to require the development of multi-use paths/sidewalks during the subdivision and/or site plan approval process to provide increased pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to existing municipal infrastructure and to proposed development.	Planning Commission, Joint Legislative Body, and Development Review Board
Conduct a study of the 1st Street Corridor. This study shall assess the effectiveness of the Neighborhood Commercial Light District (NCL) and to gather public input regarding the future vision of this corridor. This study should focus on land use,	Planning Commission

<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>
parking and streetscapes.	
<b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	
Establish a Village Historic District in the Development Regulations. The Development Regulations shall address issues related to exterior architectural and aesthetic guidelines.	Planning Commission and Joint Legislative Body
Identify and protect significant archeological sites by maintaining and encouraging communication between the municipalities, the Swanton Historical Society, and the Abenaki Community. Such communication may expedite various local projects because the issues and needs are of common interest.	Planning Commission, Municipal Staff, Vermont Archeological Society, Swanton Historical Society, and Abenaki Community
Meet with Abenaki Community leaders to assess the effectiveness of the Native American Sites Overlay District and to discuss other relevant planning related topics.	Planning Commission
Investigate becoming a Certified Local Government (CLG) available through the National Park Service. This program could increase opportunities for funding and technical assistance for historical preservation projects in Swanton.	Planning Commission, Municipal Staff, Historical Society, and Joint Legislative Body
Identify and encourage local artists. Continue to communicate with the Swanton Arts Council to ensure that their efforts are effectively supported.	Joint Legislative Body
<b>Economic Development</b>	
Investigate the creation of a local Economic Development Committee.	Joint Legislative Body
Conduct an Area-Wide Plan, with the assistance of Northwest Regional Planning Commission, to identify and plan for the redevelopment of brownfields and underutilized properties located in Swanton.	Joint Legislative Body

<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>
Investigate the creation of a part or full time position to promote and encourage community development and economic development in the community.	Joint Legislative Body
Evaluate appropriate areas for the expansion of municipal services such as sewer and water.	Joint Legislative Body and Municipal Staff
Install one or more sign plazas (kiosks) in the center of the Village and other locations in the Town to promote local business, community activities and places of special interest.	Village Trustees and Municipal Staff
Review, revise and enact the Swanton Downtown Development Plan and actions steps in the Swanton Community Visit Report to guide future community development, enhancements, or improvements.	Joint Legislative Body and Planning Commission
Evaluate the idea of attracting, supporting, or developing a community restaurant downtown.	Swanton Enhancement Committee
Create a local business guide or a list of resources that can be shared with local businesses.	Swanton Enhancement Committee and Chamber of Commerce
Maintain Village Center designation and encourage private landowners to utilize benefits of the program.	Joint Legislative Body and Municipal Staff
<b>Public Facilities and Services</b>	
Adopt a Capital Budget and Program.	Town Selectboard, Village Trustees, and/or Joint Legislative Body
Explore additional funding mechanisms for public facilities and services.	Joint Legislative Body, Planning Commission, and Municipal Staff
Continue mutual aid and cooperation among all emergency service groups including the Coast Guard, Vermont State Police, Missisquoi Rescue, and the Swanton Fire and Police Departments.	Joint Legislative Body and Municipal Staff
Seek grants to upgrade and improve the existing stormwater system.	Joint Legislative Body and Municipal Staff

<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>
Maintain representation on the Northwest Vermont Solid Waste District Board of Supervisors	Joint Legislative Body
Identify areas for future public facilities.	Joint Legislative Body and Recreation Commission
Prepare a resource inventory map of existing public and private trails and proposed public trails in Swanton.	Planning Commission and Recreation Commission
Install public restrooms downtown.	Joint Legislative Body and Recreation Commission
Coordinate new partnerships with various groups and organizations including, but not limited to: Friends of the Library, Swanton Historical Society, the Swanton Chamber of Commerce, Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, Friends of Northern Lake Champlain, and the Abenaki Self Help Association to provide community activities and educational opportunities for young and old.	Joint Legislative Body
<b>Energy</b>	
Form a local Energy Committee.	Joint Legislative Body
Participate in regional energy planning and programming.	Joint Legislative Body (Energy Committee)
Identify and implement programs that promote energy efficiency in homes, businesses and municipal buildings.	Joint Legislative Body (Energy Committee)
Attempt to identify locations in the community where new renewable energy resources should be sited. Amend the municipal plan to include identified locations.	Joint Legislative Body (Energy Committee)
<b>Housing</b>	
Explore new partnerships and funding options with groups and organizations including the Champlain Housing Trust, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and the Vermont Housing Finance Agency to preserve and enhance the supply and diversity of housing opportunities and ownership options at all affordability levels.	Joint Legislative Body

<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>
Review zoning and subdivision bylaws to allow for higher density housing in appropriate locations in and near the Village.	Planning Commission and Joint Legislative Body
Develop incentives for the creation of accessory dwellings units as a strategy to create additional affordable housing in the community.	Planning Commission and Joint Legislative Body
<b>Natural Resources</b>	
Amend the Development Regulations to require and/or incentivize the use of Low Impact Development (LID) strategies and techniques.	Planning Commission
Identify the important vistas and scenic view of Swanton which are worthy of protection.	Planning Commission (Conservation Commission)
Establish a Conservation Commission (24 VSA 4407) to assist the Planning Commission in identifying important natural resources of Swanton and in reviewing applications that affect those resources.	Joint Legislative Body
Review River Corridor Maps created by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR). Work with ANR to amend maps based on local knowledge and consider incorporating maps (and regulations) into the Swanton Development Regulations.	Planning Commission and Joint Legislative Body
<b>Transportation</b>	
Improve and expand the sidewalk network in Swanton Village to ease pedestrian travel and safety in Swanton.	Joint Legislative Body, Municipal Staff, and Development Review Board
Develop and implement a plan for a town-wide network of pedestrian/bicycle paths connecting major destination points and linkages to similar facilities in adjacent towns.	Joint Legislative Body and Planning Commission
Collaborate with GMTA and CCTA to study public transit routes and to expand routes.	Joint Legislative Body and Municipal Staff

<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>
Complete a traffic and parking study for the town core and village area. This study shall focus on parking, circulation, and traffic safety (including bicycles and pedestrians). The study shall contain an inventory of existing parking and identification of possible future parking areas in the Village.	Joint Legislative Body, Planning Commission, and Municipal Staff
Improve enforcement of traffic laws and speeding in the Village, install "No Engine Brake" signs, and increase truck inspections.	Joint Legislative Body and Police Department
Use a "speed trailer" and increased signage to improve pedestrian safety in the Village.	Joint Legislative Body and Police Department
<b>Other</b>	
Continue the existing coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions by Swanton and Swanton Village and continue to encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process.	Joint Legislative Body and Planning Commission
Conduct a yearly meeting between the Planning Commission and the Development Review Board to ensure communication about planning and zoning issues in the community. Encourage attendance from representatives of the Joint Legislative Body.	Planning Commission, Development Review Board and Joint Legislative Body
Adopt a Local Emergency Operations Plan for each community each year.	Selectboard and Village Trustees
Adopt a Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) for each community.	Selectboard and Village Trustees
Adopt Road and Bridge Standards in each community each year.	Selectboard and Village Trustees



## **CHAPTER 6 - COMPATIBILITY**

### **A. COMPATIBILITY WITH ADJOINING COMMUNITIES**

Swanton adjoins five towns and Lake Champlain. It is bounded on the north and northeast by Highgate, on the east by Sheldon on the southeast by Fairfield, on the south by St. Albans Town and on the west by Lake Champlain and Alburg. In addition, St. Albans City (the region's largest community, is located only a short distance from Swanton's border.

Swanton shares many natural features with its neighbors including Lake Champlain, the Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge, the Missisquoi River and the Fairfield Swamp State Wildlife Management Area. These natural features provide the foundation for the land uses common to Swanton and its neighbors. Common land uses include: agriculture and farming in St. Albans, recreation and wildlife management in Highgate, and forestry in Sheldon and Fairfield.

Interstate 89, Routes 7 and 78 link Swanton with Highgate, St. Albans and Alburgh. Just as the land use patterns taking place in neighboring communities can affect Swanton, Swanton can affect its neighbors via plans for development. The following is a discussion of: 1) the development patterns of adjoining communities; 2) an assessment of how Swanton's future development plans might affect its neighbors; and 3) the response of its neighbors to these future plans.

#### **Highgate**

Highgate is situated on the Canadian border just north of the Swanton Town and Village line. Swanton and Highgate share several natural features including Lake Champlain, the Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge and the Missisquoi River. The two towns are connected by I-89 and Routes 7 and 78. The Missisquoi Valley Union High School is located in Highgate and Swanton off Route 78 just north of the Swanton line. This school provides services to Swanton residents in grades 7-12. Highgate also houses the County Airport--a transportation asset for all surrounding communities including Swanton.

The land use patterns on the boundary of Swanton and Highgate are generally consistent. Swanton has zoned land on both sides of Route 78 as neighborhood commercial and on the north side this extends all the way to the Town line. South of Route 78 is a residential district. Highgate has established a large district of mixed commercial and industrial uses surrounding the Union High School. This includes the Franklin County Airport and abuts the residential district in Swanton.

West of the Dead and Black Creeks in Swanton, land uses in the two Towns are also compatible; much of this land is under the protection of the Wildlife Refuge. Lands east of the Wildlife Refuge on the south side of Route 78 in Swanton are located in a neighborhood

commercial district. The land area adjoining the river is Shoreline River. Directly across the Missisquoi River the land in Highgate is zoned for similar residential uses.

### **Sheldon**

Sheldon is situated on the northeast corner of Swanton, just east of the Town of Highgate. Swanton and Sheldon are linked by Route 105. Like Highgate, Sheldon shares natural features with Swanton Town including Hungerford Brook and its tributaries. Much of the land on the Swanton/Sheldon border has been cleared for agricultural purposes. A significant portion of Sheldon's productive agricultural soils are located in the vicinity of the Swanton border (within the Route 105 and Cemetery Road corridors). There are at least 3 working farms within close proximity of the Swanton Town line.

Land uses on both sides of the border are generally compatible. Development is fairly sparse and much of the land is used for agricultural purposes.

### **Fairfield**

Fairfield is situated on the eastern border of Swanton and is connected by one local road and a former railroad (now under Agency of Transportation ownership). Fairfield and Swanton are quite hilly in the location of the town boundaries and the land is predominantly forested. The two Towns share a unique natural feature--the Fairfield Swamp State Wildlife Management area which extends south into St. Albans Town. This swamp area is supported by the Dead and Black Creeks and its tributaries which lie at the base of Swanton's most mountainous areas (southeast corner of Town). These waterways eventually feed into the Missisquoi River.

Fairfield is a more rural community than Swanton with an 2010 population of 1,891 according to the US Census. Aside from Alburgh Town, it is the smallest community adjoining Swanton. Proposed land uses along the Fairfield/Swanton border are compatible.

### **St. Albans Town**

The Town of St. Albans is situated due south of Swanton Town. The municipalities are linked by two major north/south routes: Route 7 and I-89, and one major east/west route: VT Route 105. The two towns are also linked by two local roads, Maquam Shore and Highgate Roads (VT Route 207). The New England Central railroad connects the two towns. The rail line running east to Richford is owned by the Vermont Agency of Transportation, and has been converted to a 26-mile recreation trail, the "Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail."

Swanton and St. Albans share natural features including: Lake Champlain, Stearns, Jewett and Hungerford Brooks, open lands, prime agricultural soils, scenic vistas and several trails within the more mountainous areas (eastern side) of the two Towns.

St. Albans Town is a suburban and rural Town surrounding St. Albans City. The Town has established a number of land use districts which adjoin Swanton Town. Along the western boundary is a lakeshore land use area. East of the lakeshore district is a large rural area containing sparse development and several active farms. In the vicinity of Route 7 and I-89, is a commercial area on the west side of I-89 and a light industrial area on the east side of I-89, which is part of the Regional Growth Center. Swanton's Southern Growth District, also part of the Regional Growth Center, borders St. Albans Town in this area. Proposed land uses in this area are compatible.

St. Albans has also established a residential/commercial district along the north side of Route 105 which extends to the Swanton Town line. This District abuts a rural area of Swanton which is still actively farmed.

### **St. Albans City**

The City of St. Albans is surrounded by St. Albans Town. However, it is the most heavily populated area in Franklin County. The City provides municipal wastewater treatment and water services to outlying areas of St. Albans Town. St. Albans City is the County's largest business center providing a variety of business opportunities. The area is served by I-89 and Route 7 and Central Vermont Railroad. Amtrak passenger trains stop in the City twice a day.

As mentioned above, St. Albans City's long range plan proposes extending sewer and water service to areas outside the City adjacent to the Swanton border. Swanton has also discussed cooperative efforts to extend sewer and water to the Southern Growth District. The Town and Village of Swanton wish to encourage joint economic ventures.

### **Alburgh**

Alburgh Town is located west of Swanton Town, just across the straight of Lake Champlain. The two towns are connected by the Missisquoi Bay Bridge (Route 78) and the Central Vermont Railroad. The Missisquoi Bay Bridge and the Route 78 and Route 2 corridors present the Towns with planning issues. Alburgh is a small community and development is primarily occurring on the shoreline.

Though Swanton Town and Alburgh Town are separated by Lake Champlain, they share similar land use issues including: 1) traffic and transportation improvements of the Route 78 corridor; 2) Lake Champlain; and 3) the Missisquoi Bay Bridge improvements. Swanton Town is interested in cooperating with the Town of Alburgh in resolving these land use issues.

## **B. REGIONAL PLAN**

The Town of Swanton and the Village of Swanton are member municipalities within the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC). All communities are entitled to equal voting representation by two locally appointed members from each community on the governing

Board of Commissioners. The NRPC is legally mandated to prepare a regional plan pursuant to Title 24, Chapter 117, of the Vermont Statutes Annotated. It is intended for use as a legal document, as a guide for decision makers, and as a five year action plan to address issues of regional importance. The current Northwest Regional Plan has been effective since October 3, 2007.

Swanton recognizes that it is part of a larger region and has considered the compatibility of its planning goals with that of the region. Swanton's land use planning areas are similar to the proposed land use plan adopted by the Regional Planning Commission. The Regional Plan identifies Swanton's Village Center. It also identifies the Southern Growth District as a part of the Regional Growth Center. The Regional Plan also designates Swanton's agricultural lands as an important resource, and further states that the best farmland in the region should be given the highest level of support for continued agricultural use.

It should be noted that Northwest Regional Planning Commission is currently conducting hearings regarding a new, draft Regional Plan. Based on review of the draft Regional Plan, it appears that the 2015 Swanton Town and Village Municipal Plan shall continue to be compatible with all proposed regional goals and policies.

# APPENDIX A - SWANTON HISTORIC SITES AND STRUCTURES

Map Key No.	Site or Structure Name	Type	Style	Date
1	East Swanton Baptist Church--Benoit Shed	Church	Greek Revival	c1850
2	Royce-Bourbeau House	House	Greek Revival	c1845
3	Ladue-Saxby Barn	Barn		c1870
4	Button-Smith House	House	Greek Revival	c1820
5	Choinier House	House	Greek Revival	c1840
6	Meunier House	House		c1900
7	Benoit-Lewis House	House		c1895
8	Cummings House	House	Greek Revival	c1840
9	Underwood Farm--Carl House	House		c1860
10	Hazard Farm	House		c1898
11	Jennison-Hubbard Farm	House	Greek Revival	c1835
13	Tarte House	House	Greek Revival	c1835
14	Hislop House	House	Greek Revival	c1840
15	Rockledge Farm	House	Colonial Revival	c1918
16	Saybourin House	House	Colonial Revival	c1860
17	Bradbury-Cross House	House	Greek Revival	c1835
18	Hubbard Farm	House	V. Colonial Revival	c1930
19	McMahon House	House	Greek Revival	c1840
20	C.W. Rich-Tyler House	House	French Second Empire	c1871
21	Bullard-Rogers House	House		c1835
22	J. Lemnah House	House		c1860
23	Ferguson House	House		c1835
24	Pleasantdale Farm	House	Funct. Greek Revival	c1830
25	Hartman House	House	Vernacular	c1880
26	Seymour House	House	Federal	c1825
27	Hamlin House	House	Classic Cottage	c1835
28	Ledoux House	House	Vernacular	c1865
29	Baby House	House	Classic Cottage	c1830
30	Meade-Balentine House	House	Greek Revival	c1835
31	Tansy Farm	House	Federal	c1825
32	John's Bridge	Bridge	Functional	c1893
33	Ivan Johnson House	House	Greek Revival	c1855
34	Folsom-Bourdeau Farm	House	Italianate	c1880
35	Nokes Farm	House	Late Greek Revival	c1865
36	Hogle-Dolan House	House	Italianate	c1870
37	Webster-Aseltine House	House	Italianate	c1880
38	Barney-Rounds House	House	Late Greek Revival	c1865
39	Wheelock-Bruyette House	House	Italianate	c1875
40	Tuttle House	House	Italianate	c1875
41	North Riverside Cemetery Vault	Cemetery Vault	Bungalow	c1920
42	Donaldson Bourcher House	House	Greek Revival	c1840
43	West Swanton Methodist Church	Church	Eclectic	c1891
44	West Swanton Fish Hatchery	Hatchery		c1916
45	Missisquoi Bay Bridge	Bridge		c1936
46	Cushman-Martin House	House	Greek Revival	c1835
47	Missisquoi Bay Railroad Bridge	House		Uncertain
48	Shalom Farm	House		c1930
49	Tabor-Miller House	House	Colonial Revival	c1900
50	Barney-Cheney House	House	Federal	c1825

Map Key No.	Site or Structure Name	Type	Style	Date
51	Moreau Grocery/Bruyette Store	Store/Apart.	Italianate	c1905
52	CVRR Train Depot--Abenaki Tribal Council	Depot	Functional	c1875
53	Aseltine-Merrick House	House	Greek Revival	c1835
54	Lapelle/Bailey-Beacon Feeds Grainery	Grain Elevator	Functional	c1880
55	Choiniere House	House	Vernacular Queen Anne	c1890
56	DeBarge-Dubois House	House	Bungalow	c1918
57	Muller-Pike House	House	Classic Cottage	c1860
58	Greene House	House	Queen Anne	c1910
59	Houghton-Hamel House	House	Vernacular	c1900
60	Comeau House	House	Queen Anne	c1895
61	Chappel House	House	Queen Anne	c1895
62	LaBombard House	House	Italianate	c1880
63	Query House	House	Italianate	c1880
64	Wiseman House	House	Italianate Queen Anne	c1875
65	Prouty House	House	Dutch Colonial Revival	c1928
66	Shumway Nursery	House	Bungalow	c1830
67	Kittell House	House	Italianate	c1870
68	Morrill Texaco/Auto Parts	Auto Parts	Functional	c1935
69	Dunning-Trahan House	House	Italianate	c1865
70	Parson-Pane House	House	Queen Anne	c1895
71	Armand/Latelle Assoc.	House	Greek Revival	c1840
72	McNally House	House	Vernacular Queen Anne	c1895
73	Marcal House	House	Vernacular	c1917
74	Bushey-Valley House	House	Tu. Cottage	c1927
75	Number Nine Pine Street House	House	Vernacular Queen Anne	c1890
76	Fournier House	House	Vernacular Queen Anne	c1900
77	Horton House	House	Italianate	c1890
78	Garnier House 1	House	Vernacular	c1900
79	Garnier House 2	House	Vernacular Queen Anne	c1895
80	Church of the Nativity	Church	Neo Georgian	c1925
81	Patnod House	House	Ver. Colonial Revival	c1910
82	Brown-Charbonneau House	House	Vernacular Italianate	c1890
83	Wait-Bell House	House	Greek	c1860
84	Diamond House	House	Vernacular Col. Revival	c1910
85	Smith-Pierce House	House	Eclectic	c1900
86	Kidder House	House	Greek	c1870
87	Daniel House	House	Eclectic	c1875
88	Bevin House	House	Queen Anne	c1890
89	Dr. Hall-Chez Bouquet House	House	Eclectic	c1860?
90	E.J. Barrette Ford/Arco	Shop/Warehouse	Functional	c1930
91	Glidden House	House	Vernacular Queen Anne	c1900
92	M. & M. Enterprises--Menard Building	House	Functional	c1910
93	Blake-Parah House	House	Vernacular	c1895
94	Morrill-DuPratt House	House	Greek Revival	c1840
96	Smith-Hemingway House	House	Vernacular	c1880

Map Key No.	Site or Structure Name	Type	Style	Date
97	Gurwit House	House	Queen Anne	c1895
98	Bronson House	House	Queen Anne	c1895
99	Whittemore-Rushlow House	House	Greek Revival	c1835
100	Mason-Paran House	House	Italianate	c1875
101	Chenette Medical Clinic	House/Clinic	Queen Anne	c1890
102	Briner House	House	Queen Anne	c1890
103	Austin House	House	Italianate	c1865
104	Perry House	House	Queen Anne Italianate	c1890
105	Lawrence-Bostwick House	House	Greek Revival	c1845
106	Captain Prouty-DeVaney House	House	Eclectic	c1890
107	Blake-Morse House	House	Vernacular Italianate	c1870
108	Cray House	House	Greek Revival Italianate	c1850
109	Crane-Eldridge House	House	Vernacular	c1880
110	Burton House	House	Greek Revival Italianate	c1865
111	Ernest Cheney House	House	Queen Anne	c1895
112	Covely House	House	Vernacular	c1895
113	Blake-Scott House	House	Greek Revival Italianate	c1835
114	Squire-Cadieux House	House	Italianate	c1865
115	Doriman House	House	Gothic	c1865
116	Bullard-Sholon House	House	Greek Revival	c1850
117	Howard Lemnah House	House	Vernacular	c1895
118	Bickford-Reardon House	House	Bungalow	c1927
119	Skeels-Root House	House	Queen Anne	c1895
120	F.D. Ste. Marie Store	Store	Commercial	c1920
121	Boyer House	House	D. Colonial Revival	c1920
122	Dandrow House	House	Queen Anne Cottage	c1895
123	Mumley House	House	Queen Anne Classic	c1865
124	Casnier House	House	Bungalow	c1920
125	LaRocque	House	Queen Anne	c1890
127	Bombardier House	House	Queen Anne	c1890
128	Raleigh House	House	Queen Anne	c1890
129	Quimette-Messsier House	House	Queen Anne	c1890
130	Thompson House	House	Queen Anne	c1890
131	E.W. Jewett & Co./Swanton Lime Works	Lime Kiln	Functional	c1800
132	Vermont Dress Beef/Swanton Packing	Building	Functional	c1910
133	Webster-Hakey House	House	Colonial Revival	c1912
134	Lunna House	House	Queen Anne	c1909
135	Doney House	House	Vernacular Italianate	c1900
136	Robert Quebec House	House	Vernacular Queen Anne	c1900
137	Cray House	House	Vernacular Italianate	c1890
138	Swanton Public School	School	Neo-classic	c1912
139	Chevalier House	House	Vernacular S Style	c1885
140	Robin Hood/Remington Powder Co., United Bag Corp.	Manufacturing	Functional	c1909
141	Swanton Village Historic District--			
141-1	Town Offices	Office Building	Greek Revival	c1852
-2	First Congregational Church	Church	Italianate	c1869

Map Key No.	Site or Structure Name	Type	Style	Date
-3	Holy Trinity Episcopal Church	Church	Gothic Revival	c1876
-4	George Spear Law Offices	House/Office	Queen Anne	c1890
-5	Spear Shed	Horse Shed		c1890
-6	Sheldon House	House	Colonial Revival	c1880
-7	Baxter House	House	Italianate	c1873
-8	Prior Barn	Horse Barn		c1880
-9	Skeels House	House		c1885
-10	Skeels Barn	Horse Barn		c1885
-11	Winters House	House		c1850
-12	Wood House	House	Italianate	c1880
-13	Wood House	House	Italianate	c1880
-14	Wood Barn	Horse Barn		c1880
-15	Stimets House	House	Queen Anne	c1900
-16	Rushlow House	House	Queen Anne	c1890
-17	Rushlow Barn	Horse Barn		c1890
-18	Lear Barn	Horse Barn		c1890
-19	Lear House	House	Italianate	c1890
-20	Job House	House	Bungalow	c1910
-21	Nokes Shed	Horse Shed		c1890
-22	Nokes House	House	Queen Anne	c1890
-23	Bushey House	House	Queen Anne	c1890
-24	Martin House	House	Bungalow	c1920
-25	Chevalier House	House	Italianate	c1865
-26	Parah Garage	Garage		c1950
-27	David Parah House	House		c-----
-28	Thomas McGuire House	House	Italianate	c1875
-29	Thibault House	House		c1895
-30	Broom Factory	Broom Factory		c1940
-31	Dwight Lyman House	House		c1890
-32	E.J. Barrette's Auto Showroom	Showroom/Gar.		c1925
-33	Thibault House	House		c1890
-34	Slamon House	House		c1875
-35	Corey Store	Grocery Store		c-----
-36	Kidder Shed	Carriage Shed		c1880
-37	Kidder Memorial Funeral Home	House	Italianate	c1870
-38	Flarkoski House	House		c1895
-39	Robinson Exxon Station	Gas Station		c1925
-40	Boudreau House	House		c1880
-41	Platt Foster House	House	Greek Revival	c1840
-42	Foster Garage	Garage		c1920
-43	Hakey Barn	Horse Barn		c1895
-44	Hakey House	House		c1895
-45	Sunderland House	House	Queen Anne	c1900
-46	Toner House	House	Greek Revival	c1850
-47	Giroux House	House	Queen Anne	c1898
-48	Hakey Shop	Shop/Flower Store		c1910
-49	Kidder House	House		c1860
-50	Kidder Barn	Horse Barn		c1800
-51	LaSure Garage	Garage		c1950
-52	LaSure House	House		c1875
-53	Flat Iron Park	Park/Memorial		c1937

Map Key No.	Site or Structure Name	Type	Style	Date
-54	Kelsey House	House		c1855
-55	Guerring House	House	Greek Revival	c1840
-56	Guarring Barn	Horse Barn		c1880
-57	Dr. Spear Barn	Horse Barn		c1900
-59	Dr. Spear House	House	Queen Anne	c1900
-58	Mapes House	House	Queen Anne	1905
-60	Mapes Barn	Horse Barn		c1900
-61	Mapes House	House	Greek Revival	c1855
-62	Candor	Carriage Barn		c1890
-63	Blisshouse	House		c1890
-64	Sweeny Barber Shop	House		c1885
-65	Dave's Quick Stop	Grocery		c1970
-66	Swanton Public Library	Library		c1916
-67	Swanton Methodist Church	Church		c1895
-68	Swanton Post Office	Post Office		c1962
-69	Robert White Dentistry	House/Office	Greek Revival	c1850
-70	Lovejoy	Store/Restaurant		c1880
-71	Mobile Station	Gas Station		c1970
-72	Prouty's Market	Grocery Store		c1877
-73	Memorial Auditorium	Factory/Auditor.		c1948
-74	Information Booth	Infor. Booth		c1975
-75	Roy Jas	Bank Building	Greek Revival	c1851
-76	Robert Haley House	House		c1860
-77	VFW Hall	Hall		c1975
-78	Merchant's Row	Shopping Mall		c1977
-79	Merchant's Row	Shopping Mall		c1973
-80	Martin House	House		c1850
-81	Chevalier	Horse Barn		c1880
-82	Chevalier Real Estate	House/Office		c1835
-83	Chevalier	Trailer		c1970
-84	Robert Base	Horse Barn		c1870
-85	Base House	House		c1870
-86	Spear House	House	Greek Revival	c1890
-87	Lang House	House	Queen Anne	c1900
-88	Lang Barn	Horse Barn		c1900
-89	Town Green, Park	Park		c1803

Source: Swanton Historic Sites and Structures Survey--1982, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation and The History of Swanton Vermont, Swanton Historical Society.

## APPENDIX B – SWANTON COMMUNITY VISIT REPORT

# Swanton Community Visit

Report and Action Plan ~ May 2015



Vermont Council on Rural Development



## Vermont Council on Rural Development

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# I. Introduction

Nestled alongside Lake Champlain and bordered by the Missisquoi River, Swanton is a mecca for paddling enthusiasts and lovers northern of Vermont’s scenic waterways and rolling hills. The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge offers wildlife viewing and trail networks for local enthusiasts and those that travel to visit this national treasure. Swanton is also a home to many economic assets. It is located at the convergence of several major transportation routes and boasts a walkable village center, surrounding an iconic Village Green, with a mixture of family-owned businesses, restaurants, and national stores. The town also has a strong agricultural foundation and a rich history and cultural heritage highlighted by the Swanton Historical Museum and the Abenaki Tribal Council Headquarters and Museum.

The VCRD visiting team was impressed by Swanton’s numerous assets: hard-working volunteers, involved youth, dedicated and engaged town and village officials, a dynamic arts community, strong educational institutions, and a deep sense of belonging, community, and pride. In particular, the Visiting Team was struck by the community’s willingness to tackle tough issues. From the beginning of the Community Visit discussions, Swanton residents recognized that addressing the issue of substance abuse in the community would be a key to the future of their town. Residents confronted this issue head-on, choosing to set this as a priority and gearing up for bold action.

Swanton’s Community Visit Co-Chair, Molly Lambert said, “We live in a very rich community and we need to congratulate each other for that. We have an active and engaged citizenry. It is a very special thing to have people come together and be willing to work side by side with neighbors and strangers to build our community.” From the Community Visit Day through the end of the process, the VCRD Visiting Team saw this richness and engagement over and over again in residents of all ages from all parts of the community. We see that Swanton cares deeply about the future prosperity and quality of life in their town and village.

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While Community Visits are designed to help communities come together, review major issues, develop priorities and line up for action, VCRD has a couple of other goals behind these efforts. We look to build new volunteerism and encourage more local folks to get involved in moving the community forward. We want to help build the connections of the community to human, technical, and funding resources from lead agencies and organizations in the state. And we want to help the Visiting Team that we build learn more about local needs and the dynamics in the diverse towns of rural Vermont so they can better serve these communities.

With over 200 local people participating in the process and over 70 volunteers now engaged in active Task Forces to advance priorities, we know that there is great energy for real progress in Swanton today. In fact, one group of motivated residents did not wait until the end of the Community Visit Process to get up and running: the new Swanton Arts Council jumpstarted its efforts in the middle of the process! Following the Community Visit Day, the group formed and has already accomplished a great deal towards establishing an artistic presence and developing the artistic community in Swanton. This group is a perfect example of the leadership and energy we saw throughout the process. At the end of the Community Visit, we see strong, practical work plans and some direct connections being engaged for key

support from; the Northern Forest Canoe Trail on outdoor recreation efforts; the VT Department of Health and the Rutland Project Vision on addressing substance abuse; and the Franklin County Economic Development Corporation and the Northwest Regional Planning Commission on economic development efforts. Swanton is well-positioned to successfully move its chosen projects forward.

It was not easy to choose priorities at the Community Meeting, and there are many other good ideas for action listed in the ‘opportunities’ section of this report that can inform the ongoing work of the Task Forces and be ground for work in town over time.

We look forward to working with the Swanton Task Forces as the priority projects identified in the process move forward efforts to:

- **Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, River Access, Bike-ability and Bike Tourism**
- **Create the Swanton Arts Council** (established following the January 28<sup>th</sup> Community Visit Day)
- **Build a Swanton Economic Development Committee**
- **Unite the Community to Reduce Substance Abuse**
- **Improve Traffic, Walkability, and Parking Downtown**

The Task Forces working to advance these issues are already hard at work—please support their efforts, or join them by reaching out to their chairs (listed in the work plan section of this report).

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The Vermont Council on Rural Development Community Visit Program is a structured process that enables a community to identify and prioritize goals, fosters local leadership, and serves as a catalyst for the development and realization of concrete, achievable action plans. The program in Swanton consisted of three phases:

1. On the **Community Visit Day** on January 28th, Visiting Team members heard testimony from Swanton residents in nine focus group areas that had earlier been identified by the local steering committee. Notes and issues raised in these sessions are detailed in Part VII. Based on the testimony received, the Vermont Council on Rural Development identified an initial list of the key **Opportunities** before the community (Part III).
2. The second stage of the Community Visit occurred at the **Swanton Village Offices** on March 5th when VCRD presented the Opportunities list and facilitated the review and prioritization of these issues by town residents. The resulting list of **Swanton Priorities** (in Part IV) were then the focus for the formation of four new Task Forces established to build plans that would address them (see bulleted list above). The Swanton Arts Council, who had already formed following the Community Visit Day, announced their new group, and asked residents to sign on if they were interested in this new initiative.
3. In the third phase of the Visit, the **Community Resource Day** on April 15th, the four new Task Forces and the Swanton Arts Council met with a second Visiting Team to get organized, build Action Steps, and consider state, federal, non-profit, and private sector resources that may be available to support their work. The resulting **Task Force Work Plans** are listed in Part V.

**Resource Team Members** (listed with contact information in Part IX) signed on with a commitment to serve as sounding boards and referral agents for the Swanton Task Forces. Many of these visitors can

be partners in the work before the committees; others can be great sources of advice or connection to other resources. ***Call on them for help.***

Members of the Resource Team listened closely to the issues brought forward by town residents and have made suggestions in support of Swanton's efforts in each challenge area. **Their Recommendations (Part VI) are not prescriptions; community members are in the best position to make decisions about their next steps and strategies.** Recognizing existing local efforts and the leadership of the Task Forces, these recommendations are offered, rather, as suggestions for potential next steps, and as lists of potential resources as the Task Forces make their way forward.

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The Vermont Council on Rural Development is dedicated to helping Vermont communities develop their capacity to create a prosperous and sustainable future through coordination, collaboration, and the effective use of public and private resources. VCRD is prepared to support the efforts of Swanton as it moves forward and to provide follow up help to Swanton Task Forces as called upon. VCRD will also serve as an advocate for Swanton projects with appropriate agencies and organizations in Vermont. Call on us, and on Visiting Team members, when we can be of help.

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At VCRD, we deeply appreciate the leadership of the Swanton Enhancement Project Steering Committee who invited us to Swanton initially to explore the potential for a visit to Swanton and demonstrated an unprecedented drive, motivation, and vision throughout the Community Visit Process. Thank you to Steering Committee members; Reg Beliveau, Joel Clark, Molly Lambert, Hank Lambert, Betsy Fournier, Amanda Torrey, Adam Paxman, Sandy Kilburn, Marie Frey, Winton Goodrich, Ron Kilburn, Ross Lavoie, Mary Metayer, Kathy Lavoie, Terri O'Shea, Judy Paxman, and Kris Daignault.

VCRD especially wants to thank Hank and Molly Lambert for stepping up to lead this process as the Community Visit Co-Chairs. Swanton is fortunate to have these two fighting for the future of the community. Molly and Hank are among the strongest, most organized, and certainly most driven community visit chairs that we have had the pleasure to work with. They are both truly talented leaders and dedicated servants to the community. VCRD feels confident that the new task forces and the initiatives for the future will be successful under the guidance and leadership of these committed residents.

We also appreciate Swanton's strong Town and Village leadership who formally invited VCRD to Swanton for the Community Visit Process and who are so passionate about the future of their community. Reg Beliveau, the Village Manager, and David Jescavage, the Town Administrator, are exemplary community leaders and have offered so much support and guidance over the course of the Community Visit. VCRD also appreciates the leadership and guidance the Swanton Town Select Board and Village Trustees.

We are grateful to the St. Albans Messenger for their wonderful coverage of the Community Visit meetings and their help getting the word out and inviting folks to the Visit events. The paper exemplifies community-spirited journalism at its very best.

Mike Moser and the UVM Center for Rural Studies are terrific allies in our efforts and we appreciate their help building a briefing profile for the VCRD Community Visit Team.

Thanks must also go to the generous financial supporters of the process: The Vermont Community Foundation and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

VCRD calls state, federal and non-profit leaders at the top of their game to participate in Community Visit processes. We are proud of the partners we get to work with—and especially the Swanton Team—they are the best of Vermont’s public servants.

Getting things done is all about leadership, and all of Swanton should be grateful to those who’ve stepped up to serve as chairs of the task forces: Ron Kilburn and Mary Metayer: Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, River Access, Bike-ability and Bike Tourism; Judy Paxman and Kris Daignault: Swanton Arts Council; Terri O’Shea: Build a Swanton Economic Development Committee; Joel Clark: Improve Traffic, Walkability, and Parking Downtown; Kathy Lavoie: Unite the Community to Reduce Substance Abuse.

In the end, though, we are proud at VCRD that we work in a place where community is real and strong,



and where local residents work together to get things done to make their communities the best they can possibly be. So we are grateful to all residents, young and old, who stand up for Swanton and who are lined up for the common good and best future to this wonderful place.

## **II. Vision for Swanton's Future**

**These points of vision for the future of Swanton were shared by residents at the Community Meeting on March 5 and supported by the majority of participants in a poll of the community. The statements represent broad hopes that Swanton community members aspire to for the long term good of Swanton.**

### **Swanton residents look to a future for the community where:**

Swanton is a vibrant, diverse, and thriving community where local businesses, culture, and assets are highlighted. People are waiting in line to buy homes here because of the strong sense of community, a recreational facility that serves young and old, and a good night life with a good public restaurant, bar, or community meeting place.

Swanton is a safe community for children, families, and seniors, where children have safe places to play beyond their backyards and seniors feel they can get around and participate in activities safely.

Swanton is a community that cares about its children and families and works hard to strengthen families. Our schools are seen as the best in the region – and even in the entire state.

Swanton is a prosperous town with plenty of water resources that attracts appropriate retail development bringing good paying jobs to the town.

There is a sense of belonging in Swanton. There is an effective vehicle for communicating all of the good things going on for residents and visitors, and a community calendar to share events. The Town and the Village collaborate respectfully and effectively.

Swanton is a town where visitors come for activities ranging from biking, to paddling and fishing, and visiting the Historical Society. The town is recognized for artistic achievement and visitors come to see the work created and displayed by local artists. Swanton is much more than just a places that traffic passes through, it is a destination.

### **III. Initial List of Opportunities and Challenges**

**Identified by forums with community members on January 28 2015.**

*More than 200 Swanton residents joined with VCRD staff and a 24 member Visiting Team for the Community Visit Day on January 28, filling meeting rooms in the Swanton Public Library, the Village Office, Trinity Episcopal Church, and Missisquoi Valley Union High School. They took time from their workday and other commitments to attend forums and a community dinner at the High School, and to begin to work together in shaping the future of the town. The following issues emerged as initial challenges and opportunities. This list was presented back to community members at the Community Meeting on March 5 for voting and prioritization:*

#### **Expand Recreational Facilities and Opportunities**

Swanton residents celebrate the town's recreational assets including a new Recreation Department with diverse offerings, a teen center, church-led activities, the town green, a new fitness center, the Abenaki Community Center, and the Marble Mill Property. Residents recognize the significant role that recreation opportunities play in community building and even substance abuse and crime prevention. However, many feel that these opportunities are underutilized due to lack of space and communication, and that more opportunities should be available to adults and families as well as youth. A task force of Swanton residents could strengthen the Recreation Department and expand offerings for youth, adults, and families. The group can, with input from the community (including youth), seek out opportunities to use underutilized spaces and work together to communicate opportunities to the Town and Village via social networks, the town websites, Front Porch Forum, and perhaps a regular community newsletter.

#### **Improve River Access and Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities**

With the Missisquoi River, the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, and the Rail Trail, Swanton is a prime location for the development of outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and tourists. An Outdoor Recreation Task Force could explore opportunities to expand the use of these outdoor recreation resources by residents through organized programs or activities, build new and better boat access points, as well as identify ways to reach out to paddlers, bikers, and wildlife enthusiasts to invite both residents and visiting tourists to explore what Swanton has to offer. The task force could also work to attract a boat/bike rental business that can expand tourism access to the Missisquoi and Lake Champlain. The group could identify grant or other funding opportunities for activities and equipment as well as partner with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail to improve river access for paddling and fishing.

#### **Expand Bike Tourism and Improve Bike-ability**

Swanton is located at the beginning of the Lamoille Rail Trail. Residents recognize the opportunity to capitalize on this resource by focusing on making Swanton a more bike-friendly community and developing bike tourism resources. A Swanton Cycling Task Force could plan for and work to implement improvements ranging from bike racks and signage downtown to bike lanes on Route 78, new bike and walking paths (including a path to Hog Island) and could develop marketing resources and strategies aimed to expand local riding and attracting the regional and international cycling community.

## **Create an Arts Council**

An arts council could be formed to promote the active, but sometimes unrecognized and uncelebrated, arts community in Swanton. Residents see an opportunity to boost recognition of local crafts and artists by building an organized group to plan and publicize events. The council could identify spaces and events to show art and communicate art events to residents and visitors. The group could work with Swanton businesses, churches, the library, and others to identify potential sponsorship and collaboration opportunities.

## **Create Swanton History Hike and Brochure**

Swanton residents would like to develop a way to showcase and celebrate its rich history and connection to the Abenaki community. A History Task Force could partner with the Historical Society to identify strategies to educate residents and the public about the history of the region including: developing a history hike with signage and maps, a history brochure, exhibits of Abenaki art and other local points of interest, and offering educational events on the history of the community.

## **Build a Swanton Economic Development Committee**

Swanton is home to many assets that are attractive to businesses including the interstate, affordable utilities, and strong networking and collaboration among businesses. Many residents, however, feel that growth is currently slow, that Swanton is not a destination for relocating businesses, and competition with New York is a challenge. Residents recognize the need for growth of businesses and jobs in the town, but want to make sure to move forward in a cohesive and structured way. Currently, there is no group or entity that focuses on creating a plan for economic development and no point person in the municipality to take the lead. An Economic Development Task Force can draw on community members and outside experts to create a common vision for the growth and development of Swanton's downtown, southern district, and small business development. The committee could work to identify funding to hire a point person for economic development that could market Swanton to businesses, encourage existing businesses, help businesses get over regulatory and financing hurdles, and advance jobs and prosperity for the future.

## **Develop a Growth Plan for the Southern Growth District**

There is significant opportunity for growth in the Southern Growth District of Swanton and many residents see that growth as a great benefit to the tax base and economic prosperity of the community. A Master Plan for the Southern Growth District is needed to encourage and coordinate that growth in ways that meet the needs of Swanton and the region and, at the same time, establish locally developed structure to regulate the scale and pattern of development. A task force working with the municipality and planning commission, and supported by regional planning and other experts, could provide leadership to advance a rational plan.

## **Improve Communications and Marketing of Town Events and Resources**

Throughout Community Visit Day, the visiting resource team was struck by the many recreation opportunities, art events, social gatherings, and activities that Swanton residents described. Residents also shared significant concerns about the lack of an effective way to spread the word among residents about these events. Residents would like to improve communication between the Town and the Village, the school and the community, and find better ways to get the word out about historical society, art, community resources, and recreational events. A Communications Committee could

identify ways to improve communication such as improvements to town and village websites, a stronger community calendar, and potentially a monthly newsletter, perhaps in collaboration with students at MVU, highlighting local events, activities, businesses, gatherings, and other occasions of community interest.

### **Unite the Community to Reduce Substance Abuse**

Swanton residents expressed concern around the growing use of drugs and alcohol in the community. Many see their neighbors, family, and friends struggling, and worry about the impact substance abuse and addiction can have on the wellbeing and safety of the community. Though Swanton residents are faced with a significant challenge, they are willing and ready to tackle this complex issue. Residents recognize that the community is working hard to address this issue in schools, churches, mentoring programs, and law enforcement, but are challenged to coordinate and communicate these efforts and unite around a common vision. A Substance Abuse Task Force could form to better coordinate and communicate existing efforts and serve as the focal group to unite the community to reduce substance abuse and addiction and improve the quality of life. Tasks may include developing and sharing a Swanton position statement on substance abuse and addiction, identifying and coordinating training opportunities for residents and those working with youth, identifying ways to make resources and support systems more accessible and available, taking back areas where drug use is rampant and potentially creating a neighborhood watch program.

### **Set Up a Community Garden**

Swanton residents are proud of their prime agricultural soils, their dairy farms, and the flat tillable land in the region. Many residents are interested in ways to grow and access local food, and many grow food in personal gardens. For several years, residents have discussed developing a community garden in a safe and public area to allow all residents the opportunity to grow food together as a community. However, there has not been an organized group to get behind the effort. A task force could be formed to identify a good location for the garden, develop a plan for the community garden, and research potential funding opportunities.

### **Develop a Swanton Tourist Information Center**

Swanton is home to many attractions that make it a wonderful Vermont tourism destination. The Wildlife Refuge, the Missisquoi River, and the Rail Trail make it an ideal recreation destination, while other visitors may be interested in the active arts community or fascinating history of the town. However, residents feel that more can be done to attract tourists to the area, especially those travelling from Montreal. A Tourism Task Force could form to tell Swanton's story, package local events and offerings, and collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce to develop and staff a Swanton Tourist Information Center to market Swanton as a destination and direct visitors to area attractions and businesses. An information center could display tourism materials that advertise Swanton's many assets and could provide information to bikers utilizing the Rail Trail or to paddlers that may be travelling on the Northern Forest Canoe Trail.

### **Improve Traffic, Walkability, and Parking Downtown**

While Swanton's downtown has many key assets (small businesses, tourist attractions, sidewalks, the central green, a fitness center), residents expressed concern that a lack of parking and significant truck traffic through town undermines the full potential of the downtown and decreases safety and walkability. A Swanton Transportation Task Force could work to improve pedestrian and bikeways,

public safety, and parking availability. The group could conduct a traffic study to identify opportunities to improve truck traffic in the downtown corridor, explore potential bypass or alternative truck routes, identify opportunities to expand and improve downtown parking, look at opportunities to reduce truck traffic noise and improve signage in downtown Swanton. Residents would like to strengthen the downtown and manage traffic through the area to the town's advantage, both to improve the local economy and to make downtown Swanton more attractive and pleasant for residents and visitors.

### **Expand Public Transportation and Park and Ride**

Swanton residents expressed frustration with the lack of public transportation and/or car sharing opportunities from Swanton to Burlington and other locations. A Public Transportation Task Force could identify ways to increase public transportation options especially for seniors and youth, work with Green Mountain Transit to expand routes and access, make improvements to the existing Park and Ride, better publicize the use of the Park and Ride, and explore ways to better connect commuters who may be interested in car sharing and/or carpooling.

### **Beautify Downtown**

A Downtown Beautification Task Force could formalize downtown beautification work and expand on the efforts already made to improve the look of Swanton's downtown. Flowers, benches, attractive signage and other amenities could be planned and implemented. One opportunity to explore may be to tap into the youth community service requirement for beautification work.

### **Expand Career/ Workforce Development for Youth and Adults**

Swanton, like many other Vermont communities, faces a challenge keeping youth connected to their community, drawing youth in to the community, and filling agriculture and manufacturing jobs. A Career and Workforce Development Task Force could form, in collaboration with MVU, CCV, and NWRTC, to identify strategies to address these challenges. The group could explore ways to better connect the tech center with MVU and local businesses, to create job shadow or apprenticeship opportunities, and could work on ways to better coordinate and communicate professional development, education, and career opportunities for adults and youth. Residents also expressed an interest in working with MVU to develop continuing ed and community education offerings for adults.

### **Build a Community Center**

Swanton residents would like to see more opportunities for community members and families to come together for social and recreational activities. Many residents noted that there are several vacant buildings that may be suitable for the development of a multi-generational community center. A task force could consider possibilities for the development of a multigenerational community space. It could work with the community to develop a vision for a community center and identify potential public, private, and philanthropic funding sources to support the development of a multigenerational community gathering space.

### **Advance the Development of a Shared Work Space**

Over the past several month some Swanton residents have been looking at the possibility of developing a shared office space as a way to attract, support, or incubate new businesses and draw a new generation of entrepreneurs and young people to the community. An incubator or shared work space could range from a co-working office, to a facility to help new businesses develop products ranging from software to value-added foods. A task force could come together to build on this

discussion by identifying an appropriate building in the downtown, planning for key facility needs, setting a plan for redevelopment, and framing to connect to potential funding sources to bring this model to Swanton.

### **Start a Community Restaurant**

Swanton residents wish that there were more dining options downtown where they could go out for dinner with their friends and family. A Task Force could be formed to develop and implement a plan to set up and maintain a community-owned restaurant in downtown Swanton. A new restaurant would contribute to building a vibrant downtown, attract residents and tourists to spend time in town, and create jobs and economic opportunity.

### **Redevelop the Marble Mill Park and Playground**

During Community Visit forums, the Marble Mill Property and boat launch was highlighted both as an opportunity and a challenge. While the park and playground are a great community resource, many felt that the property was in need of attention. Some residents expressed a desire to clean up the property to be better utilized by the community while others, including youth, noted that the property did not feel safe to use. A Task Force could be formed to explore ways to clean up and or redevelop the property and better utilize the space for community recreation and enjoyment, especially for the community's youth.

### **Revitalize and Reuse Vacant/Abandoned Buildings**

Swanton residents are concerned by the number of vacant buildings in Swanton's downtown. A Downtown Buildings task force could identify ways to use vacant buildings for the improvement of the



community. Some ideas that residents brainstormed included space for art showing, a place to eat out, a community meeting space, and space for recreational opportunities.



## IV. Swanton Priorities

Determined by Swanton residents at the VCRD Community Meeting, March 5 2015

*Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, Swanton community members whittled down a list of 20 issues through discussion, reasoned arguments and thoughtful reflection. In the end, voting with orange and blue stickers, nearly 100 participants chose five issues that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the March 5 meeting by signing up for one of five Task Forces in the selected areas.*

### Swanton residents selected five priorities for future action:

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#### ✓ Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, River Access, Bike-ability and Bike Tourism

With the Missisquoi River, the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, and the Rail Trail, Swanton is a prime location for the development of outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and tourists. An Outdoor Recreation Task Force could explore opportunities to expand the use of these outdoor recreation resources by residents through organized programs or activities, build new and better boat access points, improve bike-ability, as well as identify ways to reach out to paddlers, bikers, and wildlife enthusiasts to invite both residents and visiting tourists to explore what Swanton has to offer. The task force could also work to attract a boat/bike rental business that can expand tourism access to the Missisquoi and Lake Champlain. The group could identify grant or other funding opportunities for activities and equipment as well as partner with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail to improve river access for paddling and fishing.

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#### ✓ Create an Arts Council

An arts council could be formed to promote the active, but sometimes unrecognized and uncelebrated, arts community in Swanton. Residents see an opportunity to boost recognition of local crafts and artists by building an organized group to plan and publicize events. The council could identify spaces and events to show art and communicate art events to residents and visitors. The group could work with Swanton businesses, churches, the library, and others to identify potential sponsorship and collaboration opportunities.

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#### ✓ Build a Swanton Economic Development Committee

Swanton is home to many assets that are attractive to businesses including the interstate, affordable utilities, and strong networking and collaboration among businesses. Many residents, however, feel that growth is currently slow, that Swanton is not a destination for relocating businesses, and competition with New York is a challenge. Residents recognize the need for growth of businesses and jobs in the town, but want to make sure to move forward in a cohesive and structured way. Currently, there is no group or entity that focuses on creating a plan for economic development and no point person in the municipality to take the lead. An Economic Development Task Force can draw on community members and outside experts to create a common vision for the growth and development

of Swanton’s downtown, southern district, and small business development. The committee could work to identify funding to hire a point person for economic development that could market Swanton to businesses, encourage existing businesses, help businesses get over regulatory and financing hurdles, and advance jobs and prosperity for the future.

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### ✓ **Unite the Community to Reduce Substance Abuse**

Swanton residents expressed concern around the growing use of drugs and alcohol in the community. Many see their neighbors, family, and friends struggling, and worry about the impact substance abuse and addiction can have on the wellbeing and safety of the community. Though Swanton residents are faced with a significant challenge, they are willing and ready to tackle this complex issue. Residents recognize that the community is working hard to address this issue in schools, churches, mentoring programs, and law enforcement, but are challenged to coordinate and communicate these efforts and unite around a common vision. A Substance Abuse Task Force could form to better coordinate and communicate existing efforts and serve as the focal group to unite the community to reduce substance abuse and addiction and improve the quality of life. Tasks may include developing and sharing a Swanton position statement on substance abuse and addiction, identifying and coordinating training opportunities for residents and those working with youth, identifying ways to make resources and support systems more accessible and available, taking back areas where drug use is rampant and potentially creating a neighborhood watch program.

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### ✓ **Improve Traffic, Walkability, and Parking Downtown**

While Swanton’s downtown has many key assets (small businesses, tourist attractions, sidewalks, the central green, a fitness center), residents expressed concern that a lack of parking and significant truck traffic through town undermines the full potential of the downtown and decreases safety and walkability. A Swanton Transportation Task Force could work to improve pedestrian and bikeways, public safety, and parking availability. The group could conduct a traffic study to identify opportunities to improve truck traffic in the downtown corridor, explore potential bypass or alternative truck routes, identify opportunities to expand and improve downtown parking, look at opportunities to reduce truck traffic noise and improve signage in downtown Swanton. Residents would like to strengthen the downtown and manage traffic through the area to the town’s advantage, both to improve the local economy and to make downtown Swanton more attractive and pleasant for residents and visitors.



*On Community Meeting Day, participants took part in a dot-voting exercise to select their top priorities for action.*

## V. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, April 15 2015

*Swanton Task Forces are comprised of community members and an appointed chairperson. On Resource Day committee members worked closely with a facilitator and small resource teams to develop step-by-step action plans and to devise a list of human and financial resources to help achieve their goals. This final phase of the program marks the time when residents truly take ownership of the work, and begin the exciting process of turning ideas into action.*

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### Task Force: ✓ Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, River Access, Bike-ability and Bike Tourism

Chairperson: **Mary Metayer** and **Ron Kilburn**

Facilitator: **Jenna Whitson**, *VCRD*

Resource Leaders: **Walter Opuszynski**, *Northern Forest Canoe Trail*

With the Missisquoi River, the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, and the Rail Trail, Swanton is a prime location for the development of outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and tourists. An Outdoor Recreation Task Force could explore opportunities to expand the use of these outdoor recreation resources by residents through organized programs or activities, build new and better boat access points, improve bike-ability, as well as identify ways to reach out to paddlers, bikers, and wildlife enthusiasts to invite both residents and visiting tourists to explore what Swanton has to offer. The task force could also work to attract a boat/bike rental business that can expand tourism access to the Missisquoi and Lake Champlain. The group could identify grant or other funding opportunities for activities and equipment as well as partner with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail to improve river access for paddling and fishing.

#### Priority Action Steps:

1. Investigate the access points of the Missisquoi River that the state, town, and village of Swanton own, specifically above and below the dam. Increase access to the 7 mile stretch of calm water above the dam. Develop outdoor recreation opportunities that also highlight the value of the calm water above the dam.
2. Create a map to identify and promote the current outdoor recreation assets in the community. Start with a map found at [www.townofswantonvermont.weebly.com](http://www.townofswantonvermont.weebly.com)
3. Improve river access at Depot Museum and Marble Mill.
4. Plan a river celebration that would include food, music, speakers, etc. to highlight the success of the improved access to the river and celebrate the outdoor assets of the community.
5. Improve bike safety. Perhaps by improving signage in the village and along Route 78. Collaborate on this effort with the task force working on improving traffic and walkability downtown.
6. Improve the communication of outdoor recreation opportunities in the community including outdoor oriented workshops, program opportunities, events, etc. Explore the best way to spread the word. Options may include; Front Porch Forum, the Swanton Rec Dept Wednesday Weekly, a

weekly insert in the St. Albans Messenger, or the development of an outdoor recreation community calendar.

7. Work in collaboration with the Swanton Recreation Department to support summer camp programs for youth that include ample outdoor recreation, biking, and river opportunities.

### **Other action ideas:**

- Partner with the wildlife refuge to offer paddling experience for beginners and promote outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Explore the possibility of a primitive river campsite in Swanton in collaboration with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail.
- Work with the elementary school to expand “Ski Fridays” year-round offering “river Fridays” in the summer.
- Explore opportunities for new bike paths.
- Initiate a Swanton Geo Cacheing program through Swanton Recreation Dept.
- Construct a Swanton Frisbee Golf Course through Swanton Recreation Dept.
- Connect a Swanton resident with the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail committee.
- Bring an outdoor gear rental program to Swanton.
- Improve the connection between the end of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and downtown by improving signage, mapping, and sidewalks.

### **Resources:**

1. University of Vermont students for mapping support.
2. Northern Forest Canoe Recreational Trails Program can offer support with the project to improve river access. They may be able to support a grant proposal to fund the project.
3. Missisquoi Wildlife refuge.
4. RISEVT.com
5. Complete Streets Program at Local Motion for bike safety support. Katelin Brewer-Colie manages that program.
6. The Town and Village Joint Legislative Body is a key resource as many of the outdoor recreation assets are publicly owned. A new sidewalk project may be underway which may be a good opportunity to improve bike and pedestrian safety between the Rail Trail and town.
7. Jon Kaplan is the Program Manager at the Bicycle and Pedestrian Program at the VT Agency of Transportation.
8. Swanton Historical Society.
9. Land and Water Conservation Fund at the Agency of Natural Resources.
10. Vermont Housing and Conservation Board Public Outdoor Recreation funds.
11. Highgate Arena.
12. Leaders in the Richford community who worked on improving river access and planning the Richford Riverfest. NFCT Trail Town Committee.
13. Swanton Recreation Department.
14. Amy Brewer: Northwest Medical Center/Public Health
15. Friends of Northern Lake Champlain: Denise Smith

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## Task Force: ✓ Create a Swanton Arts Council

Chairpersons: **Judy Paxman** and **Kris Daignault**

Facilitator: **Zon Eastes**, *Vermont Arts Council*

Resource Leaders: **Ben Doyle**, *Vermont Arts Council*; **Ruth Wallman**, *Lake Champlain Islands Economic Development Corporation*

An arts council has been formed to promote the active, but sometimes unrecognized and uncelebrated, arts community in Swanton. Residents see an opportunity to boost recognition of local crafts and artists by building an organized group to plan and publicize events. The council intends to identify spaces and events to show art and communicate art events to residents and visitors. The group will work with Swanton businesses, churches, the library, and others to identify potential sponsorship and collaboration opportunities.

### Action Steps

1. Register as Vermont Non-Profit (Faith Dubois).
2. Register as a 501(c)3 with the IRS (Faith Dubois).
3. Explore possibility of applying for a Project Grant - deadline 5/15/2015 (added at end of community meeting).
4. Locate a legal representative (Lenore MacMillion).
5. Research Arts Council best practices (Kris Daignault).
6. Create an Asset Map (Rebecca Rupp and Judy Paxman).
7. Gather information on existing community calendars and Create a Swanton Arts Council calendar to link to existing calendars. Create an "arts clearinghouse" of events (Summer Interns).
8. Develop a focus for the group. Identify a signature Swanton Arts Council event (to be added to future Arts Council Agenda).

### Resources

1. Vermont Arts Council staff.
2. Other Arts Councils.
3. VAC Project grants (community art list).
4. VAC Cultural facilities grants.
5. VAC Technical Assistance grants.
6. Vermont Creative Network.
7. Creative Ground Artist Directory.
8. Teaching artist residency grants for schools.
9. Community Liaisons

### Task Force Members

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## Task Force: ✓ Build a Swanton Economic Development Committee

Chairperson: **Terri O’Shea**

Facilitator: **Paul Costello, VCRD**

Resource Leaders: **Tim Smith, Franklin Industrial Devel. Corp.;** **Paul Bruhn, Preservation Trust of VT**

Swanton is home to many assets that are attractive to businesses including the interstate, affordable utilities, and strong networking and collaboration among businesses. Many residents, however, feel that growth is currently slow, that Swanton is not a destination for relocating businesses, and competition with New York is a challenge. Residents recognize the need for growth of businesses and jobs in the town, but want to make sure to move forward in a cohesive and structured way. Currently, there is no group or entity that focuses on creating a plan for economic development and no point person in the municipality to take the lead. An Economic Development Task Force can draw on community members and outside experts to create a common vision for the growth and development of Swanton’s downtown, southern district, and small business development. The committee could work to identify funding to hire a point person for economic development that could market Swanton to businesses, encourage existing businesses, help businesses get over regulatory and financing hurdles, and advance jobs and prosperity for the future.

### Action Steps

1. Investigate the other towns economic development committees in the county to see what they accomplish and how they work: Richford and Enosburg
2. Work with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission on the region-wide brownfields assessment to identify and plan for the redevelopment of Swanton brownfields.
3. Connect with the Planning Commission to review the draft Swanton Town Plan and contribute ideas on economic development.
4. Establish a Swanton “Bragging Plan” to tell great stories about Swanton assets, activities and good news! Draw on each of the other Task Force work to share a variety of stories for local media, and for media beyond Swanton.
5. Evaluate the idea of attracting, supporting or developing a community restaurant downtown.
6. Support agricultural enterprises and agritourism as key features of Swanton’s economy.
7. Go business to business in Swanton—what do they need to grow? Build an inventory of local businesses. Use a common set of questions and ultimately build a list of resources that can be shared with businesses.
8. Get an overview of workforce needs and programs from Kathy Lavoie at the Workforce Development Board, and define strategies to build the workforce.
9. Support the work in progress to develop a welcome center and signage by the Swanton Interstate exit.

## Resources:

1. Tim Smith and the Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation can provide information and support to the task force.
2. David Southwick and the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce is willing to work with and support the committee.
3. The High School, especially the agriculture program and Workforce Development Board could be important partners.
4. Paul Bruhn and Preservation Trust of Vermont who could help think about restaurants and historic building projects. PTV also conducts tours so community task force members could learn from other towns in VT, or participate in retreats to learn best community development practices.
5. Dom Cloud, Liz Gamache and Chip Sawyer from St. Albans could be invited up to share ideas and techniques for advancing commerce, downtown development and economic development.
6. Kiersten Bougouis of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development could be invited to help advance key strategies.
7. The Northwest Regional Planning Commission, Catherine Dimitruk and staff, could provide invaluable assistance.
8. Even though there are no direct earmarks available anymore, VT's Congressional Delegation can get behind Swanton efforts and can help lever resources.
9. There will be a variety of funding opportunities to move specific projects forward including the opportunity to get a grant of \$2,500 from the Northwest Board of Realtors, connect with Downtown and Village Tax Credits, check in to the Lake Champlain Basin Program heritage program funds, and look into possibilities through the Northern Borders Commission.
10. Ultimately, Swanton needs a point person to keep all work and volunteers on track and drive community efforts to encourage economic development. The Committee will investigate what Johnson and other towns do, and evaluate the possibility of proposing a part or full time position to the village and town.

## Task Force Members

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## ✓ Unite the Community to Reduce Substance Abuse

Chairperson: **Kathy Lavoie**

Facilitator: **Peter Mallery**, *VT Association for Mental Health and Addiction Recovery*

Resource Leaders: **Mary Pickener**, *VT Department of Health*;  
**Commander Scott Tucker**, *Rutland City Police Department*

Swanton residents expressed concern around the growing use of drugs and alcohol in the community. Many see their neighbors, family, and friends struggling, and worry about the impact substance abuse and addiction can have on the wellbeing and safety of the community. Though Swanton residents are faced with a significant challenge, they are willing and ready to tackle this complex issue. Residents recognize that the community is working hard to address this issue in schools, churches, mentoring programs, and law enforcement, but are challenged to coordinate and communicate these efforts and unite around a common vision. A Substance Abuse Task Force could form to better coordinate and communicate existing efforts and serve as the focal group to unite the community to reduce substance abuse and addiction and improve the quality of life. Tasks may include developing and sharing a Swanton position statement on substance abuse and addiction, identifying and coordinating training opportunities for residents and those working with youth, identifying ways to make resources and support systems more accessible and available, taking back areas where drug use is rampant and potentially creating a neighborhood watch program.

### Action Steps

1. Identify family friendly activities and promote them monthly. Opportunities could include; cooking classes, arts and crafts, outdoor movies, sports, block parties, outdoor recreation, etc. Collaborate with other local groups such as the new Outdoor Recreation Task Force and the Swanton Recreation Department.
2. Gather data on the extent of substance abuse in the Swanton community as well as map recovery and prevention assets; enlist resource of local researcher, UVM, State Dept. of Health, and law enforcement (including local, state and Dept. of Corrections).
3. Focus on Prevention through reviewing 40 Developmental Assets and identifying 3 that can be addressed; collaborate with regional and state resources to deliver support.
4. Connect with Vermont Recovery Network and local VNR, Turning Point in St. Albans, in consideration of opening a recovery center in Swanton.
5. Market & Expand “Drug Takeback” program in Swanton community. Work with local pharmacy and law enforcement to discover new opportunities throughout year.
6. Visit Rutland to learn more about the Project Vision, a collaboration of resources and services to address various community challenges, including abuse and addiction.

### Resources:

1. Partner with the outdoor recreation task force and the Swanton recreation department on the development of family-oriented recreation opportunities.
2. Faith-based organizations.
3. Franklin County Caring Communities.
4. Local law enforcement.

5. Neighborhood leaders.
6. Schools
7. Youth
8. Judy Ashley, Department of Health, and UVM researchers
9. Rutland's Project Vision.
10. Peter Mallary peter@itsclassified. Com; 802-356-0284
11. VNR & Turning Point

## Task Force Members

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## ✓ Improve Traffic, Walkability, and Parking Downtown

Chairperson: **Joel Clark**

Facilitator: **Michele Boomhower**, *VT Agency of Transportation*

Resource Leaders: **Bethany Remmers**, *Northwest Regional Planning Commission*;  
**Katelin Brewer-Colie**, *Local Motion*

While Swanton's downtown has many key assets (small businesses, tourist attractions, sidewalks, the central green, a fitness center), residents expressed concern that a lack of parking and significant truck traffic through town undermines the full potential of the downtown and decreases safety and walkability. A Swanton Transportation Task Force could work to improve pedestrian and bikeways, public safety, and parking availability. The group could conduct a traffic study to identify opportunities to improve truck traffic in the downtown corridor, explore potential bypass or alternative truck routes, identify opportunities to expand and improve downtown parking, look at opportunities to reduce truck traffic noise and improve signage in downtown Swanton. Residents would like to strengthen the downtown and manage traffic through the area to the town's advantage, both to improve the local economy and to make downtown Swanton more attractive and pleasant for residents and visitors.

### Action Steps

1. Complete traffic and parking studies for town core and village area.
2. Recruit volunteers to complete walking and biking audits.
3. Work with village officials and law enforcement to improve enforcement of traffic laws and speeding in the village, put up "No Engine Brake" signs, and increase truck inspections.
4. Inventory existing parking and new potential parking areas. Begin a list of potential parking areas at next meeting.
5. Put up a speed trailer and sign and put out flexi signs to yield to pedestrians.

### Resources:

1. VT Agency of Transportation Alternatives/Bicycle and Pedestrian Program.
2. Northern Border Regional Commission (grant opportunities may be available, especially in collaboration with other task forces such as the new Economic Development group. Identify opportunities to coordinate projects for a grant application).
3. Committee labor – audits and parking inventory.
4. Identify opportunities to integrate projects from Swanton into the Comprehensive Economic Develop Strategy for the Economic Development Council of Northern Vermont.
5. Agency of Commerce and Community Development Village Greens Program.
6. Coordinate with the VT Agency of Transportation on potential Rt 78 improvements by the time repaving begins which is planned for 2016.

### Task Force Members

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## VI. Resource Team Recommendations

*Resource Team members represent a wide array of professionals from across the state, and agree to serve as partners and advisors to the Swanton Task Forces. Their recommendations below encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs. It is hoped that community members will turn frequently to these pages for concrete ideas, resources and support. Resource Team members are eager to support the Task Forces as they begin their work.*

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### ✓ Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, River Access, Bike-ability, and Bike Tourism

#### **POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:**

One way to proceed would be to create a map of all existing and desired outdoor recreational facilities and routes. Include any local businesses that can serve the users of the trails and facilities. Once mapped, develop a vision and outdoor recreation plan for Swanton. Share the map and the vision with the community and promote its use.

Look at ways that Swanton could support recreational biking while also making it easier for people to choose biking as a transportation option. There could be opportunities for this task force to collaborate with the Walkability and Traffic Task Force to advance projects together or share infrastructure like bike racks, or advocate for bike lanes or signs to help people find their way around.

By talking about biking in the community as both tourism AND transportation the task force can underscore that efforts in this arena aren't just for tourists, but are also for the benefit of residents. This could also help the group get more widespread buy in and participation.

Connect with other communities and/or organizations who have focused on this work. Connect to Local Motion from Burlington, which is expanding its services, for ideas and support. Rutland, Manchester and Vergennes have built working groups and advanced projects; the committee might want to look into what they have done so far, how they have gotten over barriers, and funding sources they have accessed.

Reach out to bike, paddle, and other outdoor recreation tour operators based in Vermont to learn what facilities they need when planning trips. Talk to businesses about their interest in becoming involved.

Promote outdoor recreation opportunities in Swanton online. Connect with the Town, the Village, and the Chamber website to see if they could have a space for outdoor recreation opportunities to build this as a key feature of the town brand. Vermont Canoe and Kayak is a business based in Central Vermont that offers guided canoe and kayak tours. True North Kayak offers tours on Lake Champlain. Maybe they would be interested in building a tour outpost in Swanton.

Build local buy-in through organized outdoor recreation events. Consider organizing fun community outings such as the Halloween Ride that Local Motion organizes each year. Get local folks outdoors and having fun. Celebrate the outdoor assets together as a community. Host a River Festival event similar to the Annual Richford River Fest with boat rentals, guided activities, music, and food.

Work on making Swanton more bike-friendly. Build bike racks in town and explore the possibility of a local bike rental system with rental locations around the town and village. Work with local bike clubs, local police, state police, and the Traffic and Walkability Task Force to identify dangerous situations for bicyclists and prepare mitigation strategies and plan forward for expanded bike lanes, and street sweeping at critical spots. Convene focus sessions for local bike enthusiasts to identify assets and build a volunteer base.

Look at other outdoor recreation destinations that have been successful. The Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing has some resources that could be used as examples to attract outdoor recreation tourism.

Work with local schools to develop a local trails interpretation project that could function like geocaching. There are great examples of these projects where a simple sign with a code reader sends someone with a smart phone to a city or school web page that offers up interpretive nuance to points of interest throughout the town and surrounding countryside.

Share your outdoor recreation vision with local organizations, businesses, schools, municipal and regional officials and leaders. Ensure that all feel engaged and involved.

Think outside the box and be as inclusive as possible when defining “outdoor recreation.” Some outdoor activities can hit a lot of different strategies and outcomes.

The Task Force could develop more connections to the Abenaki Tribal Council and community to strengthen outdoor recreation and education opportunities.

Connect with the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge to identify ways to collaborate on outdoor recreation or outdoor education opportunities for local residents and visitors to town, maybe by inviting someone from the refuge to be a working member of the committee.

The Task Force could contribute at least one participant to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) project. The LVRT project has prioritized the Sheldon to Swanton leg as part of their next phase and would likely take input from the group.

The group could appoint one or two members to join the Lake Champlain Basin Program, a Champlain Valley Natural Heritage Partnership stakeholders committee which meets to help direct grant opportunities and funding for recreational projects. Contact Dave Southwick to join the mailing list at [director@frcvvt.com](mailto:director@frcvvt.com).

## **RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE OUTDOOR RECREATION TASK FORCE:**

Missisquoi Valley Union High School could take on a sign and/or trail building project as a class project for science or civics class. Connect with civics or science teachers at the school.

Partner with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail on improving river access. The Northern Forest Canoe Trail staff can support this work, and may be able to connect the group with funding opportunities to support river access. Contact Karrie Thomas, Executive Director at [karrie@northernforestcanoetrail.org](mailto:karrie@northernforestcanoetrail.org) or 802-496-2285.

Jon Kaplan at the VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program could be a good resource for either potential funding opportunities for scoping (feasibility) studies or for the design and construction of projects. Contact Jon at [jon.kaplan@state.vt.us](mailto:jon.kaplan@state.vt.us) or at 828-0059.

Louise Lampman-Larivee does a lot of outdoor recreation work thorough an Abenaki lens. Connect with her to discuss ways to integrate the Abenaki heritage into the work of the Outdoor Recreation Task Force; maybe invite her to join the committee.

Look at old railroad beds if there is a need to develop more trails. The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps or AmeriCorps might be able to help with trail development. Contact Tom Hark, President of VYCC at 434-3969 x100.

Connect with Local Motion for guidance on biking and other land-based, people-powered activities. Local Motion offers a variety of printed resources for promoting walking and biking. Put in a request for anything that you might use. Most are available at no charge. Local Motion is also available to consult on bike infrastructure projects for an hourly fee. Contact Jason Van Driesche, Director of Advocacy and Education ([jason@localmotion.org](mailto:jason@localmotion.org); 802-861-2700 ext 109).

Lake Champlain International would be a good resource for people interested in fishing. LCI is a non-profit organization actively involved in shaping the future of the Lake Champlain water and fishery health. They offer Youth Education and Outreach and Fisheries Restoration. Contact LCI at 802-879-3466.

Watersheds United Vermont is a state-wide network or local groups dedicated to the health of their home watersheds. They are actively working to connect all of the local watershed groups, working on both recreation and conservation ([www.watershedsunitedvt.org](http://www.watershedsunitedvt.org)).

Funding sources for outdoor recreation projects could include:

- Vermont Community Foundation Small and Inspiring Grants for community building and civic engagement projects (Christopher Kaufmann-Ilstrup, 388-3355)
- Ben & Jerry's Foundation Community Action Team grants
- New England Grassroots Environment Fund (NEGEF) grants for environmental or community organizing (603-905-9915).
- Vermont Housing and Conservation Board Public Outdoor Recreation Grants (828-3250)

Vermont Community Garden Network has resources and small amounts of funding to build or improve community gardens which are great community builders and excellent ways to engage local folks around issues of healthy food and nutrition education. Contact Jess Hyman at 861-4769.

There may be funds for outdoor recreation facilities and planning processes available through local healthcare facilities, AARP, the VT complete streets program , VAST, or the Rail Trail project.

A group in the Lake Champlain Islands is working on making the Islands a destination for bike tourism. Contact Ruth Wallman at [ruth@champlainislands.com](mailto:ruth@champlainislands.com) or 802-372-8400. There may be opportunities to work together in the future.

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission may be able to help the committee with planning, support or grant development services. Contact them at 524-5958.

RiseVT is a county wide health initiative. You can contact Dorey Demers, the Director of RiseVT, to assign a representative to the Swanton region and be a part of this group. <http://www.risevt.com/>

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## ✓ Create an Arts Council

### POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

With the Swanton Arts Council already established, it should look to develop a work plan moving forward.

The group could research others' work, and make sure not to reinvent the wheel. The team could research local arts organizations around the state and check-in with the Vermont Arts Council as it develops its work. The Swanton Arts Council might want to start small and grow capacity over time. It's important to establish parameters and assign roles and tasks to council members.

Consider registering with the Secretary of State's Office as a Vermont non-profit and consider beginning the process of becoming a 501c3. This will help the Council pursue grant funding to support its efforts.

Develop an asset map of local arts resources and allies who can help further the mission of the Council. Consider efforts that are currently underway and how you can coordinate with them to effectively highlight the role of the arts in Swanton.

Partner with neighboring communities and organizations to see what you can do together to have a greater and more robust impact regionally.

Develop a signature event for the Council to improve visibility. The River of Light Parade in Waterbury is a great example of a signature arts related event that brings the community together and celebrates local artists.

Connect with the Abenaki Tribal Council. There are many working artists involved in the tribal organization and they are able to sell crafts as native made; you might want to specifically invite a tribal representative to join the team.

Collaborate with local schools, churches, and businesses on community art projects, or to organize showing of local artists' work. Identify available visible spaces downtown that could serve as a home base for the Council and as a pop-up gallery.

Get involved with the Vermont Arts Council's statewide Creative Economy Network, an interconnected engine of statewide people, places, and resources. Find out more at [www.vermontartscouncil.org](http://www.vermontartscouncil.org).

Engage the art, music, and drama community at the schools. They will have a lot of good ideas on how to engage young people in this work. Perhaps create a "YouthArts" adjunct to the council that could develop original works by students for students. Young Playwrites and Young Writer's projects are great resources. Think poetry slams and comedy jams; develop a shared instrument or loaner program so people could take guitar lessons or bang on drums with their peers.

The group could appoint one or two members to join the Lake Champlain Basin Program, a Champlain Valley Natural Heritage Partnership stakeholders committee which meets to help direct grant opportunities and funding for culture and arts projects. Contact Dave Southwick to join the mailing list at [director@frcrcvt.com](mailto:director@frcrcvt.com)

### **RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE SWANTON ARTS COUNCIL:**

The Vermont Arts Council offers a number of grants that could help support these efforts. Information on the following grants can be found on the Vermont Arts Council website: [www.vermontartscouncil.org](http://www.vermontartscouncil.org)

- Project Grants: A matching grant of up to \$3,000 used to support projects that bring the arts to the center of Vermont Communities.
- Technical Assistance Grants: A matching grant for up to \$1,500 used to support activities that help Vermont arts organizations strengthen their capacity to serve constituents.
- Cultural Facilities Grants: Grants intended to help Vermont nonprofit organizations and municipalities enhance, create, or expand the capacity of an existing building to provide cultural activities for the public.

Vermont Arts Council staff is also available to provide technical assistance and share resources. Two key contacts at the Arts Council are:

- Sarah Mutrux, Director of Artist and Community Programs. Contact Sarah at [smutrux@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:smutrux@vermontartscouncil.org) or 802-828-5425.
- Zon Eastes, Director of Outreach and Advancement. Contact Zon at [zeastes@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:zeastes@vermontartscouncil.org) or 802-828-5423.

Other groups and organizations around the state engaged in community-level arts projects, showing, events, and development are important resources. Here are some ideas of who to connect with around the state:

- The Memphramagog Artists Collaborative in Newport runs a cooperative gallery. Call 802-334-1966.
- The Connecticut River Artisans Guild (CRAG) in Canaan runs events, classes, and pop-up galleries.
- The Art House in Craftsbury runs community classes in multiple media and runs a small gallery and craft shop. They have also starting holding concerts and dances. Call 802-586-2200.
- BarnArts in Barnard coordinates a year-round performing and visual arts program of workshops for adults and youth, exhibitions and performances, showcasing existing local talent and bringing in national recognized artist. Call 802-234-1645.
- River Arts in Morrisville is a multi-generational community arts organization that runs programming for youth, adults, and elders. It hosts events and maintains two galleries. Call 802-888-1261.

- Island Arts is an arts group in North Hero that has been around for 30 years. The President, Katya Wilcox, would be a resource for the Council. She can be contacted at [info@islandarts.org](mailto:info@islandarts.org) or at 802-233-1725.
- The Champlain Islands Artists Organization is a group for artists and crafters. Their website is [www.ciaovt.org](http://www.ciaovt.org).

Contact Burlington City Arts to look into collaboration options or advice in promoting the arts. They may be able to provide some insights into how to build a community coalition around the arts. Call 802-865-7166.

Contact Catamount Arts in St Johnsbury. Catamount Arts is a rural and relatively low-income community with a successful community arts model that also partners with school districts and college to put on events and programs for the community. Contact Jody Fried, Executive Director, at [jfried@catamountarts.org](mailto:jfried@catamountarts.org) or 802-748-2600.

Other funding sources may be available including The Vermont Community Foundation, The Ben & Jerry's Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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## ✓ Build a Swanton Economic Development Committee

### POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

The Task Force could inventory community economic assets in Swanton potentially including educational, workforce development, financial, business assistance, cost of housing, health care, and infrastructural assets. It could also identify and document available spaces for business and do an analysis of the condition of the downtown buildings to determine if they are ready for occupancy. The tea might highlight downtown reuse and redevelopment opportunities to bolster the downtown, and talk to existing businesses about expansion and/or assistance needs.

One step might be to talk to home businesses that may be growing out of their houses about the spaces you have identified in your downtown.

With your list of assets, develop a Swanton “bragging plan” to tell the story about Swanton assets, activities, and good news. Build a brochure, map, and/or buy local directory to spur businesses, bundle tourism activities and lodging, and stimulate the local business climate. Also create an economic development vision for Swanton. Include community members and outside experts.

Invite state agencies such as the Natural Resources Board (which administers Act 250 permitting) the Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Department of Housing and Community Development to come talk about permitting processes and how to make improvements locally. For example, the NRB and DHCD are doing a lot of outreach and education right now on Criterion 9L of Act 250, which is new and causing some uncertainty. The outreach has proven very helpful in many communities.

Explore the possibility of a co-working space downtown with high speed internet to attract people downtown, encourage interaction between entrepreneurs, and provide customers for local businesses. Take a field trip to existing co-working spaces such as Local 64 in Montpelier. Creating this type of space is a way to harness the so-called “creative” and “knowledge” economies, people who do

work that can be done from anywhere. This is a downtown redevelopment strategy building traction all over Vermont right now.

Work with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission on the region-wide brownfields assessment to identify and plan for the redevelopment of Swanton brownfields.

Think broadly about economic development, including nurturing businesses that are already in town. Especially include agricultural businesses, agritourism, or food businesses. Identify ways to take advantage of the strong local food movement in Vermont. Connect with the Swanton Arts Council and the Wildlife Refuge. Both of these are potential economic opportunities.

Consider organizing a grant competition for entrepreneurs looking to start businesses in Swanton to create excitement and bring some resources to new business.

Talk to other area municipalities with experience. Reach out to St. Albans (Dom Cloud, Liz Gamache, and Chip Sawyer) to learn more about the economic development work they have done there. Connect with the Richford and Enosburg economic development committees to see what they have accomplished and how they work. Invite folks from other towns to share ideas and techniques for advancing commerce, downtown development and economic development.

Continue to think about how to draw visitors from Quebec. There are many folks right over the border who are visiting Vermont frequently. How can you draw and accommodate those potential visitors? Look into the development of a welcome center and signage by the Swanton interstate exit.

Use the village green to your advantage. Offer the village green as a venue for businesses to hold events on specific days. Offer the Town Website calendar as one venue and a link to the business or organizing entities website for advertising the event. Events could include; antiques and/or residents flea market field sales; outdoor equipment sales; house/dog shows; concerts or other recreational events; offer an event on the Green to every business within town.

## **RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE:**

Tim Smith and the Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation can provide information and indispensable support to the task force. Contact [tim@fcidc.com](mailto:tim@fcidc.com) or 802-524-2194.

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission will be extremely useful to the committee, especially related to the work on the brownfields assessment and redevelopment program. Contact Catherine Dimitruk, the Executive Director, at [cdimitruk@nrpcvt.com](mailto:cdimitruk@nrpcvt.com) or 802-524-5958.

USDA Rural Development has a variety of resources that could be available for planning and project implementation. RBOG grants can help economic planning, cluster planning and with groundwork to spur economic development. RBEG grants can support the progress of particular enterprises and might be especially useful if an incubator project is developed. Contact State Director Ted Brady at 802-828-6000 and visit their website at <http://www.rd.usda.gov/vt>.

Contact co-working spaces in Vermont to learn about what they have accomplished, and explore the possibility of bringing one to Swanton. Check out

Office Squared in Burlington (<http://officesquaredvt.com>) and Local 64 in Montpelier (<http://l64.co>). Lars Hasselblad Torres coordinates the Local 64 space in Montpelier and would be a great resource if you are thinking about starting a space in Swanton (595-0605).

David Southwick and the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce is willing to work with the committee and is able to provide support. Contact David, Executive Director, at [director@frcctvt.com](mailto:director@frcctvt.com) or at 802-425-2444.

Preservation Trust of Vermont could help the committee think about restaurants and historic building projects as well as offer tours so community task force members could learn from other towns in Vermont. Contact Paul Bruhn, Executive Director, at [paul@ptvermont.org](mailto:paul@ptvermont.org) or 802-658-6647.

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## ✓ Unite the Community to Reduce Substance Abuse

### **POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:**

The team could research what other communities have done and are doing to address this issue in a positive way. Rutland City has a great community organizing project called Project Vision that is working to address addiction and its effects on neighborhoods. Connect with Project Vision and arrange a visit to Rutland to learn more about the work they are doing. Don't try and go it alone. The work is challenging and can be isolating. It is important to connect with other communities.

Collaborate closely with local law enforcement. Build your relationship with the Swanton Police Department and make sure that you are working together and towards a similar vision. It might be a good idea to invite a member of the force to be on the committee. Following the Rutland Project Vision model, identify ways to create a comprehensive and more integrated collaboration among the agencies and organizations that serve Swanton and the region. Explore the development of a satellite location in Swanton for substance abuse recovery specialists to collaborate on recovery and prevention efforts or a broader center point like Rutland has put together.

Conduct research and make sure the group and the community are informed about the root causes of substance abuse including; poverty, boredom, generational drug use, homelessness, and other challenges. Also gather data on the extent of substance abuse in Swanton and map the available recovery and prevention assets.

Work to reduce stigma around addiction to make it easier to talk about. Work to create a safe environment in Swanton for people who are addicted to reach out for help to their neighbors and friends. Addiction is a medical problem, not a criminal or moral problem. Work to bring it out of the shadows.

Cross sectoral approaches to the issue of addiction are critical. Look at ways you can get other community organization involved such as the tribal council, churches, schools, health clinics, local

businesses, etc. Ensure that all organizations are collaborating and moving in the same directions on this issue. Identify and promote family friendly activities including cooking classes, arts and crafts programs, movie showings, block parties, outdoor recreation opportunities, etc. Connect with the Swanton Recreation Department and the new Outdoor Recreation Task Force to collaborate on event development and outreach.

Consider ways to “take back” parts of town where drug usage concentrates, particularly the Marbleworks park area. Build positive activities or events there and reclaim it as public space. Consider adaptations in the area that would make it less desirable for any criminal behavior.

### **RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE REDUCE SUBSTANCE ABUSE TASK FORCE:**

Rutland Project Vision has offered to lend their guidance and support to the task force’s efforts. Contacts there include Scott Tucker, Support Services Commander, [scott.tucker@state.vt.us](mailto:scott.tucker@state.vt.us) or 802-773-1843 and Rutland Mayor Chris Louras at [mayorlouras@rutlandcity.com](mailto:mayorlouras@rutlandcity.com) or 802-773-1800. Mayor Louras can share the big story of Rutland’s efforts, and ideas on reclaiming public spaces.

Franklin County Caring Communities’ mission is to promote healthy communities in Franklin County through positive youth development and substance abuse prevention. They could be a key resource for the group. Contact Beth Crane, Executive Director, at 5275049 x 1 or [beth@fccc.org](mailto:beth@fccc.org).

Look into health care funders for assistance. For example, the Fletcher Allen Health Care Foundation, or others. Contact the Vermont Community Foundation for support: 388-3355.

Connect with other organizations working to reduce stigma around tough issues to learn from them and share resources. Organizations that may be helpful are The Howard Center in Burlington, the Vermont Parent Representation Center in St. Albans, and Vermont CARES.

The Regional Substance Abuse Prevention program through the Vermont Department of Health can offer more localized support to the task force. Contact Mary Pickener at [mary.pickener@state.vt.us](mailto:mary.pickener@state.vt.us) or 802-524-7918.

Peter Mallary, who leads Government Relations and Community Outreach at the Vermont Association for Mental Health and Addiction Recovery has also offered his support to the group. He can be contacted at [peter@itsclassified.com](mailto:peter@itsclassified.com) or 802-356-0284.

Koi Boynton is the grant writer at the Northwest Medical Center. She is currently working on a few grant opportunities that include Substance Abuse Components. Contact her at [koihope@gmail.com](mailto:koihope@gmail.com).

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## **✓ Improve Traffic, Walkability, and Parking Downtown**

### **POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:**

One way for the task force to proceed would be to complete a traffic study for the town core and the village area, identify areas for improvement and implement strategies to address each identified goal.

The team could, likewise, complete a parking study. Look into opportunities for shared parking. For example, are there churches that have parking lots that are available during the week that could be used as public parking? Identify how you can get more use out of the parking infrastructure you already have.

Complete walking and biking audits for the community. Engage community volunteers.

Improve signage and work with village officials and law enforcement to improve enforcement of traffic laws and speeding in the village. Look into what kinds of signs might be helpful for people who want to access the downtown. Are there more parking signs needed? Directional signs? Signs pointing people towards public restrooms? Look into the new idea of “do it yourself” wayfinding signs that encourage people to get out and explore. Find out more information at <https://walkyourcity.org>. Begin with signage and/or other visual cues that drivers will see and will slow down. Look at trees, fences, plantings, crosswalks, new line striping, crosswalk lights, etc. Differentiate crosswalks to make them more visible by adding texture, lighting, bump-outs, and in-street crosswalk signs.

Review the benefits available to Swanton through the Village Center designation and brainstorm how these benefits might be harnessed to improve traffic, walkability, and parking.

The group could appoint a member to the Lake Champlain Basin Program, Champlain Valley Natural Heritage Partnership stakeholders committee which meets to help direct grant opportunities and funding for establishing Swanton as a Gateway community to the Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge. This may include additional signage opportunities. Contact Dave Southwick at [director@frcvvt.com](mailto:director@frcvvt.com) to join the mailing list.

### **RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE TRAFFIC, WALKABILITY, AND PARKING TASK FORCE:**

UVM Center for Rural Studies has limited seed funding that could be used to facilitate access to UVM-based subject matter experts such as the transportation research center and VT Tourism data center. Contact Michael Moser, Research Project Specialist, at [mmoser@uvm.edu](mailto:mmoser@uvm.edu) or 802-656-0864.

Connect with Local Motion for both technical and financial advice. Contact Katelin Brewer-Colie, the Director of the Complete Streets Program at [katelin@localmotion.org](mailto:katelin@localmotion.org) or 802-861-2700 x104.

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission can provide invaluable support and assistance—especially in securing funding for, and then leading the planning aspects of the work. Contact Bethany Remmers, Assistant Director, at [bethany@nrpcvt.org](mailto:bethany@nrpcvt.org).

Newport has made its own wayfinding signs. Connect with their former Downtown Director (now a consultant), Trisha Sears, to learn more at [trish@kingdomcommons.com](mailto:trish@kingdomcommons.com).

Vermont Agency of Transportation Alternatives/Bicycle Pedestrian Program could be a resource for the group. Contact Jon Kaplan at [jon.kaplan@state.vt.us](mailto:jon.kaplan@state.vt.us).

AARP has an excellent walkability program with lots of free resources and advice on how to make your town more pedestrian friendly for seniors.

As a state-designated Village Center, Swanton can receive certain benefits as well as priority consideration for certain grants including transportation grants. Visit the Agency of Commerce and Community Development website for more information.

[http://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accd/files/Documents/strongcommunities/cpr/131125\\_Village\\_Center\\_benefits.pdf](http://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accd/files/Documents/strongcommunities/cpr/131125_Village_Center_benefits.pdf).

Richard Amore and Caitlin Corkins are the Department of Housing and Community Development staff who can answer questions about this. Their contact information is on the website above.

# VIII. The Town Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 185 Swanton residents and the VCRD Visiting Team on January 28 2015

*Although the prioritization work of the Community Visit Program requires a town to decide what is most important as it moves forward with Task Forces, nothing is lost in the process from the long list of concerns and ideas expressed in early community focus sessions. Many interesting and diverse thoughts are represented here, and are presented as a reminder of issues explored, and a possible foundation for future projects.*

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## Vibrant Downtown

Resource Team: Alex Aldrich, Megan Smith, Michelle Boomhower, Jon Muise (facilitator), Mike Moser, Paul Bruhn, Ruth Wallman, Kip Porter, Greta Brunswick (scribe), Eric Palmer

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- There are many tourist attractions.
- Many tourists pass through due to location and attractions.
- Many bikers pass through the community, especially Canadians.
- The river and natural environment are attractions.
- The Village is walkable and intimate.
- Liked old welcome signs that were hanging along First Street (aesthetic and welcoming).
- Variety of great small businesses: ice cream shop, library, new gym, hair salon, clothing, drug store.
- Real community feel.
- Great central green.
- Businesses give back to community.
- Businesses are supportive of each other.
- There is a Health Center that you can walk to.
- Everything you need as you get older is right here in the village.
- Services are great in village: Plowing and sanding of roads good and great electric service.
- Village power company is one of the best in the state - very seldom lose power and the rates very low.
- Community that loves to be here.
- A lot of protected land and recreation resources: Missisquoi wildlife refuge, Maquam wildlife refuge, Lake Champlain, River
- Improving sidewalk connections is being pursued (MVU and Bike Path at River Street).
- Good access to Lake and River outside the Village.
- Great Teen Center.
- Tyler Place brings people to town.

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### What are the Challenges?

#### Traffic:

- Amount of truck traffic that flows through village – affects walkability and bike-ability.
- 1200 trucks go through a day.
- Truck traffic is problematic for central green – noise makes it unenjoyable.
- Truck traffic makes street crossing dangerous/difficult, especially at post office.
- There have been many studies done, especially on truck traffic, but no action.
- Nothing ever came of State’s proposal to do a bypass .
- Traffic patterns in this village are ridiculous.
- Undefined corner at intersection of Route 78, 7, and Merchants Row is very problematic - What is a road, what is a path, what is a parking place?
- Commuter traffic makes it challenging to stop at local businesses.

#### Walkability/Connections:

- The High school is not walkable from village, no sidewalks.
- There is no good connection between central green and river.
- Walkability in the village is poor.
- Need better delineation of pedestrian amenities and traffic control/calming.

#### Bike Accessibility:

- Need bike trails. Not connected to Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail. There is a bike path downtown, but not good connection on River Street.
- Route 78 is not bike-able from Hog Island to village.

#### Lack of Tourist Information:

- Lack of good information center or rest stop to attract people off the interstate. First available stop is at Georgia.
- It is hard to staff local Chamber of Commerce office.

#### No good Restaurants:

- Why did really good restaurants leave? No good, upscale restaurants. Why do we not attract restaurants?

#### Public Transportation:

- Transit company does not does prove good coverage throughout town, especially to hog island.

#### Access to River:

- Need better river access in the village.

#### Youth:

- Not a lot of teens that go to the center.
- Teens don't get out to boat launch/beach much because it is not accessible. Bike path would be great. Perhaps other park amenities out there too.

#### Parking:

- Parking is challenge, not much in downtown.

#### Swanton Dam:

- Historic dam. It is the reason why we have quiet backwater, makes river enjoyable. State wants to take dam out. It would hurt usability of river.

## **Opportunities: What Should Be Done?**

### Traffic

- Study how you reroute truck traffic without rerouting retail traffic.
- We should look at alternative truck route, bypass.
- Have trucks stay on Route 2 through the islands to exit 17 and not go through village.
- There is a potential alternate truck route through Beebe Road and River Street, but this route is not taken.
- Study what the truck traffic consists of (some of is delivering wood chips nearby, not all pass through).
- Champlain NY is a good example of bypass. As a result downtown Champlain is ghost town. Study what has been done elsewhere.
- Alternative northern interstate route – Buffalo to Bangor, 89 to 9.
- Study local opportunities to address noise from truck traffic
- Canadians are completing interstate at Highgate crossing.
- May impact truck traffic. Include in study. Effect of Canada feed.
- Clearly delineate crosswalks - Use better material?
- Make sure study will result in action.
- Getting better response from Sue Minter at the Agency of Transportation – optimistic that things will happen because of this.
- Need better signage at Merchants Row/Route 78/Route 7 intersection.
- Make opportunity out of truck traffic.

### Bike Paths

- Bike paths or road improvements for bike safety out to hog island.
- Need cooperation with Montpelier for funding of big improvements – traffic, bike paths, lake cleanup.

### Parks/Recreation

- Improve park at marble mill, overlook, etc. Utilize that area better. An overlook for the dam is in the works.
- Clean up boat launch across from Marble Mill Park.

- The other side of the dam, upstream, a bridge that no longer takes vehicular traffic – link to trails and promote new trail development.
- Study how to connect Islands/Hog Island to village and up route 7 up to Highgate springs.
- St. Johnsbury to Swanton is being converted to rail trail (Lamoille Valley Rail Trail)– capitalize on it.
- Getting from dam to lake more accessible for boats – dredging?

### Parking

- Study parking in village area. Look for new municipal sites.
- Improve signage for existing parking areas

### Tourism

- Develop map of resources – on web or as an app.
- Local tourism/community promotion materials – history, culture, attractions

### Vibrant Village/Community

- Create night life – draws people to town.
- Promote arts/art galleries.
- Need to fill/redevelop vacant buildings. Need to invite proposals for redevelopment of these sites.
- Downtown beautification – formalize and expand what is already done.
- Business incentives – create certified local government. Can funnel federal money to fund projects.
- Tap into youth community service requirement for beautification.
- Street lighting up through Hog Island.
- Create attractive welcoming signs.

### Youth

- High school career shadow program.
- We could renovate the teen center to make it more attractive.
- Ask youth what they want before investing in what we think they want.
- Participatory Action Research – involve youth in determining what to ask and developing plans and research.

## **Reflections of the Community Visit Team**

- High school pedestrian accessibility is being worked on.
- Surprised that Walmart was not mentioned once – community does not perceive this as a challenge.
- There was no mention of Northern Forest Canoe Trail, which could be a great resource.
- In order to have action need to engage leadership. Voice to leadership, give direction.
- Great grass roots efforts already underway, such as beautification on bridge.

- Interest in bike trails is great!
- There are a lot of things on your list that the state is aware of but there are many significant challenges. There may be ways to move forward, but we also need to recognize limits. The State will be monitoring the new Canadian interstate.
- Improve connectivity and improve barriers to connectivity
- Lamoille Valley Rail Trail opportunity.
- No discussion on water quality and how improving it can help the town and the village.

- Think about the role of agriculture – it could contribute to local village economy.

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## Swanton History & Culture

Resource Team: Alex Aldrich (facilitator), Megan Smith, Michelle Boomhower, Jon Muise, Mike Moser, Paul Bruhn, Ruth Wallman (scribe), Kip Porter, Greta Brunswick, Eric Palmer

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- You can learn about school.
- We have good people.
- We have a great hospital.
- We have stores to get what you need.
- We have restaurants like Chinese Buffet, McDonalds.
- We have a lot of churches, and they work well together, inclusive.
- We have a great Historical Society.
- Activities for all ages are in the Park.
- Library has activities for kids.
- Village is a good size – easy to get to know people.
- Swanton is close to the river and close to Montreal.
- Swanton has reasonable prices and taxes.
- This area was settled hundreds of years ago – great history
- Native Americans and other settlers are here.
- Active teen center is also active in the community.
- Great talent – artistic people need more opportunities to be seen.
- No drama club in the school, but there is art, music.
- There is an old movie theater but it is not used.
- Theater in the school is not used in the summer, used for storage, yet it is air conditioned.
- School has new rec department and summer sports are offered for kids.
- Marble Mill Park and the river are there for recreation.
- Historical Society has history camp for kids.
- People come to Swanton from outside. The Chamber organizes festivals and a Car Show.
- Teen Center puts on an auction to raise funds to support activities.
- New Farmers Market with food and crafts, flowers.
- Swanton History unique to VT – T. Jefferson had his customs office here, Ethan Allen's ex-wife!
- Airport
- Franklin County Field Days

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### What are the Challenges?

- Merchants Row suffers from traffic that cuts across walking spaces, bad connection to parking area.
- Historical society has difficulty communicating activities with the community.
- School info goes out to parents and families, but not the rest of the community.
- Truck traffic cuts through town.
- Churches need to be recognized for what they are doing to promote community, food shelf, artistic events, history. Allow them to communicate through other venues, not just to the congregation. Churches could host music and other performances.
- Nowhere to eat, but not enough people to keep a restaurant busy in the off-season. Need jobs, so this would be a good solution.
- Need to kick start the economy.
- There are empty buildings that need to be used.
- People who commute are tired when they get home, so don't want to go out and do things.
- How do you let people know that they are empowered to get things done?
- Not everyone has access to the Internet. Need to use multiple forms of communication – local newspaper, radio, etc. County Courier, Messenger, Buyers Digest.
- Not too many businesses in Swanton that can provide sponsorship funding, and they all get asked all the time.

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### Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Churches have hosted dinners, Macbeth, many are historic buildings. Can they take advantage of being historic to get grants from historic preservation? Library doesn't host speakers or events. It does have a gym program in the basement.
- Need places to show indigenous arts and crafts – people would be interested. Show them with non-native arts in one program. Need to communicate the opportunities and use FPF. Use the sign up sheet to push out the info
- Wildlife Refuge has programs – do people know about them?
- Need a Taco Bell.
- Bring back the Swanton Festival with rides and such – needs a big group to volunteer to do the work. Contact the Chamber of Commerce to get involved. There needs to be change to bring it up to date.
- Create a museum full of games.
- Make sure people know about FPF and join.
- Help older people learn the new digital platforms like FPF

- Need a place to show art – ask restaurants. Need to find out who the artists are. Need someone(s) to organize getting the word out to people who want to participate.
- Need someplace to put signage.
- Work with the B. Free Press to see if content can go into Buyers Digest. Use school calendars. Put flyers up at stores
- Work with the Chamber to share sponsor opportunities for town events. Try to add more ad and networking opportunities.
- Use the whole town not just part of it. “Use All The Ice!”
- Match venues with the programs – do an asset inventory of spaces that might be available.
- Help people find opportunities for leadership.

## Tourism, Water & Wildlife

Resource Team: Alex Aldrich, Megan Smith (facilitator), Michelle Boomhower, Jon Muise, Mike Moser, Paul Bruhn, Ruth Wallman, Kip Porter, Greta Brunswick (scribe), Eric Palmer

### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Geography: Location on a river and on a lake, close to Canada.
- Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge – two accesses, birdfeeders, Vermont’s most important wetland, 7 miles of trail, visitor’s center, lots of programs, two boat accesses, important delta resource that has brought people here for thousands of years. Draws 70 to 80K people per year.
- Rich cultural history and Native American heritage.
- Northern Forest Canoe Trail
- Wildlife – deer, skunks, wildlife is abundant!
- An hour from Montreal which is a large population center.
- Prime spot for bikers.
- Top of Maquam shore – perfect for kiteboarding and wind surfing, particularly for beginners because it is so shallow...lots of beginners from Montreal .
- Lamoille Valley Rail Trail – right now just a VAST Trail, still waiting for more money to construct the terminus in Swanton.
- Renovated railroad station and bridge – old railroad bed still there and could be used for rec paths, etc.
- Airport – future expansion.
- Flat for biking.
- Hog Island
- 2 motels – 1 more for tourists near the elementary school.
- Champlain Country Club – but people think it’s in St. Albans
- Farms – lots of dairy.
- Bikers going to Champlain Islands.
- Tyler Place
- Lots of car traffic (potential customers). Location on Route 78 and Interstate 89.
- Sap Run during Maple Festival in St. Albans. 5K in September that’s very small. The Cooper Run at MVU.
- About an hour to Jay Peak. Hasn’t been a lot of connection to this side of the mountain.
- River and good local fishing.
- Ice skating and fishing.
- The Chamber is open so visitors can get information about Swanton.
- Swans in park.

### What are the Challenges?

- Lack of value added agriculture.
- Lack of hotels and restaurant.
- Maybe a need for more campgrounds.
- Moving refuge headquarters off of VT 78 was a bad move - less traffic, get less stopover traffic. Think boundary lines scares people away with signage, but challenge to get it known. Most visitors from out of state, not locals.
- No outfitter. No rentals for canoes or bikes. Emulate Hero’s Welcome.
- A lot of blue green algae in certain areas.
- No real engagement, or lack of personal connections with Tyler Place.
- No State Welcome Center.
- Need more information about the river. Accesses, safety issues.
- Improved accesses to the river near the bridge.
- Potential removal of the dam
- There is no marketing plan – even to local residents.
- No one really knows about community calendar.
- Getting the youth more involved. Invite Abenaki people to be more involved. Involve the community in creating more trails. Maybe working with Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

### Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Connecting Swanton to West Swanton via old railroad bed that goes from Maquam and to the refuge. There is one private landowner in between.
- Get more people to know about the Wildlife Refuge, promote opportunities for outdoor recreation there. Get bikers to stay longer than just using the restrooms. “Be able to weave the Refuge into the fabric of Swanton.” Maybe figure how to promote the Refuge as a resource and then draw folks to Swanton. Spread info on Facebook. Monthly program on local TV to let people know what’s going on at the Refuge. Create a reciprocal relationship between the Wildlife Refuge and Historical Society. Talk about putting the Refuge on the National Historical Register.
- Focus more on biking and bike tourism (need more bike racks, especially downtown). Create connection between the village and the Refuge. Bike lanes on the VT Route 78.
- Maybe something like the Boston Freedom Trail. Maybe additional way-finding signage (can put in during the summer and take out in the winter).
- Attract retail businesses to take advantage of river and lake accesses. Make the river more accessible. Could keep dam and do a fish ladder (or some way to get fish over the dam).
- Business recruitment. Try to get more lodging, campgrounds, etc.
- Determine ways to get more information out about local happenings and events. (use more Front Porch Forum and local calendar).
- Go towards making a new Welcome Center in Swanton. Islands are interested.

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### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Value of the refuge, Missisquoi Dam, Missisquoi Bay. (Emulate East Burke in terms of being a biking Mecca and connect to retail and lodging opportunities) .
- Lots of cultural and natural resources. But need commercial and retail infrastructure. A little bit of the chicken and the egg situation. Seems to be opportunities to keep the dam, but address the fishery issues and provide more access to the River.
- No coherence in terms to the stories about Swanton that you want to share. Need more communication between residents. Echo back your three or four stories with the world. Focus on those.
- Suggest going to North Hero next weekend to see their winter festival to see an example of a festival where they use what they have.
- Lack of tourist information. Or getting information to tourists. Need to create a visual cue. Need to try to get people downtown, maybe through way-finding signage. Focus on supporting your business and spend your dollars locally here in Swanton.
- Heard a lot about transport. Biking, moving throughout the community, keeping those in the community. The rail trail with LVRT and trying to connect to the Refuge.
- A lot of ingredients of success. Take advantage of the school. Bike traffic is coming here already without any real effort. Should try to create entrepreneurial opportunities here around biking, especially with the school to create ownership over the town. Work with small business development staff once a week. The theme should really be around the bicycle. Everyone aware of what they have in the community, but intra-community communication should be improved.

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### Community Recreation Facilities

Resource Team: John Tracy (facilitator), Kristen Prior, Harry Frank, Kate Jellema, Jill Remick, Mike Fife (scribe)

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#### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Swanton’s most important asset is the children.
- Both adults and children are interested in activities.
- Churches are and could be a great asset.
- The teen center.
- Public Beach on the Quam (underutilized).
- There is some dated property that is undeveloped that has potential – Goose Point park has a public boat launch w/ramp which is rarely used.
- Marble mill property – Basketball, tennis, swings, etc... all outdoor.
- Outside fields and gymnasiums at the schools (3).
- Memorial Auditorium where the youth teen center is.
- Rented out by town as a manufacturing facility (month by month lease since the 90s).
- Teen center which is rent free.
- There is a kitchen area, some rooms.
- Recreational fields (3 baseball, a soccer field, parking, community garden, 2 outdoor volleyball courts).
- Large amount of this land is wetlands.
- The community bike/rec trail going through the village and to railroad museum is a quiet calming area.
- Wildlife refuge

- Both schools have a gym, which is made available to various groups.
- There is space above the town clerk's office that was once used as a rec center for kids (now storage).
- Town Green
- MVU has 4 Soccer fields a football field and a field hockey field, 2 baseball, 3 softball, 1 gym at the high school. There is also a weight room and outdoor track as well.
- The Abenaki community center (just renovated) is doing work with community computer training.
- Franklin/Northwest Supervisory Union has a 21st century community learning center that provides many after school activities.
- The high school has a stage/auditorium.
- The Public Library
- There is a new local fitness center with classes for older and younger folks.
- The river is a good asset for fishing, kayaking, etc...
- The National Guard Armory used to have a full gymnasium in it.
- High Swans: A group that has some programs for seniors.
- The community takes pride in the high quality of fields and the work of the rec department which has a very high standard.

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### What are the Challenges?

- There are many teams but only one gym at the high school and teams meet from 3:15 to 10pm. Varsity games force JV teams into the elementary school gym. Elementary school kids get priority. This means that middle school kids and high school kids are practicing until 9 and 10 at night and then travel 30 minutes to get to school.
- There is a huge need for more space for the middle and high school teams especially during the winter.
- It's difficult to balance the need to keep kids occupied with the lack of winter space for activities.
- There is not a lot of space for organized adult rec – limited by the space issues especially in winter and inclement weather.
- High demand for classes and rec activities for adults.
- There are not a lot of options/space for senior activities.
- What are kids doing to stay out of trouble when they're not on a team?
- The teen center is a "cave."
- The teen center is a little out of the way and could use more visibility.
- Community dinners for older population are maxed out in terms of space.
- Parking is needed, for many and without it, events and even churches are hard to access.
- There is a need for multi-purpose year round facility.
- There is a need for space and options for youth that are interested in arts and other options that are not sports.
- The library hosts a good gymnastics program 3 days a week but it's limited by space as well.
- The program is filled to max every time it's offered.
- More open/public equipment is needed for the MVU fitness room.
- It would be helpful if a community center were multi-generational
- The cost at the local gym is prohibitive for many.
- The school is thinking about expanding the weight room but has no space.
- Swanton received a Healthy People Strong Communities Grant and got 50 mountain bikes for school and community use.
- The bikes were available several weekends during summer but it didn't take off.
- The program needs volunteers to function.
- There is no safe way for kids to walk from downtown to the high school.
- Bike path/sidewalks/trail all need expansion.
- Swanton has applied for a grant looking into fixing up the rail trail.
- Not a lot of bike path/space for cyclists, no clear cut places to ride your bike.
- Overall, space is a huge issue.
- Transportation to other towns is lacking, which makes it hard to use other facilities that are not in Swanton.
- When parents are working, kids who are further away need transportation.
- There is a need to get the word out about opportunities to connect with church and town programming.
- How do we communicate the need for spaces to folks without kids?
- Because of lack of space, events and programming moves around. Without a regular space and time, parents and community members can't get into a rhythm of attending.
- Elementary schools are not available through vacation so programs go on hold during those times. This is due to lack of staffing or maintenance work that happens over breaks
- Adult activity schedules must revolve around school team's practice/game times. This means that they aren't offered year round.
- The soccer field at the school has poor drainage and doesn't have grass on it.
- Swanton recreation fields used to have kids show up casually, but now they are only for organized sports.
- Volleyball and community garden weren't fully used although one man used all the extra community garden space to grow veggies for the local Food Shelf.
- Awareness is low and it's hard to get the word out about programs.

- Parents don't want to send kids out alone w/o parents present to public spaces due to safety.
- Kids can't be outside for recess due to weather in the winter, which means many kids lack physical activity.
- Money is a huge issue for the community – folks acknowledge needs and just don't have the money. Swanton needs corporate money/big dollars to build these facilities.
- Cost of living is rising faster than pay.
- Capital improvement passes quickly in city.
- General operating budget has trouble in passing.

### Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- If folks want to give money there is a space for a building in the wetland (already evaluated, and there's a possibility it could go there).
- Could the school contract with the local fitness center? This could help with safety and staffing. Teams could use the space.
- The local fitness center is currently working with MVU hockey team.
- High school just had "Blue and White" Day on mental health.
- Kids want basketball court and a place for them to get together and socialize out of school that is safe.
- How can we improve the teen center and make it brighter and more inviting?
- The teens need a facility that is not shared.
- A multi-generational community center could be a positive addition to the community.
- Space for music and computer/video work would be great.
- Highgate recreation has an ice rink and towns have tried to get together to refurbish and fix it.
- Highgate took that on and the rink is now used by both Swanton and Highgate.
- Could larger projects be done at MVU as an expansion of the high school rather than a rec center? This might go over better in terms of asking the town for funding.
- People would like community room, weight room and walking path.
- In order to keep people in the community we need spaces and programming that will help people feel connection to Swanton.
- There is a need for better communication about programming for folks who don't have a connection to the school.
- Swanton village has a community calendar but it doesn't have complete information.
- Front porch forum is an option.
- Without access to internet it's very hard to get information and that's a problem for many families.
- Could the town put flyers in bills?
  - Town employees get many of the ones that they send out back.
  - One participant said he enjoys them and likes getting information that way.
- A bond vote to build a building probably won't go through.
- Channel 15 can be a good resource the get the word out.
- The teen center is vacant during that day and might be used for community events.
- There are some unused spaces in churches for gathering and/or meetings.
- Cub scouts and boy scouts use the VFW and churches.
- Swanton Village space is highly booked.
- A swimming pool would be a good addition for winter activities for all generation.
- Safe routes to school grant is in the works right now and working very well.
- Swanton is waiting on a grant that will help with sidewalks to the school.

### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- It feels like there is a desire for a community hub where Swanton can meet and have a sense of a community.
- There are good assets that Swanton can build incrementally as a community, it does not all need to happen at once. Rail to trail, a great rec department, and support for school sports are all examples of this.
- What are options that don't require large amounts of space that could be short term wins even if they're not long term solutions to the space problems?
- Could the O'Brien Community Center in Winooski be used as a model both for funding and structure (video?). They reused existing space and have expanded repeatedly due to successes.
- Turn out is very high and the community is involved with community night out and this meeting. How does Swanton recreate this when communicating about other programs?
- Consistency is a HUGE help with this.
- National night out is a great example of success, all kinds of people come out. The police departments do a great job with this.
- There is hope and leverage in shared interests like, local sports, national night out, where else?

- There are many folks with interests in having more facilities. How can these people all get together and meet to share information about needs and options?
- Keene NH, set goal of being healthiest community in America. Can Swanton replicate something like this?
- Swanton is a “Fit and Healthy” community and getting grant money from the health department.
- This helped with rail trail and the community garden.
- The wildlife refuge has been talked about a fair bit, how is the relationship between it and the community?
- It offers activities that are well advertised and is linked closely with Swanton Schools.
- The issues with the refuge is that it is are 7 miles out from Swanton.
- How is the armory being used and how can it be used to help with facility needs. National Guard left in Burlington and it was made into a rec center.
- The National Guard is located between school and rec facility
- Can high schools do evening programs for the community?
- Sunday evening Zumba is happening now.
- If the memorial auditorium is only a month by month lease, is there a possibility that this could be moved into being a space for the community rather than leased to a manufacturer.
- They’re using the whole space and the facility needs hundreds of thousands of dollars of maintenance.

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## Education & Training

Resource Team: John Tracy, Kristen Prior, Harry Frank (facilitator), Kate Jellema, Jill Remick, Mike Fife (scribe)

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- The 5 year 21st Century Community Learning Center Program Grant provides funds for multiple school programs.
- MVU has a strong connection to the community.
- Communication with the community is high and many come regularly to provide support (Blue and White day today is an example of this).
- Children are our greatest asset.
- Abenaki have adult basic education classes that run 2 days a week free of charge. These happen at their facility on Grand Avenue.
- Northwest Tech Center at BFA St Albans has:
  - Day programs for 11 industries that provide certification and have dual enrollment.
  - Work based learning programs where high school students shadow/intern and experience potential careers.
  - Evening career development programs for adults and high school students.
  - VSAC and Dept of Labor grants for adults in need.
  - Partnership between Northwest Tech Center and MVU as well as BFA for MVU Juniors and Seniors (bused during school day).
- School system has great curriculum and teachers.
- Great arts programs.
- A wide range of afterhours programs for the community through the school.
- Murals focusing on Abenaki community and the Abenaki flag hanging at MVU important to making the Abenaki community feel welcome. Abenaki students make up 35% of the student population of MVU.
- This movement towards collaboration and inclusion has been somewhat recent.
- The Missisquoi Youth Program helps Abenaki and all youth with reading, cultural enrichment and tutoring and is open to all.
- The community is very collaborative and involved with the school.
- Cargill and other Ag partners place seniors in jobs.
- There is an active workforce investment board in Franklin county and Grand Isle, places many interns and work shadows.
- Close proximity to CCV and 45 minutes away from major metropolitan area (Montreal).
- Supportive parents.
- Franklin Grande Isle book mobile.
- The Career Program at MVU brings in community speakers and have an easy time getting folks to commit. They focus on 16 or so career clusters and almost never get turned down for job shadows.
- The school has high quality personal learning plans.
- There are organized efforts to help students come out and do positive things in the community (ie. Clean up activities).
- Proximity to the Natural Environment – MVU is close to the rail trail, Jay Peak, Missisquoi River, Wildlife refuge, and has a farm to school program.
- Student involvement in community as interns, job shadows, etc.
- Incredible educators and teachers at the schools.
- Facebook posts by the school are a great source of communication.
- The NCSS youth mental health class was available and useful for many students and adults in the community and was a success.

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### What are the Challenges?

- There is a lack of transportation for seniors and school children.
- What does exist is high cost.
- Transportation is a barrier to getting students into the community.
- There is not enough training or education for teachers and adults as to how special needs challenges effect kids. Special needs kids need more help especially autistic kids (1 in 80).
- It is difficult for teachers to talk about autism and special needs.
- There is a good core group of support but outside this core, there is training needed.
- How can the school get good news out about what's happening at MVU to people who don't have children in the school?
- This may be related to the fact that they are Union Schools which are sometimes seen as no one's school rather than everyone's.
- There is a disappearing middle class in the area which reduces the tax base.
- Lower income folks without computers don't get much information.
- There are large distances between community resources.
- Some students live far from schools and getting them centralized is difficult.
- There are multiple community identities which conflict with the idea of MVU as gathering point for all communities in the Union. This can be hard for both students and parents.
- There are high needs for space – only one theater, few gymnasiums etc... all different communities depend on the same spaces and so do the students.
- It is hard to ensure that all students have access to everything that students have in Chittenden County.
- It's harder for Swanton students to attend UVM/St. Mikes.
- There are more businesses in Chittenden County for schools to work with.
- Swanton's funding and tax base is smaller and creates anxiety.
- Museums and boat houses are lacking in Swanton.
- Keeping teachers here is difficult due to lower pay here.
- Staff move to Chittenden and Swanton ends up as a training ground.
- How do we better support those that do stay?
- Mental health and substance abuse issues in Franklin County lack resources and are a large problem for the community and thus the schools.
- Swanton needs more programs that support students with mental health/substance abuse issues.
- There is a lack of awareness about resources regarding mental health/substance abuse that are present in the community.
- How do you inform community about what appropriate mental health looks like? Many parents don't recognize mental health issues in kids.
- Addiction is compounding and can be seen as normal and then becomes generational.
- Many families have grandparents raising the children.
- Youth mental health is put on those that are working in the field rather than being an issue for the community as a whole to work through.
- It is difficult to give practical training for Agriculture in the traditional school settings which doesn't coincide with the school schedule.
- There is a need for more options at the community college in St. Albans. Students want the education but can't get to Winooski and thus miss out.
- Budgets are growing tighter and this community has an opportunity to be a leader in education. However, because there is no collective sense of the school belonging to ALL the communities that make up the Supervisory Union there is a cycle of underfunding budgets. This can lead to a vicious cycle of schools getting worse and thus continuing to lose funding.
- The communication process to the community really isn't there. It is more of "this is what we've done" that and invitation to join the process.

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### **Opportunities: What Should Be Done?**

- Swanton can use education as a driver by creating a sense of shared ownership of the school.
- The school can be used to drive economic development and thereby keep youth in the community which will increase the tax base and lower individual tax burdens.
- K-12 is going very well but Swanton can focus also on adult education that is not college based.
- Swanton can use tech centers to train people and develop multiple options for adults so that they can stay in town.
- NWTC is a great resource.
- Tech centers are not a dirty word but an opportunity for many.
- How do we create marketing and awareness of tech center programs that can increase income?
- Can we create a community service learning center?
- Promote dual enrollment programs between CCV and high school.
- There are current opportunities for this.
- Investigate more post high school training programs in Swanton.
- Talk to industries about what they need from graduates and adults.
- Education beyond high school needs to be available to all.
- MVU currently partners with Leader Evaporator in welding, training and prepping students to work there.

- Cargill is full supporter of the animal science program.
- Can Swanton create a position for coordinator of services and resources that can help communicate successes and organize the community? - This could help bring the community together.
- Can there be a school newspaper, written by students that goes out to the community. This would help as a activity for kids and also serve as a way to reach folks without computers.
- What can MVU do for taxpayers' via adult ed. that helps community members without students in the supervisory union to see what they get out of the school budget and reconnect with the school?
- Maybe if they see what's in it for them, they would vote more supportively on future school budgets.
- There have been some of these types of programs in the past.
- Make the school 24/7 – open it up as a place of belonging for all.
- The group wants dates and project planning with milestones so has to not feel overwhelmed.
- Don't want to leave this all up to the school and continues to engage the whole community.
- Major changes are coming in the next 3-5 years. We must be more proactive about change and let the community know beforehand and gather input.
- Increase positive communication and stories about the school and students to build energy. Currently there is a lot of focus on sports but very little on other positives like art and math.

### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Swanton is the hub of a larger area. Building on that rather than allowing it to divide the community will be very important moving forward.
- Communication to the community has been an issue for multiple areas and groups within the community. The school may be able to be a leader in improving communication.
- Like the idea of having the students help with communication through a school newspaper that goes out to the community.
- There is a lot of energy around Swanton being a hub.
- Is there an opportunity for a coordinator (not within MVU) that focuses on how MVU serves community members/partners?
- Transportation is a major problem throughout the county and it's good that it's being discussed.
- Is there an opportunity for MVU to give in kind space to CCV?
- How do you make a deliberate effort to engage those that are skeptical of the school budget and get them into the school so that they better appreciate MVU?
- There is a lot being done right and it is very impressive especially with regards to those students that are not going to college and using tech programs.

### Community Health & Substance Abuse

Resource Team: John Tracy, Kristen Prior, Harry Frank, Paul Costello (facilitator), Kate Jellema, Jill Remick, Jenna Whitson (scribe)

#### What are the Assets in this Area?

- We have local churches that offer support for the congregation and community. Pastors are a resource for substance abuse counseling and support.
- We made significant progress with anti-tobacco campaigns
- The teen center is a safe place to talk to an adult. The teen center cleaned out marble mills sandbox because they were seeing drug paraphernalia where kids play.
- There is a growing partnership between schools and mental health agencies to educate about risk factors and services, and to coordinate action.
- All police officers were trained in drug prevention through Northwest Counseling Services.
- There are great recreational programs and afterschool programs.
- We have a mentoring program that supports kids called Watershed mentoring which is a very effective prevention strategy and very meaningful for youth 527-5049.
- We have a strong EEE (essential early education) and Head Start. There are 190 students ages 3 and 4 in that programs a new 36 million dollar grant is offering expansion opportunities for families living in poverty and raising hours of care from 10 to 30 per week. The program is getting healthier because of focus on early education in the state.
- The 211 phone number is available for resources and support.

#### What are the Challenges?

- We are losing the war on drugs with our youth.

- The county has a real problem with opiates right now and sending someone down to Brattleboro for a week does not seem to be the solution. It takes a total life style change to come out of that. It is a long hard journey and relapse is part of it.
- A doctor that works at a Suboxone clinic was overwhelmed by the scale of the problem.
- Behavior and health of residents is undermined related to drug use. The community has seen an increase in crime.
- Another large problem is substance abuse due to veteran's treatment at the VA. When you go to the VA clinic, the very first thing they do is prescribe morphine which leads to addiction and related issues.
- This creates an issue for hiring in town. You can't hire people that don't pass the drug test.
- The town has tried to initiate the Hungry Hearts process but can't seem to get in invigorated. It lost momentum.
- Drug use builds a bad reputation for the town.
- Alcohol use and marijuana are also abused. Alcohol is still the most abused drug and nicotine as well. No one ever talks about the negative effects of marijuana which makes it hard to convince kids that it is bad when the governor is talking about legalizing. Used to have an edge but now "if it's so bad why is it legalizing?" Residents see marijuana as a gateway drug.
- The ability to parent is compromised due to abuse. What do we do with the families of addicts? Family and friends are affected.
- It is more expensive for a highschooler to get a 6-pack of beer than to get a week's worth of marijuana. Drug prices have gone down significantly so illegal trade doing better than legal trade.
- Peer pressure in the schools leads to addiction.
- Residents have seen drastic changes in Swanton. People have found needles in town. I is very scary and makes a big difference.
- Some residents see it on the street. The teen center sees youth that have been approached to use drugs or join a gang etc.
- There has been a significant increase in vandalism in town and theft/break ins which can lead to a violent situation if someone is home. This creates fear in the community.
- There are limited places where young kids can play other than schools to go and have fun because marble mill is used to do drugs and smoke.
- We are raising children who do not feel good about themselves which can lead to substance abuse.
- Most resources go to put out the fire and not to prevention.
- Swanton is not affluent. Many people that end up addicted to drugs and their resources are diminished, how will they pay for treatment?
- The state is not taking the issue seriously and the funding is not available.
- Schools recognize students at risk but are not trained to deal with prevention.
- Everyone is at risk for substance abuse.
- Community is addressing kids that are at risk but there are some more affluent kids that are being missed (have the means to pay for drugs, etc.)
- No one is held accountable for their actions.
- The school does not have the power to make sure that a kid referred to counseling goes through with the actions of counseling. They can only make sure they go.
- Local solutions have not worked. We need to make all the drugs legal at the state and federal level and this would solve the problem.

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### **Opportunities: What Should Be Done?**

- We need more support systems in the community.
- We need to focus on prevention.
- We need to do work in the school system to identify the kids who are at risk. Teachers and staff need to recognize that a kid is in trouble and get them help.
- The school is partnering with mental health. We need support of team.
- We can work to reduce the stigma around treatment of mental health and substance abuse through community education, training programs. The town could seek a grant to bring training to the community through northwest counseling.
- People working with youth can meet more often to coordinate efforts. There are great things going on but not communicating across different efforts. Monthly meeting of everyone doing this work in the community.
- We need a coordinator in the community around resources and efforts.
- We could do a neighborhood watch that would be a focal point to get everyone together.
- We need to involve people affected in decision making. We could have kids start developing some questions for a survey to ask community members what is needed.
- We could have more NAAA meetings in town and offer them at different times of day so people would be better able to attend.
- We need to develop things for adults to do that don't involve alcohol.
- We need more primary parent education and support through doctors' offices, Notch, young parents. It would be great if the medical profession started that work.
- We could develop a place in the community for families to have fun together. The teen center is great for teens, but we need activities for more than just teens. Maybe a community center for families.
- We need to amplify the resources that are available and communicate it out there and figure out how to catch people's attention. We could get a group together to compile resources and then develop a strategy to get the word out.
- We need to have activities that families can do together. For example, we could have family sport leagues that encourage health while providing activities. A committee or families willing

may be willing to lead. We have fields and could also have games for adults to play too if they didn't want to play sports.

- Town should come together to write a position statement and a vision for combatting drugs. Representatives from all organizations and institutions in town for a common vision and then we could post it everywhere! The village offices are willing to set up a meeting and are willing to get started working on this ASAP!
- We need to connect health, education, and economic development and focus our attention on pre-birth and expecting

parents. A concerted effort to work with parents through school would make a big difference.

- Mentoring in an extremely powerful intervention.
- It is critical to improve communication about what is out there. We could make a card for resources in the community to break down the blinders and enable people to take that first step. We could post information on Swanton village website and community calendar.
- If we develop committees we need to include youth.
- Peer to peer counseling is an effective prevention tool.

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## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There are a lot of good things happening and they are just not well communicated. That has been a theme across the sessions today. That is a good problem to have because it is something you can do something about.
- The experience of connecting with other people who share the struggle is a major resource. I am struck by the fact that you have that to give to each other. It is frightening to be there as a community. It not an easy step but I encourage you, recognizing the challenge you're facing. There are some great things that make me hopeful for the town. You may be an hour from where I live, but we are very connected.
- I am impressed with all of the good things I heard, forward thinking and things that can happen. It is a great idea to amplify what we already have. The faith community is underutilized. I want to work with faith communities in these counties. Mentoring is most cost effective prevention that we can do and it makes an incredible difference. Peer to peer connection is critical. Increasing AA and NAA meetings can be easily implemented. I am impressed by who showed up and by positive ideas.
- I am sympathetic to the folks who want to look at the high level systems change. I appreciate bringing up the issue of legalization and want to recognize bringing up health insurance as an issue. Universal access to health insurance would help but those are very high level systems things to change. I do want to note that this is not something Swanton doesn't have control over. You can join together as a group to advocate for systems change, that action step should be put into the mix. I am also touched by the very ground level conversations that came out tonight. The thing that stuck out for me is the importance of reducing stigma. That is something you can do right on the street is not judge people based on struggle they are having. I am seeing a very ground level kindness and deep need for systems change.
- This is a struggle that a lot of communities are having and the fact everyone is here talking about this is fantastic. I hear a call

for more coordination. There are a lot of amazing things happening here. We have all been impressed by multiple initiatives (teen center honored is great example). How can you coordinate, what is the mechanism to allow you to do that? Also, it is great that the group has recognized that the problem isn't just kids, but that we also need to pay attention to adults and families. How do we do more together as families? We need support for family members of addicts. When we think about what to do about this, that is part of this conversation. How do we support them? I encourage you to put that out there in the task force as a real issue to look at.

- Communication. There is a strong need to know what is going on and this is a theme across several groups that have met today. There is a strong desire to have more forums of communication in the community. This will certainly be an outcome of this process. This group is looking at a much more complex problem. Take a look at other communities that have done this organizing process ahead of you ex. Rutland really seized the steering wheel on this, Springfield is trying as well. I also had the feeling that there is not a clear view of how big the problem is and where the points of leverage are in the community. It is important to access and share some data on where interventions are possible, trouble spots.
- Great stuff is happening at different points of the compass but those aren't a part of the team and because of that it is diffuse. There is no easy answer and a this is a long term problem. There is enormous room for connecting and building communication. Until you're a spear point around it you end up doing things in your own pockets. It's about taking power on this. There is a lot of opportunity for direction and momentum.

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## The Future of Agricultural Opportunities

Resource Team: Kiersten Bourgeois, Catherine Dimitruk, Sarah Waring, Jenny Nelson, Tim Smith, Karen Freeman, Paul Costello (facilitator), Kate McCarthy, Jenna Whitson (scribe)

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## What are the Assets in this Area?

- We have one of the pockets of prime agricultural soils in the state.
- We have flat tillable land with good drainage
- Currently, we have about a dozen large dairy farms in town of Swanton. Farms also raise other crops such as soybeans and corn
- We have a small cheese company that is working on taking the factory to the next level. Currently the factory is running about 6,000 lbs. of milk through the plant but they want to grow. Milk for production is coming out of NY state through local cooperatives. The plant is making Italian cheeses (mozzarella, ricotta, parmesan, curd). The plant employs 13 and is looking to grow.
- We have some small diversified vegetable farms. Healthy roots has an evolving list of diversified farms in the county that could be broken out to look at the number within Swanton. The guess is about 10-12.
- We have some young farmers coming in to the county, trying to make it work.
- Franklin is one of the top maple counties in the state and the maple production is good. There are some small operations (like Hudack farm) but also some large maple producers in the area.
- We have an apple orchard in West Swanton.
- Question – is there infrastructure in town for processing grain?
- We have two mills in town – Poulin and Cargill. Each mill employs 20-40 people. The railroad goes through here – a lot of grain is going to Canada, NY, and Maine.
- We have some small farm stands.
- The local foods movement in Swanton does seem to be growing. There is some movement toward local food which is encouraging. Hudack Farm has been busy. They are making a living and keeping the farm going.
- Hudack farm is making and selling compost.
- Many people grow their own food in raised beds behind their house.
- We have competitive utility prices compared to other areas. We are close to the border and close to the highway.
- Healthy Roots is working on enhancing and improving infrastructure to help get product to market. For example - Cold storage facility to store potatoes. They are also working on consumer education and looking to embed local foods into community events and gatherings.
- We have a local FFA and 4-H.
- We have an agriculture program at the high school with a greenhouse. Students are even raising beef at MVU.
- The Town is starting to make their own compost by collecting leaves and brush and branches from residents. They are starting to make some nice compost now. When people come to drop their brush they can pick some up for free and they use it as well.
- The Recreation program has a community garden with about a dozen raised beds and the grade school has a garden.
- There is a small farmers market.
- We have a couple of organic dairy farms in the area.
- There is some interest in raw dairy availability.
- Ms. Hartman at MVU has a career exploration program for students.
- Question: Forest products are a part of agriculture, are there any mill or logging operations here in Swanton?
- There is a very small Cedar mill.
- MVU students are eligible to go to the tech center in St Albans. Currently, there are discussions about an advanced manufacturing class.
- NOFA is a huge resource for vegetable farms in the area. NRCS and the extension service in St Albans are available for certain aspects of business plans, land management, etc.
- There are a group of farmers that collaborate locally, they help each other out, they talk to each other about the future and how to be successful.
- We have a farm to school program at the elementary level.
- Hudack farm sells onions to “Farmers To You” in the winter. This program connects producers with the market in Boston. There is room for growth there.

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## What are the Challenges?

- Whey is a limiting factor for the cheese factory. It has to be handled somehow.
- It is a challenge to find people to hire for farm work. People don't want to milk cows anymore. Probably in 10-12 years dairy farms will go to robotic milking. The return on investment takes a while but there are other benefits that come along with it.
- The local foods movement is slower than in other parts of the state.
- It is challenging to compete with cheaper food in grocery stores.
- It is necessary to automate to be more efficient but this costs money.
- New water quality laws are challenging. Farms risk losing current use status or even being shut down. These changes upsetting because sometimes it seems your land is not your own and it makes you feel scrutinized.
- Farms are getting bigger. Everything has been cleared and opened right up. This is directly related to the struggle to produce food.
- Huge dairies are huge because that is the way it has to be to be successful. The price of food is too cheap compared to the price of production.
- Many farms have been consolidated into larger farms.

- There is no network of small producers or an opportunity for incubation of small farms and businesses.
- All of the growth is happening in St. Albans right now. Swanton is the last place to begin a business, it is happening in the state but will it ever get here? Is there any land left?
- We are always competing with New York.
- We do not have any vacant buildings. People make their mind up to locate in VT and they want it to happen quickly but there is no place to put them.
- Question: What do you foresee for the next generation of farmers?
- We do see our kids taking over the operation, but it can be hard to get involved with FFA and 4H due to it being hard to get away for a weekend as there are always chores to get done.
- We talked about a community garden at the church but liability insurance wouldn't allow it.
- Hudack Farm aggregates other products, honey, maple etc. but not a single thing comes from Swanton.
- We have nowhere to grow. There is no land left. Most of the land in refuge or land trust – how can Swanton grow?
- There is no group that is working on economic development (like the groups in Richford, Enosburg, and Georgia).
- Question: Are there opportunities to hire apprentices and interns interested in learning the trade?
- This is challenging because of the Department of Labor requirements to track how much each person is getting paid.
- When a farm goes out, another farmer already here buys it so there are no farmers coming in and starting new operations.

### Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We could build a community garden. People in town have been talking about it for a few years. There is currently no organized group that is working on it. We need to find a good location for the garden that is safe and public.
- We could look into grant opportunities for building apprenticeship/internship opportunities.

### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- People are busy doing what they're doing and doing more is hard, but there are also some ideas about working together, more conversations about helping people out (water quality, finding more markets, getting younger folks involved) there are opportunities to plug in small changes over time to help keep the land base.
- Interesting to think about Farm to School. There is a strong farm to school program but is the school sourcing from local farms? Are there opportunities to plug in with the local school or local businesses to expand local demand and build pride in the food produced in Swanton?
- Education is valuable. Are there ways to reach out and share information? Maybe farmer mixers, and/or a newsletter.
- It is interesting to see the conversation around agriculture shift from value of subdivision to how are we going to be profitable in agriculture. I am pleased to see that shift.
- We recently launched a program called Dairy Vision where we raised about 85K to help dairy farms with HR issues, management, etc. Four farms have gone through the program but no one from Swanton or Franklin County has participated.
- The Community Garden idea is a great vision for the town. Dairy farmers are notorious for helping each other in times of need but not having time to talk about the future. However, there is also a lot of pride to be had in anything that is value added. As a small group you could look to Swanton cheese as a way to put Swanton on the map and make a good local product. Value added in maple is another thing to consider. There are many products that can be made and there are funds at the federal and state level to help.
- The attitude needed in agriculture is when something is missing we need to see it as a place to change the picture for what ag looks like. There is also a lot of issues of scale, how to be profitable, how to have margins to keep folks on the land and manage labor issues, etc. There is an amazing education program at high school and a gap at labor force, but good TA in the form of extension, etc. There could be a way to pull people in different parts of this issue together. For example, a Teacher from MVU, folks interested in community gardens, and extension could begin to think about the missing pieces together. There may be ways to coordinate around addressing the gaps rather than focusing on one thing.
- It is important to start to brag about what you do have. In Vermont, farms and chefs are really sexy. Everyone one wants to be growing, eating, or making food but there is a missing part of the picture which is who is behind the wheel of the truck, the people that are invisible. We need to be able to be proud of the folks that are here and then think about the invisible folks as well.
- There may be an interesting connection between labor needs and the tech school. This seems like it could be a good opportunity.
- It is important to think about branding. What about having your own compost brand? You may be on to something to get out ahead of act 148 (Vermont's new solid waste law).
- For VT as a whole right now, this topic is so hot. The future of the working landscape is exciting in a lot of parts of the state. In the council on the future of Vermont, we found that the #1 ranked value of Vermonters is agriculture and its future. There

is tremendous pride in our producers. The question is, is there one thing that would be a seed of cooperation in town – maybe a seal that says “made in Swanton” or a new business that the community would get behind as a way to start a sense that Swanton is growing new businesses connecting to agriculture. In Hardwick when one person brags it’s for

everyone else too. Talking with pride about their place increases a sense of pride in everyone else in the community. Swanton has something to be proud of in its ag community and the land that has been nurtured but it has not been celebrated. Pride can be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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## Growth & Development

Resource Team: Kiersten Bourgeois, Catherine Dimitruk, Sarah Waring, Jenny Nelson, Tim Smith, Karen Freeman, Paul Costello (scribe), Kate McCarthy, Jenna Whitson (facilitator)

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- The new interstate. This gives us a lot of new opportunity to grow our business community. We need more industry to keep kids here and reduce property taxes.
- The Electric Department owned by the village. We have the lowest rates in the state. This is good for new businesses.
- Caring for streets and snow removal.
- The Chamber is great.
- We have family oriented events such as an annual car show, bands in park, Halloween on the green.
- The farmer’s market in the park is just starting this last year every Saturday with great success. There are not many vendors yet, but a big opportunity.
- Great sidewalks, we can walk anywhere.
- There is a new Gym in town.
- We have a good pharmacy.
- We have an excellent educational program, elementary and right up through.
- Good faculty and administration and good programs.
- Strong special education.
- Our biggest asset and liability is traffic. We need to balance trucking and tourism. Average truck traffic is 3 or 4% but ours is 16%.
- There is a lot of Canadian Traffic and tourism folks stopping in convenience stores.
- Some of the trucks are from our businesses.
- Southern growth district is a way to expand development and tax base.
- There is an active industrial park but only 5 acres left to develop.
- The Missisquoi river and lake access that could be improved and beautified.
- One of the largest assets is the community is networking.

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### What are the Challenges?

- We’re not a destination.
- We shouldn’t have farmers market at the same time as St. Albans. Everyone wants to be there instead.
- Big challenge that new businesses are not coming in.
- Pine st. in Burlington has small crafters and arts. We don’t have a place for artisans and have a place for people to come see their wares.
- We lose people from Montreal - they don’t stop. We have a chamber and an info center but we don’t have adequate resources to put someone there all the time. We need to have a point person to lead folks to local assets and capture their interest.
- We have a large grocery store that’s now empty.
- We don’t have a full time person working economic development...helping businesses, supporting the industrial park, attracting people.
- Hog Island is not well marked or made into an attraction.
- Trucks in the village are a challenge.
- Cleaning up the lake is a huge challenge for us, for tourists, for property values.
- There are not many jobs here. People are buying here but not working or spending money here. They are commuting out of town.
- We have lots of industrial space but not high paying jobs.
- We have very affordable rental housing, there’s a perception that there are problems with people just released from prison.
- Vermont can’t compete against New York with their program for tax free for businesses for 10 years.
- There is an income disparity between different parts of the town and village.
- We have traffic, but we don’t capitalize on it to capture dollars locally.
- The state seems to be perceived as unfriendly to businesses.
- Towns in New York are more ready to take lead to help businesses—Swanton isn’t organized to compete. It takes too much time to develop and settle in Swanton.
- St Albans town/village fight over water impedes development in the southern tier.
- Parking is a challenge...people with motor homes, etc. can’t stop in town. We have to find a lot of parking.

- There is a public lot next to the Chamber but it's full during the week...not much of a sign...
- Hard to find a place to park just to run into a place...a parking problem.
- Southern growth region doesn't have a plan or anyone on point to lead it forward.
- Paralyzed by St.Albans...lots of interest but water.
- We have to find a way to lower risk. Or maybe there is not a way to expand because of state rules on sprawl...but how do we control for risk.
- What happened to the 'space center' that was supposed to attract businesses...they weren't able to raise the money to get it started...it was to attract students from way beyond the town. A lot of money was raised.
- Village of Swanton doesn't have any modern retail space...buildings are old and in bad shape.

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### Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- A working group could take the initiative to help businesses cut through red tape to develop.
- A community point person for economic development to take the lead to work with new businesses. Nobody here is an expert in attracting or supporting growing businesses.
- Maybe we need to build our own water plant in southern Swanton to feed the growth there rather than wait and rely on St. Albans.
- We need to involve youth and also educate them about business development. MVU has an emerging program.
- Do something with the empty storefront. We are missing a nice place to have dinner.
- A place to hang out, to visit, like a community center.
- It would be good to have culinary education.
- Teen center is a big building with a lot of space, bowling alley, very dark...there could be a nice working kitchen...could be community dinners etc.
- Need a master plan for the southern growth area down by Tractor Supply. If a committee was formed it would need some folks beyond local volunteers, it would need outside experts.
- A committee with regional and local folks to develop a master plan for growth center development. Also have a town/village staff person to coordinate and lead this effort.
- We may need two working groups—one on southern growth development of boxes and business and other one on downtown—for bike tourism, for more arts, like an arts center or arts/artisan store.
- One economic development group that takes on these issues...including Hog Island and bicycling with sub-committees.
- Marble Mill could be redeveloped.
- It would be great to have a place to rent a canoe or bikes or other outdoor goods.
- St. Albans did it and it's really working. We could too. We might need some outside help. They got transportation grants and VHCBC and historic tax credits and TIF—tax increment finance district.
- We have a small beach but some people don't know about it. It is not clean because of algae - we should fix it up with a park.
- We are beginning a rewrite of town plan. We could use ideas of working groups on downtown and southern growth district could.
- Action plan to build a welcome center here in Swanton for visitors off the freeway.
- We have to support businesses in downtown because we really want these places. Restaurant has to have customers and we all need to support each other to succeed.
- Get a hired person in Chamber office. We need someone in there to channel visitors.
- Get chamber have phone number that has an active line, even when no one is in the shop.

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### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There are many existing assets and challenges with parking, traffic, and some ideas for specific action. Some things can be done with volunteers, but some things need experts. Low hanging fruit can be community action steps. Some of these can just be done by citizens, and others we need to line up to get things done.
- History of the 'space center' and what happened to the restaurant shows that there needs to be public knowledge and sharing of the ideas of committees. The more we are informed together the more we will make progress.
- Not everyone seems to be on the same page, so more communication is great. Southern growth and water supply issue—is there capacity that could be extended rather than a new and separate development?
- Funds allocated for the space center should be accounted for.
- I love the green and the town and having a place where people can meet a focal place that everyone supports.
- Be symbiotic with St. Albans, not duplicate. Empower a new economic strategy to bring in new young people.
- People need a place to meet. People need to connect with neighbors.
- Great boards in town—pro business, pro community.
- You have 3 great assets—sidewalks, roads and river...it is welcoming and could be developed.

- Ag is underutilized and is changing in VT.
- Communication can be powerful. You have lots of assets here. Tell what you have and sell it.
- Gathering spaces. You could use empty grocery as a gathering place. Something like a shared work spaces for young people, and other businesses. You can save on the commute and attract entrepreneurs—a hot spot.

- Think about what you want out of your downtown. Don't just think about what you want for tourists but mostly for you.
- Think about what you can get, how do the developments benefit or hurt the environment, job creation - you can plan the way you want it.

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## Jobs & Economic Opportunity

Resource Team: Kiersten Bourgeois, Catherine Dimitruk, Sarah Waring (facilitator), Jenny Nelson, Tim Smith, Karen Freeman, Kate McCarthy, Margaret Gibson McCoy (scribe)

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Land is an asset and we have farmers, so there is an opportunity for processing of agricultural goods; taking advantage of the local food movement.
- Our infrastructure: we have the cheapest electricity in VT, the interstate runs through, the airport is about to expand, traffic runs through town, and we have our own water purification and distribution system that is in the process of being updated.
- Also, VT Gas has a main transmission line through town – the downtown is already hooked to their feeder lines. An Israeli corporation bought some land about a year ago and is planning to open a natural compressed gas business.
- We have internet; fiber is in the area goes through Swanton Village to Highgate.
- Accessibility to legislators and community leaders.
- VT Precision Tools and Leader Evaporator are 2 successful big businesses in town.
- Cargill is still in town, and the low cost of power is really appealing to them. Town and Village leaders worked hard to keep them in Swanton. At that time, we were able to offer them tax stabilization at the local level, but can't do that now.
- The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge in Swanton offers lots of trails, fishing, duck hunting, environmental education. Lots of students visit. Would like to see it more vibrant.
- Our power company is a municipal power company with trustees that want to see the area succeed.
- We have affordable housing here and OK property taxes (one of the lower in the county).
- Lake Champlain is an asset, it brings a lot of people in to town.
- It's a relatively safe community.
- There is a proliferation of law enforcement; border patrol backs up local police.
- Career development center offers all kinds of classes from culinary, computer training, welding, blueprint reading, and licensed nursing. It's located in St Albans but services Franklin County. Dept of Labor helps fund tuition of courses.
- Lots of professional support for businesses that come to the area through the Development Corps and the Chamber of Commerce.
- Chamber of Commerce has become recognized within the community now as a great asset.
- Fire department is ISO class 5 certified which helps with property insurance rates throughout the community.
- Swanton has a lot of sense of community: fire dept, electric dept, street dept; a lot of those people live in town and it binds us together.
- We have the Franklin Grand Isle job fair every year in St. Albans. This year it's on March 26th. We take about 80-100 kids from the tech center, and about 700 students all together attend in the a.m. Then it's open to the public in the afternoon. About 600-700 people attend.

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### What are the Challenges?

- Paperwork; Act 250 requirements make it hard for new businesses to set up here. They don't want to pay the fees and go through the red tape.
- Lots of kids going through the school could be a workforce, but currently kids have to leave to get jobs. A lot of young people with potential have to leave.
- Career tech ed. center struggles with perception. Some people (parents) still think of it as vocational education, but it has changed. The perceptions need to change; the parents need to know that kids get life skills, earn credit, and get training for real jobs.
- Swanton is a large area and there is a lot of opportunity for large business to come. We need good paying jobs and being close to the interstate is attractive.
- Would like to see the type of industry in town that makes something that gets distributed rather than just offer services. More companies like Precision Tools.
- Need to focus on what the Tech Center needs to have in here, and get that kind of industry to come.

- Don't have a point person in the community that can take it from A-Z. When a business comes in, there isn't a clear path. They may go to the town, the village, the legislative body.
- We don't advertise ourselves as an attractive place to do business.
- Would like to see us attract a big tech company. Need better broadband and need to have the population to supply the need of that company. We have a blank slate in this area, if we have to go through all the processes, we have to find someone with the funding to go through it.
- Would be nice to have flexibility with being able to offer tax stabilization as an incentive for businesses. Working people pay taxes!
- Perception of those outside Swanton isn't as high as those that live here.
- Last year, there was a significant change made to Act 250. "Criteria 9L" that came out of Natural Resources and Energy Committee has turned into a disaster for business development, it's affected towns like Vergennes and it's affecting us. Something the size of a car dealer can't locate in the downtown. We're trying to get it repealed or watered down.
- From Village and Town Government standpoint, you try your best. Have an informational meeting on a multi-million vote, nobody comes to the meeting. We post meeting notices, but people don't come.

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### Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Hire an economic development coordinator and marketing. Someone with contacts in local, regional, state and federal levels. The person could support businesses that want to come to Swanton and also help those that are already here scale up. Need to fund that position. Job description could be written quickly.
- Improve public transportation; work with coordinator of Green Mountain Transit to improve the route. Look at the CIDR bus system in Grand Isle for seniors as a model because it's very localized.
- There isn't any public transportation to Burlington. Look at Carshare Vermont, or organized car-pooling. Swanton isn't on Carshare's radar, but it's a possibility.
- We have a park & ride but people don't know where it is.
- Town has received a grant to rewrite the Town Plan. Meetings are open to the public so people should attend and offer input.
- If Town Plan includes priorities, it does help with funding and access to pots of money.
- Communication in the town and village could be improved. Sometimes people don't know what's going on. Finding a way to get people active and coming to the meetings might produce a better product. Front Porch Forum (FPF) is a great resource for communication to everyone in town.
- Our Chamber could brag more about our resources; the great electric rates, etc. We could get some of those messages out through FPF, and find other ways to get the message out. Need to blast out the word. Want to bring people from Chittenden County in; people from Canada come.
- We have a great wildlife center, it could really be made into a place that draws people here.
- Where do people find out about jobs here? Some go through temp agencies but mostly through word of mouth. Some of the agencies use the job boards like VTjobs but it tends to be the larger businesses. The Chamber website has the capability to do job posts but it's not currently turned on – it could be turned on so that it can be used by local businesses.
- Building off the Franklin Grand Isle job fair idea, we could do a job expo just for this region. But the problems is that we don't have enough employers here to make it a big enough event, or have enough openings. Is there some way to duplicate a smaller version here? A career day for students?
- Because of our small size, we are sometimes limited by the density of resources and the people we have available to us. For it to be successful you have to have enough people; we're careful about what we do.
- Let's advertise our quality of life, affordable housing, and other things good about being here. Oftentimes, businesses are looking for places their employees want to be. Find a way to brand the town.
- Get the word out about all the positive assets "don't sit on your assets." Work to get the word out about the benefits of Swanton: a booth at the home recreation center where we could talk about all the benefits and opportunity in Swanton. Would be relatively inexpensive. About 7-8000 people go through there in the weekend. Get a lot of contacts.
- We have value-added ag opportunities. Dairy is king here, but in order for a business to grow, could break out into another area like the Venture Center. Look at bringing in a volume freezing facility to use the harvest out of local gardens, and extend local food offerings beyond just the growing season to local schools. A food hub could utilize farm land. The Center for an Ag Economy is working on identifying the best equipment for a new technology called "flash freezing." Freezer space is a sustainable enterprise. IQF hooks up to nitrogen or ammonia tanks at the industrial scale.
- Look at abandoned areas as an opportunity for redevelopment.
- Connect the workforce with the schools; resumé, job shadowing, career center, interviews. Our high schools spend too much time convincing kids they need to go to college rather than helping them find the right career for them and pointing them to what's available in the area. Should be spending resources on kids and getting them to learn through

the career center what's out there, rather than just spending resources to convince them to go to college.

- College grads accrue enormous debt, but some of them could find a job right through the tech center. Would also be good to connect them with outside businesses. Begin a program to pull new jobs in.
- Have to start with the kids, they are our future. Parents aren't educating kids about responsible spending. Need to educate the kids about that. Invite local business people into the classroom so kids know what's out there.
- Have a lot of small businesses here that need some help getting started or growing. Maybe start our own SBDC to help work with businesses, help them write grants, etc. St Albans has an SBDC person one day a week. If there's a way to connect existing business owners as advisors, or have a kind of

workshop setup, it wouldn't have to be as expensive as an SBDC setup.

- Have been working on a shared space model for a few months.
- Form a committee to get someone that can create a plan for the point person, write a grant to help fund that point person, someone has to decide how we're going to do that.
- Improve park and rides and public transportation.
- Getting more involvement with our local government. More people to serve on commissions, show up for public meetings. Currently we post meeting notices on town website, in village office, town office and post office. Would be great to post on PPF. Village has a facebook page, it's a good way to get info out there.

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### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The list of assets is impressive. The median size is 1,222 people in towns in VT. With the town plan coming up and economic development conversations likely to continue, ponder the role of youth. Think about what you're trying to achieve, a trend in rural communities is that kids leave but come back in their 30s. When think of ED, think about what things should be local, and what are more suitable to be done at a regional level. Some things may be more successful at a different scale and regionally. Should it be a little of both.
- List of assets is remarkable. Should spread the word about them. With a small investment with a communication vehicle it could help. Goodwill and energy, openness, great sense of community here, won't take a lot. Crow at top of lungs.
- Blow your own horn. Don't forget root cellars for value-added. USDA RD has funding. SCORE (service corps of retired executives) are retired business people that can help businesses with plans, etc. In terms of career days, they are really great to get business people right to the school.
- Swanton Enhancement project has been successful at getting people to turn out. Need to learn from them what worked as we approach the town plan update. Hope we can align some of the work that comes out of this with that project.
- A great turnout here. Great pride in Swanton, but people want to take it to the next level. Get the word out about Swanton. Always had great dealings with Selectboard and trustees here, always pro-business. Great examples of ED is Vermont Precision Tools, started with 2 guys 35 years ago. 10 years ago up to 113, now at 200. Looking to add another 20. The economy in Franklin County is pretty good. There are a lot of worse places off than.
- The more specific you can get in terms of what you want, the more success you can have. Define what you want and answer those questions, the more funding, leadership, non-profit and agency support can help make it happen.



## VIII. Swanton Community Visit Participants

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*Visiting team members gathered for a briefing luncheon before Community Visit Day forums got underway.*



*That's a wrap!!*