

TOWN OF COVENTRY

MUNICIPAL PLAN

ADOPTED BY THE
TOWN OF COVENTRY
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

ON JULY 8, 2013

This copy of the Coventry Town Plan
was adopted by the Coventry Selectboard.

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TOWN OF COVENTRY VERMONT
MUNICIPAL PLAN

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1. MUNICIPAL PLAN INTRODUCTION

A. Our Changing Times

In the year of 1860 Coventry had reached what was to become known as its “hay days.” History shows us that the town hit its second highest population level, 914 residents, during the 1860s and 70s. Coventry residents maintained 135 farms during this time period. The railroad brought supplies and passengers into Coventry Station and picked up the Town's products; cheese, butter, and lumber to be distributed around Canada and New England. Coventry maintained ten schools, two Post Offices, two churches, at least two sawmills, a hotel, and a host of small shops. The Town's population began to decline in 1880. For the next 80 years the population continued to fall, until it reached 458 in 1960. After that time, new homes then began to spring up. Families moved into town and the school's student population began to increase. This new growth saw Coventry reach its highest population ever in the year 2000 with over 1,000 persons.

There had been many changes over the past 80 years leading up to this new growth period – railroad, trucking, and then automobile transport became commonplace. We had become a mobile society. Local farming also experienced dramatic changes. By 1976 the number of farms in the Town had decreased from 135 in 1860, to 32. In addition, the farm acreage had dropped from a high of 18,610 in 1880, to 7,282 by 1976. Since 1976 these numbers have decreased even more. As of June of 2012 there were only 13 farms. The majority of these farms now sell milk to nearby cooperatives. In 1980, only 19% of the Town's labor force was working within Coventry's borders, and as of 2000, this percentage has remained at 18%. In the years between 1960 and 2000, the town population increased 121% up to 1,014 persons. However, the 2009 population estimate reveals a decline to 984 persons.

Since a town plan was adopted in 2003 and re-adopted in 2009, much has happened in Coventry that is worth mentioning. In the early 2000's the Planning Commission conducted a survey to test the idea of adopting a zoning bylaw, but this was rejected by a majority of Coventry voters. Improvements at the Newport State Airport have happened and more are planned. These include access road improvements, a new terminal building, hangars, and lengthening of one of the two runways (expected to occur in 2013-2014). The Coventry Town Foundation, created in 2002, works to enrich the lives of Coventry's residents and has sponsored a flu clinic, lead testing of children's toys, provided vouchers for free vegetable seeds, and scholarships to 22 students. Today, the Town now looking forward to the establishment of a Foreign Trade Zone to improve the local and regional business climate.

The Coventry Planning Commission has addressed many issues over time and hopes to keep the community moving forward by refining this municipal plan.

B. Coventry's Municipal Plan

This municipal plan will provide the reader with a textbook view of the Town's natural resources, its housing and population trends, its heritage, and the role that the town plays in the surrounding region – all elements that the Town must consider to comply with Vermont planning

statutes. The plan also includes sections on the Town's economic structure: education; maintaining local utilities and facilities; and providing the citizenry with the other services needed by the town. This information is used as the basis for the implementation chapter of this plan.

2. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

A. Plan Development Objectives

The Planning Commission's first objective in developing and maintaining a Municipal Plan is to provide the reader with a collection of basic information about Coventry. The information for the Plan is collected from town records; state and federal agencies; neighboring towns, and from the Town's residents. This information is presented in a format consistent with required elements under the Vermont Planning Statutes (Title 24, Chapter 117). The information that has been collected will provide the basic resource data for all future town-planning programs.

The second objective in the development of this Plan is to depict trends that had taken place over the years that could have a direct impact on the Town's future, including population trends; housing trends; economic trends; student enrollment; and land use development trends.

The third objective is to review the plan's information, analyze the results, and draw conclusions on how the current trends may affect Coventry's future.

This leads to a final objective of the Plan, which is to identify areas of community concern, and propose a method(s) of dealing with these concerns by the use of organized planning procedures and policies. The last chapter of this Plan outlines procedures that are being recommended to achieve this last objective.

B. Municipal Plan Goals

Planning a Town's future is not a new concept. Coventry's Selectmen, Town Clerk, Treasurer, and other town officials have been planning for the Town's future since March 31, 1803. If there is a new concept, it is a concept of collecting and recording information and policies that will guide the Town's management during the next five years. Many of the goals used by the Town's founders are still important to today's residents and will be used and studied within this Plan. Town Goals that will form the structure of this Plan are:

1. TO PROMOTE THE TOWN'S RURAL CHARACTER:

- This plan encourages that future development occur in the areas of town where development has already taken place. These areas would include those areas that are along and west of Route 5 with more limited development to the east of Route 5. A *Future Land Use* map identifies these areas.
- To work with neighboring communities in structuring the region's future. *[Priority: moderate]*
- To promote a residential atmosphere in the village by locating an industrial/commercial zone outside of the village. *[Priority: moderate]*

- To promote, protect the historic character of the Village of Coventry by maintaining existing historic structures and encouraging within the Village development that will harmonize with those existing structures. ***[Priority: high]***
- To support the continuation of farming in the town including the creation of a community garden where residents can grow their own food. ***[Priority: high]***
- To support the development of value-added agricultural enterprise(s) within the community. ***[Priority: high]***

2. TO DEVELOP PROGRAMS TO PROMOTE RESIDENT'S HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE:

- To continue to enhance the quality of education offered to both the Town's youth and adults. The Coventry Town Foundation provides scholarships to college students. The Town will pay 50% of a person's health club membership. ***[Priority: high]*** –
- To provide a town highway system and traffic patterns that are both safe and well maintained. ***[Priority: high]***
- To consider the adoption of a noise ordinance to protect the residents from excessive noise, including traffic noise, during certain hours of the day. ***[Priority: moderate]***
- To maintain a high quality environment by reducing the visual, water, and air pollution. ***[Priority: moderate]***
- To consider the creation of a municipal community wastewater system to serve the village area of town. ***[Priority: low]***
- To enhance the Town's recreational opportunities and promote responsible and appropriate use of all off-road vehicles to include snow machines, dirt bikes, ATV's, etc. ***[Priority: low]***
- Research and determine ways that the Town of Coventry can operate in a manner that is environmentally sound. ***[Priority: moderate]***
- Promote the development of safe and affordable child care centers in the community. ***[Priority: moderate]***
- To mitigate flood hazards within the community to protect people and property ***(Priority: high)***.
- To support art, cultural, and historic preservation efforts within the community. ***(Priority: high)***

3. TO INSURE THE TOWNS' ECONOMIC WELL BEING:

- To keep the Town's tax rate within the limits of its residents' ability to pay. ***[Priority: moderate]***
- To encourage non-polluting industries and small businesses to locate in the community. ***[Priority: moderate]***
- To support the continued growth of the community, within the limitations of the Town's natural resources. ***[Priority: low]***
- To support the expansion and development of the Newport State Airport in a manner that will create both commercial and industrial development that will benefit the Town of Coventry and the surrounding area. ***[Priority: moderate]***
- To support the establishment of a Foreign Trade Zone area for the Northeast Kingdom region to create new opportunities for business growth and job creation. ***[Priority: high]***

- To support the designation of the Newport State Airport as a Magnet Site within the Foreign Trade Zone Service Area so that businesses can be recruited / attracted to the area. [*Priority: high*]
- To generally support the development and deployment of broadband and cellular services to the businesses and residents of the Town of Coventry. [*Priority: high*]
- Proper enforcement of the Town's Flood Hazard Area Regulations is important to maintain the Town's eligibility in the National Flood Insurance Program. [*Priority: high*]

The objectives and goals of this plan are meant to provide the reader with a fairly comprehensive review and assessment of the Town's social, economic and environmental characteristics, which have had an impact on Coventry's development. The information, contained in this plan, will be used by all branches of local government, as a guide for future planning.

This Plan also provides Coventry's residents and landowners with a new way to contribute to, and be a part of, planning for the Town's future. The public is always invited to submit constructive comments on this plan by attending planning meetings, public hearings, and in writing.

The remainder of this plan is devoted presenting information that can be used in guiding Coventry's future. Problems and opportunities are identified in the plan along with recommendations for addressing problems or capitalizing on opportunities. Actions taken under this portion of the plan will be directed towards guiding the next five years of the Town's operation. This plan has been developed by the people of Coventry for the people of Coventry.

3. COVENTRY HISTORY AND PROFILE

A. Profile

According to the sign in Martha's Coventry Restaurant, Coventry is located "360 miles from New York City; 209 miles from Boston, Massachusetts; 200 miles from Albany, New York; 63 miles from Montreal, Canada; and 5 miles from Newport, Vermont". Some say you can't get here from there!

Coventry is located in northern Vermont, less than 20 miles from the Canadian border. It is bordered to the east by Derby and Brownington, to the north and west by Newport and Newport City, and to the south by Irasburg. Coventry's village area is located just off State Route 5, in the southern portion of the town.

The Village is the home of the Town's Post Office; Library; Town Office; Community Center; two of its four Churches; its Memorial Common; one restaurant; a trucking company; and several of the Town's oldest homes. The school, which was once located in the Village next to the Community Center, is now located across Route 5 from the south end of the Village. The village is served by a water system that is owned and maintained by the Coventry Fire District. The remainder of the homes, farms, and businesses are scattered over the Town's 17,280 acres. There are also important examples of historic and archeological resources within the community, such as the grist mill foundation.

Coventry's rolling hills still provide rich soils, which currently support the Town's 13 farms. These farms use and maintain approximately 3,538 acres for their crop and pasturelands.

The Town's woodlands cover 1,475 acres. Logging operations continue to provide a number of the Town's residents with employment. Some of the wood, harvested from these lands, is milled at the sawmill that is located in Coventry.

Coventry's population has grown dramatically since 1960, increasing from 458 in 1960 to 806 in 1990 to 1,086 persons in 2010. The 237% growth in population from 1960 to the present seems to stem from a combination of increase job opportunities in neighboring communities and the relatively low taxes and affordable cost of living in Coventry and school choice. Many new homes were built in Coventry to house the Town's new residents. In 1960 there were 134 housing units in town. The latest 2010 Census figures tell us that there are 431 houses in Coventry, with 357 of these being owner-occupied.

Coventry provides its children with their first nine years of education by supporting a relatively new K-8 school building built in 1995. Enrollment at the school for the 2009-2010 school year was 89 students. Coventry's students in grades 9-12 are tuitioned to the high school of their choice. While most of the grade 9-12 students attend either Lake Region Union High School or North Country Union High School, Coventry has tuitioned students to other schools as well, including the St. Johnsbury Academy and a high school in Stanstead, Quebec. Students have also been tuitioned to high schools in areas as far away as Italy and Vancouver, BC! The Town's total student population, grades K-12, went from 143 students in 1980, to 199 students in 2001-2, but dropped to 149 students in the 2009-2010 school year.

Waste U.S.A., a privately owned landfill site, which has been developed on a tract of land bordering Town Route 2, handles solid waste disposal for Town, the region and for an estimated 60 percent of Vermont.

The town is served by 16.4 miles of State Highways and 36 miles of Town Highways.⁷ Interstate Highway 91 runs the length of the Town's eastern border but does not offer the Town an interchange for access.

A division of Pike Industries; the Newport State Airport; Calkins sand and gravel works, Carroll Concrete, and Gray's Paving are all located in Coventry. Coventry is also the home of a trucking company; a bed and breakfast, and several other smaller home occupations including Fred Webster's Farm Museum. The Town's last grocery store closed its doors in 1977. Most of the goods and services that are required by the Town's residents are available in Newport, Orleans, or Derby.

The South Bay Wildlife Management Area, a tract of land bordering the South Bay of Lake Memphremagog is controlled by the State of Vermont. An additional tract of land that parallels the shores of the Black River has been designated as a wetland district and is also under the protection of the state. Both of these areas may be entered for limited recreational uses.

With the exception of a flood hazard area regulations so that the Town may participate in the National Flood Insurance Program, Coventry is a non-regulated town. It has no zoning or subdivision regulations. Commercial and residential development is limited only by Federal and State regulations such as the State's Act 250. Proper enforcement of the Town's Flood Hazard Area Regulations is important to maintain the Town's eligibility in the National Flood Insurance Program.

In the past, Coventry's population has been dominated by young residents; however, the Town's population is aging. In 1980, Coventry's median age was 24.9, and in 2010 this figure is 43.1 years. The increase in median age, however, is typical for Orleans County, Vermont, and the New England region.

Today, Coventry can be categorized as a rural residential community. Its immediate future seems to be tied to the stability of its farming community and natural resource based industries, as well as the growth of the commercial and industrial bases of its surrounding communities. As long as the town continues to offer comparatively low property taxes; a well-balanced educational program with school choice; limited development regulations; and a beautiful rural setting, it will likely continue attracting new residential growth.

Some of the chapters in this plan will provide the reader with an insight into how these current trends could affect the character and stability of the town in the future. The last chapter of this plan is devoted to presenting a planning program that will aid the community in meeting the challenges of the future.

B. Coventry History

The town of Coventry was chartered on November 4, 1780 and remained uninhabited, and virtually inaccessible, until 1800. In March of 1800, Samuel Cobb and his son Tisdale, along with their families, became Coventry's first settlers.

In 1801 a daughter was born to Tisdale Cobb, marking Coventry's first birth. Several families began joining the settlement, and by 1803 Coventry's adult male population numbered sixteen. It was throughout the year of 1803 that Coventry organized as a town. The first Freeman's meeting was held on September 6, 1803. The first school was organized, with classes being taught in Samuel Cobb's corn barn. Small business also began to operate in 1803. Coventry had two sawmills, a gristmill, and a blacksmith shop.

There was no postal service in Coventry until 1821. The post office was established and Coventry's 300 residents received a weekly mail delivery. Shortly after this time, the center of Coventry Village began to form. Homes were erected, one serving as a boarding house, another as a blacksmith shop. A store and an ashery (a place where potash is produced) soon followed. By 1923, Coventry's students required a larger building in which to hold classes. The new school was built solely on contributions of materials and labor by the townspeople. Coventry's population continued to grow, by 1882 the student population numbered 232, and instead of one school, there were ten.

As a small town trying to grow, Coventry was not without its share of tragedy. In June of 1816, a frost and a fall of snow totally destroyed the foliage and the farmers' crops. No crop survived to reach maturity, and the trees failed to put forth new foliage. The winter of 1816 saw the settlers reaching out to help their neighbors with what means they had.

July 1913 brought a fire that left the hotel, a store, and two apartments in ruins. The store later opened when another building was moved to the site. The hotel, however, was never to be rebuilt. Within two years, another fire destroyed two houses and the schoolhouse that was located across the street from the location of the first fire.

In November 1927 the area was hit with an unexpected downfall of rain; the rain continued to fall and the water continued to rise. Due to the number of waterways in Coventry, floodwaters claimed lives, property, and roadways. Many businesses, homes, and bridges were swept away by the Black River. Two fatalities occurred on the Coventry Road (Route 5) when a man and his son drowned after the wagon they were riding in overturned.

Coventry's economy was built upon agriculture and forestry. Even today, a large portion of Coventry's acreage is farm or timberland. In 1860, there were 135 farms in town; that number dwindled to 32 by 1976, and in 1990 there were approximately 25 farms still in operation. As of 2012 the number of farms in Coventry was at 13 according to Grand List data.

Sawmills seem to have been in town since 1801, when the first mill was erected on the Day Brook. In 1803, a larger and better mill began to operate on the upper falls of the Black River. Another came into existence in 1822. This mill was built by Calvin Harmon and his brother and remained in the family for over 100 years. In 1960, a new mill was built on Route 5; although the building remains, it is no longer used for a milling operation. Drown's Lumber was established in 1975, and is still operating as a mill, even after having three fires in the past fifteen years. Since 1975, Drown's Lumber has had two name changes. With the first change, the mill's name became LaBranch and now it is called Rolenco.

The Coventry Common in itself is rich in history. Now the site for Town gatherings or events, it started as a piece of land donated by Calvin and Daniel Harmon. The town and the Harmons made an agreement that the town would clear the stumps from it. Since this work was proceeding at a snail's pace, it was decided that if a man got intoxicated he would do penance by digging out a stump a day. This method proved to be a way of getting the job done at a much speedier pace! In 1912 Riley E. Wright gave to the Town a memorial monument to honor Coventry's soldiers in the wars of our country. The six pound brass field piece cannon and carriage which graces the common, was presented to the town by the State of Vermont. This cannon formerly belonged to the Militia Company known as the Frontier Guards at Coventry during the years 1857-61. The Guards were commanded by Captain Azariah Wright; Hartford Hancock, Augustice West, and John H. Thrasher were lieutenants; and Dr. D.C. Blanchard was clerk. A memorial boulder honors Coventry's World War I soldiers and was unveiled in June of 1921. In 1948 a memorial to World War II soldiers was placed between the other two monuments in the common. Today, the common also has a monument to honor veterans who served in conflicts such as Vietnam and Afghanistan.

More recently, in August of 2004, what was billed as the final concert of the music band [Phish](#) was held in Coventry. The concert was the single largest gathering of people in the town's history. Some fans had to be turned back due to heavy rains. Even so, with 65,000 attendees Coventry's augmented population was the largest in the state at that time, outranking [Burlington, Vermont](#), which had around 39,000 people in the 2000 census.

4. COVENTRY'S LANDS AND WATERS

A. Introduction

This chapter of the Plan is used as a reference guide by town planners, farmers, landowners, developers, local officials, and some state and regional agencies. Its function is to provide the reader with background information on the natural, artificial, and environmental factors that directly relate to the Town's past and future land uses. This may help the reader to evaluate the cumulative effect that a number of contributing factors could have on an area that is proposed for development and/or a change in use.

This chapter provides information and data concerning the Town's: soils types and their capacities; wetlands; streams, rivers and ponds; floodplain areas; and topography. This chapter will also review how these natural resources are being used, and in some cases, protected or preserved.

B. State Owned Lands

The State of Vermont owns and manages several large parcels of land in the town. These lands are restricted, for the most part, to their current use or to public recreational uses. These lands include the Newport State Airport (80 acres) and the South Bay Wildlife Management Area. There are a number of smaller tracts of land along the Black River that are owned and regulated by the State Fish and Wildlife Agency.

C. Flood Hazard Areas

Areas along the banks of the Barton River, the Black River (which flows through the Village of Coventry), Stony Brook, Day Brook, Alder Brook and Trout Brook, have been identified as Flood Plain areas. These areas are extremely fragile and should continue to be protected from development. In addition, development within these areas should be carried out in a manner that not only protects the environment but the development as well. Floodwaters can cause a great deal of damage to structures that are not built using flood resistant materials and techniques. Such damage can be expensive to repair and can also be detrimental to existing development and the environment as well. The Town of Coventry is a member of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and development within these flood hazard areas are currently regulated by local Flood Hazard Area Regulations. Proper enforcement of this regulation is critical for maintaining NFIP eligibility and accessing emergency funds in the event of a disaster.

D. Soils

Soils play a major role in our environment. Each soil classification has its own strengths and limitations. In town planning, consideration must be given to a soil's ability to support a proposed use. The most common effect caused by over development of a classified soil is surface and subsurface water pollution.

A soil's ability to withstand and process sewage effluent is, therefore, of major concern. Currently, the State's subdivision laws require a review of all development projects. This process includes a review of the project's soils and requires an engineered septic system design, where applicable.

The State of Vermont's Act 250-review process reviews all aspects of a soil's ability to support the proposed use. Consideration is also given to the land's agricultural classification. Under this process, high quality agricultural soils are identified and can be preserved.

The Town of Coventry contains 11 of the 12 soil associations displayed on the Orleans county general soil map. The general soils map associated with this plan shows patterns of these soils that are unique in particular areas.

The U.S. Soils Conservation Service soils map can be used to identify the *general* areas where each soil type exists within the town. A detailed soil map, plus an onsite determination should be used for an accurate soil assessment for a small parcel of land.

Soil mapping data now exists for all areas of Coventry and Orleans County.. The Soils Map Associations Reference Guide will describe each of the soils that have been identified in the Town of Coventry.

SOILS MAP ASSOCIATION REFERENCE GUIDE

1. Lyman-Tunbridge-Peru Association; Shallow to very deep, strongly sloping to steep, somewhat excessively to moderately well drained loam soils, low in lime and with bedrock or a hardpan usually within a depth of 3 feet.
- 2 & 3. Peru-Cabot Association; Very deep, gently sloping to moderately steep, moderately well to poorly drained loamy soils, low in lime and with hardpan usually within the depth of 3 feet.
4. Cabot-Peru Association; Very deep, gently sloping to strongly sloping, poorly to moderately well drained loamy soils, low in lime and with hardpan usually within a depth of 3 feet.
5. Lupton-Wonsqueak-Peacham Association; Very deep, nearly level, very poorly drained, organic and mineral soil, usually found in floodplain depressions.
6. Fullam-Cabot Association; Very deep, gently sloping to moderately steep, moderately well to poorly drained loamy soil, medium in lime and with hardpan usually within a depth of 3 feet.
7. Cabot-Fullam association; Very deep, gently sloping to strongly sloping, poorly to moderately well drained loamy soils, medium in lime and with a hardpan usually within a depth of 3 feet.

8. Vershire-Glover Association; moderately deep to shallow, strongly sloped to steep, somewhat excessively to well drained loamy soils, medium in lime and with bedrock usually within 3 feet.
9. Charles-Rumney Association; Very deep, nearly level, poorly to moderately well drained loamy soils, medium in lime, on floodplains.
10. Adams-Colton Association; Very deep, nearly level to steep, somewhat excessively drained sandy and gravelly soils, low in lime, on stream terraces.
11. Lamoine-Buxton-Nicholville Association; Very deep, gentle sloping to moderately steep, moderately well to somewhat poorly drained clayey and loamy soil, in stream terraces and lake plains.
12. Adams-Nicholville-Nasmith Association; Very deep, nearly level to moderately steep, somewhat excessively to poorly drained sandy and loamy soils, in stream terraces and lake plains.

Note: Presently, there are six active gravel pits in the Town of Coventry. Four are commercial operations and the town owns two others.

E. Topography

Coventry is made up of rolling hills and lowland wetlands or waterways. Central Coventry consists of a high plain area, which is at an average of 928 feet above sea level. The large wetland area located below the South Bay area averages 689 feet above sea level. The Town's highest elevations are located in the western end of town where elevations of over 1,312 feet above sea level are found. Most of the Town's high plain areas provide rich agricultural soils, which have been cleared and worked by Coventry's farming community.

F. Coventry's Lakes, Ponds and Watersheds

Coventry has six lakes and ponds within its borders. Cleveland Pond receives its waters from the Cleveland Hill watershed area. The overflow of water from this area flows downstream to Stony Brook. Smith Pond forms the water collection basin for a 141-acre watershed that is formed along the Newport Center and Coventry border. Water from Smith Pond then flows into Sargents Pond. Sargents Pond is located at the southern end of a 1,306-acre watershed. Sergeant Pond is also fed from Walker Pond. Walker Pond collects its waters from a 204-acre watershed that is formed in the northwest corner of Coventry. Waters from these three watersheds serve as the headwaters for Stony Brook. Revoir Pond receives its water from a large watershed that is located in Brownington and the southeastern corner of Coventry. Waters from this pond empty into the Barton River. Trout Brook is formed by waters from this watershed.

Lake Memphremagog's South Bay waters enter Coventry along its northeastern border. The bay's wetlands extend deep into the eastern portion of town. This wetland area is owned and managed by the State of Vermont. Some contaminated runoff from the highlands surrounding the Black and Barton Rivers has reached Lake Memphremagog. The State annually undertakes a variety projects designed to reduce the risk of runoff contamination.

The Coventry Planning Commission is concerned about the possible impacts on water quality that could be caused by agricultural runoff and runoff from residential and industrial ridgeline developments in the watershed area. This runoff, which may be contaminated with agricultural wastes and chemicals, has the potential of contaminating both surface and ground water supplies. Such contamination is a serious issue and can cause a number of health and water quality problems for people and wildlife. Alder Brook is one water resource that is impaired by industrial runoff.

Waters from all the watershed areas in the Town serve the residents of Coventry in many ways. Surface and subsurface waters are used as drinking water and water for livestock. The water retention qualities of these watersheds help to maintain an even distribution of the area’s water. Plant life in these areas serves to deter natural erosion and to filter the water as it enters the low-lying retention areas, providing outstanding habitat for wildlife populations. The natural ecological balance of these watersheds can be easily disturbed by the introduction of residential, industrial, and/or agricultural pollutants. Poor development design and construction practices can also have a dramatic effect in these fragile areas. The State of Vermont’s forest and land use reimbursement programs require a forest management plan that will ensure that non-polluting land use practices are developed. These programs recognize the fact that pollution within watershed areas can be transmitted through the area’s surface and subsurface waters and affect vast areas of the region. Coventry Falls and Lower Falls are important natural scenic water resources in the community that should be protected.

This is the reason that watersheds and their accompanying wetland areas are considered to be fragile areas. We believe that providing the citizenry with the facts concerning these vital natural resources will create an effective deterrent against the misuse and/or pollution of our watershed and wetland areas.

WETLANDS MAP LEGEND

P – PALUSTINE

RB – ROCK BOTTOM

- 1. Bedrock
- 2. Boulder

UB – UNCONSOLIDATED BOTTOM

- 1. Cobble/Gravel
- 2. Sand
- 3. Mud
- 4. Organic

AB – AQUATIC BED

- 1. Submergent Alga
- 2. Submergent Vascular
- 3. Submergent Moss
- 4. Floating Leaves
- 5. Floating

- 5. Dead
- 6. Deciduous
- 7. Evergreen

FO – FORESTED

- 1. Broad-leaved Deciduous
- 2. Needle-leaved Deciduous
- 3. Broad-leaved Evergreen
- 4. Needle-leaved Evergreen
- 5. Dead
- 6. Deciduous
- 7. Evergreen

OW – OPEN WATER

- 1. Unknown Bottom

MODIFYING TERMS WATER

REGIME (1)

- A. Temporary
- B. Saturated

- 6. Unknown Submergent
 - 7. Unknown Surface
- FL** – FLAT
- 1. Cobble/Gravel
 - 2. Sand
 - 3. Mud
 - 4. Organic
 - 5. Vegetated Pioneer
 - 6. Vegetated Non-pioneer
- ML** – MOSS/LICHEN
- 1. Moss
 - 2. Lichen
- EM** – EMERGENT
- 1. Persistent
 - 2. Non-persistent
 - 3. Narrow-leaved Non-persistent
 - 4. Broad-leaved Non-persistent
 - 5. Narrow-leaved Persistent
 - 6. Broad-leaved Persistent
- SS** – SCRUB/SHRUB
- 1. Broad-leaved Deciduous
 - 2. Needle-leaved Deciduous
 - 3. Broad-leaved Evergreen
 - 4. Needle-leaved evergreen
- C. Seasonal
 - D. Seasonal Well Drained
 - E. Seasonal Saturated
 - F. Semi-permanent
 - G. Intermittently Exposed
 - H. Permanent
 - J. Intermittently
 - K. Artificial
 - Z. Intermittently Exposed Perm.
 - W. Intermittently Flooded Temp.
 - Y. Saturated/Semi-permanent Season
 - U. Unknown

G. Coventry’s Wetlands

The National Wetlands Inventory Map produced by the U.S. Department of the Interior can be used to show approximate locations of Coventry’s wetlands. Wetlands are protected by state and federal law. In many cases these lands or soils are marshy in nature and unsuitable for development. However, their usefulness is often impaired or eliminated by land uses on neighboring properties. Wetlands and their tenant plant life create a natural filter for surface and subsurface waters that are traveling to the area’s rivers, streams, and lakes. The plant life also reduces the erosion of these fragile soils. Wetland soils are high in organic and mineral content. In addition to their filtering characteristics, wetlands also reduce flooding, retain and distribute water during periods of drought and provide a rich habitat for the area’s fish and wildlife. Coventry’s wetlands are an important part of the Town's ecological system. Waters from the Town's watersheds are slowed, filtered, and then distributed by these wetlands.

The Barton River Marsh, located at the southern area of South Bay, at the mouth of the Barton River, is the largest wetland area in Coventry. It is comprised of emergent marsh, shrub swamp, riparian forest, and floating bog vegetation.

When appropriate, and funds permit, the State of Vermont will purchase wetlands and abutting properties, in an attempt to preserve and protect these important natural resources. Coventry has supported both state and federal laws pertaining to wetland protection and will continue these

efforts under the guidelines of this municipal plan. The Planning Commission will discourage any proposed land use that may infringe on the wetland's ability to perform its functions. Coventry will also continue to support the State's management of these areas.

H. Man-Made Land Uses

Located south of the intersection of Routes 5, 14, and the Coventry Station Rd and west of Route 5 is the Village of Coventry. This area is mainly a concentration of residential land uses with a mixture of commercial, industrial, governmental and semi-public land uses. The commercial/industrial uses include a diner and a trucking business. This area also includes the Post Office, the town office building and, at one time, the Town's elementary (K-8) school. The old school occupied two buildings, but with the completion of the new school, both buildings have been converted into apartments. The new school building is located on the eastern side of Route 5 near the southern end of the Village. The Village area serves as the hub of the Town's social activities.

As indicated, the Town of Coventry functions as a rural residential community primarily for the nearby employment centers of Newport City, Derby, and Orleans. Coventry's residents also commute to other employment centers such as St. Johnsbury, Montpelier, and beyond. Therefore, residential land uses are perhaps the most predominant land use in Coventry with residences scattered throughout the Town.

While the Village of Coventry does have some commercial/industrial land uses, the major commercial/industrial land use areas are located along Route 14 and the Airport Road. As one drives north on Route 14 from Route 5 one will find the Pike Asphalt plant and then the Calkins Sand and Gravel operation. Just off Route 14 on the Alder Brook Road is Carroll Concrete. Finally, on the Airport Road is the Newport State Airport and the Waste USA solid waste landfill.

That part of Coventry that lies east of the Airport Road is very rural with very little development. A large percentage of this area is occupied by the South Bay Wildlife Management Area. In addition, approximately half of this area is subject to flooding according to the September 1985 flood hazard area maps published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency making much of this area less than ideal for development. Due to this area's limitations for development, the western side of town seems much more suited for development.

I. Conclusion

The majority of Coventry's future development should occur along or west of the Airport Road as much of that area east of the Airport Road is either wetland or has limited access. From Rt. 5 to the airport is a state highway, while the road beyond the airport is a town road. Commercial land uses should be encouraged in the Village area but not in the floodplain. Commercial / industrial uses already exist along Route 14 and the Airport Road; therefore these areas would be suited for additional uses of a similar nature. The area surrounding the Pike plant and the gravel pit on Route 14 area would seem to be the best place to locate heavy industrial land uses that require trucking. Route 14 is already a trucking route with considerable truck traffic. The Airport

Road, on the other hand would be a better location for lighter industrial / commercial uses that would need to locate near an airport. Heavy industrial land uses that require the use of heavy trucks would not be recommended along the Airport Road as this is a Town road of a lighter classification than State Route 14. Traffic count data is available for both the Airport Road and VT Route 14 for years 2005-8 and 2010 on the NVDA website: www.nvda.net. Also, if the Newport State Airport becomes a Magnet Site within a proposed regional Foreign Trade Zone, both the Route 14 and Airport Road areas may see an increase in development.

Importantly, the Town needs to think about its farms and how agriculture can be maintained and continued as other types of development occur. Similarly, the Town needs to consider the impact of developments on the local watershed.

5. POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

A. Historical Profile

During the years between 1800 and 1860 Coventry grew at a dramatic pace. Loggers and farmers cleared vast areas of the Town's woodlands. By 1860 there were 135 farms established, totaling 14,625 acres.¹ Coventry's population stood at 914 residents. Farming and logging were the Town's two main industries. In 1882, ten schools were needed to house Coventry's 232 students. Coventry Station was the Town's commercial center during this time period. In 1894, four trains a day picked up and delivered supplies and passengers to the station. Farms increased in size until 1880, because the railroad provided an increased market for the farmer's cheese and butter. At that time the total farming acreage was recorded to be 18,610². The population that year was 911. The furious pace of the Town's growth was over for the time being. 1880 marked the end of the Town's population growth cycle.

By the 1920's the railroads were feeling the impact of the Model "T". The Town's new airport serviced over 1000 passengers in the summer of 1922¹. The number of schools was decreasing and the Town's population had dropped to 668³. Farms were decreasing in number during this time period, but gasoline driven farm equipment had allowed the farmer to increase the size of his farm.

The population was down to 549 by 1940. Most of the Town's commercial establishments had closed. The railroad's passenger service was discontinued and in 1943 the railroad station was torn down⁴. The automobile had made its mark on Coventry. It provided a way for the Town's work force to travel to neighboring communities for their employment. Newport and Derby's commercial base was beginning to grow.

By 1960 the Town's population was 458, but the 80-year population decline had come to an end. The surrounding Town's commercial base began to hire more and more people. During the late 70's, Coventry began to see new homes being built and new families moving to town. The Town's population had risen to 674 by 1980. Coventry was providing homes for many of the surrounding towns' workers.

The 2010 Census has seen Coventry reach its highest recorded population ever (1086 persons). Coventry is considered a rural residential community. There are still 13 farms in operation according to 2012 grand list data. Coventry has a relatively new school building for their children’s K-8 education, while high school students in grades 9-12 attend schools in the neighboring communities. There were a total of 149 students today (2009-10 school year). The number of housing units in Coventry increased from 283 in 1990, to approximately 477 in 2010, a 168% increase. The population has increased by 134% (from 806 to 1086) over the same time period.

B. Population and Development Trends

The population and housing trends table at the end of this chapter provides the actual housing and population statistics developed by the Town's current growth trend.

The chart below shows the relationship between the growth in housing, population growth, and the corresponding growth in the student population.

The Plan’s Historical Profile outlines the changes that have occurred to Coventry over time. History tells us that as business began to fall off in the early 1900’s, Coventry’s residents moved out of town, to find employment elsewhere. The lack of mobility formed a natural population growth control. Today, we live in a mobile society. The Town's residents can travel to neighboring business communities for their employment. These communities also offer Coventry’s residents a wide range of goods and services. Small town businesses find it hard, and in most cases impossible, to compete with these larger companies. The rural towns can and do supply the additional housing needs of these business communities. Therefore, small towns like Coventry become bedroom communities. Census figures from 1980 show that while 72% of Newport’s population age 16 and over worked in Newport and 40% of Derby’s population age 16 and over worked in Derby, only 19% of Coventry’s population 16 and over lived and worked in Coventry. Since 1980 these numbers have changed very little. The 2010 Census indicates that of the age 16 and over population (540 persons) in Coventry, 85.7% of these people work outside of the community. This percentage has increased from the 68.2% (346 persons) in 1990. While the business communities receive the financial benefits of the area’s increased population; the rural bedroom communities must provide the services that are required by the people that work in the neighboring communities. It is also obvious that the growth trends within these bedroom communities are controlled, in a large part, by business and commercial growth in neighboring communities.

TABLE 1: POPULATION AND HOUSING 1970 TO 2010

Year	Total Town Population	Student Population			Total Housing
		K - 8	9 - 12	Total	
1970	492	108	34	142	127
1980	674	88	53	141	171
1990	807	125	54	179	280
2000	1,014	124	74	198	435
2010	1,086	89	60	149	477

% Increases					
'70-'80	37.0%	-18.5%	55.9%	-0.7%	34.6%
'80-'90	19.7%	42.0%	1.9%	27.0%	63.7%
'90-'00	25.7%	-0.8%	37.0%	10.6%	55.4%
'00-'10	7.1%	--	--	--	9.7%
US Census Bureau, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010					

The trends that occur within the age groups of the Town's residents are another factor that must be considered when planning for a community's future. Census figures indicate that in 1980, Coventry's population had a median age of 24.9, with 39% of its population being under the age of 20. Today (2010), the communities median age is 43.1, with 24% of the population under age 20. This trend is consistent with the aging population trends in Orleans County, Vermont, and the New England region.

The chart on the preceding page shows that the Town's student population increased by 10.6% between 1990 and 2000 while the Town's population grew at a rate fo 25.7% for the same period. However, there have been decreases in both the total student population (-32.9%) and Town population (- 3%) from 2000 through 2009. This is important when planning for the use of the Town's education facilities.

C. The Future

It is evident from the Census information provided that Coventry has been in a growth cycle since 1970. It is also apparent that this growth does not stem primarily from increased employment opportunities within the town of Coventry, but instead from the neighboring business centers.

Historically, growth meant new houses, new businesses, and more people to share the expenses to run the town. There was a natural balance of growth between residential and commercial growth, which tended to divide the tax burden evenly. Today, the majority of the area's commercial tax base is located in neighboring communities. As Coventry grows in population, the demand on town services also continues to increase. Financing the new demands on town services should not be a problem for Coventry, however. Each year the Town of Coventry receives a percentage of the tipping fees charged at the Waste USA Landfill. This percentage results in a significant sum of money (over \$545,000 in 2008-9).

If the majority of Coventry's growth in population derives from growth within neighboring commercial centers, then we must become aware of the potential growth of these centers. While we have seen several industries close in both Derby and Newport over the past few years, we are also aware of new developments in those towns and others that could impact Coventry. These include a biomedical manufacturing company and planned hotel and convention facilities in Newport, and four-season resort development at Jay Peak. There has been an increase in the number of retail establishments over recent years, particularly in Derby. Recently, the new Canadian goods and services tax has increased retail trade in all of Vermont's border towns. A recent poll completed by the Planning Commission shows that many of the retail establishments, in both Derby and Newport, have increased their sales by over 20% since the new tax was

imposed. If these increases continue, a renewed expansion of the area's retail community could be experienced. In addition, Derby's Municipal Plan calls for fostering the development of environmentally friendly businesses and the continuation of limitations on residential development.

Most of the indicators seem to point to the conclusion that the town of Coventry will continue to gain population during the coming years, but primarily through in-migration and residential development.

Factors Indicating Coventry's Continued Population Growth

1. Comparatively low taxes
2. Limited development restrictions within the Town
3. Quality education system
4. Unique rural setting and friendly residents
5. Adequate inventory of undeveloped lands
6. Increased Canadian retail trade
7. Continuing growth in neighboring business centers
8. Ease of accessibility to goods and services
9. Town's birthrate averaging ten children a year

Factors That Could Slow or Halt Population Growth

1. Slow recovery from current recession
2. Continuation of a high unemployment rate
3. Substantial reductions in State Aid to Education (this could cause a dramatic increase in the Town's property taxes)
4. Repeal of the Canadian goods and services tax
5. Future closings in the region's business communities
6. Equalized evaluation of the U.S. and Canadian dollar
7. Additional increases in the Vermont sales tax

D. Conclusion

Taxes from farmlands, forest lands, and commercial sites help to offset expenses brought on by a community's residential growth. Maintaining a balance between residential and non-residential development is essential in planning for a community's economic security. When a town like Coventry becomes a bedroom community, it must try to offset its long-term educational expenses, (see Economic Profile chapter) by diversifying its tax base, by increasing its non-residential tax base. If this is not done, the inflated property tax may soon cause the low-income portion of the population to leave the town.

TABLE 2: POPULATION TRENDS IN COVENTRY 1890 TO 2009

Year	Population	Year	Population
1890	879	1950	497
1900	728	1960	458
1910	616	1970	492
1920	668	1980	674
1930	610	1990	804
1940	549	2000	1,014
2010 estimated population: 1085			
US Census Bureau, 1890 - 2010			

TABLE 3: COVENTRY HOUSING GROWTH BETWEEN 1980 AND 2010

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Residential 1 (<= 6 acres)	91	90	91	95	95	96	95	97	100	104	108
Residential 2 (> 6 acres)	34	39	40	41	44	46	48	48	50	55	60
Mobile Home 1 (w/o land)	26	32	46	38	44	47	52	49	51	59	53
Mobile Home 2 (w/ land)	20	20	18	26	26	27	27	27	27	29	34
Total Dwellings	171	181	195	200	209	216	222	221	228	247	255
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Residential 1 (<= 6 acres)	113	111	110	110	110	109	112	111	110	111	115
Residential 2 (> 6 acres)	62	66	71	79	85	93	95	114	117	117	119
Mobile Home 1 (w/o land)	48	48	51	47	47	43	39	38	40	48	46
Mobile Home 2 (w/ land)	38	42	44	48	55	56	55	60	66	68	65
Total Dwellings	261	267	276	284	297	301	301	323	333	344	345
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2010			
Residential 1 (<= 6 acres)	108	110	114	113	117	117	124	128			
Residential 2 (> 6 acres)	125	120	132	139	141	144	152	158			
Mobile Home 1 (w/o land)	43	44	45	48	45	44	49	54			
Mobile Home 2 (w/ land)	71	72	75	75	75	76	74	73			
Total Dwellings	347	346	366	375	378	381	399	413			
Data from the Coventry Grand List. Farmhouses and Commercial Apartments not included.											

6. EDUCATION

A. Current Status

Coventry’s young people spend their first nine years (K-8) of school in their own community school, located on the southern fringe of the Town’s village. High school students (grades 9-12) attend classes in neighboring town school facilities.

In the early 1990's it became apparent that the Town's K-8 facility had reached its maximum student capacity. As a result of this, the Town started looking into the idea of replacing the two school buildings being used at that time with a new building. This work culminated in 1995 with the construction of a new school building that is perhaps 3 to 4 times larger than the former buildings.

The school is located at the south end of the Village and was designed using a Vernacular Georgian style and has a "T" shaped footprint. The building was designed with 9 large classrooms, music and art room, a library and media room, a large special education room, a reading recovery training room with a one way window, and a full court gym with bleachers. Finally, this building has been designed to allow the creation of additional classrooms in the attic space.

The Town of Coventry takes great pride in its new school and the Town's support has been very generous. The Parent's Club raised funds to pay for the bleachers in the gym as well as the playground equipment. The Town, as a whole, paid for the ball field. The Coventry School is also very fortunate to have the Edmunds / Douglas / Price Endowment. Income from this endowment has been used to purchase a piano and snowshoes for the school.

The school offers a number of after school activities for student assistance and enrichment. These activities include dance, French, science, art, math and reading (reading is for grades 3 - 8 only). The funds to support these activities come from one or more grant programs.

The Coventry School also provides its students high quality lunches. Having a high quality lunch program is important as nutritious meals help to keep the students alert and helps them to think and reason. This plan encourages the continuation of these high quality lunches.

Daycare services are important for single parent families and those families where both parents work for the care of preschool children and for after school care for school age children. However, according to a 2012 on-line database of daycare providers maintained by the Department for Children and Families, there are no registered child care facilities in Coventry. This could be a problem for families with children who are too young to care for themselves. While the Town of Coventry cannot mandate the establishment of child care centers, the Town can encourage the establishment of such centers by making available information on where to find financing and business assistance.

B. School Population and Expense Data

A study of Coventry's population shows that the percentage of school-aged children, in relationship with the Town's total population was relative stable from 1980-2000, however there has been a decrease over the last decade. Hopefully, this is just a short-term trend. The chart below indicates the population growth pattern since 1970.

TABLE 4: COVENTRY'S STUDENT POPULATION

Year	Town Population	Student Population	Percentage of Town's Population
1970	492	142	28%
1980	674	141	21%
1990	807	179	22%
2000	1,014	198	20%
2009	1,085	208	15%

US Census Bureau, 1970 – 2000 and 2009 data (American Community Survey 2005-9)

A study of the actual money spent for education, on a per student basis, shows that in the school year 1979/80:

- \$1,877 was spent to educate each K-8 student
- \$1,784 was spent on tuition for each high school student

By school year 1989/90:

- \$3,703 was spent to educate each K-8 student
- \$4,502 was spent on tuition for each high school student

Then in school year 1999/2000:

- \$6,558 was spent to educate each K-8 student
- \$10,925 was spent on tuition for each high school student.

This represents an increase of 178% in K-8 expenditures per child and an increase of 46% per high school student, in tuition expenditures over the last ten years. These figures are developed by separating the tuition expenditures from the total school year expenditures, and then dividing these two figures by the student population attending the respective grade level.

Using the 2009 student population figure of 208 students and a base education rate of \$7,500 per student per year, it would cost \$97,500 to send each student to school for 13 years (K-12). Using 2009 figures, this would total \$20,280,000 for all students.

C. Educational Funding

The July 1, 1989 to June 30, 1990 Coventry School District Treasurer’s Report shows the total educational funding received for that time period was \$789,076. For the 2000 - 2001 school year education funding had increased by 151.01% to a total of \$1,981,167. The receipts for these two time periods can be found in the following table:

TABLE 5: EDUCATION RECEIPTS

Source	1989 - 1990 School Year		2000 - 2001 School Year	
	Dollars	% of Total	Dollars	% of Total
Coventry Property Taxes	\$244,865	28.0%	\$463,953	23.4%
State Aid to Education	\$455,145	57.5%	\$976,691	49.3%
Additional State Funding	\$55,168	8.0%	\$396,498	20.0%
Interest	\$9,692	1.0%	\$22,768	1.2%
Short Term Loan	\$30,000	4.0%	\$0	0.0%
OENSU Receipts	\$9,480	1.0%	\$57,645	2.9%
Other Income	\$4,726	0.5%	\$63,612	3.2%
Total	\$789,076	100.0%	\$1,981,167	100.0%

Source: Town and/or School Records

Property tax funding for education in the 1990/91 school year was \$225,100 and the school budget that was approved during the June 3, 1991 School Meeting was \$215,600. State Aid to Education funding has provided the means to keep the educational portion of the Town's property taxes down. In recent years over 80% of the Town's tax dollars went toward education, but these town funds only represented 28% of the educational funds collected in the 1989/90 school year. The current “formula,” which has worked in favor of the community over these past years, should continue to be a positive financial force until the Town's median income level rises to a higher statewide income category, or until the formula is replaced by a new classification rating system. However, it must be remembered that the amount of state funding available for this program is at the discretion of the State Legislators.

D. The School and the Community

The Coventry School’s yearly K-8 expenditures are managed, and in many cases controlled, by the Town's School Board, the school’s Principal, and Coventry’s voters. This would not be the case if Coventry were to tuition out all of their students. Interviews with Coventry residents, during the development of this plan, revealed that most of the residents interviewed believed that the quality of the education that is offered to the Town's students is a direct result of the high quality of the school’s teachers that are currently employed by Coventry. The ability to maintain this high standard of education and school staff was of prime importance to those interviewed.

The school facility plays an important part in the stability of Coventry Village. Most of the Town's social activities are centered on the school and the Community Center. It could be said that the community spirit that has been an historic point of pride among the Town's residents, is born in the fact that its youth spend the better part of their formative years, in this peaceful village setting.

E. Adult Education

Prior to the middle of the 20th century, when someone graduated from high school or college they knew most of what they would need for their career in many cases. However, with the explosion of knowledge and technology that has occurred during the last 60 years, it is no longer acceptable today for someone to consider their education complete after completing high school or even college. Lifelong learning is becoming the norm and continuing education is more important than ever. Similarly, individuals were once more likely to stay in the same career for a lifetime than they are today. Today, however, many people change careers several times during their lifetimes. This latter fact also underscores the importance of continuing education and workforce development opportunities.

Within the Northeast Kingdom there are a number of continuing education providers:

The North Country Career Center offers a number of courses for adult learners. These courses cover a variety of careers and some of the courses can be taken simply for personal enrichment. Lyndon Institute and St. Johnsbury Academy through a joint venture called the Caledonia Essex Technical Education Region also offer a variety of courses that can be taken for career advancement or personal enrichment. The courses at these locations can be taken in a classroom or on-line. In 2010, the regional technical centers in Newport and St. Johnsbury - Lyndon assumed the roles of the Workforce Investment Board.

The Community College of Vermont has two locations in the Northeast Kingdom, Newport and St. Johnsbury. CCV generally offers, in most cases, two year degree programs. Johnson State College also offers classes in Newport.

In addition to the community college discussed in the previous paragraph, there are several other post-secondary schools in the area that offer four year degrees and beyond. Sterling College in Craftsbury offers an alternative under-graduate education. Offering both graduate and under-graduate educations are Lyndon State College and Springfield College in St. Johnsbury. Other schools would include Johnson State College, University of Vermont and Champlain College (Burlington).

The above list is not intended to be all inclusive. There may be other adult learning opportunities in Northern Vermont, as well as online learning opportunities too numerous to mention here.

The Coventry Planning Commission recognizes the importance and availability of continuing education and encourages the Town's residents to take advantage of the available programs. At the same time, the Planning Commission feels that there ample opportunities within the area for the Town's residents. Therefore, it seems unnecessary for this plan to set forth any goals regarding the availability of such programs. The Planning Commission, however, does feel that it is appropriate to encourage all of the aforementioned academic institutions to maintain and improve their programs as necessary.

The Planning Commission supports greater collaboration linking the school and community organizations for education and other community efforts.

7. ECONOMIC PROFILE

A. Introduction

Coventry’s financial situation must be studied from several standpoints. Consideration should be given to the number of services being provided by the town; the cost of these services; and where the funds, to finance these services, will come from. Each year, Selectmen and Budget Committee members face the difficult job of deciding how to balance the cost of required services against their citizenry’s ability to fund these services. This chapter of the plan will review the Town's income, expenditures, and their relationship to the current and future needs of the community.

B. Selectmen’s Budget

The Selectmen’s budget covers all of the Town's income and expenses, excluding the Town's educational expenses.

Figures from past Coventry Annual Reports show 20% of the Town's expenditures were spent on office support services, 78% of the funds were spent on the Town's highways, and the remaining 2% was allocated to the library. The town’s operating costs increased by 57% between 1980 and 1990. These expenditures increased from \$101,752 in 1980 to \$117,501 in 1985 and to \$156,794 in 1990. Budget increases were in part due to the establishment of reserve funds for the community. For the fiscal year beginning in 2002, the Town's budget was \$608,100.

For Fiscal Year 2009-2010, the Town’s breaks down as follows: municipal government 22%, Emergency Shelter and Fire Protection 3%, Highway 62%, and Miscellaneous 13%. These numbers, however, may not be comparable with the earlier numbers above.

TABLE 6: GRAND LIST AND ASSESSMENTS 1980 - 2005

Year	Grand List	Assessments	Total Funds Assessed
1980	\$ 46,023.78	General Fund/Roads \$1.09	\$50,166.00
1985	\$167,098.03	General Fund/Roads \$0.41	\$68,510.00
1990	\$192,393.23	General Fund/Roads \$0.41	\$78,881.00
1995	\$331,770.28	General Fund/Roads \$0.30	\$99,531.00
2000	\$355,628.33	General Fund/Roads \$0.00	\$0.00
2005	\$530,085.09	General Fund/Roads \$0.00	\$0.00
_____ reassessment brought Grand List to Fair Market Values			

These figures show that the growth in population and housing units and a re-evaluation of assessed evaluation, helped to lower and stabilize the tax assessment. Increases in state and federal funding and a spending cap established by the Selectmen also contributed to the stabilization. Finally, the funds collected by the Town from the tipping fees at the landfill have completely eliminated the need for a town tax.

C. Coventry’s Economic Future

There are several economic trends to take into consideration, when planning for the Town's economic future. Will the Town's population grow? Will town expenses continue to increase and if so, at what rate?

Since 1992 the Town has received a percentage of the tipping fees charged at the Waste USA land fill. During the last 10 years the funds collected each year have increased considerably (over \$800,000 in 2009). In fact, these funds have contributed to the Town of Coventry no longer having a municipal property tax. The only property tax charged in Coventry is the school tax. The changes in this tax rate will be governed by the changes to State Education financing.

D. Taxable Base Trends

The charts below show how Coventry’s property tax base has changed over the years. Residential properties (R1, R2) accounted for 35% of the value of properties in 1983. This percentage increased to 54% by 2001, but is now at 44.7% (2010). Commercial and Industrial properties accounted for 11.3% of the value of properties in the Town in 1983. This figure has increased to 15.3% for 2010. Farms made up 31.6% of the properties in 1983 and now account for only 7.5% of the value of properties at present. In 2010, the value of Utilities in the town make up 17% of the Grand List.

TABLE 10: NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL AND FARM LOTS

Grand List Category	1983		1991		2001		2010	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
R-1 homes w/ < 6 acres	95	NA	113	+19	115	+2	128	+11
R-2 homes w/ > 6 acres	41	NA	62	+51	119	+92	158	+33
MH mobile homes w/o land	38	NA	48	+26	46	-4	54	+17
MHL mobile homes w/ land	26	NA	38	+46	65	+71	73	+12
Farms	34	NA	32	-6	18	-44	13	-38
Totals	234		293		363		426	

NA - Not Applicable. Percentages represent the increase/decrease in properties from the previous period.

TABLE 11: PERCENTAGE OF GRAND LIST BY PROPERTY CATEGORY

	Year			
	1983	1990	2001	2010
R1 Residential 1	21.7%	23.6%	20.2%	14.8%
R2 Residential 2	13.2%	17.5%	33.8%	29.9%
MHU Mobile home w/o land	1.9%	2.4%	1.9%	.01%
MHL Mobile home w/ land	3.9%	5.1%	8.4%	5.9%
F Farm	31.6%	25.7%	10.6%	7.5%
V1 Vacation 1	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	.02%
V2 Vacation 2	0.6%	0.5%	1.9%	.1%
C Commercial	3.7%	5.8%	7.2%	3.3%
I Industrial	7.6%	6.7%	6.4%	12.0%

W Woodlands	2.2%	2.1%	2.4%	2.0%
M Miscellaneous	4.4%	5.0%	7.0%	5.7%
U Utilities	--	--	--	17.1%
Data for this table derived from the Coventry Lister's Records.				

8. TRANSPORTATION –

A. Road Transportation

Coventry’s current road system mileage is broken down as follows:

Highway Classification	Miles	
Town		
Class 2	10.44	
Class 3	25.88	
Class 4	7.11	
Total Town		43.43
State		
Interstate 91	3.69	
Other state highways	12.80	
Total state and federal		16.49
Total highway miles		59.92

State Route 5, running north/south, passes through Coventry providing residents with a link to Newport City and Derby to the north, and Irasburg, Interstate 91 and Orleans, to the south. State Route 14, also a north/south highway, provides Coventry's residents with a link to Newport Town to the north and numerous communities to the south. State Aid Route 2 provides a direct route from Newport City and Interstate 91 to both the State Airport and the Waste U.S.A. landfill site. Interstate 91 runs through the eastern portion of the Town. However, access to Interstate 91 within the Town of Coventry is not possible.

Coventry’s five gravel yards are located along the upper portion of State Route 14 and near the junction of State Routes 14 and 5. These areas of the Town's highway system receive heavy truck traffic. After July 1, 1992, truck traffic on State Aid Route 2 increased dramatically because Waste U.S.A. became the only state approved, privately owned landfill site in northern Vermont. It is estimated that more than half of the 50 towns in Act 250 District 7 are shipping their solid waste to this site, and the facility receives approximately 60% of the solid waste generated in Vermont. Interstate 91 provides the major transportation route for all of the goods that are sold in the northeastern section of the state. The interstate is also the area’s major commercial link to Canada.

The majority of the Town's residents live along the town maintained highway system. This system also provides access to most of the Town's farms. Starting in the mid 1950’s, the town undertook a highway reconstruction program. This program called for the reconstruction, from

the roadbed up, of most of the Town's class 3 roads. The project was completed, one section at a time, over a fifteen year period. Recently the town, in conjunction with the state, has implemented a similar program to deal with its aging bridge system. It was through this program that a bridge on the Heermanville Rd was replaced between 1992, when this plan was originally adopted, and 1997.

The Town's gravel road system is in good condition and requires a minimum of yearly maintenance, due to the efforts completed in the 50's and 60's. The Road Commissioner oversees maintenance and road projects in the town, with the work usually performed by sub-contractors.

Over the past twenty years, the Town's residential population has steadily increased. (See Population and Development Profiles and Trends) Generally, the increased road traffic, brought about by the population growth, has not created any major problems with the highway system; however, some development is occurring in areas that are flood prone. Access to these areas during mud season and/or times of flood may be difficult, at best, or even impossible. For the most part, residential growth has been scattered throughout the system. Any future development proposals which would incorporate a cluster development design would require a review of the road system that would service the development.

While the traffic generated by residential development in Coventry has not created any major problems, the truck traffic on Route 14 between Route 5 and Route 100 has. Some time ago the City of Newport banned through truck traffic on City streets forcing all such truck traffic to bypass Newport City using Routes 14 and 5. Route 14 is narrow with little or no shoulder is very windy between Route 5 and the gravel pits, and, as it approaches Route 5, it comes down a long hill. This section of Route 14 was not designed for major truck traffic and has become very dangerous with the increased truck traffic. There have been many accidents on this stretch of road and a number of those accidents have involved fatalities. This is a serious situation that the town, and many of its residents, is concerned about. In addition to the dangers created by the trucks on this section of Route 14, the trucks also create a great deal of noise that must be endured by the residents of the village.

Most of the Town's class 4 roads have recently been transferred to a recreational trail status. This was done to ensure that these paths would remain undeveloped and open for the recreational use of the general public. These paths continue to be used for agricultural purposes. Utilities are not available in these areas.

B. Rail Transportation

There is only one rail corridor that passes through Coventry. This corridor travels from the southeastern corner of town in a northwesterly direction to the eastern shoreline of South Bay. The State of Vermont currently owns this corridor and rail service is currently being offered by Vermont Rail Systems. With regard to the future, it is unknown at this time if Vermont Rail Systems will continue to provide service along this corridor. However, the State of Vermont purchased this corridor with the intent that rail service will continue. The Town of Coventry sees

rail transportation as a cost effective and efficient means of transporting freight through the region and would therefore encourage the continuation of this service as long as is possible.

C. Air Transportation

The Newport State Airport is located in the center of Coventry, originally on 1,200 acres. The airport provides two paved, runways which are equipped with a lighting system. Runway 18-36 (currently 4,000 feet long runs north/south, while 05-23 (3,997 feet long) provides the airport's east/west runway.

The airport is equipped with ground to air communications, (122.8 megahertz), and an "ILS" (landing) system. The airport currently offers such services as flight instruction, a charter service, an aircraft rental service, and a full seven-day operations schedule. Two planes, a Cessna 310 and 172, are provided to meet the needs created by these services. The airport provides hanger and open storage for a number of area based aircraft. Several area, U.S., and Canadian, companies use the airport on a regular basis. The airport also provides the area with medical transport services.

Plans have been in the works for some time to lengthen runway # 18-36 from its current length of 3,997 feet to 4,997 feet. This lengthening will enable small business class jets to land at the Newport State Airport. This project has the support of local communities, and it is expected that the extension will occur in the next 2-5 years. Fencing around the entire airport would be part of a runway extension project. While an extension project would likely result in new commercial and industrial businesses in town and improvements to the roads that serve the airport, there may be other impacts to consider such as the potential relocation of families, increased noise from the small jets that will be using the airport, increased traffic on the roads that serve the airport, and increased development – especially if the NVDA Foreign Trade Zone is approved. While new businesses may provide jobs for the area's residents, developments should be planned to minimize negative impacts on the environment and the Town.

Commercial airports that are located within 3 to 4 hours of Coventry would include Burlington, VT; Manchester, NH; Boston, MA; Portland, ME; Albany and Plattsburgh, NY; and Montreal, Que. These are the airports that one would have to travel to for regular commercial airline service.

D. Transportation Policy

Coventry's Selectmen have developed several transportation policies over the years. These policies are time tested and warrant recording in this plan.

Under town policy, Class Four roads are only to be used as agricultural and recreational roadways. Construction along these roads, except in the case of a pre-existing structure, is discouraged. Additionally, if construction were to be permitted along a Class Four road, the road's classification would not change. Class Four roads are not serviced or maintained during the winter months. Policy requires that any upgrade of a Class Four road to a higher

classification would require a public approval and the upgrading costs would be paid by the parties requesting the change.

Town policy states that all new road development authority rests with the Selectmen. Under this policy, all new construction must meet state standards. In addition, all new roadway easements must be fifty feet in width.

Town policy limits the Town's responsibility for maintenance and seasonal services to roads identified by number on the approved Town Highway map.

The Planning Commission would like to encourage the establishment of a recreational trail system designed with the input of the Town's landowners. This trail system would allow access for such recreational pursuits as hunting, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, cross country skiing, and similar activities. Funding sources for the development of such a trail system needs to be researched. Currently, the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) and the Vermont ATV Sportsmen Association (VASA) provide trails for people who ride snowmobile and all-terrain vehicles. Many, if not all, of these trails have been laid out on private property and used with the gracious permission of the land owners.

With regard to the truck traffic problem on Route 14 (between Route 5 and 100), the Planning Commission strongly encourages the Town of Coventry to initiate a dialog with the City of Newport and the Vermont Agency of Transportation. The purpose of this dialog would be to make Route 14 safer for those individuals that use or live on this section of road. One possible solution would be the building of a new road to connect Route 105 with the south end of Coventry St. and then realign the north end of Coventry St. so that it intersects with East Main St. This would eliminate the truck traffic from Route 14 in Coventry as well as providing a bypass around the City of Newport.

9. UTILITIES AND FACILITIES

A. Utilities

a. Electric

Vermont Electric Cooperative provides most of the electric power required by most of the Town. The Orleans Electric Department serves small areas of the Town and Washington Electric owns an electrical generation facility (methane) at the landfill. Single-phase and three-phase power is distributed throughout the community. Three-phase service is currently restricted to the western portion of the town. At this time, the local electric utilities assure us that there is a sufficient amount of electricity available to supply the Town's expanding residential requirements. A 2.2 MW photovoltaic electric generation plant to be located near the landfill has recently been proposed by New England Waste Services of Vermont, Inc. Known as the "Coventry Solar Project", the project is supported by the Town of Coventry.

Recently, a 5.75-mile, double circuit, 115-kilovolt line through Coventry from Irasburg to Newport was built. This line forms a loop with existing lines that act as a backup source of power.

b. Water and Sewer

With the exception of Coventry Village, residents of Coventry do not connect to community water system. Most of the homes, farms, and businesses in the community develop their own water supplies, using surface, or artesian wells. Most of the homes and businesses located in Coventry Village are serviced by a system owned and maintained by the Coventry Fire District. This system includes: a gravel packed well, a pump rated at 65 gpm, a chemical/control room; a 100,000 gallon concrete storage reservoir; and a number of 2", 4" and 6" transmission lines and distribution mains. The system serves homes along Town roads 7, 36, and 54. Due in part to scattered development trends and the adverse economic impact, Coventry has no current plans to develop a town wide water system. This water system must be monitored to insure that it is being properly maintained and, when necessary, major improvements are implemented. Doing so will insure the quality of the water being distributed to the homes in the Village and project the health of the Village's residents. A wellhead protection plan(s) for the community water supply and reservoir are recommended.

Coventry does not provide a public sewage system. Almost all homes, farms and businesses located in the town, are dependent on septic systems for sewage disposal. The town relies on VT Dept. of Environmental Conservation for enforcement of on-site septic systems and potable water supplies in the community, and the illegal dumping of sewage into rivers and streams. . Coventry has no current plans to develop a town wide sewer system

c. Solid Waste Disposal

The Town of Coventry is the host town to a regional disposal facility that is owned and operated by New England Waste Services of Vermont, Inc. The landfill is located on Airport Road just north of the Newport State Airport. The current landfill operating area is a state-of-the-art double lined landfill with leachate collection. The site is permitted and regulated as a solid waste facility by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. This site was the only privately owned landfill facility in operation in northern Vermont when the Coventry Selectmen adopted a 20-year Solid Waste Implementation Plan in 1992.

The Plan establishes Coventry as the host town for a certified landfill facility operated by New England Waste Services of Vermont, Inc. Coventry has entered into a Host Community Agreement with the landfill where the Town receives a fee for each ton of waste disposed at the facility. This offers Coventry's residents several benefits for material disposal. These "tipping fees" are currently providing the Town with sufficient revenues to cover Town operating expenses, thus alleviating the need for a municipal property tax.

B. Facilities**a. School**

In 1995 the Town of Coventry completed a new school building to replace the two overcrowded buildings located next to the Community Center. The design capacity of the current building is 180 to 200 students and the enrollment during the 2009 - 2010 school year was 117.

Despite the fact that this wonderful building is new, it has not been without its problems. Some faults that have been corrected have included leaks caused by ice jams on the roof, heating and air quality problems, and a kitchen not designed for institutional use. Other problems that were corrected during the summer of 2002 included damage to the refrigeration units located outside the kitchen on the front of the school and site work to correct a drainage problem outside the building.

b. Coventry Community Center

The community center was financed and built through the dedicated efforts of the Coventry Parents Club and the support of Coventry's citizenry. The center provides Coventry with a community meeting room; a half court gym, which is used by the general public and for other civic events; a town meeting hall; and an office that is used as the Town Clerk's office. With the completion of the new school building, the school no longer uses the gym in this building.

c. Town Garage and Gravel Pit

The town now maintains two town garages. The first garage is located on Main Street on a two-acre lot. There are no plans to enlarge this facility at this time. The second town garage is located on a 55-acre parcel on Route 14, which is also the location of the Town's gravel pit. This pit has been an important town investment. It has kept the cost of road re-surfacing and repairs to a minimum. However, the source of gravel on this site has been exhausted and the presence of ledge has interfered with continuing efforts to remove gravel. As a solution to this problem, the Town has found a new site for a gravel pit on Hancock Hill.

The Town also owns an assortment of road maintenance equipment. These items include a 1997 grader, 3 road sanders (1988, 1999, and 2000 model years), a four wheel drive Kubota tractor equipped with a bucket and mower, a Ford F450 dump truck, and an assortment of snowplows.

d. Town Cemetery

The town maintains three cemeteries. This work is completed on a contract basis. Cemetery maintenance is funded by the Town general fund.

e. Emergency Services

The Town of Coventry does not provide fire or police services. The town has two constables, two fire wardens, and a civilian defense chairman. Firefighting services are provided on a fee-for-service basis by departments in Coventry's neighboring communities. State Police officers and the Sheriff's department are available to Coventry's residents. Ambulance services are available from several local sources. The community and state services have been more than adequate in serving the residents of Coventry. Unless or until local services are unable to meet the emergency service needs of the community, the town will not increase its infrastructure to include local police and fire fighting services and equipment.

C. Conclusion

The Town's ever increasing residential growth warranted the construction of a new school facility in the mid- 1990's. This new facility will be adequate to house the expanding student population for many years to come. The new school may also create a new population or village center. In most cases, residential development tends to be heavy in the areas adjacent to school facilities. This trend must be considered in future land use planning.

Except for those connected to existing community water systems, water, sewage disposal, and electric services is the individual responsibility of the Town's residents. There does not seem to be a reason to change this historical practice. History shows that the town centers have been established, only to be abandoned and relocated with the changing of the era's priorities. These changes have also been supported by the fact that a large portion of northern Vermont's population is transient in nature. Establishing town owned utilities would also create fiscal responsibilities that could not be met by the population.

The town currently relies on the State's environmental act, Act 250, to govern the feasibility of high density, multi-unit development that may be proposed within the Town's borders. It could be said that the Town's policy on utilities is that if a proposed housing or commercial site can, in the eyes of the state, support its proposed use, then it can be established in the town and will be supplied with town managed roads and schools. It could also be stated that this practice is supported by the State's goal of supporting residential and commercial growth within the state.

10. ENERGY PLAN

The Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC) supplies electric power to the Town's users – both single- and three-phase power. In addition, Orleans Electric serves two small areas of Coventry. One of these areas is in the southeastern corner of town while the other is along the Brownington - Coventry town line approximately half way between the southeastern and northeastern corners of Town. The town has no history of electric power shortages. The two companies have supplied reasonable installation and user fees.

VEC maintains a 47-kilovolt trunk line that runs north and south through Coventry, from Irasburg to Newport. In addition to this 47-kilovolt line there is also a 120-kilovolt line that runs along Route 105 in the northern corner of Town.

Most of the Town's three-phase power is consumed in powering motors in use at the Pike and Calkins gravel pit operations and the LaBranche sawmill. The electric companies assure the town that requests for additional connections would not pose a problem.

Single-phase service is available throughout the town. Service lines span most of the Town's class two and three roads. High-density development, such as the residential growth along Town Roads 57 and 58, had no trouble in obtaining electrical power upon demand.

The Town's road system represents an energy efficient means of traveling within the Town's borders. The system also provides direct routes to the neighboring commercial communities. The

Town's policy of limited road development has prompted a higher density in residential areas, therefore increasing the road system's energy efficiency.

Coventry has no town regulations regarding building codes. Therefore, the National Building Codes are suggested as a means for construction within the town to meet an energy efficient level. The Act 250-approval process also plays a major role in requiring energy efficient development.

Town officials are aware of the energy savings produced by the use of wood fired stoves and furnaces. A large number of Coventry's homes are heated in this way. Officials acknowledge the merits in preserving the renewable resources found in its woodlands.

Most of the shoreline area along the Black and Barton rivers are owned or protected by the State of Vermont. For this reason, it is unlikely that a hydroelectric site would ever be established on either of these rivers in Coventry.

There are two electric generation facilities located in Coventry and one in the permitting phase. There is a methane fueled generation station located at the Casella landfill. The methane is harvested from the landfill and is created by the decomposition of organic materials in the landfill. When this facility opened on July 1, 2005 its output was rated at 4.8 megawatts. Since it opened, the facility has been enlarged with additional generators and the output has been increased to 8.0 megawatts. This generating facility is owned and operated by Washington Electric and now provides enough electricity to meet two-thirds of the needs for 10,000 member households and businesses. There is also an on-farm bio digester at the Maxwell farm. A 2.2 MW photovoltaic electric generation plant to be located near the landfill has recently been proposed by New England Waste Services of Vermont, Inc. Known as the "Coventry Solar Project", the project is supported by the Town of Coventry.

Other sources of energy used in Coventry include gasoline, diesel, heating oil, and propane. All of these come from suppliers located outside the Town of Coventry. At this time there does not seem to be any problems with the supply of these sources of energy.

Coventry offers its citizens an energy efficient infrastructure, and this municipal plan offers a means for its citizenry to increase their own level of energy efficiency.

Coventry officials will continue to work with local energy producers, in providing the resources required to meet the community's needs.

The goal of this plan, with regard to the energy used here in Coventry, is to insure that such energy is provided and consumed in a manner that is environmentally sensitive and efficient. In addition, while the Town does not support large scale wind farms, the Town does support and encourage small-scale wind (less than 200 ft. in total height) and solar development, including the proposed 2.2MW facility known as the Coventry Solar Project.

11. HOUSING

A. Existing Housing Data

This section of the Plan looks at housing in Coventry. Data concerning occupancy and affordability will be presented and discussed. This section will also attempt to determine future housing needs in Coventry. The data used in this section was taken from the 2010 Vermont Housing Data (www.housingdata.org). Some of the data presented in this part of the plan will be medians. The median of a group of data is that value where one-half of the data fall below that point and one-half are above that point. For example, with median value of houses, one-half of the houses are valued less than the median and one-half are valued more than the median.

The 2010 population of Coventry was 1,086 persons. The number of households in the community totaled 431, with 355 households owning their home and 76 renting their home. Forty-seven percent of householders moved into their residence between 1990 and 2000, and 18.5 % moved in during the decade from 1980-1989.

The total number of workers age 16 and older in the community totaled 540 (2005-2009, ACS data). The VT Dept. of Labor estimation of the Town’s labor force was 550 persons, with 520 persons employed, and 20 unemployed (UE rate of 4%).

TABLE 13: EXISTING HOUSING DATA			
Status	Units		
Occupied			
Owner	355		
Renter	76		
Total occupied		431	
Vacant			
For rent	8		
For sale only	3		
Seasonal / recreational	16		
All other vacant	19		
Total vacant		46	
Total units			477
VT Housing Data, 2010			

As of April 1, 2010, there were a total of 477 dwelling units in Coventry. Of these 477 units, 431 were occupied and the remaining 46 were vacant. 16 of the 46 vacant units were held for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Coventry's housing stock is relatively young. One-half of the Town's 435 units have been built since 1977 or about 7 new homes per year. In addition, 79.3% of Coventry's housing has been built since 1940. Table 14 has more details.

TABLE 14: YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT	
Time Period	Units
1999 - Mar 2000	25

1995 - 1998	55
1990 - 1994	46
1980 - 1989	73
1970 - 1979	80
1960 - 1969	38
1950 - 1959	14
1940 - 1949	14
1939 - earlier	90
Median year built	1977
Census 2000, Tables H34 & H37	

Of the occupied housing units, 70.8% of the units heated their home with fuel oil or kerosene, and 24.9% of units were heated with wood.

B. Affordability

The objective of this section is to determine whether or not housing in Coventry is affordable. For housing to be affordable, total housing payments should not exceed 30% of the occupant's gross income.

The median household income in Coventry (Census, 2005-2009) was \$51,667 which was higher than the Orleans County average of \$40,605. The median family income for the same period was \$54,318 (Orleans County was \$49,432).

The average annual wage (VT DOL, 2010) for Coventry residents was \$36,394, which was higher than the Orleans County figure of \$31,666. Per capita income (Census, 2005-2009) in Coventry was \$20,997 (Orleans County was \$20,391).

The average price of primary residences sold in 2011 was \$141,583, which was slightly higher than the Orleans County figure of \$139,789. The average price of vacation residences sold in 2011 was \$109,600, which was lower than the County average of \$234,435.

The municipal tax rate in Coventry for FY2011 was \$0.00. The homestead education tax rate was \$1.18 (per \$100), and the non-residential rate was \$1.37 (per \$100).

Median monthly owner costs (2005-2009, Census) for homes with a mortgage was \$986 and \$388 for homes without a mortgage. Twenty percent of owner occupied households pay more than 30% of their income for housing-related costs. Five percent of households pay more than 50% of their income for housing. For rental households, 75.7% pay more than 30% of their income for housing, and 37.8% pay more than 50%. The affordability of rental units is much greater than it is for the County average where 56.5% of incomes are spent on housing.

The reader should note that the Town of Coventry is not and will not be in the business of providing housing for the residents of Coventry. The purpose of this housing element is only to help the Town understand the existing housing situation and plan for the Town's future needs.

12. PLANNING FOR COVENTRY'S FUTURE

A. The Grand List

A review of Coventry's Grand List data over recent decades would reveal that taxes derived from farm properties has been on a steady decline and that a majority of the school tax burden is now carried by residential homeowners. Future planning should include a program that would stimulate diversification in the Town's approach to adding to its Grand List. Commercial and light industry should be offered incentives for moving into Coventry. Coventry's low tax rate should add to a favorable development environment. Increases in the commercial and industrial inventory could replace the loss in the agricultural tax income and reduce the taxes paid by the Town's residents.

Coventry may find it beneficial to join forces with organizations from neighboring communities such as Newport and Barton that are also seeking new commercial growth. Additional consideration should be given to industries that support the Town's agricultural community. Companies that deal with dairy or wood products should be considered prime additions to Coventry's commercial base.

Town support, such as that recently given to the Waste U.S.A. Corporation's expansion program, should continue to be extended to all of the Town's commercial establishments.

It is understood that the Town's commercial base cannot be increased overnight, but a long term program can and will help to offset the current trend toward increasing the R-1 and R-2 tax burden.

B. Bedroom Community Status

This plan points out that Coventry has gone from being a small agriculturally based community, to becoming a bedroom community for the neighboring towns' commercial base. In just twenty years the Town's population has increased by over fifty percent. (See Population and Development Trends) At the same time the Town's farms have decreased to only 6 farms. This population growth had strained the school facilities to their limit, which resulted in the building of a new school with a capacity of 180 students. With a current enrollment of only 117, the new school should be adequate for a number of years.

In 1991 (4 years prior to the completion of the new Coventry School in 1995), one proposed Coventry housing development was limited in its scope by the State of Vermont. The state viewed the Town's lack of classroom space at that time as a deterrent in allowing the proposed number of homes to be built in the development.

If the town is going to continue its practice of non-regulated local development, it must also plan for and develop the expanded services that are required by its residential growth. The Planning Commission and Selectmen must closely monitor areas such as; classroom availability, road usage and conditions, emergency service availability, and the economic impact derived from an expanding population.

The Planning Commission must also monitor the commercial development in all of its neighboring communities. The majority of Coventry's residential growth comes as a direct result of its neighboring Town's commercial and industrial growth. The Commission should take an active role in local and regional planning. Changes in the commercial sector should be reported and discussed with the Selectmen.

C. Town Economics

Changes, brought about by growth, can have a dramatic effect on a Town's economic stability. A review of this plan's Economic Profile chapter will show that over the last ten years, Coventry has experienced a 137% increase in its education expenses and a 57% increase in the cost of other town expenses. Actual town tax increases, however, have been relatively moderate over the past decade, due in part to the ever increasing state funding to education and road maintenance. The Selectmen have managed to keep the road maintenance and town office expenses to a minimum. The Coventry School expenses have also been kept well below the region's average cost per student ratio. Tuition expenses however are continuing to rise at an alarming rate.

It seems at this time that continuing to educate our K-8 students in a town controlled school system makes academic and economic sense. From the Town's economic perspective, local control of K-8 educational expenses far outweighs the alternative of entering the dictates of a tuition program.

As mentioned in the opening section of this chapter, Coventry needs to implement one or more programs that would aid in diversifying its tax base, as a hedge against possible reductions in future state aid programs. Coventry has established a capital reserve program that sets aside money earmarked for specific projects that require large sums of money. Capital reserve funding also helps to eliminate dramatic one-year increases in the Town's tax assessments and serves to eliminate emergency tax appropriation. The Planning Commission should develop a draft program that can be presented to the selectmen for their review. A renewed awareness of the various state and federal grant programs should also be a subject for consideration in the near future.

D. Town Development Restrictions

Prior to the adoption of the 2003 Coventry Town Plan, the Coventry Planning Commission conducted a public opinion survey that seemed to indicate an interest on the part of the town's residents for the adoption of a zoning bylaw. In light of this, the Planning Commission did prepare a draft zoning bylaw, with assistance provided by NVDA, and presented it to the public at three public hearings. During the public hearings it became obvious very quickly that there was a great deal of opposition to the proposed bylaw. After the public hearings, the zoning bylaw

was put before the voters for a vote. The adoption of the zoning bylaw was soundly defeated by the voters.

Development in Coventry does fall under the confines of the State's Act 250, which is meant to protect an area that is to be developed from environmental damage. Sewage treatment is of prime concern during an Act 250 review. The site's proximity to wetlands and or waterways is also a prime consideration. Act 250, the Town's flood hazard area regulations, and restrictions on state owned lands, all play a role in governing development in Coventry.

If continued residential development threatens Coventry's economic stability, consideration should be given to implementing regulations that would balance the rate of new development with the Town's ability to provide and fund the additional town services that would be required.

Consideration should be given to establishing a town pollution policy that could be used to guard against air and water pollution. This policy would inform the public that violation of these standards would result in the town requesting the appropriate state agency intervention. Although policy falls short of the impact of a town regulation, it does serve as a deterrent.

E. Regional Planning

Many of the problems stemming from Coventry's growth cycle are also being faced by other small towns in the region. Discussions concerning these problems should be included at the regional level. The Planning Commission should become involved in the Northeastern Vermont Development Association. Regional representation at the state level can also be very effective in advising the legislature of a problem that is being experienced by a host of small communities.

F. Review Process

It is imperative to establish a review program that will keep all municipal officials aware of changes in trends within the Town's operating environment. Municipal planners must be aware of changing conditions and what impact these changes will have on the Town's plan. Therefore, the Planning Commission must routinely review and record changes occurring at the town and regional level. This review will allow all town departments to see how the changes will affect the established trends and the town plan.

G. Education

As the Town's population has grown over the past twenty years, the school population (grades K-12) has increased from 142 students in 1970 to 198 students in 2000. Since 1970, an average of 22% of the Town's population has been between 5 and 18 years old. A 20-year population trend study shows that by the year 2010, Coventry's student population could increase to 274.

Now that the Town of Coventry has a new school building, it will be important to monitor future enrollment trends to insure that the building and materials remain adequate. This monitoring will involve many different aspects. The building must be maintained and kept clean, books and other materials must be kept up to date, and supplies and staff must be adequate. It will also be

important to monitor the school age population in Coventry to prevent overcrowding. These are important factors affecting the quality of education.

The biggest asset to having the K-8 students in Coventry is the relationship between the students and the current school staff. It is also felt that the small school atmosphere allows each student to receive the personal attention that he or she requires. The townspeople have voiced their support in continuing local control of the Town's K-8 programs. Tuition programs have proven to virtually eliminate public involvement in teacher selection and financial negotiations.

Budget planning by both the School Board and the School's staff must continue to be a high priority item on the School Board's agenda.

13. IMPLEMENTATION

A. Introduction

This section of the plan is devoted to Coventry's future. The preceding chapters of this plan have illustrated the changes that have occurred during Coventry's recent growth cycle. It has shown the impact that these changes have had on the Town's economy, its environment, and its social structure. In using the plan's historical trends, we have been able to develop scenarios on the Town's future population growth and its future financial structure. This section of the Plan now offers a program, based on these scenarios, for planning the Town's future. The objectives and actions that are listed in this chapter are developed to enable each branch of the Town's management team to work together toward common goals.

B. Scope of Objectives

The following objectives, goals, and timetables represent a research and implementation structure that will be followed over the next five years. The thrust of the program is meant to help the town to adjust to the changes in rural life that have been brought about by urban sprawl, a weakening agricultural economy and the dramatic effect that educational expenditures have had on property taxes. The program will also help to develop policies that will preserve and protect the Town's natural resources that are vital to the Town's existence. The conclusions drawn from the following programs will form a basis for future policy development.

C. Proposed Actions and Schedules

Note: All programs described in this chapter will be developed during posted public meetings.

1. Subject: **Establish a Traffic Safety Committee**
Conducted by: Planning Commission and Selectmen
Proposed time period: – 2013-2015
Intro. Statement: Recognizing that traffic through the Village of Coventry and the area near the school is dangerously fast. Truck

- traffic has increased dramatically and statistics indicate that there have been many accidents in or near the village, with several fatalities.
- Goals: To form a committee that will work toward a safer highway system (to include establishing speed reduction areas in and around the Village on Routes 5 and 14.
2. Subject: **Establish a Committee to Explore Zoning**
Conducted by: Planning Commission, Selectmen, and NVDA
Proposed time period: –2013-2015
Intro. Statement: The Planning Goals as evidenced in this Plan suggest that local land use regulations may need to be implemented.
Goals: To form a committee that will address the topics listed in Section 2B of this Plan in order to provide Coventry residents with the information necessary to determine if local land use regulations are appropriate for the Town.
3. Subject: Municipal Plan Review
Conducted by: Planning Commission
Proposed Time Period: Ongoing
Goals: The planning commission will review the data in the municipal plan on an annual basis. New statistical data should be added to the trends and graph sections of the plan. This additional data should be analyzed and the conclusions should be shared with the appropriate authorities. On the fifth year of review, additions and corrections should be made to the plan after the changes are approved by the Selectmen and the voters. The revised plan would then be submitted to the Regional Planning Commission.

14. ADJACENT TOWNS

This section of the Coventry Town Plan presents an analysis of the town plans and zoning bylaws for Coventry’s neighboring communities, where available, as well as growth patterns for near the town boundaries to determine compatibility of development along those boundaries. This section also looks at the regional plan to see how Coventry fits into the scheme of the proposed development for the region as a whole.

Coventry is surrounded by a total of five towns. These include Brownington, Derby, Irasburg, Newport Center, and Newport City. However, even though Barton does not abut Coventry, its consideration is warranted here due its proximity and its employment centers of Barton and Orleans Villages. Three of the abutting towns, Brownington, Irasburg, and Newport Center are much like Coventry in that they share Coventry's rural environment. Barton, Derby, and Newport City, on the other hand, are the three largest communities in Orleans County and their environments are more urban like.

A. Barton

The Town of Barton is located to the south of Coventry but does not actually abut the Town of Coventry. Barton is considered here because of Coventry's status as a bedroom community and Barton's job opportunities – the Ethan Allen manufacturing plant and retail and service businesses in Barton and Orleans villages.

The Village of Orleans, located adjacent to the Barton / Irasburg town line near the northern most corner of the Town of Barton, has been designated for commercial and industrial development in the town's plan and zoning bylaw. Along with Newport and Derby, the Villages of Barton and Orleans are job centers in Orleans County. Any significant growth in the number of jobs, as well as a sudden decrease in jobs, in the Town of Barton could have an effect on the Town of Coventry as Coventry serves as a bedroom community for the surrounding job centers.

The Barton Town Plan also expresses a concern for, and encourages, maintaining water quality. This is important for the Town of Coventry as the Barton River flows from Barton into Coventry. If the Barton River were polluted as it flowed through the Town of Barton it could have a significant impact upon the Barton River Marsh, a large wetland in the eastern portion of Coventry between the Airport Road and Interstate 91. The pollution of this wetland could have a severe impact upon the wildlife that live in this area (much of which is in the South Bay Wildlife Management Area) as well as local wells and other water supplies in eastern Coventry.

With Barton's low growth rate it seems very unlikely that any residential development in Barton will impact the Town of Coventry. However, any commercial or industrial development that should occur in Barton, especially in Orleans Village, could result in additional residential development in Coventry. Such development could have impacts, possibly severe, on Coventry.

B. Brownington

The Town of Brownington is located to the east of Coventry. Brownington, like Coventry, is a rural town with a population of 885 (2000 Census). Between 1990 and 2000 however, the populations of both towns grew at the rate of 26.

Interstate 91, never more than 0.8 of a mile from the Brownington / Coventry town line, acts as a barrier between the two towns. This barrier to development may help to reduce the impacts that development in Brownington will have on Coventry. However, due to I-91, there is only one road that allows passage between Brownington and the Village of Coventry. This could result in any development in Brownington near the town line being focused along this road.

A sudden influx of development in any part of Brownington could also impact water quality in Coventry as all of the surface water in Brownington drains into the Barton River. It has already been pointed out that the pollution of this river could be very detrimental to the quality of the Barton River Marsh as well as the residents and wildlife of the eastern portion of Coventry.

Brownington does have a town plan that should serve to protect the Town of Coventry from adverse impacts caused by development in Brownington. The Brownington Town Plan encourages the development of small, non-polluting businesses as well as the protection of Brownington's rural character, natural resources, and agricultural and forest lands.

C. Derby

Derby, with a population of 4,604 (2000 Census), is located to the northeast of Coventry, and like Barton and Newport, provides the residents of Coventry with employment opportunities.

Of all the boundaries that Coventry shares with its neighbors, the Coventry/Derby town line is the shortest. However, this does not mean that there will not be any impacts due to development. Development in the vicinity of this town boundary will most likely occur along Pine Hill Road, which lies between I-91 and the Barton River Marsh. The Glenn Road is also in this area, but unlike the Pine Hill Road, which enters into Derby, the Glenn Road enters into Newport City.

As with development in Barton and Brownington, development in those parts of Coventry and Derby that drain into the Barton River Marsh could impact the quality of water in the Barton River Marsh. Cobb Brook, which begins at Cobb Pond in Derby flows from the pond, under both the interstate and Pine Hill Road and eventually into the marsh.

Derby does have a town plan adopted in 2009 and a zoning bylaw that is regularly updated — that should mitigate any impacts that development in Derby will have on its neighbors. In addition to encouraging the development of "environmentally friendly businesses", the Derby Town Plan encourages the preservation of the integrity of the environment and the undeveloped woodlands and open spaces. The Plan also suggests that the development of those areas not served by water and sewer be limited to not more than one dwelling unit for every two acres of land. It is likely that Derby will see additional growth and travel into the community as it was recently announced that a WalMart will be coming to the Town as early as 2014.

D. Irasburg

The Town of Irasburg is located to the south of Coventry and is very similar to Coventry in terms of population and existing development. Both towns have a dispersed settlement pattern with a single village.

Access into Coventry from the south is via Routes 5 and 14 with these two routes intersecting very near the town line. Located around this intersection one can already find several establishments including a church, a mini-mart, a farm tractor sales and service business, and a bar. While little else has happened in recent years in this area, this area could become a focal point for future development which may impact Coventry Village and the Coventry School as they are less than half a mile away.

The remaining roads that cross the town line between Coventry and Irasburg are secondary roads and the most likely development along these roads will be residential development. The roads in

these areas are not suitable for heavy traffic, but the Planning Commission may want to monitor the rate and density of residential development in those areas.

While there is the potential for development along the town line to the east and west of the intersection of Routes 5 and 14, it is unlikely that development in these areas will have a severe impact on the Town of Coventry. The development that has the greatest potential of having a severe impact on the Town of Coventry will most likely occur at or near the intersection of Routes 5 and 14.

Finally, the Town of Irasburg does not have a town plan nor does it have a planning commission. This fact may be of concern to the Town of Coventry as there is nothing to mitigate the impacts on the Town of Coventry caused by development in Irasburg other than those that may be subject to review under Act250.

E. Newport Center

The town of Newport Center borders Coventry to the north and west. Along this boundary there are three roads that enter Newport Center and two of these, Routes 14 and 105, are major state highways. Route 14 connects Route 5 to Route 100 and crosses the town boundary in the vicinity of Smith Pond. Route 105 heads east from its intersection with Route 100 in Newport Center passing into the northwestern corner of Coventry and then back into Newport Center just before it enters Newport City. The third road is Lane Road, a town road that connects Route 14 with Route 105 between the Coventry/Newport Center town line and the Newport Center/Newport City town line.

That part of the town line that lies south of Route 14 follows part of a long ridge. This area, along both sides of the town line, is both undeveloped and inaccessible. However, due to the topography and inaccessibility of this area, any development here could have severe impacts on both Coventry and Newport Center.

Development is much more likely to occur along or near that part of the Coventry/Newport Center town line that lies north of Route 14. This area appears to be relatively flat and most of it lies within one-half mile of one or more roads. This area also contains lands that may be used for agricultural purposes and there are four ponds that drain into the Black River. While agricultural lands are often easily developed, development in this area could adversely impact the ability to use these lands for agriculture in the future, as well as negatively impact the Black River watershed and Lake Memphremagog.

The most recent Newport Center Town Plan, adopted September 10, 2009. The plan does encourage the maintenance of the Town's rural and agricultural characteristics and the preservation of open space. However, it also indicates that the preservation of open land should not inhibit the future growth of the town. Newport Center does have a zoning bylaw in effect (most recent version 2006, although their Planning Commission is updating the bylaw at this writing). Interestingly, there is only one zoning district for the entire town of Newport. While permitted uses are residential in nature, other types of development – commercial and industrial could be permitted upon receipt of a conditional use permit. This creates the potential for

conflicting land uses in the future (near or distant) depending upon the decisions of Newport officials. However, hearings requiring conditional use approval for lands in Newport Center immediately adjacent to Coventry would require that an adjacent landowner in Coventry be notified of that proposed development.

F. Newport City

In terms of sheer numbers, Newport City had the greatest increase in population between the 1990 Census and the 2000 Census (+516 persons), but from 2000 – 2010 the population decreased by 416 persons. While the increase can be directly attributable to the opening of the Northern State Correctional Facility and the creation of new businesses and the expansion of existing businesses between 1990 – 2000, the decrease can likely be attributed to a general economic downturn in VT and the nation at the end of the 2000 – 2010 period.

While Newport's growth in both population and jobs likely impacts most of Coventry, it is important to look at both the existing and potential development along the town line. The area to be most concerned about, perhaps, is that area along Route 105 west of Newport and the roads that connect Routes 14 and 105. This area is already one of the most densely developed in the town and there is the potential for additional development, as it is high and dry. The homes along Route 105 in Newport are served by a public water system. Public sewer is not available here. Development in this area could spill over into Coventry, creating a suburban development pattern with single-family dwellings on lots served by on-site water and sewer. If this were to happen, this could greatly impact Coventry's rural qualities.

Development along Route 5 in the vicinity of the town line is more limited due to physical constraints and includes little more than a small trailer park and a garage. To the west of Route 5 in this area sits a steep slope and to the east is the Barton River and a large wetland, much of which is in the South Bay Wildlife Management Area. Even though the natural features in this area will limit future development right along Route 5, the area at the top of slope on the west side of Route 5 may be accessible from the Adler Brook Road. Therefore, development in this area must be monitored carefully as any development here could cause severe impacts on both communities as well as Lake Memphremagog.

The Newport City Plan promotes industrial and recreational development. This type of development is appropriate for the area and a small city like Newport, as long as it is located in such a manner so as not to negatively impact the surrounding towns, because it will provide jobs for the residents of the area. The Newport City Plan also promotes the extension of water & sewer lines to city limits. While this may be good for existing development that does not have the benefit of these services it could also promote sprawl which the City is concerned about. In fact, this concern is expressed in the plan due to the fact that most new residential development in Newport has been on the outskirts of the city.

Finally, the Newport City Plan does encourage the protection of the environment and promotes the city as part of a community of towns. This later fact indicates that the City is aware that it is

part of a larger community and that what happens in Newport can and sometimes does have an impact on the surrounding area.

G. Regional Plan

The Regional Plan for the Northeast Kingdom designates the village of Coventry as a village center. Village centers are more densely developed areas with a mixture of residential homes and businesses that may be served by public water systems and/or public sewer systems. Finally, village centers must have adequate access via, state highways, to the principal and secondary activity centers that are defined in the regional plan. The remaining areas in Coventry are designated as rural agricultural/forest areas. For these areas the regional plan calls for limited, scattered development other than the rural agricultural and forestry type unless the local plan and/or zoning provides for it. At present, the development within Coventry fits well with the designations for the town set forth in the regional plan, although there are constraints for future development in the village area due to its location near flood hazard areas. This, of course, may change in the future depending on development patterns within and adjacent to the town.

H. Conclusion

While there may be some reasons for concern in the future, Coventry's Town Plan and current development patterns do appear to be reasonably consistent with the plans and development patterns for the surrounding towns and the region. However, this situation should be monitored given the growth that is expected in the Newport area. Development in one town can impact an adjoining town even when that development is not on or near the town line. This is especially true for Coventry, as Coventry serves as a bedroom community for three of its neighboring towns.