TOWN OF GEORGIA, VERMONT
2017 COMPREHENSIVE MUNICIPAL PLAN

Photo Credit: Suzanna Brown

Adopted by the Georgia Selectboard
January 9, 2017

Acknowledgements

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Technical assistance provided by:

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This Town Plan Update was funded by a Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Table of Contents

List of Maps

List of Tables

List of Figures

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF PLAN

This plan was developed to assist Town Officials, residents, and persons contemplating actions involving land use and development in the Town of Georgia. It provides a comprehensive framework and statement of policies, goals and implementation strategies from which to make decisions regarding land use, economic development, energy, provision of services and facilities, resource use and conservation (including historic, scenic, cultural, and natural resources), and public health, safety and welfare.

The Georgia Town Plan also serves as the legal basis for the adoption of local land use regulations, capital budget programs, and impact fee ordinances. By statute, plans must be readopted every five years or they expire.

It is important to note the legal link between the plan and other regulations the Town may adopt. The policies, goals and implementation strategies found herein should serve as a guide for decision making by the appropriate branches of government as well as the private sector. The plan policies give definition and meaning to the regulations and should be used in concert with one another in order to be effective in directing growth and development in desirable ways. A good plan is one that is used by both the public and private sector to make reasonable decisions concerning development and land use for the overall benefit of the citizens residing in the Town.

This plan updates a plan adopted on September 12, 2011. The 2016 plan has been developed by the Georgia Planning Commission with assistance from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and with input from other Town boards, municipal offices, private citizens and the Town Administrator. The plan has been developed to conform to current state statutes, including 24 VSA Chapter 117.

As part of the 2011 Town Plan revision, the Planning Commission sought to further engage the public on two specific issues currently facing the community: energy and issues related to public and private roads.

This Town Plan required considerable involvement and effort. Projections are based, to a large degree, on the 2009-2013 American Community Survey and the 2010 Census, as well as a review of past Town reports. A list of past Town reports can be found in Appendix A.

The Town Plan is given consideration in state agency planning decisions, state and federal regulatory schemes, such as Act 250 Hearings, Agency of Transportation Hearings, and Public Service Board Hearings. The Planning Commission and Selectboard are statutory parties in any Act 250 Hearing involving Georgia and conformance with Plan Policies is one method of participating in those hearings.

A less tangible, but much desired, goal of this Town Plan is to serve as a focus for community action and governmental action. There is much that citizens can do for the benefit of themselves and the town by working towards an identified common goal. Georgia has many excellent examples of this, including the Historical Society, the Recreation Committee, the Solid Waste Committee, the South Georgia Fire District, and the Conservation Commission, to name a few. These and other groups continue to work to make Georgia a better place to live.

Planning is a continuing and dynamic process, the purpose of which is to prepare for the future by understanding where we came from, how we got there, where we want to go from here, and how that can be best accomplished. The process involves developing a "community vision." This plan is an attempt to provide that vision for the town over the next five years and beyond. As stated in previous plans, "A community which plans has decided to exercise some choice over its future. It rejects the idea that the undesirable consequences of growth are inevitable."

Georgia took the first steps toward planning over fifty years ago when it adopted zoning in 1967. The first town plan was adopted in 1972 and was updated in 1986, 1995, 2001, 2006 and again in 2011. This plan will be another step in the continuing process of promoting a desirable community setting while protecting and improving environmental quality.

Another statement from previous plans is as true today as when it was written and sums up the purpose of this plan: "Changes are coming and at an increasing rate. The problems posed by these pressures must be addressed by comprehensive forethought to ensure that future decisions will provide long term solutions rather than stop gap measures. Since communities exist primarily for the health and enjoyment of those who live in them, it follows that the nature, location, and timing of any future development should be determined by the people of Georgia rather than left solely to chance or the decisions of developers. The intent is not to eliminate any existing land uses or to stop all future development, but to channel the desired growth to appropriate locations within the Town."

While municipal planning can lead to many positive actions and benefits to the community, it must also be recognized that there are external factors, over which we have little control, which will influence our community. The national economy, tax policy, federal and state regulation or legislation, natural disasters, the weather, dairy prices and the real estate market are a few factors that can have major impacts on all of us. No plan is perfect nor can anyone anticipate all the factors affecting us as individuals or as a community. Not all of the goals, policies and implementation strategies outlined in this plan will be achieved. So why plan at all? If only a few of the goals are met and the result is that we leave our community a better place for our children, then, the efforts will have been worth it.

B. STATEMENT OF AUTHORIZATION

The Georgia Town Plan has been prepared in accordance with and under the authority

of Title 24, Chapter 117 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated (V.S.A.) which will henceforth be referred to in this document as "the Act." As such, the provisions of the Act are hereby incorporated by reference into this Town Plan and the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations and may be used by the Planning Commission to further define and clarify any policies, goals, implementation strategies, powers and duties expressed herein. This Act is also known as the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act.

First enacted in 1968, the Act has undergone several amendments, with a major change in 1988, known as the Growth Management Act or Act 200. The Act provides the legal framework for municipal planning, capital budgeting, impact fee ordinances, transfer and purchase of development rights, and land use regulation.

SECTION 2. PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES

The following section includes goals and policies related to each section of the Town Plan. Many of the policies were developed as part of past town plans and have been carried forward in the 2016 update because they continue to be relevant. Other goals and policies are new, reflecting current town planning goals.

Implementation actions related to these goals and policies are located in Section 8, Plan Implementation

A) Housing

Goals:

To ensure that safe, sanitary and adequate housing is available and affordable for Georgia residents.

To achieve a diverse mix of housing types that meets the needs of Georgia's population at every stage of life.

Policies:

A-1) Where possible, rehabilitate existing housing through the use of existing programs or volunteer efforts, such as Habitat for Humanity.

A-2) To encourage the provision of affordable housing through planning for appropriately sized lots, accessory apartments, and clustered developments.

A-3) Ensure that residential development does not exceed the ability of the community to provide services and facilities for such development.

A-4) Design and phase development so as to minimize impacts on municipal services, local tax burden and important resources.

A-5) Encourage Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) that allow for clustered housing and less infrastructure to reduce the cost and other impacts of housing development.

A-6) Provide a diversity of housing types and ownership that meets the needs of Georgia residents.

B) Economic Development

Goal:

To encourage the development and expansion of appropriate and compatible industry and business in the town.

Policies:

B-1) To promote a diversified and stable economy by encouraging compatible industrial and commercial development and the continuation of existing industries, small businesses and home occupations.

B-2) To provide necessary infrastructure to accommodate more intensive land uses (such as industrial and commercial) within areas designated for such growth. To avoid those areas where infrastructure is not available, the land will not support the use, or there would be a conflict with present land uses.

B-3) When planning for commercial and industrial development, encourage such development to serve the public good in terms of employment, revenue, environmental quality, health and safety, and services.

B-4) To encourage home occupations that are compatible with the surrounding areas through specific standards in the zoning bylaws.

B-5) To enhance and protect the vitality of Villages and population centers as important community assets.

B-6) Commercial and industrial development shall not place an undue burden on the town in terms of services and facilities required from their development and its associated impacts.

C) Taxes, Growth and Fiscal Condition

Goal:

To maintain a sound fiscal balance for the town, to encourage reasonable, functional, orderly development of facilities, utilities and services, and to promote the health of agriculture while providing a stable economic base for the other sectors of the economy.

Policies:

C-1) The location, form, and rate of growth must not exceed the ability of the residents of the town to pay for the necessary services and facilities required from that growth but must be sufficient to mitigate the increasing cost of services.

C-2) Development should occur based on projected need, availability of revenues to provide services, and recognition of the limits of human, financial, and natural resources.

C-3) Development of infrastructure shall not significantly impact natural or human resources outlined in this plan unless there is a demonstrated public need.

C-4) Growth shall be guided toward locations which can make use of existing services and facilities.

D) Transportation

Goal:

To provide a safe, efficient, cost effective transportation network to meet the varied needs of the residents of the Town.

Policies:

D-1) Development of roads shall meet specified standards as set forth by the Selectboard. Roads will be accepted into the Town highway system only after meeting these requirements and a finding that it is in the public good to do so. Developers shall bear all costs associated with acceptance of roads.

D-2) Highway access for the purpose of development shall be strictly controlled on Rural Principal and Rural Minor Arterial Roads. Wherever possible, lots will be required to provide one access/egress point onto said highways which shall serve the entire parcel. Multiple curb cuts are strongly discouraged.

D-3) To plan development so as to avoid the need for major public investment in transportation networks. Particular regard shall be given to impacts on the carrying capacity of transportation networks affected by the development. Developers will be required to pay for the costs of necessary improvements.

D-4) To support alternative forms of transportation such as bike and pedestrian paths or lanes, particularly in conjunction with new development or road projects, and to connect these systems, where possible, to form a comprehensive network.

D-5) Public and private roads shall not be constructed or extended into fragile, unique, and sensitive area, as designated by this plan, when it would lead to the destruction or degradation of those resources.

D-6) The Town will work cooperatively with the state to develop a transportation network that meets both state and local needs. The Town will play an active role in the planning of new improvements proposed by the state which might affect Georgia. Such plans shall conform to the overall goals and policies of the Town.

E) Historic and Scenic Resources

Goals:

To encourage that Georgia's noteworthy historic and scenic resources remain intact.

Policies:

E-1) Places of outstanding historical, educational or scenic value shall be protected from development that would unreasonably impair their character or quality.

E-2) Encourage the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic structures.

E-3) To encourage innovation in design and layout of development so that the visual impact can be minimized.

E-4) To encourage the use of vegetative buffers and other screening methods to reduce the visual impact of development.

SECTION 4. THE PHYSICAL SETTING

F) Geology and Topography

Goal:

To protect private and public investment and maintain the natural environment by considering topography and geology when determining land use.

Policies:

F-1) Geologic factors should be considered in planning to insure the proper use of land.

F-2) Development on ridges and hilltops shall be discouraged and their adverse aesthetic and environmental impacts should be prevented.

F-3) Site modifications necessary for a particular project should be allowed but there should be no substantial change to natural drainage ways.

F-4) Land development on slopes in excess of 25% shall be prohibited and every effort shall be made to maintain a suitable cover of natural vegetation to reduce erosion.

F-5) Development shall be performed so as to prevent runoff and soil erosion. Vegetative cover should be maintained or established and erosion control measures shall be undertaken at the time of construction.

G) Soils

Goal:

To maintain and improve the quality of important soils, such as agriculture and forestry soils, when considering the future development of the town.

Policies:

G-1) The Town shall require proof of a State wastewater permit as a condition of local Zoning Permits, where applicable.

G-2) Slopes in excess of 8% may be highly subject to erosion, depending on soil type, and consideration should be given to the use of acceptable soil erosion control measures. Vegetative cover shall be established and maintained after construction.

G-3) Development on poorly drained soils shall be avoided.

G-4) Following the use of required agricultural practices and best management practice is essential to protect valuable soil and other resource. Accepted forestry practices and/or best management practices are encouraged as a way to protect valuable soil and other resources.

G-5) Impacts to prime agricultural soils due to land development shall be mitigated to ensure the future viability of agricultural uses in Georgia.

H) Earth Resources

Goal:

To protect local earth resources until needed for future use for the benefit of the community; and to minimize the impacts of extraction on the environment.

Policies:

H-1) Extraction of earth resources should be permitted when it has been demonstrated that the activity will not have an undue impact on the Town of Georgia and its residents.

H-2) All proposed earth extractions shall have a plan for the reclamation of the site, acceptable to the Planning Commission, to ensure the wise use of resources. Guarantees may be required of the developer to assure that the site is properly reclaimed.

I) Climate and Air Quality

Goal:

To consider climatic factors and to protect the quality of the air when planning for future development.

Policies:

I-1) Development which degrades air quality should be strongly discouraged.

J) Water Resources

Goal:

To maintain, improve, and protect the quality of Georgia's water resources, including groundwater and surface water.

Policies:

J-1) Following the use of required agricultural practices and best management practice is essential to protect water resources. Accepted forestry practices and/or best management practices are encouraged as a way to protect water resources.

J-2) Future development near surface waters should be low density and low impact.

J-3) As much as reasonably possible, streams, ponds, rivers, and wetlands should be maintained in a natural state and protected from pollutants so they can provide their natural functions. Buffer strips shall be encouraged so as to protect these natural functions.

J-4) Consider impacts to Public Source Water Protection during the development review process.

J-5) Development shall be prohibited on wetlands and hydric soils.

J-6) Development within shoreland and streambank areas shall, where reasonable, maintain existing vegetation, prevent soil erosion, prevent pollution of the water body, and be set back in accordance with established buffers so as not to detract from the natural beauty or cause harm to the environment.

K) Flood Resiliency

Goal:

To ensure that Georgia is a flood resilient community.

Policies:

K-1) Development in identified flood hazard and river corridor areas shall be prohibited in all but rare, specifically defined circumstances to ensure that the impacts of flooding and fluvial erosion are not exacerbated.

K-2) Protect and restore floodplains and river corridors that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.

K-3) Support implementation of high priority projects as identified in the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

K-4) Encourage flood emergency preparedness and response planning.

L) Fragile, Unique and Sensitive Areas

Goal:

Protect fragile, unique, and sensitive areas.

Policies:

L-1) Buffer strips shall be encouraged to prevent harmful effects of development from affecting these areas.

SECTION 5. UTILITIES, FACILITIES AND TOWN SERVICES

M) Utilities, Facilities and Town Services

Goals:

Development and growth in Georgia should occur at a rate which can be accommodated by reasonable expansion and/or improvement of facilities and services.

Public utilities and services should be enhanced in ways that improve economic development opportunities and quality of life, but that do not jeopardize public health, the environment or scenic resources.

Regulation of land development in Georgia should not negatively impact the availability of safe and affordable childcare.

To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities for all ages, sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of current and future residents.

Policies:M-1) Review projects based on their individual impact, as well as their conformance with the overall rate of growth and facility/service capability planned for the town.

M-2) Locate facility and service improvements in existing development areas and areas that are designated for future growth.

M-3) All commercial telecommunication facilities shall be located in appropriate areas, respecting the integrity of residential areas, aesthetic concerns, and natural resource issues. As noted elsewhere in the Plan, the protection of scenic and natural areas is very important to the Town of Georgia.

M-4) New telecommunications facilities shall be co-located on or near existing structures, unless the Planning Commission determines that separate facilities will create less visual and aesthetic impact.

SECTION 6. LAND USE

N) Land Use

Goals:

To concentrate residential, commercial and industrial growth in the Village Center and the South Village area to protect the Town's rural character and resources.

Policies:

N-1) To avoid strip development the town may require developers to use techniques such as clustering to discourage strip development along highway corridors. Strip development along highway corridors shall be strongly discouraged.

N-2) Use the site plan review process to encourage innovation in design and layout for improved traffic flow, pedestrian access, parking, landscaping and screening, lighting and aesthetics.

N-3) Support Vermont's "right-to-farm" statute.

N-4) Support the preservation and protection of open land agricultural fields and forests through programs that encourage farming and forestry such as the current use tax program and land conservation easements.

N-5) Encourage the preservation of land in an agricultural, wooded or open state, particularly in areas of the town which are important scenic viewsheds and not well connected to service systems.

N-6) Georgia's rural landscape shall continue to be characterized by open land agricultural fields and forests. Agriculture shall be the predominant use in the Agricultural/Rural Residential District ("AR 1").

N-7) Recognize that important resource lands such as prime and statewide agricultural and forest soils are a unique and limited resource, which are essential for food and fiber production.

N-8) Consider the impacts of livestock in medium and high density residential areas.

SECTION 7. ENERGY

O) Energy

Goals:

To reduce the use of and dependence on expensive and polluting energy sources.

To promote energy efficient use and conservation of energy resources.

To promote the use of renewable energy sources.

Policies:

O-1) Promote the use of small scale renewable energy sources.

O-2) Promote educational opportunities which increase energy awareness of students, local officials and townspeople.

O-3) Encourage the use of car and van pools, public transportation and park and rides for commuters and others.

O-4) Consider energy costs and energy efficiency as a criteria for the purchase of Town equipment and facilities.

SECTION 3: THE COMMUNITY SETTING

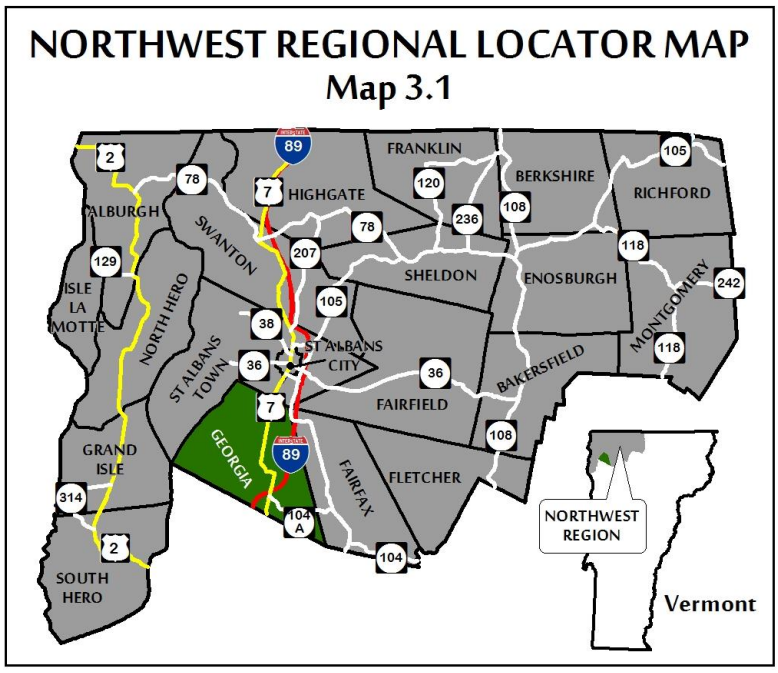
A. LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

Georgia is located in the southwest corner of Franklin County and borders the Chittenden County towns of Milton and Westford to the south, the Franklin County towns of Fairfax to the east, St. Albans and Fairfield to the north and Lake Champlain to the west. Georgia has over seven miles of shoreline along Lake Champlain and part of its border with Milton bisects Lake Arrowhead.

The Town of Georgia has a land area of 30,952 acres, or 47.8 square miles, making it a large town by Vermont standards (many are app 36 square miles).

The Town is characterized by a narrow shoreline, a broad, relatively flat plain, the foothills of the Green Mountains, the Lamoille River and tributaries, as well as various other smaller streams, tributaries and wetlands. The Town is roughly half open land and half forested, with much of the open land devoted to agriculture.

Georgia's long boundary with Lake Champlain, it's relatively flat plain, and foothills of the Green Mountains make it a diverse and beautiful town.



B. HISTORY

To write a history of Georgia in a few pages is like writing a single page town plan. Since 1967 the Georgia Town History Committee has produced 34 volumes of Georgia history. However, an effort has been made to touch on the highlights of our history reflecting the major changes in our community as we move through the first decade of the 21st century.

Georgia was chartered by the first royal Governor of New Hampshire, Benning Wentworth, August 17, 1763. In 1773, the original shares were purchased by men who later became prominent in Vermont affairs, Levi Allen, Ethan Allen, Remember Baker, Heman Allen and Ira Allen. By the time the town was settled, Ira Allen owned most of the shares.

The town of Georgia was organized on March 31, 1788 at a meeting warned by Judge John White of Chittenden County, of which Georgia was then a part. Reuben Evarts was elected clerk. The other officers were Stephen Davis, Stephen Holmes, and Richard Sylvester, selectmen; Frederick Bliss, constable; Solomon Goodrich and Abel Pierce, haywards; William Farrand, Noah Loomis and Stephen Fairchild, surveyors of highways.

The families of William Farrand and Andrew Van Guilder were the first to winter in Georgia, during 1785-86. The first child born in town was named Georgia Farrand. He was named by Ira Allen. The Farrands settled in the northwest corner of the town, the Van Guilders in the southeast corner. Several single men had spent their summers in town before this, returning to their homes in southern New England in the winter.

Early settlers had to transport their grain to Whitehall, New York, or Vergennes to be ground. Transportation was by way of the lake, on foot, or by ox team through the woods. In 1788 there was almost a famine as it was a poor crop year and more people wintered in town than the food supply could support.

The population of Georgia increased rapidly from 1791 when there were 340 people in town. The population figures are interesting:

1800 A.D. – 1068 residents
1810 A.D. – 1760 residents
1830 A.D. – 1897 residents
1850 A.D. – 2686 residents
1870 A.D. – 1603 residents
1890 A.D. – 1282 residents
1910 A.D. – 1090 residents

The population was never again over 1100 until 1970. Georgia was the largest town north of Burlington until 1830 and the largest town in Franklin County until 1840.
In 1800, construction of a "meeting house" was started, and in 1802 the Old White

Meeting House was dedicated. It was built under the direction of Captain Spratt, an English architect. It was carefully built of the best of materials and for years was the largest and finest building in northern Vermont. It served the town in many ways for 150 years. It was destroyed by fire on October 2, 1952.

During the War of 1812, smugglers drove beef cattle into Canada to supply the British Army, but the men of Georgia sided with the customs officers and put up so courageous a fight that the traffic was stopped. The smugglers called Georgia "Hells Gate."

The Georgia militia company crossed the sand bar to Georgia in September 1814 and was transported across the lake to Plattsburg. There they helped repel a British invasion from Canada.

In 1850, the Central Vermont Railroad was completed through Georgia. The High Bridge over the Lamoille River is the highest railroad bridge in Vermont; it is also the most photographed railroad bridge.

Hemenway's Gazetteer lists 142 men from Georgia who served in the Civil War. Twenty-six of these men died of disease or wounds while in the service. There were six commissioned officers and two Civil War generals born in Georgia: General George H. Stannard and Brigadier General Joel A. Dewey. A granite monument near the Dunsmore farm marks General Stannard's birthplace.

Other famous men of this age who were born in Georgia were Alvah Sabin, Congressman from Vermont; Gardner Colton, who invented the first electric locomotive and who also popularized "laughing gas"; and Daniel Bliss, founder of the American University in Beirut, Lebanon in 1866.

The Vermont roster for the Spanish American War shows five men from Georgia and the roster of the Vermont Adjutant Generals office shows 24 Georgia men in the armed service during World War I. Of these two died in service and two were wounded in action. Six were commissioned officers.

In the Second World War there were at least 56 men and women from Georgia in the armed services. One, Wendell Post, did not return. Many others from Georgia served in the Korean, Vietnam and Gulf wars.

In 1896 Georgia established a public library. The Georgia Library is now located in the building which formerly housed the Northwest Regional Library on Route 7.

Our Churches

As early as 1793 Congregationalists gathered in Georgia. Gradually the congregation diminished until in the 1930s services were no longer held and the church was torn down. Sarah Hyde was the inspiration for the Episcopal Church in East Georgia which was constructed in 1872. It too succumbed to lack of parishioners and by 1945 it was torn down. In 1985 the Northside Baptist Church purchased a building on Route 7 at

the north end of town and it soon was renovated to serve its parishioners; this congregation has since left this location for a site in St. Albans which allowed for a larger building.

There are currently four active churches in Georgia:

- the Methodist Church in Georgia Center, organized about 1830;
- the Baptist Church in Georgia Plains, organized about 1793;
- the Ascension Parish, whose first Mass was celebrated in the school, and in 1988 they gathered in their own new church on Route 7 just south of Georgia Center; and
- the Redeeming Grace Church, located in Georgia South Village, organized in 2010.

Our Schools

Early in its history Georgia had 16 school districts where one-room schools served the neighborhoods. In 1959 a consolidated school opened its door to 242 students. By 1973 another school had been built and the enrollment had grown to 430 students. In 1991, $3.87 million was spent to house about 700 students with a new building and considerable renovations to the two older ones. The student population is currently 896 according to Franklin Southwest School District, with 620 children attending Georgia Elementary School.

Our Town

Georgia now ranks 33rd in population in the State of Vermont. Georgia has several social groups: Friends of the Arts, a Lions Club, active Boy, Cub, and Girl Scout troops, a Georgia Historical Society, a Riding Club, Snowmobile Club, and 4-H groups. The Georgia Station Post Office opened in 1993 at Bob's Hardware, and is now located at the Georgia Market on Route 7. Georgia has a seven-bay, 9000 square foot fire station on Route 7. The Town expanded the highway department into former fire department space. The Town has constructed a new sand and salt shed and expanded internal meeting rooms and office facilities at the Town Hall.

Georgia will continue to grow. With close access to I-89, Lake Champlain on its western shore, Mt. Mansfield not far away, and Burlington within a half-hour, the town has strong appeal. It is a nice place to live and it will continue to attract people.

C. DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

In order to plan successfully, a community must understand its demographic composition. This section of the town plan includes a community profile of Georgia, which provides a solid baseline for town planning activities. An understanding of recent growth trends, current community make up, and future growth projections, planners can better respond to residents' needs, and better account for the impacts and opportunities of growth. A community profile accomplishes the following: 1) documents the growth trends which have brought the town to its current situation, 2) assesses the current

makeup of the town, from demographic, economic, housing and social perspectives, and; 3) assesses the range of growth factors affecting the town.

Much of the information in the demographic overview, and throughout the entire plan, comes from the American Community Survey (ACS). This is because the US Census no longer collects a considerable amount of data that was previously collected. When information previously obtained via the US Census was no longer available, data from the American Community Survey was used. Typically, data from the American Community Survey 2009-2013, the most recent American Community Survey available during the drafting of this plan.

The main difference between the American Community Survey and the US Census is that the American Community Survey contains estimates based on surveys of random households within a community during a five year period (ex. 2009-2013). It is not a "count" like the census. The American Community Survey is collected via mail.

According to the US Census Bureau, approximately 295,000 surveys are mailed per month to randomly selected addresses in the United States. Follow up phone calls or personal visits by US Census workers are made to households that do not respond to the mailed survey.

Since Georgia is a small community, and since American Community Survey is a survey and not a census, data from the American Community Survey for Georgia typically has a considerable large margin of error. This should be kept in mind while reading this report. Despite issues with the American Community Survey, it is the best available data for a variety of data points used in this plan.

American Community Survey is abbreviated as "ACS" throughout the plan. More information about ACS can be found at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/.

Population Growth

A review of historic population data for Georgia, **Figure 3.1**, indicates early rapid growth, reaching a population of almost 2,700 persons in 1850. The growth which characterized the town's early years was followed by almost 100 years of population decline reaching a low population point of just over 1,000 persons in 1940. Population levels began to increase again at a relatively slow rate in the 1940s and 1950s, picking up speed between 1960 and 2000, increasing by almost 3,300 persons. Clearly, those 40 years have been a time of tremendous change in the town. Since 2000, the population has significantly stabilized. **Figure 3.2** illustrates that while growth has continued between 2000 and 2010, it was at a far slower rate (3.2%) when compared with other recent decades.

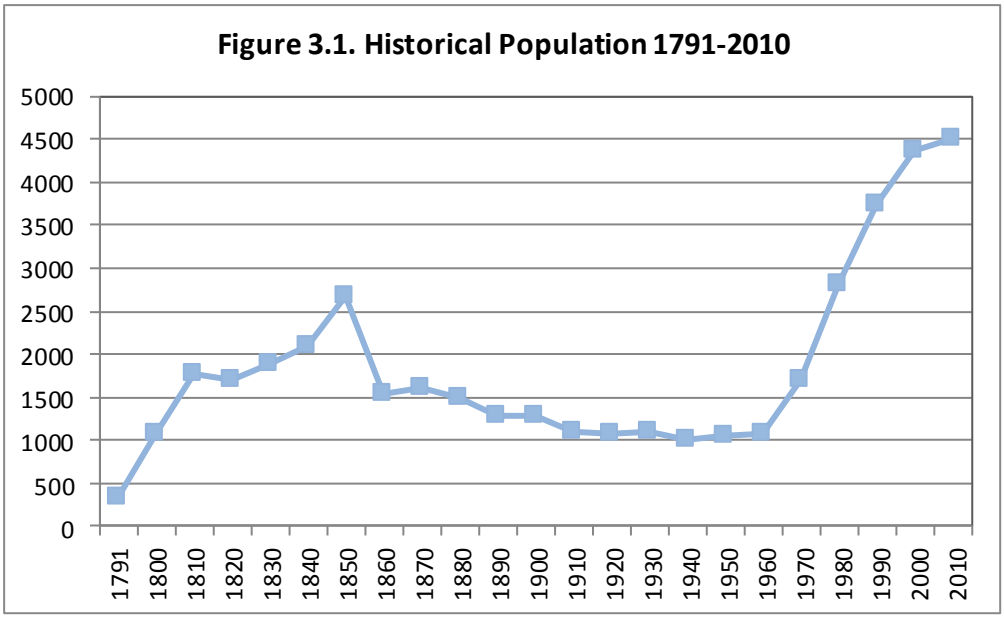


Figure 3.1 – Source: U.S. Census

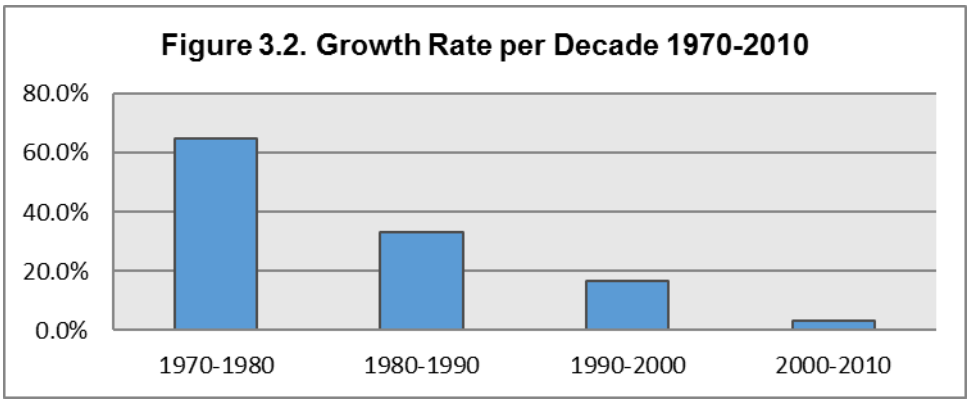


Figure 3.2 - Source: NRPC calculations based on U.S. Census, 2000, 2010; Center for Rural Studies UVM

Georgia's low growth rate is consistent with growth trends throughout Vermont in recent years. The recession of the late 2000s has put a brake on the economic growth that characterized the early part of the decade.

Figure 3.3 compares Georgia's average yearly growth rates during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Since the slowdown in Georgia's population growth starting in the 1990s, the town is showing an average yearly population growth rate more consistent with the State at large; it fell off sharply compared to Chittenden and Franklin Counties.

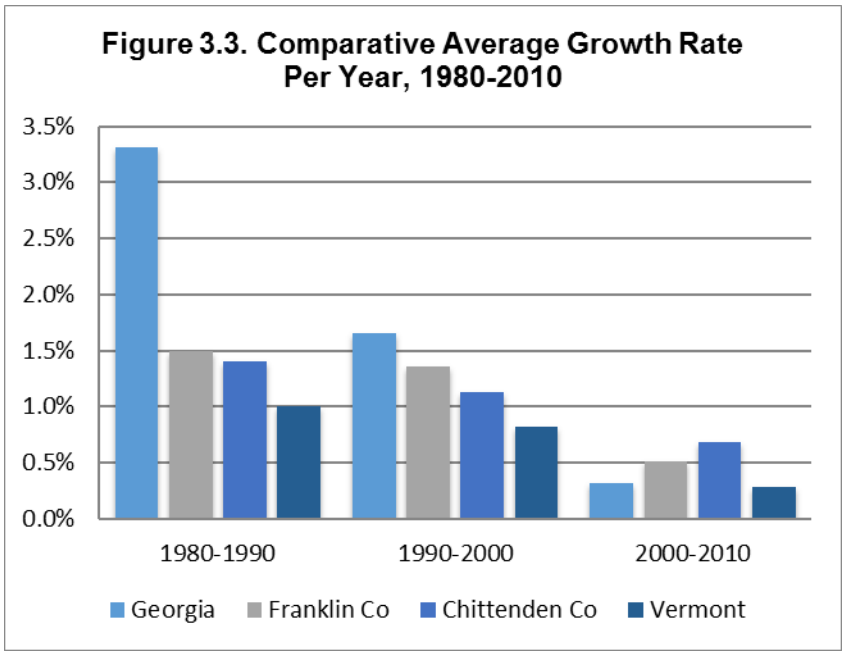


Figure 3.3 - Source: 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010 Census

Figure 3.4 shows that Georgia is among the most slowly growing towns in Franklin County, besting only Richford and Enosburg in its growth rate, even while Chittenden and Franklin Counties grew at a more rapid rate.

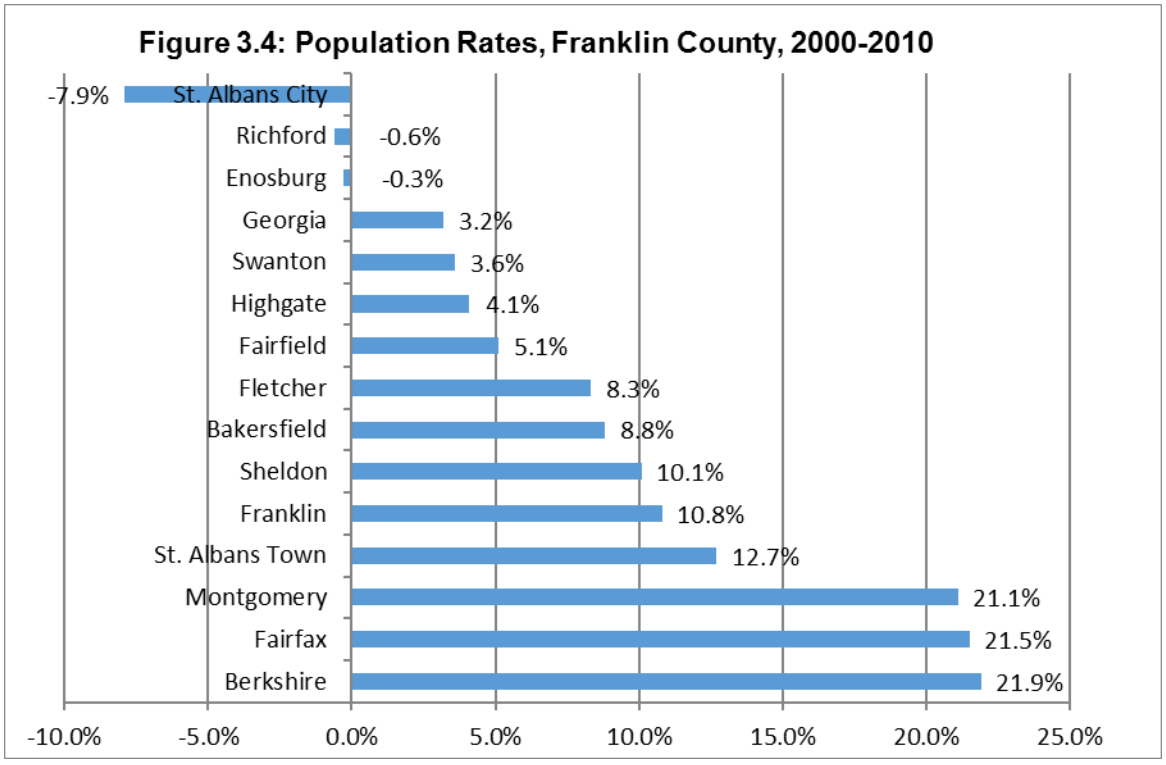


Figure 3.4 - Source: 2000 and 2010 Census

An Aging Population

Figure 3.5 contains a graphic comparison of the percentage distribution of the Georgia population by under-35 and over-35 age groups. The figure shows that the under-35 population steadily decreased since 1980 as the over-35 segment of the population increased. The two segments each held approximately a 50% share of the population in 2000. According to the 2009-2013 American Community Survey, the split is now approximately 44% less than 35 years old and approximately 56% aged 35 and older.

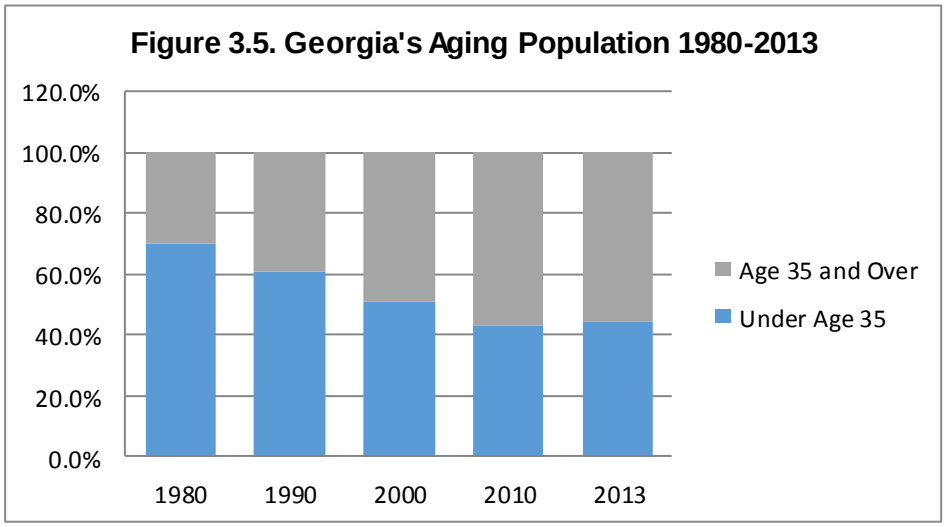


Figure 3.5 – Source: U.S. Census, 1980-2010; American Community Survey 2009-2013 5-Year Estimate

This trend is consistent with the historic impact of the aging "baby boom" generation combined with the slow growth of recent years and the failure to attract a younger demographic. This trend is further illustrated in **Figure 3.6**, which shows a decline in the percentage of married family households with children under the age of 18. This trend is further reflected in the stability of the school population in town.

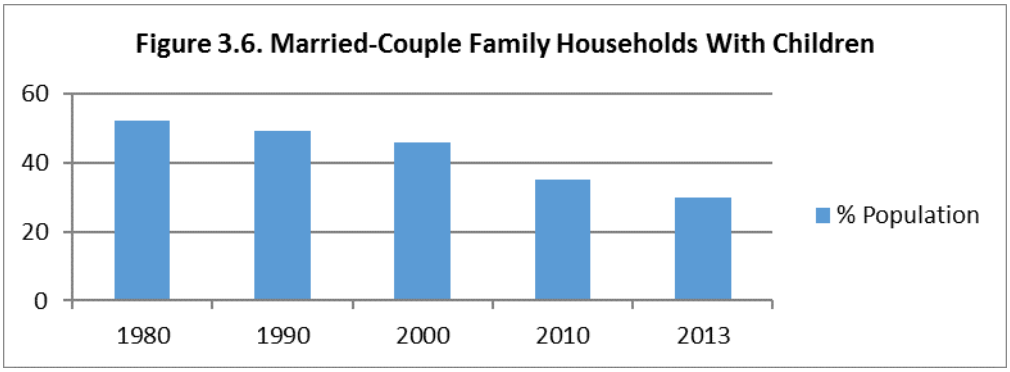


Figure 3.6 – Source: 1980-2010 US Census; 2009-2013 American Community Survey

Household Incomes

According to the 2009-2013 American Community Survey, the median household income in Georgia was $81,394 compared to $56,240 in Franklin County, $61,763 in the Burlington MSA, and $54,267 in Vermont. A closer look at income levels in Georgia suggests (**Figure 3.7**) that the town is attracting people with substantially higher incomes per household, possibly because its proximity to higher-paying jobs in the City of Burlington.

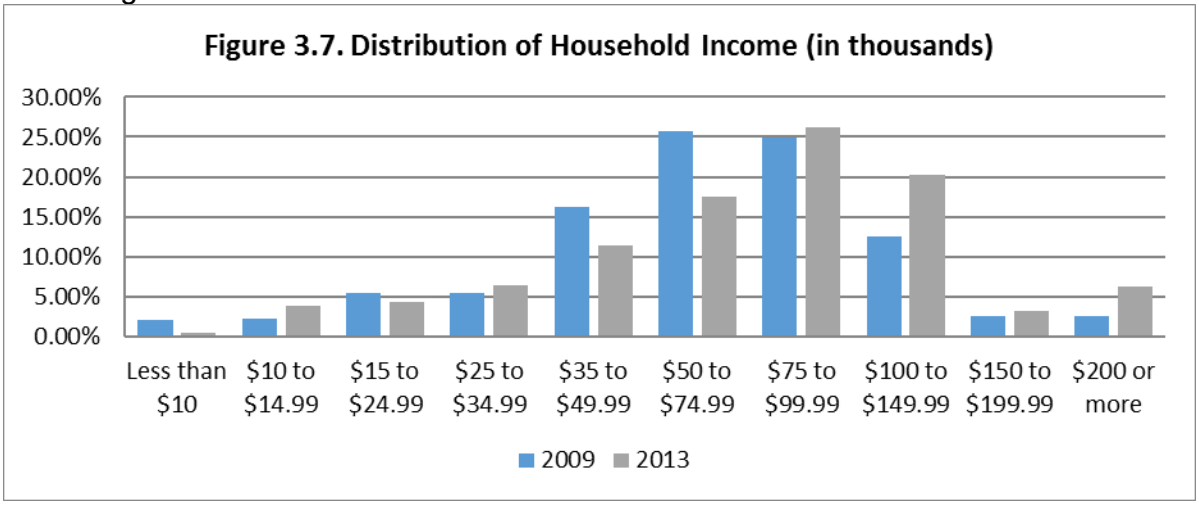


Figure 3.7 – Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2005-2009, 2009-2013

Income data from 2009-2013 American Community Survey shows that nearly 74% of households in Georgia have incomes higher than $50,000 and at least 56% of households have incomes higher than $75,000 annually. These rates are generally higher than surrounding communities. A higher percentage of upper income households may also be a further reflection of Georgia's aging demographic.

D. POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Table 3.1 Population Projections, 2010-2030

	Scenario A			Scenario B		
	2010	2020	2030	2010	2020	2030
Georgia	4,515	4,822	5,055	4,515	4,583	4,643
Franklin County	47,746	51,810	55,647	47,746	49,253	50,739
Vermont	625,741	653,575	670,073	625,741	628,688	620,480
Source: VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development						

In August of 2013, the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development released population projections for the years 2020 and 2030 for every municipality in Vermont. By using population counts, mortality, birth, and migration rates from 1990-2010, the Agency created high and low projection estimates for the following two decades. Both Scenario A and B show an increase in population through year 2030 with Scenario A indicating a moderate rate of increase (12%) and Scenario B indicating a small increase (3%).

These projections show that even while other places in Vermont may decrease in population over the next ten to twenty years, Georgia is expected continue to gain population. This should be kept in mind while planning future projects.

E. PROPERTY AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Georgia's growth has taken a number of forms over the years. The changing distribution of property types affects the town's ability to provide services and has implications for taxpayers. **Table 3.2** shows the distribution of property types in Georgia. The percentage of residential units still makes up a sizable majority of the town's building stock.

Table 3.2. Georgia Property Types, 1985-2015

	1985		2000		2005		2010		2015	
	# prop	%	# prop	%	# prop	%	# prop	%	# prop	%
Residential	897	64%	1,340	75%	1,419	77%	1,504	76%	1582	77%
Vacation	189	14%	193	11%	184	10%	160	8%	141	7%
Farm/Open	no data	no data	40	2%	39	2%	37	2%	36	2%
Commercial/Industrial	38	3%	55	3%	57	3%	66	3%	76	4%
Other	252	18%	165	8%	149	8%	218	11%	214	10%
TOTAL	1,376		1,793		1,848		1,985		2049	

Source: Town of Georgia

The number of seasonal vacation homes has decreased since 1985 . Some of the vacation homes have been converted to permanent year-round residences. The percentage of Farm and Commercial/Industrial properties has remained steady over the past three decades, yet there has been an overall increase in the number of Commercial/Industrial properties. This likely has had the effect of reducing the burden on residential development to provide tax revenue.

As shown in **Table 3.3**, the market value of taxable property in Georgia increased at an unprecedented rate of approximately 110% between 2000 and 2010 for an annual average of 11%, which is much greater than the annual growth rate of 1.8% experienced in the period from 1990-2000. The majority of this growth occurred between 2005 and 2010. In 2005, the gross market value of properties of Georgia had increased from $241 million to $264 million. The dramatic increase in Georgia property values between 2000 and 2010 was due, at least in part, to a Town-wide reappraisal in 2006. The market value of taxable property has decreased between 2000 and 2013, most likely due to the great recession.

Table 3.3. Property Trends					
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2013
Market Value*	$43	$205	$241	$507	$498
Population	2,780	3,753	4,375	4,515	4,570
Value ($) Per Capita	$15,500	$54,600	$55,100	$112,230	$108,972
Data Source: Town of Georgia; U.S. Census 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey 2009-2013. *All figures in millions					

F. HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Georgia's housing trends directly reflect population growth trends. As a primarily residential town which, in part, serves as a bedroom community for regional job centers, the town's housing stock is focused on single family units that are used year-round. The town also has a notable second home component, although it is consistent with the state average. There is a limited rental housing market in the town (**Table 3.4)**.

Table 3.4 Housing Unit By Type						
	2000		2010		2013	
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%
1-Unit	1458	88.1%	1801	93.7%	1732	91.5%
2-Unit	73	4.4%	22	1.1%	19	1.0%
3 or 4 Unit	26	1.6%	50	2.6%	69	3.6%
5 to 9 Units	6	0.4%	10	0.5%	0	0.0%
Mobile Home	91	5.5%	104	5.4%	73	3.9%
Total	1,654	100.0%	1922	100.0%	1,893	100.0%
Source: US Census 2000; American Community Survey 2006-2010 and 2009-2013 By 5-Year Estimates						

Table 3.5 below shows housing occupancy broken down into four major categories: 1) Owner Occupied (occupied by year-round residents who own the dwelling); 2) Renter Occupied (occupied by year-round residents who rent the dwelling); 3) Vacant-Seasonal Use (held for occasional use), and; 4) Vacant. Housing occupancy in Georgia for owner-occupied has trended at near stable level from 2000 to present. So have rentals occupied housing. Seasonal housing rates have slightly declined as a percent of the total. That trend has started to reverse in recent years. The rate of renter occupied units has increased by 2 percent in the past five years.

Table 3.5 Housing Units by Use				
	1990	2000	2010	2009-2013
Owner Occupied	75%	80%	76%	73%
Renter Occupied	11%	10%	10%	14%
Seasonal	12%	9%	11%	12%
Vacant	2%	1%	3%	3%
Data Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2006-2010, 2009-2013				

G. HOUSING NEEDS

Overview

Housing issues are an important aspect of a town plan. The following presents some perspective on housing issues, particularly as they apply to Georgia.

Housing markets and issues will change over time along with the economy and other factors. However, it is important to keep in mind that people will always need adequate shelter. Since Georgia is a popular place to live, it will be important to ensure that housing in the town meets the needs of its residents.

In assessing housing issues, it is important to consider a regional perspective. In this part of New England, housing stock and pricing can vary significantly from town to town. No town is a closed system, where future housing needs can be projected based on an analysis of the current population alone. Housing markets are always regional in nature. Demographic trends and in-migration/out-migration over a broad area will affect demand levels and pricing in Georgia.

The town is part of a regional market. This is particularly true, as many Georgia residents commute out of the town for employment (93.2% of workers leave Georgia for employment according to the 2011 US Census “On the Map” tool). Given existing commuting patterns, it is realistic to assess both Franklin and Chittenden Counties as comparative areas.

Housing and Market Conditions

Georgia’s housing stock is strongly oriented toward single family homes, which are typically owner-occupied. Georgia's housing stock contains a relatively small percentage of mobile homes, which often offer an affordable housing option. Condominiums, which also offer an affordable housing option in other parts of the state, have not been developed in Georgia as quickly as other surrounding municipalities. **Table 3.6** contains a summary comparison of Georgia's housing stock with that in

Franklin County.

Table 3.6. Housing Stock Comparison for Georgia, Franklin County						
	Georgia			Franklin County		
Year	2000	2010	2013	2000	2010	2013
% Owner-Occupied	90%	88%	86%	75%	75%	76%
% Renter Occupied	10%	12%	14%	25%	25%	24%
Occupied Mobile Homes as % of Occupied Units	6%	5%	4%	10%	8%	9%
Source: 2006-2010, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; 2000 and 2010 Census						

Housing Needs

The demographics of a community or housing market can be used to assess housing needs. A range of factors, including individual preferences, affect housing needs. Housing market analyses make it clear that age and income are strong factors in the type of housing people want.

The 2015 Vermont State Housing Needs Assessment available through the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development provides some context regarding statewide and regional housing needs. The State Housing Needs Assessment notes that there is a general housing shortage in Vermont. It also notes that there will be an increasing need for senior housing in Vermont.

The Assessment does analyze future housing needs in Franklin County to some extent. It notes that in Franklin County future housing should be prioritized to meet the needs of renter households with incomes between 50% and 120% of median household income and homeowners with incomes between 95% and 120% of median household income. This is based on what the Assessment refers to as the "housing gap," an estimate between the future housing needs of a community and the future housing stock of a community based on estimates of future population growth, households living in substandard housing, and units in the development pipeline in the County. The Assessment does not including "cost burdened" households when calculating the "housing gap." "Cost burdened" households are those households that are living in housing that is unaffordable. The Assessment does estimate that a considerable amount of households, both renter and homeownership, will become increasingly cost burdened in the next five years. This potential reality should not be ignored and should be kept in mind when making planning related decisions about housing.

Using data for the current and projected mix of households by age of household head and income, it is possible to make broad assessments about housing needs in Georgia. For instance, a head of household aged between 35 and 39 years, with an income level in the $50,000-$74,999 range, will probably be seeking, or have recently purchased, their first home. Markets with a substantial number of households in this category will be a good one for affordable, starter housing. With the exceptions of upper age bracket

households and households with a preference for mobile homes, households with incomes below $25,000 are most likely to be renters, while households with incomes of $50,000 or more are likely to be a mix of new and established single family homeowners.

Figure 3.7 (page 28) illustrates income distribution as well as a comparison of the changes between 2010 and 2013. Georgia's shift to higher income brackets is dramatic. At least 56% of all households now make over $75,000 annually.

Housing Affordability

According to Vermont Statute, housing is considered affordable when a household earning not more than 80 percent of the county median income or the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) median income (if a municipality is within a MSA), pays no more than thirty percent of their income on housing. A household consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit.

Generally, the median home sales price in Georgia has been comparable to the median home sales prices in Chittenden County. Both Georgia and Chittenden County have historically had higher median home sales prices than Franklin County. The median price of housing in Georgia has generally followed historic regional and statewide trends. Median prices gradually increased between 1990 and 2000. In 2000, median sales prices climbed steeply until 2006. Georgia and Franklin County then experienced the bursting of the housing bubble of the early 2000s before Chittenden County. Between 2006 and 2008, Georgia and Franklin County's sales prices fell off sharply, while Chittenden County's prices increased marginally. Between 2008 and 2009, Georgia and Franklin County's prices increased marginally, while Chittenden County's prices decreased. Between 2009 and 2010, Georgia's housing prices dropped sharply, Franklin County's stayed the same and Chittenden County's slightly increased. Since 2010, prices in Georgia and in Chittenden County have begun to increase back towards pre-housing bubble levels. However, Franklin County and statewide housing sales prices have continued to stagnate.

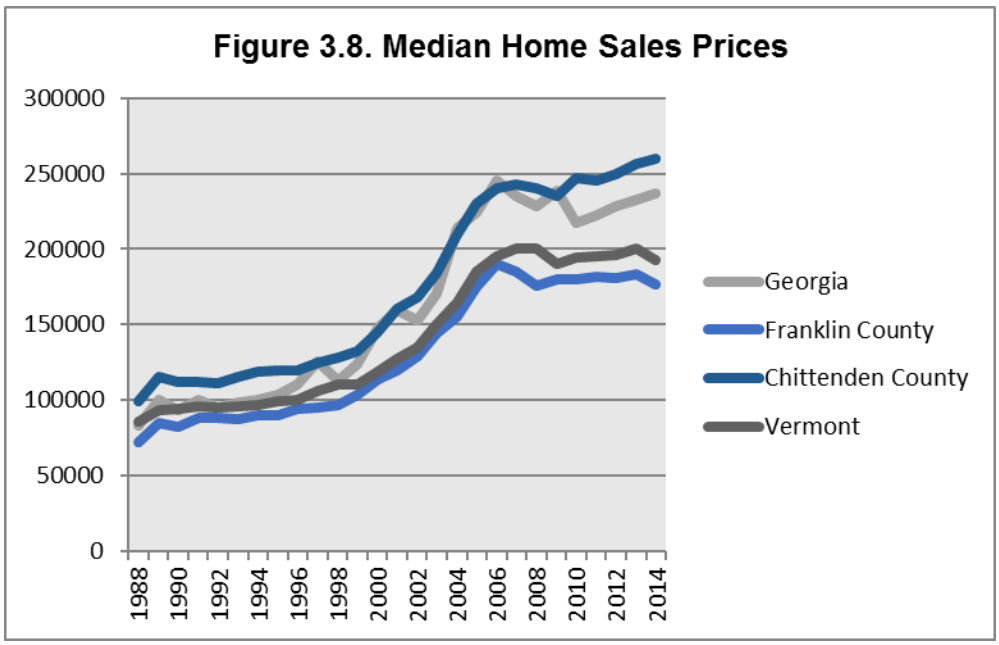


Figure 3.8 - Source: VT Dept. of Taxes

The median sale price of a home in Georgia in 2014 was $236,500. When compared with other local housing markets, like St. Albans Town ($199,900) and Milton ($222,040), Georgia appears to be a less affordable community in which to buy a home.

All municipalities in Franklin County are deemed part of the Burlington-South Burlington Metropolitan Statistical Area by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The most recent data tells us that the median household income for the Burlington-South Burlington MSA is $61,763 and is $56,240 in Franklin County (2009-2013 ACS). These amounts are significantly lower than Georgia's median household income ($81,395).

Table 3.7 shows the home ownership "affordability gap" for Georgia. The "affordability gap" is the difference between the maximum affordable mortgage and the median sale price for primary residences. Per state statute, households should afford a mortgage with monthly payments that does not exceed 30 percent of their monthly income. The "affordability gap" has been calculated using both the MSA and Georgia median household incomes.

Using the MSA Median Household Income, a home in Georgia sold at the median sale price in 2014 would be unaffordable. There would be an "affordability gap" of $58,889 over the course of a 30 year mortgage. The "affordability gap" is even higher for those households making less than the MSA median household income.

Using the Georgia median household income, it appears that even at 100% of median household income, a home at the 2014 median sale price of $236,500 would be affordable. However, households making 80%, 50%, and 30% of the Georgia median

household income would be unable to afford a home in Georgia. The "break even" income for home affordability in Georgia is approximately $69,355. This indicates that there may be a need for more affordable housing options for Georgia.

Table 3.7: Homeownership Affordability in Georgia

		30% of Income		Taxes and Insurance	Income Available for Housing/Month	5% Down Payment	Maximum Affordable Mortgage	Median Sale Price for Primary Residences in Georgia (2014)	Affordability Gap
		Per Year	Per Month						
MSA Median Household Income									
100%	$61,763	$18,529	$1,544	$647	$897	$11,825	$177,611	$236,500	($58,889)
80%	$49,410	$14,823	$1,235	$647	$588	$11,825	$112,399	$236,500	($124,101)
50%	$30,882	$9,264	$772	$647	$125	$11,825	$14,579	$236,500	($221,921)
30%	$18,529	$5,559	$463	$647	($184)	$11,825	($50,634)	$236,500	($287,134)
Georgia Median Household Income									
100%	$81,394	$24,418	$2,035	$647	$1,388	$11,825	$281,249	$236,500	$44,749
80%	$65,115	$19,535	$1,628	$647	$981	$11,825	$195,309	$236,500	($41,191)
50%	$40,697	$12,209	$1,017	$647	$370	$11,825	$66,398	$236,500	($170,102)
30%	$24,418	$7,325	$610	$647	($37)	$11,825	($19,542)	$236,500	($256,042)

Data Source: Median income based on 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year estimates; taxes and insurance are an estimate; median sale price for primary residences in Georgia was obtained from the Vermont Department of Taxes; all other figures computed by the NRPC. Maximum affordable mortgage rates include a 4% mortgage rate.

Rental housing is more affordable than home ownership in Georgia; however, the cost of rental housing is on the rise and the number of rental units in Georgia is relatively small. Affordable rent is defined by the State of Vermont as rent plus utilities. **Table 3.8** outlines the affordability of rental units in Georgia based on the median contract rent according to the 2009-2013 ACS. Contract rent is the monthly rent agreed to or contracted for, regardless of any furnishings or utilities. The estimated median contract rent in Georgia is $843 per month. Rent is affordable for households making 100% and 80% of both the MSA and town median income. Rent is even affordable for those making only 50% of the town median income.

Table 3.8. Renter Affordability in Georgia						
Percent of Georgia Town Median Household Income		30% of Income		Income Available for Housing/Month	Median Rent	Affordability Gap
		Per Year	Per Month			
MSA Median Household Income						
100%	$61,763	$18,529	$1,544	$1,544	$843	$701
80%	$49,410	$14,823	$1,235	$1,235	$843	$392
50%	$30,882	$9,264	$772	$772	$843	($71)
30%	$18,529	$5,559	$463	$463	$843	($380)
Georgia Median Household Income						
100%	$81,394	$24,418	$2,035	$2,035	$843	$1,192
80%	$65,115	$19,535	$1,628	$1,628	$843	$785
50%	$40,697	$12,209	$1,017	$1,017	$843	$174
30%	$24,418	$7,325	$610	$610	$843	($233)
Data Source: Median income and rent based on 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year estimates; all other figures computed by the NRPC						

High housing costs place the greatest strain on lower income households. There are several local and statewide affordable housing initiatives emphasize the importance of providing affordable housing to households below the median income of the County or MSA (which includes Chittenden, Franklin, and Georgia Counties). Some organizations are dedicated to providing affordable ownership opportunities while other organizations are dedicated to providing affordable rental opportunities. Other organizations are dedicated affordable senior housing. These organizations include the Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA), Champlain Housing Trust (CHT), and the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA).

Of particular relevance for a town oriented toward home ownership like Georgia is VHFA's several low cost mortgage programs, which can decrease both the initial and ongoing costs of home ownership. Land trusts and housing trusts can also play a role in housing development. Currently, there are no project-based affordable housing rental opportunities in Georgia. Data regarding tenant-based rental vouchers and affordable homeownership opportunities is not readily available.

Summary

Georgia is unlikely to become a center for subsidized project-based housing in the region. There is currently insufficient infrastructure in place to support a concentration of high density housing, and the lack of commercial and social services make it a less than ideal location. The vision for the Georgia South Village includes opportunities for affordable and senior housing.

Given the regional market, and the type of household which has found Georgia to be attractive, a more likely affordable housing initiative might take the form of a reasonably

priced, owner-occupied housing which could be subsidized via a shared equity arrangement through a housing trust, and with Vermont Housing Finance Agency mortgage programs. This would give households in the low to moderate income range a home ownership opportunity in Georgia.

Market forces will likely continue to dominate the housing real estate in Georgia. However, by recognizing local and regional housing needs, Georgia can play an appropriate regional role in providing an adequate housing stock for a variety of population and income groups. The town plan should set policies, or suggest courses of action which could encourage a variety of housing forms in the town. It will be important to consider town services in making planning decisions. Current town services do not provide public water or sewer systems for the majority of town residents. Because most residences must rely upon on-site systems, there is limited opportunity to concentrate residential development at higher densities, which can often aid the development of affordable housing opportunities.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO HOUSING
SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS RELATED TO HOUSING

H. THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Georgia's economy can be viewed in two ways:

1) What economic activities occur within the town, and;
2) In what local or regional economic activities are Georgia residents involved?

While Georgia is often regarded as a bedroom community, the data makes it apparent that there is a substantial amount of economic activity within the town. Clearly, industrial development had a substantial impact during the 1980's. This is true throughout Franklin County. While the county remains Vermont's top dairy producer, it is also home to some of the state's top manufacturers.

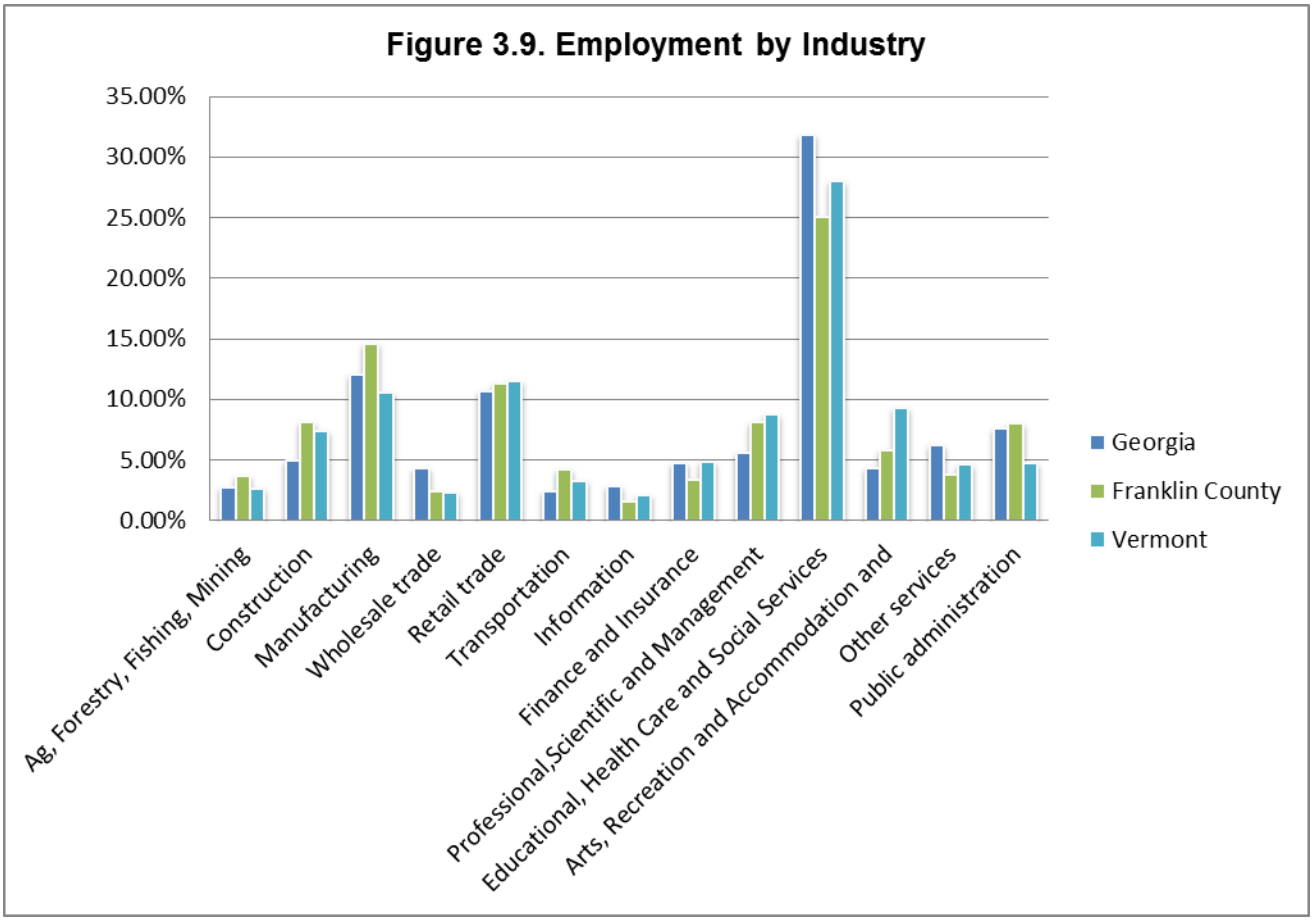


Figure 3.9 - Source: American Community Survey 2009-2013 5-Year Estimate

Georgia experienced strong employment increases through the 1980's and 90's, largely in response to the establishment of new industries in the local business parks. While Georgia's employment base has experienced significant growth, the town is still not a regional job center.

While employment in Georgia varies from regional norms, Georgia residents are part of the regional economy, and find jobs in a variety of industries and occupations. **Figure 3.9 and Table 3.9** compare the percentage distribution of Georgia residents' employment by industry to Franklin County and the State of Vermont. **Figure 3.10** compares the occupations of Georgia residents with those of the residents of Franklin County and Vermont.

Overall, the data show that Georgia residents find jobs in industries and occupations which do not differ significantly from regional or statewide averages.

Employment data makes it clear that the greater Burlington area is the dominant job center in the region. Many Georgia residents commute to Burlington on a daily basis for employment. Journey to work information is included in Section 7, Energy.

Table 3.9. Employment by Industry			
	Georgia	Franklin County	Vermont
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	2.72%	3.71%	2.63%
Construction	4.96%	8.09%	7.38%
Manufacturing	12.01%	14.62%	10.60%
Wholesale trade	4.29%	2.46%	2.27%
Retail trade	10.63%	11.29%	11.50%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	2.36%	4.21%	3.29%
Information	2.88%	1.60%	2.11%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	4.69%	3.34%	4.80%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	5.59%	8.09%	8.75%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	31.78%	25.01%	28.02%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	4.33%	5.78%	9.27%
Other services, except public administration	6.18%	3.77%	4.63%
Public administration	7.64%	8.03%	4.75%
Source: American Community Survey 2009-2013 5 Year Estimate			

The educational services, health care and social assistance industry employs the most Georgia residents by far. Today, Georgia's employment base is much less dependent on manufacturing than it was in 2000 with manufacturing dropping from 29% to 12% of Georgia's industry. Much of agriculture and small business data could be unreported and therefore understated in the data available from the state. In Georgia, small and home-based businesses and agriculture are integral aspects of our economy and, particularly in the instance of agriculture (despite employing a small percentage of residents), give the town a unique visual and social image.

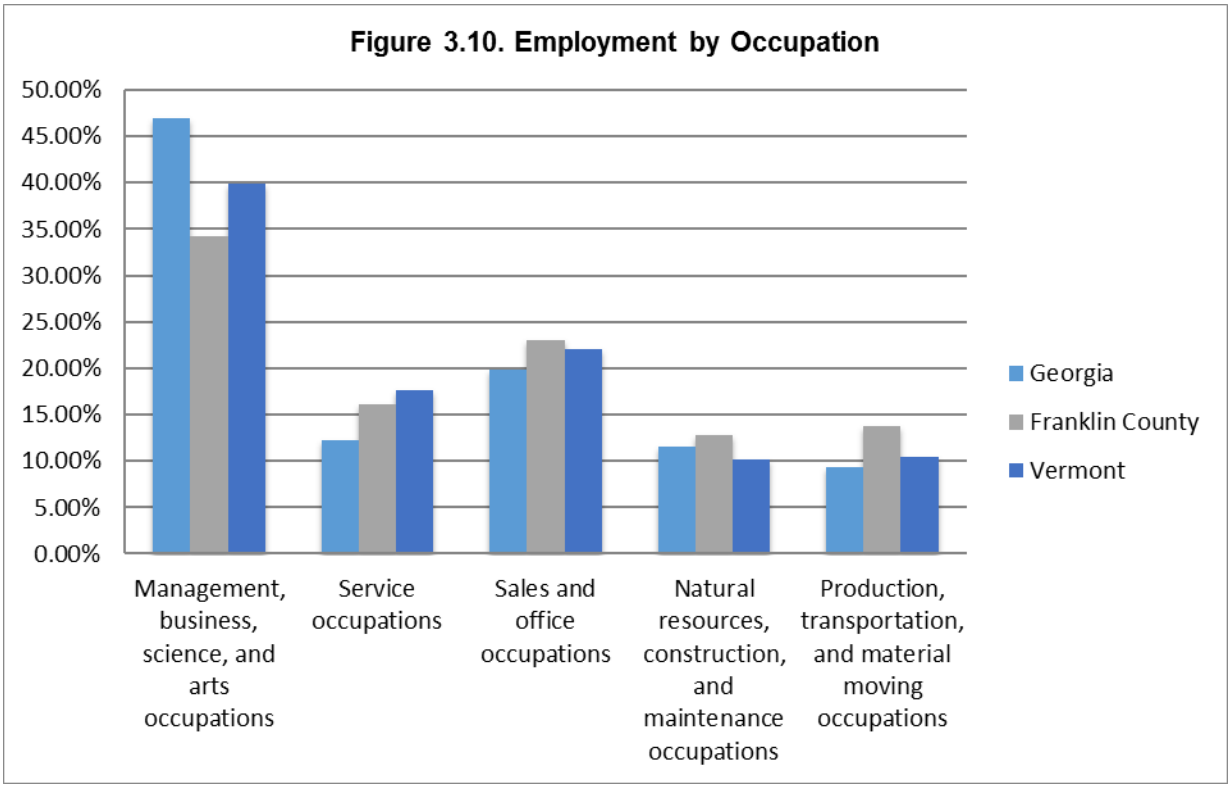


Figure 3.10 - Source: American Community Survey 2009-2013 5-Year Estimate

Note the following:

- Agriculture provides both full-time and seasonal employment. Seasonal employment in agriculture can help to increase income levels for otherwise underemployed persons.

- There is a relationship between Georgia's farms and the location of industry engaged in the processing of agricultural products. The continued presence of farms in the town will create jobs both directly and by attracting other businesses which utilize agricultural products.

- Georgia's agricultural landscape is attractive to Vermont travelers. As such, it creates secondary economic activity for businesses which can draw from travelers in the region.

- Agriculture is a fiscal bonus from the town's standpoint. While generating substantial tax revenues, it creates minimal need for town services.

- Small businesses also serve an important economic role by creating jobs for persons seeking a change in careers or underemployed persons. Looking to the future, it is likely that small businesses will create most of the new jobs in the region. Similar to agriculture, small business is a fiscal benefit to the town, as it

creates tax base while requiring relatively few services.

Summary
Businesses and appropriate industries are an essential component of a healthy community. Careful planning can provide a better standard of living and meaningful jobs to residents. The designation of growth centers and the construction of the necessary infrastructure for certain types of growth have enhanced the ability of towns to attract appropriate and desired commercial and industrial activity.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS RELATED TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I. TAXES, GROWTH AND FISCAL CONDITIONS

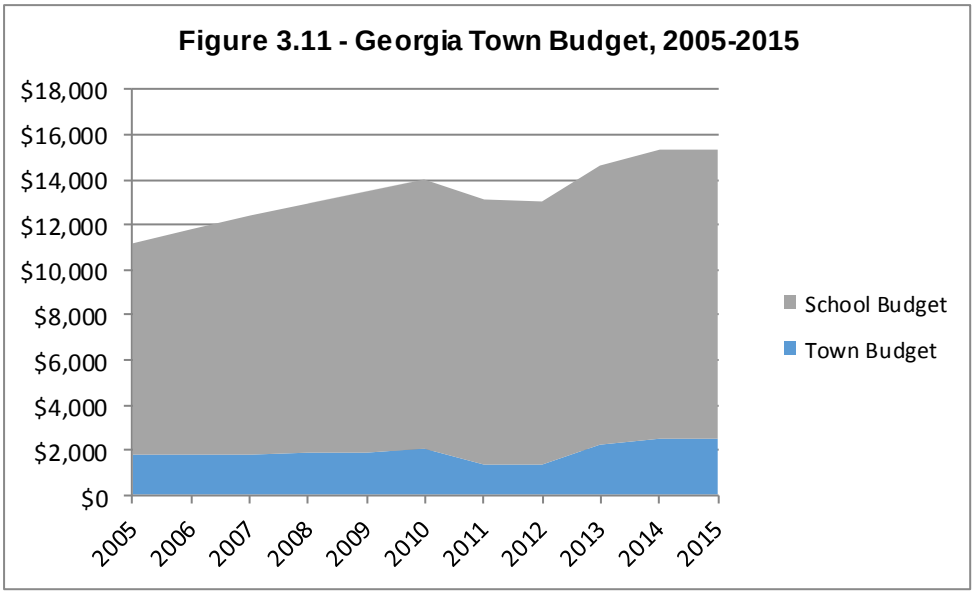
Overview
Given Vermont's property tax system and state aid to education policies, the pace and form of land development has a great deal of significance to the fiscal health of communities. Virtually any form of land development has two related effects:

1) The generation of additional revenues in the form of town/school property taxes and state aid to education, and

2) The generation of need for additional community services, which have associated costs.

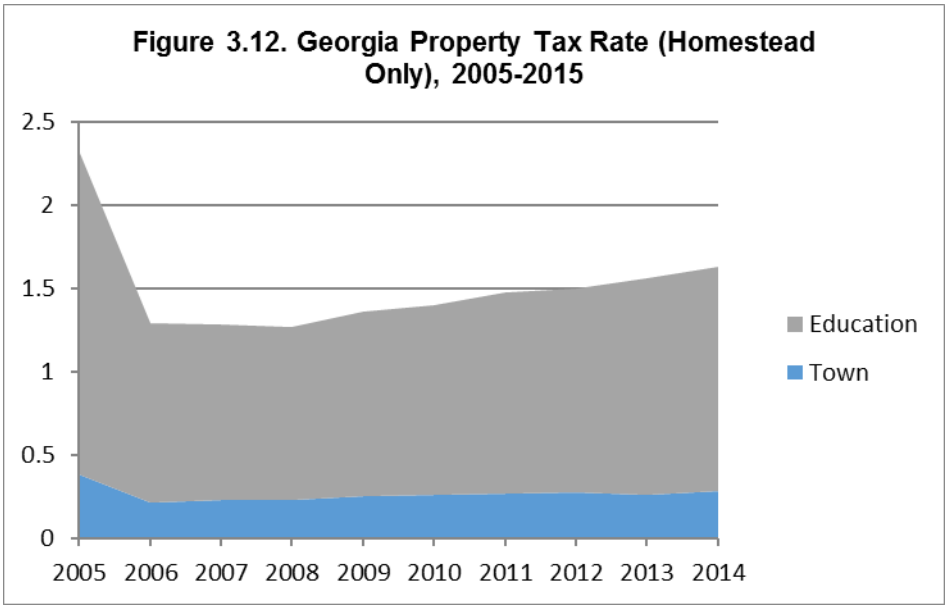
This plan section provides background on Georgia's recent and current fiscal situation, and provides a basis upon which to project our fiscal future based on potential development trends.

Town & School Expenditures & Property Taxes
Town and school expenditures have increased at different rates in recent years. This is shown in **Figure 3.11** below, which covers the period from 2005 to 2015**. Figure 3.11** shows total expenditures broken into two parts: 1) Town (Highways, Police, Fire, etc.), and; 2) Georgia School District.



As shown in **Figure 3.11**, town expenditures, though a relatively small portion of the budget picture, have remained relatively stable since 2005. The school budget has increased consistently in 10 years, but seems to have level during the last budget cycle. The school budget made up 84% of the total by 2015. Over that period the total budget increased from $11.2 million in 2005 to $15.349 million in 2015 -- a 27% total increase. The average annual increase in the total budget was 2.7% per year.

Increases in budgets have been accompanied by real increases in the tax burden carried by Georgia residents. **Figure 3.12** shows changes in the residential tax rate in Georgia, associated with Education and Town expenditures, for the period 2005 to 2014. The major reduction in the property tax rate in 2006 was the result of a town-wide reappraisal.



Fiscal Impacts of Development

Fiscal impact assessment involves the measurement of the impact a proposed land use may have on a community, from a dollars and cents standpoint. A common approach involves "cost averaging", an assumption that each new increment of growth will have the same costs as existing development in the town. In its simplest form, this approach includes the following basic steps:

- Determine the populations generated by growth - People, School-Age Children, and Employees.
- Translate the populations into consequent public service costs (Town and School).
- Project the revenues to be generated by the project.
- Compare development-induced revenues to development-induced costs to determine net result. A positive fiscal impact refers to revenues exceeding costs, while a negative impact refers to the reverse situation.

Georgia's current analysis of the fiscal impacts of residential, non-residential, seasonal, and undeveloped land is out-of-date and needs to be reviewed. In 1997, the Vermont legislature passed the Equal Education Opportunity Act (Act 60 and 68), which is intended to provide equitable levels of funding for education, and be income sensitive for local property-tax payers. This has potentially changed the fiscal impacts of land use.

Due to the complexities of the per-pupil allotment based on Act 60, the generalization that certain land uses (residential) have a "negative" fiscal impact on a Town because they add to school expenses, while others (non-residential, seasonal, undeveloped land) have a "positive" fiscal impact because they "pay their own way" is outdated. Such an analysis is also of little use in providing considerations for future land use in Georgia, particularly with respect to ensuring that town services and facilities will be able to handle growth without straining the town's fiscal resources. Because Act 60 and Act 68 allocate a certain "per-pupil" amount of money to each town, it is no longer possible to unequivocally say that residential uses have a negative impact on Town resources and revenues. Additional school children will increase service costs ONLY if the Town's fixed costs also increase. If the Town's fixed costs do not increase, then additional residential development and its related school children will not cause the school service costs to increase.

In the short term, until a deeper, more current analysis can take place looking at the actual fiscal impacts of development, the benefit and impact that additional development will have on the Georgia's Town and School budgets and tax rates must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Summary
Georgia needs an updated analysis of the fiscal impacts of development. An outdated analysis indicates that a strong rate of residential growth will tend to increase tax rates in Georgia, as this type of growth generates new residents and school children, both of which generate service costs. Tax rate increases could be modified by increases in the non-residential property base, particularly in instances where non-residential projects take care of many of their own service needs. However, this analysis needs to be understood to be a generalization, and that residential development can have a revenue-boosting effect in light of Act 60 and 68. The presence of major industries in Georgia has clearly had a positive impact on our town's fiscal situation. Just as importantly, the preservation of undeveloped and agricultural land will also be important from a fiscal standpoint, as these lands generate taxes while creating relatively small service demands.

In recent years, Georgia has experienced relatively small growth in population. Despite this, a review of town and school finances makes it clear that the cost of providing services and facilities increased significantly. The cost of service provision has specifically increased for the school system over the past ten years, while the Town's cost of providing services has remained relatively unchanged. These increased costs resulted from the desire of Georgia residents to improve the level of services available as well as increases in state education funding requirements.

A balance of public and private investment is necessary to provide a sound economic base for our community. The cost of the provision of services must be made based on the available tax revenues and reasonable public and private investment. Town government is charged with providing for orderly growth and services at a rate that does not unduly tax the residents, yet protects the health, safety, and welfare of those same citizens.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS RELATED TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

J. TRANSPORTATION

Georgia is served by a network of State and Town Highways, as well as a rail line. In many ways, Lake Champlain also serves a transportation function. Single occupancy vehicles are by far the most common form of transportation. **Map 3.2** shows Georgia's transportation system.

The Highway System currently includes 91.04 miles of roads (including Class IV roads and legal trails). This is broken down into State owned and maintained roads and Town roads. Class IV road mileage is included in these figures because of impacts from their use if reclassified and because of their potential recreational use. The State has 17.62

miles of roads, including the 6.53 miles of Interstate 89 and its on/off ramps. The balance of State road miles includes Rte. 7 (7.6 mi.), Rte. 104 (0.130 mi.) and Rte. 104A (3.362 mi.). These roads are owned and maintained by the State. Changes in the Planning Statutes and policy shifts at the Agency of Transportation have allowed considerably more input from municipal government and the public at large regarding improvements of these State Highways within Town borders.

The balance of the road network is made up of Town and private roads, which can be seen on the transportation map. No attempt has been made to inventory private roads for this Plan. Some private roads may be accepted into the highway system at a future date. Others will remain private to serve only the individual landowners.

Town Roads are classified, according to a statutory scheme, into Class I, Class II, Class III, or Class IV roads. These state classifications are primarily for the purpose of distributing State Aid and often do not reflect the actual usage of the road. State Aid is distributed by Class type as follows: 6% of State funds for all Class I roads, 44% of funds to all Class II roads, and 50% to all Class III roads.

Class I roads form extensions of State Highways and are numbered as such, Class II form connections from town to town and or carry more than normal traffic, Class III roads are all other traveled roads receiving State Aid funds, and Class IV roads are all other roads owned by the Town (no State Aid). Class IV roads do not have to be maintained by the Town.

The Town of Georgia has no Class I roads, 19.53 miles of Class II roads, 43.64 miles of Class III roads and 7.72 miles of Class IV roads and 2.59 miles of legal trails, for a total of 73.48 miles.

Another classification scheme which portrays usage more than the Class I-IV system is as follows: Major Arterial Highways, Minor Arterial Highways, Collectors, and Local streets.

In addition to the highways themselves, the town maintains bridges, culverts and drainage systems. Maintaining bridges and culverts can be enormously expensive. Fortunately, the State of Vermont's Town Structures Grant program is designed to assist towns with these responsibilities. The town has taken advantage of this program very successfully. Past projects involving these programs were the replacement of Stonebridge Brook Bridge and the replacement of two large culverts on Polly Hubbard Road.

Georgia has a major rail line, owned by New England Central Railway, running north and south through Town, though there is no direct service provided to the Town. There is a railway siding where the Vermont Whey Plant used to be located, off of T.H. #31 near the Industrial Park. This could serve as a terminus for additional industrial development in the immediate vicinity. New England Central Railway owns additional lands near the Georgia High Bridge, which at one time served as a cattle and freight yard. If rail commuter service were ever considered for the region, this site might

provide access for Georgia residents. At one time there was also a train depot at Oakland Station (hence the name Oakland Station Road). It is possible that this could serve a similar function if a future need arises.

Amtrak offers passenger rail service out of their St. Albans depot. Amtrak trains provide passenger service south from St. Albans twice per day. There are several large freight trains passing through Georgia each day.

Table 3.10 - Functional Classification of Roads in Georgia, 2015		
Class	**Description**	**Miles**
Class 1	Class 1 town highways are those town highways which form the extension of a state highway route and which carry a State highway route number. The Agency shall determine which highways are to be class 1 highways.	0
Class 2	Class 2 town highways are those town highways selected as the most important highways in each town. As far as practicable they shall be selected with the purposes of securing trunk lines of improved highways from town to town and to places which by their nature have more than normal amount of traffic. The selectmen, with the approval of the Agency, shall determine which highways are to be class 2 highways.	19.53
Class 3	Hard surface roads not included in a higher class and improved, loose surface roads passable in all kinds of weather. These roads are adjuncts to the primary and secondary highway systems. Also included are important private roads such as main logging or industrial roads which serve as connecting links to the regular road network.	43.64
Class 4	Class 4 town highways are all town highways that are not class 1, 2, or 3 town highways or unidentified corridors. The selectboard shall determine which highways are class 4 town highways.	7.72
Source: Vermont Agency of Transportation		

Lake Champlain has served as a significant transportation corridor for all lakeshore communities in the past. The lake has a rich history involving everything from naval battles and rum smuggling to passenger steamship service. Today, most lake transportation takes place in a recreational context. The lake is widely used during warm weather (and to a lesser extent during winter) by large numbers of people.

There is limited public transportation serving Georgia. Commuter buses arrive and depart from the State owned and maintained commuter park and ride facility located off Skunk Hill Road near the intersection of Route 7 and Interstate 89.

The Green Mountain Transit Agency (GMTA) provides shuttle service Monday-Friday connecting the Georgia Park and Ride Lot and the Arrowhead Industrial Park to stops in St. Albans, Swanton, Highgate, Alburgh, Sheldon, Enosburgh and Richford.

The Georgia Park and Ride is also served by the St. Albans LINK Express operated by the Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA). The LINK Express provides service Monday-Friday between St. Albans and Burlington/Winooski. There are limited transportation services provided to the elderly and special needs persons through

various service providers.

Air service is provided to the region by the Franklin County Regional Airport in Highgate and the Burlington International Airport in Burlington. There is no local taxi service in Georgia.

There are only a few sidewalks or pedestrian paths in Georgia, although there has been increasing discussion regarding this issue and the provision for safer means of pedestrian travel, especially in the “village area” near the intersection of Route 7 and Route 104A.

The South Village Strategic Plan emphasizes pedestrian connectivity as integral to the development of the South Village area. Some of the actions regarding sidewalks including a feasibility study, have been completed. Next steps will be to find design and construction funding and to work with developers who are required to construct sidewalks as part of their proposals. A sidewalk master plan may be appropriate for Georgia to develop and implement to guide future sidewalk development in the community.

Georgia's Highways are maintained by a Highway Department of four full time employees. For more information regarding the Department and its resources refer to the utilities facilities section of the Plan. The 2015 highway budget was $788,074 of which we will receive an anticipated $146,700 in State Aid to Highways. Of this budget, $507,867 is direct costs for road maintenance, the remainder being for equipment and construction. The highway budget accounts for 32% of total Town budget (excluding school district budget). In and of itself, spending is not an accurate measure of the quality of a town's roads.

Significantly larger sums of money could be spent in improving and maintaining the highway system. However, road and bridge work is very expensive and those costs are passed on to the taxpayers. It is hoped that a reduction on the reliance of the local property tax for funding education would allow communities to invest more money in other town services such as transportation. Overall, Georgia provides a high level of service and has a good transportation network. One of the major problems facing most Vermont communities is the lack of good gravel and sand resources for road construction and maintenance. A stone quarry is open in Georgia which provides a local source of aggregate for road construction.

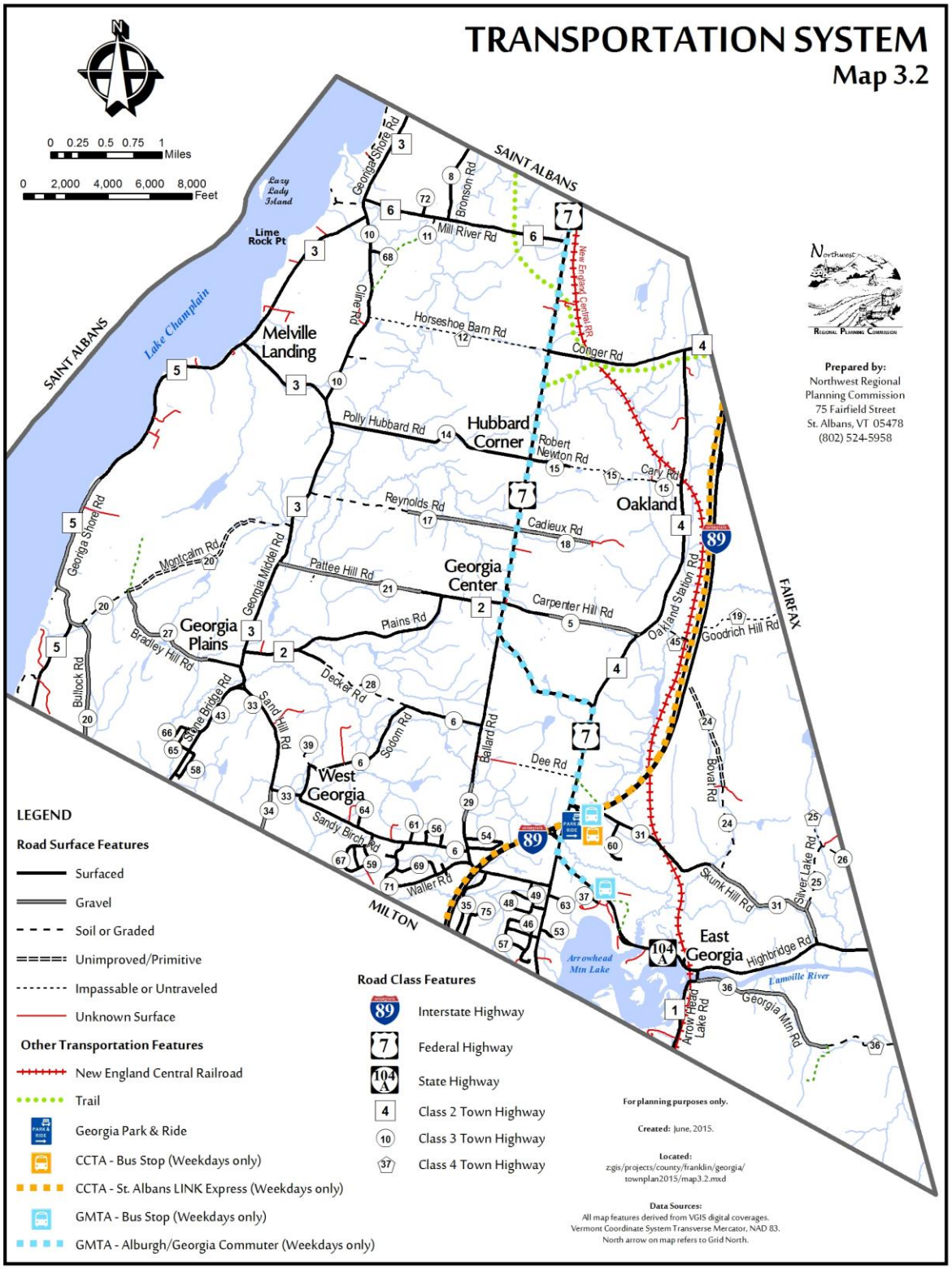
Summary

Safe, convenient and affordable transportation has become an essential need in today’s mobile society. Public investment in transportation systems should be based on need, energy efficiency, and cost effectiveness.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS RELATED TO

TRANSPORTATION



K. CULTURAL RESOURCES

With ninety-two structures on the State Register of Historic Places, and historic districts in Georgia Center and Georgia Plains, Georgia is rich in cultural and historical resources. As with many Vermont towns, the value of Georgia's cultural and historical resources is greater than the sum of its parts. The development pattern of villages and countryside, the context for Georgia's historic sites, is a valuable asset. While this pattern is valuable, it is also fragile.

In addition to Georgia's historic structures, numerous cemeteries are located around the town. These cemeteries serve as a link to the previous generations of Georgia residents. Their preservation is of upmost importance, as they represent a significant cultural resource of the town.

The Lamoille River and Deer Brook corridors have sites of known archeological sensitivity, while the stream corridors extending northward from Arrowhead Mountain Lake to Silver Lake contain sites of expected archeological sensitivity.

Summary

Prehistoric and historic sites are an essential link to our past and represent significant social and cultural investment and deserve consideration in the planning process. Efforts should be made to reduce or mitigate negative impacts on these valuable resources.

SECTION 4. THE PHYSICAL SETTING

A. INTRODUCTION

The Town of Georgia is rich with natural resources. The diverse landscape stretches from the shores of Lake Champlain across the sandy flats of Georgia Plains and the open farmland of Georgia Center, to the western foothills of the Green Mountains. These resources enrich the lives of all those who live, work and play in our community. Our natural resources provide recreational opportunities, a scenic landscape, and support the local economy. Through good planning and sustainable management of these resources, we seek to enhance the quality of life for current and future Georgia residents.

The Georgia Conservation Commission was formed in 1992 by the voters of the town in accordance with state statute. The commission has seven members who are appointed by the select board for a term of four years. Normally, meetings are held once a month and work days are scheduled throughout the year. The members work to preserve, protect, and enhance the native plants, animals, and their habitats in the town for current and future residents. The Conservation Commission has an educational presentation board which is displayed each year at town meeting, Fall Fest and other events around town. Topics studied have included Stream Bank Buffers, and Invasive Plants and Insects in Vermont. On the recommendation of the Commission, the Town purchased a 70 acre parcel in 2004 at the North end of Lost Pond; this area has a management plan which is overseen by commission members. Other duties currently include town maintained properties including Russell Greene Natural Area at Deer Brook, the Henley Webster Town Forest and the Mill River Falls natural area.

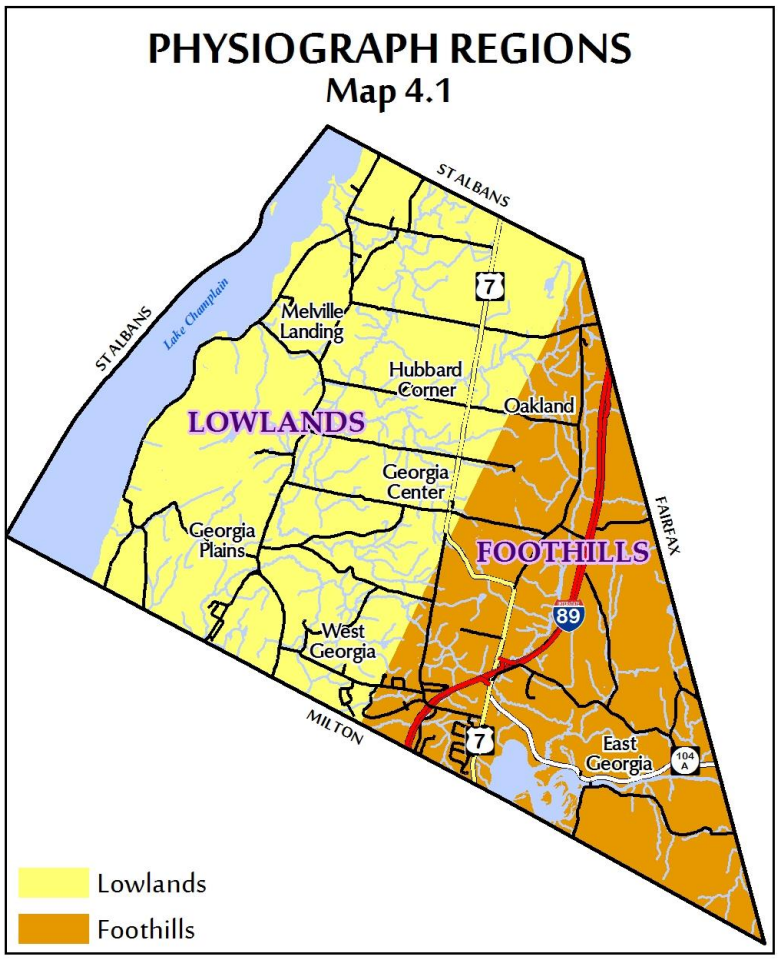
The Town also established a Conservation Reserve Fund, guidelines for the use of these funds can be found on the town website. Conservation Commission members also work on controlling invasive plants, increasing wildlife habitat, controlling erosion, building trails, improving water quality along Georgia's extensive Lake Champlain shoreline, tree plantings, and Green Up Day held in May.

B. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Geology

Perhaps the most notable geologic feature in Georgia is the 5-mile north/south length of Champlain thrust fault ledges, a limestone and dolomite precipice that overlooks the lake. The shoreline slopes west of the Champlain thrust fault are generally less than 12%. The Champlain thrust fault is typically made up of rock outcrop and west facing slopes greater than 12%. These rock outcrops and steep slopes of the Champlain thrust lie in a sparsely populated area several thousand feet east of the shoreline and west of Middle, Cline, and Bronson Roads.

The Town of Georgia spans across two Physiograph Regions: The Champlain



Lowlands and the Foothills of the Green Mountains (**Map 4.1**).

The Champlain lowlands extend eastward from the Champlain thrust fault to the Hinesburg-Oak Hills Thrust fault, which is generally marked by I-89 and the ridge of quartzite it rides along. The slopes are typically less than 12%.

The eastern part of Georgia is considered to be the foothills of the Green Mountains. Many of the forested slopes east of the northern half of I-89 and around Cushman Hill and Georgia Mountain are greater than 12%, while a few areas of slopes greater than 25% exist around Lamoille River, Arrowhead Mountain lake and several of its tributaries.

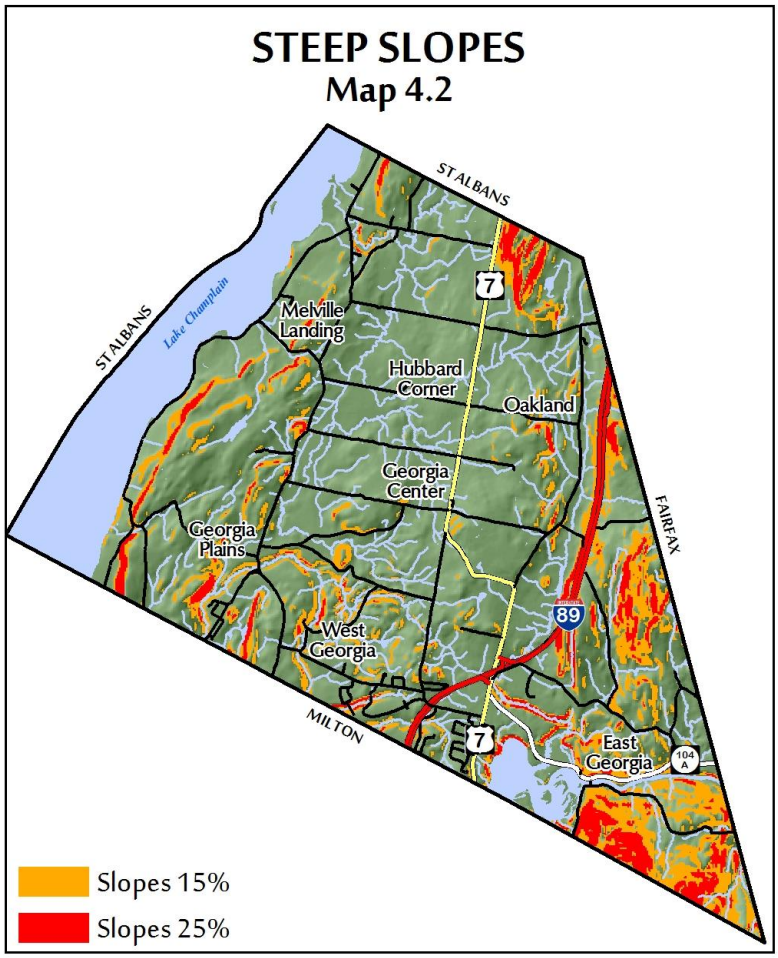
The Champlain lowlands were formed as a result of Lake Champlain's predecessors (Lake Vermont and the Champlain Sea), glacial action and weathering. The Geological history of the bedrock and soils are therefore much different than the history of the Green Mountains. The bedrock tends to be less complex and not as highly metamorphosed. Dolomite and Limestone marbles, shales, slates, and occasional quartzite are the most common bedrock materials in the Lowlands. Soils in the Lowlands also reflect the geological history and are predominately marine sediments, such as clays and sands. These are most often found in elevations of less than 700'.

The Green Mountain foothills have a much different geological history than the Lowlands. The Bedrock is highly metamorphosed and complex due to the numerous upheavals and folding of the earth's plates and enormous heat and pressure created in the process. In the vicinity of the Hinesburg Oak Hill Thrust, the bedrock is primarily Dolomite Marble. As you move eastward to the foothills, the bedrock changes to predominately Quartzite.

Parker Cobble is identified in the Vermont Natural Area Inventory as a significant geological site in Georgia containing fossils which are used as age indicators for the Cambrian Geologic Period.

Topography

Topography, or the shape of the land surface, is a function of the underlying bedrock, soil cover, and the effects of weather over the ages. Georgia's topography is comparatively uniform; there is no major mountain range and the difference between the highest elevation and the lowest elevation is 1300'. The lowest elevation in Georgia is approximately 95.5 feet above sea level at Lake Champlain. The highest is Georgia Mountain at 1400' in the southeast corner, near the Milton/Fairfax border. In Georgia, most human activity such as homes, farms, and businesses, takes place in the 103 feet to 500 feet elevation range.



The topography adjacent to the lake ranges in altitude from just above the ordinary high-water mark of 94 feet to 103 feet above sea level. Georgia's shorelands slope to the lake from a distinct south to north trending, which is the Champlain Thrust Fault line, and which tops out at almost 500 feet and creates a distinct, narrow sloping lake edge 1/4 to 1/2 mile in width. At several points, outcroppings which are perhaps remnants of one "wave" of the Champlain Thrust Fault emerge, most notably at Lime Rock Point, 35 to 40 feet above the Lake. The Georgia lakeshore is perhaps less dramatic than further south in Milton, where the Thrust Fault emerges in the bedrock hills of Milton creating a more elevated and cliff-like environment, such as Eagle Mountain.

Topography is one of the major factors that determine suitability of specific land uses. Traditionally, major settlements have been located near water courses, for power and transportation, and roads have followed the course of valleys and streams for ease of construction.

Georgia's drainage pattern is a result of its geology and topography. Our drainage network includes meandering streams, lakes and ponds, and significant wetland areas.

Poorly draining soils and high ground water tables in many parts of town present a challenge to development.

Map 4.2 gives a good indication for the limits for development, based on slope factors. Where development is proposed on slopes of greater than 15% the developer should address the potential concerns of erosion, structural problems, and ground water pollution associated with the thin soils usually found on steep slopes. Steep slopes present greater limitations for road construction, on-site sewage disposal, foundation construction, and provision of emergency services by the town.

Summary

The underlying bedrock and surficial geology are important considerations in the capability of the land to support development and should be considered in the planning stage. The continued availability of pure water supplies, and earth and mineral resources depend on sound planning for their wise use. The identification, protection and wise use of these resources are extremely important to the residents of the town as they are in limited supply and can be contaminated, depleted or rendered useless by certain developments.

Drainage and slope are very important considerations for establishing appropriate and economic use of land. There are physical factors associated with slope and drainage ways which directly affect the cost of development and provision of services. Areas of steep slope are more expensive to develop and are subject to much higher rates of foundation failure, septic problems, and serious soil erosion problems. Upland areas also provide needed habitat for wildlife, and recharge our ground water resources for drinking water.

C. SOILS

Topography, geology, drainage, and soils are major factors presenting opportunities or constraints for development. These factors should be viewed as a whole when assessing the ability of the land to support a certain use or activity. Many other factors may enter into a planning process, but if the physical conditions will not support the proposed use, problems will result, not only for the town but for individual landowners too. Georgia's soils fall into two general groups, those formed from the Green Mountain's glacial till, and those formed from lake and marine sediments and the Champlain Lowlands glacial till.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service maintains soil survey maps for approximately 95% of the United States. This information has recently been made available online through the Web Soil Survey (http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov)

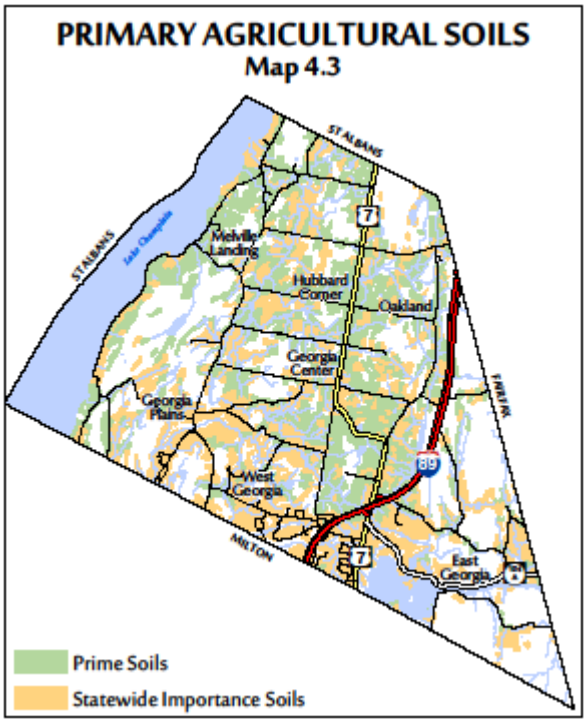
As far as development potential is concerned, the town has a mix of soils. Some are ill suited to development, having low permeability (or high), shallow depth to bedrock, or high water table. **Maps 4.3 and 4.4** show the locations of prime agricultural and prime forestry soils in Georgia. Others are well suited to development presenting few constraints from a physical perspective. In general, development constraints are based

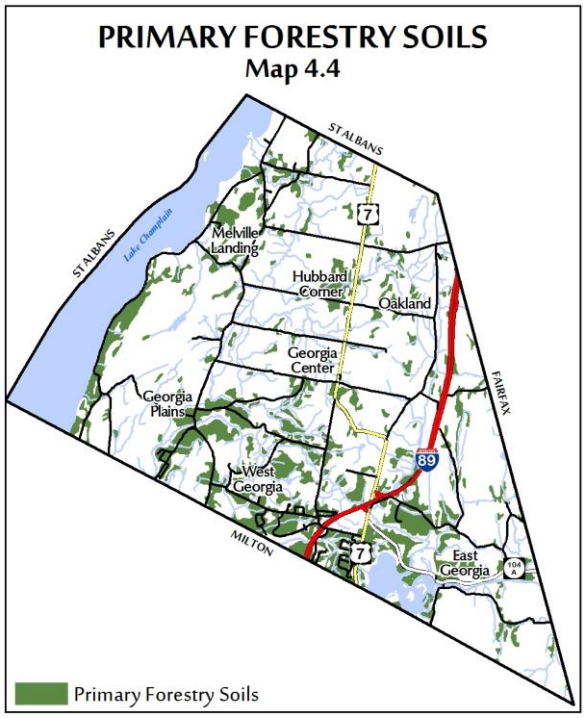
on many factors including soils (**Maps 4.3 and 4.4**), topography (**Map 4.2**) and the presence of sensitive natural features such as wetlands and floodplain (**Map 4.6**). These maps show a broad picture of the town and do not indicate that specific sites might or might not be suited for development.

Because Georgia relies on private septic systems for disposal of sewage and ground water for our drinking water supplies, soil types are very important considerations in locating developments.

The presence of appropriate soils is also critical to supporting the working landscape in Georgia. **Map 4.3** and **Map 4.4** indicate the locations of soils that can support agricultural and forestry operations. Vermont's agricultural soils have been classified by USDA/NRCS in the publication, "Farmland Classification Systems for Vermont Soils" (June 2006).

The two categories of agricultural soils are Prime Soils (Classes 1-3) and Statewide Soils (Classes 4-7). Prime Soils are described as "having the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, forage, and fiber crops, and are also available for these uses." Statewide Soils are defined as "having good potential for growing crops, but have one or more limitations which restrict the choice of crops and require more intensive management than prime soils." The location of these soils does not necessarily correspond to areas presently being farmed, rather it indicates areas that have the highest capability for producing crops from a soils capability perspective. Preserving large, contiguous blocks of agricultural soils is necessary to continue to have viable agricultural operations in Georgia.





The NRCS has also identified “primary forestry soils,” important to sustain commercial forestry operations in the region, according to their relative productivity.

Soils are a finite resource. We require suitable soils for food production, building materials, waste water treatment, drinking water, renewable and non-renewable energy sources, and as a medium on which to place our homes. Given these factors, the proper development of soils is enormously important to consider when protecting the public health and welfare and providing safe homes and services to our residents. Primary agricultural and forestry soils are a very finite resource, which because of their unique chemical and physical properties are capable of producing food, energy and fiber for our use. Once converted to other uses they are essentially lost for food production.

D. EARTH RESOURCES

Earth resources, including sand, gravel and stone, are important resources particularly for use in construction and road maintenance. Sand and gravel are finite resources; they are important to the continued growth and economy of the town and should be protected from incompatible uses, until needed.

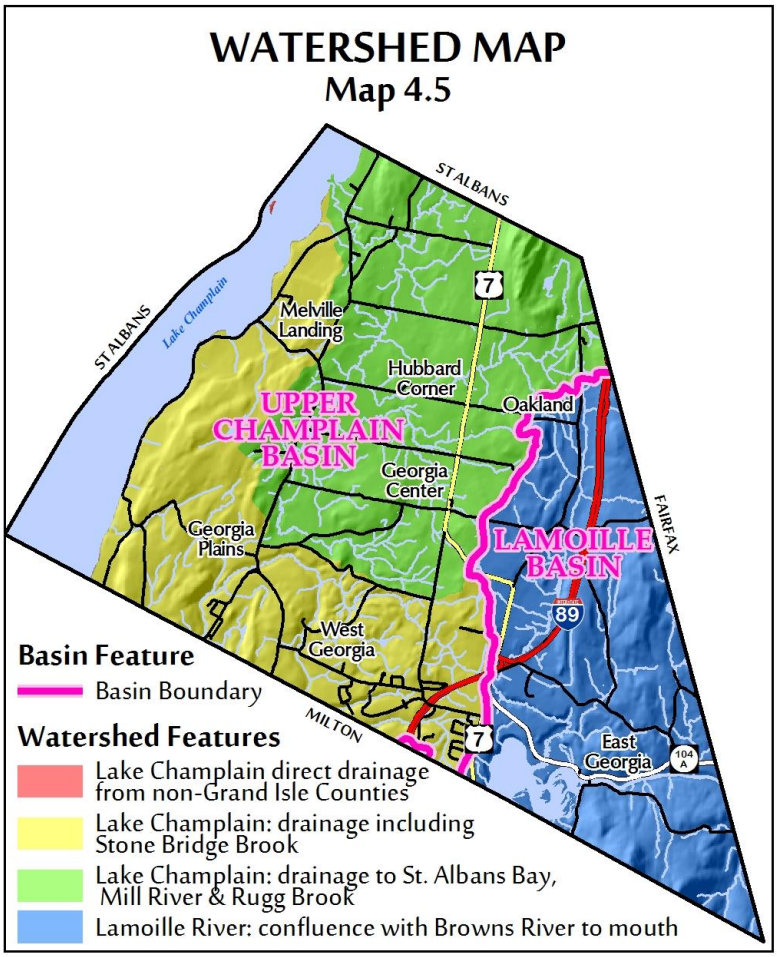
In 2014, the Town of Georgia spent $31,307.21 on processed aggregate to maintain town roads. With the availability of a quarry in Georgia, the town is purchasing its aggregate from a combination of in-town and out-of-town sources. If possible, the town should secure additional economical sources of gravel from a location close to town to meet future road construction and improvement needs. A local gravel inventory should be taken to determine if local sources are available.

Gravel and sand pits can be located and designed to reduce the negative impacts of excavation and operation. With well-designed reclamation plans, sites can be restored and used for other purposes including: agriculture, residential, commercial or recreational. This requires careful planning and engineering; local regulations should include performance standards for extraction, noise, dust, hauling, reclamation and bonding to insure adequate protection to residents and wise use of the resource.

E. CLIMATE AND AIR QUALITY

Georgia's climate is humid and continental, with precipitation relatively equally divided between rain and snow. The influence of Lake Champlain has moderated Georgia's climate, giving it a longer growing season than in other parts of the county. In the eastern quarter of the town, where agricultural land does not dominate the terrain, the vegetation is the northern temperate deciduous forest typical to Franklin County.

The quality of the air we breathe is an essential requirement of continued good health and should be protected from degradation in the interest of the public good. Our climate has a great effect on our lives, including social, economic, natural resource, and energy considerations. As such, climatic factors should be considered in future planning to insure the appropriate and efficient provision of housing, services, energy needs, food production and the like.



F. WATER RESOURCES

Georgia's hydrology is largely a function of Lake Champlain and its tributaries which pass through Georgia. As shown on **Map 4.5**, the Town of Georgia is divided into three subwatersheds.

The northwestern portion of Georgia drains into the Mill River, which is joined by Rugg Brook and ultimately drains to St. Albans Bay. The southwestern portions of Georgia, which includes the Stone Bridge Brook watershed, drains directly into Lake Champlain. Eastern portions of Georgia are part of the Lamoille River Watershed, including Arrowhead Mountain Lake.

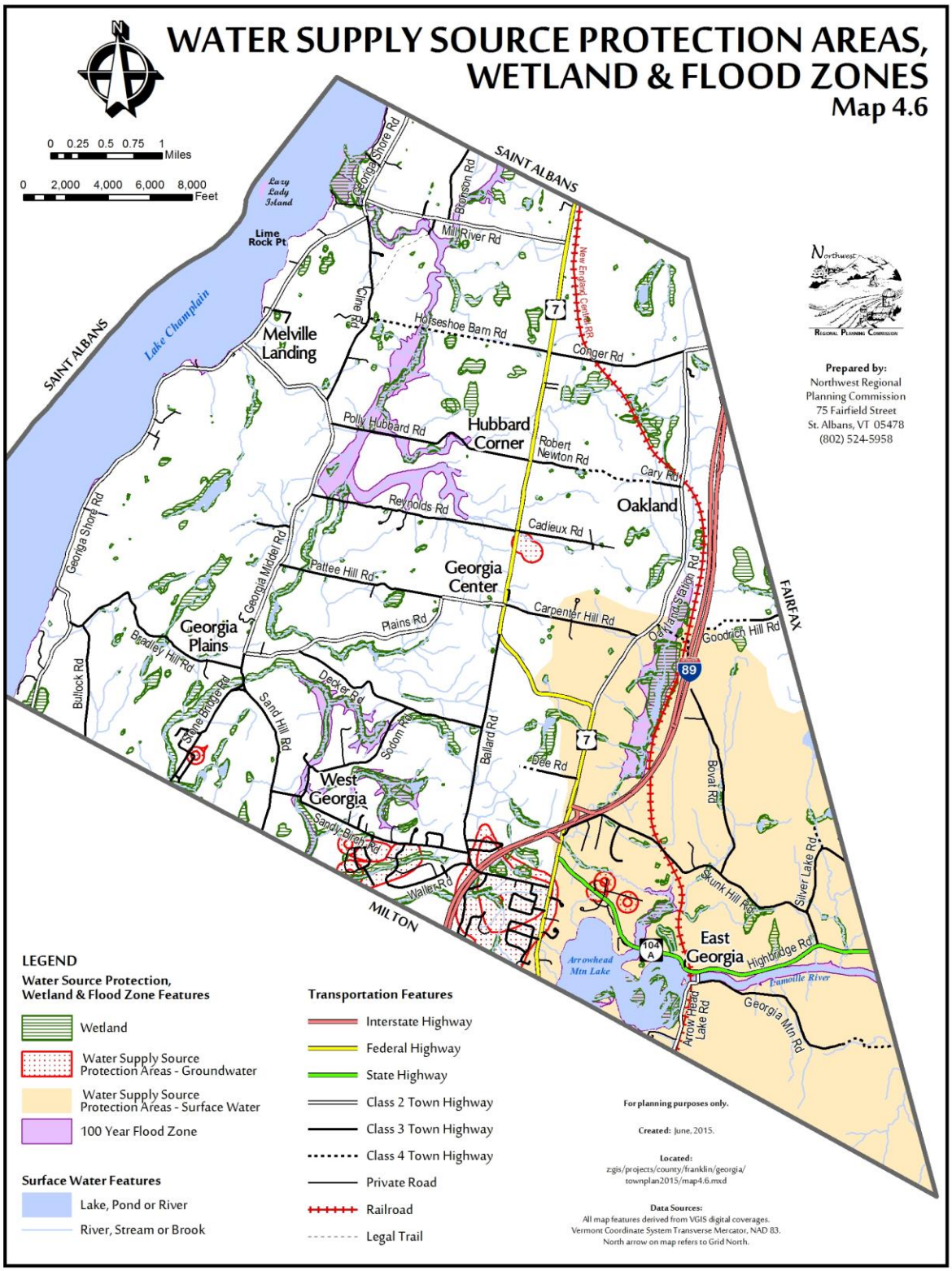
Rivers and Floodplains

The Town of Georgia includes portions of the Lamoille River, Rugg Brook, Mill River and all of Stone Bridge Brook, in addition to many smaller streams and brooks. Erosion is a major issue in Georgia's rivers, due in large part to unstable soil types and significant conflicts between rivers and road infrastructure. The Town of Georgia has been successful in obtaining grants from the Agency of Natural Resources and the Better Backroads Program to address some of the most pressing erosion issues that threaten public road and bridges. The Georgia Zoning Regulations also require a fifty (50) foot buffer from the edge of the waterways and a "no development" buffer of two hundred (200) feet along Deer Brook and Arrowhead Mountain Lake in the I-1, I-2 SV, and B-1 zoning districts.

Stormwater runoff has also been identified as a threat to our local waterways as it carries sediment and pollutants, increases the volume of water in our rivers, accelerates flows, and exacerbates erosion in the stream channel. Ensuring stormwater from roads, parking lots, roofs and other impervious surfaces is adequately captured and treated is an important step to protecting our water quality and improving the stability of our streams and shorelines.

Arrowhead Mountain Lake

Arrowhead Mountain Lake was formed by the impoundment of water by the Green Mountain Power dam at Milton Falls. The lake that was formed has provided significant new areas for wildlife over the years. The water levels fluctuate based on need for water in the plants turbines. The levels are regulated by the State of Vermont and the Federal Government. Arrowhead Mountain Lake also provides a valuable source of water for the Georgia Industrial Park. Water is drawn from the Lake, treated at the Park, used for industrial processing, re-treated and discharged back into the lake.

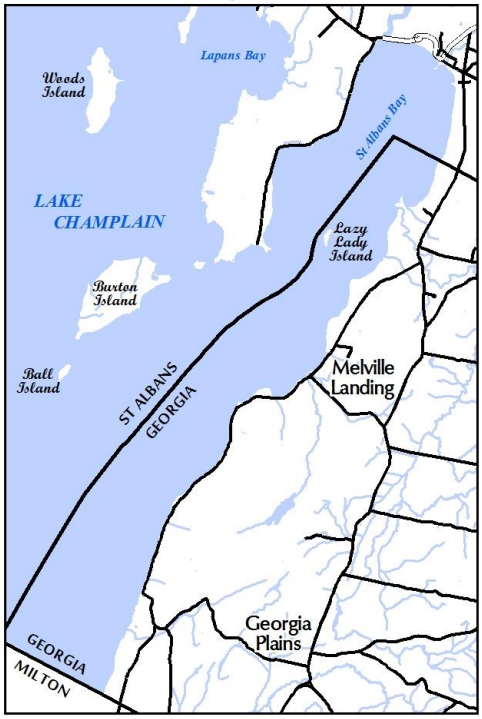

WATER SUPPLY SOURCE PROTECTION AREAS, WETLAND & FLOOD ZONES
Map 4.6
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
Lazy Lady Island
Lime Rock Pt
Lake Champlain
SAINT ALBANS
SAINT ALBANS
MILTON
FAIRFAX
Melville Landing
Hubbard Corner
Oakland
Georgia Center
Georgia Plains
West Georgia
East Georgia
Arrowhead Mtn Lake
Lamoille River
Georgia Shore Rd
Bronson Rd
Mill River Rd
New England Central RR
Lime Kiln Rd
Horseshoe Barn Rd
Conger Rd
Polly Hubbard Rd
Robert Newton Rd
Cary Rd
Reynolds Rd
Cadieux Rd
Pattee Hill Rd
Carpenter Hill Rd
Plains Rd
Georgia Middle Rd
Bradley Hill Rd
Bullock Rd
Stone Bridge Rd
Sand Hill Rd
Decker Rd
Sodom Rd
Ballard Rd
Dee Rd
Sandy Birch Rd
Waller Rd
Oakland Station Rd
Goodrich Hill Rd
Boyal Rd
Skunk Hill Rd
Silver Lake Rd
Highbridge Rd
Arrow Head Lake Rd
Georgia Mtn Rd
89
7
104
A
Prepared by:
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
75 Fairfield Street
St. Albans, VT 05478
(802) 524-5958
LEGEND
Water Source Protection, Wetland & Flood Zone Features
Wetland
Water Supply Source Protection Areas - Groundwater
Water Supply Source Protection Areas - Surface Water
100 Year Flood Zone
Surface Water Features
Lake, Pond or River
River, Stream or Brook
Transportation Features
Interstate Highway
Federal Highway
State Highway
Class 2 Town Highway
Class 3 Town Highway
Class 4 Town Highway
Private Road
Railroad
Legal Trail
For planning purposes only.
Created: June, 2015.
Located: z:gis/projects/county/franklin/georgia/townplan2015/map4.6.mxd
Data Sources:
All map features derived from VGIS digital coverages.
Vermont Coordinate System Transverse Mercator, NAD 83.
North arrow on map refers to Grid North.

Lake Champlain

The Town of Georgia has approximately 7 miles of lakeshore frontage on Lake Champlain. The lake, which is more than 400 sq. miles in size is the largest freshwater body in the United States besides the Great Lakes.

Georgia forms the easternmost shore of St. Albans Bay and holds, within its waters, several small islands, the largest of which is Lazy Lady Island. To the west, St. Albans Point and Burton Island form a peninsula which separates the northerly half of Georgia's waters from the broad lake (See **Map 4.7**).

GEORGIA ISLANDS
Map 4.7



The water quality of St. Albans Bay is impaired primarily by excessive levels of phosphorus which lead to algal blooms and growth of aquatic weeds. This problem impacts recreation in the lake, making boating, swimming and fishing less enjoyable for residents and visitors of our community. The State of Vermont's recently adopted a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Lake Champlain. The TMDL aims to reduce phosphorus pollution in Lake Champlain. The State also recently adopted Act 64, which aims to address increased phosphorus loads in Lake Champlain through increased regulation of agriculture and stormwater discharge.

Lake Champlain is a sensitive resource. It is sensitive environmentally, aesthetically and in terms of its ability to absorb development. The area's "carrying capacity" and development requires extensive oversight and planning initiatives to ensure its long term health and viability.

Sewage disposal along the lakeshore also has the potential to degrade water quality. Regional solutions are currently cost-prohibitive. However, alternative individual system options, now permitted by the State of Vermont, are working to improve the waste disposal issue for several shore owners. As they become more generally applied, these will substantially reduce this as a problem.

Lake Champlain continues to be a valuable asset to our community for community recreation and enjoyment, but access to the lake remains an issue. The Town Beach is the primary means of access for the public to the lake. The bulk of shoreland is in private ownership which limits the use and enjoyment of the lake for the citizenry as a whole. The town will continue to investigate ways to increase public access to the lake.

Shoreline

The Lake Champlain shoreline is a unique ecosystem that provides an important habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial animals. The shoreline in Georgia is relatively open with

typical grasses and cultivated fields running adjacent to the shore itself, typically to the east of Georgia Shore Road, particularly in the central part of the lakeshore in town. In the northerly section there are more wooded areas in the vicinity of Melville Landing, Lime Rock Point and the Mill River Delta.

Much of the Georgia shoreline is characterized by high-density, seasonal camps. Although much of the lakeshore is densely developed, there are notable open sections at Lime Rock Point, the Mill River Delta, Rhodes Shore, and White Shore. This is contrasted dramatically by the extensive open space to the east of Georgia Shore Road, and indeed pressure is mounting to develop these lands with their views and potential access to the lake.

The shoreline, characteristic of many Champlain Valley lakeshore sections, alternates between bedrock shales, limestones and loamy bank conditions, (Lordstown is a predominant soil type in this area). Several areas along the shore are subject to erosion.

Wetlands

Wetlands are abundant throughout Georgia and play an important role in maintaining water quality. The location of known wetlands are shown on **Map 4.6**.

The extensive biological activity of a wetland area enables the absorption and assimilation of nutrients and thus purifies to some extent the water that is discharged. These areas store large quantities of water during periods of high runoff and gradually release water during low flow periods. Therefore, the wetland regulates stream discharge both during low flow and peak flow. Loss of this storage capacity not only adversely affects stream behavior but also increases floods and reduces stream flow during crucial low flow periods. Wetlands also provide habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals, including a disproportionately high number of threatened or endangered species, compared to other ecosystem types. Many wetlands receive some protection through State and Federal regulations.

Drinking Water Supply

There are three Wellhead Protection Areas that have been delineated to protect public drinking water sources: one which serves Rhodeside Acres, one which serve Sherwood Forest, and one which serves the South Georgia Fire District (see **Map 5.1**, Utilities, Facilities and Town Services).

Most Georgia residents obtain their drinking water from ground water resources. The management of all our water resources has a direct impact on the present and future quality of the water we consume.

Summary

Abundant clean water is a basic need for public health and economic and community development. Protecting these resources from pollution and inappropriate use is of paramount importance to the citizens of the town and is the public good. Because these

resources do not follow municipal boundaries, it is also important to coordinate and cooperate with adjacent municipalities to see that the resource is wisely managed.

G. FLOOD RESILIENCY

Flooding is the most common and impactful natural hazard that affects Georgia. The Town of Georgia lies within the Champlain Islands sub-basin of the Northern Lake Champlain watershed and the Lamoille River watershed. Several small streams and wetland complexes drain into Lake Champlain. Lake Champlain rises above flood levels in the spring of each year when snow melts and also rises during major summer rain events. Flooding along the shores of Lake Champlain affected a considerable amount of the community in the spring of 2011. This flooding resulted in thousands of dollars in property damage. Flooding can also occur on Georgia's rivers and streams.

Flooding is a natural occurrence and can occur in two ways: inundation and fluvial erosion. Inundation flooding is when water rises and covers the adjacent low-lying land. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines a floodplain as an area of land adjacent to lakes and streams that is subject to recurring inundation or high water (**Map 4.6**). There are several areas of floodplain in Georgia. This includes areas along the banks of the Lamoille River, the Mill River, Deer Brook, and the shoreline of Lake Champlain. The base flood elevation for Lake Champlain is 102 feet above sea level.

Development within floodplains can have damaging consequences. Development may obstruct the natural flow of water or displace soil and raise base flood elevations. One strategy to mitigate potential encroachment and flood loss is to prohibit development below the base flood elevation or set an elevation from which development is prohibited. The State of Vermont has recently implemented a statewide buffer regulation on all lakes and ponds greater than 10 acres (including Lake Champlain). The Shoreland Protection Act essentially prohibits new clearing and development within 100 feet of the mean water level of Lake Champlain (95.5 feet above sea level) and places limits on clearing and development from 100 to 250 feet from the mean water level. The intent of the regulation is to limit bank erosion, to protect shoreland habitat, and to improve water quality.

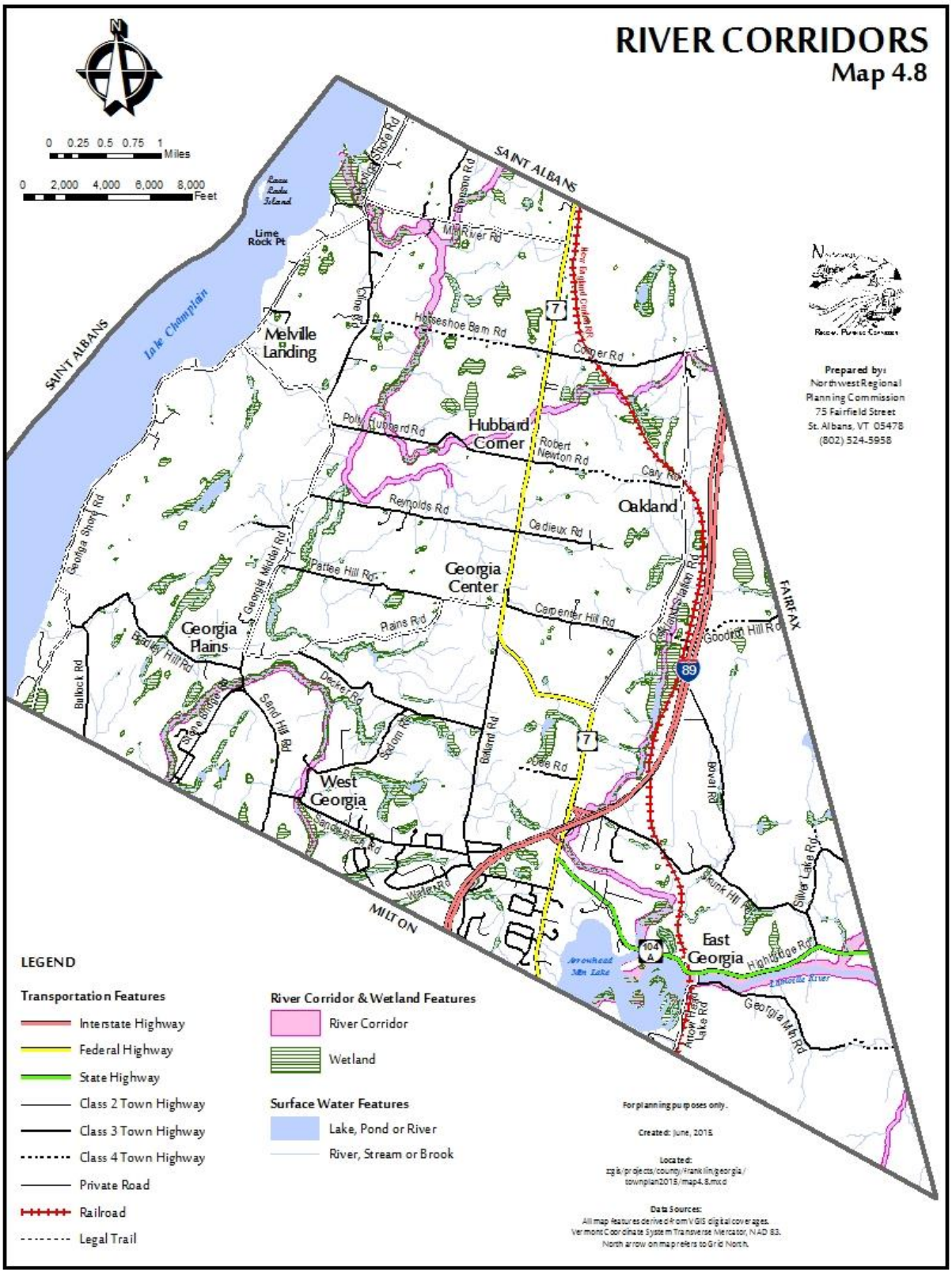
The Town of Georgia has adopted land use regulations for special flood hazard areas, as defined by FEMA on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its residents and to allow the community to participate in the National Flood Hazard Insurance Program (NFIP). It is important to note that the existing FIRMs are dated September 16, 1981 and the Flood Insurance Study was published in August 1980. While this information is the best available, the hydrology that these maps are based on has not been updated since the study in 1980 and therefore does not account for shifts in shoreline or effects of development. The FIRMs were digitized by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission in 1999 to assist in planning efforts and are used to determine approximate locations. The digital version is not used for regulatory rulings.

Flooding can also occur through fluvial erosion, a condition that occurs when fast moving flood waters, typically in steep areas, cause erosion of areas surrounding streams and rivers. To identify areas prone to fluvial erosion hazards, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resource has identified River Corridors in all Vermont municipalities. River Corridors are based on the individual conditions of streams and rivers including topography and the existence of public infrastructure. River Corridors are not mapped for streams that have a watershed of less than 2 square miles. Instead, the Agency advises using a 50 foot buffer on each side of a stream with the intention of protecting stream stability and natural flow. **Map 4.8** shows all mapped River Corridors in Georgia.

River Corridors regulations currently apply only to Act 250-related land development and land development not regulated by municipalities (like agriculture). Municipalities may adopt River Corridor maps and regulation as a part of their development regulations. Adoption may provide financial benefits to the Town in the event of federally declared natural disaster due to changes in how the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) is administered.

Georgia has adopted zoning regulations to address fluvial erosion hazards on named rivers and streams in the community. Specifically, Georgia has adopted a riparian buffer zone regulations. These regulations include a 200 foot setback from Deer Brook and a 50 foot setback from all other named rivers and streams. Setbacks are measured from the top of bank or top of slope depending on topographic conditions. Within these setback areas development is highly restricted. These setbacks are based on the work that was done with Northwest Regional Planning Commission and the Agency of Natural Resources in the early 2000s that identified areas susceptible to fluvial erosion. These regulations are comparable to River Corridor regulations and therefore may make a possible transition to River Corridor regulations relatively simple and straightforward.

Planning for future flooding events is important to ensure that a community is flood resilient. Development and adoption of a local hazard mitigation plan can help a community identify potential hazard risks to the community. Local hazard mitigation plans can also identify projects in the community that can decrease the effects of potential hazards, such as the replacement of culverts or buyouts of properties with repetitive flood risk. Approval of local hazard mitigation plans by FEMA may also lead to increased grant opportunities for communities to implement identified projects. Georgia should ensure that it continues to have a local hazard mitigation plan to plan for future hazards, including flooding to ensure continued access to this funding.


RIVER CORRIDORS
Map 4.8
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
SAINT ALBANS
MILTON
FAIRFAX
Lake Champlain
Lime Rock Pt
Melville Landing
Hubbard Corner
Oakland
Georgia Center
Georgia Plains
West Georgia
East Georgia
Arrowhead Mtn Lake
Lamoille River
Prepared by:
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
75 Fairfield Street
St. Albans, VT 05478
(802) 524-5958
LEGEND
Transportation Features
Interstate Highway
Federal Highway
State Highway
Class 2 Town Highway
Class 3 Town Highway
Class 4 Town Highway
Private Road
Railroad
Legal Trail
River Corridor & Wetland Features
River Corridor
Wetland
Surface Water Features
Lake, Pond or River
River, Stream or Brook
For planning purposes only.
Created: June, 2015
Located:
z:\gis\projects\county\franklin\georgia\townplan2015\map4.8.mxd
Data Sources:
All map features derived from VGIS digital coverages.
Vermont Coordinate System Transverse Mercator, NAD 83.
North arrow on map refers to Grid North.

H. SCENIC RESOURCES

The views and scenic beauty of the Georgia landscape are greatly valued and appreciated by residents and visitors alike. Georgia's gradual transition from the foothills to the lake provides beautiful scenery: The juxtaposition of rolling farmland, historic settlements, and forest within the Champlain lowlands creates a landscape that enhances our community and our quality of life. Scenic resources must be a consideration in planning and development, including ridgelines, foregrounds of distant views, open lands, vistas, and historic village settlements.

Lake Champlain is particularly important as visual and aesthetic resource for the Town of Georgia. To the west, we enjoy beautiful views of the Adirondacks and to the east we see the Green Mountains. The shoreline itself is a scenic resource and is particularly sensitive to human and natural change.

Changes in our working landscape will also affect the aesthetics of our community. Just as Vermont's forest cover has risen from 20-30% in 1850 to over 75% today, we can expect to see our landscape change as the economics of forestry and agriculture change. We can also expect that demand for new renewable energy sources will create interest in wind power development in our town and towns within our viewshed. Balancing economic, environmental and aesthetic interests will require careful review of projects and consideration of all potential costs and benefits.

Poorly planned development can threaten the scenic beauty of our community. These scenic resources contribute to the local quality of life and sense of place, help to preserve and enhance property values, and are instrumental in defining the character of the Town. Future development must be sensitive to these areas of the landscape. Development should be properly sited to protect scenic vistas, and to avoid steep slopes and hilltops. Through the use of flexible zoning tools, such as PUDs, the town can allow creative site design that accommodates and respects scenic and natural resources.

I. FRAGILE, UNIQUE AND SENSITIVE AREAS

All three physiographic regions contain sites for natural, unique, and fragile areas/species. **Map 4.9** indicates the location of critical habitat areas including deer yards and habitats used by threatened and endangered species.

The 1992 Non-game and Natural Heritage Program Report identified five sites in Georgia as Biological Areas of State-Significance. The Program, part of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, determined the sites on the basis of uncommonness of the natural community type, ecosystem integrity and lack of major disturbance, and the presence of rare species. State significance implies that a site is one of the best examples of its natural community type in the state, or that it is the site for at least one rare species.

These sites are:

- A 60 acre ecosystem containing four rare plant species and a good example of floodplain forest.
- A nesting site for the state threatened common tern (Sterna Hirundo).
- A site hosting a large population of state threatened northern stickseed (Hackelia Americana) and a good example of upland northern white-cedar (Thuja occidentalis).
- A short length of dolomite ledge hosts a population of northern stickseed.
- An uncommon east-facing dolomite ledge hosts a population of northern stickseed, as well as a rich northern hardwood forest containing two uncommon species, American ginseng (Panax quinquefolius) and walking fern (Asplenium rhizophyllum).

In 2006, the Program identified an additional site:

- A dolomite bluff composed of a mixture of young cedar and mature oak-hardwood forests hosting a rare, state threatened short-styled snakeroot, and the uncommon long-fruited snakeroot. The Limestone Bluff Cedar-Pine Forest occurs primarily along the shores of Lake Champlain. The area in Georgia is very unique in that it is located about 1500 feet east of the lakeshore. Cedar Bluff Forests are highly threatened by development as they occur on low cliffs with commanding views of Lake Champlain. This Cedar Bluff Forest is part of the larger block of contiguous forest running north from Bradley Hill Road to Polly Hubbard Road.

Other sites, not included in the Biological Natural Areas of State-Significance, exist within the Town of Georgia.

- A 50 acre deep inland marsh is a habitat of unusual significance for waterfowl. The Lake Champlain Basin Study identified the marsh as a site for unique, rare, or endangered species.
- A 50 acre hilly area contains fossils which are used as indicators for the Cambrian Geologic Period.
- A rare plant, animal, significant natural community or state fragile/natural area exists at a shoreline.
- A brook has been identified as a site for unique, rare, or endangered species by the Lake Champlain Basin Study.

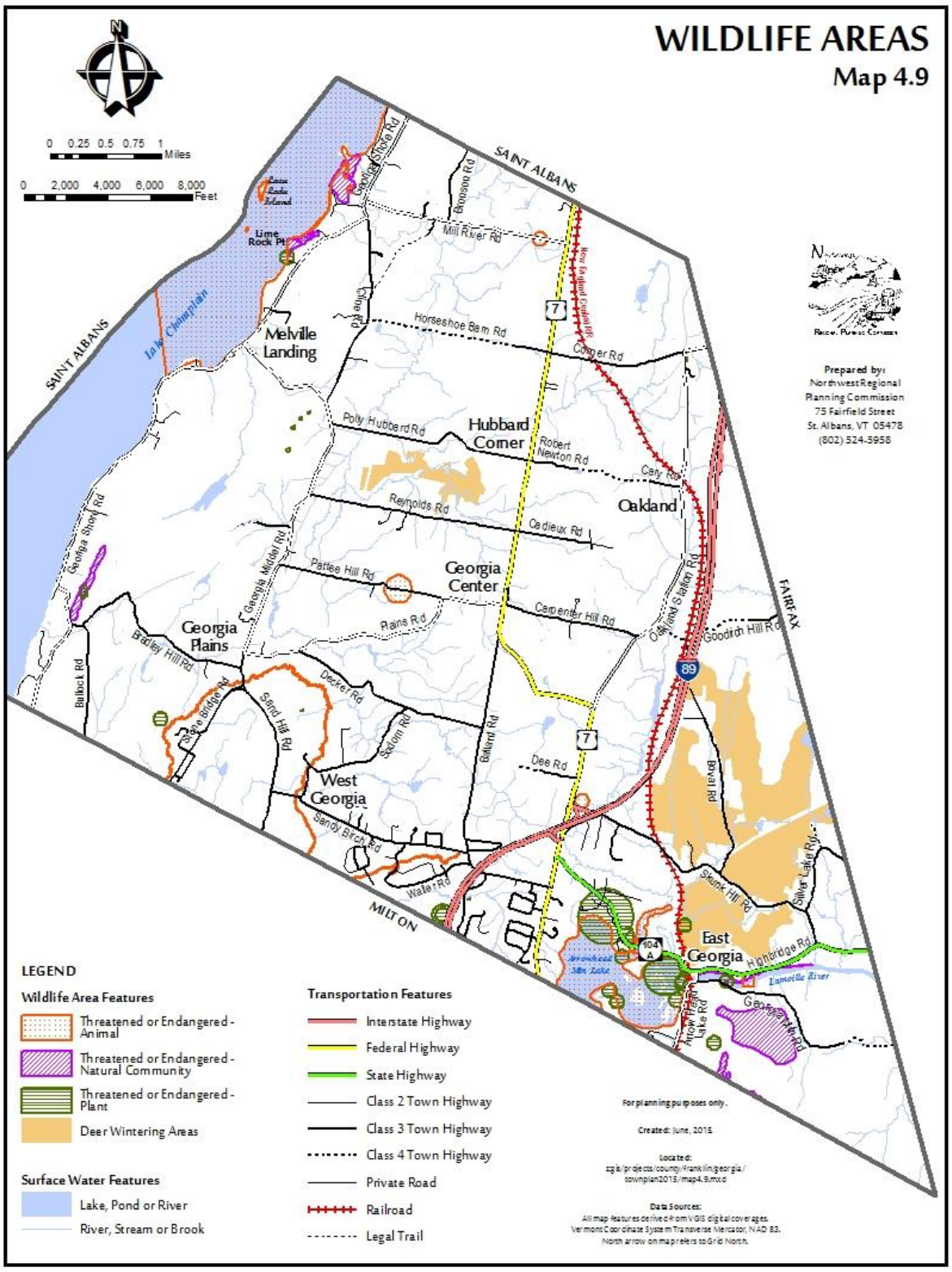
Habitats for rare and endangered species constitute an important resource for the Town of Georgia. Not only are they sites for future biological study, but they also serve as examples and focal points for Georgia's natural character. These habitats should be considered when the Planning Commission evaluates the appropriateness of development in a particular area.

Summary

These areas serve unique functions which are very sensitive to human interference and deserve a level of protection. They are usually unsuited for human habitation but ideally suited for wildlife habitat and have significant ecological, recreational, scientific, and scenic value. They represent a dwindling resource which, with careful planning, this generation may be able to offer as a gift to the next generation.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO THE PHYSICAL SETTING

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS RELATED TO THE PHYSICAL SETTING


WILDLIFE AREAS
Map 4.9
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
SAINT ALBANS
MILTON
FAIRFAX
Lake Champlain
Lime Rock Pt
Melville Landing
Hubbard Corner
Oakland
Georgia Center
Georgia Plains
West Georgia
East Georgia
Mill River Rd
Horseshoe Bem Rd
Poly Hubbard Rd
Robert Newton Rd
Cary Rd
Reynolds Rd
Cadieux Rd
Pattee Hill Rd
Carpenter Hill Rd
Plains Rd
Bradley Hill Rd
Decker Rd
Sand Hill Rd
Sandy Birch Rd
Dee Rd
Goodrich Hill Rd
Skunk Hill Rd
Highbridge Rd
Lamoille River
Arrowhead Mtn Lake
Prepared by:
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
75 Fairfield Street
St. Albans, VT 05478
(802) 524-5958
LEGEND
Wildlife Area Features
Threatened or Endangered - Animal
Threatened or Endangered - Natural Community
Threatened or Endangered - Plant
Deer Wintering Areas
Surface Water Features
Lake, Pond or River
River, Stream or Brook
Transportation Features
Interstate Highway
Federal Highway
State Highway
Class 2 Town Highway
Class 3 Town Highway
Class 4 Town Highway
Private Road
Railroad
Legal Trail
For planning purposes only.
Created: June, 2015.
Located: z:gis/projects/county/Franklin/georgia/townplan2015/map4.9.mxd
Data Sources:
All map features derived from VGIS digital coverages.
Vermont Coordinate System Transverse Mercator, NAD 83.
North arrow on map refers to Grid North.

SECTION 5. UTILITIES, FACILITIES AND TOWN SERVICES

Overview

In a growing town, community facilities and services are often in transition. Existing facilities and services become inadequate as growth occurs. In Georgia, it is apparent that both population growth and the increasing expectations of Georgia residents regarding community services are continuing to result in facility and service expansions and improvements. While town budgets have not increased substantially, the prospect of future service and facility improvements, as well as need for new services, will undoubtedly have fiscal effects. **Map 5.1**, Utilities, Facilities, and Town Services shows the location of such existing facilities. This plan section contains an overview of town facilities and services from two perspectives: 1) What is the current state of the facility or service? Are there current deficiencies? and; 2) What changes are expected over the next five to ten years? Further, it is the goal of this plan section to aid the town in anticipating changes over the next few years, and to establish priorities for facility and service improvements during that period.

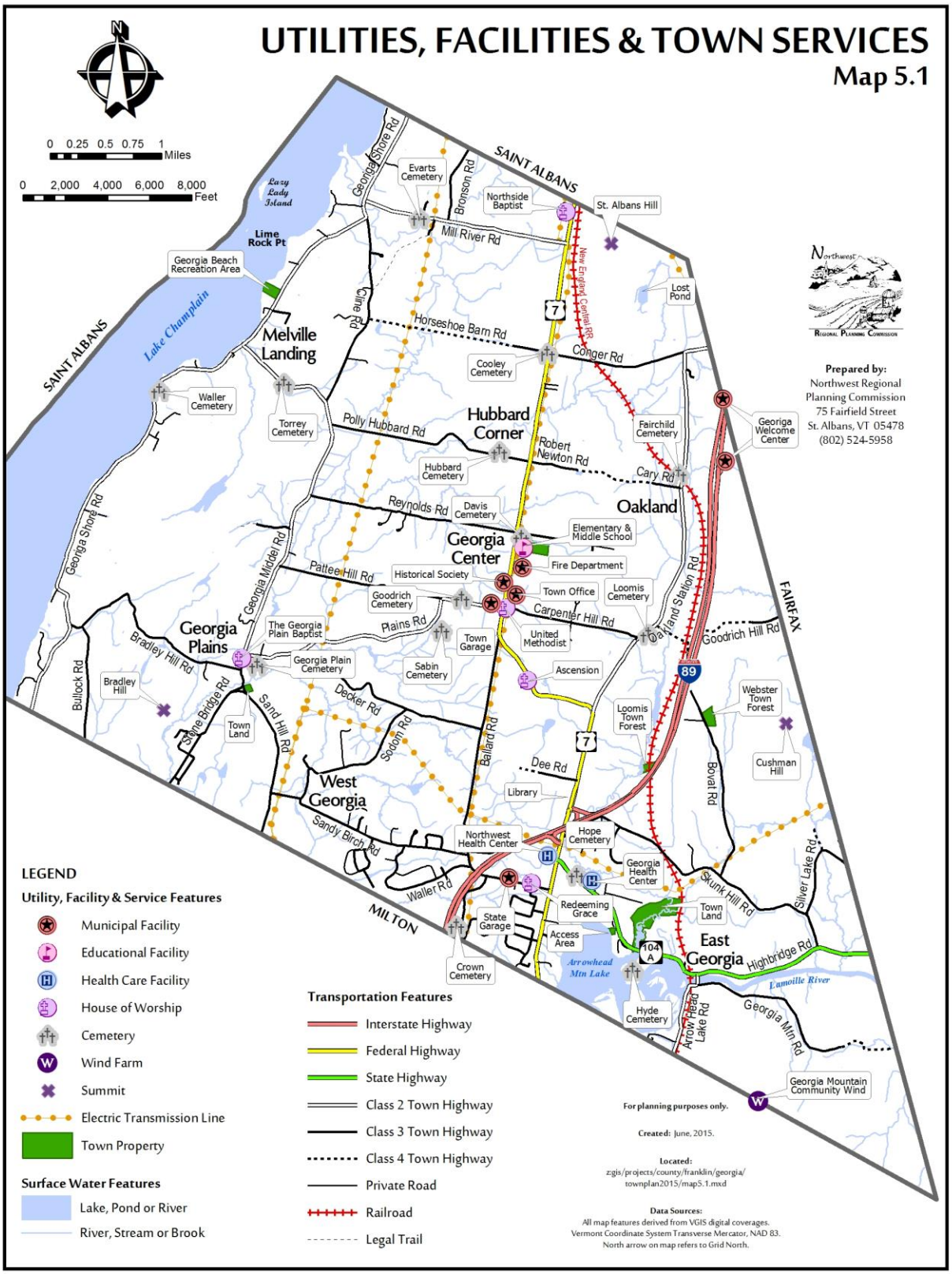
A. PUBLIC SAFETY

Police Services

Georgia's police protection system currently is handled by both the Vermont State Police, who respond from St. Albans, and by contract services with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office. Georgia residents or businesses typically call 911 in the event of a need for police services.

Given the amount of growth which has occurred in town, several arrangements for increased police services have been considered by the Selectboard, including a contract with the Vermont State Police, a contract with the Franklin County Sheriff's Department, and the creation of a local police department. Based on investigation by the Selectboard and Town Administrator, the most cost effective option is to contract services with the Sheriff's Department and the State Police. The cost and liability exposure to the Town from having its own Police Department is seen as prohibitive at this time.

As of 2015, there is a 16-hour-per-week contract with the Sheriff's Department and a four hour per week contract with the State Police. While this approach appears to be adequate, concerns about issues like speeding and potential for property break-ins will likely increase residents' expectations for higher levels of service in the future and may result in increased town expenditures in this area. These contracts will be carefully monitored for effectiveness.


UTILITIES, FACILITIES & TOWN SERVICES
Map 5.1
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
SAINT ALBANS
Lake Champlain
Lazy Lady Island
Lime Rock Pt
Georgia Beach Recreation Area
Melville Landing
Waller Cemetery
Torrey Cemetery
Georgia Shore Rd
Lime Kiln Rd
Evarts Cemetery
Bronson Rd
Northside Baptist
St. Albans Hill
Mill River Rd
New England Central RR
Lost Pond
Horseshoe Barn Rd
Cooley Cemetery
Conger Rd
Hubbard Corner
Polly Hubbard Rd
Robert Newton Rd
Hubbard Cemetery
Fairchild Cemetery
Georgia Welcome Center
Cary Rd
Reynolds Rd
Davis Cemetery
Oakland
Elementary & Middle School
Georgia Center
Fire Department
Pattee Hill Rd
Historical Society
Town Office
Loomis Cemetery
Goodrich Cemetery
Carpenter Hill Rd
Oakland Station Rd
Goodrich Hill Rd
FAIRFAX
Georgia Middel Rd
Georgia Plains
The Georgia Plain Baptist
Plains Rd
Town Garage
United Methodist
Bradley Hill Rd
Georgia Plain Cemetery
Sabin Cemetery
Ascension
Bullock Rd
Bradley Hill
Stone Bridge Rd
Town Land
Sand Hill Rd
Decker Rd
Sodom Rd
Webster Town Forest
Loomis Town Forest
Cushman Hill
Ballard Rd
Dee Rd
Boval Rd
West Georgia
Library
Sandy Birch Rd
Northwest Health Center
Hope Cemetery
Georgia Health Center
Waller Rd
Redeeming Grace
Skunk Hill Rd
Silver Lake Rd
Town Land
State Garage
Access Area
East Georgia
Highbridge Rd
Arrowhead Mtn Lake
Lamoille River
Crown Cemetery
Hyde Cemetery
Arrow Head Lake Rd
Georgia Mtn Rd
MILTON
Georgia Mountain Community Wind
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
Prepared by:
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
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LEGEND
Utility, Facility & Service Features
Municipal Facility
Educational Facility
Health Care Facility
House of Worship
Cemetery
Wind Farm
Summit
Electric Transmission Line
Town Property
Surface Water Features
Lake, Pond or River
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Fire and Emergency Services

The Georgia Volunteer Fire Department is a volunteer force and is a member of the Franklin County Mutual Aid Agreement. The Georgia Fire Department covers an area of 47.8 square miles as primary response from one station that is centrally located for our Firefighters and First Responders.

The department's financial needs are primarily supported by the town budget. In addition, several developers have contributed toward major equipment purchases. "911" emergency dialing is available in all of Georgia, and dispatch services are handled by Central Dispatch in St. Albans.

Georgia First Response is part of the Fire Department, which responds to emergency situations in town. First Response relies principally on emergency equipment which the town contracts for on an annual basis. Georgia contracts with Am Care from St. Albans for ambulance services. Am Care responds to emergency situations in Georgia. Emergency response is a significant issue in Georgia because of the presence of several major industries and Interstate 89.

During the past few years, the numbers of fire calls responded to by the department have increased significantly due to an increase in motor vehicle accidents. The department currently has a volunteer roster of 35 persons, which has remained stable within +/- 10% for the past several years and includes both long-term and new residents of Georgia. This is a positive development, as many towns in the state are having trouble maintaining their volunteer forces. However, it is important to note that training and equipment costs have increased considerably in recent years, and that the larger workload have resulted in higher town expenditures.

A new fire station was constructed in 2011. The new fire station is 8,996 square feet and has seven apparatus bays, all with direct access due to doors on the front and back of the building. Traffic flow has been designed to provide for a separate exit when responding to emergencies. The new meeting & training room provide a safe and convenient location for Department training as well as use by other Town entities. The apparatus bay area for the new facility includes room for up to two additional trucks to meet the possible growth needs of the Town. The station is home to the Georgia First Response who have had no building of their own and have held their regular business and training meetings at the Town Offices.

B. TOWN SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Highway Department

The Georgia Highway Department is responsible for town highways and bridges (see Transportation Section). The Highway Department is based in the town garage facility and has 4 full-time employees and no seasonal employees. Department equipment currently consists of two medium trucks, two tandem dump trucks, two backhoes, a grader, a roadside mowing tractor, track paver, roller trailer, wood chipper, broom sweeper, air compressor, pressure washer, as well as miscellaneous equipment. The

Georgia Highway Department purchased another tandem dump truck in 2014. The Town's fleet of highway vehicles is adequate for current needs.

Workload has increased from past years due in large part to the increased service expectations of residents. Residents now expect their roads to be plowed sooner, and expect road surfaces to be maintained at a higher level, than they did in past years.

The Highway Department has taken over the entire building on Plains Road, which was previously shared with the Fire Department. The additional space has been used for vehicle and equipment storage, a tool and equipment room, and other consolidations of space. Additionally, a new sand and salt shed has been constructed across the street.

The following are likely to be required by the Highway Department during the next few years:

- Regular replacement or rebuilding of major equipment as existing pieces reach the end of their useful life.
- Additional expenditures for re-surfacing, paving, and reconstruction of town highways.
- Increased service demands and road mileage may result in a need to employ an additional full-time person during the next five years.

Administrative Functions

Georgia's administrative functions have gradually expanded over the years, including both personnel and facility needs.

Town personnel now include the Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, Assistant Town Clerk, Town Administrator, a part time Zoning Administrator, a part time Planning Coordinator, and a part time Lister Clerk. Additionally, the Town has contracted services for our assessor and assistant assessor positions.

Elected and appointed officials perform important functions in Georgia. The town's five elected Selectboard members are responsible for overseeing all of the town's affairs, budget, Capital Budget and policy issues which arise from time to time. The Selectboard appoints all other officials except the Planning Commission and the Library Board. Planning Commission is elected under the provisions of Title 24 VSA Section 4323(c). The Selectboard is also the Board of Health for the town.

The Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) and the Planning Commission oversee planning and development issues in the town. The Planning Commission is responsible for the preparation of the town plan, zoning and subdivision regulations, and subdivision reviews. The ZBA is responsible for reviewing conditional uses, variances, appeals and interpretation of the by-laws. There are several other elected or appointed officials and boards which perform important functions for the town such as the First Constable, Delinquent Tax Collector, Auditors, Animal Control Officer, Health Officer, Board of Civil Authority, Justices of the Peace, Conservation Commission and Historical Society.

The Town Administrator position handles numerous administrative functions ranging from dealing with concerns and inquiries, applying for and administering grants and loans, investigating and implementing cost control measures, reviewing and responding to Selectboard correspondence, responding to state and federal requirements, reviewing expenditures and billings, and acting as liaison between town boards and citizens. The Administrator attends all Selectboard meetings and performs whatever duties required by the Board and other duties as assigned.

The Planning Coordinator serves the Planning Commission. This involves reviewing all development proposals, attending all meetings, preparing Planning Commission correspondence, working on plans and by-laws and any other tasks required by the Commission.

The Zoning Administrator handles all zoning related issues. This involves attending all meetings of the Zoning Board, reviewing permits, issuing permits, investigating complaints, and enforcement against violations.

The Town Clerk's Office has also experienced a major increase in workload over the past ten years. Deed and document recording and research, issuing various licenses, birth and death certificate recording, tax billing, concerns and general inquiries have all increased dramatically as the number of new houses, businesses and properties has increased. As mentioned before, the change from a small rural town to a more suburban town has resulted in a population more used to a higher level of services.

All of the above administrative services are based in the Georgia Town Office. In 2010, a Georgia Facilities Bond issue was presented and approved which included a reconfiguration of the Town Offices. The Town has also received a grant from the VT Department of Public Service to improve the energy efficiency of this building and to install LED exterior lighting to illuminate the parking lot and veteran’s memorial.

Library

The Georgia Public Library is available to town residents, and is primarily supported by the town budget. The aging and undersized library was replaced when the Town took over the former Northwest Regional Library. The agreement between the town and the State specifies that at least 50% of the building must be used for library purposes.

The Library currently utilizes most of the building. There are two meeting rooms available for the public to use. The library serves the population of Georgia, as well as seasonal residents and people from surrounding communities. In 2014, there were 15,271 patron visits to the library, down from 16032 in 2009. Adult patron visits increased from 10,763 to 10,952 and juvenile patron visits decreased from 5,269 to 4,319 during this time frame. Access to the public computer stations for 2014 was 1,472, which is a decrease from 2,120 in 2009. These numbers do not include time that patrons spent using the wi-fi service available in the library. The library employs three part-time staff members and has seven regular volunteers. The library's collection, however, is very limited. It currently holds 20,987 volumes. The Georgia library has approximately 3.59 volumes per capita which is less than the Vermont libraries' average of 4.33.

Recreation

There are currently three major recreational facilities in Georgia, which accommodate a variety of recreational activities.

1) The Town Beach - facilities include the beach, fishing access, multi-purpose athletic field, tennis, volleyball and basketball courts, pavilion with public facilities and a playground, which was replaced with an extensive array of equipment suitable to a wider age range. The Town Beach facility is maintained and operated by the Georgia Recreation Committee. During normal operations, the Town Beach is used for summer outings, Little League, picnics, swimming, fishing and boating access. Annually, the beach is also used for Fall Fest. While there are limitations, options for expansion and/or improvement of the Town Beach facility should be investigated.

2) The School Property - facilities include the Gymnasium, a Soccer, Softball and Babe Ruth Field, a Walking Path Inside and Outside of the School, and Limited Playground Equipment.

3) Russel Greene Natural Area- facilities include a walking trail.

Though the Town currently has exceptional recreation facilities that are well utilized and

maintained, Georgia should research opportunities for acquiring additional land when possible, particularly when these lands fill an expressed recreational need. To that end, the town should investigate possibilities for better utilization of existing recreation areas set aside from approved subdivisions, and encourage comprehensive recreation planning for all new developments.

C. SOLID WASTE

Georgia is a member of the Northwest Vermont Solid Waste Management District (NWSWD), which offers disposal options for several types of solid waste such as Household Hazardous Waste and Special Trash that are open to residents of Georgia, including collections within the Town of Georgia itself. Recycling is mandatory within the District, and all haulers are required to provide curbside pick-up of recyclables. NWSWD posts a complete list of fees and accepted materials on their website, nwswd.org. Georgia's Conservation Commission sponsors Green Up Day activities.

D. WATER AND SEWER

The Town does not own or operate its own water or sewage treatment facilities. The South Georgia Fire District owns and operates a water system which currently serves approximately 175 users. There are also several small public water systems in housing developments. The vast majority of all water systems and sewage disposal systems are private and on site. This fact further supports the need for adequate design and construction of systems, in accordance with State standards.

Most townspeople get their drinking water from groundwater sources, whether from a deep well or a shallow well. Given this fact, it is extremely important that septic systems be properly designed and constructed to eliminate contamination of groundwater resources that are also used for our drinking water. This cannot be overstated. Pathogens and bacteria from improperly treated waste water can remain "alive" for five years or more and travel for miles from their source if they mix with the groundwater. The lakeshore presents unique concerns for sewage treatment and potable water supplies.

The southern end of Town is also an area that has been studied for wastewater disposal alternatives and for potential community water systems (see Appendix A). Alternative locations for disposal of collected wastewater have been identified that could be implemented as development occurs in the region around the intersection of U.S. 7 and I-89. As for a recommended source for water, the most practical solution would likely be connection to the Champlain Water District which currently extends through most of Milton. These will have to be given serious consideration in order to implement the vision of the Georgia South Village. There is a large private wastewater system that serves the Georgia Industrial Park

E. EDUCATION

Georgia's growth during the past few decades has resulted in changes in the local educational system. The Georgia School District and the Franklin West Supervisory Union currently take responsibility for providing the public education system for

Georgia's school children. Georgia's schools have evolved from multiple school districts and school buildings within the town, to a centralized system, which was created in 1959, when the Georgia Elementary School opened. Within 10 years, this facility was so crowded that a second school was rented in St. Albans to handle grades 5 through 8. In 1973, the "Big School" was opened. Finally, in 1991, the two schools with a new addition became the Georgia Elementary and Middle School. Georgia's elementary and middle school aged children now utilize the Elementary and Middle School for grades K through 8. Secondary students (Grades 9 through 12) attend the area high school of their choice on a tuition basis, with individual families responsible for handling transportation. In recent years, most Georgia students have chosen to attend the Bellows Free Academy in St. Albans, Bellows Free Academy of Fairfax, or the Essex Junction Educational Center. Each year, a few students are enrolled at approximately five other area high schools. In 2014, 15 students attended BFA Fairfax and 261 students attended other high schools in the area. Vocational opportunities exist at technical centers located at Northwest Technical Center in St. Albans and at the Center for Technology, Essex.

The Georgia Elementary and Middle School facility has a capacity of 900 students. Enrollment has been remarkably stable over the past four years going from 672 students in 2010 to 620 students in 2014. This is not surprising as the town population is aging with a lower percentage of families with children than in the past. As it is projected that current trends will continue for the balance of the decade, the current facility should suffice for the foreseeable future.

While the School District maintains control over the budget for the Georgia Elementary School, it is important to note that several aspects of the total school budget remain out of local control. These include: 1) Vermont State Aid to Education funding; 2) Tuition levels paid to out-of-town high school facilities and; 3) Vermont State educational mandates which have not been fully funded. The impact of the Equal Education Opportunity Acts (Act 60 and 68) on the town's ability to raise education funds remains dependent on State legislation and is therefore out of the Town's control.

Overall, the school district maintains a quality educational product for Georgia's children. Georgia continues to have an enviable reputation for high education standards. Adult and post-secondary educational opportunities exists at several colleges in area surrounding the Georgia. This includes the Community College of Vermont (with campuses in St. Albans and Winooski), the University of Vermont in Burlington, Champlain College in Burlington, St. Michael's College in Colchester, Vermont Technical College in Williston, and Johnson State College in Johnson.

School Enrollment

Public school enrollment is directly related to town-wide growth and is of critical importance in any Vermont town. Simply put, educational services are the major set of local expenditures facing most Vermont taxpayers. This is certainly the case in Georgia. **Figure 5.1** shows trends in public school enrollments in Georgia, broken down between elementary and middle school levels (includes Grades K through 8) and secondary

school level (includes Grades 9 through 12.

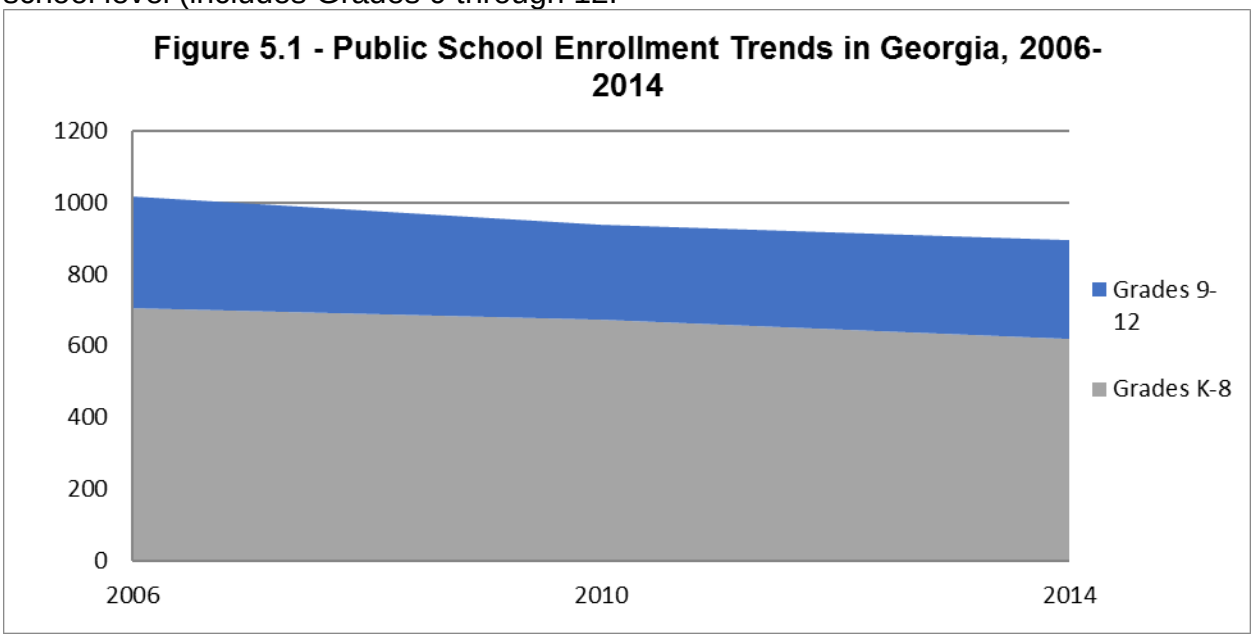


Figure 5.1 – Source: Source: Franklin West Supervisory Union & Georgia Town Reports

Students in grades 9 - 12 are tuitioned to area high schools of their choice. Enrollment has ranged from a high of 317 to a low of 266 during the past ten years. Tuition costs for area schools have become a more significant factor in the total educational budget than in years past as charges for tuition has increased rather dramatically. As seen in **Figure 5.2,** Georgia invests very generously in education as evidenced by its level of overall spending per pupil.

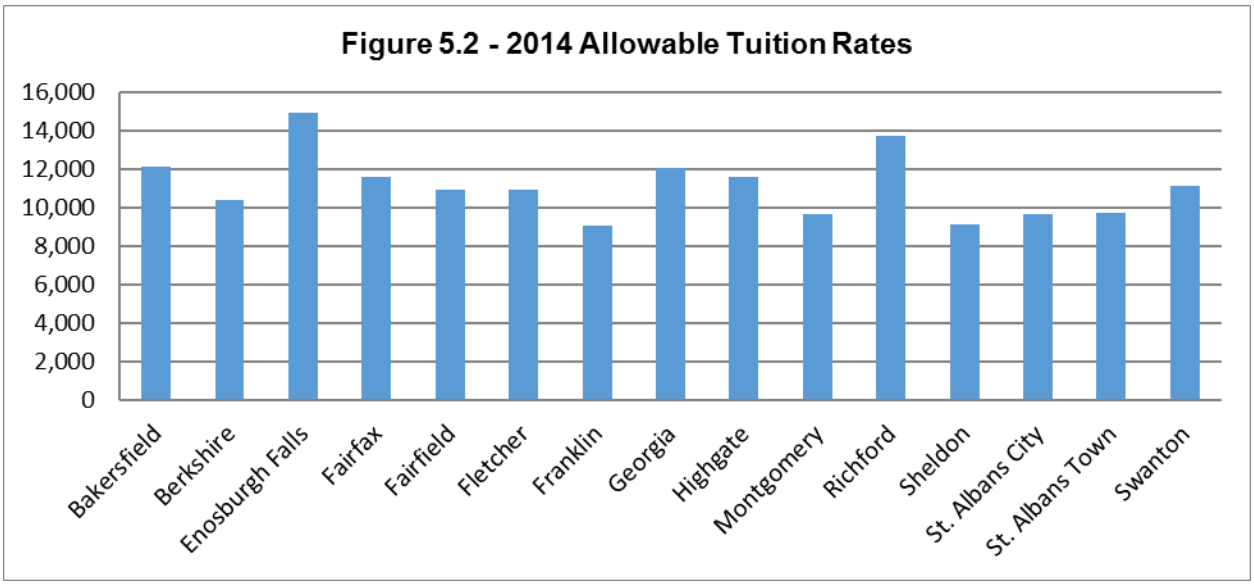
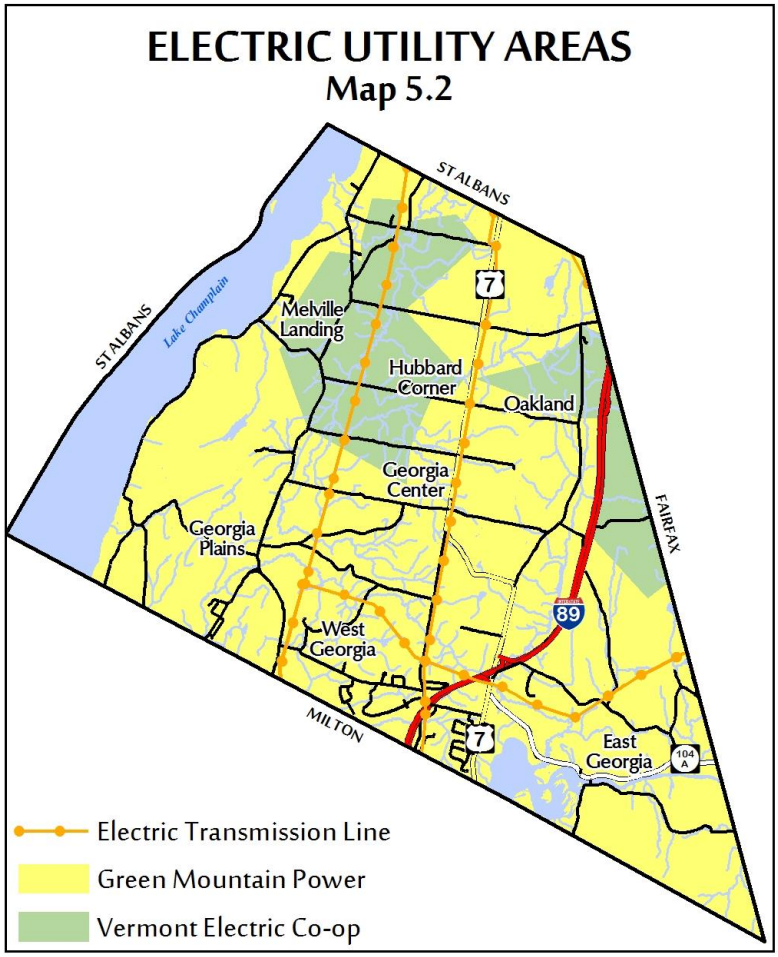


Figure 5.2 - Source: VT Department of Education 2014

F. PRIVATE UTILITIES

Georgia is served by several utilities which provide needed energy, power and communication services. Vermont Electric Power Company owns and maintains a major 115 KV transmission line, which bisects the Town in a north/south direction, as well as numerous substations and fiber optics cables. These lines serve as a major transmission link for the power grid from Canada to the Northeast.



As shown on **Map 5.2**, Electric Utility Areas, Green Mountain Power (GMP) serves much of the residential and commercial electrical needs of the town, with Vermont Electric CO-OP (VEC) serving the rest. VEC owns approximately 13.2 miles of overhead and underground lines, while GMP owns app. 77 miles. GMP serves approximately 1700 residential, commercial and industrial customers and Vt. Electric CO-OP serves approximately 100 customers.

GMP estimates they will have ample supplies of electrical energy in the near term for both residential and commercial/industrial usage. Three phase power is available for commercial and industrial purposes along Route 7 from the Georgia Elementary school south to the Milton line; along Ballard Rd from Route 7 south to the Manor Rd.; along Manor Rd.; and along Route 104A from Route 7 approximately 1/2 mile. Old Stage Rd, Morse Dr, Industrial Park Rd, and Skunk Hill Rd (East to the town line) have also gained access to three phase power recently. Three phase power enhances growth potential of the commercial/industrial base.

Vermont Gas Systems has a major north south transmission line and provides gas service to approximately 440 residential, business and industrial customers in Town. The system presently consists of 6.9 miles of transmission lines and 5.9 miles of distribution lines. Natural Gas is a clean fuel source of energy used for heating, hot water, cooking, clothes drying and industrial/commercial processing. The presence of this energy source near the B-1, I-1 and I-2 zoning districts enhances commercial

industrial development potential.

Fiber optic cables are available for telephone service and the cable companies are providing greater coverage for Georgia each year. It is expected that technological advances will continue to fuel the fast growing field of information and communication, which may present a range of increased opportunities for Georgia.

G. TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The field of commercial telecommunications has many implications for land-use in the Town of Georgia. Telecommunications have become increasingly important as a tool for economic activity. Moreover, the technology enables people to "telecommute," and thereby live a long distance from where they work, which may have the effect of populating more rural areas. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 (federal statute) placed certain limitations over municipal control of telecommunication structures. With these confines, however, Georgia can use land-use regulations to protect the town's rural nature, historic character, and scenic beauty.

Telecommunication Towers

Telecommunications infrastructure is a critical component to economic development in rural areas. However, commercial towers and related infrastructure require careful consideration. Since wireless communication facilities emit electro-magnetic radiation which may affect human and animal health, and towers (and supporting facilities, e.g. roads, transmission lines and fences) create aesthetic and wildlife impacts, telecommunications has emerged as a form of land-use which has significant impacts on a wide area around its location, and therefore is a planning concern.

Telecommunication towers tend to be located in highly visible locations, for example on mountaintops and ridgelines. Furthermore, the technology is evolving quickly. While the use of such technology has increased dramatically within the past ten years, it could be replaced by another technology within the next ten years.

Toward that end, when siting new facilities or upgrading existing facilities, there must be clear evidence that the proposed facility and location are necessary. The Zoning Regulations incorporate appropriate guidelines and regulations governing at least the following areas: integrity of residential zones, protection of scenic areas, protection of wildlife areas, preferred locations, and co-location or clustering of tower facilities.

H. HEALTH SERVICES

The closest hospital to Georgia is the Northwestern Medical Center in St. Albans. NMC is a 70-bed community hospital with an active medical staff of more than 75 physicians spanning 22 medical specialties. NMC's service area covers the greater Franklin and Grand Isle County region, which includes the Town of Georgia. NMC cares for approximately 2,000 inpatients each year, performs over 3,000 surgeries, delivers over 450 babies, and treats over 27,000 patients in the Emergency Department. NMC offers

a comprehensive array of diagnostic and rehabilitative services as well as Chronic Disease Management and Health Promotion initiatives.

The Northwestern Georgia Health Center, located on Highbridge Road in Georgia, is an NMC-employed practice providing primary care for adults and children. Through a wholly-owned subsidiary, NMC also operates the Northwestern Walk-In Clinic on Ethan Allen Highway in Georgia, with extended hours during the week as well as Saturday hours. This facility offers non-emergent care for minor medical conditions with no appointment necessary, occupational health services, x-ray imaging, mammography, and physical therapy.

The nearest trauma center is at Fletcher Allen Health Care in Burlington. Georgia residents also are served by providers in St. Albans and Milton.

I. CHILDCARE

Childcare can be a growing concern for existing and prospective families, whether it means finding quality services or securing the costs of services. High quality, available childcare is a critical component supporting a stable workforce.

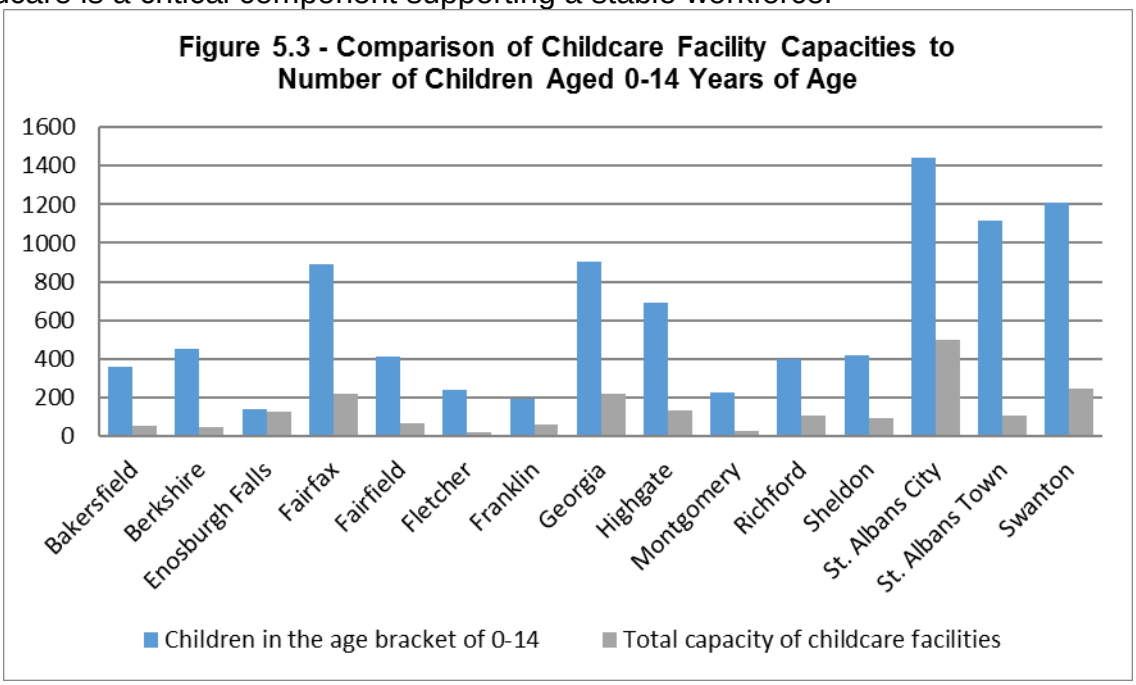


Figure 5.3 - Source: American Community Survey 2009-2013 5-Year Estimates, VT Department of Children and Families

According to state data, Georgia currently has 9 registered childcare homes and 3 childcare centers, with a total capacity of 220 children. The 2010 U.S. Census indicates that there are 972 children from birth to age 14 living in Georgia. Data on other options, such as siblings, stay-at-home parents, family care providers, un-registered childcare homes or other opportunities are not available.

Georgia's population of children under the age of 14 is among the highest in the County, it competes with St. Albans City, St. Albans Town, and Swanton Town. In several other

Franklin County municipalities there are not enough registered facilities for the number of children living in the town, suggesting most child care needs are met through other means.

Summary

As the Town of Georgia grows, the demand for municipal and educational services will also grow. In some cases growth will carry with it demands not only for more service, but also demands for technically higher quality services and often a broader array of services. As a result, Georgia will face demands to not only expand traditional services (general administration, zoning administration, road maintenance, etc.) but also to provide some new services such as municipal police. This will bring added expenses for staff and equipment, as well as needs for larger facilities.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO UTILITIES, FACILITIES AND TOWN SERVICES

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS RELATED TO UTILITIES, FACILITIES, AND TOWN SERVICES

SECTION 6. LAND USE

Overview

The use of land, both historically and currently, defines the physical make-up of the Georgia, providing not only a sense of place, but an insight to how the town functions economically, physically and socially. Current land use trends in Vermont are often inconsistent with local historic patterns of development and State planning goals. To some extent that has happened in Georgia. An example is the Interstate highway, which represents a national land use/transportation initiative which has altered traditional or normal development patterns that did occur or may have occurred in Georgia.

All of the factors discussed in this plan have to be reconciled with the community's short and long term goals for itself...does Georgia want to remain rural?...does Georgia want more industrial development? What will be the future of the Town Center? These are questions which a Land Use Plan attempts to answer.

The land use plan must be responsive and directive, yet flexible. On the one hand, it must respond to conditions as they now exist. Ideally, the location and form of natural landscape features should dictate patterns and location of future growth. The land use plan must respond to existing patterns of development, enhancing their value and utility, and not alienating them, or rendering them obsolete. On the other hand, the land use plan must direct future development to take place in ways that will serve goals, policies and implementation strategies as we now understand them. Land use patterns in the future should enhance Georgia's scenic, cultural and natural resources. Land use patterns in the future should ensure that Georgia continue to function as a viable community.

A. LAND USE TRENDS

Historically, land use in Georgia has been dominated by residential and agricultural uses. Much of this development has taken place in three village centers, Georgia Center and Georgia Plains, and more recently in South Village around the Interstate access. More than half of the town's population lives in these villages, along the southern edge of town, and in the clustered development near Arrowhead Lake. While St. Albans has long influenced development in Georgia, the construction of I-89 places Georgia within the reach of Chittenden County commuters. Approximately 61% of the town’s working population commuted to Chittenden County in 2011 according to the US Census “On the Map” tool. . Access to transportation and services, as well as natural conditions conducive to development, have resulted in significant development in the town’s southern tier.

In recent years, Georgia has also experienced more industrial development. Located next to the interstate and the railroad, the Georgia Industrial Park brought jobs to the town and diversified its tax base. There is also a private Industrial Park located off

Route 104A in South Georgia. These parks offer a variety of employment opportunities for the area. Industrial development should continue to be an element in Georgia's overall land use plan, but care should be taken to contain such development to suitable areas, and to minimize environmental impacts on the rest of the town.

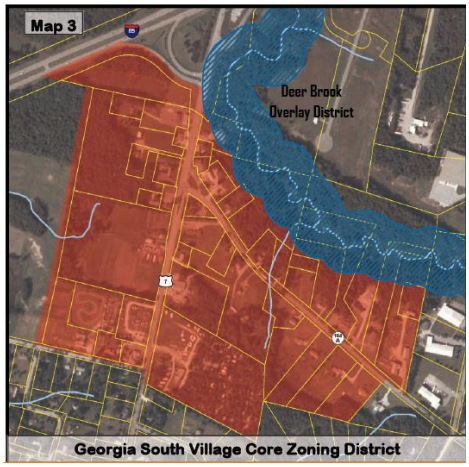
In recent years a service economy has developed to serve Georgia's expanding industrial and residential bases. If properly located, this type of development can enhance the quality of life in Georgia. A community ceases to function when people must go elsewhere for day to day goods and services. Future efforts should encourage a suitable amount of service industry development, and should encourage it to locate so as to enhance the vibrancy and desirability of living in Georgia Center, Georgia Plains, and the South Village.

In 2006, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission worked with the Georgia Planning Commission to complete a build-out analysis that helped to anticipate future land use and development trends. According to NRPC projections, Georgia could realistically see the addition of 401 new housing units by 2020, which would be more than a 20% increase in households from 2000 to 2020. The vast majority of this development was projected to occur in the Residential High Density, Residential Medium Density, and Agricultural/Residential Districts. The results of the Build-out analysis are shown on **Map 6.1**, Community Buildout. It should be noted that this analysis was completed before the current economic recession and before the Town adopted the South Village Zoning District. Both of these events are likely to affect the location and rate of new development in Georgia.

As of the end of 2015, 188 housing units have been constructed in Georgia since 2006. Georgia should work with Northwest Regional Planning Commission to update the build-out analysis to understand and plan for possible growth patterns in the town over the next 15 to 20 years.

Implications for Planning

Based on historic development patterns, current trends, and physical constraints, including natural resources, elevation, and septic suitability, the Town of Georgia has carefully considered the appropriate uses for the different areas of town and has explored the planning tools that will support and encourage appropriate development of these areas.



Georgia South Village

The Georgia South Village is an area of approximately 120 acres located south of the Exit 18 interchange of Interstate 89. Today, this area consists of commercial and residential development along routes 7 and 104a, surrounded by high-density residential neighborhoods to the south and southwest

and an industrial area to the east.

Since 2003, the Town of Georgia has been planning for the creation of a village area that will include a mix of residences, businesses, professional services, light commercial and public facilities with bike and pedestrian facilities, green space and other public amenities. The planning for this area was summarized in 2009 in the "Georgia South Village Core Strategic Plan." In 2009, the vision for this area was codified into the Georgia Zoning Regulations. The regulations support creating a smart-growth, mixed use village by:

- Requiring buildings to be 2-3 story, minimum.
- Establishing a zero front setback minimum and 15-ft front setback maximum.
- Establish design criteria and standards that support appropriate design, scale, connectivity and architectural detail that will create a village with a unique sense of place.
- Requirements for amenities include pedestrian access, street trees and outdoor lighting.
- Requiring parking to the side or rear of a building.

The Georgia Planning Commission continues to work on planning for the transportation, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure that are necessary to support the future development intended for the South Village. It may benefit Georgia to review the changes made to the South Village and effects upon the area to ensure that development in this area has met the community's intent.

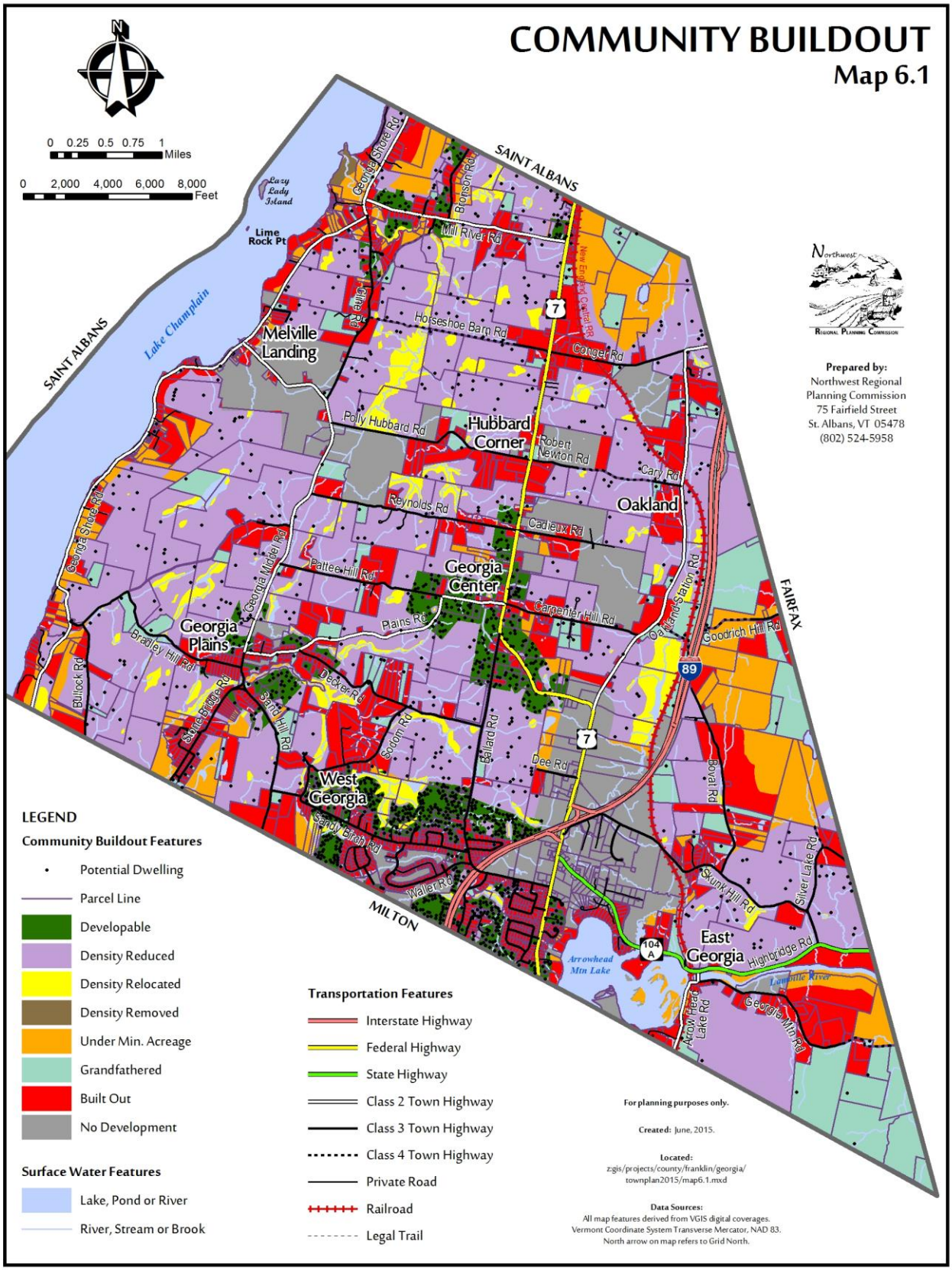
In 2011, the Planning Commission completed the South Village Bicycle and Pedestrian Feasibility Study. The study was approved/endorsed by the Selectboard and the Planning Commission. The study lays the groundwork for future sidewalk construction in the Village and provides the Town with an excellent basis for applying for grants for construction in the future. This plan should continue to be referenced when making land use decision in the South Village.

Georgia Center

Georgia Center shall continue to serve as the municipal center for our community. This Georgia Village Plan, developed in 2003 by Lamoureux and Dickinson, included a future growth plan for the Georgia Center area. The Plan included the expansion of municipal and educational facilities, multi-family and senior housing, and modest commercial together with ample greenspace and parks. In 2009, the Town took steps to developing this vision with the construction of a new Fire Station in Georgia Center.

Georgia Plains and other Traditional Village Centers

A potential secondary development area exists in and around the village of Georgia Plains. While the soils in this area drain less well than those in the primary development corridor, the area contains fewer natural resources than either to the east or west. Most of the development here would be residential, although a certain amount


COMMUNITY BUILDOUT
Map 6.1
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
SAINT ALBANS
Lake Champlain
Lazy Lady Island
Lime Rock Pt
George Shore Rd
Bronson Rd
Mill River Rd
New England Central RR
Melville Landing
Horseshoe Barn Rd
Conger Rd
Polly Hubbard Rd
Hubbard Corner
Robert Newton Rd
Cary Rd
Oakland
Reynolds Rd
Cadieux Rd
Pattee Hill Rd
Georgia Center
Carpenter Hill Rd
Plains Rd
Georgia Plains
Bradley Hill Rd
Bullock Rd
Decker Rd
Sand Hill Rd
Stone Bridge Rd
Godom Rd
Ballard Rd
Dee Rd
West Georgia
Sandy Birch Rd
Waller Rd
MILTON
FAIRFAX
Goodrich Hill Rd
Boyal Rd
Stunk Hill Rd
Silver Lake Rd
East Georgia
Highbridge Rd
Arrowhead Mtn Lake
Lamoille River
Arrow Head Lake Rd
Georgia Mtn Rd
89
7
104
A
Prepared by:
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
75 Fairfield Street
St. Albans, VT 05478
(802) 524-5958
LEGEND
Community Buildout Features
Potential Dwelling
Parcel Line
Developable
Density Reduced
Density Relocated
Density Removed
Under Min. Acreage
Grandfathered
Built Out
No Development
Surface Water Features
Lake, Pond or River
River, Stream or Brook
Transportation Features
Interstate Highway
Federal Highway
State Highway
Class 2 Town Highway
Class 3 Town Highway
Class 4 Town Highway
Private Road
Railroad
Legal Trail
For planning purposes only.
Created: June, 2015.
Located:
z:gis/projects/county/franklin/georgia/townplan2015/map6.1.mxd
Data Sources:
All map features derived from VGIS digital coverages.
Vermont Coordinate System Transverse Mercator, NAD 83.
North arrow on map refers to Grid North.

of service base might be viable at or near the Georgia Plains crossroads in order to provide a place for people to congregate and interact, an essential element of a strong community. This area should remain compact, surrounded by open space.

Other crossroads and historic village centers have been identified. Zoning should allow for mixed use in these areas, strengthening their role as sub-centers in the town and communities which are identifiable. This pattern of denser development would, as in the preservation of Georgia's rural/pastoral qualities, require refinement as well as distinct changes to Georgia Zoning and the development of a Proposed Land Use Plan which reflects this historic settlement pattern.

A population which reaches its homes by automobile each evening is less likely to need or recognize the services of village centers. If Georgia is to maintain its rural character, its distinction between village and countryside, and its spirit of community, it must take special pains to enhance the quality of village life to make living there as desirable as possible. Without vibrant village centers in Georgia Center, Georgia Plains, and the South Village, scattered development with higher impacts on natural resources and greater demands on the town's budget will prevail. While zoning minimum lot sizes can achieve part of the differentiation of densities between the development areas and the outlying countryside, the more important and more difficult means of containing development to the traditional centers and the South Village will involve taking those steps that make the higher density areas the more desirable places to live, work, and play. Carefully planned and implemented landscaping, preservation of historical and cultural resources, and close attention to the provision of desired services within these areas will be essential.

Lake Champlain Shoreline

Land use along the Lake in Georgia has typically been of three basic types: 1) agricultural; 2) year-round residential; and 3) seasonal residential.

It is interesting to catalog some recent trends, particularly with regard to residential development. The 1871 Map of Georgia from the Beers Atlas shows about 10 lakeshore dwellings and farms. One hundred ten years later, there were approximately 175 camps, or seasonal dwellings along the lake in concentrations along Mills Shore, White's Shore, Rhodes Shore, Sweeney Shore, Hayden Shore, The Cedars, the Pines and Pelletier Shores. Residential development was at a level of 55 homes along Georgia Shore Road, including farmsteads. By 1991 there were 186 seasonal homes and 84 residences on Georgia Shore Road. As of 2010, there are approximately thirty additional residences on Georgia Shore Road. In addition, a substantial number of existing seasonal cottages have been improved and updated.

Although much of the lakeshore is densely developed, there are notable open sections at Lime Rock Point, the Mill River Delta, Rhodes Shore, and White Shore. This is contrasted dramatically by the extensive open space to the east of Georgia Shore Road, and indeed pressure is mounting to develop these lands with their views and potential access to the lake.

Land development along the shoreline should occur within parameters developed to preserve environmental and visual quality, as well as the accessibility of the resource for the community. Clustering, screening, sensitive siting and site development are all standards which should be applied by the Planning Commission, when reviewing development. The Planned Residential Development and Site Plan Review processes should be used to protect this fragile resource.

Agriculture and forestry efforts must be carefully considered and managed within the context of supporting these activities, facilitating their operation and ongoing viability, while at the same time ensuring that the land and water resource is not further undermined.

Finally, lake access, visually and physically, should be maintained and enhanced. The town might explore the purchase of additional lands or obtaining easements which maintain the open spaces. These steps could be an integral component, for example, of a PRD process.

Rural Character and Agriculture

Much of Georgia outside of the South Village Core and Traditional Village Centers continue to have a rural/agricultural character that is valued by Georgia residents and should continue to be promoted.

Agriculture and forestry continue to be important components of the local culture and economy. It is important to remember that owners of farms and forests provide a public benefit by not developing their property, and cost the town little in terms of municipal services. From popular scenic vistas, to important wildlife habitat, these contributions to the well-being of the town cannot be overlooked.

The development of farms and forests for residential use is becoming more profitable for the individual land owners. This creates pressure for development. It is important that this development be guided by good land use planning in order to maintain the unique character of our community and ensure that local services are not overwhelmed.

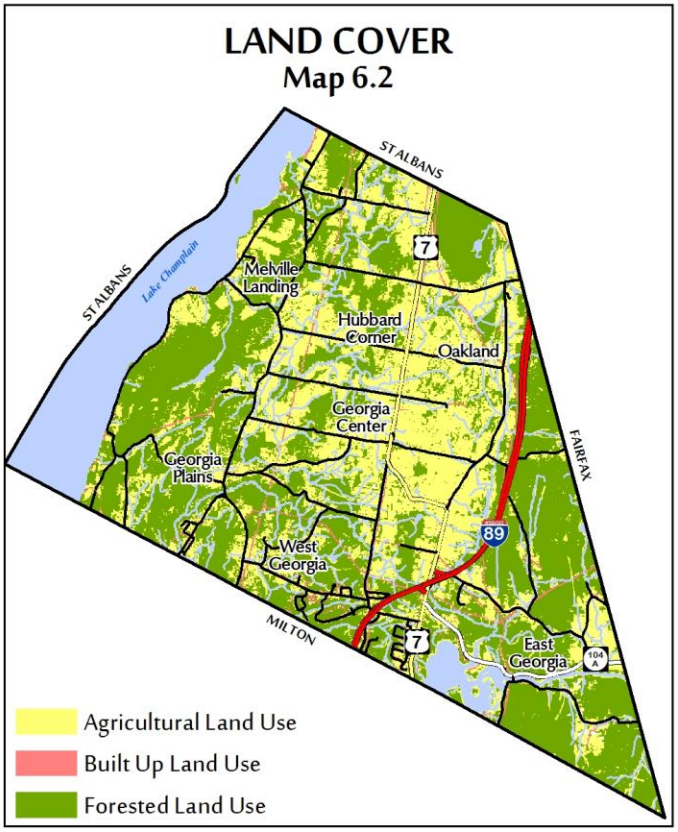
Industrial Development

Industrial Development is generally concentrated in the two industrial parks located to the east of Exit 18, which measure approximately 600 acres. Industrial activities should continue to be focused in these areas as they are largely buffered from residential neighborhoods and provide the appropriate infrastructure to support these uses.

B. EXISTING LAND USE

The Town of Georgia is currently composed of approximately 29% forested, 42% agricultural/open, 23% water and 6% developed (Landsat 2002, **Map 6.2**).

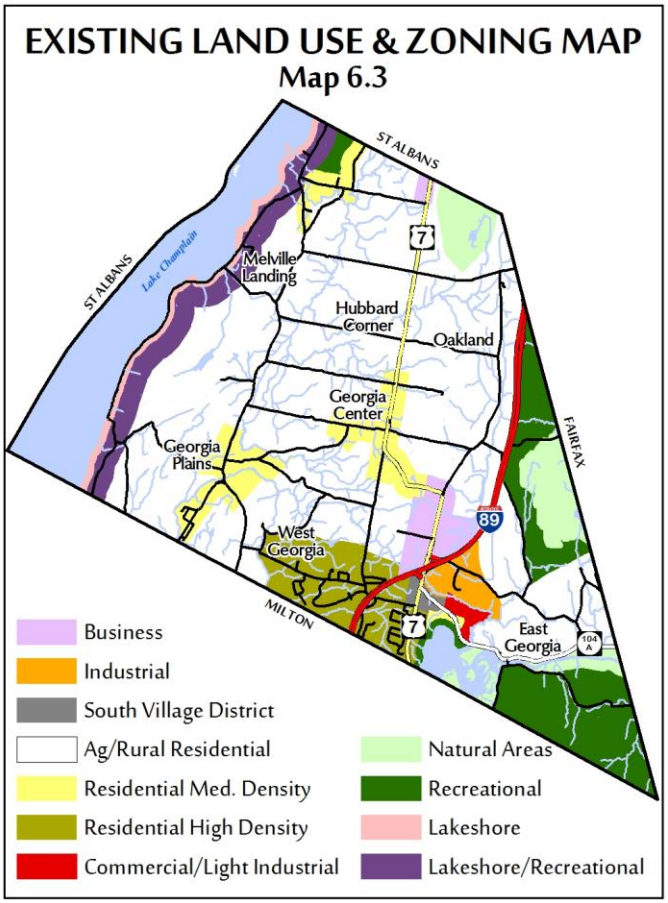
Today, the Town of Georgia is divided into 11 zoning districts. These districts have been developed to implement the Town's goal of maintaining rural character and allowing for appropriate residential, commercial and industrial development in the areas that are most suited to these uses (**Map 6.3**).



C. PROPOSED LAND USE

The proposed land use map is intended to respect the traditional land use patterns and activities that have defined the Town, while being attentive to the physical capabilities of the landscape and the desires of its residents. The Town is proposing 13 land use districts listed and described below, and as shown in **Map 6.4**, Proposed Land Use. There is also one overlays

It is the intent that the Planning Commission use the Proposed Land Use Map, the district purposes outlined below, and the goals, policies, and implementation strategies in this Plan when preparing updates to the Georgia Development Regulations. Any future zoning map is not required to match the proposed land use map exactly, but it should be used as a guide when delineating zoning district boundaries.



Agricultural/Rural Residential District (AR-1)

The primary purpose of the Agricultural/Rural Residential District ("AR-1") is to provide a place in Georgia for *agriculture* and silviculture *uses*. The Town Plan encourages development in other areas of the Town and not in the AR-1 District. Residential and other *uses* permitted in the district should be very low *density* and should not interfere with the agricultural and rural nature of the District, and should not place an unreasonable burden on the Town's ability to provide and maintain Town *service*s to all residents. It is a policy of the Town to strongly discourage *strip development* in this district. Land should be developed so that large contiguous expanses of agricultural, *forestry*, significant geological areas, wildlife habitat, *scenic area*s, and other important *open space* land will be protected. Development may be phased in order to meet the purposes of this district.

Medium Residential District (AR-2)
The purpose of the AR-2 Residential District is to provide a location for residential development at a higher *density* than surrounding rural areas where historic centers of the town are located. In addition, small *scale commercial uses* will be allowed. Development in the district should reflect historic village patterns, protect important resources, enable the economic provision of *service*s, plan for pedestrian and vehicular access, avoid *strip development*, and be planned so as not to burden the ability of the Town to provide adequate facilities and *service*s.

High Density Residential District (AR-3)
The purpose of the AR-3 District is to enable higher *density* residential development where existing development at a higher *density* has already occurred. Development in the district should enable the economic provision of *service*s, reasonable pedestrian and vehicular access within the district and to nearby business and recreation districts, protect important resources, avoid *strip development*, and be planned so as not to burden the ability of the Town to provide adequate facilities and *service*s.

South Village District (SV)
The purpose of the South Village Core District is to provide a concentrated core settlement of small-scale commercial, governmental, and residential *uses* in a traditional Vermont village setting. The standards in this section intend to achieve a livable *streetscape* where people can walk, gather, and meet comfortably. A mix of *uses* is allowed at a higher *density* than elsewhere in the Town to create a community where people live, work, and shop. Developers are encouraged to work with the Planning Commission on developing their site according to the Design Criteria and Guidelines which are intended to implement the South Village Core Strategic Plan.

Business High Density District (B-1)
The Business-High Density District is a high traffic area with good access to major highways. The purpose of the Business-High Density District is to enable high *density commercial uses* in an interconnected, unified pattern that does not result in *strip development*. Development in the district will have controlled access on highways, screening and landscaping, creative design and layout, good pedestrian circulation, and connections to adjoining residential and industrial districts. This district is not intended

to serve as a regionally-designated growth center. *Commercial uses* shall be of a *scale* and size appropriate only for a locally-designated growth center.

Business Medium Density District (B-2)
The Business-Medium Density District is a moderate traffic area with good access to major highways. The purpose of the Business-Medium Density District is to enable mixed commercial and *residential uses* in an interconnected, unified pattern that does not result in *strip development*. Development in the district will have controlled access on highways, screening and landscaping, creative design and layout, some pedestrian circulation, and connections to adjoining residential and commercial districts. This district is not intended to serve as a regionally-designated growth center. *Commercial uses* shall be of a *scale* and size appropriate only for a locally-designated growth center.

Industrial District (I-1)
The purpose of the Industrial District is to enable industrial development in an area with good highway and rail access and set apart from agricultural and residential districts. The I-1 District enables heavy and *light industrial* development in an efficient pattern.

Commercial-Light Industrial District (I-2)
The purpose of the Commercial-*Light Industrial* District is to enable commercial and *light industrial* development in an area with good highway access and set apart from agricultural and residential districts. The I-2 District enables *light industrial* development to develop in an efficient and integrated pattern. This district is not intended to serve as a regionally-designated growth center. *Commercial uses* shall be of a *scale* and size appropriate only for a locally-designated growth center.

Recreation District (R-1)
The Recreation District has severe limitations for development, including steep slopes, poor soil suitability for development, and high elevations. Therefore, much of the district is best suited to remain in a natural state or to be used for outdoor recreation purposes. *Residential uses* are limited to large *lot*s to minimize the impact on the land and prevent substantial *alteration* to the landscape.

Natural Areas District (N-1)
The Natural Areas District has significant natural features or areas which are unique or irreplaceable. The purpose of this district is to protect these features and areas in their natural state to the extent possible for present and future generations. *Structure*s are limited to large *lot*s to minimize the impact on the land and prevent substantial *alteration* to the landscape.

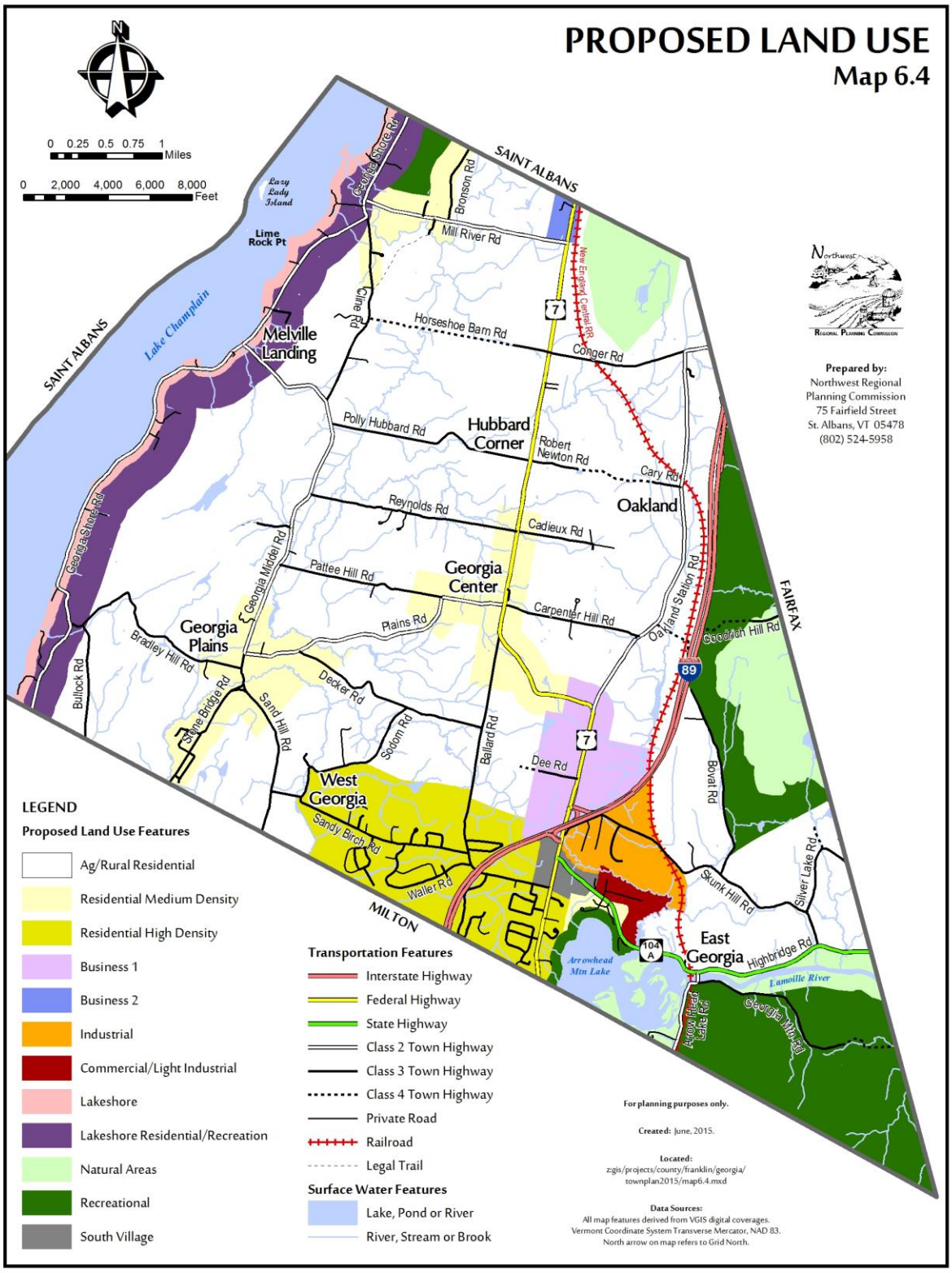
Lakeshore District (L-1)
The Lakeshore District contains land bordering Lake Champlain - one of the most significant natural features of the Town of Georgia. The purpose of the district is to protect the water quality of the lake and the recreational potential and natural beauty of the *shoreline*.

Lakeshore Residential-Recreation District (L-2)
The Lakeshore Residential-Recreation District contains land close to Lake Champlain - one of the most significant natural features of the Town of Georgia. The purpose of the district is to protect the water quality of the lake and the natural beauty of the shoreland area. Development within the district should preserve the contiguous open lands, and protect the view looking eastward from the lake. There are some severe limitations on development in this district due to soil conditions and slopes and thus densities in the district should be low.

Flood Hazard Zone District
The Flood Hazard District is defined and delineated by the National Flood Insurance Maps (FIRM) created by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Flood Hazard Zone District incorporates the Special Flood Hazard District which is also known as the 100-year floodplain (see **Map 4.6**). This district overlays other land use districts. Wherever there is overlap, the provisions of both districts shall apply. If there is a conflict between the two district requirements, or if there is a specific provision for development located within the Flood Hazard Zone District, the more restrictive provision shall apply.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO LAND USE

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS RELATED TO LAND USE


PROPOSED LAND USE
Map 6.4
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
Lazy Lady Island
Lime Rock Pt
Lake Champlain
SAINT ALBANS
Melville Landing
Georgia Shore Rd
Bronson Rd
Mill River Rd
Lime Kiln Rd
Horseshoe Barn Rd
Conger Rd
New England Central RR
Polly Hubbard Rd
Hubbard Corner
Robert Newton Rd
Cary Rd
Oakland
Reynolds Rd
Cadieux Rd
Oakland Station Rd
Georgia Middle Rd
Pattee Hill Rd
Georgia Center
Carpenter Hill Rd
Plains Rd
Georgia Plains
Bradley Hill Rd
Bullock Rd
Stone Bridge Rd
Sand Hill Rd
Decker Rd
Sodom Rd
Ballard Rd
Dee Rd
West Georgia
Sandy Birch Rd
Waller Rd
MILTON
FAIRFAX
Goodrich Hill Rd
Bovat Rd
Skunk Hill Rd
Silver Lake Rd
East Georgia
Highbridge Rd
Lamoille River
Arrowhead Mtn Lake
Arrow Head Lake Rd
Georgia Mtn Rd
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
Prepared by:
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
75 Fairfield Street
St. Albans, VT 05478
(802) 524-5958
LEGEND
Proposed Land Use Features
Ag/Rural Residential
Residential Medium Density
Residential High Density
Business 1
Business 2
Industrial
Commercial/Light Industrial
Lakeshore
Lakeshore Residential/Recreation
Natural Areas
Recreational
South Village
Transportation Features
Interstate Highway
Federal Highway
State Highway
Class 2 Town Highway
Class 3 Town Highway
Class 4 Town Highway
Private Road
Railroad
Legal Trail
Surface Water Features
Lake, Pond or River
River, Stream or Brook
For planning purposes only.
Created: June, 2015.
Located:
z:gis/projects/county/franklin/georgia/townplan2015/map6.4.mxd
Data Sources:
All map features derived from VGIS digital coverages.
Vermont Coordinate System Transverse Mercator, NAD 83.
North arrow on map refers to Grid North.

SECTION 7. ENERGY

Vermont planning law requires that municipal plans include an energy element, which is intended to plan for and promote the efficient and economic utilization of energy in the community. While it is recognized that energy supply and demand are directed largely by economic forces at the state, federal, and international levels, there is a lot that can be done on a household and community level to promote the use of renewable resources, to promote energy efficiency, and to conserve energy**.**

The State of Vermont has set ambitious goals for energy conservation and energy generation in state statute and in the State Comprehensive Energy Plan. The most prominent of these goals, and perhaps the most controversial, is to have renewable energy resources provide 90% of the state's total energy needs by 2050. This accounts for energy used for transportation, heating, and electricity. Northwest Regional Planning Commission is currently developing a Regional Energy Plan that will implement regional policies and strategies that will help achieve the state's energy goals. Georgia supports the efforts of both the State and the Northwest Regional Planning Commission in their efforts to improve energy conservation, reduce reliance on foreign energy sources, and to develop additional, appropriately sited, renewable energy facilities.

A. Existing Conditions: Energy Use

Energy use is generally broken down into the following four categories:

Table 7.1 – Energy Use	
Residential	involves all sources of energy use in the home from water heating to space heating and electricity.
Commercial	involves all energy use directly used for service, wholesale and retail trade, and manufacturing or products
Industrial	involves all energy use directly used for service, wholesale and retail trade, and manufacturing or products
Transportation	involves all energy used in moving people and things from one place to another

Figure 7.1 shows the breakdown of energy use in Vermont by end use. Unfortunately, data for energy use on a local level is not widely available and so we must draw general conclusions from statewide data.

According to the US Department of Energy's Energy Information Center, the transportation sector consumes the most total energy (measured in Btu's) accounting for 37% of the State's total. Commercial and industrial uses consume 31% while residential uses expend the remaining 32% of Vermont energy.

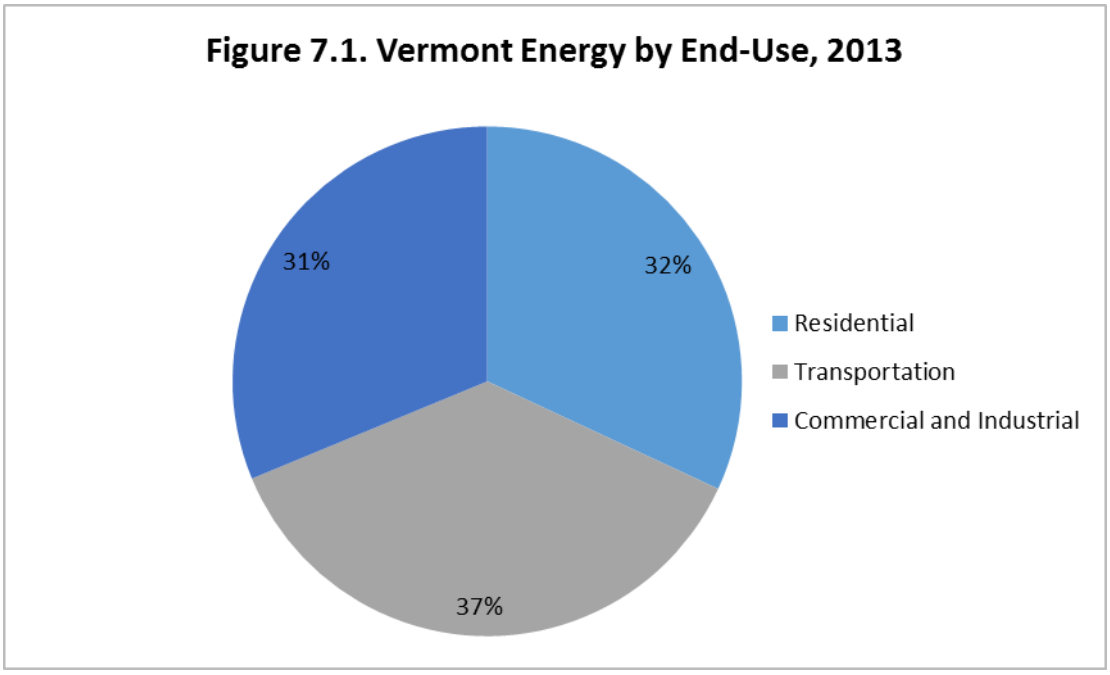


Figure 7.1 – Source: Energy Information Administration, State Energy Data System

In addition to end use, overall energy consumption can be divided by energy source. **Figure 7.2** shows that about half of Vermont's energy demand is met by petroleum-based fuels (gasoline and distillates). This is consistent with what **Figure 7.1** showed, which is that the biggest end use is transportation. Almost a third of the state's energy is consumed in the form of electricity, which predominantly comes from resources that could be considered "cleaner", like hydro. The remaining energy demand is met by natural gas and renewable generating facilities, including solar and wind.

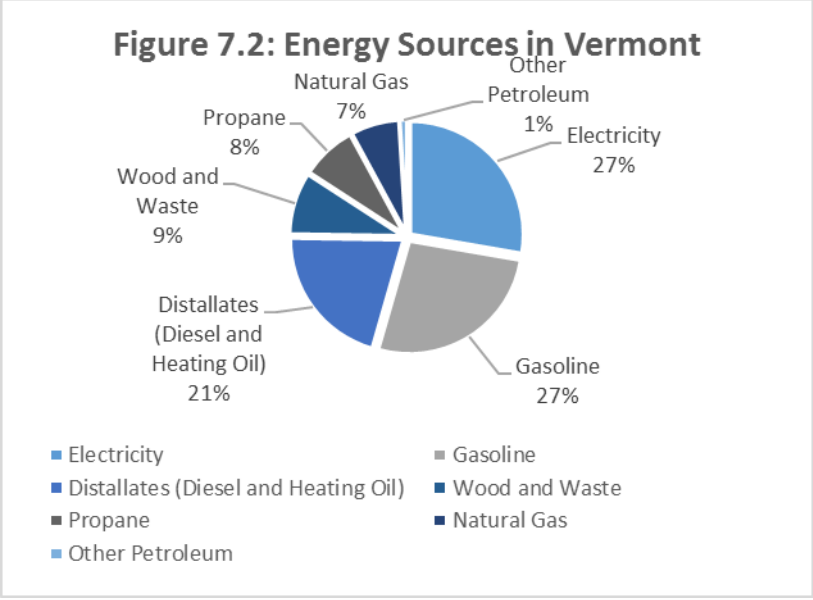


Figure 7.2 – Source: 2016 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan

Electricity

According to the Vermont Department of Public Service, there are two electricity service providers for Georgia. The primary service provider for the town is Green Mountain Power (GMP).A small area of town is served by Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC).

Energy sources for electricity provided by GMP and VEC include hydroelectric, nuclear power, wood, wind, methane and other means. “System” means purchase of electricity on the electrical grid, typically from fossil fuel sources. The following charts (**Figures 7.3 and 7.4**) show GMP and VEC’s energy sources (before renewable energy credits are sold).

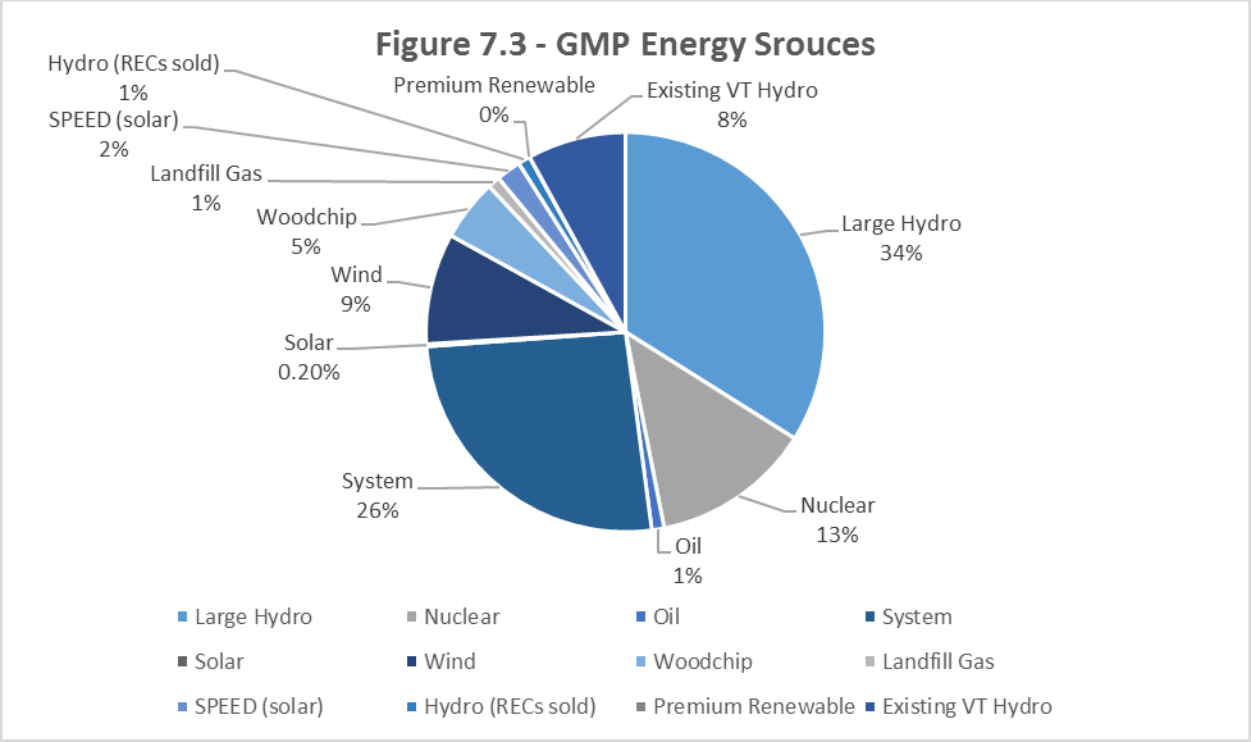


Figure 7.3 – Source: Green Mountain Power

Statewide the largest source of electric power comes from a long-term contract Hydro-Quebec. As a result, Vermont and Georgia customers pay approximately 10% less for their electricity than other New England states as of September 2015 (**Figure 7.5**). These prices should remain relatively stable over the next several years.

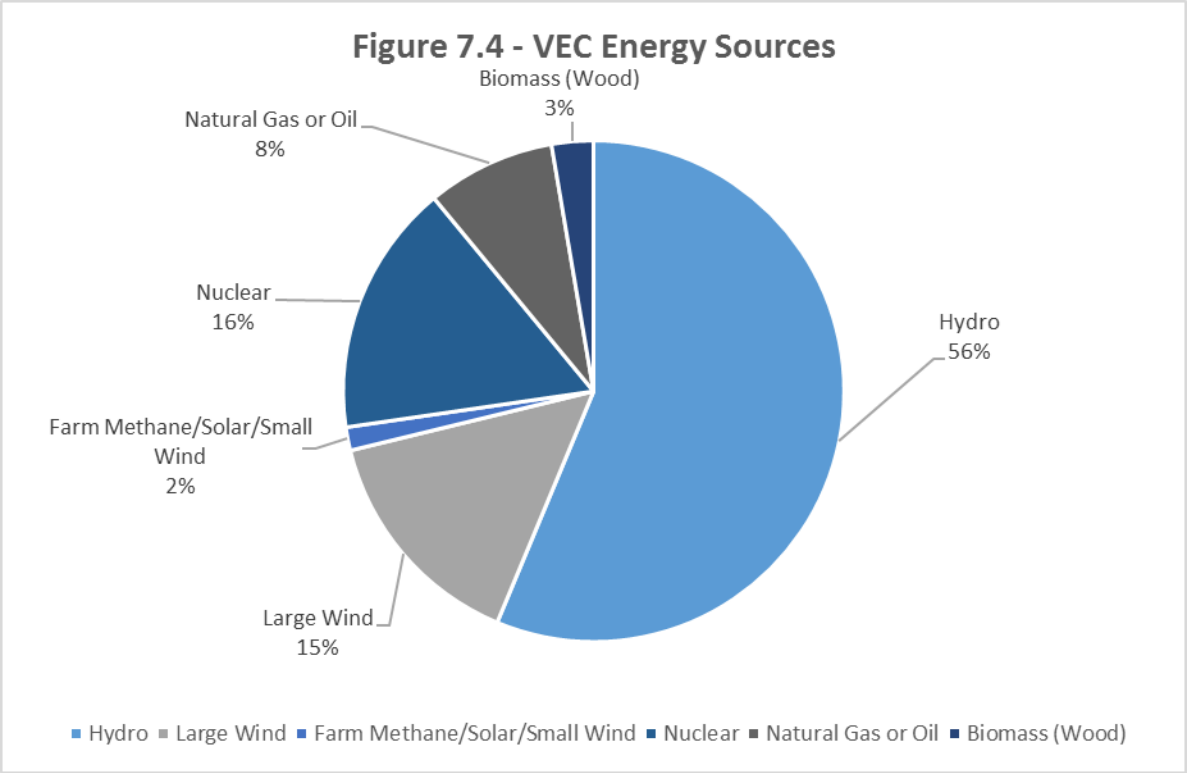


Figure 7.4 – Source: Vermont Electric Cooperative

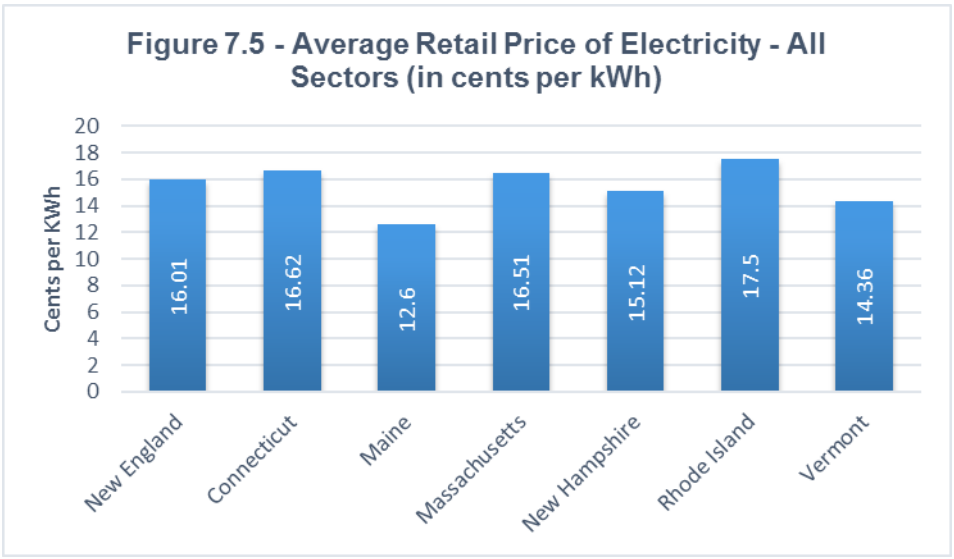


Figure 7.5 – Source: Energy Information Administration, State Energy Data System

Heat

Resources involved in producing heat are a major consideration in energy planning. In Vermont, heat is a large and essential area of energy consumption. It is important to understand the available heat-related energy supply in a town where the winter temperatures regularly fall below zero degrees Fahrenheit. **Figure 7.6** shows the breakdown of energy sources for heating fuel for the Town of Georgia.

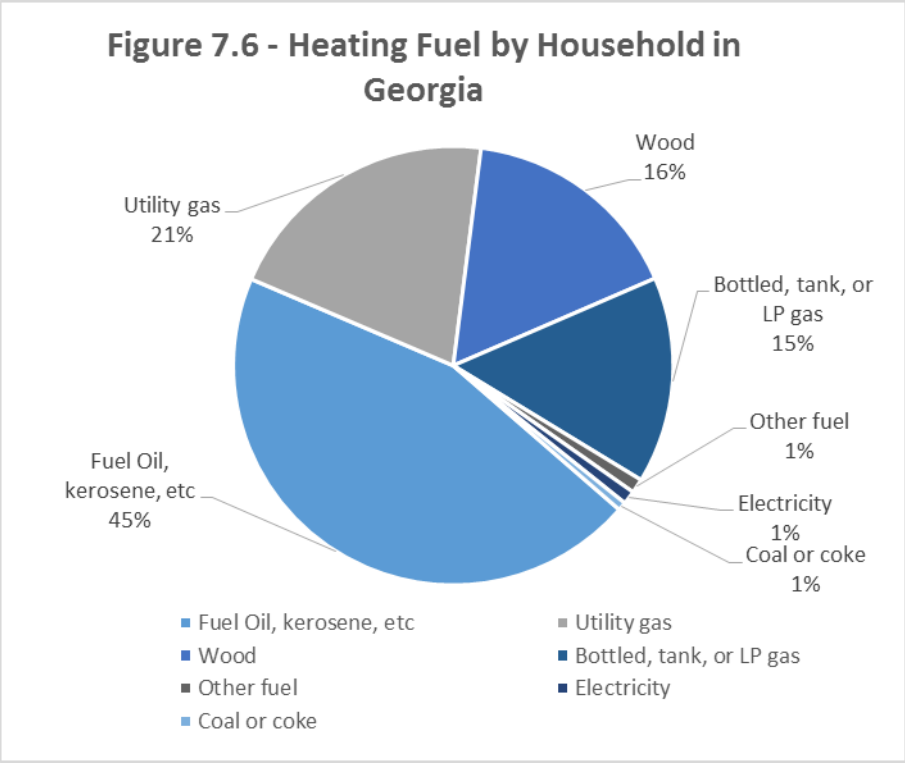


Figure 7.6 – Source: American Community Survey 2009-2013

Figure 7.6 shows that the predominant energy sources for heating fuel in Georgia are fuel oil or kerosene, which is consistent with the state at large. The next largest heat resource category for Georgia is utility gas, at 21%. This is larger than the state's percentage use of the same source, due to the fact that portions of Georgia have access to natural gas, a lower cost and cleaner alternative to other fossil fuels. Note also, that only 16% of Georgia residents use wood for their primary heating source. According to the Draft 2015 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, wood is one of the least expensive sources of thermal energy in Vermont, although the labor associated with obtaining, storing and using wood fuel keeps people from using it in greater numbers.

The development in southwest Georgia and along Route 7 has access to natural gas. Vermont Gas Systems, Inc. (VGS) is the state's single natural gas distribution company. VGS serves almost 50,000 customers in Chittenden and Franklin Counties and continues to increase its customer base and gas sales. VGS's gas is supplied from a connection at Highgate Springs to the TransCanada Pipeline.

This reliance on non-local, unsustainable energy sources for heat could have negative implications for future energy affordability and reliability. Residents and developers could consider alternatives to current heating sources, which provide greater public benefit at lower economic, social, and environmental costs. Cold climate electric heat pumps, which can provide both heating and cooling, are a relatively new technology that could be viable heating alternative in the future and could reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Weatherization efforts can also decrease reliance on heating energy sources.

Transportation

Transportation is a major factor in energy use for Vermont and for the Town of Georgia. In large quantities, cars, trucks and other vehicles not only produce harmful carbon emissions but also consume large amounts of petroleum-based energy at a relatively high cost. The transportation sector is the largest energy end use in the State according to the US Department of Energy. According to the Vermont Agency of Transportation, Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) per person has continually risen in Vermont since the 1960s.

Georgia's easy access to Interstate-89 and close proximity to Burlington has contributed to the town's growth and high median household income. Looking at the town's commuter patterns illustrates that many people have a lengthy commute to work. According to the US Census On the Map tool, about 61.5% of persons 16 or older work in Chittenden County. Only 25.9% of Georgia workers are employed in Franklin County which includes the 7.5% of workers that are employed in Georgia. This data supports the idea that a majority of Georgia residents commute to the Burlington area. According to the 2009-2013 American Community Survey, the mean travel time to work is 25.5 minutes, with a sizeable share of the population (32.8%) traveling between 25 and 34 minutes.

As **Figure 7.7** illustrates, an overwhelming majority of Georgia residents drive to work alone. Only 11.2% drove with at least one other person in a carpool.

Figure 7.7 shows that 4.6% of Georgia's working population worked at home, thus having no commute. This is a positive step toward reducing carbon emissions and promoting fuel economy.

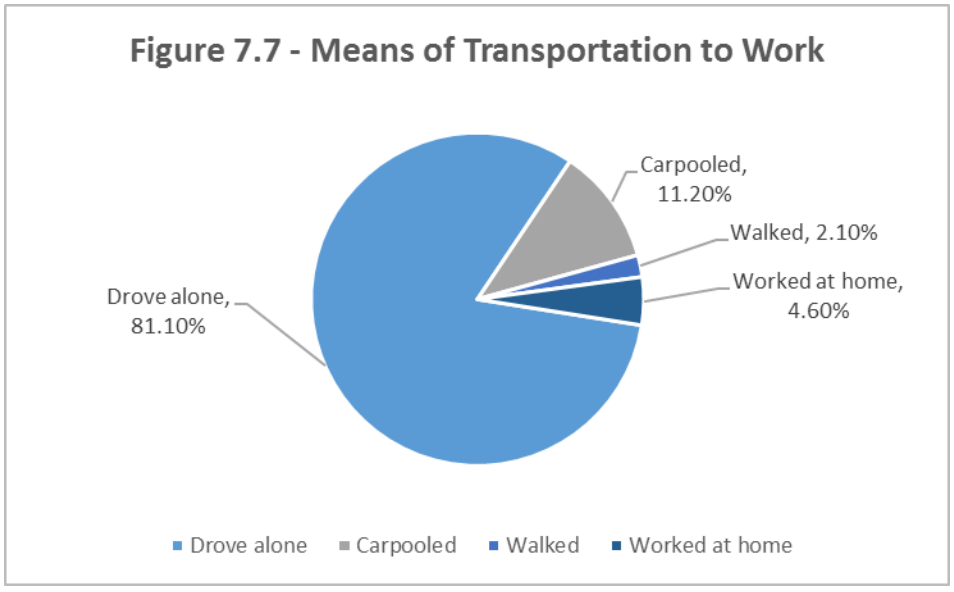


Figure 7.7 – Source: American Community Survey 2009-2013

Potential opportunities for Georgia in reducing its carbon footprint and reducing fuel consumption include carpooling, public transit options and working at home. Although, not captured in the ACS data, there are some residents that use public transit. As discussed in Section 3, Georgia is served by two public transit routes.

At this point in time, increasing fuel efficiency for vehicles is largely an individual choice. Gasoline prices are currently at some of the lowest prices in the past 5 years. Hybrid and electric vehicles are available but production costs have not come down enough to make them affordable to moderate and lower income households. This may change over time. The draft 2015 State Comprehensive Energy Plan calls for increased electrification of the vehicle fleet.

B. Opportunities to Conserve Energy in Georgia

There are myriad opportunities for energy conservation in Georgia. The biggest area of impact could come from land use planning policies. According to the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, it is estimated that simple, inexpensive energy conservation measures employed in new construction could result in energy savings from 20% to 30%. Couple these with an additional 10% savings for conservation measures applied to existing homes and businesses and one can see that real energy savings can be realized over a ten year period.

Efficient Use of Land

From a land use planning perspective, it is sensible to encourage the development of village centers, clustered housing, energy efficiency in design, location and construction of buildings, and the development of more efficient transportation networks.

"Smart Development" practices encourage just such a development pattern, using land efficiently by clustering buildings in a compact area, much like a traditional village pattern. This type of development also leads to less stormwater runoff and less pollution. Infill development, or developing or redeveloping vacant or undesirable lots in existing centers is the most efficient use of land because they avoid the development of open land while at the same time revitalizing town and village centers. This type of development can also reduce transportation energy costs.

Georgia's South Village Core Strategic Plan is a guide for future development in the growth center, and incorporates Smart Development principles into the development standards and design guidelines that apply in the area.

Promoting home occupancy businesses through its land use ordinances is yet another way that Georgia can contribute to energy conservation. Home occupancies cut down on commuting distance, and provide nearby employment for residents.

Transportation

In addition to efficient land use practices**,** promoting a variety of transportation choices is another means for a town to conserve energy. Communities should be designed to support walking, bicycling, and public transit as well as driving. Neighborhood streets can be designed so that they are narrow enough to slow traffic speeds and create a safe and pleasant walking environment. Extending a traditional grid pattern rather than building cul-de-sacs allows for full pedestrian access throughout a community.

While hybrid fuel and electric vehicles have a higher initial cost, these types of vehicles may be more economical in the long run. In 2007, only 420 new or used hybrid vehicles were sold in the state (~1% of the total vehicles sold), but are now fairly common. The number of electric vehicles in Vermont has grown from 88 in 2012 to almost 1046 in October 2015. The 2015 Draft Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan highlights some incentives for such vehicles already in place, such as federal income tax credits.

Programs like Safe Routes to School (SR2S) exist to help municipalities encourage school aged children to be more active and to walk and cycle safely. There is currently no active SR2S program in Georgia but there are several ongoing programs in other towns in Franklin County. SR2S programs can lay the groundwork for obtaining additional state and federal funds for infrastructure promoting walking and cycling.

Carsharing is a national, membership-based program where members pay for the occasional use of a vehicle without the high fees and paperwork associated with rentals. Much of the carsharing fleet is made up of hybrid fuel vehicles. Currently, the carsharing fleets closest to Georgia are located in Burlington and Winooski (Car Share Vermont).

Energy Efficient Building Practices

The most logical time to look at energy conservation is at the time of construction, renovation, or replacement of equipment. Simple practices incorporated into new

construction could save from 20%-30% in energy use. Upgrading water heaters, heating systems, windows and doors, insulating and sealing cracks and drafts can save an additional 10% for existing homes.

There is a great potential to reduce heating bills in old, inefficient buildings. Funding from the state for town energy audits is available and individual households are also eligible for free energy audits. Energy audits can tell individuals where they can improve the efficiency of their home through additional insulation and upgrades to more energy efficient heating, cooling and other systems. Audits of Georgia Elementary School, Library, Town Garage and the Town Office were completed in 2010.

In new construction, incorporating passive solar design is one way to capture the sun's heat throughout the day. The town's Site Plan Review process could include requirements or incentives for orientating new buildings to take advantage of passive solar energy.

"Green building" programs like LEED actually measure the sustainability of new construction by looking at the energy use, site location, reuse of materials, water efficiency and design innovation of a building. Vermont's non-profit Building for Social Responsibility promotes green building and supports a voluntary certification program for residential buildings in Vermont.

For low income residents, the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity offers a weatherization program which offers greater energy efficiency in housing and which can improve basic housing conditions. Households whose income level is less than 150 percent of the Federal poverty guideline can apply for the program which, dependent on the individual circumstances, can address problems with insulation, building envelope, windows & doors, and heating system. Efficiency Vermont and Vermont Gas also have weatherization programs targeted at residential and commercial users regardless of income.

C. Siting Energy Generation Facilities in Georgia

Certificate of Public Good Process

It is important for the Town Plan to provide strong guidance regarding the placement of future energy facilities in Georgia. Most energy generation facilities receive a Certificate of Public Good from the Vermont Public Service Board and are therefore exempt from municipal regulation (30 V.S.A 248 and 24 V.S.A. 4413). However, the Public Service Board shall provide "due consideration" to the recommendations of the Selectboard, Planning Commission and the Town Plan when making a determination regarding a Certificate of Public Good. Georgia supports the development of renewable generation facilities in appropriate locations in the community.

Biomass

Wood is a local energy resource, which has been used as a principal source of heat for much of the town's history. The state sponsors a program to subsidize certain woodchip

heating systems. Woodchip heating could be considered for the town's municipal buildings, including schools.

There are currently 6 farms in Franklin County using its methane waste to generate electricity for GMP, although none located in Georgia at this time. According to GMP, a nearby St. Albans Town farm produces over 15 million pounds of milk a year, and is expected to produce 1.4 million KWH (kilowatt-hours) of electricity a year. There are three medium sized farms in Georgia that could produce a comparable amount of energy.

Wind

There are two net-metered wind turbines located in Georgia. While most of Georgia is on the low end of the spectrum for wind power potential, the town does have three wind-generating sites in Georgia: one in central Georgia, one in northern Georgia, both located at private residences. The third is a high potential area that is part of Georgia Mountain Community Wind facility that has two turbines in Georgia. The other two turbines used by the facility are in Milton. Burlington Electric purchases all of the electricity generated by Georgia Mountain Community Wind (10 MW).

In addition, recent improvements in turbine technology, proposals for small scale, community scale, and utility scale wind power facilities are increasing across the state. Environmental impacts that shall be considered when looking at wind proposals include impacts on aesthetics, wildlife (birds and bats), forest clearing and potential erosion from siting and access roads, and noise.

Solar

There are in excess of 25 existing solar energy facilities in Georgia within Green Mountain Power's service territory. In 2010, there were only 3 such solar facilities. Typically, these facilities are less than 10 kW in size.

Based on mapping work completed Northwest Regional Planning Commission, Georgia has considerable solar generation potential. This generation potential in complimented with good access to transmission and three-phase power lines.

At present, there are only net-metered solar facilities in Georgia. All net-metered solar facilities must be less the 500 kW in size (typical roof mounted solar facilities are about 5 kW in size). Much larger solar facilities with generation capacity between 5 MW and

20 MW have recently been proposed in other municipalities in the region. These facilities need approximately 30 to 120 acres depending on size and topography. Georgia should begin to plan for facilities of this size both in terms of geographic location within the town and in terms of site specific standards. Environmental impacts that shall be considered when reviewing solar proposals in Georgia include impacts on aesthetics and screening, wildlife impacts (birds and bats), forest clearing, potential erosion from siting and access roads, and noise.

Georgia could consider adopting a solar screening bylaw or ordinance, as enabled by the legislature in 2015, to have a greater influence in the Certificate of Public Good Process.

Micro Hydro

Micro-hydro is a potentially low impact form of renewable energy, where power is generated through the force of falling water. New dams are generally not built; rather, the site conditions have to be appropriate for a project. There are currently no micro-hydro projects in Georgia at this time, although there is a successful site in Barton, which could serve as a guide.

In closing, renewable energy is an active area of research. The Town of Georgia supports development of additional renewable generation facilities in appropriate locations. The State of Vermont is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Energy Plan and we should expect new sources and technologies to become available during the five years that this plan will be in place.

SEE SECTION 2 FOR GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO ENERGY

SEE SECTION 8 FOR IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS RELATED TO ENERGY

SECTION 8. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Many goals and policies have been proposed in the plan to help Georgia continue to develop as a strong community. A cooperative effort will be required between town officials, developers, and town citizens to successfully implement the goals, policies and implementation strategies as set forth in the plan. Plan implementation options fall into two categories -- regulatory and non-regulatory. Regulatory options consist of zoning and subdivision options and other town ordinances, which can include numerous specific regulations that further goals and policies in the plan. Non-regulatory implementation options include, but are not limited to: capital planning, special studies, and advisory commissions. The Planning Commission recommends the strategies listed below to implement the Town Plan:

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeline
A. Regulatory Implementation		
Georgia Development Regulations		
Review River Corridor Maps created by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR). Work with ANR to amend maps based on local knowledge. Consider incorporating river corridor maps and regulations into the Georgia Development Regulations.	Planning Commission and Selectboard	Next major bylaw amendment
Review current Flood Hazard Zone District standards in the Georgia Development Regulations for compliance with National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) minimum standards. Consider adopting standards higher standards for this district.	Planning Commission and Selectboard	Next major bylaw amendment
Review regulations concerning development on Class IV roads.	Planning Commission and Selectboard	Next major bylaw amendment
Investigate and consider adopting a “stretch code” for residential and commercial structures to require greater energy efficiency. The code would be integrated into the Georgia Development Regulations.	Planning Commission and Selectboard	Next major bylaw amendment
Review Georgia Development Regulations to ensure that the regulations address development and farming exempt from Required Agricultural Practices from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture.	Planning Commisison and Selectboard	Next major bylaw amendment

Municipal Ordinances		
Adopt Vermont Road and Bridge Standards each year.	Selectboard	Every Spring
Review and update the Town Road Ordinance including standards for Class IV roads.	Planning Commission and Selectboard	2 years
Reevaluate and revise all town ordinances to assure conformance with the town plan.	Planning Commission and Selectboard	2 years
Develop and adopt a solar facility screening ordinance enabled by 24 V.S.A. 4414.	Planning Commission and Selectboard	1 year
B. Non-regulatory Implementation		
Capital Planning and Impact Fees		
Review the Capital Budget and Program and revise consistent with the adopted Capital Facilities and Equipment Impact Fee Ordinance.	Selectboard	Each Fall
Special Studies, Projects, and Plans		
Adopt a Local Emergency Operations Plan.	Selectboard	Every Spring
Update the Georgia Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP).	Planning Commission and Selectboard	Every 5 years
Work with NRPC to update Georgia buildout analysis.	Planning Commission	2 years
Conduct a study of the South Village Zoning District to assess previous changes made to the zoning district in the Development Regulations. This study shall also investigate the possible future use of form-based code and/or design standards in the South Village Zoning District	Planning Commission	2 years
Consider applying for a state designation (village center or neighborhood development area) for the South Village and Georgia Center.	Planning Commission and Selectboard	2 years
Conduct a study of scenic resources in Georgia and include specifically identified scenic resources in the Municipal Plan.	Planning Commission and Selectboard	2 years
Investigate the creation of a Municipal Energy Committee.	Selectboard	1 year
Conduct periodic energy audits of Town buildings and vehicles.	Municipal Staff and Selectboard	Ongoing
Pursue State and Federal Grant Programs to secure funding for projects that improve water quality such as shoreline stabilization and buffers.	Municipal Staff and Selectboard	Ongoing

Pursue State and Federal Grant Programs to secure funding for recreational projects that are consistent with the recreational goals of the town.	Municipal Staff and Selectboard	Ongoing
Continue to pursue a wastewater treatment solution for the South Village Core.	Selectboard	Ongoing
Reach out to community land trusts, housing trusts, other municipalities and NRPC to learn more about obstacles to developing affordable housing and use this information to inform changes to the Plan and the bylaws.	Selectboard and Planning Commission	2 years
Investigate ways to further support walking, bicycling, and public transit as well as driving. One way would be to consider working with Georgia Elementary School to start a Safe Routes To School program.	Planning Commission, Selectboard, and School Board	Ongoing
Develop a sidewalk master plan to guide future sidewalk development in Georgia.	Selectboard and Planning Commission	3 years
Work with the Vermont Department of Historic Preservation to assess the current Historic Sites and Structures Survey and determine if additional sites or structures should be added.	Planning Commission	3 years
Work to promote wide access to broadband internet to encourage home occupation businesses and entrepreneurship amongst Georgia residents.	Planning Commission and Selectboard	Ongoing
Other		
Hold semi-annual meetings with the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment and Selectboard to coordinate the implementation of the goals, policies and implementation strategies in this Plan.	Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment, and Selectboard	Ongoing
Continue the existing coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions by the Georgia Planning Commission and continue to encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process.	Planning Commission	Ongoing

SECTION 9. GEORGIA'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE REGION AND ADJACENT COMMUNITIES

Georgia is located at the southern end of Franklin County, adjacent to the Chittenden County Town of Milton to the south, the Franklin County Towns of St. Albans to the north, and Fairfax to the east. The town of Fairfield has a point of land that touches Georgia in the northeast corner but provides no real physical connection or any conflict in land use.

To the west of Georgia is Lake Champlain, which provides a physical separation between the Grand Isle County communities of South Hero, Grand Isle and North Hero. While it may be argued that land uses between these communities have an effect on water quality and that their plans should be reviewed for compatibility issues, we have chosen to review those communities with a direct land link. Water quality and land use Issues are addressed in our plan, although they may be most adequately addressed on Regional scale, such as through the Lake Champlain Basin Study.

Compatibility of this plan with those of adjacent municipalities and the Region was undertaken by reviewing those plans and zoning districts along the borders of Georgia. A review by community follows.

A. ADJACENT COMMUNITIES

St. Albans Town

St. Albans Town's most recent Town Plan was adopted and approved by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission in 2011. However, based on that plan, there are three primary "areas" related to the compatibility of land use between Georgia and St. Albans: land use districts, the shoreline, and transportation.

Land Use Districts

Land use districts in both towns are generally compatible. Georgia and St Albans both have "lakeshore" districts. See below for more detailed discussion of shoreline issues.

Moving east to Bronson Road, Georgia has a Lakeshore/Recreation District, a Recreation District, and the AR-2 Medium-Density Residential District. Throughout this area, St Albans' Rural District is described in the Town Plan as primarily rural, nevertheless it has potential for more intense development because of the relatively small (~ 1 acre) minimum lot-size allowed in the Zoning Bylaws.

From Bronson Road to Route 7, Georgia has the Ag/Rural Residential (AR-1) District and the Business-1 (B-1) District. St. Albans has an Industrial District (offset from the Georgia town line by approximately ¾ mile). While there have not been any problems in the past with regard to industrial development in this area, there is potential for conflict; for example, an increase in truck traffic, if the district is extensively built-out.

Eastward to the Fairfax line, Georgia has mapped a Natural Areas District and an AR-1 District, and St. Albans Town has a Conservation and Rural Lands Zone. While minimum lot sizes are considerably smaller in both St. Albans Zones (10 acres and 1 acre respectively as opposed to 20 acres and 5 acres respectively) it is unlikely that either area will see much intensive development due to physical limitations of the land.

Shoreline

Development along the shoreline of Lake Champlain must be closely regulated to ensure protection of lake water quality standards. New wastewater options for residents now offer better methods to protect against wastewater runoff. These should be applied whenever development applications are presented.

The St. Albans plan states: "All permitted uses in this district would be subject to special considerations given to improving sewage disposal and preventing unnecessary clearing and shoreline erosion". Georgia supports this view and further believes, if properly regulated, development along the shoreline can lead to improved pollution control, shore beautification, and enhanced revenue for our communities.

Transportation

The following roads connect Georgia and St. Albans Town: Interstate 89 (by way of Fairfax and Fairfield), Route 7, Bronson Road, Ferrand Road, and Georgia Shore Road. Additionally, train tracks and a bus shuttle run through both towns. I-89 and Route 7 function as "major arterials" in both towns. Georgia Shore Road functions as a "collector" in both towns, especially during warmer months. Bronson and Ferrand Roads serve as "local streets" in both towns. Since all of the roads which connect the two towns have the same functions, there is no inherent conflict regarding these roads.

The main concern regarding the road system is access management on Route 7. St. Albans' Town Plan and Zoning Bylaws include language regarding access management. Access management is important on Route 7 since this road serves as a major arterial, and failure to control access will result in reducing its effectiveness.

Georgia and St. Albans Town would benefit from cooperating with regard to provisions for public transportation since both towns have largely commuting workforces.

Milton

Milton adopted its latest Comprehensive Plan on February 18, 2013. As with St. Albans Town, there are three primary "areas" related to the compatibility of land use between Georgia and Milton: land use districts, the shoreline, and transportation.

Land Use Districts

Starting from Lake Champlain, Milton has West Milton, Arrowhead Lake and East Milton, while Georgia has a Business-1 and Lakeshore Residential District mapped. Each of these districts proposes resource protection and generally low intensity of development.

The area in between Stonebridge Brook to Arrowhead Mountain Lake encompasses the

most intensely developed region of Georgia, the High Density Residential (AR-3) District, as well as the Recreation District in a 500 foot swath around Arrowhead Lake. Milton adjoins with the West Milton and Arrowhead Lake Planning Areas. West Milton is designated as a rural district and Arrowhead Lake is intended to be for suburban-type development comparable to Georgia's AR-3 allows one unit per acre.

East of Arrowhead Mountain Lake, Georgia has Natural Area and Recreational Districts whereas Milton has the East Milton Planning Area. These districts primarily provide for low intensity development and are compatible.

Milton and Georgia have much in common with each other. Both towns have experienced high rates of residential growth and retain significant agricultural and natural resource areas. However Milton has more commercial and industrial development along Route 7, and also more public infrastructure, such as municipal water and sewer. In general, the Milton and Georgia Town Plans are compatible with regard to the adjacent land use districts.

Shoreline

Milton and Georgia share the shoreline of Lake Champlain. The Milton Town Plan makes reference to the problem that existing septic systems are frequently undersized and in poor condition resulting in lake pollution but does not include any specific policies regarding this issue. As expressed elsewhere Georgia and St. Albans Town share this concern.

Transportation

The following roads connect Georgia and Milton: I-89, Route 7, Old Stage Road, Hibbard Road, Stonebridge Road, Bullock Road, North Road/Arrowhead Lake Road, and Georgia Shore Road. Additionally, railroad tracks also run through both towns.

I-89 and Route 7 function as “major arterials” in both towns (although the Milton Plan classifies Route 7 as a “minor arterial”). Old Stage Road, Stonebridge Road, and North Road/Arrowhead Lake Road serve as “collectors.” Hibbard Road, Stonebridge Road and Georgia Shore Road in vicinity of the town boundaries serve as “local streets.”

Fairfax

Fairfax adopted its Town Plan in September 2013, with an update to its Development Regulations (Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations) in 2014. The two main areas related to the compatibility of land use between Georgia and Fairfax are land use districts and transportation.

Land Use Districts

The boundary between Georgia and Fairfax includes a significant amount of natural areas that serve as wildlife habitat. The Georgia side of the border is made up of Ag/Rural Residential (AR-1), Recreational, and Natural Areas while the Fairfax side of the border includes Rural and Conservation Districts. It should be noted, however, that Fairfax’s 2014 Zoning Bylaws allow for much smaller lot sizes (between two and five

acres), which therefore could result in fairly intensive development along the Georgia border.

Transportation

The following roads "connect" Georgia and Fairfax: I-89, Route 104A, Goodrich Hill Road, Blake Road, and Georgia Mountain Road. Route 104 runs along the border of the two towns for 0.13 miles.

I-89 functions as a "major arterial" in both towns. Route 104A serves as a "minor arterial," and is notable for its scenic quality due to its proximity to the Lamoille River and Georgia Mountain. Route 104 serves as a "collector" where it joins the two towns. Goodrich Hill Road, Blake Road, and Georgia Mountain Road are "local streets." Goodrich Hill Road and Georgia Mountain Road are Class 4 roads on the Georgia side, but turn into Class 3 roads on the Fairfax side.

Although most of these roads currently function similarly in both towns, and so are not a cause for concern at this time, as discussed above, intensive development along Route 104 or Route 104A in Fairfax could create traffic impacts in Georgia on Oakland Station Road, Route 7, and Route 104A.

B. THE REGION

Georgia is part of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC). The Commission is comprised of two appointed commissioners from each of the 23 member municipalities and a support staff. The Commission provides technical assistance in matters of land use and development and develops a Regional Plan similar to our Town Plan. The Northwest Regional Planning Commission adopted a Regional Plan effective September 2, 2015. There are many topics in the Regional Plan which are pertinent to Georgia, however three main areas related to the compatibility of the Regional Plan and this Town Plan are: growth center designation, transportation, and shoreline protection.

Growth Center Designation

The Regional Plan identifies one "regional growth center" and six "sub-regional growth centers." Georgia's South Village is included as a "sub-regional growth center." The Regional Plan describes the attributes of sub-regional growth areas as serving as "economic and cultural hubs for surrounding towns." The plan continues by noted that the sub-regional growth centers are located in municipalities that have "expressed the desire and planned for managed, high-density mixed-use development."

It is uncertain whether Georgia will invest in sewer or water infrastructure in the near future. It would take a tremendous capital investment to develop this type of infrastructure and the town does not have a large enough population or tax base to support the investment at this time. The town has investigated the possibilities and implications of this infrastructure, and has identified potential practical solutions if this is the direction townspeople wish to go.

Transportation

The Regional Plan describes the multi-faceted transportation network in the region, and includes goals, policies, objectives and strategies for this network. The Interstate, Route 7 and the rail line are important components of both the local and regional network.

Both the Town Plan and the Regional Plan support the minimization of curb-cuts on Route 7, especially in the vicinity of the Interstate exit ramps, in order to maintain the arterial function of Route 7. The Town Plan and the Regional Plan also support public transportation in the Route 7 corridor, and support improvements in the vicinity of Exit 18 to consider the needs of pedestrian travel.

Shoreline Protection

The Lake Champlain shoreline is both a local and a regional resource. Protection of this resource is a high regional and local priority.

The Regional Plan indicates that one strategy for protecting and improving the water quality along the shoreline is to encourage shoreline settlements to consider developing wastewater treatment districts to manage common effluent issues and improve the quality of wastewater treatment. Additionally, the Regional Plan indicates the importance of coordinating development and wastewater management. This Town Plan supports both of these strategies.

APPENDIX A – LIST OF HISTORICAL TOWN REPORTS AND RESOURCES

There are several recent studies, reports, and proposals relating to the future of our town that have been useful in the development of the 2016 Town Plan and previous plans. These document include:

Village Planning:

- Georgia Village Plan: A Vision for the Future (2003);
- Georgia South Village Core Strategic Plan

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure:

- Report on Preliminary Engineering for New Water System for the Town of Georgia, VT Webster-Martin, Inc., 1975
- The Georgia Facilities Improvement Proposal
- Town of Georgia Sewer and Water Assessments for the Historic Village and the Town Center;
- The Georgia shore Wastewater Feasibility Study, Stone Environmental, Inc. Montpelier, VT 2005.

Transportation Infrastructure:

- U. S. Route 7 Corridor Study;
- The Vermont Interstate Interchange Design Guidelines study;
- Georgia Ancient Roads Study.
- 2011 Sidewalk Study

Housing:

- 2015 State Housing Needs Assessment
- Transportation and Housing Affordability in Georgia, Vermont Natural Resources Council, 2015.

Natural Resources:

- National Flood Insurance Program, Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1981.
- The Ordinary High and Low Water Marks are set by the Army Corps of Engineers at 96 and 93 feet, respectively.
- 1981 and 1991 Georgia Town Maps, Vermont Orthophotos Series, and the 1871 Beers Atlas Map of Georgia.
- The St. Albans Bay Pollution Abatement Feasibility Study, TWM Northeast, Williston, VT 1991.
- Biological Natural Areas of Western Franklin County, Non-game and Natural Heritage Program, Department of Fish and Wildlife, 1992
- Vermont Natural Area Inventory
- Significant Habitat Map, VT Department of Fish & Wildlife

- 1988 Vermont Recreation Plan-Assessment and Policy Plan Recreation Division, Dept. of Forest, Parks and Recreation
- Lake Champlain Atlas: Water Quality and Shoreland Use, Lake Champlain Basin Study, 1978
- Vermont Rivers Study, Vermont Agency of Environmental Conservation, 1986