

TOWN OF COVENTRY

MUNICIPAL PLAN

ADOPTED BY THE
TOWN OF COVENTRY
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
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**This Municipal Plan was presented By
the 2003 Coventry Planning Commission**

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TOWN OF COVENTRY VERMONT
MUNICIPAL PLAN 2003

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1. MUNICIPAL PLAN INTRODUCTION

A. Our Changing Times

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

There had been many changes over the past 80 years leading up to this new growth period. The railroad had ceased to be the Town's only link with the commercial marketplace. Trucks were now carrying the Town's dairy products to the marketplace and cars were transporting the Town's residents to neighboring communities, where goods and services were now available. We had become a mobile society. The Town's farms have also experienced dramatic changes. By 1976 the number of farms had decreased from 135 in 1860, to 32. In addition, the farm acreage had dropped from a high of 18,610 in 1880, to 7,282 by 1976. Since 1976 these numbers have decreased even more. As of June of 2002 there were only 18 farms and agricultural acreage had dropped to 3,538 acres. The majority of these farms were now selling milk to nearby cooperatives. In 1980, only 19% of the Town's labor force were working within Coventry's borders. However, by 1990 this percentage had increased to 33%. In the years between 1960 and 2000, the town has increased its population by 121% and in just the last ten years the number of homes in Coventry has increased by 56%.

How have these changes affected the Town of Coventry and its residents? Will this growth cycle continue into the coming years, and if so, how can the town officials prepare for the future growth? The Coventry Planning Commission has addressed these and many other questions, by developing this municipal plan.

B. Coventry's Municipal Plan

This municipal plan will provide the reader with a textbook view of the Town's natural resources, its housing and population trends, its heritage, and the role that the town plays in the surrounding region. The plan includes sections on the Town's economic structure and how funds are spent on educating Coventry's children; maintaining the Town's utilities and facilities; and providing the citizenry with the other services that are required of the town. This information is used as the basis for the implementation chapter of this plan.

2. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

A. Plan Development Objectives

The Planning Commission's first objective in developing this Municipal Plan was to provide the reader with a collection of factual information pertaining to Coventry. The information for this portion of the Plan has been collected from town records; state and federal agencies; neighboring towns, and from the Town's residents. This information is presented in a textbook format. Subjects covered under this category include studies in the Town's soils; wetlands; surface waters; plant life; and wildlife population. These sections of the Plan also provide a historical review of the Town's population; its industries; and its economic and social structure. The information that has been collected will provide the basic resource data for all future town-planning programs.

The second objective in the development of this Plan was to depict trends that had developed over the years that could have a direct impact on the Town's future. The plan includes a review of the Town's population trends; housing trends; economic trends; student population trends; and development trends. We have developed charts to help illustrate these subjects.

The third objective is to review the plan's information, analyze the results, and draw conclusions on how the current trends would affect Coventry's future. The results of this study were used to develop a questionnaire, which was distributed to Coventry taxpayers. The questionnaire was used to obtain public opinion on specific subjects relating to the Town's future.

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

B. Municipal Plan Goals

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

1. TO PROMOTE THE TOWN'S RURAL CHARACTER:

- To explore the mechanics of implementing and administering a zoning bylaw. [*Priority: high*]
- To work with neighboring communities in structuring the region's future. [*Priority: moderate*]
- To promote a residential atmosphere in the village by encouraging an industrial zone outside the village. [*Priority: moderate*]
- To support the continuation of farming in the town. [*Priority: low*]
- To consider the adoption of a regulation or ordinance designed to regulate the erection of telecommunications antenna towers. [*Priority: low*]

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

- To continue to enhance the quality of education offered to the Town's youth. ***[Priority: high]***
- To provide a town highway system and traffic patterns that are both safe and well maintained. ***[Priority: high]***
- To consider the adoption of a noise ordinance to protect the residents from excessive noise during certain hours of the day. ***[Priority: moderate]***
- To maintain a high quality of life by reducing the visual, water, and air pollution. ***[Priority: moderate]***
- To consider the creation of a municipal sewage disposal system to serve the village. ***[Priority: low]***
- To enhance the Town's recreational opportunities and promote responsible and appropriate use of all off-road vehicles to include snow machines, dirt bikes, ATV's, etc. ***[Priority: low]***

3. TO INSURE THE TOWNS' ECONOMIC WELL BEING:

- To keep the Town's tax rate within the limits of its residents' ability to pay. ***[Priority: moderate]***
- To encourage non-polluting industries and small businesses to locate in the community. ***[Priority: moderate]***
- To support Vermont's plan for the Newport State Airport as this facility will benefit the region as well as the Town of Coventry. ***[Priority: low]***
- To support the continued growth of the community, within the limitations of the Town's natural resources. ***[Priority: low]***

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

This Plan also provides Coventry's residents and landowners with a new way to contribute to, and be a part of, planning for the Town's future. Contributions for this plan have been received through the public attending planning meetings and hearings, their filling out and returning questionnaires, and their attending Commission sponsored field trips to local businesses, and establishments. Commission Members and their planning consultant have also conducted residential visitations.

The final chapters of this plan are devoted to introducing methods and programs that can be used in guiding Coventry's future. Problem areas that have been brought out within the text of the plan are highlighted and programs are scheduled for addressing these problem areas. Actions taken under this portion of the plan will be directed towards guiding the next five years of the Town's operation. This plan has been developed by the people of Coventry for the people of Coventry.

3. COVENTRY HISTORY AND PROFILE

A. Profile

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

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

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

Coventry's rolling hills still provide rich soils, which currently support the Town's 18 active farms. These farms use and maintain approximately 3,538 acres for their crop and pasturelands¹.

The Town's woodlands cover 1,945 acres². Logging operations continue to provide a number of the Town's residents with employment. Some of the wood, harvested from these lands, is milled at the sawmill that is located in Coventry.

Coventry's population has grown dramatically since 1960, increasing from 458 in 1960 to 1,014 in 2000³. The majority of this growth seems to stem from an increase in job opportunities offered by the surrounding communities. In 1980 77% of the Town's work force were employed out of town⁴. Since 1990, however, the percentage of people working out of town has decreased to 67% of the Town's employed population. Many new homes were built in Coventry to house the Town's new residents. In 1980 there were 171 wood frame and mobile homes in town, by 1990, the number of homes had grown to over 280⁵ and now, the 2000 Census tells us that there are 435 houses in Coventry.

Coventry provides its children with their first nine years of education by supporting a relatively new K-8 school building built in 1995. Enrollment at the school for the 2001-2002 school year was 117 students. Coventry's teenagers are tuitioned to the high school of their choice. While most of Coventry's teens attend either Lake Region Union High School or North Country Union High School, Coventry has tuitioned students to other high schools as well. These include such schools as St. Johnsbury Academy and a high school in Stanstead, Que. Students have also been tuitioned to high schools in areas as far away as Italy and Vancouver, BC! The Town's total student population, grades K-12, increased from 143 students in 1980, to 179 students in 1990⁶. Coventry's total school population for the 2001-2002 school year was 199.

Waste U.S.A., a privately owned landfill site, which has been developed on a tract of land bordering Town Route 2, handles solid waste disposal.

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

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

A large tract of land bordering the South Bay of Lake Memphremagog is under the control of the State of Vermont. This area is called the South Bay Wildlife Management Area. An additional tract of land that parallels the shores of the Black River has been designated as a wetland district and is also under the protection of the state. Both of these areas can be entered for limited recreational uses.

With the exception of a flood hazard area regulation, Coventry is a non-regulated town. It has no zoning or subdivision regulations. Commercial and domestic development is limited only by Federal and State regulations such as the State's Act 250.

In the past, Coventry's population has been dominated by young residents; however, the Town's population is growing older. In 1980, Coventry's median age was 24.9, contrasted with Derby's 30.5 and Newport City's 33.4⁸. 38.9% of the Town's population was under 20 years of age in 1980⁹. According to data from the 2000 Census this percentage has dropped to 30.0%. This young population was a dominant factor in the Town's "Low Income Community" status and in the growth of the Town's student population. The 2000 Census figures, however, indicates that the Town's median age is now 36.3 while Newport's and Derby's median age figures are 39.9 and 38.9 respectively. The Town's low-income level has had its advantages. Funds from State Aid to Education provided just over 70% of the funds required to educate the Town's youth in the 1988/89-school year¹⁰. The increase in median age, however, has not had an impact on State Aid to Education as this figure for the 2000-2001 school year increased slightly to 72% of the budget.

Today, Coventry can be categorized as an agriculturally based bedroom community. Its immediate future seems to be tied to the stability of its farming community and the growth of the commercial and industrial bases of its surrounding communities. As long as the town continues to offer comparatively low property taxes; a well-balanced educational program; unrestricted residential development sites; and a beautiful rural setting, it will continue to attract new residential growth.

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

B. Coventry History

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

In 1801 a daughter was born to Tisdale Cobb, marking Coventry's first birth. Several families began joining the settlement, and by 1803 Coventry's adult male population numbered sixteen.

It was throughout the year of 1803 that Coventry organized as a town. The first Freeman's meeting was held on September 6, 1803. The first school was organized, with classes being taught in Samuel Cobb's corn barn. Small business also began to operate in 1803. Coventry had two sawmills, a gristmill, and a blacksmith shop.

There was no postal service in Coventry until 1821. The post office was established and Coventry's 300 residents received a weekly mail delivery. Shortly after this time, the center of Coventry Village began to form. Homes were erected, one serving as a boarding house, another as a blacksmith shop. A store and an ashery (a place where potash is produced) soon followed.

By 1823, Coventry's students required a larger building in which to hold classes. The new school was built solely on contributions of materials and labor by the townspeople. Coventry's population continued to grow, by 1882 the student population numbered 232, and instead of one school, there were ten.

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

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

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

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

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

The Coventry Common in itself is rich in history. Now the site for Town gatherings or events, it started as a piece of land donated by Calvin and Daniel Harmon. The town and the Harmon's made an agreement that the town would clear the stumps from it. Since this work was proceeding at a snails pace, it was decided that if a man got intoxicated he would do penance by digging out a stump a day. This method proved to be a way of getting the job done at a much speedier pace! In 1912 Riley E. Wright gave to the Town a memorial monument to honor Coventry's soldiers in the wars of our country. The six pound brass field piece cannon and carriage which graces the common, was presented to the town by the State of Vermont. This

cannon formerly belonged to the Militia Company known as the Frontier Guards at Coventry during the years 1857-61. The Guards were commanded by Captain Azariah Wright; Hartford Hancock, Augustice West, and John H. Thrasher were lieutenants; and Dr. D.C. Blanchard was clerk. A memorial boulder honors Coventry's World War I soldiers and was unveiled in June of 1921. In 1948 a memorial to World War II soldiers was placed between the other two monuments in the common.

4. COVENTRY'S LANDS AND WATERS

A. Introduction

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

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

B. State Owned Lands

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

C. Flood Hazard Areas

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

D. Soils

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

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

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

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

The U.S. Soils Conservation Service soils map can be used to identify the general areas where each soil type exists within the town.

A detailed soil map, plus an on site determination should be used for an accurate soil assessment for a small parcel of land.

Soil mapping does not exist in all areas of Coventry, so in those areas surface geology maps and aerial photography were used to gain an educated guess of what soil associations may be found. The Soils Map Associations Reference Guide will describe each of the soils that have been identified in the Town of Coventry.

SOILS MAP ASSOCIATION REFERENCE GUIDE

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

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

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

E. Topography

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

F. Coventry's Lakes, Ponds and Watersheds

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

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

The Coventry Planning Commission is concerned about the possible impacts on water quality that could be caused by agricultural runoff. This runoff, which may be contaminated with agricultural wastes and chemicals, has the potential of contaminating both surface and ground water supplies. Such contamination is a serious issue and can cause a number of health and financial related problems. At the very least such contamination can cause a family great expense

if they must have a new well drilled. More importantly, however, are the health effects. Such contamination can cause a variety of health related problems some of which may be relatively minor and not life threatening and others that could be very dangerous to a person's well being.

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

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

WETLANDS MAP LEGEND

P – PALUSTINE

RB – ROCK BOTTOM

- 1. Bedrock
- 2. Boulder

UB – UNCONSOLIDATED BOTTOM

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

AB – AQUATIC BED

- 1. Submergent Alga
- 2. Submergent Vascular
- 3. Submergent Moss
- 4. Floating Leaves
- 5. Floating
- 6. Unknown Submergent
- 7. Unknown Surface

FL – FLAT

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

5. Dead

6. Deciduous

7. Evergreen

FQ – FORESTED

1. Broad-leaved Deciduous

2. Needle-leaved Deciduous

3. Broad-leaved Evergreen

4. Needle-leaved Evergreen

5. Dead

6. Deciduous

7. Evergreen

OW – OPEN WATER

1. Unknown Bottom

MODIFYING TERMS WATER

REGIME (1)

A. Temporary

B. Saturated

C. Seasonal

D. Seasonal Well Drained

E. Seasonal Saturated

F. Semi-permanent

G. Intermittently Exposed

H. Permanent

J. Intermittently

- 5. Vegetated Pioneer
 - 6. Vegetated Non-pioneer
- ML** – MOSS/LICHEN
- 1. Moss
 - 2. Lichen
- EM** – EMERGENT
- 1. Persistent
 - 2. Non-persistent
 - 3. Narrow-leaved Non-persistent
 - 4. Broad-leaved Non-persistent
 - 5. Narrow-leaved Persistent
 - 6. Broad-leaved Persistent
- SS** – SCRUB/SHRUB
- 1. Broad-leaved Deciduous
 - 2. Needle-leaved Deciduous
 - 3. Broad-leaved Evergreen
 - 4. Needle-leaved evergreen
- K. Artificial
 - Z. Intermittently Exposed Perm.
 - W. Intermittently Flooded Temp.
 - Y. Saturated/Semi-permanent Season
 - U. Unknown

G. Coventry's Wetlands

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

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

When appropriate, and funds permit, the State of Vermont will purchase wetlands and abutting properties, in an attempt to preserve and protect these important natural resources. Coventry has supported both state and federal laws pertaining to wetland protection and will continue these efforts under the guidelines of this municipal plan. The Planning Commission will discourage any proposed land use that may infringe on the wetland's ability to perform its functions. Coventry will also continue to support the State's management of these areas.

H. Man-Made Land Uses

Located south of the intersection of Routes 5, 14, and the Coventry Station Rd and west of Route 5 is the Village of Coventry. This area is mainly a concentration of residential land uses with a mixture of commercial, industrial, governmental and semi-public land uses. The

commercial/industrial uses include a diner and a trucking business. This area also includes the Post Office, the town office building and, at one time, the Town's elementary (K-8) school. The old school occupied two buildings, and with the completion of the new school, both buildings have been converted into apartments. The new school building is located on the eastern side of Route 5 near the southern end of the Village. The Village area serves as the hub of the Town's social activities.

The Town of Coventry serves as a bedroom community primarily for the nearby employment centers of Newport City, Derby, and Orleans. Coventry's residents also commute to other employment centers such as St. Johnsbury, Montpelier, and beyond. Therefore, residential land uses are perhaps the most predominant land use in Coventry. These homes, as well as the farms in Coventry, are scattered through out the Town.

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

I. Conclusion

The majority of Coventry's future development should occur along or west of the Airport Road as much of that area east of the Airport Road is either wetland or has limited access. Commercial land uses should be encouraged in the Village area but not in the floodplain. Industrial uses already exist along Route 14 and the Airport Road; therefore these areas would be suited for additional uses of a similar nature. The area surrounding the Pike plant and the gravel pit on Route 14 area would seem to be the best place to locate heavy industrial land uses that require trucking. Route 14 is already a trucking route with considerable truck traffic. The Airport Road, on the other hand would be a better location for lighter industrial uses that would need to locate near an airport. Heavy industrial land uses that require the use of heavy trucks, would not be recommended along the Airport Road as this is a Town road of a lighter classification than State Route 14. Finally, the Town needs to think about its farms and how these land uses can be maintained and continued.

5. POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

A. Historical Profile

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

year was 911. The furious pace of the Town's growth was over for the time being. 1880 marked the end of the Town's population growth cycle.

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

The population was down to 549 by 1940. Most of the Town's commercial establishments had closed. The railroad's passenger service was discontinued and in 1943 the railroad station was torn down⁴. The automobile had made its mark on Coventry. It provided a way for the Town's work force to travel to neighboring communities for their employment. Newport and Derby's commercial base was beginning to grow. In fact, the 2000 Census indicated that Coventry's population had more than doubled since 1960. Coventry has reached its highest recorded population ever (1014 persons). Canadians as well as Americans have been supplying the area's work force.

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

Today (2002), Coventry is considered a rural bedroom community. There are still 25 farms in operation, on a total of 5,864 acres.⁵ The town has 1,014 residents. Coventry now has a new school building for their children's K-8 education, while sending their high school students to schools in the neighboring communities. There are a total of 179 students today. The number of homes in Coventry has increased from 171 in 1980, to approximately 435 in 2000, a 154% increase. The population has increased by 50% over the same time period.

B. Population and Development Trends

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

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

The Plan's Historical Profile outlines the changes that have occurred to Coventry, with the introduction of the gasoline engine and the automobile. Prior to the automobile, the size of a town was governed, for the most part, by the number of business opportunities that were available within the town. History tells us that as business began to fall off in the early 1900's, Coventry's residents moved out of town, to find employment elsewhere. The lack of mobility formed a natural population growth control. Today, we live in a mobile society. The Town's residents can travel to neighboring business communities for their employment. These communities also offer Coventry's residents a wide range of goods and services. Small town businesses find it hard, and in most cases impossible, to compete with these larger companies. The rural towns can and do supply the additional housing needs of these business communities. Therefore, small towns like Coventry become bedroom communities. Census figures from 1980 show that while 72% of Newport's population age 16 and over worked in Newport, and 40% of Derby's population age 16 and over worked in Derby, only 19% of Coventry's population 16 and

over lived and worked in Coventry. Since 1980 these numbers have changed very little. The 2000 Census indicates that of the age 16 and over populations, 60% of this segment of Newport's population live and work in Newport, 42% of this segment of Derby's population live and work in Derby, and only 17% of this segment of Coventry's population live and work in Coventry. While the business communities receive the financial benefits of the area's increased population; the rural bedroom communities must provide the services that are required by the people that work in the neighboring communities. It is also obvious that the growth trends within these bedroom communities are controlled, in a large part, by the neighboring business community's commercial growth.

POPULATION AND HOUSING 1970 TO 2000					
Year	Total Town Population	Student Population			Total Housing
		K - 8	9 - 12	Total	
1970	492	108	34	142	127
1980	674	88	53	141	171
1990	807	125	54	179	280
2000	1,014	124	74	198	435
% Increases					
'70-'80	37.0%	-18.5%	55.9%	-0.7%	34.6%
'80-'90	19.7%	42.0%	1.9%	27.0%	63.7%
'90-'00	25.7%	-0.8%	37.0%	10.6%	55.4%
US Census Bureau, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000					

The trends that occur within the age groups of the Town's residents is another factor that must be considered when planning for a community's future. Census figures indicate that in 1980, Coventry's population had a median age of 24.9, with 39% of its population being under the age of 20. In comparison, census figures show that Derby's median age was 30 and Newport's was 33. Since 1980, however, the median age of Coventry's population has increased by almost 12 years. Based on data from the 2000 Census, the median age of Coventry's population is now 36.3 years. This figure is more in line with the median ages of Derby's (38.9 years) and Newport City's (39.9 years) populations.

A community's educational costs are directly affected by its median age trends. It should also be noted that the figures taken from the Vital Statistics portion of the Town's Annual Reports, shows an average of a two to one ratio in births over deaths in the town, over the past twenty years. Since 1992, when this plan was originally written, this ratio has decreased to 1.14:1.

The chart on the preceding page shows that the Town's student population increased by 27% between 1980 and 1990. During the 90's, Coventry's population growth continued but the growth of the school age population slowed considerably with an increase of only slightly more than 10%. The Town's elementary school facilities have been modified over the years to accommodate the Town's growing number of students. However, following the growth of the 80's the old school facility became inadequate to house the Town's growing school age population. This triggered a feasibility study in the early to mid 1990's regarding the possibility

of a new school facility. As a result of this feasibility study a new school was completed and opened in the later half of the 90's. (See Education Chapter)

C. The Future

It is obvious from the information introduced in this chapter that Coventry has been in a growth cycle since 1960. It is also obvious that this growth does not stem from increased employment opportunities within the town of Coventry, but instead from the neighboring business centers.

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

If the majority of Coventry's growth in population derives from growth within neighboring commercial centers, then we must become aware of the potential growth of these centers. Over the years we have seen several industries close their doors in both Derby and Newport. At the same time, an increase in the number of retail establishments has occurred. Recently, the new Canadian goods and services tax has increased retail trade in all of Vermont's border towns. A recent poll completed by the Planning Commission shows that many of the retail establishments, in both Derby and Newport, have increased their sales by over 20% since the new tax was imposed. If these increases continue, a renewed expansion of the area's retail community could be experienced. In addition, Derby's Municipal Plan calls for fostering the development of environmentally friendly businesses and the continuation of limitations on residential development.

Most of the indicators within this chapter point to the conclusion that the town of Coventry will continue to grow in population during the coming years.

Factors Indicating Coventry's Continued Population Growth

1. Comparatively low taxes
2. No Town development restrictions
3. Quality education system
4. Unique rural setting and friendly residents
5. Adequate inventory of undeveloped lands
6. Continuing increase in Canadian retail trade
7. Continuing diversity in neighboring business centers
8. Ease of accessibility to goods and services
9. Town's birthrate averaging ten children a year

Factors That Could slow Down or Stop Population Growth

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

D. Conclusion

On average, it takes 100 years for the property tax that is collected from an average home on a five-acre lot to pay the educational costs of sending one child through 13 years of school. Taxes from farmlands, forest lands, and commercial sites help to offset expenses brought on by a community's residential growth. Maintaining a balance between residential and non-residential development is essential in planning for a community's economic security. When a town like Coventry becomes a bedroom community, it must try to offset its long-term educational expenses, (see Economic Profile chapter) by diversifying its tax base, by increasing its non-residential tax base. If this is not done, the inflated property tax may soon cause the low-income portion of the population to leave the town.

POPULATION TRENDS IN COVENTRY 1890 TO 2000			
Year	Population	Year	Population
1890	879	1950	497
1900	728	1960	458
1910	616	1970	492
1920	668	1980	674
1930	610	1990	804
1940	549	2000	1,014

US Census Bureau, 1890 - 2000

COVENTRY HOUSING GROWTH BETWEEN 1980 AND 2001											
	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Residential 1 (<= 6 acres)	91	90	91	95	95	96	95	97	100	104	108
Residential 2 (> 6 acres)	34	39	40	41	44	46	48	48	50	55	60
Mobile Home 1 (w/o land)	26	32	46	38	44	47	52	49	51	59	53
Mobile Home 2 (w/ land)	20	20	18	26	26	27	27	27	27	29	34
Total Dwellings	171	181	195	200	209	216	222	221	228	247	255
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Residential 1 (<= 6 acres)	113	111	110	110	110	109	112	111	110	111	115
Residential 2 (> 6 acres)	62	66	71	79	85	93	95	114	117	117	119
Mobile Home 1 (w/o land)	48	48	51	47	47	43	39	38	40	48	46
Mobile Home 2 (w/ land)	38	42	44	48	55	56	55	60	66	68	65
Total Dwellings	261	267	276	284	297	301	301	323	333	344	345

Data from the Coventry Grand List. Farmhouses not included.

6. EDUCATION

A. Current Status

Coventry’s young people spend their first nine years of school in their own community school, located on the southern fringe of the Town's village. High school students attend classes in neighboring town school facilities.

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

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

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

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

B. School Population and Expense Data

A study of Coventry’s population shows that the percentage of school aged children, in relationship with the Town's total population has stabilized over the last 20 years. The chart below indicates the population growth pattern since 1970.

COVENTRY'S STUDENT POPULATION			
<u>Year</u>	<u>Town Population</u>	<u>Student Population</u>	<u>Percentage of Town's Population</u>
1970	492	142	28%
1980	674	141	21%
1990	807	179	22%
2000	1,014	198	20%
US Census Bureau, 1970 - 2000			

These figures indicate that for every five new residents that move into the town, the school’s student population could increase by one or more students.

If the Town's 1980/90-population growth rate had continued through the year 2000, (see Population Trends Chart) the total student population in 2000 would have been 207. This would have put that year’s K-8 enrollment at 152 students. With a total school enrollment of 198 (124 for grades K-8) for the 2000/2001 school year, this projection was fairly accurate. In addition, if Coventry's population continues to grow over the next 10 years as it has since 1960, then the Town's population in 2010 could increase to as much as 1,240. An average annual growth rate of 2.225% was used to calculate this projection. This means that the school age population could be as high as 248 in the year 2010 (20% of the projected population).

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

\$1,877 was spent to educate each K-8 student

\$1,784 was spent on tuition for each high school student

By school year 1989/90:

\$3,703 was spent to educate each K-8 student

\$4,502 was spent on tuition for each high school student

Then in school year 1999/2000:

\$10,295 was spent to educate each K-8 student

\$6,558 was spent on tuition for each high school student.

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

C. Educational Funding

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

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

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

D. The School and the Community

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

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

7. ECONOMIC PROFILE

A. Introduction

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

B. Selectmen's Budget

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

Figures from the Coventry Annual Reports, show that over the past ten years, 20% of the Town's expenditures were spent on office support services, 78% of the funds were spent on the Town's highways, and the remaining 2% was allocated to the library. Town operating costs increased by 57% over this time period. These expenditures increased from \$101,752 in 1980 to \$117,501 in 1985 and to \$156,794 in 1990. For the fiscal year beginning in 2002, the Town's budget was \$608,100.

GRAND LIST AND ASSESSMENTS 1980 - 2000			
Year	Grand List	Assessments	Total Funds Assessed
1980	\$ 46,023.78	General Fund/Roads \$1.09	\$50,166.00
1985	\$167,098.03	General Fund/Roads \$0.41	\$68,510.00
1990	\$192,393.23	General Fund/Roads \$0.41	\$78,881.00
1995	\$331,770.28	General Fund/Roads \$0.30	\$99,531.00
2000	\$355,628.33	General Fund/Roads \$0.00	\$0.00
1982 reassessment brought Grand List to Fair Market Values			

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

FEDERAL & STATE FUNDING RECEIVED 1980 - 2000	
Year	Amount
1980	\$41,302
1985	\$78,614
1990	\$83,685
1995	\$106,849
2000	\$87,897
Town and/or School Records	

C. Education Budget

The Town's "Education Budget" includes all income and expenses required to support the Town's K-8 school system and the tuition for students attending grades 9-12, during a July 1 through June 30, school year.

Figures taken from the Town's Annual Reports and the 1991 School Annual Report show that over the past ten years, an average of 34% of the school expenditures were spent to pay for tuition expenses for the Town's high school students. For the 2000-01 school year the 27% of the school budget was spent for high school tuition. The total school year expenditures increased from \$254,721 in the 79/80 school year, to \$429,256 in the 1984/85 school year, to \$716,305 in the 1989/90 school year, and finally, to \$1,698,156 for the 2000/01 school year. This represents a 137% increase in school expenditures since the 1989/90 school year. Since the 1989/90 school year the tuition expenditures per student (grades K-12), increased 127% over the past ten years. Grade school expenditures per student, increased by 178% during the same time period. School expenditures for students in grades 9-12 have increased by only 46% over the past 10 years. The charts below show the actual expenditures and student population for a given year, and the average cost to educate a student in that year.

EDUCATION EXPENDITURES, 1979-2001				
	School Year	Education Expenditures	Number of Students	Cost per Student
9-12	1979/80	\$94,575	53	\$1,784
	1989/90	\$238,627	53	\$4,502
	2000/01	\$452,488	69	\$6,558
K-8	1979/80	\$164,696	88	\$1,871
	1989/90	\$477,678	129	\$3,703
	2000/01	\$1,245,668	121	\$10,295
K-12	1979/80	\$259,271	141	\$1,839
	1989/90	716,305	182	\$3,936
	2000/01	\$1,698,156	190	\$8,938
Town and/or School Reports				

The figures above indicate that while the individual student tuition costs are increasing at an alarming rate, Coventry School’s individual student cost increases have been consistent and moderate. The region wide trend toward developing large centralized schools seems to have equalized the costs involved between paying high regional tuition costs or paying for a small individualized, hometown program, which includes mortgage payments. This would mean that the Town's decision on building a new school would focus on how important they feel local control is in educating their children.

State Aid to Education funding has played an important role in Coventry’s property tax program. Figures taken from the School District Treasurer’s Reports show that the percentage of State Aid funding has increased dramatically over the last ten years. These increases have been the major contributing factor in neutralizing the affect of the Town's rising educational expenses. The chart below provides the reader with two important facts. The first is that over a ten year period, State Aid funding to Coventry has increased from \$2.00 on each tax dollar spent, to \$2.22 per tax dollar spent. The second fact is that even with the increases in State Aid funding; the expansion in Coventry’s Grand List has not been able to keep pace with the increased costs involved in educating the Town's growing number of students.

GRAND LIST & STATE AID ASSESSMENTS 1980 - 2000				
Year	Grand List	School Assessments		State Aid Received
		Tax Rate	Dollars Raised	
1980	\$ 46,023.78	\$3.3600	\$154,639	\$101,706
1985	\$167,098.03	\$0.8500	\$142,033	\$201,601
1990	\$192,393.23	\$1.1700	\$225,100	\$455,145
1995	\$331,770.28	\$1.1300	\$374,900	\$489,274
2000	\$355,628.33	\$1.3047	\$463,988	\$1,031,490
1982 reassessment brought Grand List to Fair Market Values				

Between the years of 1980 and 1990, Coventry’s population growth resulted in a 27% increase in the number of town students attending classes. This rise in student population and inflationary factors resulted in a 176% increase in school expenditures during the same time period. The Town's State Aid funds were increased by 348% over this ten-year period. The Town's Grand List values had increased by 318% over this time period, but the school assessment, or tax rate, decreased by 65% due to the reassessment. This represented a 46% increase in the amount of school taxes collected since 1980.

For the period 1990 to 2000 most of the changes expressed in the previous paragraph were not as dramatic. While Coventry had its largest population increase during this period, historic figures seem to indicate that the Town's school age population, as a percentage of the total population, is declining. During this period the school age population increased by only 11% and the increase in school expenditures dropped to 137%. The increase in state aid funds was only 127%. The grand list increase was less also with an increase of only 85% while the school tax rate increased by only 11%. The amount of the school taxes, however, have increased by 106% due to the growth in the grand list.

D. Profile Summary

School expense inflationary factors are not examined in this report. These factors will be examined during the research work being done on the proposed changes in the Town's school facility. The financial results of these factors, coupled with the increases in the Town's student population, has resulted in an increase of \$457,584 or 176% in education expenditures between 1980 and 1990. In the 10 years between 1990 and 2000 school expenditures have increased by \$981,851 or 137%. Town and road expenses increased by \$55,069 or 57% over the same ten-year period. These percentages should not be compared with each other, because of the increased student population factor. However, it is noteworthy that the individual high school student tuition expenditures for this time period had increased by 152%, while Coventry school's student expenditures rose by 92% per student.

Obviously, educational expenses dominate the expenditure side of the Town's budget. It is equally obvious that State Aid to Education funding and State Highways Quarterly Payments, and highway funding, control the income side of the Town's ledger. However, it could be said that the driving force behind the dramatic changes in the Town's record keeping was and still is the yearly inflation rate in education expenses.

E. Coventry's Economic Future

There are several economic trends to take into consideration, when planning for the Town's economic future. Will the Town's population growth continue? The Population Trends chapter of this plan indicates that growth will continue at a moderate pace. Will town expenses continue to increase and if so, at what rate? Information and data within this chapter indicates that the Selectmen should be able to hold their budget's annual increases to 6%, which would offset the inflation factor. However, this figure would change if the Town's population growth required additional public services. (see Transportation chapter) The data in this chapter indicates that education costs will continue to escalate over the next ten years. Growth in the Town's student population; enlargement of the Town's school facility; and the continued inflation in high school tuition costs, all point toward a common annual education expenditure growth rate of between 13 and 15 percent, per year.

While increased costs, and having the funds to meet those costs, is always a concern it should be noted that since 1992 the Town has received a percentage of the tipping fees charged at the Waste USA land fill. During the last 10 years the funds collected each year have increased considerable. In fact, thanks to these funds the Town of Coventry no longer has a municipal property tax. The only property tax charged in Coventry is the school tax. The increases in the tax rate will be governed by the changes in the State Aid to Education funding. Many factors enter into the "formula" which sets the amount of State Aid that a town receives. The new population and economic figures, taken from the 1990 and 2000 Census, could have an impact on the "formula" and therefore, on the Town's balance of payments.

If the education expenditures continue to increase at a rate of 6% per year, expenditures for the school year 2009-2010 will total an estimated \$2,104,530. Coventry's operational expenses have remained relatively stable over the past 10 years. In 1990 the Town's expenses were \$873,099 and in 2001 they were \$805,592. However, while Coventry's town expenses may remain stable over the next 10 years, some increase should be expected and planned for. If the Town's operational expenses were to increase at an annual rate of 3% over the next 10-year

period, the Town's expenses in 2011 would total \$1,082,648. This represents an average annual increase of \$27,706 or an overall increase of 34.4% over and above the Town's expenses for 2001.

F. Taxation Trends

The charts below show how Coventry's property has been taxed in recent years. The charts also point out the increases in the percentage of taxes paid by the residential landowners. Note that in 1974 the farmers of the town paid 43% of the Town's tax burden, while residential landowners paid a total of 24.6%. In 1990, the farmers paid 25.7% of the Town's taxes and the residential landowners paid 48.6%. It should also be noted that in 1974 30.7% of the Town's taxes were paid by the commercial sector of the Town's tax roll. By 1990 this percentage had dropped to 22.3%. By the year 2001, the farmers were paying only 10.6% of the Town's taxes, while the residential landowners paid 64.3%. These changes are partly due to the fact that the number of farm properties have decreased significantly and residential properties have increased significantly.

NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL AND FARM LOTS								
Grand List Category	1974		1983		1991		2001	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
R-1 homes w/ < 6 acres	63	NA	95	+50	113	+19	115	+2
R-2 homes w/ > 6 acres	13	NA	41	+215	62	+51	119	+92
MH mobile homes w/o land	10	NA	38	+280	48	+26	46	-4
MHL mobile homes w/ land	5	NA	26	+420	38	+46	65	+71
Farms	41	NA	34	-20	32	-6	18	-44
Totals	132		234		293		363	

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

PERCENTAGE OF TAXES PAID BY TAX CATEGORY				
	Year			
	1974	1983 ¹	1990 ²	2001
R1 Residential 1	14.0%	21.7%	23.6%	20.2%
R2 Residential 2	5.6%	13.2%	17.5%	33.8%
MHU Mobile home w/o land	2.0%	1.9%	2.4%	1.9%
MHL Mobile home w/ land	3.0%	3.9%	5.1%	8.4%
F Farm	43.0%	31.6%	25.7%	10.6%
V1 Vacation 1	0.6%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%
V2 Vacation 2	0.5%	0.6%	0.5%	1.9%
C Commercial	2.6%	3.7%	5.8%	7.2%
I Industrial	5.0%	7.6%	6.7%	6.4%
W Woodlands	3.0%	2.2%	2.1%	2.4%
M Miscellaneous	6.0%	4.4%	5.0%	7.0%

¹Property taxed at 100% FMV. ²Property taxed at 67% FMV.
Data for this table derived from the Coventry Lister's Records.

8. TRANSPORTATION

A. Road Transportation

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

HIGHWAY MILEAGE IN COVENTRY		
Highway Classification		
Town		
Class 2	10.44	
Class 3	26.68	
Total town		36.12
State		
Interstate 91	3.68	
Other state highways	12.80	
Total state		16.49
Total highway miles*		53.00
*Including class 4 roads		

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

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

The majority of the Town's residents live along the town maintained highway system. This system also provides access to most of the Town's farms. Starting in the mid 50's, the town undertook a highway reconstruction program. This program called for the reconstruction, from the roadbed up, of most of the Town's class 3 roads. The project was completed, one section at a time, over a fifteen year period. Recently the town, in conjunction with the state, has implemented a similar program to deal with its aging bridge system. It was through this program that a bridge on the Heermanville Rd was replaced between 1992, when this plan was originally adopted, and 1997.

The Town's gravel road system is in good condition and requires a minimum of yearly maintenance, due to the efforts completed in the 50's and 60's. Maintenance, including snow removal, is managed by the town and is usually completed by sub-contractors.

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

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

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

B. Rail Transportation

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

C. Air Transportation

The Newport State Airport is located in the center of Coventry, originally on 1,200 acres. The airport provides two 3,997 foot, paved, runways which are equipped with a lighting system. Runway 1836 runs north to south, while 0523 provides the airport's east to west runway. The airport is equipped with ground to air communications, (122.8 megahertz), and an "ILS" (landing) system. The airport currently offers such services as flight instruction, a charter service, an aircraft rental service, and a full seven-day operations schedule. Two planes, a Cessna 310 and 172, are provided to meet the needs created by these services. The airport provides hanger and open storage for a number of area based aircraft. Several area, U.S., and Canadian, companies use the airport on a regular basis. The airport also provides the area with medical transport services.

D. Transportation Policy

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

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

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

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

The Planning Commission would like to encourage the establishment of a recreational trail system designed with the input of the Town's landowners. This trail system would allow access for such recreational pursuits as hunting, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, cross country skiing, and similar activities. Funding sources for the development of such a trail system needs to be researched.

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

9. UTILITIES AND FACILITIES

A. Utilities

a. Electric

Citizens Energy Services and Vermont Electric Cooperative provide the electric power required by most of the Town. In addition, the Orleans Electric Department serves two small areas of the Town. Those two areas are located along the Town's eastern boarder and the Town's southern most tip. Single phase and three-phase power is distributed throughout the community. Three-phase service is currently restricted to the western portion of the town. At this time, the power companies assure us that there is a sufficient amount of electricity available to supply the Town's expanding residential requirements. No electric power is generated within the town limits.

Future expansion plans for electric utilities include only a 5.75-mile, double circuit, 115-kilovolt line through Coventry from Irasburg to Newport. This line will form a loop with existing lines that will act as a backup source of power.

b. Water and Sewer

With the exception of Coventry Village, residents of Coventry do not enjoy the benefits of a municipal water system. Most of the homes, farms, and businesses in the community develop their own water supplies, using surface, or artesian wells. Some of the homes and businesses located in Coventry Village are serviced by a system owned and maintained by the Coventry Fire District. This system includes: a gravel packed well, a pump rated at 65 gpm, a chemical/control room; a 100,000 gallon concrete storage reservoir; and a number of 2", 4" and 6" transmission lines and distribution mains. The system serves homes along Town roads 7, 36, and 54. Due, in part, to scattered development trends, and the adverse economic impact, Coventry has no current plans to develop a town wide water system.

Coventry does not provide a sewage system. All homes, farms and businesses located in the town, are dependent on septic systems for sewage disposal. The town relies on State Act 250 in placing regulatory requirements in the development of these systems. Due to the previously mentioned conditions, Coventry has no current plans to develop a town wide sewer system.

c. Solid Waste Disposal

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

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

B. Facilities

a. School

In 1995 the Town of Coventry completed a new school building to replace the two overcrowded buildings located next to the Community Center. The design capacity of the current building is 180 to 200 students and the present enrollment (2001 - 2002 school year) is 117.

Despite the fact that this wonderful building is new, it has not been without its problems. Some faults that have been corrected have included leaks caused by ice jams on the roof, heating and air quality problems, and a kitchen not designed for institutional use. Other problems that

were corrected during the summer of 2002 included damage to the refrigeration units located outside the kitchen on the front of the school and site work to correct a drainage problem outside the building.

b. Coventry Community Center

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

c. Town Garage and Gravel Pit

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

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

d. Town Cemetery

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

e. Emergency Services

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

C. Conclusion

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

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

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

10. ENERGY PLAN

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

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

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

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

The Town's road system represents an energy efficient means of traveling within the Town's borders. The system also provides direct routes to the neighboring commercial communities. The Town's policy of limited road development has prompted a higher density in residential siting, therefore increasing the road system's energy efficiency.

Coventry has no town regulations regarding building codes. Therefore, the National Building Codes are sited as a means for construction within the town to meet an energy efficient

level. The Act 250-approval process also plays a major role in requiring energy efficient development.

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

Most of the shoreline area along the Black and Barton rivers are owned or protected by the State of Vermont. For this reason, it is unlikely that a hydroelectric site would ever be established on either of these rivers in Coventry. At least one site along Stony Brook has been identified as a potential dam site and may be a possible development site in the future.

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

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

11. HOUSING

Coventry's housing inventory has increased by 100% since 1970. Coventry Lister records show there were 127 homes in 1970 and 280 homes in 1990. 84 homes were built between 1980 and 1990. Following 1990, Coventry's housing stock increased by another 82 units, an increase of 29.3%. Most of the Town's homes are widely dispersed along the Town's highway system. Two pockets of high density exist, the first located in the "village area" and the second located along Town Road 58.

As stated in the beginning of this plan, the town of Coventry does not regulate housing development. Development restrictions are limited to state and federal regulations. Development sites are available throughout the town. If the dairy industry continues to struggle, additional open land may become available in the near future.

The new school, along with the Town's favorable property tax structure, has, in all likelihood, had an impact on housing development throughout Coventry. This is a trend that can be expected to continue. The new correctional facility development in Newport may have also increased development pressure along Town Road #20 and Town Road #4.

The highest percentage of housing growth over the next two to three years may be generated by the increase in new retail businesses being established to handle the increased Canadian trade that has been prompted by the Canadian Goods and Services Tax. Increased retail development in Derby and Newport will foster the continuation of Coventry's residential growth trend.

Recent history indicates that the town should expect that one or more modular home parks will be established to handle the Town's growing housing market. Small rental apartments will also be marketable.

While the current recession will limit the percentage of residential growth, the Canadian influence, and the area's new correctional facility should account for a steady increase in housing development over the next few years. Coventry must be ready to handle this additional growth. Additional diversification in the Town's tax base, is essential to offsetting the financial shortcomings caused by the Town's residential growth.

12. PLANNING FOR COVENTRY'S FUTURE

A. The Grand List

The charts in the Taxation section of this plan show that one third of Coventry's residential units are mobile homes. The charts also show that in 1990, mobile homes accounted for only 7.5% of the Town's Grand List. The charts show that taxes derived from farm properties is on a steady decline and that the majority of the tax burden is now carried by the R-1 and R-2 homeowner.

Future planning should include a program that would stimulate diversification in the Town's approach to adding to its Grand List. Commercial and light industry should be offered incentives for moving into Coventry. Coventry's low tax rate should add to a favorable development environment. Increases in the commercial and industrial inventory could replace the loss in the agricultural tax income and reduce the taxes paid by the Town's residents.

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

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

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

B. Bedroom Community Status

This plan points out that Coventry has gone from being a small agriculturally based community, to becoming a bedroom community for the neighboring towns' commercial base. In just twenty years the Town's population has increased by over fifty percent. (see Population and Development Trends) At the same time the Town's farms have decreased by forty-seven percent. (see Taxation Trends)

This population growth had strained the school facilities to their limit, which resulted in the building of a new school with a capacity of 180 students. With a current enrollment of only 117, the new school should be adequate for a number of years.

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

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

The Planning Commission must also monitor the commercial development in all of its neighboring communities. The majority of Coventry's residential growth comes as a direct result of its neighboring Town's commercial and industrial growth. The Commission should take an

active role in local and regional planning. Changes in the commercial sector should be reported and discussed with the Selectmen.

C. Town Economics

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

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

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

D. Town Development Restrictions

The town of Coventry has not felt the need to implement its own zoning or subdivision regulations. Development in Coventry does fall under the confines of the State's Act 250, which is meant to protect an area that is to be developed from environmental damage. Sewage treatment is of prime concern during an Act 250 review. The site's proximity to wetlands and or waterways is also a prime consideration. Act 250, the Town's flood hazard area regulations, and restrictions on state owned lands, all play a role in governing development in Coventry.

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

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

E. Regional Planning

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

F. Review Process

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

G. Education

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

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

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

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

13. IMPLEMENTATION

A. Introduction

This section of the plan is devoted to Coventry's future. The preceding chapters of this plan have illustrated the changes that have occurred during Coventry's recent growth cycle. It has shown the impact that these changes have had on the Town's economy, its environment, and

its social structure. In using the plan's historical trends, we have been able to develop scenarios on the Town's future population growth and its future financial structure. This section of the Plan now offers a program, based on these scenarios, for planning the Town's future. The objectives and actions that are listed in this chapter are developed to enable each branch of the Town's management team to work together toward common goals.

B. Scope of Objectives

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

C. Proposed Actions and Schedules

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

1. Subject: **Establish a Traffic Safety Committee**
Conducted by: Planning Commission and Selectmen
Proposed time period: 2003 - 2004
Intro. Statement: Recognizing that traffic through the Village of Coventry and the area near the school is dangerously fast. Truck traffic has increased dramatically and statistics indicate that there have been many accidents in or near the village, with several fatalities.
Goals: To form a committee that will work toward a safer highway system (to include establishing speed reduction areas in and around the Village on Routes 5 and 14.

2. Subject: **Establish a Committee to Explore Zoning**
Conducted by: Planning Commission, Selectmen, and NVDA
Proposed time period: 2003 - 2005
Intro. statement: The Planning Goals as evidenced in this Plan suggest the need to implement zoning bylaws.
Goals: To form a committee that will address the topics listed in Section 2B of this Plan in order to provide Coventry residents with the information necessary to determine if zoning and/or other ordinances are appropriate for the Town.

3. Subject: **Municipal Plan Review**
Conducted by: Planning Commission

Proposed Time Period:

Goals: The planning commission will review the data in the municipal plan on an annual basis. New statistical data should be added to the trends and graph sections of the plan. This additional data should be analyzed and the conclusions should be shared with the appropriate authorities. On the fifth year of review, additions and corrections should be made to the plan after the changes are approved by the Selectmen and the voters. The revised plan would then be submitted to the Regional Planning Commission.

14. ADJACENT TOWNS

This section of the Coventry Town Plan presents an analysis of the town plans, where available, and growth patterns for the surrounding towns to determine compatibility of development along the town lines separating Coventry from the surrounding towns. This section has also taken a look at the regional plan as well to see how Coventry fits into the scheme of the proposed development for the region as a whole.

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

A. Barton

The Town of Barton is located to the south of Coventry but does not actually abut the Town of Coventry. Barton has been considered here because of Coventry's status as a bedroom community and Barton's job opportunities and more urban-like environment.

The Village of Orleans is located adjacent to the Barton / Irasburg town line near the northern most corner of the Town of Barton. This part of Barton has been designated by the most recent Barton Town Plan, which expired in September of 2001, for commercial and industrial development. Along with Newport and Derby, the Villages of Barton and Orleans are the major job centers in Orleans County. Any significant growth in the number of jobs, as well as a sudden decrease in jobs, in the Town of Barton could have an effect on the Town of Coventry as Coventry serves as a bedroom community for the surrounding job centers.

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

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

B. Brownington

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

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

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

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

C. Derby

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

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

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

Derby does have a town plan that should mitigate any impacts that development in Derby will have on its neighbors. In addition to encouraging the development of "environmentally friendly businesses", the Derby Town Plan encourages the preservation of the integrity of the environment and the undeveloped woodlands and open spaces. The Plan also suggests that the development of those areas not served by water and sewer be limited to not more than one dwelling unit for every two acres of land.

D. Irasburg

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

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

The remaining roads that cross the town line between Coventry and Irasburg are secondary roads and the most likely development along these roads will be residential development. The roads in these areas are not suitable for heavy traffic however, therefore, even residential development should be carefully monitored.

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

Finally, the Town of Irasburg does not have a town plan nor does it have a planning commission. This fact should be of concern to the Town of Coventry as there is nothing to mitigate the impacts on the Town of Coventry caused by development in Irasburg.

E. Newport Center

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

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

Development, however, is much more likely to occur along or near that part of the Coventry/Newport Center town line that lies north of Route 14. This area appears to be relatively flat and most of it lies within ½ mile of one or more roads. This area also contains lands that may be used for agricultural purposes as well as four ponds all of which drain into the Black River.

While agricultural lands are often easily developed, development in this area could adversely impact the agricultural use of these lands. In addition, development in this area could adversely impact the Black River watershed as well as Lake Memphremagog.

The most recent Newport Center Town Plan, adopted March 21, 1996, has expired, but it does set forth several goals that encourage the maintenance of the Town's rural and agricultural characteristics. In addition, the land use element of the Newport Center Plan encourages the Planning Commission to "Consider existing and historical land use patterns in adjacent towns when revising Zoning Bylaws". Newport Center's sensitivity to the impacts of development, not only in Newport Center but in the neighboring towns as well, along with the existing development constraints along the town line south of Route 14, should act to mitigate any impacts development in Newport Center might have on Coventry.

F. Newport City

In terms of sheer numbers, Newport City had the greatest increase in population between the 1990 Census and the 2000 Census. During this 10-year period Newport City's population increased by 571 persons. While approximately half of this increase can be directly attributable to the opening of the Northern State Correctional Facility, the remaining half can be attributed to the creation of new businesses and the expansion of existing businesses.

While Newport's growth in both population and jobs is going to impact nearly all of Coventry, it is important to look at both the existing and potential development along the town line. The area to be most concerned about, perhaps, is that area along Route 105 west of Newport and the roads that connect Routes 14 and 105. This area is already developed and holds potential for additional development, as it is high and dry. In addition, the homes along Route 105 in Newport are served by a public water system. Public sewer is not available here. Development in this area could spill over into Coventry, causing a suburban development pattern. If this were to happen, this could greatly impact Coventry's rural qualities.

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

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

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

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

G. Regional Plan

The Regional Plan for the Northeast Kingdom designates the village of Coventry as a village center. Village centers are areas with residential homes that are served by public water systems and perhaps public sewer systems as well. Such areas are also defined as having businesses such as bed and breakfasts and/or general stores. Finally, village centers must have adequate access via, state highways, to the principal and secondary activity centers that are defined in the regional plan. The remaining areas in Coventry are designated as rural agricultural/forest areas. For these areas the regional plan calls for little development other than the rural agricultural and forestry type unless the local plan and zoning provides for it. There is little doubt that the planned development for Coventry fits well with the scenario set forth in the regional plan.

H. Conclusion

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

15. APPENDIX

- Chapter 3. ¹ Grand List Book Section 1 Totals, Acreage, 4/1/90
 ² Grand List Book Section 1 Totals, Acreage, 4/1/90
 ³ United States Census Figures
 ⁴ E & D Profile Table #5, Northeastern Vermont Development Assoc. Box 640,
 St. Johnsbury, VT 05819, (Census 1980)
 ⁵ Coventry Grand List Tax data
 ⁶ Numbers supplied by the Orleans-Essex North Supervisory Union
 ⁷ State Road Map, Town of Coventry, 1980
 ⁸ Derby, Coventry, Newport E & D Report, Northeastern Vermont Development
 Assoc. (Census 1980)
 ⁹ Coventry E & D Report, Northeastern Vermont Development Assoc. (Census
 1980)
 ¹⁰ 1989 Coventry Annual Report, Coventry, VT
- Chapter 5. ¹ Bits and Pieces of Coventry's History 1977, Coventry Bicentennial Committee,
 Modern Printing Co. Inc. Barre, VT; page 56
 ² Same as above
 ³ United States Census Figures

- ⁴ Bits and Pieces of Coventry's History 1977, page 51
⁵ Grand List Book Section 1 Totals, Grand List 6/29/90

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