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# PART I

# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this plan is to provide direction so as to help assure that decisions made at the local, regional and State levels are in accordance with the goals and policies established by the citizens of the Town. Like all plans, it must be subject to continual improvements, updates and changes to reflect our changing times. Therefore, this plan should be regularly reviewed and revised to reflect the opinions of the people of Westminster.

This Town Plan is the product of the work of many of our citizens:

Judith Berkley, John Cook, Jay Eschelman, Woodbridge Fuller, Mike Ghia, Jim Grandy, Paul Harlow, Mike Kelley, Ann Kebbell, Obie Lisai, Bev Major, Stephen Major, Jim Matteau, Dick Miller, Lori Miller, Verna Newcomb, Bill Noyes, Judith Petry, Margo Tucker (Ghia), Leslie Turpin, Frank Walter, Karen Walter, Janice Wojcik, Doreen Woodward and Marie Wright

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And a big thanks goes to Jim Grandy for editorial assistance.

To all of these people we offer our deepest appreciation for the work they have done toward the betterment of our community.

Westminster Planning and Development Commission

Lorraine Kane, Malcolm (Sam) Streeter, Vice Chair; Myra Ashcroft, Roger Farnsworth  
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2007 Westminster Planning and Development Commission

Christian Blake, Lou Blanchard, Melinda Bussino, Chair; Rick Cowen, Vice Chair; Steve  
Durand, Rose Fowler, Fran Renaud, Clerk.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of our town plan is to foster active cooperation between our three village centers, enabling us to work together for practical solutions that benefit all. Our aim is to preserve our inherited village character by employing appropriate land use and town government decisions to guide growth that will enhance the continuity of work and family life in an active, caring community that holds a long-standing appreciation of our land and historical character.

Westminster must look to the future, and plan not just for today but for generations to come.

## WESTMINSTER TOWN PLAN GOALS

*The goal of the Westminster Town Plan is...*

1. To plan development so as to maintain the historic pattern of compact village centers separated by rural countryside, working toward an ongoing and respectful relationship among the three communities in our town while at the same time honoring the uniqueness of each.
2. To encourage diverse enterprises that provide satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and maintain high environmental standards.
3. To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all residents.
4. To provide for safe, convenient, economic and efficient transportation and communication systems that respects the integrity of the natural environment and that includes paths for pedestrians and bicyclists.
5. To recognize the critical importance of preserving our natural resources and to implement specific measures to guarantee for future generations: clean surface and ground waters, monitored fragile areas, sensitivity to scenic corridors and perpetual protection of our extensive wildlife, our forest and plant life, our soils, topography, and mineral deposits. To identify, protect and preserve educational, scientific, historic and cultural features that can include structures, sites, or districts and archeologically sensitive areas.
6. To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife and land resources.
7. To encourage the efficient use of energy, the development of renewable energy resources, and the recycling, reduction and reuse of waste.
8. To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
9. To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries by developing strategies to protect the long-term viability of those lands.
10. To provide for the wise and efficient use of natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.
11. To plan for meeting the needs of basic social services for Westminster citizens.
12. To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs, so as to assure and maintain a healthful environment for our people; and to address any changing social needs of the community with clearly defined information available to all and resultant decisions for change in our Town Plan and/or ordinances, keeping the individual's needs in mind but favorable to the citizenry as a whole.

## D. ENERGY

The United States is responsible for almost 25% of the world's total energy consumption. We use one million gallons of oil every two minutes. Energy currently wasted by cars, homes, and appliances equals more than twice the known energy reserves in Alaska and the US outer Continental Shelf. (Source: Natural Resources Defense Council, 1998)

### Energy Planning

Westminster is, and most likely will continue to be, dependent on energy sources generated or imported from outside its borders. Although energy resources are a necessity for transportation, heating, lighting, business, industry, electrical generation and human work in our community, the control of supplies and policy is presently largely in the hands of state and federal government and international energy suppliers.

Nonetheless, regional and local efforts can play an important role in energy conservation and development through control of local land use, solid waste management practices, and educational outreach to its residences and businesses.

Recycling reduces air pollution, water pollution and industrial water use, and provides energy savings, while diminishing our reliance on incineration and landfill usage. Westminster residents are encouraged to recycle; making use of the Rockingham-Westminster Recycling Center located in Westminster.

Recycling should be an important aspect of our community's solid waste management *system*. *Reducing* the amount of solid waste generated by homes and businesses provides the greatest energy and consequently greatest cost savings of all.

Included in local zoning are regulations regarding planned development (Planned Residential and Planned Unit Developments, or PRD and PUDs) to allow for the clustering of development and therefore the reduction of energy required to provide essential services.

The Town can directly support the implementation of energy conservation measures by participating in the Act 250 review process. Development of subdivisions involving Act 250 reviews is required to "reflect the principles of energy conservation and utilize the best available technology for energy efficiency."

### Current Energy Use

The Town's main supplier of electricity, Green Mountain Power Corporation, purchases electricity generated from hydro power (43.8%), nuclear power (40.6%), oil and natural gas (1.8%), wood (4.1%), wind (less than 1%), with 9.6% coming from various open market sources. Automobiles and heating account for the greatest energy use in Westminster. Because of limited employment opportunities in our Town, 78% of its inhabitants commute to work, with an average commuting time of 20.7 minutes. Approximately 26% of homes use wood as a primary heating source. Most of the remaining 74 use oil or propane.

## Energy Resources Analysis

Westminster has several potential renewable energy resources: solar, wood, hydro, and wind. Except for wood, these resources are not being used extensively. The Town has supported sound and sustainable forest management that encourages the use of wood for heating purposes and provides local jobs. The Town encourages the use of wood stoves that meet US Environmental Protection Agency standards for emission controls and maximum heating efficiency.

Solar energy remains a largely underutilized resource. Research shows the use of passive solar heating and photovoltaic electrical generation is a viable means of diminishing our dependency on outside sources of non-renewable energy. Hydro can be very expensive and is very limited.

Westminster's energy practices and policies should anticipate potential future problem areas, such as shortages of fossil fuels, rising petroleum costs, and increases in electrical rates consequent upon the recent deregulation. Any efforts to reduce the use of non-renewable energy will benefit everyone. Education on practices of conservation is believed to be an effective way of lessening this dependency.

## Policies

1. To promote energy conservation and use of renewable resources.
2. To encourage land use patterns that concentrate housing, work opportunities, and social services toward the existing villages in order to conserve energy by placing less demand on transportation.
3. To ensure that future energy transmission lines fall within (or as closely as possible) to existing rights or corridors.

## Recommendations

1. The Town shall promote the use of vehicles with improved gas mileage.
2. The Town shall promote car pooling.
3. The Town shall adopt policies to maximize solar potential in new house construction.
4. The Town shall work to make residents aware of recent state energy codes.
5. The Town shall encourage the institution of an energy awareness curriculum in schools.
6. The Town shall develop guidelines for energy conservation to be used in site plan or conditional use review. Whenever possible, development should be encouraged only in areas with characteristics most suitable for maximum energy conservation, including southern orientation and protective wind barriers.

7. Residential energy conservation programs that conduct energy audits and/or provide weatherization services for existing homes, especially for low income homes, should be fully utilized and promoted through information outreach.
8. The use of on-site or locally obtainable renewable energy sources should be encouraged as long as it is consistent with resource conservation policies of this Plan, including air quality.
9. The Town shall encourage generation and cogeneration of electrical energy from environmentally sound renewable sources in both public and private facilities.