

Middletown Springs Town Plan

Adopted September 10, 2002

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1 **Introduction**

2 Middletown Springs is unique among Vermont towns in both electing its Planning
3 Commissioners and adopting a proposed Town Plan by public vote. A Town Plan accepted at the
4 polls indicates acceptance by the voters regardless of the amount of time they can contribute to the
5 development of the Plan and whether or not they are comfortable expressing their opinion at public
6 meetings.

7 This Plan has a lengthy history. Work on a Town Plan began in 1998 with the then-current
8 Planning Commission conducting a series of listening sessions at local clubs and organizations. This
9 series was followed by neighborhood meetings throughout the town. The Commission then held a
10 town-wide meeting facilitated by the Vermont Council for Rural Development, where issues were
11 discussed and prioritized. Six committees arose from these meetings. The committees discussed
12 town issues in greater depth and developed goals and objectives for the Plan. The preparation of the
13 final plan was finished in April of 2000. Despite the commendable efforts of the Planning
14 Commission and extensive public input gathered, the Plan was not accepted by the voters.

15 An interim selectboard-appointed Planning Commission served from the Fall of 2000 until
16 Town Meeting, 2001 and in addition to open regular meetings gathered public feedback through a
17 questionnaire.

18 The current elected Planning Commission has attempted to discover, by informal means
19 including door-to-door visits and regular meetings open to the public, the reasons why the voters did
20 not accept the previously proposed Plan and to formulate a Plan based on previously gathered input
21 but limited to areas of broad consensus. Further input was gathered at a public meeting held on
22 January 3, 2002. This Plan is the result of those efforts.

23 The people of Middletown Springs believe that extensive citizen involvement in planning by
24 residents is preferable to state or regional directives. To survive as a rural agrarian town with its
25 many benefits, it is important to continue the process of sound planning. The people's voice and vote
26 provide direction. The ongoing task of the Planning Commission is to follow that direction by
27 proposing appropriate amendments and by facilitating continued discussion of topics where broad
28 consensus does not currently exist.

29 All who read this plan should keep in mind that policies (which in this Plan include objectives
30 and programs) are not mandates. They express what the town would like to achieve but there is no
31 guarantee that the town will be able to achieve them. The town shall not be held liable if it fails, for
32 good reason, to implement policies.

33 Respectfully,
34 Middletown Springs Planning Commission

35 Statutory Authority and Requirements
36 This plan is being adopted following the procedures set forth in the *Vermont Municipal and*
37 *Regional Planning and Development Act* (Title 24 VSA Chapter 117)

38 **Middletown Springs**

39 **The Past**

40 Middletown Springs is a small, rural town in Rutland County. It was originally formed in
41 1784 when citizens of Ira, Poultney, Wells, and Tinmouth petitioned the Vermont legislature to
42 create a town bounded by the ridges that prevented them from attending meetings and worship
43 services in their original Towns. Thus it is a community defined by the shape of its encircling
44 mountains. At 23 square miles, it is slightly smaller than the average Vermont town.

45 The Poultney River and its tributaries have been prominent in Middletown Springs' history.
46 They provided one of the original reasons to settle here; water for agriculture and power for mills. By
47 1800 the town had 1,066 people, seven mills, distilleries, clothiers, mechanics' shops, taverns, and
48 stores. Then in 1811 a heavy downpour caused floods that wiped out all but one of the mills. Jobs
49 perished, commerce declined, and people moved away.

50 For several decades only agriculture remained strong. By 1835 there were 3000 sheep in the
51 town and in the second half of the century dairy and cheesemaking thrived.

52 Industry returned when A. W. Gray began manufacturing horsepower treadmills and related
53 agricultural equipment. By 1867 Gray employed 30 men and supported loggers, sawyers, teamsters,
54 and others.

55 Gray also rediscovered mineral springs that the 1811 flood had buried. Soon Middletown
56 waters were bottled and widely distributed and in 1870 the luxurious Montvert Hotel began catering
57 to visitors to the springs.

58 By the early twentieth century the internal combustion engine had largely replaced the Gray
59 horsepower machines and the Montvert Hotel was failing. A disastrous fire in 1920 destroyed four
60 prominent buildings in the center of town and further demoralized the populace.

61 Again, agriculture sustained the town. The Buxton and Copeland farms were especially large
62 and modern and in 1940 a creamery was built on the site of the old Gray horsepower factory. The
63 creamery processed milk from as many as 140 Vermont and New York farms but declined as
64 farmers began selling direct to bottlers.

65 Today's technology favors larger dairy enterprises than are possible in Middletown's hilly
66 terrain. The result has been a recent decline in mainstream agriculture. It remains to be seen if
67 specialties and niche markets can revive Middletown Springs' agricultural focus.

68 **The Present**

69 The village green in Middletown Springs lies at the heart of the village, surrounded by one of
70 the town's two churches, fine old houses, a country store, a service station, and the old cemetery.
71 One of the historic houses is owned by the Middletown Springs Historical Society and houses a
72 museum and the Town Office. The three roads that lead into the town from the East, the South, and
73 the West meet there at the green, along with a local road to the North that was once the main road
74 to Rutland.

75 Middletown Springs' rich history has left a legacy of elegant buildings along these roads. In
76 1984 much of the village was added to the National Register for Historic Places. Later, 31 additional

77 sites outside the village were added to the Vermont State Register of Historic Places. (See *Land*
 78 *Use, Village Area* below for further description.)

79 The largely hilly rural surroundings are connected by winding country roads fringed by trees
 80 and stone walls. Until the middle of the twentieth century these areas were home primarily to those
 81 engaged in agriculture; they are now dotted with rural residences.

82 The 2000 census shows a population of 823 for Middletown Springs. Of these 5.8% are
 83 under 5 years of age, 75.1% are 18 or older, and 12.3% are 65 or over. The median age is 40.6.

84 Population growth has been uninterrupted since 1960 as shown in the following table. Of the
 85 28 towns in Rutland County, Middletown Springs' growth rate of 20% since 1990 is sixth highest.

Year	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	381	426	603	686	823

86 Middletown Springs is right in the middle of the fairly wide ranges of population and density
 87 of its neighboring towns as shown in the following table based on 2000 census data.

Population	Housing units	Land area sq. mi.	Population per sq. mi.	Housing units per sq. mi.
Ira: 455	Ira: 192	Ira: 21.32	Tinmouth: 20	Ira: 9
Tinmouth: 567	Tinmouth: 332	Wells: 22.56	Ira: 21.3	Tinmouth: 11.7
Middletown Springs: 823	Middletown Springs: 397	Middletown Springs: 22.84	Middletown Springs: 36	Middletown Springs: 17.4
Wells: 1121	Wells: 857	Tinmouth: 28.28	Wells: 49.7	Wells: 38
Poultney: 3633	Poultney: 1673	Poultney: 43.92	Poultney: 82.7	Poultney: 38.1

88 The numbers and picture postcard attractiveness of the town tell only half the story; the other
 89 half is that the town is very much alive with a Maple Festival, a Strawberry Festival, a Memorial Day
 90 Parade, a Fireman's Auction, weekly Bingo, regular Library programs for both children and adults,
 91 an Apple Festival, a Halloween Dance, occasional concerts, periodic church dinners and breakfasts,
 92 and an annual festival of popular music and renewable energy technology.

93 The local economy is less vibrant. With few exceptions, wage and salary workers commute
 94 to surrounding areas. Of the 22% who are self-employed, most are tradespeople. For a town of only
 95 823 people, Middletown Springs has a remarkable number of successful musicians, writers, artists,
 96 and craftspeople.

97 Of Middletown Springs' population of 650 aged 16 or older, 465 consider themselves to be
 98 in the labor force. 436 were employed at the time of the survey in 1999 and 29 unemployed.
 99 Roughly 77% were wage and salary workers, 22% were self-employed, and 1% were unpaid family
 100 workers.

101 An unknown but high percentage of households have more than one member contributing to
 102 household income. Elderly households may rely entirely on Social Security and/or other retirement
 103 sources. Regardless of source, in 1999 27% of households had income of less than \$25,000, 57%

104 had income of \$25,000 to \$75,000, and 17% had income of more than \$75,000. Median household
105 income was \$35,385.

106 **The Future**

107 Residents of Middletown Springs want to retain the peaceful, rural atmosphere of the town
108 and enhance their quality of life by:

- 109 ● Promoting the health, safety and general welfare of the public,
- 110 ● Encouraging the preservation of unique natural, cultural, and historical areas,
- 111 ● Achieving harmony within the community and with the environment,
- 112 ● Using natural resources wisely.

113 They want to cultivate a strong and diverse economy by:

- 114 ● Recognizing and facilitating changes beneficial to the Town including development that is
115 consistent with this plan and that meets recognized needs,
- 116 ● Encouraging sound agriculture and forestry,
- 117 ● Maintaining property values,
- 118 ● Avoiding abrupt changes in the distribution of the tax burden.
- Continuing to support activities and festivals that promote the town's vibrancy.

119 These goals are addressed to varying degrees in this plan. In cases where a goal enjoys
120 wider consensus than specific means of achieving the goal, the people favor continuing to work
121 toward consensus on the means. The following pages describe the townspeople's vision for the future
122 in more detail.

123 **Surrounding Towns**

124 As described above, Middletown Springs was carved out of neighboring towns because of
125 its geographic isolation—it is a town largely bounded by steep ridgelines. A direct result of this
126 geography is that trends and developments in Middletown Springs have little impact on neighboring
127 towns, and *vice versa*. Regardless, a review of the Plans of adjoining towns shows great similarity in
128 goals and substantial compatibility. Similarly, a review of the Rutland Regional Plan shows no
129 inconsistencies with this Plan.

130 An exception to Middletown's isolation is the Poultney River. Middletown Springs'
131 boundaries encompass much of the upper watershed of the Poultney River, which originates in
132 Tinmouth. The quality of water in the river is largely determined in Middletown Springs. To maintain
133 the high quality of the Poultney River for the benefit of the people of Middletown Springs and those
134 downstream, the Town will continue to cooperate with the Poultney-Mettowee Natural Resources
135 Conservation District in its Watershed Basin Planning and improvement projects.

136 A second exception is the three main roads leading into the town. Traffic generated in
137 Middletown Springs can affect surrounding towns through which those roads pass, and traffic
138 passing through the town can affect the peaceful, rural atmosphere that Middletown wants to
139 preserve. The geography of the town makes a bypass virtually impossible.

140 **Preservation of Rare and Irreplaceable Natural Areas**

141 The native plants, animals, natural communities, landscapes, and ecosystem processes of
142 Middletown Springs are an important part of our heritage. They contribute to the aesthetic appeal of
143 Middletown Springs and provide numerous opportunities for our recreation and psychological
144 renewal. Moreover by protecting biological diversity, ecosystem services are maintained. These
145 include pollination, predation, flood and erosion control, and maintenance of soil and water quality.

146 The attached *Sensitive Areas* map shows deer wintering areas within Middletown Springs
147 but does not show any "rare, threatened, or endangered species" or "significant natural communities."
148 However it is virtually certain that this absence on the map is not because the species and
149 communities don't occur here but rather because they have not been identified and reported to the
150 Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. The surrounding towns, which share much the same terrain
151 and soils, contain numerous very rare natural plant communities and 36 rare, threatened, or
152 endangered plant species of which eight are State Threatened or Endangered. Clearly, there is an
153 absence of reporting, not of rare species or communities.

154 **Goal:**

- 155 • Biological diversity including all currently existing species and types of natural community.

156 **Policies:**

157 Middletown Springs supports it's Conservation Commission in the following endeavors:

- 158 1. Obtain appropriate expertise and grant funding to cooperate with landowners in compiling an
159 inventory of naturally occurring plant and animal species and natural communities in Middletown
160 Springs.
- 161 2. Maintain, protect and restore biological diversity of native species, natural communities, rare and
162 endangered species, natural ecosystem processes, and landscapes.
- 163 3. Encourage and enhance the appreciation and appropriate use of natural resources.
- 164 4. Encourage efforts to enhance and preserve our scenic beauty.
- 165 5. Encourage operators of sand and gravel pits to be respectful of the natural environment and to
166 consider restoring the terrain to a potentially useful configuration.
- 167 6. Encourage and enhance appreciation, preservation, and improvement of the Poultney River
168 watershed, including water quality, stream bank condition, and watershed ecology.
- 169 7. Manage the use of herbicides and road salt to protect water resources from pollution or
170 destruction.
- 171 8. Ensure that state and federal regulations to protect water resources are followed in development,
172 agriculture, and logging activities.
- 173 9. Maintain and preserve the quality of our surface and underground water resources to adequately
174 serve present and future residents.
- 175 10. Assist landowners in obtaining information, grants, and assistance for such projects as bank
176 stabilization, best agricultural practices, sustainable logging practices, road construction,
177 recreational use, and sustainable energy sources.

178 Land Use

179 The people of Middletown Springs want the Town to keep its traditional rural character. The
180 scenic approach through farmland to a defined village hub is a part of this character.

181 Present and future land use are conventionally shown on a map. (*See Future Land Use*
182 *map, attached.*) Actual acreage, which is not easy to determine from a map, is equally important—
183 particularly for tracking trends. The following table shows the current use made of land in
184 Middletown Springs as reflected in the Town Listers' database. Note that a category like
185 "Woodland" might, in some cases, include some wetland, barren land, or areas too steep for logging.
186 "Miscellaneous" includes a broad range of uses including such lands as protected wetlands, gravel
187 pits, residential usage, and minor undetected errors.

Land Use	Acre s	%
Cropland	1,792	12%
Pastureland	823	6%
Woodland	10,374	71%
Miscellaneous	1,629	11%

188 At the present time there is no broad consensus on the best means to maintain the historic
189 settlement pattern of a compact village surrounded by open countryside. Declining economic viability
190 of dairy farming has placed economic pressures on landowners to sell parcels of land for individual
191 residences. At the same time, the lack of an economically viable plan to provide municipal sewer and
192 water facilities has limited new residential construction within the village.

193 In the absence of consensus on how to maintain the historic settlement pattern of the Town,
194 this plan does not include specific policies for that purpose. (See also *Housing* below.)

195 Overall Land Use Goals:

- 196 • Continuation of the historic pattern of a compact village surrounded by open countryside.
- 197 • Preservation of traditional landowners' rights.
- 198 • Protection of the diversity of the Town by ensuring that taxes remain within the means of working
199 class people and those who are retired and on limited budgets.

200 Overall Land Use Policy:

- 201 1. Facilitate discussion aimed at developing consensus on how to maintain the historic settlement
202 pattern of open agricultural land surrounding a compact village.

203 Village Area

204 The village area is an area of compact development in the center of the Town. It is not a
205 governmental entity with defined boundaries but is taken to extend in all four directions from the
206 intersection of routes 133 and 140 until open fields are encountered. It includes virtually all
207 community-wide facilities including the Town Office, the Volunteer Fire Department, the Town
208 Library, the Middletown Springs Elementary School, the U.S. Post Office, two churches, small retail

209 establishments, the Mineral Springs Park with a re-creation of the 19th century spring house and a
210 picnic area and, in the heart of the village, the solid waste transfer station and storage facilities for
211 sand, road salt, and road maintenance equipment. Broad consensus calls for moving the transfer
212 station and road maintenance facilities elsewhere.

213 (See *Middletown Springs* above for further description of the village area.)

214 **Goal:**

- 215 • A traditional, compact village consisting of residences and appropriate services and businesses.

216 **Policies:**

- 217 1. Continue the ongoing search for available land to relocate the solid-waste transfer station and
218 road maintenance facilities to an area that is convenient for the people of the town but not in the
219 heart of the village.
- 220 2. Allow the development of compact growth within the village to the extent that such development
221 provides for adequate and safe water supplies and waste disposal. (See *Sewer and Water*
222 below.)

223 **Rural Area**

224 The rural area is defined as the lands around the village, extending to slopes too steep for
225 agriculture. (See *Future Land Use* map) It includes all farmland, residential lots outside the village,
226 and forestland. Many older properties are listed in the Vermont State Registry of Historic Places.
227 Agricultural uses include but are not limited to dairy, beef, horses, small ruminants, crops, maple
228 syrup, fruit, and logs.

229 **Goal:**

- 230 • Attractive countryside with large tracts of open land in diversified agricultural use.

231 **Policies:**

- 232 1. Support current-use taxation of agricultural land.
- 233 2. Support Right-to-Farm legislation.
- 234 3. Foster awareness of private or foundation funding to purchase conservation easements and
235 development rights of prime agricultural and scenic lands.

236 **Highland Conservation Area**

237 The highland conservation areas are the steep, forested, upper elevation areas with shallow
238 soil. These areas include the ridgelines that define the Town. Ridgelines hold historic, scenic, and
239 sentimental value to residents. The highland ecology is fragile and susceptible to damage. (See
240 *Sensitive Areas* map.)

241 With the exception of a small number of residences, the highland conservation areas are
242 undeveloped. Most of those portions that are accessible with logging equipment are periodically
243 logged. There are no existing local restrictions on development of these areas.

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Goal:

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- Natural, forested highlands and ridgelines with a healthy ecology, feeding ground water resources.

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Policies:

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1. Develop guidelines to protect the higher elevations and ridges from erosion, preserve their value as wildlife habitat, and preserve their natural appearance.

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2. Cooperate with landowners in conserving the ecosystem, soils as well as wildlife, of the highlands.

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3. Encourage loggers to use practices that conserve soils in the Highland Conservation Area and provide for a sustainable timber industry. (See also *Preservation of Rare and Irreplaceable*

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Natural Areas above.)

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Lowland Conservation Area

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Flood plains and riverbanks are located along the Poultney River and South Brook. These waterways are significant natural resources. Information on flood hazard boundaries on specific parcels of land is available from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Conservation, Water Quality Division.

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Lowland soils are often heavy, with high clay content and poor drainage. While not conducive to subsurface sewage disposal systems, agriculture thrives on these moist soils, especially in drought years. Agricultural use should be encouraged in conformance with the State of Vermont’s *Accepted Agricultural Practices*.

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Middletown Springs recognizes the need to balance water quality improvements with the need to sustain a healthy, economically viable agricultural industry. These practices will maintain the health and long-term productivity of the soils, water, and related plant and animal resources and reduce the potential for water pollution from agricultural non-point sources. *Accepted Agricultural Practices* includes recommendations on erosion and sediment control, animal waste management, fertilizer management, and pesticide management.

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Goal:

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- Healthy streams and wetlands of high water quality and minimal flood danger.

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- Sustainably productive agricultural use of lowlands that are not protected wetlands.

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Policies:

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1. Maintain existing Flood Plain Regulations to protect property.

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2. Increase public awareness of appropriate land use in lowland areas.

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3. Encourage agricultural enterprises to use practices that conserve soils during floods and provide for a sustainable agricultural industry. (See also *Preservation of Rare and Irreplaceable*

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Natural Areas above.)

279 **Housing**

280 The residents of Middletown live in 331 out of a total of 395 housing units. 83% of the units
281 are owner-occupied, 17% are renter occupied. The remaining 66 units are either seasonal or
282 unoccupied. The rental vacancy rate is 3.4%.

283 Of the 395 housing units in Middletown Springs 80.3% are single-unit detached structures,
284 2.3% are attached or multiple units, and 17.5% are mobile homes. One out of six is fairly new, built
285 since 1990 while nearly half were built between 1960 and 1989. Fully a third date back to 1939 or
286 before. They range in size from a single room to more than nine rooms. 14% have three or fewer
287 rooms, houses with four to eight rooms occur in nearly equal numbers and account for 77.8% of the
288 total, and the remaining 8.4% have nine or more rooms. The median number of rooms is 5.9.

289 51% of owner occupied housing units are valued at less than \$100,000; 49% at over
290 \$100,000. The median value of owner occupied units is \$99,500.

291 Based on a sample of 95 taken in 2000, 76.9% of owners paid less than 30% of household
292 income while 20% of owners paid 30% or more of household income. 3.2% of owner's costs were
293 not computed. The median monthly cost was \$393.

294 A similar sampling of 43 renters indicated that 48.8% paid less than 30% of household
295 income, 33.3% paid 30% or more of household income, and 17.8% were not computed. Median
296 monthly rent was \$644.

297 Housing is considered affordable when it does not exceed 30% of household income.

298 (The above is a very brief summary of housing data from Census 2000. More detailed
299 statistics can be found at <www.census.gov>.)

300 The people of Middletown Springs recognize the need for affordable housing for all income
301 groups. They also recognize that a town with only 436 employed residents is largely at the mercy of
302 economic forces and the local geography. In the last several decades these forces have resulted in:

- 303 • No subdivision development involving multiple housing units built on speculation.
- 304 • Occasional subdivision of large parcels into smaller parcels, in some cases requiring many years
305 to sell.
- 306 • New rural residential construction occurring primarily along existing roads and power lines and
307 on sites where excavation and sewage disposal are possible by conventional, economic means.

308 Since the town does not have substantial employment or commercial centers around which
309 housing can be encouraged and has not found an economical way of providing sewer and water
310 utilities, it appears that the current un-zoned and unregulated approach to residential construction has
311 met the local needs for affordable housing to the extent that a town of this size is able. While
312 extensive residential development along existing roads is by no means the pattern that many residents
313 would prefer, it seems clear that regulation to avoid that pattern could be detrimental to the
314 affordability of housing by increasing costs for road building and power line extensions.

315 Note that Middletown Springs does not have bylaws prohibiting specified types of housing
316 in specified areas. Many residents consider this a valuable contribution to the affordability of housing.

317 **Goal:**

- 318 • Decent, safe, affordable, and healthy housing for all residents.

319 **Policies:**

- 320 1. Refrain from enacting bylaws that increase housing costs for reasons other than public safety.
321 2. Cooperate with not-for-profit housing organizations, government agencies, private lenders,
322 developers, and builders in pursuing options and meeting the affordable housing needs of
323 Middletown Springs' residents in a manner consistent with this plan.

324 **Transportation**

325 Middletown Springs maintains 34 miles of class 2 & 3 roads. The State maintains an
326 additional 6 miles of road (route 133). (See *Transportation* map.) There is no mass transit system,
327 airport, rail or bus system, or municipal parking facility within the town. The only public parking is on
328 the street.

329 **Connections to Surrounding Towns**

330 Transportation to and from the town is primarily via routes 140 and 133, secondarily via
331 McIntyre Road, and potentially via Dayton Road, Mountain Road, and North Street. The remaining
332 roads do not cross into adjoining towns.

333 Route 140 runs East and West through the town, connecting the town with Poultney to the
334 west and Tinmouth and Wallingford to the east. It coincides with route 133 from the center of the
335 village to the eastern boundary of the town. West of the center of the village it is known as West
336 Street while east of the center of the village it is known as East Street.

337 Route 133 connects the town with Pawlet to the south and with Tinmouth, Ira, and West
338 Rutland in its easterly and then northerly directions. South of the center of the village it is known as
339 South Street while east of the center of the village it is known as East Street.

340 McIntyre Road is a short continuation of Poultney's East Road, connecting to Route 140.

341 Mountain Road extends south from the most Southerly portion of Coy Hill Road. It is a
342 maintained class 3 road to within a short distance of the town boundary with Wells, then continues as
343 a class 4 road to the town boundary, where it continues as a class 4 road within Wells.

344 North Street ceases to be a class 3 road 2.5 miles from the center of the village but
345 continues as a class 4 road in a northerly direction toward the town of Ira, where it continues,
346 eventually leading to Route 133 in Ira.

347 The remaining roads in the town do not connect with surrounding towns.

348 **Current Road Policy**

349 Middletown Springs has an adopted Road Policy that covers classification of highways,
350 general policy, acceptance procedures and specifications, and is available for inspection at the Town
351 Office.

352 **Future Plans**

353 The goals and objectives that follow reflect the limitations on development imposed by the
354 geography of the town. Briefly, the town can accommodate local and neighboring town commuter
355 and commercial truck traffic and still maintain its current agricultural and rural residential character
356 but could not survive becoming a major traffic conduit without changing the character of the town.

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Goal

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- A well-maintained, safe, and pleasant system of roads that meets the needs of residents, town growth, maintenance of the current town character, and that is compatible with the surrounding towns while minimizing the tax burden on residents.

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Policies:

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1. Protect our roads from damage while meeting the transportation needs of our community.

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2. Assure that town maintained roads are always passable by emergency vehicles.

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3. Protect the rural character of the town and the residential character of the village from being diminished by an increase in truck traffic that is not engaged in commerce with Middletown Springs or neighboring towns.

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4. Maintain regular communications with The Vermont Agency of Transportation to assure that the town is notified of proposed State projects affecting the town.

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5. Favor the keeping of State maintained roads through Middletown Springs at their current traffic carrying capacity.

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6. Favor improvements to State maintained roads through Middletown Springs for the purpose of enhancing their safety but not the reconstruction or expansion of such roads for the purpose of increasing their traffic carrying capacity unless it can be shown that such an increase would not diminish the rural character of the town, the residential character of the village area, or property values.

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7. Ask for suggestions and comments from abutting landowners when planning road improvements.

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8. Favor long-term life cycle economy over immediate cost considerations when improving and maintaining roads.

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9. Participate in Act 250 hearings on developments that may affect safety, town character, property values, or the geographic distribution of taxes in Middletown Springs. If a proposed development is inconsistent with this Plan, then the town shall negotiate changes or shall oppose the development.

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10. Establish and enforce legal speed limits on all roads within the town.

383

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11. Establish and maintain a long-term plan for road base improvements on town maintained roads.

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12. Develop a plan for the funding and construction of a town garage and salt shed.

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13. Develop a plan for the replacement of road maintenance equipment.

14. Develop a plan to enhance the safety of pedestrian and bicycle traffic in town.

387

Education and Recreation

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Education

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The 2000 census shows that of the population in Middletown Springs aged 3 or more, 153 are enrolled in school. Of these 17 are in nursery school, preschool, or kindergarten, 76 are in grades 1-8, 51 are in grades 9-12, and 9 are in college or graduate school.

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Of those aged 25 or older, 90% have completed high school or higher and 35% have a bachelor's degree or higher.

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394 Elementary students are educated at the Middletown Springs Elementary School located in
395 the village. Junior and senior high school students attend the school of their choice, with State
396 averaged announced tuition for non-religious State approved schools paid by the local school
397 district. Breadth of access to educational and vocational training is assured by this policy.

398 Middletown Springs does not provide transportation to or from the elementary school.

399 The current elementary school facility was renovated in 1997 and has a capacity of 115
400 students and staff. The staff is made up of classroom teachers, Title 1, and Special Education
401 teachers as well as support staff. Grades Kindergarten through Four have individual classes; grades
402 Five and Six are combined.

403 The school is rich in technology, one example being the children's access to computers and
404 the Internet through a central server. The staff and children have the option of using a Macintosh Lab
405 or a PC lab using computers in the classroom. This technology is also used by the local monthly
406 newspaper, *The Middletown Magnet*. This publication is produced by members of the community.

407 A major component of the renovation was the addition of a multi-purpose room. This room
408 is used for physical education, serving lunch, and education programs as well as being open to use by
409 the community. Considering that the current school enrollment is 60 students and that the 2000
410 census shows a population of 48 under 5 years of age, the capacity of the school should serve the
411 needs of the elementary population well into the future.

412 For almost 20 years, Middletown Springs has had a significant number of independen-
413 minded, resourceful families who have chosen to teach their children at home. The healthy
414 acceptance and cooperation between homeschoolers and the local community have given the town a
415 reputation as being homeschool-friendly and this, in turn, has attracted several additional families to
416 the town and inspired others to start homeschooling. Their collective creative energy and cooperative
417 spirit have made Middletown a homeschooling hub for families from neighboring towns as well.

418 The current homeschool population of 15 is of grade school and junior high age. The number
419 of resident families with preschool age children showing an interest in homeschooling indicates that
420 this alternative to public schooling is likely to continue.

421 **Goal:**

- 422 • A quality education for all children of this community.

423 **Policies:**

- 424 1. Continue to support local elementary school education.
425 2. Conduct an academic program that exceeds accepted standards for specific grade levels.
426 3. Encourage and stimulate students to achieve the highest level of which they are capable.
427 4. Provide for health education and recreation; model examples of a healthy lifestyle.
428 5. Make the school environment inviting, enriching, and challenging.
429 6. Continue to financially support junior and senior high school students attending the State
430 approved non-religious school of their choice.
431 7. Continue to cooperate with families choosing to educate their children at home.

432 **Library:**

433 The Middletown Springs library plays an important part in the community as an intellectual
434 and cultural focus. The library satisfies the Vermont Department of Libraries mandates and
435 standards. The library's computer is on-line to both the Internet and the Vermont Automated Library
436 System. The library is open year round.

437 **Recreation:**

438 In 2002 the Middletown Springs School Board obtained a grant for \$20,000 from the Land
439 and Water Conservation Fund to help build a new community playground and upgrade the athletic
440 field on the school grounds. Both of these recreational areas have been used and will continue to be
441 used by both the school and the community of Middletown Springs.

442 The Middletown Springs Historical Society maintains a mineral springs springhouse and a
443 picnic area in the Springs Park located within the village.

444 Locally popular recreational pursuits that can benefit from established trails include
445 snowmobiling, walking, and cross country skiing. The snowmobilers have established a special
446 interest organization, *The Spruce Knob Ramblers*, through which they negotiate permission to use
447 private lands. Those active in walking and cross country skiing are encouraged to do likewise.

448 **Goal:**

- 449 • A community with recreational facilities that meet the interests of residents.

450 **Policy:**

- 451 1. Continue cooperation with organized or unorganized groups willing to develop recreational
452 facilities to meet their interests.

453 **Utilities, Facilities, and Services**

454 **Sewer & Water**

455 As mentioned in the Land Use section above, Middletown Springs has no municipal sewer
456 or water facilities. Property owners rely on individual septic systems and wells. Considering the size
457 of individual lots in the village, and the potential for contamination of wells from leach fields, the
458 situation is not ideal. However, an economically viable plan to provide these facilities has not been
459 found.

460 **Goal:**

- 461 • Safe drinking water and sewage disposal throughout the town.

462 **Policies:**

- 463 1. Continue to search for an economically viable and politically acceptable way to provide one or
464 both of these services in the village area.

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Solid Waste Disposal

Middletown Springs and ten other regional towns are joined in a Solid Waste Alternative Committee (SWAC) for the purpose of planning and arranging for disposal of the Town's solid waste in conformity with applicable laws.

The Town currently has a Selectboard approved Solid Waste Implementation Plan and an ordinance regulating the separation, collection and disposal of solid waste. The Town's transfer station is certified by the Vermont State Agency of Natural Resources.

The Town recycles glass, plastic, tin and aluminum cans, newspaper, junk mail, magazines, boxboard, and cardboard. The Town also collects over-sized trash and metal/white goods on publicized days. Twice a year SWAC holds collection days for Household Hazardous Waste. The collections are held at each town on a rotating basis

The current interim transfer station site is too small and inappropriately located in a residential area. See *Land Use, Village Area* for corrective steps.

Goal:

- Healthful and non-polluting disposal of solid waste.

Policies:

1. Increase public participation in recycling efforts.
2. Enforce existing laws on trash burning and dumping.

Police

The Town elects one local constable. The Vermont State Police and County Sheriff's Office, accessed through "911", provide professional protective services from headquarters in Castleton Corners and Rutland. These services have adequately met the needs of the town.

Fire Protection

The town is well served by the Middletown Springs Volunteer Fire Department which is a member of both the Rutland County Fire Association and the Washington County (N.Y.) fire control with radio and pager dispatch. The department's operating expenses are paid by property taxes, dues, donations, and fund raising activities including support from the Ladies` Auxiliary. The town is NEIRA rated "Class F" for fire insurance purposes.

Goal:

- An effective, well-trained, volunteer fire department

Policies:

1. Continue municipal and community support for the Middletown Springs Volunteer Fire Department.

498 **Health Services**

499 Emergency medical services are provided to the citizens in a tiered system. The Middletown
500 Springs First Response provides immediate care prior to arrival of the Poultney Rescue Squad.
501 Advanced life support and paramedic service are available from the Regional Ambulance Service
502 Inc. of Rutland. Emergency “911” service is available for emergency medical needs.

503 **Goal:**

- 504 • Adequate emergency medical and ambulance services.

505 **Policies:**

- 506 1. Continue municipal and community support for the Middletown Springs First Response,
507 Poultney Rescue Squad, and Rutland Regional Ambulance Service.

508 **Emergency Management**

509 The Middletown Springs First Response group, in cooperation with the selectboard and
510 other town organizations, is currently developing a Rapid Response Plan.

511 **Goal**

- 512 • A community that responds quickly and effectively to emergency situations of all types,
513 anticipated or unanticipated.

514 **Policy:**

- 515 1. Support and cooperate with all community organizations in their efforts to meet emergency
516 situations.

517 **Telecommunications and Similar Facilities**

518 Middletown Springs has an existing bylaw governing the construction of telecommunications
519 towers and similar facilities. Adopted in 1998, the bylaw is available for inspection at the Town
520 Office.

521 Both telecommunications technology and the public demand for modern telecommunications
522 have been advancing rapidly. Parallel to these advances, communities throughout the country have
523 developed thoughtful controls over the construction of such facilities.

524 **Goal:**

- 525 • Modern telecommunications services within Middletown Springs.

526 **Policies:**

- 527 1. Remain informed of the current state of telecommunications technology, public demand, and
528 effective control legislation.
529 2. Amend or replace the existing bylaw as necessary to facilitate the provision of
530 telecommunications service in the Town consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan.

531 **Energy**

532 The Town is located within the service territory of Central Vermont Public Service Corp.,
533 which provides electric service to the Town. The service continues to be adequate to serve the needs
534 of the Town.

535 63.2% of households are heated primarily with fuel oil or kerosene, 22.2% with wood,
536 13.4% with LP gas, and 1.2% with electricity. A large but unknown percentage of households that
537 do not heat primarily with wood nevertheless use wood for supplementary or emergency heat.

538 **Goal:**

- 539 • Reliable and affordable energy for residences and businesses.

540 **Policies:**

- 541 1. Favor the location of new electricity and phone lines in existing corridors.
542 2. Encourage underground service drops.
543 3. Encourage conservation of energy through community initiatives (e.g.: car-pooling, recycling, and
544 energy efficiency initiatives in homes, school, and community buildings).
545 4. Provide practical information about available alternative energy technologies.
546 5. Conserve energy in buildings used by the Town and school.

547 **Implementation Program**

548 Full implementation of this Plan does not require the passage of any additional bylaws
549 enabled by Chapter 117 in 24 V.S.A.

550 Following adoption of the Town Plan, the Planning Commission will, as necessary,
551 recommend to the Selectboard and other commissions and organizations specific steps to implement
552 the policies included in the Plan. The Commission will begin with consideration of the goal and
553 policies concerning telecommunications and similar facilities.

554 Following adoption of the Town Plan, the Planning Commission will continue to foster community-
555 wide discussion of goals that do not currently have corresponding policies supported by wide
556 consensus. If and when such consensus seems to have emerged, the Commission will prepare and
557 recommend to the voters amendments to this Plan incorporating such policies.