

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of the Plan

A Town Plan identifies goals and strategies for maintaining, improving, and developing a livable community. Although Cabot is not required to adopt a Town Plan, doing so affords it a voice in the way the town grows and develops. An approved Town Plan enables the citizens of Cabot to have a legal say over both private and state land use decisions in the town. State statutes grant the plan great weight in determining whether development projects subject to Act 250 are approved, and the conditions applied to approval.

If a town chooses to plan, it must do so within the framework established by State legislation, which sets standards for the way municipal plans are to be developed, reviewed and adopted. An up-to-date plan is required as a basis for any local land use regulations. Cabot's last Town Plan was adopted in 2003.

The 2011 Town Plan, which includes elements on housing, energy, land use, natural and historic resources, community facilities, transportation, and economic development, will be the basis for updating the town's land use regulations and provide a reference in the review of projects before the local Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Adjustment, and projects subject to Act 250 Review.

This plan describes both existing conditions in Cabot (people, resources, challenges) and aspirations for the future of the community. The aspirations are expressed as **goals** and found at the end of every section, along with **implementation strategies** which articulate the policies and action steps designed to help reach those goals. A "measure of progress" is also identified, which will help chart progress made in relation to stated policies or tasks.

B. Public participation

The Planning Commission recognizes the importance of public participation in the planning process. To this end, the Planning Commission conducted a Town-wide survey at the beginning of the planning process, which was available to Town residents online and in print from June 1 to June 30, 2010. The survey sought to gather opinions on the value of various resources and qualities of Cabot, such as small town character and natural features, historic buildings, and recreational facilities. It was also the first step in identifying the need for improvement in various areas, from Town facilities and services to conservation of resources.

Another major outreach effort was a public visioning session held on September 13, 2010, designed to both develop a vision for the future of Cabot and help prioritize the issues that would be addressed in the Town Plan. About 40 Cabot residents attended the visioning session held at the Willey Building, which was facilitated by a community resource specialist from the University of Vermont extension office.

In February of 2011, a second survey was prepared and mailed to over 30 farming operations in Town, to try to get better insight into agricultural practices in Town.

Summaries of both surveys and a detailed description of the Visioning meeting program are included in Appendix A.

Public work sessions were scheduled throughout 2010 and early 2011 on every section of the Town Plan, and residents were kept apprised of progress through articles in the monthly *Cabot Chronicle*. Residents who provided an email contact to the Planning Commission were also notified by email of all upcoming work sessions.

The following vision statement was developed with input from the citizens of Cabot, and has served as a guide for the Planning Commission as it developed the various sections included in this updated Town Plan. The Plan will guide Cabot in a direction that will help the community realize its vision, and accommodate future growth in a way that does not compromise the irreplaceable features and qualities that its citizens want to preserve.

VISION

The Town of Cabot envisions a future that continues our history and identity as a rural community, with an emphasis on stewarding the features that make us a unique and special place to live: a vibrant, compact village center surrounded by acres of open farmland and forest that contain ample recreational resources, majestic scenery, clean and bountiful waters, and historic features. In this future, Cabot residents will meet their needs for food, material, shelter, and transportation using resources managed in a sustainable manner.

The thoughtful placement of housing, commercial, civic, and recreational spaces in Cabot will strengthen and preserve an active village center, maintain a healthy working landscape, and best steward our natural resources.

The many historic features of the village center serve as a focus point for Cabot's identity, and include our school, library, church, and "main street" district.

Development will be focused in and around the village center, which will be well served by local facilities, services and infrastructure. Development outside the village center will respect and conserve important agricultural lands and natural resources.

C. Historic Overview

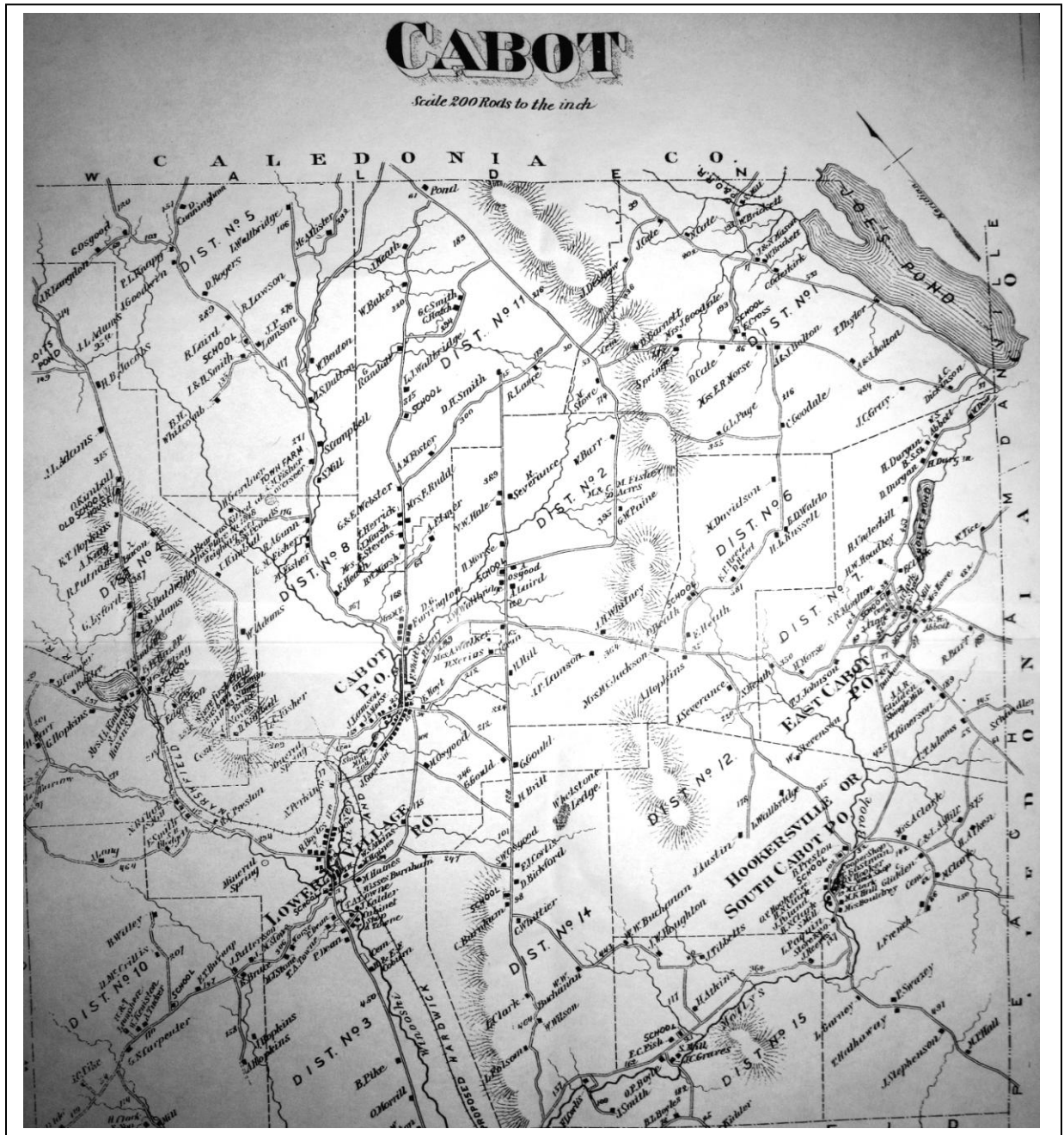
Much of what we see in Cabot village today has evolved from a rich agricultural tradition that has its roots in the latter part of the 18th Century. This architectural, cultural and topographical record informs an important part of Cabot's identity today.

The earliest settlement in Cabot occurred on Cabot Plain, where the Bayley-Hazen Military Road cut a swath through the northeastern part of what is now Cabot Town in 1779. The Bayley-Hazen Road was named for Colonel Jacob Bayley, who began construction of the road in Wells River in 1776, and General Moses Hazen, who continued the road to its ending point at Hazen's Notch in 1779, in what is now the Town of Westfield.

The Town of Cabot was chartered August 17, 1781, and surveyed and lotted in 1786. Historical accounts note that Cabot was named by Lyman Hitchcock, one of the original Town proprietors, in honor of his bride-to-be, a Miss Cabot of Connecticut. In 1789, saw mills and grist mills were built on the Winooski River in what later became Cabot Village, and by the 1790s, settlement began to spread south, east and west. In 1796, the seat of government was moved to the geographic center of Town. This "Centre", as it was called, was a promising village with a church, school, store, a number of houses, livestock pound, a four-acre common, and cemetery. By 1800 the town population had grown to 349.

By 1820, little settlement remained on the high plain, as new settlements grew around the productive mills along the river. From 1800 to 1820 the population had almost tripled to 1,032 residents. In about 1825 the seat of government moved to the present village. That year, the church that had been built in the Center in 1806 was disassembled and moved to Cabot Village.

Farm crops at that time included wheat, flax, hay and apple cider. Sheep were among the livestock raised on the newly cleared land in Town, and a large woolen mill was built about 1825 in Lower Cabot. In 1833 a woolen carding mill was built in the upper village which continued in business for 44 years. Other early industries included a tannery, a blacksmith shop and foundry.



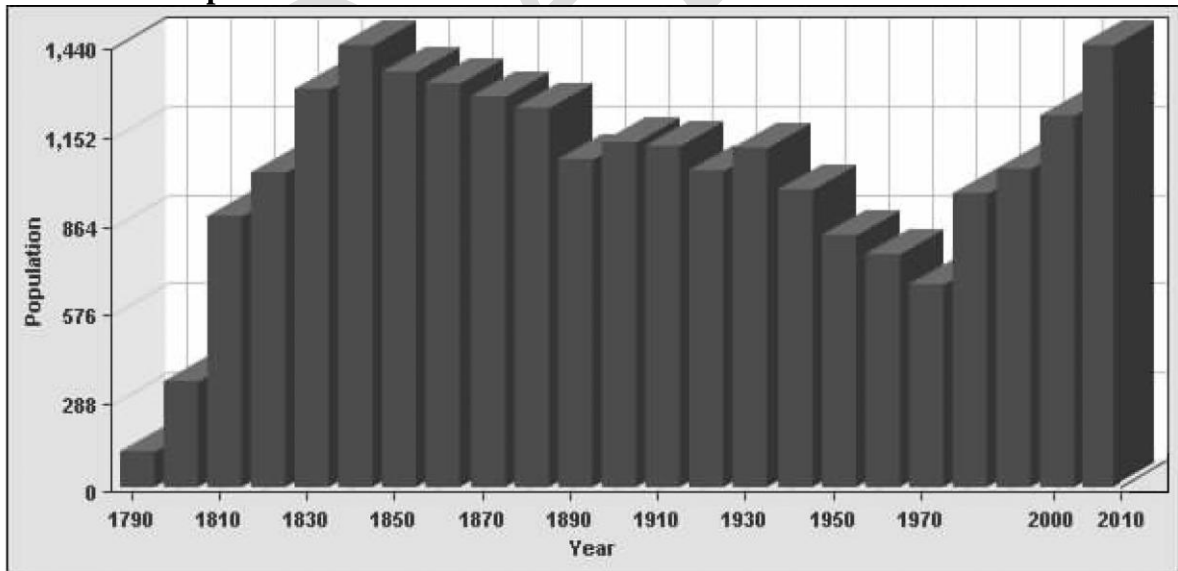
F.W. Beers Atlas of Washington County, 1873

The demand for lumber to build houses for the growing population led to the building of water-powered lumber mills throughout town, including in Cabot Village, Lower Cabot Village, Hookersville, East Cabot, West Hill Pond, and Peterville (now submerged in the Molly’s Falls reservoir). The county road connecting the Caledonia County Seat at Danville with Montpelier passed through Cabot, bringing travelers and spurring the construction of the Winooski Hotel in 1833. (In 1914 the hotel burned -- the Willey Memorial Building is now located on the site.) By 1840 the population in Cabot reached the highest point in the Town’s history, with 1,440 residents.

Between 1850 and 1880 the demand for wool declined, while the construction of railroads opened up new markets for dairy products and lumber. Apples and maple sugar were also important crops in the last quarter of the 19th century. Butter production increased rapidly during this period, to nearly 160,000 pounds in 1880, and cows began to outnumber sheep on most Cabot farms. Agricultural statistics published at the beginning of the 20th century indicate that Cabot had 675 horses and colts, 3500 cows, 2000 other cattle, and 500 sheep. There were also four lumber mills, and about equal amounts of land were described as “tillable” and “in forestry.”

Inevitably, the railroads that first opened markets to Cabot farmers also brought competition from farms in New York, Pennsylvania and the Midwest. From the peak in 1840, Cabot’s population decreased more or less steadily until 1970, when it reached a low of 663 people.

CABOT – Total Population 1790 - 2010



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau – Census of Population & Housing, 2000 Summary File 1 Table P1)

Despite the decline in farming, which occurred throughout the northeast, a probable factor in the persistence of dairy farming as a livelihood in Cabot was the formation of the Cabot Farmers Cooperative Creamery, first in 1893, and then again in 1919. The success of this enterprise, which managed to weather the Great Depression of the 1930s, has provided a

convenient outlet for Cabot dairy farmers and a place of employment for many other residents to this day.

Sources:

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D. Community Snapshot

Cabot's population in 2010 was 1,433. This represents an increase of about 18% since 2000. Although the population in Cabot has more than doubled since 1970, it has only just about reached the population in town in the year 1840, when Cabot's population peaked at 1,440 residents.

The 2009 census indicated that Cabot's population had a higher percentage of school-aged children (aged 5 – 19), at 20.4% of the population, than was typical in Vermont as a whole, whereas 8.5% of the population was in this age bracket. The average household size in Cabot in 2000 was 2.5, higher than the statewide average of 2.4. In 2000, 37.7% of Cabot residents were not Vermont natives, having arrived from different states and outside the U.S.

Residents 65 years and older comprised 17.5% of Cabot residents in 2009, whereas statewide, 13.8% were 65 and older. The median age in Cabot in 2009 was 47.0, vs. 40.6 statewide. Of the total Cabot population 25 years and older, 20.1% had some college, and 32.1% had a Bachelor's degree or higher. These figures on educational attainment in Cabot track closely with the figures state-wide.

The median household income in Cabot for the five year period 2005-2009 was estimated at \$46,989, as compared to \$54,227 for all of Washington County and \$51,284 for all of Vermont. Median family income in Cabot for that period was estimated at \$53,750 as compared to \$67,885 countywide and \$63,482 state-wide.

Cabot is approaching the population level that existed during its agricultural heyday of the mid-19th century; the occupation and economic livelihood of its residents are quite different from that time.

According to the American Community Survey 5-year estimates released in 2010, the most prominent occupations in Cabot are educational, health care, and social services (30.4%), construction (14.2%), manufacturing (10.3%), and professional, scientific, management, and administrative services (9.4%). Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining occupations comprise 7.2%.

**Table I-1
Employment Status in Cabot, 2009**

	Number	Percent
Employed civilian population 16 years and over	671	100.0%
INDUSTRY		
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	48	7.2%
Construction	95	14.2%
Manufacturing	69	10.3%
Wholesale Trade	10	1.5%
Retail Trade	49	7.3%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	17	2.5%
Information	23	3.4%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	13	1.9%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	63	9.4%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	204	30.4%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	22	3.3%
Other services, except public administration	21	3.1%
Public administration	37	5.5%

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates)

Although these statistics point to the fact that most residents in Cabot earn their primary income in occupations and industries other than agriculture or forestry, Cabot is nonetheless characterized by its rural and forested areas, and has a population density of only 32.53 persons per square mile (as compared to an overall population density in Vermont of 65.82 persons per square mile). An important indicator of the way land is used in Cabot is the “Current Use” program. In 2010, a total of 13,087 acres of land in Cabot was in this program, representing about 53% of the total land area in town. In addition, 2,109 acres of farmland and open space are permanently conserved through easements and public ownership. So, while only a small percentage of residents are officially classified in the federal census as having farming or forestry occupations, farming and forest management is a pervasive use that defines the character of the Town.

E. Sustainability

Sustainability was a common refrain at the Town-wide visioning session held in Cabot in September 2010. Residents are looking for ways to move forward on the issues of land use, energy production and consumption, and economic development that will be environmentally and economically sustainable well into the future. The following goal of sustainability is was established in Executive Order 13514, “Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance”, which was signed by in 2009:

“To create and maintain conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations.”

Planning for a sustainable future in a time of global climate change is a daunting task: competition, volatility, and uncertainty are factors likely to make long-term planning difficult and costly. The October 2007 Report to the Governor’s Commission on Climate Change notes:

...Our Ability to “keep Vermont, Vermont” is at grave risk. Accordingly, we all – individual citizens, businesses, institutions, and government alike – bear a responsibility to reduce our greenhouse gas contributions to our warming planet.

Among the goals for the 2011 Town Plan update are to acknowledge global climate change as a factor that will impact the cost and quality of life for Cabot residents, recognize our responsibility to consider community, environmental and economic sustainability (including greenhouse gas emission reductions) in the plan, and to clarify local opportunities – goals and plans of action – to mitigate the causes and effects of climate change, however small, through the plan.

F. Compatibility with the Region

According to Vermont statute, a municipal plan is considered to be “compatible” with the plans of its neighboring towns and the region if it “will not significantly reduce the desired effect” of those plans. Cabot, located in Washington County, is served by the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, which has developed and adopted the *Central Vermont Regional Plan* in 2008.

Towns that border Cabot are: to the northeast, Walden, in Caledonia County; to the northwest, Woodbury, Washington Co.; at the northern corner, Hardwick, Caledonia Co.; to the southwest, Marshfield, Washington Co.; to the southeast, Peacham and Danville, Caledonia Co. Of the Towns that border Cabot, the only town that does not have an adopted Town Plan is Walden.

The proposals contained in the 2011 Cabot Town Plan will not reduce the desired effect of the plans of the region or of neighboring Towns. In several instances the Town Plan notes areas in which Cabot has worked or intends to work with other communities or the region towards goals regarding water quality, transportation, educational facilities, housing and food system development.

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