

Here is the Planning Commission's **PROPOSED DRAFT REVISION** of the 'Economy' section of the **Bethel Town Plan**. By State Statute, the Town Plan is revised every five years. The Planning Commission will hold a duly warned public hearing in mid-June on this and, depending on comments received then, will transmit it to the Select Board, which will hold a hearing at the end of July. Public comments are appreciated. Formal adoption by the Select Board is anticipated by August 13, 2006.

IV ECONOMY

A. Locations of Economic Activity

Bethel serves as a center of employment for adjacent communities in the Upper White River Valley: including Royalton, Stockbridge, Barnard, and Rochester. Basic retail services are available, as well as a building materials supplier, banking services, and automobile sales and service.

I-89 and Routes 107 and 12 serve as primary transportation links to Bethel. The village area serves as the primary concentration point for services and retail businesses, however, Routes 107 and 12 have seen considerable development in recent years. Major employers in Bethel are Vermont Castings, a multi-line stove/fireplace manufacturer; GW Plastics, an injection molding manufacturer; Valley Motors, an automobile dealer; the Whitcomb School; Bethel Mills, a building materials supplier; Ultramotive, a container dispensing business; and Silvatech, a manufacturer of specialized sawmill processing equipment.

Economic activity in Bethel has seen moderate growth since the early 1990's: largely manufacturing and service oriented. For major retail, trade, and health care, Bethel residents utilize the Tri-Town Area (White River Junction, Hanover, and Lebanon), Rutland, or the Barre-Montpelier Area, and to a limited extent to Randolph.

B. LABOR FORCE

1. Employment Patterns

The number of Bethel residents in the labor force has risen each year since 2001, however, at a rate somewhat different than that of Windsor County as a whole and of Vermont.

LABOR FORCE: Residents of Bethel, Windsor County and Vermont

[Source: VT Dept. of Employment & Training]

YEAR	BETHEL	WINDSOR CO.	VERMONT
2000	1,100	31,050	333,200
2001	1,090 (-1%)	31,550 (+2%)	339,400 (+2%)
2002	1,160 (+6%)	31,900 (+1%)	348,700 (+3%)
2003	1,180 (+2%)	32,750 (+3%)	350,700 (+0.6%)

The private sector continues as the largest employer for Bethel residents in the labor force: 73.8%. Another 13.8% work for government, and 12.2% are self-employed (Source: U.S. Census 2000).

**OCCUPATIONAL TYPES:
BETHEL RESIDENTS IN THE LABOR FORCE 16 YEARS AND OVER
(Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census)**

Occupational Type	1990 Census		2000 Census	
	Number	% of labor force	Number	% of labor force
Managerial/Professional	216	23%	353	36.2%
Technical, Sales, Administrative	220	23%	210	21.5%
Production, transportation, and material moving			181	18.5%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance			111	11.4%
Service	177	19%	107	11.0%
Precision Production	166	16%		
Operators, Fabricators, Laborers	140	15%		
Farming and Forestry	25	3%	14	1.4%
TOTAL	944	100%	976	100%

When the Bethel labor force is compared with that of adjacent towns and Vermont as a whole, it appears that a lower percentage of females with children under six years are employed, however, a higher percentage of families with children six to seventeen years have all parents working:

**EMPLOYMENT STATUS
[Source: Census 2000]**

Town	Population 16 years and over- % in the labor force			Own children: % with all parents in family in labor force	
	Total	Female		Under six years	Six to seventeen years
		Total	With own children under 6 years		
Barnard	68.3	62.8	75.6	73.8	80.0
Bethel	66.1	60.5	58.9	61.0	83.8
Randolph	69.0	63.4	54.7	51.2	70.5
Rochester	70.4	62.2	66.0	70.0	92.2
Royalton	64.2	62.0	75.3	79.4	82.6
Stockbridge	66.9	61.5	48.3	36.0	74.5
Vermont	69.3	64.3	70.6	68.1	78.2

2. Unemployment

The number of unemployed Bethel workers seeking jobs was comparable with Windsor County and Vermont during 2000 and 2001. Since then, the number exceeds both:

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

[Source: VT Dept. of Employment & Training]

YEAR	BETHEL	WINDSOR CO.	VERMONT
2000	2.4%	2.3%	2.9%
2001	3.0%	2.8%	3.6%
2002	4.1%	3.2%	3.7%
2003	5.7%	3.7%	4.6%
July 2004	5.0%		
July 2005	6.8%		

The 2000 US Census revealed that Bethel is about mid-point regarding civilian labor force unemployment rates when compared with neighboring towns:

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

[Source: Census 2000 Summary file 3]

Town	Civilian Labor Force: % Unemployed
Barnard	2.7
Bethel	2.8
Randolph	4.9
Rochester	4.4
Royalton	2.3
Stockbridge	0.0
Vermont	4.2

3. TRAVEL TO WORK

In 2000, approximately 6.9% (69) of Bethel's employed labor force worked at home. For those who commuted to work:

- 18.4% (164) traveled less than 10 minutes to work;
- 32.3% (287) traveled between 10 and 20 minutes;
- 17.5% (156) traveled between 20 and 30 minutes;
- 26.7% (238) traveled between ½ to 1 hour;
- 5.1% (45) traveled more than one hour.

Comparing employed Bethel residents to their counterparts in adjacent towns, a higher percentage carpool and total commuting time in minutes is in the middle to lower range:

COMMUTING TO WORK

[Source: Census 2000]

Town	Workers 16 years and over			
	% in carpools	% using public transportation	Who do not work at home: mean travel time to work (minutes)	% who work outside county of residence
Barnard	4.6	0.8	25.1	23.3
Bethel	15.5	0.0	23.5	40.3
Randolph	14.9	0.5	21.7	39.2
Rochester	7.6	0.6	22.8	37.0
Royalton	15.3	0.5	25.9	36.0
Stockbridge	11.0	0.0	28.7	53.3
Vermont	11.9	0.7	21.6	21.5

According to Census 2000, the hours commuting to work each year now exceeds the two weeks of vacation time frequently taken by workers over the course of a year.

C. INCOME

1. Average Annual Wage: The average annual wage in 2001 for Bethel's employed labor force was \$30,685. In general, between 1990 and 2001, the annual average wage in Bethel was greater than that for Windsor County and usually exceeded that for Vermont:

ANNUAL AVERAGE WAGE

[Source: VT Department of Employment & Training]

YEAR	BETHEL	WINDSOR COUNTY	VERMONT
1990	\$19,607	\$19,226	\$20,531
1992	\$21,548	\$21,115	\$22,364
1994	\$22,672	\$22,857	\$22,963
1996	\$25,032	\$23,091	\$24,479
1998	\$26,958	\$24,960	\$26,624
2000	\$30,369	\$27,414	\$28,925
2002	\$30,685	\$29,167	\$31,041

Average annual wages by occupation type cover a wide range: in 2004 (for six occupations measured), from \$26,570 to \$42,014. The annual increase between 1997 and 2000 was far greater than over the following four years:

ANNUAL AVERAGE WAGE BY OCCUPATION TYPE

[Source: VT Department of Employment & Training]

OCCUPATION	1997	2000	2004
Public Administrator	\$33,983	\$33,807	\$42,570
Transportation/Utilities	\$29,448	\$31,755	\$37,135
Manufacturing	\$29,351	\$35,915	\$37,019
Finance/Insurance	\$22,060	\$29,852	\$32,163
Construction	\$24,379	\$28,600	\$28,974
Services	\$21,693	\$25,080	\$26,570

2. Median Family Income: Bethel families rely on two incomes for financial stability, as do other Windsor County and Vermont families:

AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE & MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME

[Source: Census- Historical data]

YEAR	BETHEL		WINDSOR COUNTY		VERMONT	
	Average Wage	Median Income	Average Wage	Median Income	Average Wage	Median Income
1979		14,806		17,798		17,205
1989	19,214	32,098	18,552	34,691	19,487	34,780
1999	29,418	41,250	25,829	49,002	27,589	48,625

The median family income in Bethel varies greatly depending on household type:

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME

[Source: Census 2000]

Subject	Households	Families			Nonfamily Households
		Total	Married-couple family	Female Householder- no husband present	
Number	806	547	447	70	259
Median Income	\$34,141	\$41,250	\$45,813	\$17,083	\$20,688

Notwithstanding the sizeable range in median income, the average Bethel household is nowhere near capacity to purchase their own home at an affordable rate (see 'Housing' section).

3. Poverty Rates: As with median family income, the household type greatly influences whether a Bethel family subsists below, near, or above poverty status:

POVERTY STATUS OF FAMILIES AND NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLDERS 1999 - BETHEL TOWN, WINDSOR COUNTY, VERMONT

[Source: Census 2000]

Poverty Status	Number		Percent below poverty level
	All income levels	Below poverty level	
Families	547	43	7.9%
With related children under 18 years	255	29	11.4%
With related children under 5 years	98	16	16.3%
Married-couple families	447	21	4.7%
With related children under 18 years	183	9	4.9%
With related children under 5 years	71	7	9.9%
Families with female householder, no husband present	70	19	27.1%
With related children under 18 years	54	17	31.5%
With related children under 5 years	20	9	45.0%
Nonfamily householder	259	61	23.6%
Families below:			
150 percent of poverty level	85 (16%)		
185 percent of poverty level	134 (25%)		

D. CHILD CARE

As many as 115 preschool children in Bethel might need full time child care services (average number of births per year, 1999 through 2002, times five), and up to 150 school age children potentially need before and after school care (average elementary class size times six).

Securing accessible and available child care is a concern for many local families with young children. A 2002 report by the VT Agency of Human Services' Planning Division showed a 34% 'met need' for child care in the Stockbridge, Bethel, Rochester, Pittsfield, Granville and Hancock area.

As of January, 2005, there were only four registered child care providers residing in Bethel. Some children in their care reside elsewhere. The Bethel Elementary School offers an After School Program, Monday through Friday, with a cap of 59 school age children: families must have alternate arrangements for any day that school is not in session. There is no 'Before School Hours' program available. The Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union Early Education Program provides two-days-a-week services for up to 15 children with limited hours (9:00 AM to 2:30 PM). No local business has on-site child care for employees with young children.

Bethel's Zoning Ordinance, revised in February 2005, poses few or no barriers to individuals who wish to provide child care in their homes.
