



Protection of Local Character & Natural Resources

An overarching theme emerging from the public input was a strong desire by many residents to protect the Town of Georgia from changes which would erode its historic rural setting and natural resources. This position was supported in several survey questions and public comments. When asked in the survey to identify which factors were most important for managing future growth and development in the town, the top three responses were: protection of water quality and natural resources, protection of local working farms and agricultural lands, and protection of small-town rural character and scenic views. A combined 76% of survey respondents also felt it was either important (22%) or very important (55%) to protect the view of the lake along Georgia Shore Road. When asked to rank overall priorities for the town to address, “preserving town character and natural resources” ranked as the highest overall priority, noticeably higher than all other topics provided.

Specific natural resources suggested for protection included Lake Champlain, Arrowhead Lake, Silver Lake, as well as local wetlands and streams. The view of Lake Champlain along Georgia Shore Road was often suggested as an area for viewshed protection.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

The “Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act” (CRBPA) was enacted by the State of Vermont in 2022. This Act seeks to address the loss of critical biodiversity from human development, climate change, pollution, habitat fragmentation, and invasive species. The Act seeks to protect the priority ecological areas of the state identified in the Vermont Conservation Design, with the goal of conserving 30% of Vermont’s land area by 2030, and 50% by 2050. This plan seeks to support and coordinate with those goals.

These natural resources are important not just for maintaining the scenic beauty and charm of our town however. As our climate changes, having contiguous areas of the natural landscape which maintain ecological function helps plants and animals to survive, reproduce, migrate, adapt and be more resilient to change, in turn helping us and our localized environment. The preservation of these resources, in short, helps make us more resilient for future generations. It is clear from the public input that this issue is of high importance to the community, and should be a focal point of this plan.

GOAL 00	To maintain, improve, and p Protect the quality of Georgia's water resources, including groundwater and surface water.
GOAL 00	Protect fragile, unique and sensitive areas <u>natural resources, including those which contribute to Vermont's high priority inventory for ecological integrity.</u>
GOAL 00	<u>Protect the existing open spaces, agricultural lands and scenic views which define Georgia's rural character.</u>
GOAL 00	To m Maintain and improve the quality of important soils, such as agriculture and forestry soils, when considering the future development of the town.
GOAL 00	To p Protect private and public investment and maintain the natural environment by considering topography and geology when determining land use.
GOAL 00	To p Protect local earth resources until needed for future use for the benefit of the community; and to minimize the impacts of extraction on the environment.
GOAL 00	To c Consider climatic factors and to protect the quality of the air when planning for future development.
GOAL 00	<u>Support the goals of the Vermont Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act with the conservation of important natural areas and critical biodiversity lands.</u>





Protection of Historic & Cultural Resources

Much like our natural resources, the cultural and historic artifacts of our community help to define the rural character of Georgia. These examples are fragile and fleeting, and it is important that we work to maintain them as a reminder of our past. Once they are gone, they cannot be bought back.

GOAL 00

To encourage **Ensure** that Georgia's noteworthy historic and **scenic** cultural resources remain intact.



Roadway Maintenance and Safety

Improving roadway maintenance and safety is a common desire of local residents today. This topic was ranked in the survey among the highest priorities for the Town of Georgia to work on in the coming years. The winter maintenance and plowing of both state and town roads ranked reasonably well in the survey, with a majority of respondents having a favorable opinion on the level of service which is provided. This was followed by the clearing of right-of-ways, mowing and ditching along both state and town roads, which received more mixed reviews. However, the level of service paving and repairing roads ranked the lowest among the topic of roadway maintenance overall, and appears to be



an area for improvement. In general, residents had a slightly more favorable view of the state roadway upkeep compared to the town, which would seem to support the notion that more could be done to keep the local roads in shape. In particular, residents noted that there were some unpaved roads which should be considered for paving, potholes which were in need of repair, and that it sometimes takes too long for mowed roadside materials to be cleaned up. Bicycling or walking along the roadways is sometimes a cause for concern, with narrow shoulders and potholes creating obstacles. The town should look for ways where this service could be improved in order to provide for a safe, efficient and cost-effective transportation network.

GOAL 00

Work to improve roadway maintenance.

GOAL 00

~~To~~ Provide a safe, efficient, cost effective transportation network to meet the varied needs of the residents of the Town.

Police and Law Enforcement

The need to increase overall police presence and law enforcement was a popular topic for people during the public outreach process. In a ranking of various municipal services, this topic was rated as the most unfavorable overall among respondents, and was identified as the third highest priority for the town to address. Several people noted that the speed limits on local roads are not being enforced adequately, and that additional police coverage in general should be provided before the town expands with additional commercial or residential development.

Unfortunately, this service is outside the direct control of the town, which must rely on outside support from the County Sheriff and State Police through contract agreements. Attempts to negotiate additional service in the past have been stymied due to a current lack of available manpower to cover all of the service areas needed in the region, but it is clear that a resolution to this issue must be found. The town should work to identify ways in which it may be able to secure better support from the County Sheriff and State Police.

GOAL 00

Seek ways to improve local police and law enforcement coverage within the town.

Cellular and Internet Coverage

The availability of local cellular and internet coverage continues to improve technologies and expand throughout the region, however it remains lacking in some areas and can be spotty or inconsistent. In the community survey, a majority of people felt that current high-speed internet service was adequate for their daily needs, while most felt that current cellular service was inadequate. Overall, the improvement of these combined services ranked 4th in terms of town priorities in the community survey. The private service providers who supply this technology naturally prioritize population centers which more efficiently provide coverage to many people, and as a result more rural areas such as Georgia receive less attention. However, these technologies remain increasingly important for the growth of local businesses, home occupations as well as safety and convenience. The expansion of cellular service coverage in particular needs to be balanced with the desire to maintain our natural rural and scenic countryside. Similar to police presence, this service is outside the direct control of the municipality, however the town should continue to work to influence and lobby for improved and more consistent communications services while mitigating the potential negative impacts it may have on the Vermont landscape.

GOAL 00	Continue to expand local availability of cellular and high-speed Internet communications services.
GOAL 00	Seek ways to mitigate potential negative visual impacts of cellular towers on the scenic landscape.

Municipal Government & Communication

Throughout the public outreach process, there were comments received about the need for improved communication between the municipality and local residents. People noted that they weren't often aware of what was happening in town, had missed announcements, or felt that better transparency was needed. Town Office communication and information generally received an unfavorable rating in the community survey, and addressing this issue was ranked as the 5th most important priority for the town. Public comments on this topic ranged from a need for more mailed notices/newsletters, use of local newspapers, more reliance on online/electronic notices, and a general distrust of local government and decision making. Some people were not aware that the town has an official Facebook page, others felt that the Facebook page was not utilized well enough, and others felt there was a need for mailed/paper announcements since they do not use social media. A newly redesigned and updated town website was launched shortly before the community survey was conducted, and this update addressed several of the commonly requested improvements—such as the ability to sign up for email announcements—however many were not aware of this. A portion of the communications issue





is apparently a lack of awareness of the media sources available, however there is still room for improved communication methods. While it is true that some residents would prefer mailed notices or newsletters, printing and mailing incurs additional expense on the town. There is no denying the cost-savings, reach and convenience which online-digital media can provide. Therefore, the town should develop a strategy to improve both digital and paper communication methods, and launch an educational campaign to make the public aware of how it will be used and the different media sources available. This should be done to both improve municipal communication and begin to address concerns regarding transparency.

GOAL 00

Improve municipal communication methods with the public, including notices, announcements and transparency policies.

GOAL 00

Conduct municipal duties and decision-making in a manner which is fair, ethical, transparent and in the interest of the overall population.

GOAL 00

Update land use regulations to comply with this plan, including diversified housing, smart growth principles, emerging uses and resolving outdated or confusing standards or code organization.



Healthy Tax Base

Each town must find a balance between the tax revenue it collects from commercial, industrial, agricultural and residential land uses, and the cost of providing municipal services to those uses. As new development and growth occurs in town, it generates additional revenue, however it also requires more servicing and cost to the town. Generally speaking, commercial, industrial and agricultural operations tend to be more profitable to municipalities because they require relatively little work to service. Residential uses, on the other hand, have traditionally been less profitable for a variety of reasons. Much of this was due to their impact on local schools and school taxes, however this impact is much more complicated to quantify locally since Act 60 was enacted and schools began to get funded through a statewide pool. Residential uses are also often spread out across an entire town, requiring a large and inefficient area for the municipality to service compared to commercial centers.

Maintaining the right balance of growth and land uses to keep taxes low is a moving target, however the right amount of commercial/industrial development can potentially provide the town with sufficient tax revenue that they can keep residential taxes relatively low. This is the goal of increasing revenues to support a healthy tax base. In the community survey, respondents indicated that increasing tax revenue to maintain a healthy tax base was among the top four most important considerations in managing future growth and



[Note: Need to complete update on tax burden and land use data for more insight to complete this section]

development, after protecting local character and natural resources. It was also identified as the 6th-ranked priority in overall town goals. Respondents also indicated a preference in attracting more industrial and commercial growth over residential.

The 2017 Town Plan noted that until the longer-term effects of Act 60 on land use profitability are better understood, big picture land-use decisions should be postponed. Another consideration is that since the adoption of Act 60, municipalities have seen more muted financial benefits to local economic development. Going forward, the town needs to find the appropriate mix of land uses and development to support a balanced tax base, and currently a focus on growth in the industrial and commercial sectors, with continued preservation of agricultural operations, is most likely to provide the best financial benefits to the town.

The town should continue to diversify the nonresidential land uses in the area, particularly in South Village where it has an opportunity to create a special destination that could be an attractive place to work, shop and live. Because of its location along major travel corridors, the South Village and industrial areas represent the best location to focus future economic growth. If the South Village area can be successfully shaped into the walkable “traditional village downtown” it has been envisioned as instead of an average commercial strip, the town could be well positioned to create a high-value location which would help support it financially. This growth needs to be measured however to stay in check with the ability of the town and local road network to handle it.



GOAL 00	To e Encourage the development and expansion of appropriate, <u>diverse</u> and compatible industry and business in the town.
GOAL 00	To m Maintain a sound fiscal balance for the town, to encourage reasonable, functional, orderly development of facilities, utilities and services, and to promote the health of agriculture while providing a stable economic base for the other sectors of the economy.
GOAL 00	Development and growth in Georgia should occur at a rate which can be accommodated by reasonable expansion and/or improvement of facilities and services.
GOAL 00	Regulation of land development in Georgia should not negatively impact the availability of safe and affordable child care <u>and adult care services</u> .
GOAL 00	To b Broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities for all ages, sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of current and future residents.
GOAL 00	<u>Strengthen and support existing local agricultural industries.</u>

Housing

Nationwide, our country is experiencing a significant issue where housing has been in short supply, and is becoming increasingly unaffordable. This problem is particularly acute with the lack of available “long-term” rentals for people who aren’t yet ready or able to buy. The Town of Georgia is not immune to this phenomena. Data in Part II of this plan illustrates a continued decline in the number of rental properties, a growing lack of diversity on housing types, and home prices which are rising faster than the surrounding region. This is reflected in the community survey where a majority of respondents felt that the types of housing needed in Georgia were not available for people, and a larger majority felt they were not affordable. The current lack of diversity in the local housing stock is creating a landscape where younger people and families cannot afford to live here, including local workers and seniors looking to age-in-place.

The town has an obligation and self-interest to address this issue, however public support for new housing in Georgia is extremely low. Attracting additional residential growth or affordable rental properties scored at the bottom of importance for managing future growth in the community survey, and ranked last in terms of overall town priorities. Residential growth is still going to occur however, and we have some control over how it may happen.

The town should address these housing needs by allowing more variety in the types of housing which are allowed, with careful consideration as to where they are each appropriate. Some of this needed variety been recently mandated by the passage of the Vermont State “HOME” Act of 2023 (see sidebar) which will open up some options on a town-wide level. Additional, denser housing types such as apartments, senior apartments, senior living and cottage courts are also still needed. These are more appropriately located in the already established hamlet and development areas of South Village and Georgia Center in order to help preserve and protect the rural character of the remainder of town.



2023 Vermont HOME Act

The “Housing Opportunities Made for Everyone” (HOME) Act was enacted by the State of Vermont in 2023. This Act amends state law regarding planning and development, Act 250 and other laws to help enable new housing opportunities to address the housing crisis. This Act calls on local municipalities to address housing affordability through a variety of mechanisms, including allowing 2-family duplexes in any district where single-family homes are permitted, allowing Accessory Dwelling Units in all districts where single-family homes are permitted, and allowing small multi-family apartments (3-4 units) in any area served by municipal water and sewer.

GOAL 00	To achieve <u>Allow for a more balanced and diverse</u> mix of housing types that meets the needs of Georgia’s population at every stage of life.
GOAL 00	GOAL: To e nsure that safe, sanitary and adequate housing is available and affordable for Georgia residents.
GOAL 00	<u>Utilize the development potential of the South Village area to accommodate denser housing options where infrastructure is able to support it while protecting the rural areas of the town.</u>



South Village

South Village represents the core commercial area for the Town of Georgia. Located at the intersection of Route 7, Route xxx and Interstate I-89, it is a well positioned and logical place to focus future economic growth which will help to support the town financially. Focusing growth in this limited area of town would help to protect the more rural areas from much of the commercial sprawl which often takes over these travel corridors. The town has the opportunity to help shape this area into something much more inviting than the average strip development that is found in many other towns. This area has been envisioned as something different—a walkable mixed-use “traditional downtown village”—which could make it a very attractive and financially sound asset to the town. Multiple planning and visioning studies for South Village have depicted how it could work, with tree-lined streets, two and three-story shops and offices and attractive greenspace creating a welcome destination to live, work and shop.

Despite its high potential, the vision for this area has not yet been realized. Today the corridor remains an otherwise unremarkable commercial strip along Route 7 just off the highway. One reason has been that some of the provisions in the new zoning for the South Village did not align well with developers interest or a post-covid real estate market. Constructing multi-story development is more complicated, and demand for retail and office space has been in steady decline. The major stumbling block which has been holding back development

interest in South Village is the lack of water and sewer service required to sustain the type of redevelopment which is envisioned here, including support for multi-story construction and fire suppression systems. The town has been unable to get this area designated by the state as an official “village center” because there is limited evidence that it was historically an older hamlet settlement. A village center designation for this area would qualify it for a number of grant funding programs which would greatly enable the desired vision for South Village to be realized, particularly the development of municipal water and sewer. Water and sewer service here is likely necessary to attract and enable the creation of a more walkable downtown village.

Without the introduction of water and sewer service, the South Village corridor will most likely continue to slowly develop as an average commercial strip with single-story standalone chain businesses, much as it is today. This would represent a missed opportunity to create a more attractive, welcoming and profitable destination to financially support the town.

Many local residents have mixed feelings about future development in this location. The community survey indicated South Village was the most appropriate location for additional commercial development to help support the tax base, and there was moderate support for the creation of water and sewer services depending on how it would be paid for. There are however valid concerns about current traffic conditions. The Route 7 corridor often gets backed-up with traffic congestion, and the public is wary of inviting more growth here if it will only make the traffic conditions worse. State VTrans is responsible for these roadways and the highway interchanges which are at issue, and is currently working on a redesign which should alleviate the congestion and provide some room for growth. In order for South Village to be improved, the town must continue to work with the state to resolve the traffic issues and find adequate funding solutions for water and sewer.

Given that the demand for traditional retail and office space has been in decline, the town should position itself to attract other markets. The service industry and food service industry still remain in relatively high demand. Public input showed that there is a strong desire for local dining options, particularly a casual restaurant, bakery/coffee shop and a take-out restaurant. Child care and other daycare services are also in high demand. Recreational rentals for bikes, canoes or kayaks could be very popular as well. Georgia residents do not want to see any fast-food/chain/drive-thru type restaurants, and this aligns well with the desired future vision for South Village. Lastly, reasonably priced housing is in extremely high demand right now, and could be integrated into new development proposals as part of rear-lot or second story designs. The town should carefully take the time to ensure that future growth in the South Village area lives up to the high potential that is envisioned for it, provided that traffic and municipal services are adequate provided to support it.

GOAL 00

~~To~~Concentrate residential, commercial and industrial growth in the Village Center and the South Village area to protect the Town's rural character and resources.

GOAL 00

Continue to coordinate with the State of Vermont on design improvements along Route 7, Route 104A in South Village to improve access management and traffic issues, and accommodate future growth.



2022 Vermont Energy Plan

The "Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan" was developed in 2022 providing goals and strategies for energy adequacy, reliability, security and affordability. This plan sets statewide goals to meet 25% of our energy needs from renewable sources by the year 2025, 45% by the year 2035, and 90% by the year 2050.

Energy, Sustainability and Resilience

Many communities are working today to try to address the growing issues of climate change, increased sustainability, energy independence and storm resilience. At a time when severe weather events appear to be more prevalent and destructive, finding alternative sources of energy is prudent to make long-term changes in our behavior and provide short-term backup plans. In general, these efforts seek to conserve energy use, reduce reliance on foreign energy sources, and improve the environment with less energy pollution. Public input during the development of this plan showed that there was very strong support for the town to take an active role in leading or supporting sustainable energy solutions. This included energy and fuel reductions at the municipal level, switching to cleaner energy solutions, as well as providing support to private homeowners and businesses who wanted to pursue similar efforts.

Georgia is not alone in identifying the benefits and needs of taking such steps. The Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan was recently updated to outline the need for more sustainable energy sources, providing ambitious statewide goals for energy independence (see sidebar). A Regional Energy Plan is also developed by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission to help to achieve these milestones at a more localized level. Each municipality shares a responsibility to work toward this effort. The town should support and take an active role in addressing these issues where we are able for the long term health of the community.

There are funding sources and incentive programs available which the town [can/is] participate in, including the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP). These programs provide specific metrics, goals and funding to help municipalities adopt changes, with benefits upon certifying certain milestones. It is beneficial for the town to participate in such programs.

It is also important for the town to provide strong guidance regarding the placement of any future energy facilities. Georgia supports the development of renewable energy, provided they can be located in appropriate places in the community. Rooftop, building-integrated installations, and the use of formerly developed areas such as industrial lands, gravel pits or brownfields should be prioritized and streamlined as alternatives to systems located in otherwise rural lands. The town currently has specific standards to help avoid larger-scale energy generation systems from adversely affecting sensitive areas such as scenic viewsheds, primary agricultural soils, environmentally sensitive areas, farms, and forests. These areas must be avoided where they would adversely impact our natural systems or rural community character, and these standards should be periodically updated to ensure they are sufficient to do so.

Lastly, our community should be vigilant in preparing for and mitigating the potential effects of severe weather and other hazards. The continued update of our local Hazard Mitigation Plan and Emergency Preparedness Plan is necessary to address our changing times, and can save money, lives and unnecessary disruptions to our way of life.

GOAL 00	To promote the use of renewable energy sources. <u>Support the goals of the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan by working to promote and pursue sustainable energy solutions for all town operations, including but not limited to reduced energy and fossil fuel consumption, geothermal systems, heat exchangers, solar and wind energy systems.</u>
GOAL 00	<u>Support the goals of the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan by working to encourage and support the use of sustainable energy solutions by local homeowners and businesses.</u>
GOAL 00	Public utilities and services should be enhanced in ways that improve economic development opportunities and quality of life, but that do not jeopardize public health, the environment or scenic resources.
GOAL 00	To <u>e</u> nsure that Georgia is a flood resilient community.
GOAL 00	<u>Prepare for emergency contingencies and work to limit their potential impact on local citizens, services and infrastructure.</u>



Recreation & Quality of Life

The Town of Georgia provides a variety of outdoor recreational spaces, events, trails and public lands which contribute to our enjoyment of the area. Among the most requested community amenities were additional off-road recreational walking/biking trails; refurbished or improved facilities at Georgia beach; more activities or facilities for local youth; and new activities or uses at Georgia Beach. Public input during this planning process suggested that while upgrades to some public amenities were desired, residents often wanted to see our existing parks fully maintained before additional new features were considered. Such upgrades may need to be addressed slowly over time as the town has sufficient resources to support it. It was also noted that the full variety of existing trails and public lands may not be generally well known to some residents.

A wider variety of multi-modal transportation alternatives provides a community with improved accessibility as well as active recreation and exercise options that can improve our health and reduce energy use. Sidewalks, bike lanes, wider road shoulders and multi-purpose paths were desired by many residents, particularly along Georgia Shore Road. In the long-term, the town may want to consider the development of a bike and pedestrian trails feasibility study to plan for prioritized connections which help link together missing gaps in an overall network. Ideally, these connections should be coordinated with adjacent municipalities for both on and off-road improvements.

The costs and maintenance associated with creating other potential facilities, such as new youth and senior centers, playgrounds, or multi-purpose gathering spaces is a concern. Residents noted that many such features can be found in adjacent communities. Instead of taking on the burden of providing such features ourselves, the Town of Georgia would be better suited to proactively reaching out to adjacent municipalities and discussing a strategy of shared facilities where each community provides some of what is needed, but not all.

This approach would allow the town to be able to focus more of its effort and funding on proper upkeep of existing facilities, and keeping the town well cared for. The Town of Georgia is an example of natural scenic beauty. It is in the best interest for our quality of life to maintain this scenic quality and keep our town looking attractive and welcoming for all.

- GOAL 00** *Work toward the diversification of the local transportation network to include multi-modal options of pedestrian sidewalks, on and off-street bike paths, public transit and interconnectivity with local trail systems as growth occurs.*
- GOAL 00** *Coordinate with adjacent municipalities on long-term growth management, road network and multi-modal connections which may improve connectivity between communities.*
- GOAL 00** *Continue to maintain and expand recreational opportunities throughout the town which contribute to a high quality of life, as the town has capacity to maintain them.*
- GOAL 00** *Keep the Town of Georgia a beautiful community by encouraging and educating commercial and residential property owners regarding proper maintenance and upkeep of their property.*

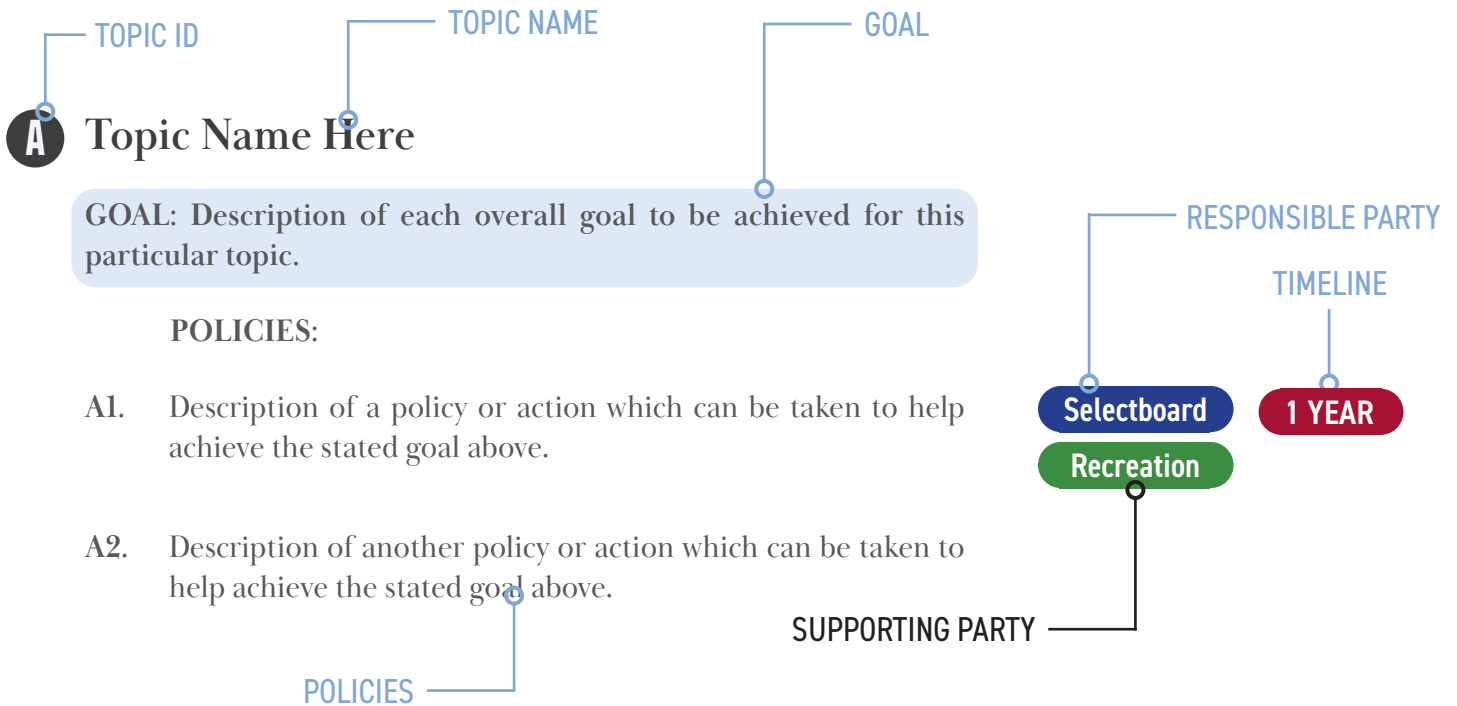


PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

*To Be Completed Once Goals and Policies
are Finalized*

Goals & Policies Legend

The Goals and Policies of this plan are organized by topic as shown in the example below. For each numbered policy identified, the primary “Responsible Party” for its implementation is listed first, followed by any supporting party. Each numbered policy is also given a timeline for it to be completed.



PARTIES RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Selectboard	Town Selectboard	Town Staff	Town Staff
Planning Com	Planning Commission	Historic	Historical Society
Zoning	Zoning Administrator	Conservation	Conservation Commission
DRB	Development Review Board	Library	Library Board
Recreation	Recreation Department	Private	Private Sector / Citizens
Public Works	Public Works		

TIMELINES

- 1 YEAR**
- 2 YEARS**
- 3 YEARS**
- 4 YEARS**
- EACH YEAR**
- SPRING**
- ONGOING**

Goals & Policies

The following pages list the goals and policies of this Town Plan. Many of the policies were developed as part of past town plans and have been carried forward to this 2024 update because they continue to be relevant. Other goals and policies are new, reflecting newly identified planning goals.

A Historic & Scenic Cultural Resources

GOAL: ~~To encourage~~ **Ensure** that Georgia’s noteworthy historic and **scenic** cultural resources remain intact.

POLICIES:

- | | | | |
|-----|---|--------------------------|---------|
| A1. | Places of outstanding historical, educational or scenic cultural value shall be protected from development that would unreasonably impair their character or quality. | Planning Com | ONGOING |
| A2. | Encourage the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic structures. | Planning Com
Historic | ONGOING |
| A3. | To encourage innovation in design and layout of development so that the visual impact can be minimized. | Planning Com | ONGOING |
| A4. | To encourage the use of vegetative buffers and other screening methods to reduce the visual impact of development. | Planning Com
Zoning | ONGOING |
| A5. | Work with the Vermont Department of Historic Preservation to assess the current Historic Sites and Structures Survey and determine if additional sites or structures should be added. | Planning Com | 2 YEARS |
| A6. | <u>Utilize, where possible, names which reference local historic elements in the vicinity when considering the naming of a new road.</u> | Selectboard
Historic | ONGOING |

Goals & Policies

B Scenic & Natural Resources, Continued

B Scenic & Natural Resources

GOAL: ~~To maintain, improve, and p~~Protect the quality of Georgia's water resources, including groundwater and surface water.

B1. Following the use of required agricultural practices and best management practice is essential to protect water resources. Accepted forestry practices and/or best management practices are encouraged as a way to protect water resources.

B2. Future development near surface waters should be low density and low impact.

DRB
Planning Com
ONGOING

B3. As much as reasonably possible, streams, ponds, rivers, and wetlands should be maintained in a natural state and protected from pollutants so they can provide their natural functions. Buffer ~~strips~~ areas shall be encouraged so as to protect these natural functions.

DRB
Planning Com
ONGOING

B4. Consider impacts to Public Source Water Protection during the development review process.

DRB
ONGOING

B5. Development shall be prohibited on wetlands and hydric soils.

DRB
ONGOING

B6. Development within shoreland and streambank areas shall, where reasonable, maintain existing vegetation, prevent soil erosion, prevent pollution of the water body, and be set back in accordance with established buffers so as not to detract from the natural beauty or cause harm to the environment.

DRB
Planning Com
ONGOING

B7. Encourage the use of naturalized stormwater methods in future site plan development which is in harmony with the Vermont landscape, such as rain gardens, bioswales and retention ponds.

DRB
ONGOING

B8. *MS4 - Stormwater Management policies?*

DRB
ONGOING

Goals & Policies

B Scenic & Natural Resources, Continued

GOAL: Protect fragile, unique and sensitive **areas** natural resources, including those which contribute to Vermont’s high priority inventory for ecological integrity.

B9. Buffer **strips** areas shall be encouraged to prevent harmful effects of development from affecting these areas.

DRB

ONGOING

GOAL: Protect the existing open spaces, agricultural lands and scenic views which define Georgia’s rural character.

B10. Investigate regulatory alternatives for protecting the view of Lake Champlain along Georgia Shore Road which balances the protection of the viewshed with private property owner rights.

Planning Com

4 YEARS

Selectboard

B11. Conduct a study of specific scenic resources and viewsheds within the town to identify locations and potential protection options.

Planning Com

4 YEARS

Selectboard

B12. Consider requiring a conservation/cluster subdivision design for all [major/minor] subdivision and Planned Unit Development (PUD) proposals on agricultural lands. [For discussion - you already seem to require some form of clustering for PUDs?]

Planning Com

3 YEARS

Selectboard

B13. Site planning should try to take into consideration the preservation of unique or sensitive site features such as old growth trees, historic stone walls, hedgerows, streams, viewsheds and similar elements to design with the land.

DRB

ONGOING

GOAL: ~~To m~~**M**aintain and improve the quality of important soils, such as agriculture and forestry soils, when considering the future development of the town.

B14. The Town shall require proof of a State wastewater permit as a condition of local Zoning Permits, where applicable.

DRB

ONGOING

Zoning

B15. Slopes in excess of 8% may be highly subject to erosion, depending on soil type, and consideration should be given to the use of acceptable soil erosion control measures. Vegetative cover shall be established and maintained after construction.

DRB

ONGOING

Goals & Policies

B Scenic & Natural Resources, Continued

B16. Development on poorly drained soils shall be avoided.	DRB	ONGOING
B17. Following the use of required agricultural practices and best management practice is essential to protect valuable soil and other resource. Accepted forestry practices and/or best management practices are encouraged as a way to protect valuable soil and other resources. <i>[Mostly duplicate with policy B1 - remove?]</i>		
B18. Impacts to prime agricultural soils due to land development shall be mitigated to ensure the future viability of agricultural uses in Georgia.	DRB	ONGOING
<p>GOAL: To protect private and public investment and maintain the natural environment by considering topography and geology when determining land use.</p>		
B19. Geologic factors should be considered in planning to insure the proper use of land.	DRB	ONGOING
B20. Development on ridges and hilltops shall be discouraged and their adverse aesthetic and environmental impacts should be prevented.	DRB	ONGOING
B21. Site modifications necessary for a particular project should be allowed but there should be no substantial change to natural drainage ways.	DRB	ONGOING
B22. Land development on slopes in excess of 25% shall be prohibited and every effort shall be made to maintain a suitable cover of natural vegetation to reduce erosion.	DRB	ONGOING
B23. Development shall be performed so as to prevent runoff and soil erosion. Vegetative cover should be maintained or established and erosion control measures shall be undertaken at the time of construction.	DRB	ONGOING
B24. <u>Consider the development of design guidelines for future development.</u>	<p>Planning Com</p> <p>Selectboard</p>	3 YEARS

Goals & Policies

B Scenic & Natural Resources, Continued

GOAL: To pProtect local earth resources until needed for future use for the benefit of the community; and to minimize the impacts of extraction on the environment.

B25. Extraction of earth resources should be permitted when it has been demonstrated that the activity will not have an undue impact on the Town of Georgia and its residents.

Planning Com
DRB

ONGOING

B26. All proposed earth extractions shall have a plan for the reclamation of the site, acceptable to the Planning Commission, to ensure the wise use of resources. Guarantees may be required of the developer to assure that the site is properly reclaimed.

Planning Com
DRB

ONGOING

GOAL: To eConsider climatic factors and to protect the quality of the air when planning for future development.

B27. Development which degrades air quality should be strongly discouraged.

DRB

ONGOING

GOAL: To eEnsure that Georgia is a flood resilient community.

B28. Development in identified flood hazard and river corridor areas shall be prohibited in all but rare, specifically defined circumstances to ensure that the impacts of flooding and fluvial erosion are not exacerbated.

DRB

ONGOING

B29. Protect and restore floodplains and river corridors that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.

DRB

ONGOING

B30. Support implementation of high priority projects as identified in the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Selectboard
Planning Com

ONGOING

B31. Encourage flood emergency preparedness and response planning.

Selectboard
Planning Com

ONGOING

Goals & Policies

C Economic Development, Growth & Taxes

C Economic Development, Growth & Taxes

GOAL: ~~To~~ encourage the development and expansion of appropriate, diverse and compatible industry and business in the town.

C1. To promote a diversified and stable economy by encouraging compatible industrial and commercial development and the continuation of existing industries, small businesses and home occupations.

Planning Com

ONGOING

Selectboard

C2. To provide necessary infrastructure to accommodate more intensive land uses (such as industrial and commercial) within areas designated for such growth. To avoid those areas where infrastructure is not available, the land will not support the use, or there would be a conflict with present land uses.

Selectboard

ONGOING

Planning Com

C3. When planning for commercial and industrial development, encourage such development to serve the public good in terms of employment, revenue, environmental quality, health and safety, and services.

Planning Com

ONGOING

C4. To encourage home occupations that are compatible with the surrounding areas through specific standards in the zoning bylaws.

Planning Com

ONGOING

C5. To enhance and protect the vitality of Villages and population centers as important community assets.

Planning Com

ONGOING

C6. Commercial and industrial development shall not place an undue burden on the town in terms of services and facilities required from their development and its associated impacts.

Planning Com

ONGOING

DRB

cccccccccccc

Goals & Policies

C Economic Development, Growth & Taxes, Continued

GOAL: ~~To~~ **M**aintain a sound fiscal balance for the town, to encourage reasonable, functional, orderly development of facilities, utilities and services, and to promote the health of agriculture while providing a stable economic base for the other sectors of the economy.

- | | | | |
|------|--|-----------------------------|-----------|
| C7. | Review the Capital Budget and Program and revise consistent with the adopted Capital Facilities and Equipment Impact Fee Ordinance. | Selectboard | EACH YEAR |
| C8. | The location, form, and rate of growth must not exceed the ability of the residents of the town to pay for the necessary services and facilities required from that growth but must be sufficient to mitigate the increasing cost of services. | Planning Com
Selectboard | ONGOING |
| C9. | Development should occur based on projected need, availability of revenues to provide services, and recognition of the limits of human, financial, and natural resources. | Planning Com
DRB | ONGOING |
| C10. | Development of infrastructure shall not significantly impact natural or human resources outlined in this plan unless there is a demonstrated public need. | Selectboard
Planning Com | ONGOING |
| C11. | Growth shall be guided toward locations which can make use of existing services and facilities. | Planning Com | ONGOING |

Goals & Policies

D Housing

D Housing

GOAL: ~~To achieve~~ Allow for a more balanced and diverse mix of housing types that meets the needs of Georgia's population at every stage of life.

D1. ~~Provide~~ Allow for a diversity of housing types and ownership styles that meets the needs of Georgia residents, including accessory dwelling units, smaller starter homes, two family duplexes, senior apartments, senior housing, and year-round rental apartments.

Planning Com

1 YEAR

Selectboard

D2. ~~To encourage~~ the provision of more affordable affordably accessible housing through planning for appropriately sized lots, accessory apartments, and clustered developments which provide denser and more efficient use of land.

Planning Com

1 YEAR

Selectboard

D3. Allow for a more streamlined review and approval processes for needed housing types including accessory dwelling units and two family duplexes.

Planning Com

1 YEAR

Selectboard

GOAL: ~~To ensure~~ that safe, sanitary and adequate housing is available and affordable for Georgia residents.

D4. Where possible, rehabilitate existing housing through the use of existing programs or volunteer efforts, such as Habitat for Humanity.

Planning Com

ONGOING

Private

D5. Ensure that residential development does not exceed the ability of the community to provide services and facilities for such development.

Planning Com

ONGOING

DRB

D6. Design and phase development so as to minimize impacts on municipal services, local tax burden and important resources.

DRB

ONGOING

D7. Continue to monitor the growth of short-term rentals and their potential impacts on the community.

Planning Com

EACH YEAR

Selectboard

Goals & Policies

D Housing, Continued

GOAL: Utilize the development potential of the South Village area to accommodate denser housing options where infrastructure is able to support it while protecting the rural areas of the town.

D8. Continue to pursue the development of centralized water and sewer services in the South Village to support new growth and housing options.

Selectboard

4 YEARS

Town Staff

D9. Encourage Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) that allow for clustered housing and less infrastructure to reduce the cost and other impacts of housing development.

DRB

ONGOING

Planning Com

Goals & Policies

E Transportation

E Transportation

GOAL: Work to improve roadway maintenance.

E1. Review roadway maintenance procedures to identify potential new strategies or methods which would improve the quality and efficiency of road maintenance, particularly with regard to roadway paving, repair and the mowing and ditching of right-of-ways.

Public Works

EACH YEAR

Selectboard

GOAL: Continue to coordinate with the State of Vermont on design improvements along Route 7, Route 104A in South Village to improve access management and traffic issues, and accommodate future growth.

E2. ~~The Town will w~~Work cooperatively with the state to develop a transportation network that meets both state and local needs. ~~The Town will p~~Play an active role in the planning of new improvements proposed by the state which might affect Georgia. Such plans shall conform to the overall goals and policies of the Town.

Planning Com

ONGOING

GOAL: ~~To p~~Provide a safe, efficient, cost effective transportation network to meet the varied needs of the residents of the Town.

E3. Development of roads shall meet specified standards as set forth by the Selectboard. Roads will be accepted into the Town highway system only after meeting these requirements and a finding that it is in the public good to do so. Developers shall bear all costs associated with acceptance of roads.

Public Works

ONGOING

Selectboard

E4. Highway access for the purpose of development shall be strictly controlled on Rural Principal and Rural Minor Arterial Roads. Wherever possible, lots will be required to provide one access/egress point onto said highways which shall serve the entire parcel. Multiple curb cuts are strongly discouraged.

DRB

ONGOING

E5. To plan development so as to avoid the need for major public investment in transportation networks. Particular regard shall be

Goals & Policies

E Transportation, Continued

given to impacts on the carrying capacity of transportation networks affected by the development. Developers will be required to pay for the costs of necessary improvements.

- E6. To support alternative forms of transportation such as bike and pedestrian paths or lanes, particularly in conjunction with new development or road projects, and to connect these systems, where possible, to form a comprehensive network.
- E7. Public and private roads shall not be constructed or extended into fragile, unique, and sensitive area, as designated by this plan, when it would lead to the destruction or degradation of those resources.

GOAL: Work toward the diversification of the local transportation network to include multi-modal options of pedestrian sidewalks, on and off-street bike paths, public transit and interconnectivity with local trail systems as growth occurs.

- E8. Consider pursuing grant funding for a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to provide short and long-term priorities for transportation

Selectboard
Planning Com

3 YEARS

GOAL: Coordinate with adjacent municipalities on long-term growth management, road network and mulit-modal connections which may improve connectivity between communities.

Goals & Policies

F Town Services & Infrastructure

F Town Services & Infrastructure

GOAL: Seek ways to improve local police and law enforcement coverage within the town.

F1. Text

GOAL: Conduct municipal duties and decision-making in a manner which is fair, ethical, transparent and in the interest of the overall population.

F2. Consider adoption of a formal ethics policy or statement which reaffirms local government's commitment to ethical and fair conduct and maintains the trust of the community.

F3. Maintain and uphold the policy which prohibits discrimination against persons based on their race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age or disability.

GOAL: Improve municipal communication methods with the public, including notices, announcements and transparency policies.

F4. Adopt a policy for all announcements and notices which uses a strategic and cost-effective combination of paper and electronic media. Develop a campaign to increase public awareness of the various sources for town announcements and notices.)

GOAL: Development and growth in Georgia should occur at a rate which can be accommodated by reasonable expansion and/or improvement of facilities and services.

F5. Review projects based on their individual impact, as well as their conformance with the overall rate of growth and facility/service capability planned for the town.

F6. Periodically review the efficiency of local services to determine if additional resources may be needed to accommodate additional growth, and report conditions to the Town Selectboard and

Goals & Policies

F Town Services and Infrastructure, Continued

Planning Commission so that they are aware of current limitations.

- F7. Continue to pursue the development of a centralized water and sewer system in South Village to accommodate denser commercial and residential growth.

GOAL: Keep the Town of Georgia a beautiful community by encouraging and educating commercial and residential property owners regarding proper maintenance and upkeep of their property.

- F8. Continue to enforce the town Junk Ordinance and periodically assess its effectivity for any potential improvements.

GOAL: Continue to maintain and expand recreational opportunities throughout the town which contribute to a high quality of life.

- F9. Ensure that the town is able to maintain existing recreational facilities at the Town Beach and other before expanding with new amenities.

- F10. Consider the development of a Trails Master Plan which would identify long-term goals for on and off-road bike and trail connections, including the infill and connection of missing segments in the network.

- F11. Proactively coordinate with adjacent municipalities to plan for shared community and recreational amenities so that each community does not need to rely on constructing their own facilities.

Public utilities and services should be enhanced in ways that improve economic development opportunities and quality of life, but that do not jeopardize public health, the environment or scenic resources.

- F12. All commercial telecommunication facilities, utilities, solar and wind energy systems shall be located in appropriate areas, respecting the integrity of residential areas, aesthetic concerns, and natural resource issues. As noted elsewhere in the Plan, the protection of scenic and natural areas is very important to the Town of Georgia.

Goals & Policies

F Town Services and Infrastructure, Continued

- F13. New telecommunications facilities shall be co-located on or near existing structures, unless the Planning Commission determines that separate facilities will create less visual and aesthetic impact.
- F14. Locate facility and service improvements in existing development areas and areas that are designated for future growth.

GOAL: Continue to expand local availability of cellular and high-speed Internet communications services.

- F15. Continue to lobby and coordinate with regional service providers and groups such as the CUD Union District to upgrade and improve local cellular and high-speed Internet communications.

GOAL: Seek ways to mitigate potential negative visual impacts of cellular towers on the scenic landscape.

- F16. Promote the co-location of cellular transmission equipment and strengthen local laws to enhance visual protections.

GOAL: Prepare for emergency contingencies and work to limit their potential impact on local citizens, services and infrastructure.

- F17. Adopt a Local Emergency Operations Plan.

Selectboard

SPRING

- F18. Update the Georgia Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP)

Planning Com

RECURRING

Selectboard

Goals & Policies

G Energy

G Energy

GOAL: ~~To reduce the use of and dependence on expensive and polluting energy sources.~~

GOAL: ~~To promote energy efficient use and conservation of energy resources.~~

GOAL: ~~To promote the use of renewable energy sources.~~ Support the goals of the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan by working to promote and pursue sustainable energy solutions for all town operations, including but not limited to reduced energy and fossil fuel consumption, geothermal systems, heat exchangers, solar and wind energy systems.

G1. Consider the use of alternative energy systems, including energy costs and efficiencies, whenever upgrading or replacing out-dated systems, equipment or vehicles.

G2. Consider developing short and long term energy reduction goals for municipal operations through the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) or similar affiliations.

G3. Conduct periodic energy audits of Town buildings and vehicles.

Town Staff

ONGOING

Selectboard

GOAL: Support the goals of the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan by working to encourage and support the use of sustainable energy solutions by local homeowners and businesses.

G4. Work to reduce administrative or procedural barriers to local sustainable energy adoption, including the development of streamlined or simplified applications.

G5. Promote the use of small scale renewable energy sources.

G6. Promote educational opportunities which increase energy awareness of students, local officials and townspeople.

Goals & Policies

G Energy, Continued.

G7. Encourage the use of car and van pools, public transportation and park and rides for commuters and others.

G8. ~~Consider energy costs and energy efficiency as a criteria for the purchase of Town equipment and facilities.~~

G9. Investigate the creation of a Municipal Energy Committee.

Selectboard

1 YEAR

Goals & Policies

H Future Land Use, Continued

H Future Land Use

GOAL: Support the goals of the Vermont Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act with the conservation of important natural areas and critical biodiversity lands.

H1. Encourage the preservation of land in an agricultural, wooded or open state, particularly in areas of the town which are important scenic viewsheds and not well connected to service systems.

GOAL: ~~To~~ Concentrate residential, commercial and industrial growth in the Village Center and the South Village area to protect the Town's rural character and resources.

H2. Apply for Village Center or New Town Center designation in the South Village and Georgia Center areas to promote more compact and efficient growth.

Planning Com

Selectboard

2 YEARS

H3. ~~To~~ Avoid strip development ~~the in town~~ ~~may require~~ ~~by requesting~~ developers to use techniques such as clustering ~~to discourage strip development~~ along highway corridors. Strip development along highway corridors shall be strongly discouraged.

GOAL: Strengthen and support existing local agricultural industries.

H4. Review and revise land use regulations to reduce potential obstacles to the growth of local agricultural industries, and encourage supportive uses such as value added agricultural products, ag-related services and industry diversification.

H5. Support Vermont's "right-to-farm" statute.

H6. Support the preservation and protection of open land agricultural fields and forests through programs that encourage farming and forestry such as the current use tax program and land conservation easements.

H7. Georgia's rural landscape shall continue to be characterized by

Goals & Policies

I Future Land Use, Continued

open land agricultural fields and forests. Agriculture shall be the predominant use in the Agricultural/Rural Residential District (“AR 1”).

- H8. Recognize that important resource lands such as prime and statewide agricultural and forest soils are a unique and limited resource, which are essential for food and fiber production.
- H9. ~~Consider the impacts of livestock in medium and high density residential areas.~~

GOAL: Update land use regulations to comply with this plan, including diversified housing, smart growth principles, emerging uses and resolving outdated or confusing standards or code organization.

- H10. Use the site plan review process to encourage innovation in design and layout for improved traffic flow, pedestrian access, parking, landscaping and screening, lighting and aesthetics.

GOAL: Regulation of land development in Georgia should not negatively impact the availability of safe and affordable child care and adult care services.

- H11. Review and revise land use regulations to reduce potential obstacles to the siting and availability of childcare and adult care operations.

GOAL: ~~To~~ **B**roaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities for all ages, sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of current and future residents.

- H12. Review and revise land use regulations to reduce potential obstacles to the siting and availability of local trade school and vocational training operations.

Goals & Policies

I Other Implementation

I Other Implementation

GOAL: Update Town of Georgia Development regulations to align with latest data and recent changes in State and Federal policies.

- II. Review River Corridor Maps created by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR). Work with ANR to amend maps based on local knowledge. Consider incorporating river corridor maps and regulations into the Georgia Development Regulations.
- I2. Review current Flood Hazard Zone District standards in the Georgia Development Regulations for compliance with National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) minimum standards. Consider adopting standards higher standards for this district.
- I3. Review regulations concerning development on Class IV roads.
- I4. Investigate and consider adopting a “stretch code” for residential and commercial structures to require greater energy efficiency. The code would be integrated into the Georgia Development Regulations.
- I5. Review Georgia Development Regulations to ensure that the regulations address development and farming exempt from Required Agricultural Practices from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture.
- I6. Adopt Vermont Road and Bridge Standards each year.
- I7. Review and update the Town Road Ordinance including standards for Class IV roads.
- I8. Reevaluate and revise all town ordinances to assure conformance with the town plan.
- I9. Develop and adopt a solar facility screening ordinance enabled

Goals & Policies

I Other Implementation, Continued

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- II0. Pursue State and Federal Grant Programs to secure funding for projects that improve water quality such as shoreline stabilization and buffers.
- III. Work with NRPC to update Georgia buildout analysis.
- II2. Conduct a study of the South Village Zoning District to assess previous changes made to the zoning district in the Development Regulations. This study shall also investigate the possible future use of form-based code and/or design standards in the South Village Zoning District.
- II3. Pursue State and Federal Grant Programs to secure funding for recreational projects that are consistent with the recreational goals of the town.
- II4. Reach out to community land trusts, housing trusts, other municipalities and NRPC to learn more about obstacles to developing affordable housing and use this information to inform changes to the Plan and the bylaws.
- II5. Hold semi-annual meetings with the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment and Selectboard to coordinate the implementation of the goals, policies and implementation strategies in this Plan.
- II6. Continue the existing coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions by the Georgia Planning Commission and continue to encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process.