

IX. ENERGY

9.1 Issues

Energy is a scarce resource that should be considered in any comprehensive land use planning process. Homes and businesses use a variety of energy sources for heating -- wood, fuel oil, gas, gas, electricity, and coal. With a heating season that generally lasts seven months, it is evident that home and business energy consumption is a significant issue for everyone in the area. Substantial economic savings can be realized through energy conservation. Of course, a reduction in energy usage also reduces the production of environmental pollutants. Energy conservation can be facilitated through effective land use planning, building standards and design, and improved transportation efficiency.

The siting, design, and construction of buildings strongly influences the amount of energy required for heating and cooling, as well as the amount of electricity needed for lighting. Proper subdivision design, building orientation, construction, and landscaping provide opportunities for passive solar space and domestic hot water heating, natural lighting, and photovoltaic electricity production. Additional energy and cost savings can be realized by retrofitting existing buildings with insulation, weatherstripping, compact fluorescent lights, and efficient appliances.

The most obvious and important renewable energy resource available to Sandgate residents is wood that is obtained from the town's extensive forest lands. Many residents rely on wood as a primary fuel for heating their homes. Wind turbine generators, like those recently developed in Searsburg, represent another alternative energy technology. Sandgate's abundant water resources offer opportunities for the development of small hydroelectric facilities. The town should support efforts to research and develop these and other alternative energy resources.

The town should consider energy conservation and new technologies in the operation of the town hall and municipal vehicles. When evaluating energy options, the town should consider a number of factors: capital cost, operating and maintenance costs, safety, dependability, expected life of the technology, and environmental concerns.

In summary, the town and its residents should be mindful of energy conservation, and should objectively consider all available options for energy use. Because energy costs and technologies change frequently, the best energy strategy for Sandgate is likely to involve an intelligent and flexible mix of many energy sources.

9.2 Policies and Recommendations

1. The town should make an effort to minimize its energy consumption by using appropriate energy conservation and efficiency practices; the town should support programs that are designed to increase public awareness of energy issues and to encourage homeowners to conserve energy.
2. Major development proposals should fully and effectively address energy conservation and efficiency concerns.
3. Land use planning should be consistent with the objective of encouraging energy efficiency.
4. Renewable energy resources should be protected; Sandgate's productive forest land is an important energy resource.