

People

Key Considerations and Concerns

Population Growth

After a population boom in the 1970s and 1980s, Bolton's population growth slowed. Since 1990, the town has grown at a slow but steady rate of 1.1% annually—about 11 people every year. In 2010, Bolton's population was 1,182 people, making it one of the smallest towns in Chittenden County.

Bolton's population is projected to continue growing at this rate, reaching an estimated 1,259 to 1,385 people by 2030. Bolton's population is also very rural. In 2010, the town had a population density of 28 people/square mile, compared to 292 people/square mile in Chittenden County as a whole. Bolton's small-town feel and rural character and beauty are highly valued by its residents.

Education

Bolton children attend Smilie Memorial Elementary School from pre-kindergarten to fourth grade, Camel's Hump Middle School for grades 5-8, and Mount Mansfield High School for grades 9-12. While Bolton's population is growing slowly, enrollment at Smilie School has been on a downward trend over the last ten years. It remains to be seen whether an increase in enrollment in the 2015-2016 school year represents a new trend. Although Smilie School has less than 100 students in any given year, it plays a large role in the social fabric of Bolton. Bolton residents feel a great deal of pride in the school and feel strongly that it should remain open.

In November 2014, Bolton voted to join the newly formed Mount Mansfield Modified Union School District with Richmond, Jericho and Underhill. Though the communities had already consolidated their 5-12 grade education, MMMUSD is a single entity governing all education in the three communities, from pre-kindergarten to graduation. The most significant change caused by the merger was school governance. Rather than retaining its own school board, Bolton now has one member on the 15-member MMMUSD board. Additionally, 3 and 4 year old Bolton children now have access to half day pre-kindergarten education.

Adults in Bolton have access to a wide range of technical training opportunities, colleges, universities and community education events. Students under the age of 26 seeking post-secondary education can apply for one of the ⁵ annual Wheeler Trust Scholarships, which are administered by the town.

[CALLOUT BOX: FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE MMMUSD, CHECK OUT [THE MERGER COMMITTEE REPORT.](#)]

[CALLOUT BOX: MAKING THE CONNECTION: YOU CAN READ ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE SMILIE SCHOOL BUILDING IN THE FACILITIES SECTION (HYPERLINKED)]

Childcare

For families with working parents, quality childcare is important for the safety, wellbeing and education of their children. In Chittenden County, the majority of families rely on out-of-home-care for their youngest children, and childcare costs and availability are significant issues for them. In Chittenden County, families pay an average of more than \$19,000 a year for child care. In 2010, there were 68 children under age 5 in Bolton. As reported by Building Bright Futures in March 2016 there are 36 spots

to serve infants, toddlers and pre-school children, with 6 vacancies. There are also 9 school age capacity spots with 2 vacancies. Therefore there are only 45 spots available for a potential need of 68. When the YMCA closed its Live Y'ers after school program in 2015, capacity was reduced. Smilie families do have the option of busing their children to Richmond Elementary School for an afterschool program. While older children will have to attend afterschool care elsewhere, Smilie started participation in Part Two: The Early Years program for before and after care for preschoolers ages 3 and 4 and for kindergartners. Summer Our Community Cares Camp (OCCC) provides food and summer enrichment activities for kids in CESU, programs for grades K-6 and 7-8, and a job training program for teens as junior counselors or culinary interns. WAITING FROM INFORMATION TO INTEGRATE.

Social Services and Community Health

Bolton's rural nature is prized by its residents, and provides ample opportunities for recreational pursuits and healthy activities, but it may present challenges to aging residents or residents with disabilities. Like many towns in Vermont, Bolton's population is getting older. Between 2000 and 2010, the population of residents 65 years of age and older increased by 26%. Because of the aging nature of Bolton's population, ensuring that town residents are cared for at all stages of their lives is key.

More and more seniors feel a greater desire to age in place, placing an emphasis on home based care. Bolton's beloved rural nature may present challenges to those residents who choose to age in place. Difficult driving conditions and long distances between home and other necessities are just some of the potential challenges. There are some services that can assist with home based care, however they may not be able to meet the demand. Visiting Nurse Association services are available for Bolton residents who need occasional care. For those who cannot drive on their own, transportation to medical appointments, social events, grocery stores and more is available through the Champlain Valley Agency on Aging's Countywide Elderly and Disabled Transportation (E&D). Countywide can provide up to 4 round trips per month per person for critical care (dialysis or chemotherapy/radiation therapy), medical appointments, essential shopping, and social/personal needs. However, this service has not been utilized to its fullest extent.

Due to Bolton's small population, there are no reliable available data on the amount of poverty or food insecurity in the community. However, 28% of Smilie School students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, providing a rough indicator of food security. While Smilie School offers free and reduced lunch, no nutrition programs are available to students after school or during the summer.

Community Connection

Bolton residents are more likely to feel a sense of community with their neighborhood than the community as a whole. However, during the community engagement completed for this plan during the fall of 2015, residents revealed that they value their relationships with friends and neighbors in town, and expressed an interest in a greater sense of town-wide community. Residents with children in Smilie School find school events to be an enjoyable way to connect with community members. However, more opportunities are needed for community connection regardless of whether children are present in a household.

Goals and Objectives

GOAL: BOLTON'S POPULATION WILL CONTINUE TO GROW AT A SLOW BUT STEADY RATE.

Objective: Bolton's 5-year average population growth rate will not exceed XX% (TBD by Planning Commission).

GOAL: EVERY BOLTON RESIDENT WILL BE ABLE TO ACCESS HEALTH CARE, EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CHILDCARE.

Objective: Increase the annual number of Bolton residents visiting local senior centers and utilizing the Elderly and Disabled Transportation provided by Champlain Valley Agency on Aging.

Possible Action: Educate residents about the availability of the CVAA service by providing information on the town website and in the town offices.

Responsible Party: Town Website Administrator

Funding Source: Approximately 2 hours of volunteer time

Timeline: Completed in 2017

Objective: Maintain a high level of education for children in Bolton, such that 100% of students at Smilie School are promoted to the next grade annually and the annual percentage of students testing proficient in all subjects increases.

Objective: Increase the principal amount of the Wheeler Trust, from which the Wheeler Memorial Scholarship is drawn.

Possible Action: Seek one major donation to the fund by 2020.

Funding Source: Approximately 20 hours of volunteer time

Responsible Party: Bolton Board of Civil Authority

Objective: Increase the number of childcare spots available in Bolton or surrounding municipalities by integrating child care issues into the planning process.

Possible Action: Review the Bolton Land Use and Development Regulations to identify needed amendments to authorize quality child-care services in appropriate locations convenient to households, employment centers, and near recreation facilities. Amendments could include incentives to provide space for childcare in all types of projects.'

Responsible Party: Planning Commission

Funding Source: Approximately 20 hours of volunteer time

Timeline: See timeline for Action XX, "Bylaw Revisions"

GOAL: BOLTON RESIDENTS WILL FEEL A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY, BOTH WITHIN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS AND ACROSS NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARIES.

Objective: Increase the number of town residents who attend a town wide social or civic event every year.

Possible Action: Leverage resident interest in community building events by forming an experimental "Social Committee," which will plan and execute one town-wide event.

Responsible Party: The Economic Resource Committee will be responsible for finding volunteers for the committee. The volunteers will be responsible for planning and executing the event.

Funding Source: Business sponsorships and donations.

Timeline: One event successfully completed by the end of 2018.