

# A PRIMER TO MUNICIPAL PLANNING IN VERMONT

Municipalities are not required to adopt a plan, but the 90 percent that have chosen to must include 10 elements. These include:

- 1) A ***land use plan***
- 2) A ***transportation plan***
- 3) A ***utility and facility plan***
- 4) A ***statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources***
- 5) An ***educational facilities plan***
- 6) A ***housing element***
- 7) An ***energy plan***
- 8) A ***statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities, areas and the region***
- 9) A ***statement of objectives, policies and programs***
- 10) A recommended ***program for (plan) implementation***

# State Planning & Development Goals

It is ... the intent of the legislature that municipalities, regional planning commissions and state agencies shall engage in a continuing planning process that will further the following goals

- To establish a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions by municipalities, regional planning commissions, and state agencies.
- To encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process, and to assure that decisions shall be made at the most local level possible commensurate with their impact.
- To consider the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development for the region and the state, as well as the community in which it takes place.
- To encourage and assist municipalities to work creatively together to develop and implement plans.
- ... to further the following specific goals:

# Vermont Planning & Development Goals

- 1) **To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers surrounded by rural countryside.**
  - **Intensive residential development should be encouraged primarily in areas related to community centers, and strip development along highways should be discouraged.**
  - **Economic growth should be encouraged in locally designated growth areas,** or employed to revitalize existing village and urban centers, or both.
  
- 5) **To provide for safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems** that respect the integrity of the natural environment, including **public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.**
  - Highways, air, rail and other means of transportation should be mutually supportive, balanced and integrated.
  
- 7) **To encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources.**

# Vermont Energy Plans

An **energy plan** must include:

- **analysis of energy resources, needs, scarcities, costs and problems** within the municipality,
- a **statement of policy on the conservation of energy, including programs, such as thermal integrity standards for buildings,** to implement that policy,
- a **statement of policy on the development of renewable energy resources,**
- a **statement of policy on patterns and densities of land use likely to result in conservation of energy.**



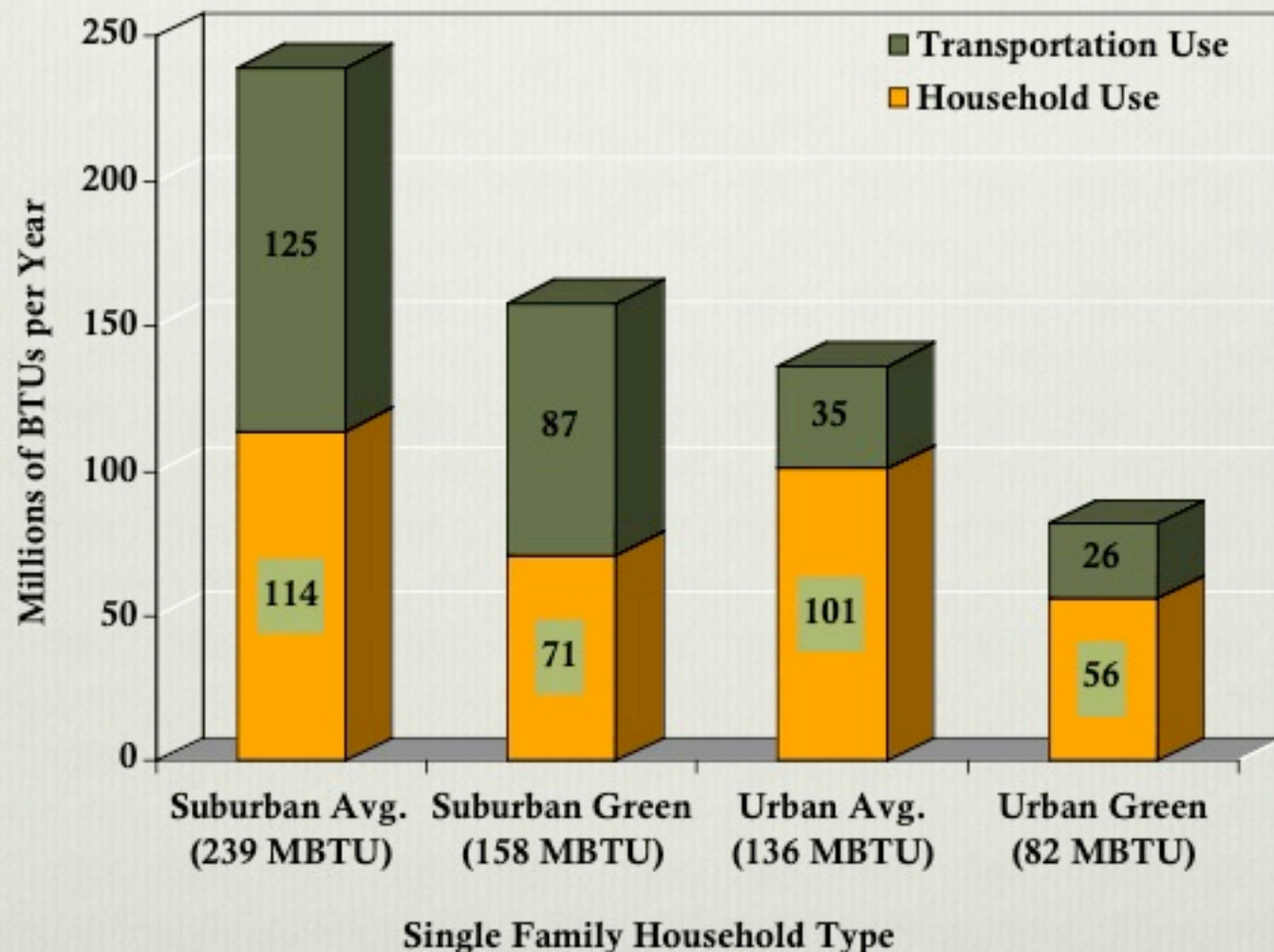
# Benefits of Adopting a Municipal Plan (that includes a strong Energy Plan)

- Requires a **comprehensive look** at the community, including the interrelatedness of issues (e.g., land use, transportation, energy and climate change).
- **Engages citizens** in the planning process -- this is a two way street that can inform the public about energy needs and challenges, and involve them in making decisions.
- Provides a structure for **analyzing and documenting current conditions and needs**, and for projecting future trends.
- Creates an opportunity to enact clear **Town policies to guide the actions of local officials** and others in a variety of settings (e.g., Act 250, Section 248, grant programs, capital budgets).
- If done properly, provides an **implementation plan** that sets forth the communities priorities, identifies specific tasks to be undertaken by various municipal (and non-municipal?) people and organizations, and therefore serves as a blueprint for greater energy independence.

# Planning for Energy Also Involves Planning for Land Use & Transportation



# Average In-Town House Outperforms Even the Greenest Sprawl House w/Hybrid Cars



# Transportation is not only Vermont's greatest source of GHG emissions, but among the state's greatest financial challenges

Per capita VMT increased nearly 11% in Vermont from 2000 to 2005 (VT ranks 6th among 50 states)

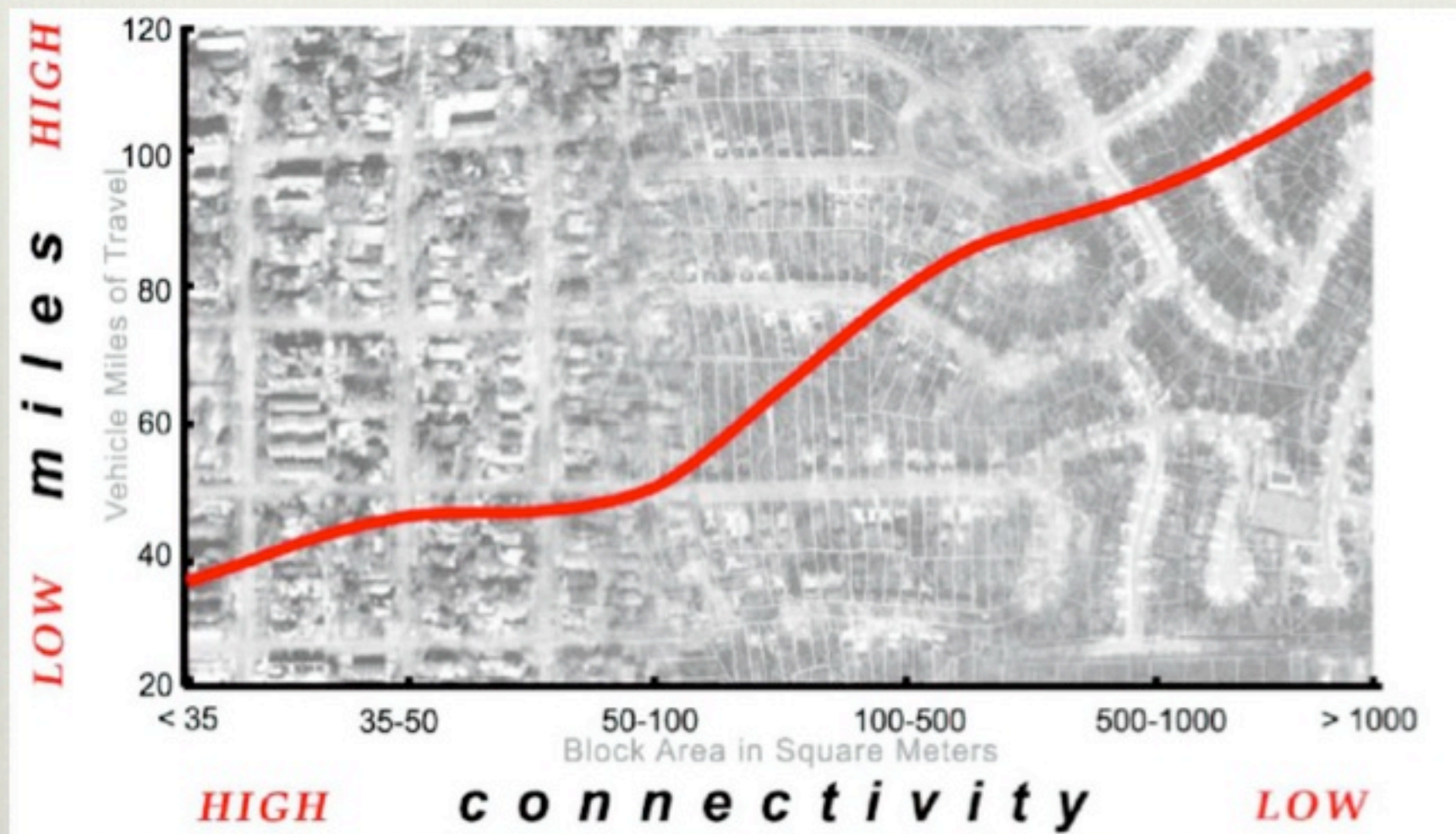
In 2000, transportation costs accounted for 18% of all household expenses in U.S.

Most families spend more on driving than health care, education, or food.

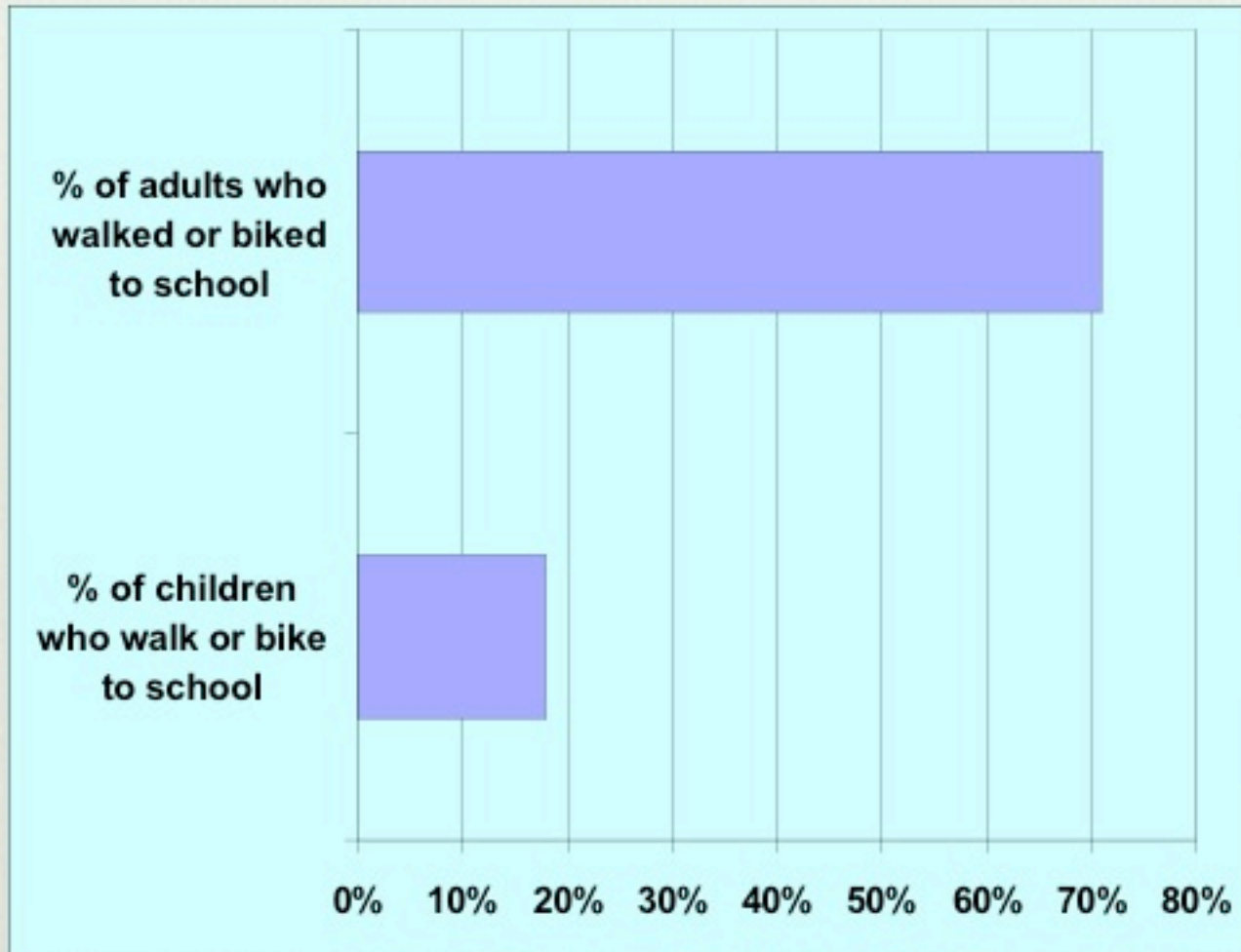
In 2005, families in the U.S. with incomes between \$20,000 and \$50,000 spent, on average, more on transportation than on housing.



# Vehicle Miles Traveled vs. Street Connectivity



# Fewer Children are Walking/Biking to School



Source: Surface Transportation Policy Project (American Attitudes  
Toward Walking and Creating Better Walking Communities, 2003)

# Think Globally (and Regionally) and Act Locally (and Regionally)

The Regional Planning Commission also adopts a plan for the region that includes the same 10 “elements” as a municipal plan, including regional energy, transportation and land use plans. Many issues, such as transit, regional land use patterns, large scale renewable energy generation are best addressed on a regional scale, through the regional planning process.



For more information or to request help with energy planning contact:

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