

Healthy Community & Wellness

Stowe's residents consistently emphasize the importance of a strong sense of community, access to nature, recreation, and the well-being of all who live and visit here. The Stowe 2050 Community Survey reaffirmed these values, highlighting the community's appreciation for social connection, outdoor recreation, housing for all income levels, educational opportunities, and a vibrant historic village. Together, these elements form the foundation of a healthy, thriving community - physically, mentally, socially, and environmentally.

A healthy and sustainable community is one where all residents and visitors, regardless of age, income, ability, background, or length of residency, can thrive in a safe, inclusive, and connected environment. Healthy communities are shaped by a combination of social, environmental, and economic factors, along with the quality of local services, infrastructure, and opportunities. When people's physical, mental, social, and environmental needs are met, both individuals and the broader community thrive. By prioritizing equity, accessibility, and inclusion, the Town can ensure that everyone is able to access the resources needed for healthy, meaningful, and connected lives. The Town is committed to the well-being of the community and will continue to incorporate health and wellness into decision-making, planning, and policy efforts.

The concept of "public interest" in local government has long been understood as protecting public health, safety, and welfare, and this principle continues to guide many municipal services, facilities, and programs. Residents and visitors benefit from a strong and growing network of local and regional health and human service organizations dedicated to promoting community well-being. Vermont law explicitly authorizes municipalities to support these programs. Under 24 V.S.A. §2691, towns may "*appropriate such sums of money as it deems necessary for the support of programs and agencies that provide social services to town residents.*" Each year, Stowe voters allocate funding to a variety of social service organizations. In FY 26, these appropriations ranged from \$420 to \$15,669. Such appropriations ensure that health, human service, and nonprofit agencies can continue to operate in the community, particularly for vulnerable populations and in cases where state and federal funding alone may not be sufficient.

Health Care Services

Copley Hospital, located in Morrisville, serves as the principal regional health care facility for Stowe and the Greater Lamoille Valley. Since opening in 1932, Copley has expanded to meet community needs, offering a full range of inpatient and outpatient care, including 24-hour emergency services and more than two dozen medical specialties.

Lamoille Health Partners is a nonprofit Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) based in Lamoille County, with its main office in Morrisville. Services include but are not limited to primary care/family medicine, pediatrics, dental care, behavioral health and wellness, pharmacy, and other health care services. In early 2025, Lamoille Health Partners consolidated its family medicine services from its Stowe office on Mountain Road into its larger Morrisville facility.

Home health and hospice services are provided locally by Lamoille Home Health & Hospice, the largest recipient of the Town's Social Services appropriations. This non-profit agency serves

Lamoille County towns, offering skilled nursing, rehabilitative therapies, wellness programs, telemedicine, and long-term care.

Mental health services are available through Lamoille County Mental Health Services, which operates a walk-in clinic for low-income residents and provides a comprehensive array of programs, including adult, children, family, and outpatient services; substance abuse treatment; community rehabilitation; and emergency services.

Stowe also has a robust network of private health care providers serving local residents, visitors, and surrounding communities.

Senior Services

Stowe's older residents are supported by several organizations. The Central Vermont Council on Aging, based in Morrisville, helps seniors remain independent in their homes through federal, state, and local funding, providing services such as meals, transportation, advocacy, and volunteer programs. Meals on Wheels deliver home meals under this framework, and Out & About, the Lamoille Area Adult Day Care Center, offers in-home day care for frail and impaired elders, along with caregiver respite services.

Currently, Stowe has no licensed residential care homes. Copley Woodlands, a private retirement community opened in 1998, offers assisted living options, while several nursing homes are available nearby in Morrisville and Waterbury. With an aging population and longer life expectancies, demand for senior services and facilities is expected to increase. The success of Copley Woodlands signifies that Stowe is becoming an attractive destination for active seniors, and these demographic trends should influence future planning for local services and facilities.

Human & Behavioral Health Services

Residents also benefit from a range of regional behavioral health and human service providers. Central Vermont Community Action (CVCA) in Morrisville assists low-income families with food, fuel, housing, Head Start programs, and micro-loans, offering both short-term aid and long-term support. Downstreet (formerly the Lamoille Housing Partnership) provides affordable housing and housing assistance.

The Vermont Center for Independent Living helps residents with significant disabilities live independently and engage in community life. Lamoille Family Center supports families and children through parenting programs, preschool and playgroups, childcare assistance, home visits, and mediation services, reaching approximately 4,000 individuals annually.

Founded in 1981, the Clarina Howard Nichols Center serves Lamoille County by working to end domestic and sexual violence, human trafficking, and stalking through advocacy, education, prevention, and community outreach. The Center provides shelter and support services for survivors and offers preventive education programs to promote safety and social change.

The North Central Vermont Recovery Center (NCVRC) in Morrisville is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting individuals and families on their journey to lasting recovery from alcohol

and drug addiction. NCVRC provides a welcoming, safe, and substance-free environment where people can access information, connect with others who have lived experience, and participate in substance-free social activities. The center offers education, support, and hope, helping the community build pathways to recovery and wellness.

Lamoille Community House, located in Hyde Park, is a fully staffed, year-round shelter providing a safe and supportive environment for those experiencing homelessness. The shelter offers warm meals, secure accommodations, and access to a range of social services through partnerships with local organizations. Dedicated to treating every guest with dignity and respect, the ADA-compliant facility and trained staff welcome all adults, regardless of race, gender, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.

The programs, services, and organizations listed above are not comprehensive. For a single, easy-to-use resource connecting you to local assistance with food, housing, healthcare, and financial support, visit <https://www.findhelp.org/>.

Consider incorporating the following policies and action items into the appropriate sections of the Town Plan.

Policies

1. Prioritize wellness initiatives that are accessible to residents of all ages, abilities, and income levels. Ensure diverse voices are included in planning, decision-making, and program design.
2. Invest in pedestrian pathways, bike lanes, sidewalks, and public transit systems that safely connect homes, schools, parks, and village centers, promoting active and sustainable transportation.
3. Maintain, enhance, and expand community centers, playgrounds, pools, sports fields, and other public facilities to provide diverse wellness and recreational opportunities for all residents.
4. Support programs, services, and incentives that maintain year-round housing for families, essential workers, and seniors.
5. Protect trails, open spaces, rivers, and scenic landscapes. Integrate green infrastructure and sustainable practices into recreation, wellness, and land use planning.
6. Ensure high-quality schools, recreation programs, and youth services that promote physical, mental, and social wellness, supporting the growth and well-being of young residents.

Action Items

1. Expand trail networks and recreation paths to support year-round biking, hiking, walking, and cross-country skiing.
2. Evaluate existing park and recreation facilities and integrate outdoor fitness stations, playgrounds, and community gardens, where appropriate.

3. Evaluate existing park and recreation facilities to ensure facilities are ADA-compliant to allow participation by residents of all abilities.
4. Develop and support community programs and events that foster neighborhood connections, volunteerism, intergenerational engagement, and celebrate diversity and inclusion.
5. Partner with healthcare providers and community organizations to expand wellness programs, mental health resources, preventive care, and access to nutritious food for all residents.
6. Promote workforce and affordable housing to retain full-time residents and families, including incentives to maintain homes as primary residences and limit conversions to short-term rentals.
7. Improve mobility and safety through enhanced walking and biking infrastructure, traffic-calming, and expanded public transit connections.
8. Expand open spaces, scenic areas, and trails while integrating nature-based wellness programs and promoting sustainable practices to support long-term community health.