

## MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

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### Tax Base & Cost of Services

In 2021 Grand List value is based on the 2019 reappraisal. Since 2013, property values have increased 5%. In the same time period, the municipal budget has increased 60%. This increase has been driven by a few factors including increasing salaries for town officers and adding emergency services personnel to the budget. The school budget has increased 24.5% in the same period, which is roughly in line with inflation.

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Year	2013	2021	Change 2013-2021
<b>Total Property Values (in thousands)</b>	\$492,005	\$516,456	5.0%

Total Budget by Year					
	2003	2013	Change '03-'13	2022	Change '13-'22
<b>Town</b>	\$441,025	\$756,439	71.5%	\$1,214,846	60.6%
<b>School</b>	\$3,454,198	\$3,212,116	-7.0%	\$ 3,997,890	24.5%
<b>Total</b>	\$3,895,223	\$3,968,555	1.9%	\$5,212,736	31.4%

Under Vermont's Act 60 and 68, South Hero is required to transfer a significant amount of money raised by property taxes to the State for redistribution to other towns. This means that the education tax burden for South Hero is about double what is needed to support local requirements. Many South Hero taxpayers already feel overburdened by property tax rates, making them reluctant to approve any other spending in the town. Unless action is taken to relieve the property tax burden, improvements to existing Town services and the expansion of Town services will be difficult to initiate. The Town is considering a 1% local option tax to fund special projects without increasing municipal taxes.

Volunteers and elected officials work together to govern the Town, provide social services, plan community activities, and make South Hero a healthy and safe place to live. Town services are provided in an efficient, safe, friendly and environmentally sound way. Decisions about future services are made in a cooperative and participatory atmosphere. Although most of its services are provided locally, the Town is joining with neighboring towns to identify services and resources, such as joint purchasing, technical planning assistance, schools, solid waste management, and recreational facilities, which could be shared efficiently without sacrificing local control.

## Recreation

### Current Recreational Facilities

#### State Parks

The Round Pond State Park and Natural Area consists of approximately 125 acres of spectacular wetlands, fields, woodlands, and approximately 1,100 feet of Lake Champlain shoreline. This resource was conserved and was opened to the public in 2001.

#### Public Trails

Healthy communities need outdoor space for physical activity and gathering. Trails make land available for walking, jogging, bicycling, horseback riding, skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and all terrain vehicle use. These uses may not always be compatible with each other and trail planning should consider this. Trail locations can include existing rights of way for roads and the former railroad bed and negotiated easements or licenses over private property.

There are six public trails existing in the Town today. 2 are located on private lands with easements, 2 are located on state lands, 1 is a connector between a private easement and state lands, and the Town owns the South Hero Recreation Trail. The town-owned Recreation Trail is located along the railroad bed from West Shore Road to Tracy Road as shown on MAP 6: Transportation System as the South Hero March Trail. Additionally, the Island Line Rail Trail connects Martin Street in South Hero to Burlington in the summer via a bicycle ferry.

#### Access to the Lake

Public access to the lake from the Town of South Hero is an important asset which enhances the recreational and scenic value of the town as a whole for residents, seasonal homeowners and visitors.

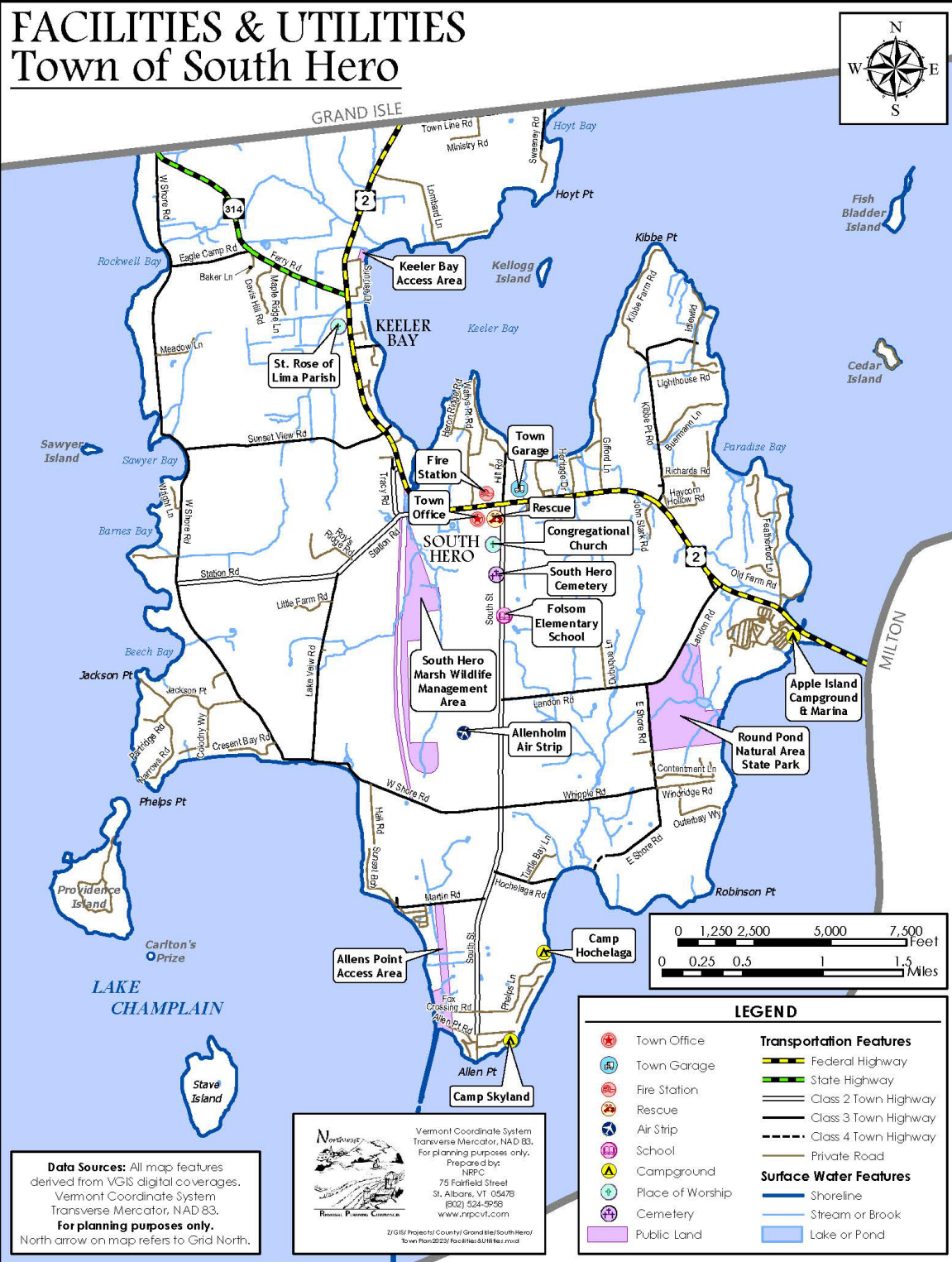
The public access areas in the Town are shown on the Facilities and Utilities map, and listed below:

- at the end of the public portion of Hill Road;
- at the end of the public portion of Lavigne Road as it comes into Keeler Bay;
- Keeler Bay Road at the first hard curve to the right;
- Vermont Fish & Wildlife Accesses:
  - Guilmette Access Area, at approximately 90 U.S. Route 2 near Featherbed Lane
  - Keeler Bay Access Area at the end of Sunrise Drive
- Sweeney Farm access off of Town Line Road (winter only);
- White's Beach (owned and maintained by the Town);
- Allen Point Access to "the Fill";
- The railroad bed on Keeler Bay, south of Keeler Bay Marina.
- "Knee Deep" Bay Trail; and
- Round Pond State Park on Landon Road.

#### Recreation Commission

**DRAFT 1, NOT YET FORMATTED**

A volunteer Recreation Commission plans several activities which are scheduled during the summer months and supported by tax dollars. For details and up-to-date information on programs visit [www.SouthHero.net/rec](http://www.SouthHero.net/rec).



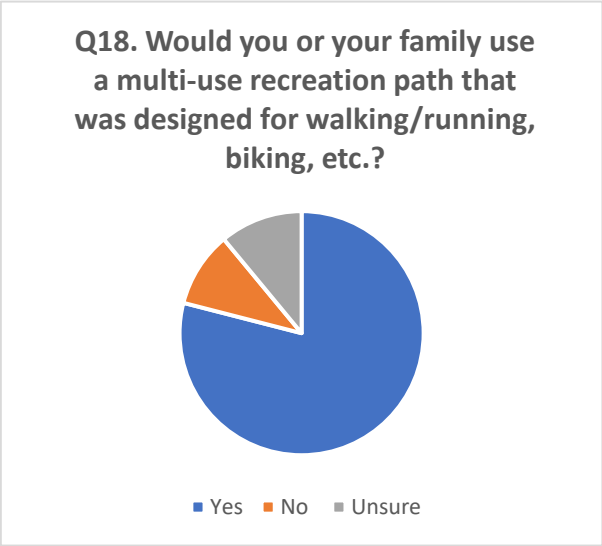
Future Recreation Planning

**Future Trail Planning**

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the use of trails & recreations spaces, highlighting the value of these community spaces. Over 80% of all respondents to the Town Plan Survey stated they would use a multi-use path designed for walking & biking. Developing additional trails and recreational spaces that are inclusive & accessible to all residents is a priority for the Town. Such development will require cooperation and negotiation with landowners, town investigation of liability issues, good access including parking facilities, public support, provision of public safety, protection of wildlife habitat and natural areas, and public funds.

Volunteers can help in easement negotiations, trail planning, trail clearing, fundraising and monitoring. Federal and state funds are available for certain types of trails.

The Town and the Lake Champlain Islands Economic Development Corporation (LCIEDC) are also considering how to best manage the Island Rail Trail to maximize economic benefits while reducing unintended consequences. The 2022 South Hero Town Plan Survey asked an open-ended question on the role of bicycle tourism in South Hero. While a plurality of residents stated they supported bicycle tourism, residents also noted that there is a need for better planning to ensure safety and reduce traffic impacts.



**Future Park Plans**

Recognizing the need for additional recreational opportunities, the Town has begun planning for a future public park to be located behind the South Hero Meeting House in the South Hero Village. The Planning Commission has put forward as an initial recommendation that \$50,000 of ARPA funds be dedicated to the project and the Town is seeking additional funding sources to further plan & implement this priority.

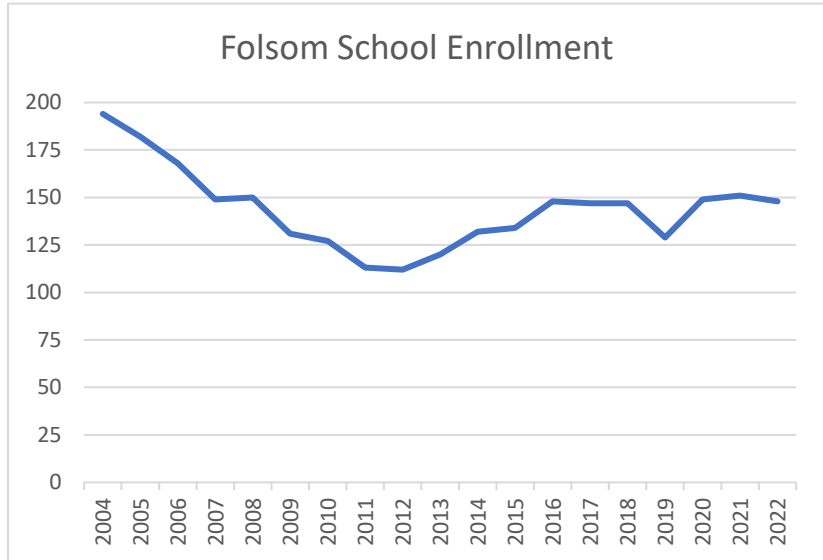
Education & Childcare

**Education**

The residents of South Hero recognize that a strong school system has a positive influence on the community. For this reason it is important that the town keep, maintain, and enhance the Folsom Education and Community Center. It is integral to the identity of the town. The school provides a safe educational environment for students and a community building that serves as a focal point for community activities and events.

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Built in 1948, and expanded in 1973, Folsom Education and Community Center serves grades K-8. It is noted for the dedication and morale of its teachers and staff, its high academic standards, and activism of volunteers in school and after-school programs. Its excellent library is available for both student and public use. The gymnasium is also the site for the annual Town Meeting and other large community meetings.



After experiencing a peak of around 220 students in 1997, enrollment declined to about 110 students in 2012. Enrollment rebounded to around 150 by 2016 and has been level ever since.

Since GISU does not have a high school, students have school choice. Students typically pick South Burlington High, Essex High, or Colchester High. Some choose Champlain Valley Union, Vermont Commons, Lyndon Institute, and 3 area Technical Centers. Tuitions are set by the State Agency of Education.

Vocational and continuing education resources available to South Hero residents include the technical centers in Burlington & St. Albans, Vermont Adult Learning in St. Albans, and numerous post-secondary college opportunities throughout the state.

**Childcare**

Champlain Islands Parent Child Center (CIPCC)

CIPCC came to South Hero from Alburgh in 1998 and initially rented the Allen House from Ray Allen. The Center purchased the Allen House in 2002, and the large “Red Building” portion of the Center was built in 2008 and serves as its primary facility for children ages 6 weeks through 5 years.

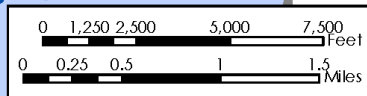
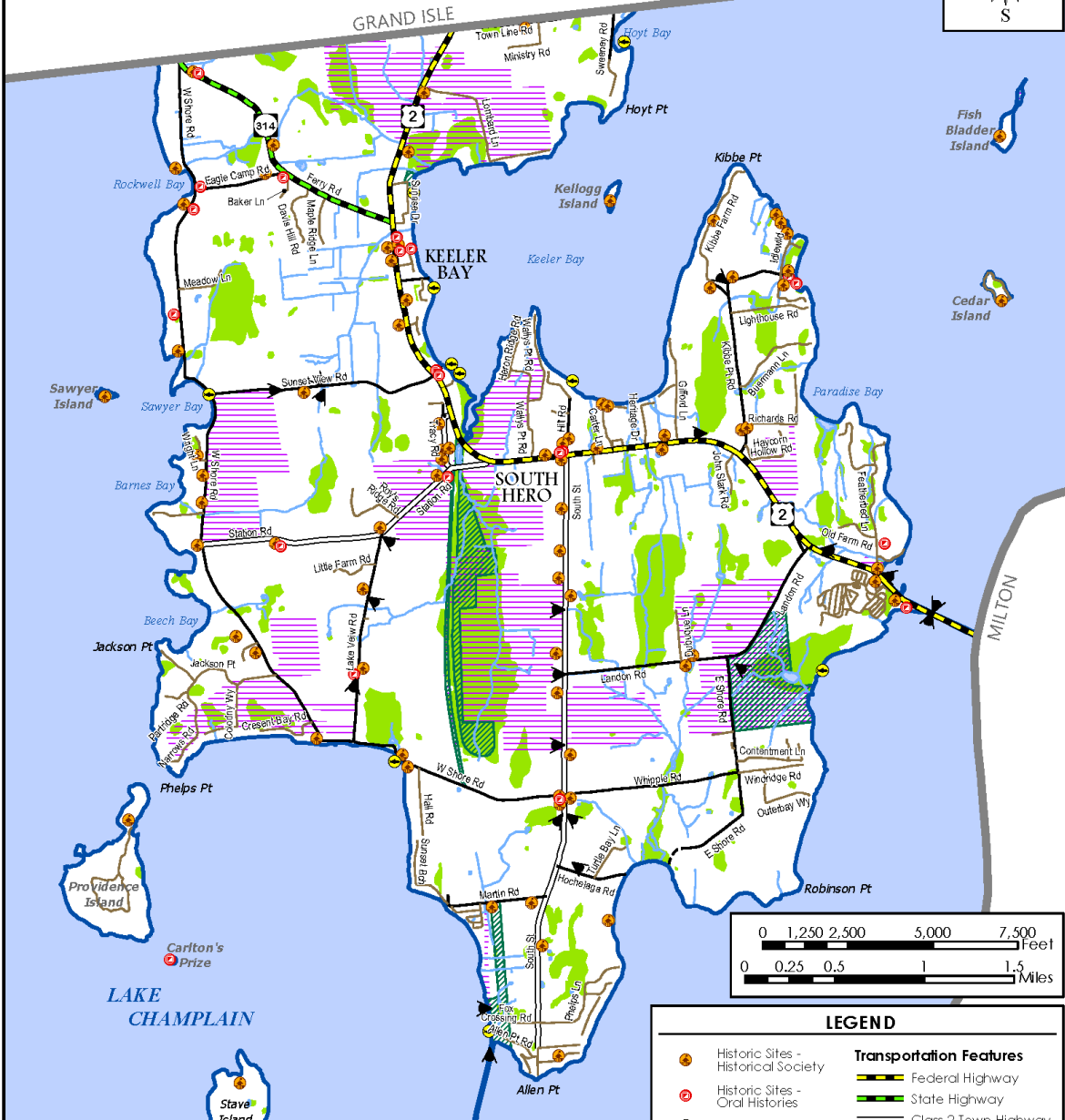
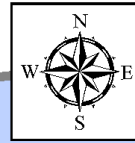
The Allen House is where universal pre-K students are taught. The Red Building serves as both daycare and preschool. Between both buildings, CIPCC serves 16 preschoolers annually and 40 and 50 infants and children total. The Allen House is also where the school provides after school care for Folsom students.

Registered Daycare Centers & Homes

There are only two other registered daycare facilities in South Hero. The Turn to Joy Center is located in the South Hero Village and has a capacity of 28 children. The other facility is a home-based business with a capacity of 10 children. Over two-thirds of children under age 6 have all parents in the workforce and are likely in need of childcare. There are 1.2 children under 6 for each childcare spot in South Hero, meaning that many South Hero families may have challenges finding licensed care in their community.

# COMMUNITY ASSETS

## Town of South Hero



**Data Sources:** All map features derived from VGIS digital coverages. Vermont Coordinate System Transverse Mercator, NAD 83. **For planning purposes only.** North arrow on map refers to Grid North.

**North Arrow**  
 Vermont Coordinate System Transverse Mercator, NAD 83. For planning purposes only. Prepared by: NRPC 75 Fairfield Street St. Albans, VT 05478 (802) 524-9956 www.nrpcvt.com  
 ZGIS/Projects/County/GrandIsle/SouthHero/ TownPlan-2023/CommunityAssets.mxd

LEGEND	
	Historic Sites - Historical Society
	Historic Sites - Oral Histories
	Lake Access
	Scenic Views
	Shoreline
	Stream or Brook
	Lake or Pond
	Wetland
	Federal Highway
	State Highway
	Class 2 Town Highway
	Class 3 Town Highway
	Class 4 Town Highway
	Private Road
	Town Boundary
	Conserved Land
	Public Land

Municipal & Community Facilities

**Solid Waste**

The town contracts with a private company for weekly curbside pickup of trash and recycling through a “Sticker Program.” Several times a year, special trash days are coordinated with the Northwest Vermont Solid Waste Management District (NWSWD) for the disposal of large items. The Town is a member of the NWSWD with a transfer station located at 362 West Shore Road in North Hero (see [www.nswsd.org](http://www.nswsd.org)) and continues to address the problems of household hazardous waste, sludge and other long term solid waste issues through the District.

**Fire Department & Rescue Squad**

The Rescue Squad is staffed by a combination of trained volunteers and paid staff. Paid staff were funded by the Town voters in 2019 to alleviate staffing shortages. With the construction of the new senior housing facility, the Rescue Squad anticipates an increase in calls and is considering hiring staff for nighttime shifts.

The Town Fire Department is staffed by trained volunteers. . The main funding of the operations of both these organizations is through public contributions. Some purchases of equipment for the fire department and rescue are funded by tax dollars. In 2018, both organizations moved into a shared building on Community Lane.

**Law Enforcement**

The town has no local police department. Vermont state police as well as the Grand Isle County Sheriffs Department cover all areas of law enforcement from traffic violations to major crimes. The town currently contracts with the County Sheriff’s office for additional coverage and help with enforcement of local traffic ordinances. This coverage includes patrolling of the Town Beach during the summer months and various other extra coverage. If you have an emergency call 911.

**Library**

After a \$1.5 million-dollar fundraising campaign, the Worthen Library was opened in 2019. Moving the library to its own dedicated building has allowed for an expansion in hours, additional programming, and for the library to be used for community meetings. Current programming includes lending books, movies, equipment as well as holding events for adults and children. The Library is primarily funded by a Town tax dollars, as well as by private fundraising. The library is staffed by two salaried librarians and many volunteers from the community.



*Figure 1: Worthen Library*  
*Credit: <https://soherolibrary.wordpress.com/>*



### **Water & Wastewater**

There is no town water system. There are several water districts, three of which formed a union, Water District 4, and constructed a pumping and chlorination system to supply water to most of the residents of South Street and several adjoining streets. The districts maintain their own budgets and fund their operations with assessments separate from town property taxes. Existing and future water supply needs in the Town could be impacted by the emerging zebra mussel problem in Lake Champlain and the state's prohibition on the use of lake water for water supply in subdivisions. Investment and/or coordination with adjoining towns in providing water supply and distribution should continue to be considered.

In 2021, Fire District #4 installed 1,400 feet of upgraded and new water line to support the development of a 30-unit senior housing in the South Hero Village. The extended water line may also support additional growth in the Village.

There is no town sewer system. All residences and businesses must comply with state regulations when installing their systems. Being a Lake community the Town of South Hero encourages old wastewater systems be upgraded before there is a failure issue. New technologies are available that can even pre-treat wastewater.

The lack of wastewater capacity in the village creates barriers to the goal of creating a vibrant village with a mix of housing, municipal services, and businesses. Development potential and density (the amount of development per acre) is directly dependent on the capacity of the soil and land to accommodate soil-based wastewater treatment. The Town is currently conducting a feasibility study to understand the potential options for decentralized wastewater treatment in the villages.

### **Cemetery**

There is a town cemetery located on South Street which operates with some town funding as well as funding from a cemetery trust fund and income from the sale of lots.

### South Hero Meeting House

The South Hero Meeting House is a historic church & meeting house constructed in 1816 in the heart of South Hero Village. Currently the building's second floor houses Grannie's Attic seasonally, while the first floor is unused. In 2019, the Town conducted an extensive survey effort and found that the majority of respondents wanted to keep the building and renovate it for year-round use. The Town has completed initial conceptual design and has received \$100,000 in grants to fund the renovations. The Town and a nonprofit community group are currently working towards funding the remainder of renovation costs through grants, fundraising and potential Town funds.

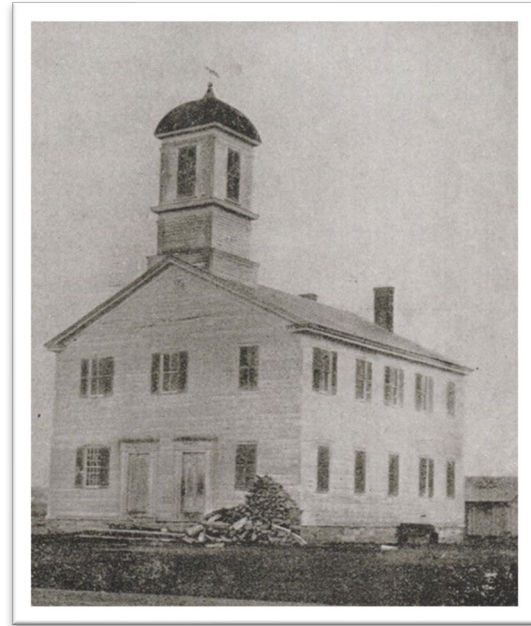


Figure 2 : South Hero Meeting House (circa 1895)

### Community Health

Community health is informed by a variety of social factors such as education access & quality, health care access & quality, economic stability, neighborhood & built stability, and social & community context. Community planning around education, land use and infrastructure can all support better community health. The Town's investments in creating complete streets, recreation opportunities and community spaces like the Worthen Library and South Hero Meeting House will all serve to support community health goals.

### Social Determinants of Health



Social Determinants of Health  
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Figure 3: Social Determinants of Health

South Hero has diverse array of health care services, both professional and volunteer, that contribute to the well-being of its residents. They include fire and rescue squads, a physical therapist, chiropractor, yoga studios, massage therapist, the Visiting Nurses Association, the Champlain Islands Parent Child Center and Champlain Islanders Developing Essential Resources, Inc. (C.I.D.E.R.), a non-profit group whose mission is "to develop and foster resources that enable the people of Grand Isle County, Vermont to live in their community with dignity." C.I.D.E.R. provides direct services such as transportation and accessibility services, as well as by collaborating with other individuals and groups. C.I.D.E.R.'s efforts are directed at providing the resources and assistance that individuals would need in order to remain living independently in their own homes, including providing wheelchair accessible vehicles, transportation, senior meals, constructing wheelchair ramps and a variety of other programs. C.I.D.E.R. relies heavily upon volunteers, and over 130 different individuals assist in some fashion.

## DRAFT 1, NOT YET FORMATTED

The Community Health Center: Champlain Islands is located in South Hero and provides primary care to residents. The Center is a Federally qualified Health Center with a mission to serve all, including those typically underserved. The nearest hospitals to South Hero are the Northwestern Medical Center in St. Albans and the University of Vermont Medical Center in Burlington.

A notable loss to the healthcare services of South Hero was the closure of the South Hero Pharmacy in 2020. Residents must now travel off the Islands to access a pharmacy, which has presented a healthcare barrier for some residents.

### Telecommunications

Telecommunications facilities in South Hero include Consolidated Communications phone lines, Consolidated Communications Digital Subscriber Loop (DSL), Comcast Cable TV and internet, satellite television and radio, various cellular phone service antennas, wireless Internet providers such as HughesNet and GlobalNet, and shortwave radio frequencies that are operated by amateur operators and emergency services.

As telecommunications continue to become a vital part of everyday functions both at home and at work, pressures to increase the speed, reliability, and affordability of these networks will continue to escalate. Northwest Vermont is currently served by one internet transmission line originating to the south. While the majority of South Hero residents have access to service that meets the minimum standards for broadband, 2% still lack broadband service and none are served by high-speed fiber. The majority of residents have cellular access. The Town should continue to support improvements to the communication infrastructure so that all residents, government services, businesses, and the like can take advantage of existing and developing technologies. To support enhanced broadband access, the Town has joined the Northwest Communications Union District (NWCUD). The goal of the NWCUD is to bring fiber to every home and business in the district.

### Civic Organizations

Civic organizations are involved in children's activities, historic preservation, agriculture, business, social services, church activities, and community events among other activities. The organizations and activities include: Boy and Girl Scouts, Masons, Eastern Star, Granny's Attic, 4-H, churches and church activities, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Camp Hochelaga (a YWCA girls camp), South Hero Players, South Hero Recreation Committee and 4th of July Parade Committee.

The South Hero Land Trust (SHLT), one of several land trusts, is an active organization within the community with the mission of protecting the farmland, woodland, natural and recreational areas, and open spaces which help give South Hero its distinctive quality of life. According to their website, over 1,800 acres of land have been conserved in South Hero, protecting farm land, natural areas, lakeshore, and scenic vistas of Lake Champlain and the Green Mountains .

### Goals & Objectives

1. Work towards a system of town multiple use paths, trails and recreational areas that exist within town and private lands. Trails should be accessible to recreational resources, local businesses, the school, and concentrated residential areas.
2. Make plans and regulations that enhance community assets, maintain community cohesion, look to the future, and consider the needs of landowners.
3. Improve the village environment of the village areas of South Hero and Keeler Bay.

## DRAFT 1, NOT YET FORMATTED

4. Increase the involvement of community members in community affairs.
5. Support preservation of historic sites in South Hero.
6. Explore innovative ways to finance and provide town services to reduce property tax burdens.
7. Administer town regulations in a fair, consistent and efficient way and monitor them for their effectiveness and enforcement.
8. Encourage the availability of safe and affordable child care.
9. Find new ways to finance and provide town services to offset property tax burdens.
10. Insure that new growth does not overburden town services by planning, budgeting and exploration of new ways to cover costs of growth.
11. Promote town plan objectives in the adoption of tax policies and planning for public facilities and services.
12. Promote the voluntary and participatory role of citizens in town government.
13. Promote the production of renewable energy resources, such as wind, solar and/or hydroelectric, by including appropriate provisions in zoning regulations.

### Strategies

1. The following items are community opportunities which should be promoted:
  - a. educating the public, including children and landowners, on the importance of agriculture, natural areas, wetlands, and historic sites;
  - b. organizing volunteers who are interested in creating and maintaining town trails and coordinating with regional trail projects;
  - c. encouraging volunteers to participate in town government;
  - d. finding a home for cultural events, possibly using a historic site;
  - e. developing activities that support farmers and are attractive to tourists
2. Ensure the Town continues to be represented in and participate in local and regional planning organizations such as the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, Northwest Solid Waste District, etc.
3. Support the expansion of the Fire District #4 private water district and/or setting up other water districts in concentrated areas of the Town.
4. Encourage and embrace innovative new technologies for septic systems that would allow safe effluent disposal in challenging soils.
5. Support the expansion of the Fire District #4 private water district and/or setting up other water districts in concentrated areas of the Town.
6. Encourage the development of communication technology infrastructure to and within the community.
7. Support efforts to allow properly treated and filtered water from Lake Champlain to be used as potable water for domestic and business use.
8. Continue to support innovative solutions for safe sewage disposal for homes and businesses with waste water problems.
9. Support efforts for education funding reform to address the property tax burdens imposed by Acts 60 and 68.
10. The Selectboard should continue to explore ways to save on supplies and equipment through collective buying with other towns.

11. The Town should develop a capital budget and program that will identify town and school capital needs for a six year period and seek to minimize tax burdens on residents in any one year. The budget and program would contain a time frame for meeting needs and a method of financing the improvement.
12. Develop fees for town services that are based on real costs of providing services.
13. Cooperate with other towns in the region to save costs in Town personnel, equipment and services and to ensure compatible development and natural resource planning.
14. Encourage water conservation and the use of water conservation devices.
15. Explore ways to increase the tax base without adding significant burdens on Town services. Among the ways to do this are to encourage light business growth in central locations, the use of vacant private and Town buildings for new commercial enterprises, and home-based businesses.
16. Address the staffing issues posed by the Rescue Squad and the Fire Department.
17. Investigate whether a central location for growth would help with the efficient and safe delivery of Town services.
18. Encourage public/private partnerships to improve Town services whenever possible.
19. It is not a policy of the Town to provide public facilities and services to the outer islands.
20. Encourage a variety of telecommunications infrastructure. To this end, the Town should encourage solutions that minimize possible conflicts that might arise from these varied sources. Emergency broadcasting capabilities should be preserved first and foremost.
21. Encourage comprehensive, fast, and reliable telecommunications network for the community. To this end, partnering with public and/or private companies may be appropriate.
22. Continue to promote co-location of telecommunication facilities and appropriate siting and screening of these facilities from larger towers to smaller residential dishes.
23. Coordinate future growth with telecommunications providers to ensure that areas of expansion are adequately served.