

Introduction

Goals & Objectives

1. Strive for public participation in the planning process at all levels.
2. Understand what the Town's residents want for the future "look and feel" of the Town balanced against the potential impact on taxes.
3. Build upon and continue to improve our relationships with neighboring towns.

Strategies

1. Encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process.
2. Continue working with Town residents to find ways to turn their vision for the future of South Hero into reality.
3. Collaborate with other municipalities and regional organizations to address important regional issues, such as improving water quality in Lake Champlain.
4. Consider the impact of land use decisions on adjacent municipalities.

Vision Statement

South Hero, Vermont is a friendly, vibrant, and beautiful small Lake Champlain Island town where folks live, work, play and visit. The abundant recreational, agricultural and cultural amenities support healthy lifestyles, a sense of community, and a thriving local island economy.

Themes

As part of the development of the 2023 South Hero Town Plan, the Planning Commission identified five key themes to prioritize. Given that these themes cut across traditional areas of planning, the following icons are used to indicate where these themes are found throughout the plan.



Vibrant Villages



Housing and Transportation



Recreation and Recreation Economy



Equity & Inclusion



Climate Change and Resilience

View of Providence Island from "The Narrows"



Photo Credit: Mary Harwood

Equity and Inclusion

The South Hero Town Plan seeks to incorporate the principles of equity & inclusion in its process, vision, goals, and policies. Removing barriers to equitable opportunities for all residents allows the whole community to thrive.

Much like the other key themes, equity is not an independent goal but rather a consideration that helps to inform all other goals. In each chapter of the plan, readers will find a section explaining how the Town's goals & policies will work towards a more equitable and inclusive community.

Each person has a valuable perspective on how the Town can best support its residents, and an equitable and inclusive South Hero recognizes this and strives to engage the whole community in its planning efforts. Engagement opportunities included a survey, community events and dedicated workshops, all with the goal of reaching residents who may not typically be involved in municipal planning efforts.

The Town recognizes that the work of creating an equitable and inclusive community is an ongoing process and is committed to continuing to re-evaluate how to ensure its planning best supports its goals for equity and inclusion.

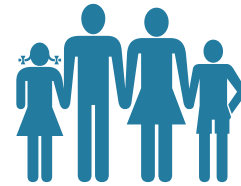
The Town of South Hero adopted a declaration of inclusion on June 14, 2021, the full text of which is included below.

Defining Equity and Inclusion

Equity: Equity is ensuring fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some communities.

Inclusion: Inclusive environments are places in which any individual or group is and feels welcomed, respected, supported, valued, and able to fully participate as their authentic selves. An inclusive and welcoming culture embraces differences, offers respect in words and actions for all people, fosters a diversity of thought, ideas, perspectives, and values, strives to create balance in the face of power differences.

Source: Vermont League of Cities and Towns



Town of South Hero Declaration of Inclusion

The Town of South Hero condemns racism and discrimination in all forms, and welcomes all persons, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, age, disability or sexual orientation. The Town of South Hero commits to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community and to be a place where individuals can live freely and express their opinions.

Adopted by the Town of South Hero, June 14, 2021

Community Engagement

A key goal of the 2023 update process was to reach a broad range of residents to develop a community supported vision for the future of the Town. To achieve these goals, the Town Planning Commission held several public events, met with local organizations, and conducted a survey.

Community Organization Meetings

To inform initial focus areas for the plan outreach efforts, the Town met with local & regional organizations including the Grand Isle County Alliance for Racial Equity, Take Action, Grand Isle Natural Resource Conservation District, Friends of Northern Lake Champlain, CIDER, Transportation Advisory Committee, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, the South Hero Recreation Commission, South Hero Land Trust, and Local Motion.

Town Plan Survey

The Town Plan Survey included 23 questions covering demographics and the following themes: housing & transportation, climate change & resilience, equity & inclusion, recreation & recreation economy, and vibrant villages. The survey was distributed online & in paper form at the Town Office and Worthen Library. Residents were sent a postcard with a link to the survey, and the survey was available at the June Community Cheers and Cheese event. The survey received 207 responses; 11.7% of year-round adult residents responded to the survey and 32 responses were received from seasonal residents. An analysis of the survey response demographics found that the survey underrepresented renters and residents aged 18-34. Therefore, it is important to consider that the survey may be biased as it relates to issues that primarily affect these groups. A full account of survey results can be found in the appendix.

Community Events

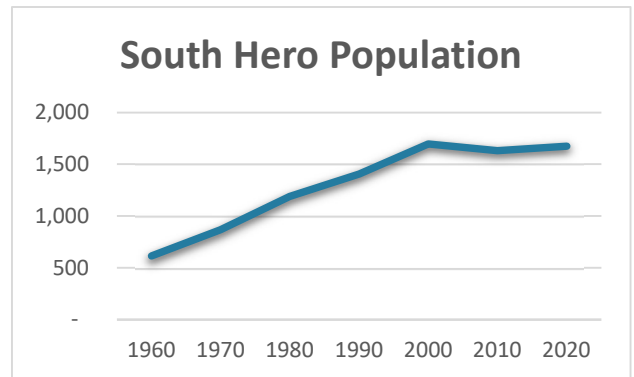
The Town Planning Commission participated in two “Community Cheers & Cheese” events. During the June events, residents were encouraged to leave comments about what they would like to evolve, maintain, and transform about South Hero

During the August event, the Planning Commission asked for feedback on a draft vision statement. The Planning Commission was also available to discuss the plan with residents at the Farmer’s Market several times throughout the summer.

The Town held a Village Vision Workshop in September 2022. Attendees discussed the current character of the two village zoning areas, and the desired future build-out via a map exercise.

The results of all these public outreach efforts have directed the vision, organization and goals & policies throughout this plan. Survey results and community input are noted throughout the plan, and have driven the vision, goals and policies found throughout the plan.

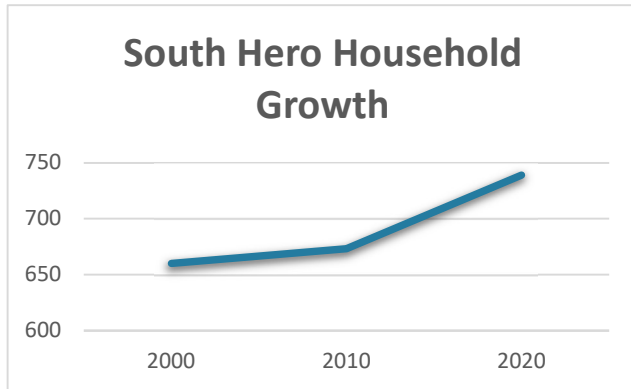
Town Data Profile



As of 2020, South Hero has 1,674 year-round residents. South Hero’s population grew rapidly from 1960 to 2000 and has stayed relatively stable over the last 20 years.

There is no specific data on percentage of seasonal residents, but it is understood that they are a significant group in South Hero.

South Hero’s population continues to age, with a 12% increase on the population over age 65 in the last 12 years. Despite this, South Hero continues to attract younger families, and the population under 18 has stayed relatively stable over the past 10 years.



While population growth has slowed in the last 20 years, the number of households has continued to grow. This is likely due to a reduction in average household size in the region over the same period. Growth in the number of households will mean that the same population requires additional housing units over time.

Compatibility with Neighboring Municipalities

From transportation to land use to water quality, a community's planning effort cannot happen without involving adjacent communities within the region. The Town of South Hero is adjacent to the Towns of Grand Isle in Grand Isle County and Milton and Colchester in Chittenden County. The following is a review of the relationship between the South Hero Town Plan and the plans of adjacent communities:

Grand Isle

The Town of Grand Isle's plan was adopted in February 2007. The Rural Residential/Agricultural Zoning District, Commercial Recreation Shoreline, and Residential Shoreline Districts are immediately adjacent to South Hero's Residential District. These districts have comparable permitted and conditional uses. The South Hero Plan does not conflict with the Grand Isle Town Plan.

Colchester

The Town of Colchester's plan was adopted on April 19, 2017. Colchester is not accessible to South Hero via road, but is connected via the Island Line bike path and ferry during the summer. Residential One District and Flood Plain District are the most adjacent to South Hero. Land uses are compatible

with proposed land uses in the adjacent areas of South Hero. Lake Champlain serves as a buffer between the lower densities of South Hero and areas of Colchester with higher densities. The nearest growth center to the Town of South Hero is the Local Growth Center in the Town of Colchester at Exit 17 on Interstate 89.

Milton

The Town of Milton last updated their development regulations on June 7, 2021. Milton's zoning districts on the border of South Hero are Agricultural/Rural Residential (R5) and Shoreland Residential (R6), as well as a Flood Hazard Overlay District. These Milton zoning districts include uses that are comparable to uses permitted in the Shoreline and Flood Hazard District in South Hero, the zoning districts located on the South Hero side of U.S. Route 2.

Relationship to Regional Plans

South Hero is a member municipality of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), which provides a forum for municipalities in Franklin and Grand Isle County to act on behalf of the region. All communities, including South Hero, are entitled to equal voting representation by two locally appointed members of the governing Board of Commissioners. Each member municipality has the opportunity to participate in the NRPC Policy/Project Review Committee, Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), Brownfield Redevelopment Program, and other subcommittees. NRPC is required to adopt a Regional Plan per Title 24, Chapter 117 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated. The Regional Plan is intended for use as a legal document, as a guide for decision makers and as an action plan to address issues of regional importance. The Regional Plan for the NRPC was adopted in July 29, 2015. South Hero is primarily in the agricultural Resource Planning area, which is compatible with South Hero's zoning. The Regional Plan acknowledges village centers as an appropriate location to maintain historic character of denser residential and commercial uses. The South Hero Town Plan conforms to the Northwest Regional Plan. The Chittenden County Regional Plan calls for the areas of Milton immediately adjacent & the closest portions of Colchester to South Hero to remain rural.