

Municipal and Community Facilities and Services Goals & Objectives

1. Maintain and upgrade, where reasonable and necessary, municipal facilities and grounds at reasonable costs.
2. Strive to meet the basic needs of residents and access to affordable goods and services within town, including in times of emergency.
3. Ensure that new growth does not overburden town services by planning, budgeting, and exploring new ways to cover costs of growth such as impact fees.
4. Increase civic infrastructure, community engagement, and communication through transparent government.
5. Support and create outdoor recreation opportunities that are available to the public, including a system of multiple use paths, trails and recreational areas on municipal and private lands.
6. Support through policies and regulations the preservation of historic buildings and sites in South Hero.

Strategies

1. Promote town plan objectives in the adoption of tax policies and planning for public facilities and services.
2. Explore innovative ways to finance and provide town services to reduce property tax burdens.
3. Explore ways to save on supplies, equipment and Town services (such as plowing) through cooperative efforts with other towns.
4. Encourage the involvement of community members in community affairs and Town government in order to increase the number of individuals represented while addressing Town issues. This will provide a broader perspective of ideas to consider when making important decisions.
5. Develop and maintain a capital budget and program that will identify anticipated town and school capital needs for a six-year period. Seek ways to minimize tax burdens on residents in any one year. The budget and program would contain a time frame for meeting anticipated needs and a method of financing the improvements.
6. Support efforts for education funding reform to address the property tax burdens imposed by Acts 60 and 68.
7. Investigate adopting impact fees, which would help finance the cost of specific town services.
8. 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 uses, and encourage home-based businesses.
9. Encourage public/private partnerships to improve Town services whenever possible.
10. Encourage volunteers to participate in town government.
11. Support volunteers who are interested in creating and maintaining town trails and coordinate with regional trail projects.
12. Redevelop the Meeting House as a location for municipal and community events.
13. Support community events and activities such as farmers markets and weekend in the Islands
14. Ensure the Town continues to be represented in and participate in local and regional planning organizations such as the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, Lake Champlain Islands Economic Development Corporation (LCIEDC) Northwest Solid Waste District, etc.
15. Encourage the availability of safe and affordable child care.
16. Support the expansion of the Fire District #4 private water district and/or setting up other water districts in concentrated areas of the Town.
17. Support efforts to allow properly treated and filtered water from Lake Champlain to be used as potable water for domestic and business use.

18. Encourage water conservation and the use of water conservation devices.
19. Continue to support innovative solutions for safe sewage disposal for homes and businesses with waste water challenges. Encourage and embrace innovative new technologies for septic systems that would allow safe effluent disposal in challenged soils.
20. Pursue a municipal wastewater system for the South Hero village areas (South Hero Village and Keeler Bay Village) that implements the recommendations of the 2022-2023 South Hero Village Wastewater Feasibility Investigation.
21. Address the staffing issues of the Rescue Squad and the Fire Department.
22. The Town does not provide public facilities and services to the outer islands.
23. Encourage the development of communication technology infrastructure to and within the community.
24. 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.
25. Encourage comprehensive, fast and reliable telecommunications network for the community. To this end, partnering with public and/or private companies may be appropriate. Coordinate future growth with telecommunications providers to ensure that areas of expansion are adequately served.
26. Continue to promote co-location of telecommunication facilities and appropriate siting and screening of these facilities from larger towers to smaller residential dishes.

Tax Base & Cost of Services

In 2021 Grand List value is based on the 2019 reappraisal. Since 2013, property values on the Grand List 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.

Property Values on Grand List			
Year	2013	2021	Change 2013-2021
Total Property Values (in thousands)	\$492,005	\$516,456	5.0%

Commented [EK2]: Added text to clarify. This 5% number is based only on the Grand List re-appraisal done in 2019. The only value # we have beyond that is for recently sold properties.

Total Budget by Year					
	2003	2013	Change '03-'13	2022	Change '13-'22
Town	\$441,025	\$756,439	71.5%	\$1,214,846	60.6%
School	\$3,454,198	\$3,212,116	-7.0%	\$3,997,890	24.5%
Total	\$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. In 2022, the Town voted to approve a 1% local option tax to fund special projects without increasing municipal taxes. State law needs to be updated to include the Town of South Hero in the list of approved towns to collect the 1% local option tax. Our State legislators are attempting to update this legislation in 2023. Although most of its services are provided locally, the Town is joining with neighboring towns to identify services and resources that can be shared efficiently without sacrificing local control.

Recreation

Recreation Commission

A volunteer Recreation Commission plans several activities which are supported by tax dollars. For details and up-to-date information on programs visit <https://southherovt.org/departments/rec/>.

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.

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. Two (2) are located on private lands with easements, two (2) are located on state lands, one (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 Marsh Trail. Additionally, the Island Line Rail Trail connects Martin Street in South Hero to Burlington in the summer via a bicycle ferry. The proposed 'Robinson Trail' would connect Tracy Road directly to a proposed crosswalk across South Street to Folsom School.

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.
- 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"

Future Recreation 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.

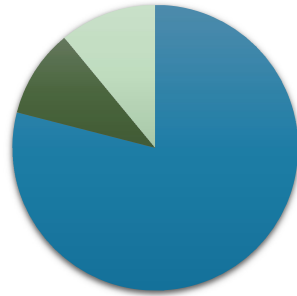
Volunteers can help in easement negotiations, trail planning, trail clearing, fundraising and monitoring. Federal and state funds are available for certain types of trails.

The Town and the Lake Champlain Islands Economic Development Corporation (LCIEDC) (www.champlainislands.com) 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 Old White Meeting House (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.

Would you or your family use a multi-use recreation path that was designed for walking/running, biking, etc.?



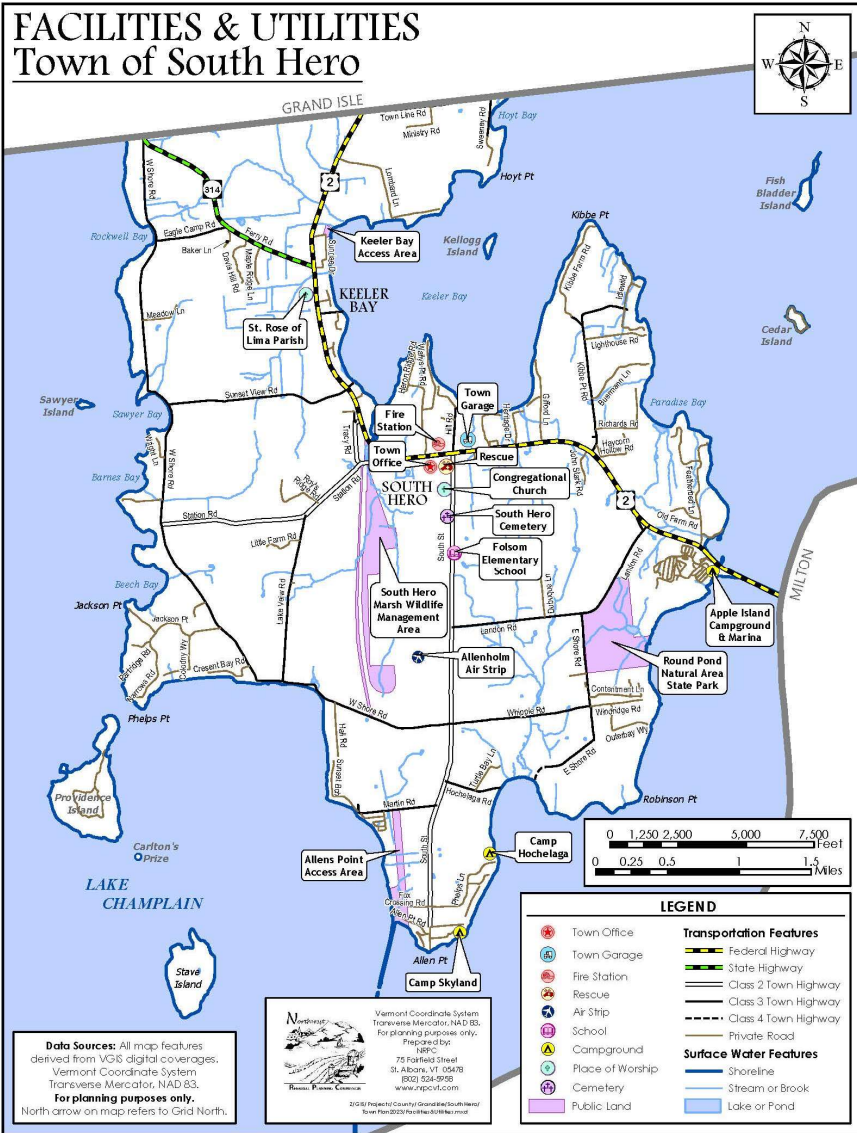
■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure

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.

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. The school maintains an excellent student library. 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. 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. Online courses offer continued learning opportunities from home of via the Worthen Library’s computer stations.

Childcare

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.

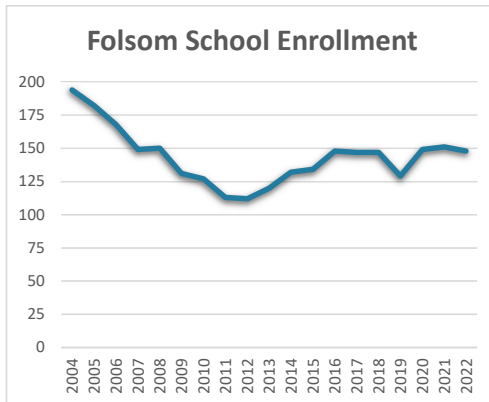
Champlain Islands Parent Child Center (CIPCC)

The Center received 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 32 preschoolers annually and 24 infants and toddlers. The Allen House is also where the school provides after school care for Folsom students.

Registered Daycare Centers & Homes

There are two other registered daycare facilities in South Hero. Turn to Joy Early Learning Center (www.TurnToJoy.com) is located in South Hero Village and has Infant and Toddler Programs with a total capacity of 24 children. Their preschool program operates in Grand Isle.



A registered home-based childcare provider, Roots & Wings, is located on South Street (<https://southherorootsandwings.weebly.com/>). It has a capacity of 10 children from infants to school-ages.

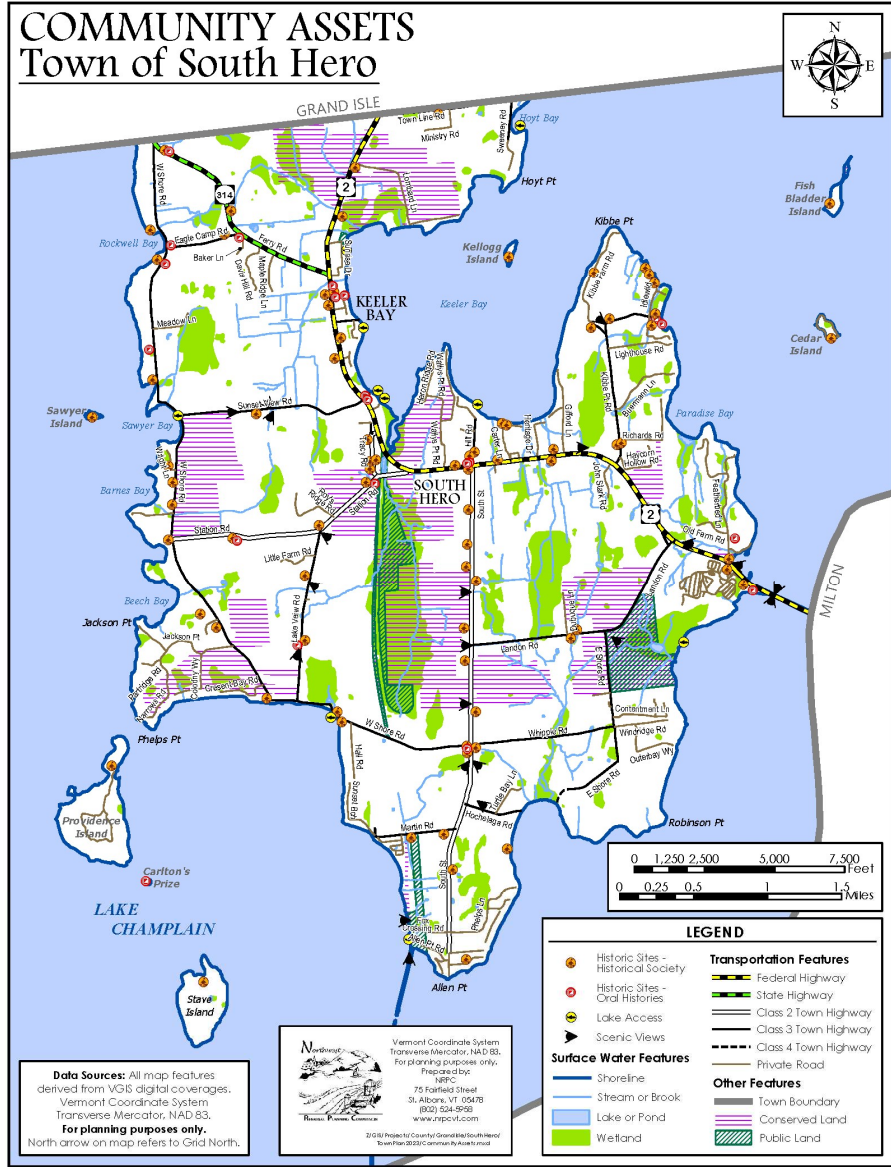
Municipal & Community Facilities

Solid Waste

There is no town program for curb-side trash pickup. Residents are responsible for contracting their own service. 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 transfer stations located at 362 West Shore Road in North Hero and the Georgia Recycling Center located at 158 Morse Dr, Fairfax, VT (see www.nwswd.org for operating hours & closing) 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 starting 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 and Rescue Departments are funded by tax dollars. In 2018, both organizations moved into a shared building on Community Lane.

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.

Water & Wastewater

There is no town water system. There were several water/fire districts, three of which formed Water District 4, and constructed a pumping and chlorination system to supply water to some of the residents of South Hero and Keeler Bay Villages. 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 BayView Crossing, 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 villages creates some barriers to the goal of having vibrant villages with a mix of housing, businesses, and municipal services. Development potential and density (the amount of development per acre) are 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.

Old White Meeting House

Also known as the South Hero Meeting House, was an 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. At the 2023 Town Meeting day, residents voted in favor of a motion to conduct a study of the feasibility, cost, and seek grants for moving the Town Offices to the Old Meeting House site.

Community Health

Community health is measured by a variety of social factors such as education, health care access & quality, economic stability, neighborhood & housing stability, and social & community context. The Town’s investments in community planning such as; creating complete streets, recreation opportunities and community spaces like the Worthen Library, Old White Meeting House and proposed Recreation Park will all serve to support multigenerational community health goals.

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



Figure 2 : South Hero Meeting House (circa 1895)

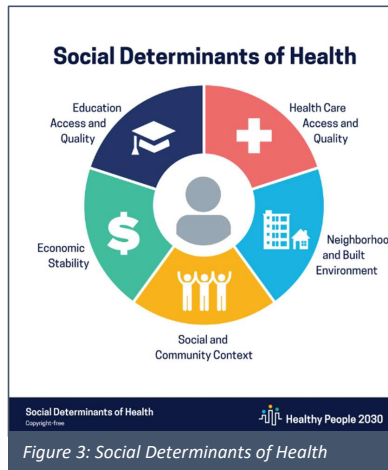


Figure 3: Social Determinants of Health

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 collaborating with other groups. C.I.D.E.R.’s efforts are

directed at providing the resources and assistance that individuals need in order to remain living independently in their own homes, including providing wheelchair accessible transportation, senior meals, constructing wheelchair ramps and a variety of other programs. C.I.D.E.R. relies heavily upon over 130 volunteers.

The Community Health Center: Champlain Islands is located in South Hero Village at 52 Community Lane. Offered services include; primary care, medical, mental health and psychiatry. For appointments call: 802-372-4687. 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 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. This has created a healthcare barrier for some residents. There is a need for a pharmacy and the Town supports efforts to restore this health service.

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. Free Wi-Fi is available at the Worthen Library on Community Lane in the South Hero Village.

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 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, and 4th of July Parade Committee.

The South Hero Land Trust (SHLT) is an active organization with the mission of protecting 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 farmland, natural areas, lakeshore, and scenic vistas of Lake Champlain and the Green Mountains.