



**Northwest
Regional Planning
Commission**

75 Fairfield Street
St. Albans, Vermont 05478
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To: Fairfield Planning Commission
From: Emily Kloff, Regional Planner
Date: August 19, 2024
Subject: Development Constraints Analysis

Enclosed are maps and a document describing potential development constraints in Fairfield. The intent of these documents is to assist the Town in prioritizing which constraints should be most heavily weighted in a future development constraints analysis.

A development constraints analysis is a mapping tool that determines the development potential of land based on natural resource constraints and community preservation goals. The purpose of the analysis is to provide a general picture of the development potential of various areas for planning purposes. Each potential constraint is assigned a score by local planners based on its relative importance: minor, moderate, severe and absolute constraints.

At this meeting, NRPC will work with the Planning Commission to assign scores to each potential constraint, which will then be developed into a development constraints analysis. I look forward to reviewing with you on the 19th!

Development Constraint Scoring for Each Criteria	
Type	Score
Minor/Geographical Constraint- Minor constraints where excessive development could be a concern	1
Moderate Environmental- Constraints which may be mitigated through engineering/design	3
Severe Environmental Constraints- Environmental Constraints which cannot be easily mitigated	6
Absolute Constraints: Areas where no new development should be (or is) allowed	(Removed from Analysis- Considered Not Developable)

Criteria	Score
>1,000' Distance from Class 1, 2 or 3 Roads	
Elevation > 1,000'	
High Priority Wildlife Habitat Blocks	
Vermont Significant Wetlands (Class I & Class II)	
50 ft. buffer- Vermont Significant Wetlands (Class 1 & Class 2)	
Source Water Protection Areas	
Severe Septic Soils (Class IV)	
Marginally Suited Septic Soils (Class III)	
Prime Agricultural Soils	
Statewide Agricultural Soils	
Public & Conserved Land	
100 Year Floodplain	
Lake Champlain Basin Lidar-Informed Flood Inundation Layer	
River Corridors	
Slopes 15-25%	
Slopes >25%	
Current Use	

Appendix: Description of Each Potential Constraint

>1,000' Distance from Class 1, 2 or 3 Roads

Roads of Class 1, 2, or 3 are state or local roads that are maintained year-round to be passable for passenger vehicles. Development far away from the existing road system would require long driveways or private roadways.

Elevation > 1,000'

Areas over 1000' in elevation which may be more environmentally sensitive.

High Priority Wildlife Habitat Blocks

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has identified areas of natural cover that are not fragmented by roads, development and agriculture as potential habitat blocks. These habitat blocks were ranked according to their importance in terms of size and connection to other large blocks. Large, connected areas of habitats are important to allow for the survival of species. Those that are highest priority are typically larger blocks or those that provide an important connection in between larger areas of habitat. See <https://anr.vermont.gov/maps-and-mapping/biofinder>

Vermont Significant Wetlands (Class I & Class II) & Buffer for Vermont Significant Wetlands

The Vermont Significant Wetlands Inventory is an inventory of wetlands statewide, divided into two classes. Class 1 wetlands are those of exceptional or irreplaceable value to Vermont, while most other wetlands fall into Class 2. Note that not all Class 2 wetlands are in the inventory, only a qualified wetlands scientist can determine the presence, absence and exact boundaries of a wetland on a given site. Beyond the borders of the wetland, the state also regulates the 50 ft buffer around the wetland, as development in this area may impact the wetland. See: <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/wetlands/jurisdictional>

Source Water Protection Areas

The source water protection areas are areas that pass or recharge groundwater used in public water supplies. Under state law, there are few protections for source water protection areas not owned by the water system. Certain types of development may lead to contamination that negatively affects the water system. Fairfield has two SPAs for its two fire districts. See: [https://dec.vermont.gov/water/drinking-water/public-drinking-water-systems/source-water-protection#:~:text=Source%20Protection%20Area%20\(SPA\),are%20identified%20in%20the%20SPP](https://dec.vermont.gov/water/drinking-water/public-drinking-water-systems/source-water-protection#:~:text=Source%20Protection%20Area%20(SPA),are%20identified%20in%20the%20SPP).

Severe Septic Soils (Class IV & Class III)

Using the data of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil survey, soils in Vermont have been divided into four categories based on their suitability for septic soils. Class IV are generally not suited for septic systems due to being too wet, rocky or steep for soil-based septic. Class III soils are soils with limitations that may require additional site investigation or more sophisticated septic designs to overcome limitations. See:

<https://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/SOILS/2008%20Soil%20Suitability%20Groups%20for%20Soil-based%20Residential%20Wastewater%20Disposal-January2008.pdf>

Prime and Statewide Agricultural Soils

Based on data from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil survey, the state has classified soils based on their suitability for agricultural purposes. The best soils are designated as prime agricultural soils, while the soils which are highly suitable for agricultural purposes but may have one or more limitations are designated as soils of statewide importance. See: https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/VT/Important_Farmlands_Narrative-update-April2018-Final.pdf

Public & Conserved Land

Public and conserved lands are tracked in the Vermont Protected Lands Database (VPLD). Lands conserved through land trusts are generally conserved in perpetuity via conservation easements, although limited land swaps may sometimes be permitted. Lands held in federal, state or local control are conserved based on the policies and laws of those entities.

100 Year Floodplain

Based on past incidences of flooding and topography, FEMA has identified areas that have a 1% chance of flooding in a given year. The last flood maps for Fairfield were completed in 1985. See: <https://www.fema.gov/glossary/flood-zones>

Lake Champlain Basin Lidar-Informed Flood Inundation Layer

Inundation flood hazard research conducted by University of Vermont researchers that shows risks from 2-year floodplain (50% chance of flooding in a given year) to 500-year floodplain (.2% chance of flooding in a given year). See: <https://vcgi.vermont.gov/data-release/lake-champlain-basin-lidar-informed-flood-inundation-layer-now-available>

River Corridors

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources developed maps of river corridors based on the area of the stream or river needed to maintain the physical/geomorphic equilibrium of the stream/river, that is, providing space for the natural meander of the river over time. See: https://floodready.vermont.gov/flood_protection/river_corridors_floodplains/river_corridors

Slopes 15% and Greater

Slope is calculated based on topographic maps. Development on steep slopes can cause issues such as run-off, environmental concerns and erosion.

Current Use

The current use program is a program of Vermont Department of Taxes which allows owners of agricultural and forest land to be taxed on the basis of the actual use of the land, rather than its value if it was developed. If land in the current use program is removed and developed the owner must pay a Land Use Change tax (LUCT). See: <https://tax.vermont.gov/property/current-use>

Map 1: Zoning Districts

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Zoning Districts

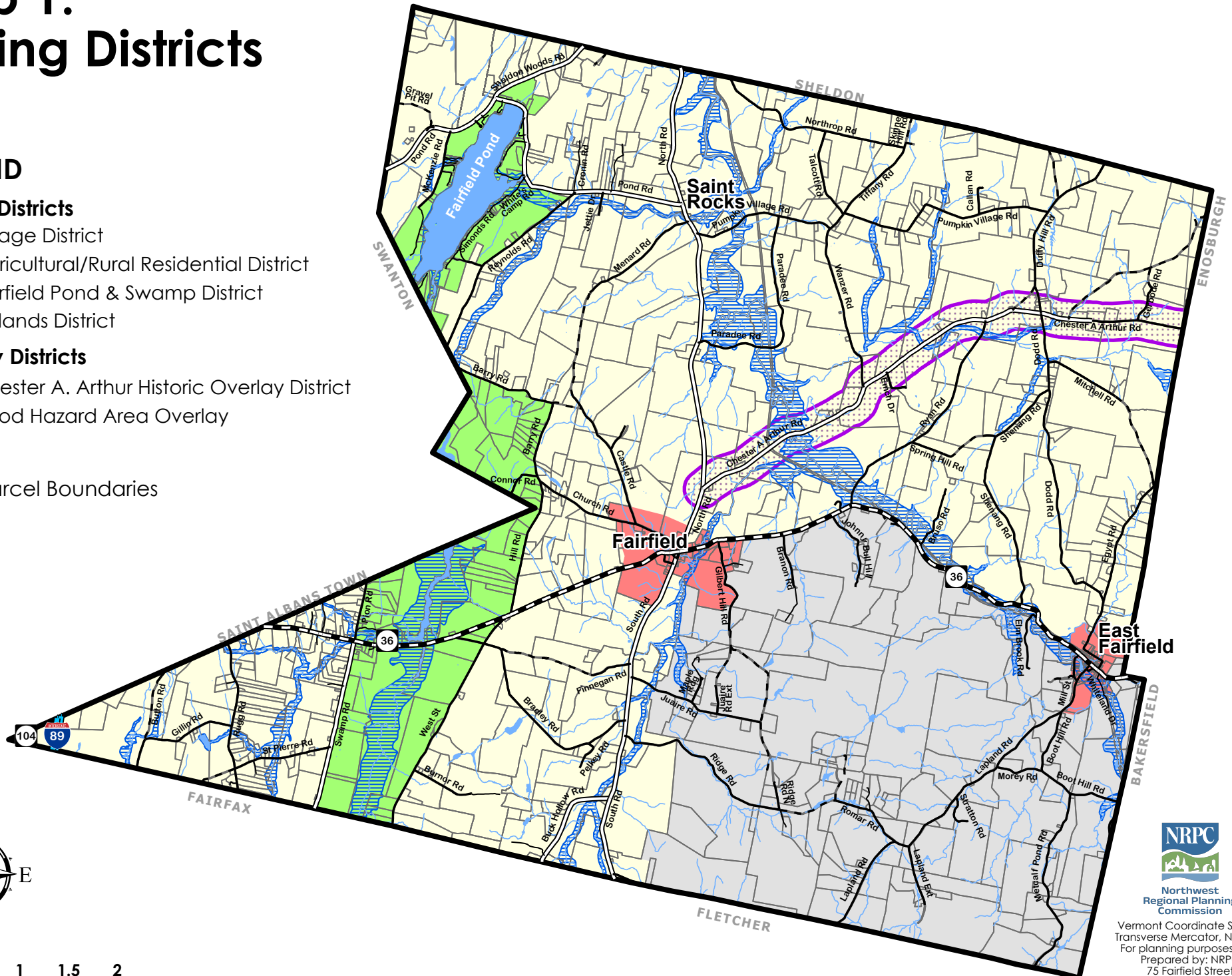
- Village District
- Agricultural/Rural Residential District
- Fairfield Pond & Swamp District
- Uplands District

Overlay Districts

- Chester A. Arthur Historic Overlay District
- Flood Hazard Area Overlay

Parcels

- Parcel Boundaries



0 0.5 1 1.5 2
Miles

Location: Z:\NRPC-GIS\Projects\County\Franklin\Fairfield\DevelopmentConstraints



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Vermont Coordinate System
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June 2024

Map 2: Agricultural Soils and Wetlands

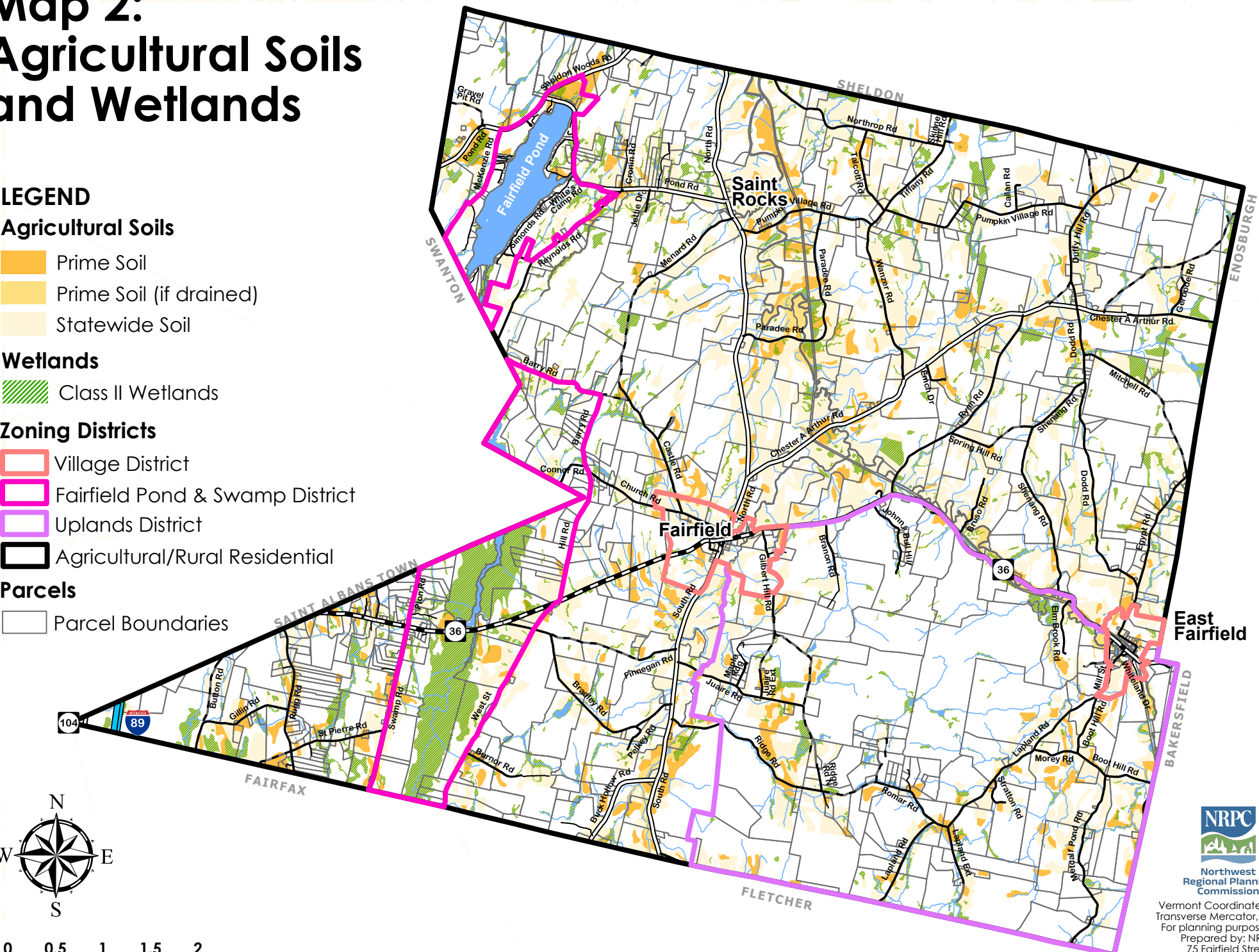
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- Agricultural Soils**
- Prime Soil
 - Prime Soil (if drained)
 - Statewide Soil

- Wetlands**
- Class II Wetlands

- Zoning Districts**
- Village District
 - Fairfield Pond & Swamp District
 - Uplands District
 - Agricultural/Rural Residential

- Parcels**
- Parcel Boundaries



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Map 3: Flood Areas

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 FEMA 100-year Floodplain

 River Corridor

Zoning Districts

 Village District

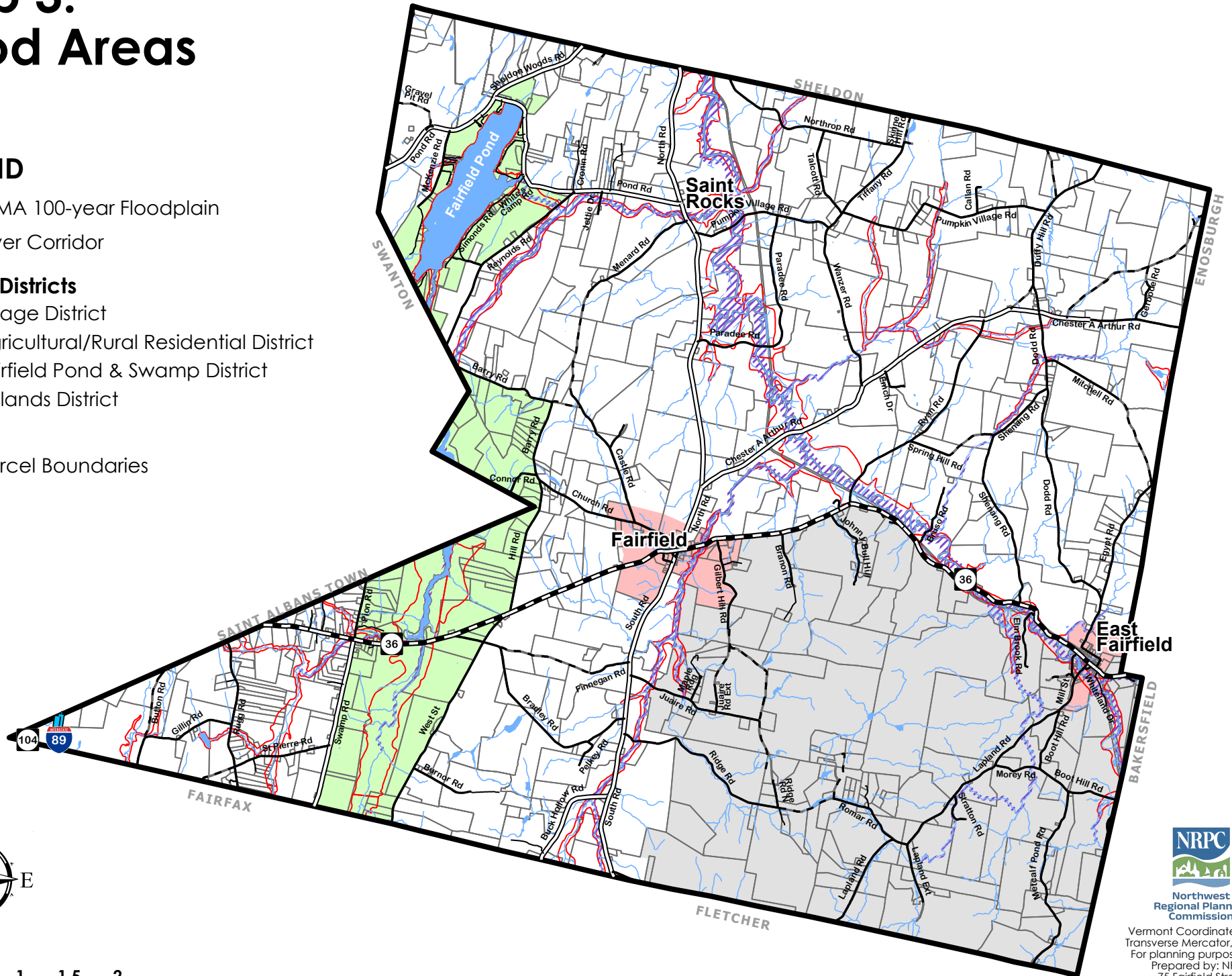
 Agricultural/Rural Residential District

 Fairfield Pond & Swamp District

 Uplands District

Parcels

 Parcel Boundaries



0 0.5 1 1.5 2
Miles

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Map 4: Protected Lands

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Protected Lands

-  Vermont Land Trust
-  State of Vermont
-  Town of Fairfield
-  City of St. Albans

Wellhead Protection

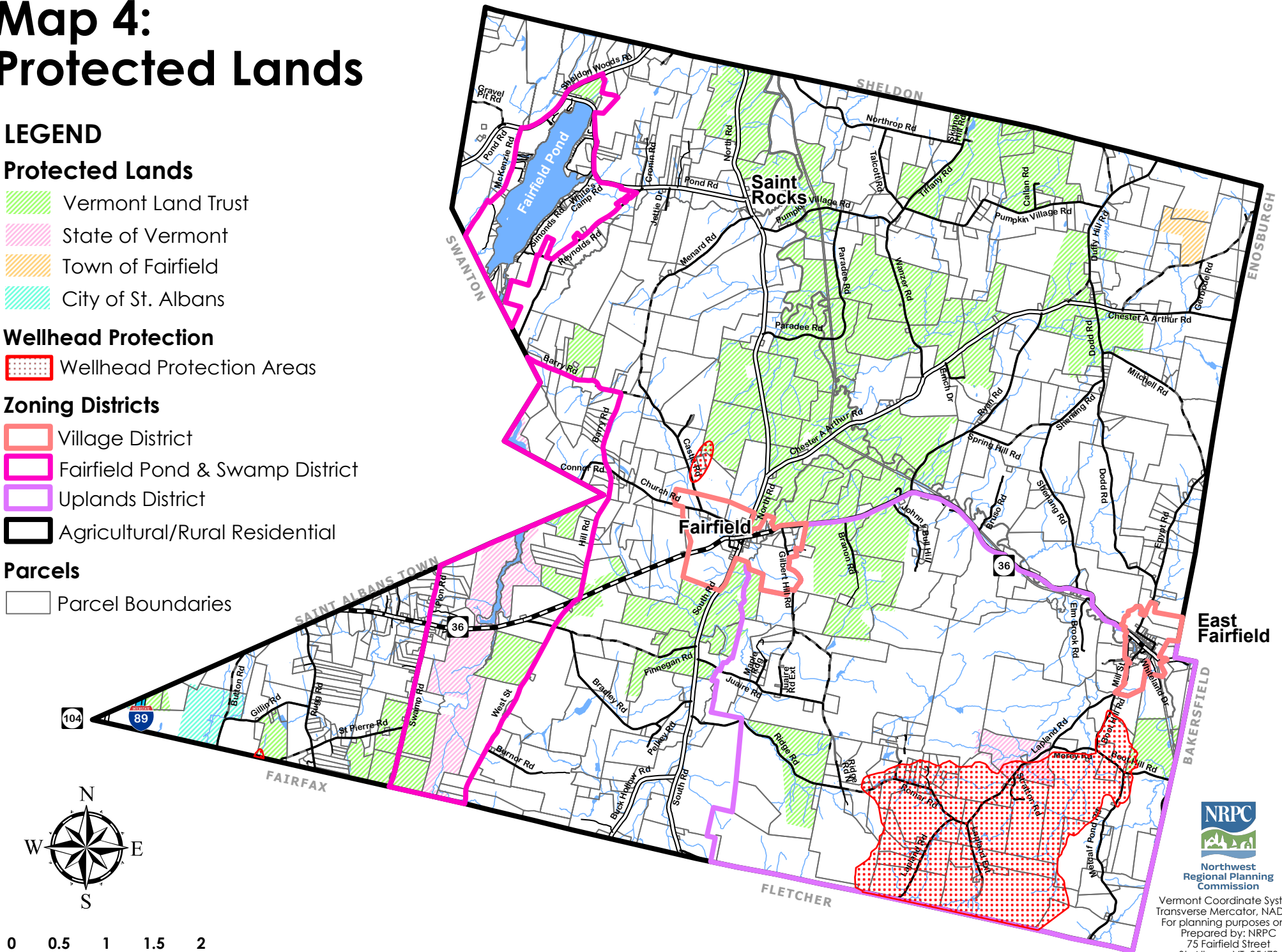
-  Wellhead Protection Areas

Zoning Districts

-  Village District
-  Fairfield Pond & Swamp District
-  Uplands District
-  Agricultural/Rural Residential

Parcels

-  Parcel Boundaries



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Map 5: Slopes

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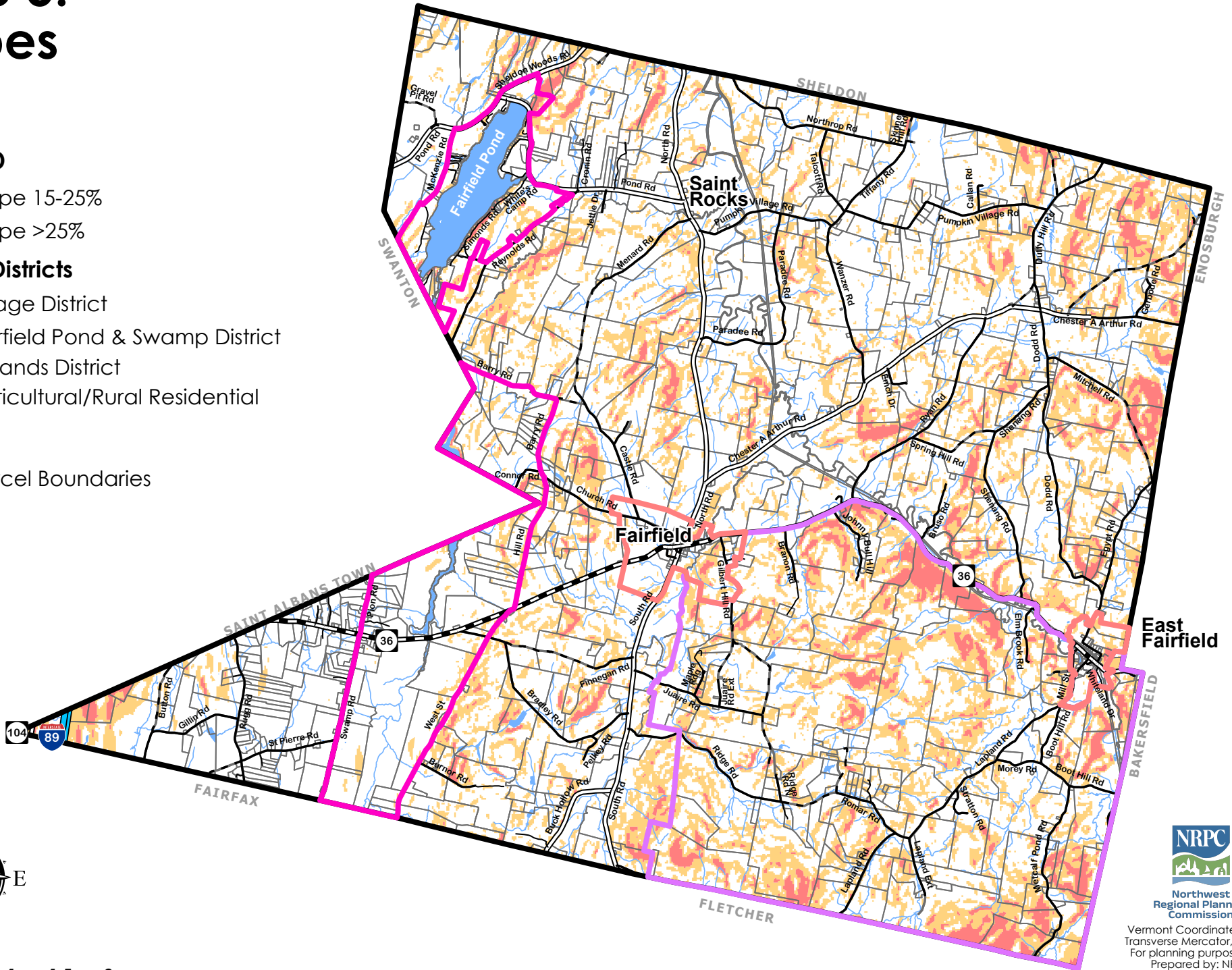
- Slope 15-25%
- Slope >25%

Zoning Districts

- Village District
- Fairfield Pond & Swamp District
- Uplands District
- Agricultural/Rural Residential

Parcels

- Parcel Boundaries



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Map 6: Current Use

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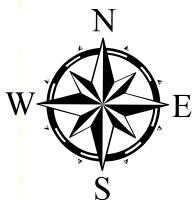
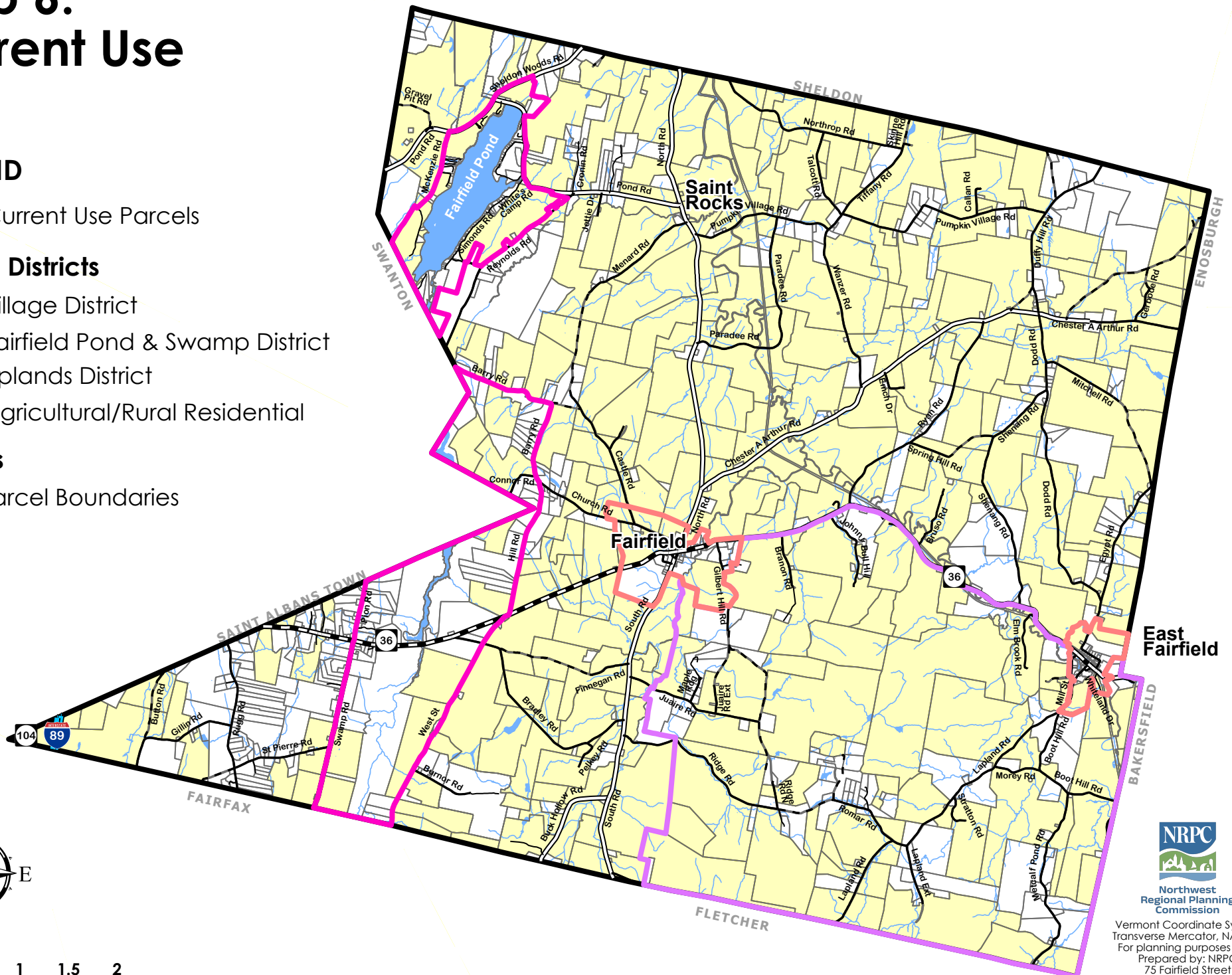
 Current Use Parcels

Zoning Districts

-  Village District
-  Fairfield Pond & Swamp District
-  Uplands District
-  Agricultural/Rural Residential

Parcels

 Parcel Boundaries



0 0.5 1 1.5 2
Miles

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Map 7: Habitat Blocks & Rare Species

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Habitat Blocks

- Highest Priority Interior Forest Blocks
- Highest Priority Connectivity Blocks
- Riparian Wildlife Connectivity Blocks

Significant Species

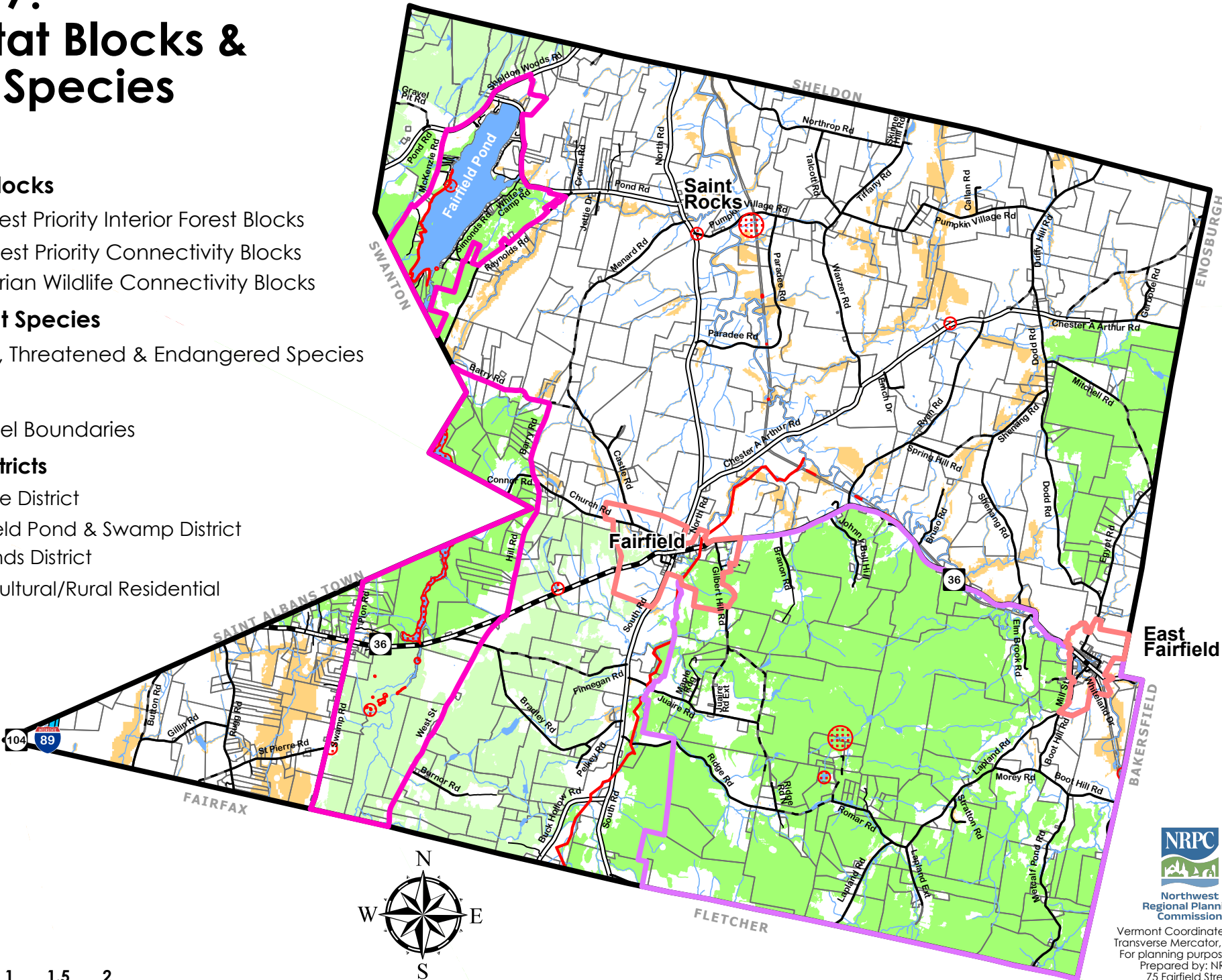
- Rare, Threatened & Endangered Species

Parcels

- Parcel Boundaries

Zoning Districts

- Village District
- Fairfield Pond & Swamp District
- Uplands District
- Agricultural/Rural Residential



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Map 8: Septic Soils

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Septic Soils

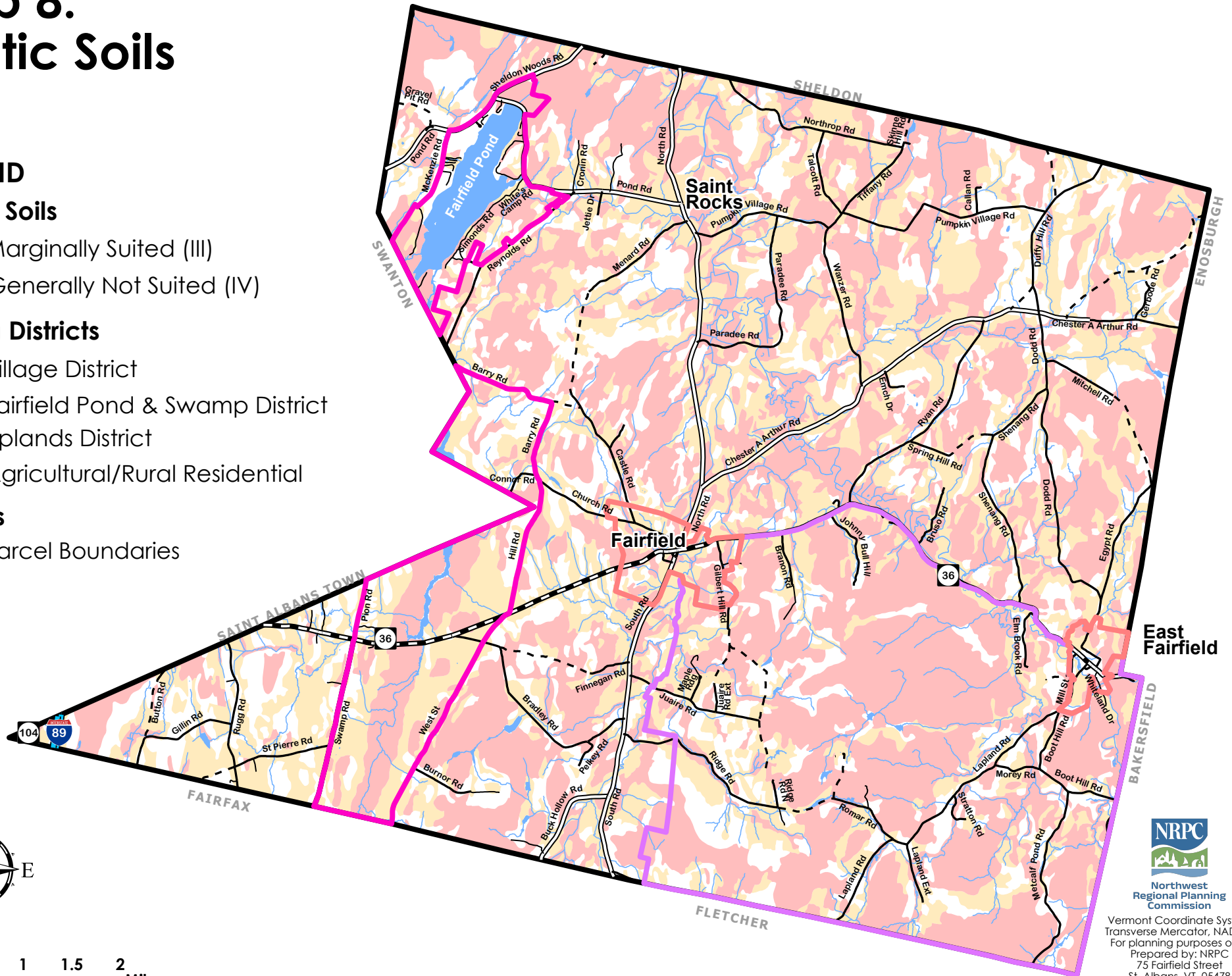
- Marginally Suited (III)
- Generally Not Suited (IV)

Zoning Districts

- Village District
- Fairfield Pond & Swamp District
- Uplands District
- Agricultural/Rural Residential

Parcels

- Parcel Boundaries



0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

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