

Section 1: Planning with a Purpose

Planning helps the Town prepare for the future, to overcome problems, meet opportunities, and achieve community goals. Planning means that future decisions provide long-term solutions rather than stopgap measures. Rather than leaving future development to chance, the plan allows the people of Fairfax to guide the nature, location, and timing of any future development.

8. A statement indicating plan compatibility with plans and trends in adjacent municipalities, the region, and state;
9. An energy plan;
10. A housing element;
11. An economic development element; and
12. A flood resilience plan.

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- Deleted:** Since communities exist primarily for the health and enjoyment of those who live in them, it follows that
- Deleted:** should be determined by the people of Fairfax rather than left solely to chance.

What's In the Plan?

The plan for the Town of Fairfax must consider many connected factors. The plan looks at Fairfax's history, current trends, natural resource limitations, and potential futures. These elements help us decide what is possible and what may be desirable in our future.

State law requires that municipal plans be updated and readopted every eight years to remain in effect. Once adopted, the plan forms the basis for policy implementation at the local level, including the zoning & subdivision regulations. The Plan also plays a role in evaluation of developments subject to state review such as Act 250 an development subject to the Certificate of Public Good process (energy generation and telecommunications projects). The Plan's stated goals and policies makes residents and those looking to develop in Fairfax aware of the desires of the Town.

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- Deleted:** t; prior to July 1, 2015 plans were required to be updated every five years.
- Deleted:** the comprehensive plan allows the Town to exercise its authority with regard to the course of its future growth and development. It forms
- Deleted:** inter-related
- Deleted:** It is helpful to understand Fairfax's history and traditions to give a perspective for considering our present and our future. Present trends and their likely future impact must be analyzed.
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The plan starts with a broad vision that reflects what Fairfax residents want for our shared future. This vision then informs the Plan's goals, policies and actions across many topics.

Structure of the Town Plan

This document is drafted to comply with Section 4382 of Title 24, Chapter 117, Vermont Statutes Annotated, which outlines the 12 required plan components. They are, briefly:

This plan is split into sections and each major topic area has a series of goals, policies and actions. Goals express broad, long-range community aspirations. Policies are what the Town intends to do on a specific issue or topic. Actions are intended to be "SMART"—specific, measurable, actionable, relevant and time-bound—to form a to-do list for the town and its boards and commissions. This list can be found in Section 2, the Implementation Section of this plan. Appendix 1 is the Fairfax Enhanced Energy Plan enabled per 24 V.S.A. §4352.

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- Deleted:** through stated goals and policies.
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1. A statement of growth related objectives, policies, and programs;
2. A land use plan;
3. A transportation plan;
4. A utility and facility plan;
5. A statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic, and historic features and resources;
6. An educational facilities plan;
7. A recommended program for the implementation of the plan objectives;

There are a number of documents incorporated by reference into this plan including:

❖ **Fairfax Community Data Profile**, which includes the supporting data and information about the past and present town trends in more depth than is covered in the Town Plan. This profile is incorporated by reference so that it can be separately updated and maintained.

❖ **Town of Fairfax Historical Record**
❖ **2026 Fairfax Town Outreach Summary**

These documents will be available by request and posted on the Planning Commission's section of the Town website.

Role of the Planning Commission

The Fairfax Planning Commission prepares and updates the Town Plan. In addition to developing the plan, the Planning Commission supports:

- Plan implementation, which may include the preparation of appropriate regulations (e.g., zoning and or subdivision regulations) and capital

programming to direct the course of future growth and development;

- Preparation of further studies to identify and plan for specific issues that may arise; and
- Regular review and revision of the Plan, Development Regulations, and programs to ensure that they reflect changing conditions and requirements.

Resident Participation

Resident participation is important in all levels of the planning process. There have been opportunities for involvement throughout the Town Plan update process as well as during projects that implement goals and policies of the Plan (see inset Resident Participation).

These efforts are intended to foster the broadest level of public participation possible, and to utilize the planning process as a vehicle for exercising an inclusive, community-wide vision for the future of Fairfax.

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The Town of Fairfax is engaged in a planning process to encourage the appropriate development of land, facilities, and services located within the Town in a manner that will promote the health, safety, and general welfare of its residents. The Fairfax Town Plan provides a framework for the achievement of recognized community goals and policies, while the planning process serves to coordinate public and private actions with these goals and policies. ¶

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Deleted: The Fairfax Planning Commission has a responsible role in all phases of the planning process. This role does not end with the adoption by the Selectboard of a comprehensive plan, but continues in the following areas:

Resident Participation: A History of Involvement

Public input has been utilized in formulating and implementing the Town Plan since the adoption of the first Plan in 1984.

1971 The first meeting of the Fairfax Planning Commission was held March 22, 1971.

1984 The first Town Plan was adopted.

1990 A community survey was mailed to all postal patrons in the Town of Fairfax. The survey received 395 responses. Questions were focused on identifying community needs and concerns, and on defining areas which are most important to protect from future development.

1991-95 Citizen committees were developed to formulate goals, objectives, and policies regarding the future of the Town. Reports from each group were submitted to the Planning Commission for further action.

1997 A follow-up survey similar to that of 1990 was distributed to Fairfax residents. Results were tabulated and compared to results from 1990 to gauge similarities and changes in citizen ideas and concerns.

2002-03 Citizen focus groups were formed according to geography. The Planning Commission coordinated ten separate meetings through late 2002 into early 2003.

2007-08 A community survey was mailed to all postal patrons in the Town of Fairfax. The survey received a 19% response rate. The survey asked questions about the rate and pattern of growth in the community, important community issues, and the quality of town services.

2012-2013 The Village Vision Steering Committee held four public informational events to inform community members project and to provide an opportunity for residents to identify opportunities, express concerns and foster open dialogue.

This Committee also provided input to a long-term vision for a network of bicycle and walking facilities in and around the Village that would maximize non-motorized mobility and conveniently link the Village with the rest of the Town.

2017 A booth during the Fourth of July celebrations displayed a series of posters to kick off public outreach on the Plan update.

A community survey was distributed in property tax mailing (1850 recipients) and on social media; 258 surveys were completed.

2026 A community planning sessions was advertised to all postal customers in Fairfax with 35 attendees in person and 10 responses online. (More information to be added throughout process).

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Overall Community Vision

1. Efficiently use public funds to maintain and improve public utilities and services while maintaining a stable tax rate.
2. Focus future development and housing towards the Village and South Village while preserving farmland and natural resources in rural areas of Fairfax.
3. Promote the development of a variety of housing for all segments of the population.
4. Maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for all residents.
5. Maintain and strengthen a diverse local economy built on locally-owned businesses and clean industry.
6. Provide broad access to quality educational and vocational services which respond to the needs of a growing community.
7. Promote the efficient use of energy and encourage the development of renewable energy resources.
8. Provide a safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems for all including bicycle and pedestrian travel.

Fairfax is a thriving small town. The scenic beauty of Mount Mansfield and the Lamoille River provide the background for traditional villages and rural farmland. Small local businesses and clean industry provide amenities and a strong tax base. Fairfax's residents enjoy a strong public school system, community facilities, road network and recreational facilities. Careful budgeting ensure tax rates remain stable, ensuring future generations can afford life in Fairfax.

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To develop, maintain and implement any plans or studies as necessary to achieve the goals and policies set forth by the Town of Fairfax Plan.¶
To preserve the natural, cultural, and historic features and activities which define the rural character and scenic beauty of Fairfax.¶

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