

CHAPTER 7. LAND USE

Goals

- To maintain Bakersfield’s rural character and scenic resources through informed land use decisions
- To accommodate future growth in patterns, densities, and locations that respect traditional patterns of development, and that do not compromise the integrity of natural, historic and cultural resources
- To establish public policies that balance development with the town's ability to provide services
- To protect and promote the continuation of agriculture and forestry as integral components of Bakersfield’s local economy and culture through land use planning

Policies

1. Promote new development in areas of existing infrastructure and services (roads, power, and water) and discourage development in areas without existing infrastructure and services.
2. Promote anti-sprawl initiatives as a measure to maintain the appropriate use of the town’s land resources
3. Protect the vitality and importance of Bakersfield Village by designating it as the primary focus for commerce while preserving its essential historic character and beauty
4. Discourage development in areas which are hazardous to human health and safety
5. In subdivision review, encourage lot layouts, landscaping and site design that respect the natural features of the landscape and do not create long, narrow lots which contribute to sprawl and waste irreplaceable agricultural and silvicultural resources
6. Prohibit siting cellular and wind towers on specific scenic ridgelines identified in this plan.
7. Development in existing neighborhoods in the village should respect historic resources, maintain compact settlement patterns and avoid potential conflicts between incompatible land uses.
8. Conserve agriculturally productive lands by accommodating development in areas apart from most farming activity and from areas of prime agricultural soils
9. Encourage sustainable agricultural and silvicultural practices to both protect the use of land and water resources, and to keep a working rural landscape based on a practice of stewardship
10. Promote alternative small farms which produce products such as cheese, yogurt, market garden, etc.

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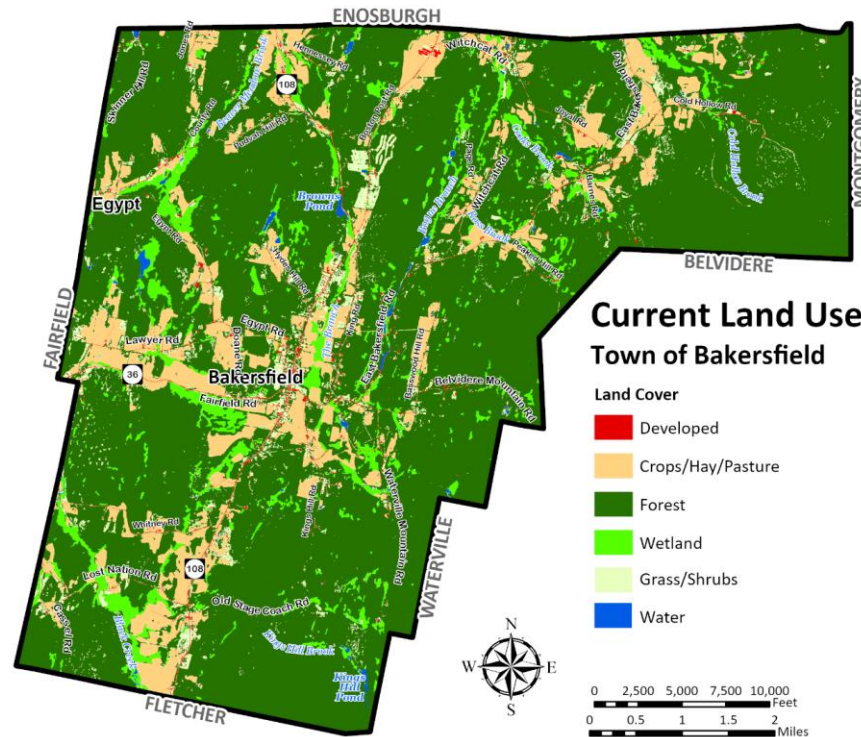
Town Plan

In developing the land use plan for Bakersfield, it is important to recognize the many physical constraints to development. Steep slopes limit development in many areas of town, and nearly a third of the land (8,610 acres) has a slope greater than 20 percent. The town also has two small bodies of water, Brown's and Kings Hill Ponds, with a total area of only 16 acres and 1057 acres of class 2 wetlands which account for almost 4 percent of its land area. The overall goal of Bakersfield's land use plan is to encourage development in and around Bakersfield Village and reduce development pressure on rural lands and sensitive areas.

Current Land Use and Development Trends

Currently, the highest concentration of residential development in Bakersfield lies within the village area. This is also the district where commercial development is considered to be most appropriate. The higher density development that exists within the village creates a strong sense of community and is an efficient use of land. The village also provides important public services including the Town Hall, post office, school, library, fire department and historical society.

The village is an important asset and should be promoted and preserved by encouraging historic preservation, economic development, and the adaptive reuse of existing structures. Village sidewalks, the reuse of Brigham Academy, and other projects intended to maintain and improve the quality of life in Bakersfield village should be encouraged and supported through thoughtful land use decisions. Sprawling development patterns that fragment the landscape and detract from Bakersfield's rural character are discouraged.



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Agriculture and forestry continue to be important components of the local culture and economy. It is important to remember that owners of farms and forests provide a public benefit by not developing their property, and cost the town little in terms of municipal services. These areas provide scenic vistas, important wildlife habitat, and other contributions to the well-being of the town.

The development of farms and forests for residential use can be profitable for individual landowners. This creates pressures for development. It is important that this development be guided by good land use planning in order to maintain the unique character of our community and ensure that local services are not overwhelmed. The use of planned unit development provides a tool for Bakersfield to accommodate some residential development, while protecting the working landscape and open land. PUDs allow for a more flexible design approach and provide an opportunity for the planning commission to work with landowners and developers to create subdivisions that reflect the goals and values of Bakersfield, including clustered development, the provision of common land, and the protection of prime agricultural soils.

As currently implemented, the Town has concerns about the Fixed Area Allocation system that is currently used for subdivisions. The Town should ensure that this system is not contributing to fragmentation and loss of farm and forest land. Other options for zoning in rural areas may be more appropriate meet the goals of the Land Use plan, and should be explored in future zoning updates.

Future Land Use

The town of Bakersfield divides its future land use map into the following districts: Village, High Density Residential, Low Density Residential, Rural, Conservation, Aquifer Overlay, and Flood Hazard Overlay. The purposes of these districts are summarized below. These districts represent both the existing and future land uses in the Town of Bakersfield. These districts are implemented through Bakersfield's zoning regulations, and it is important that Bakersfield's zoning conforms to the Land Use plan.

Village Center District: The Village Center represents the historic center of Bakersfield. This district has a distinct historic character which features mixed residential, commercial and public uses in a historic village setting. Development in this district should protect and preserve existing historic resources, promote pedestrian access and maintain the village character, including its historic settlement pattern, scenic character and sense of community.

High Density Residential District: This district is comprised of the area around the village center where additional high-density development could be accommodated. This district provides a transition between the compact development of the village center and the rural areas of Bakersfield. It is designed to allow a radial pattern of development around the village in an effort to discourage linear sprawl. Development in this district should

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complement and extend the character and traditional development pattern of the village core. Interconnected street networks and pedestrian access are encouraged in this district.

Rural District: It is intended that this district remain rural, agricultural and silvicultural. The preservation of farmland and prime agricultural soils is a major objective. Rural residential development and compatible rural uses, at a density the land can support are permitted. Clustered development that protects large, contiguous tracts of farmland or open space is appropriate in this district. Within the rural district, additional restrictions are included to protect an important Heron Rookery in northwestern Bakersfield, consistent with the requests of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Conservation District: This district is designated to protect the natural resources and scenic value of mainly forested lands that lack direct access to public roads, are important for wildlife and wildlife habitat, and which are poorly suited for development. Included are areas of high elevation, steep slopes and swamplands. Concern must be given to building on any slope greater than 15% because the soils in these areas tend to be thin and unstable, making them unsuitable for development. The Conservation District includes the watershed that provides Bakersfield's municipal water supply and land uses that might reduce the water quality in this area are restricted. Only limited, low-density development is to be permitted in this district.

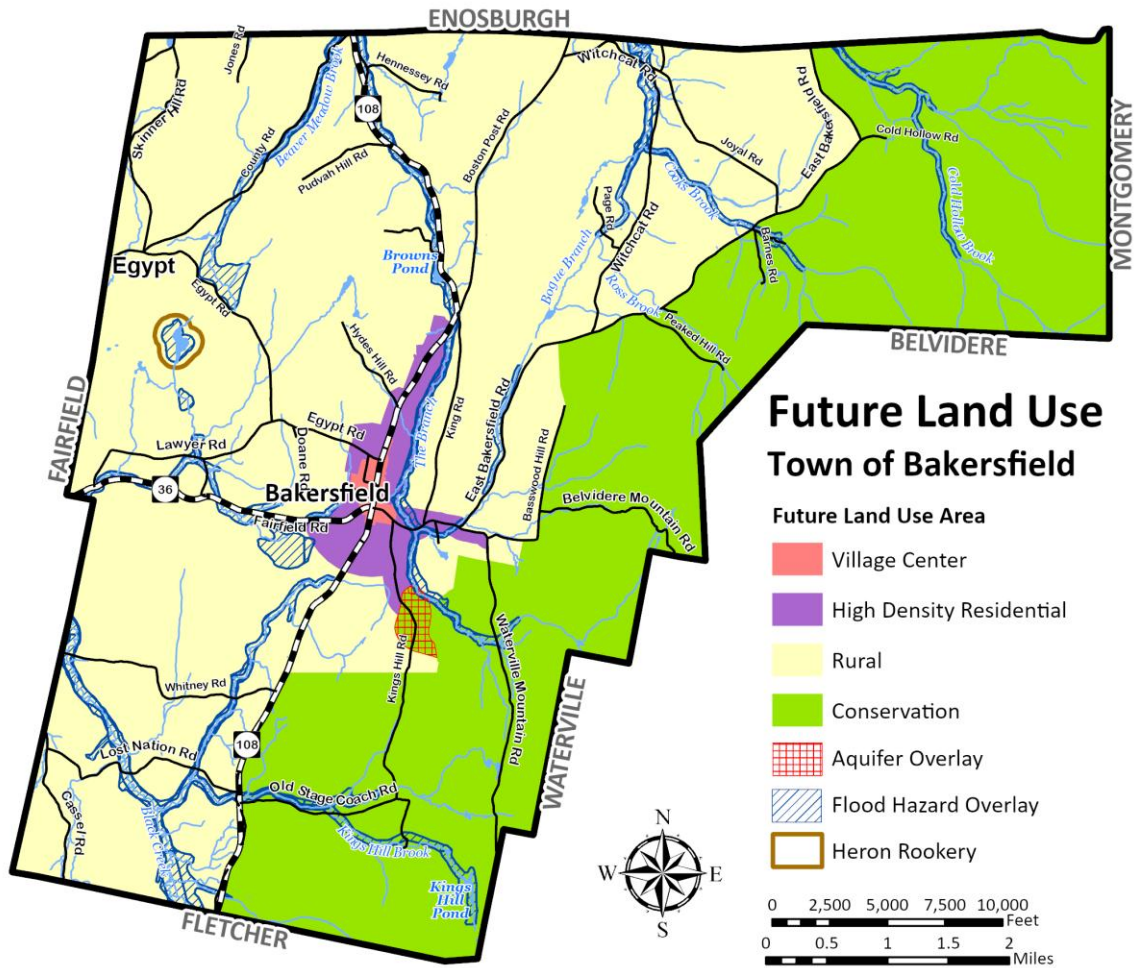
Aquifer Overlay District: The purpose of the Aquifer Overlay District is to protect the public health and safety by preserving and maintaining the community water source from incompatible development. No new construction is permitted within the Aquifer Overlay District.

Flood Hazard Overlay District: The purpose of the Flood Hazard Overlay District is to minimize and prevent the loss of life and property, the disruption of commerce, and the extraordinary costs that result from flooding and other flood-related hazards. Within this district, the design and construction of development should be accomplished in a manner that minimizes or eliminates the potential for flooding and loss or damage to life and property. Uses in the flood hazards areas shall be restricted to agriculture, conservation and outdoor recreation.

The map of Future Land Use Districts is on the next page.

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CHAPTER 8. HOUSING

Goals

- To ensure the provision of adequate, safe and affordable housing for all income and age groups in an environment that is safe and visually attractive
- To promote new and renovated residential development that reinforces and reflects the traditional forms and historic patterns of residential community settlements and efficiently utilizes existing and planned infrastructure

Policies

1. Conserve and protect the quality and vitality of existing residential neighborhoods and encourage the renovation of old and deteriorating dwellings.
2. Locate new housing, especially housing for elderly and disabled residents, in proximity to Bakersfield village and existing infrastructure and services. Consider using the Brigham Academy building for this purpose.
3. In rural areas, work with developers to site new housing in a way that blends harmoniously with the surrounding landscape and preserves continuous blocks of agricultural and forest land.
4. Determine residential densities on the basis of topography, soil conditions, proximity to highways, cost of providing mandated public services, and conservation of natural resources.
5. Promote innovative approaches to developing affordable housing, including planned unit developments.
6. Allow the building of accessory dwelling units within or attached to single family residences in accordance with state law.
7. Ensure that land use regulations do not restrict multifamily and manufactured housing in accordance with state law.
8. Support efforts that assist elderly and disabled residents who want to remain in their homes, and community-based health care systems that enable elderly and disabled people to remain in their communities.
9. Encourage high quality design, efficient construction, and energy efficiency to provide affordable housing that minimizes environmental costs.

All Bakersfield residents, present and future, should have safe and affordable housing. However, if poorly planned, housing development can increase demands on available facilities and services and may adversely affect environmentally sensitive areas. Planning is necessary to meet anticipated needs, to avoid overburdening services, and to protect natural resources. Planning should include not only the character of the housing stock, but also the patterns of development within the community and housing affordability.

Housing Data

Households

The 2020 Census reported 497 households in Bakersfield. Overall, households are getting smaller. The average household size was 2.56, compared to 2.77 in 2000. The most common household type are couples without children, which account for almost half of all households in Bakersfield. Roughly 17% of Bakersfield residents live alone.

Figure 8.2: Housing Units vs. Population, 1940-2020

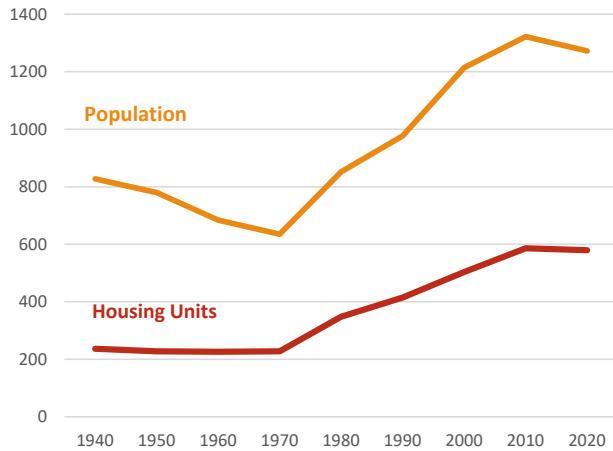
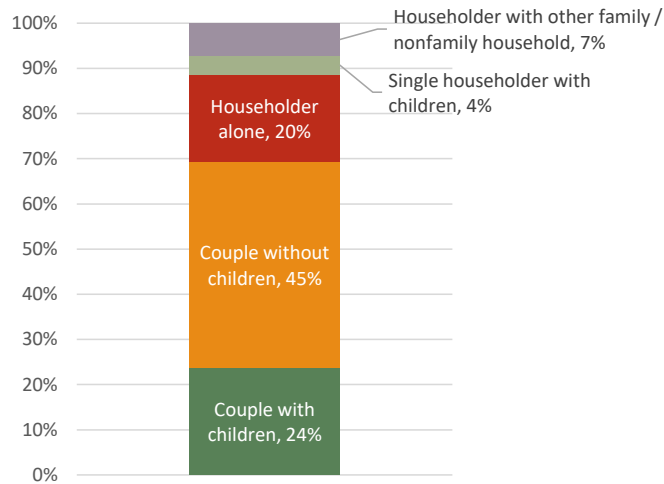


Figure 8.1: Households by type (2024)



Housing Stock

Bakersfield had a period of rapid growth in housing stock between 1970 and 2010. During that period 358 housing units were added, which more than doubled the housing supply. However, this period of growth has not continued since 2010, and the number of housing units declined slightly from 2010 to 2020. This is consistent with a similar slight loss of population during the same period.

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Recently, 3-6 building permits for new homes have been issued each year in Bakersfield. 20 years ago, this number was much higher. Today, most housing units in Bakersfield were built either before 1940 or between 1980-2000.

The 2020 Census showed a total of 579 housing units in Bakersfield. Of these units, only 27 are renter-occupied according to the 2024 American Community Survey. 97% of housing units are single-family homes, and 3% are mobile homes. ACS data also estimates that Bakersfield has about 57 units that are seasonally occupied.

Figure 8.3: Number of Building Permits Issued per Year in Bakersfield, 2000-2025

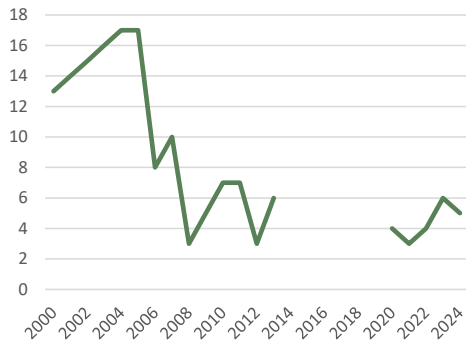


Figure 8.4: Bakersfield Housing Units by Age (2024)

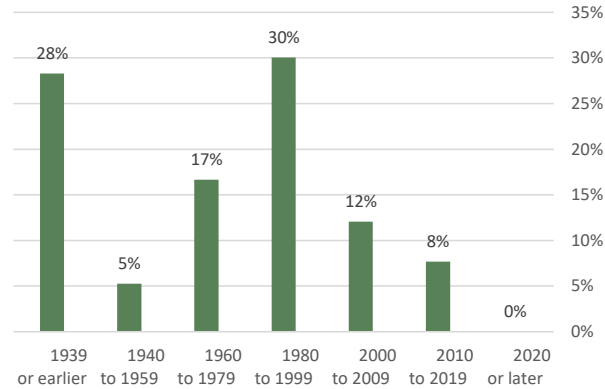
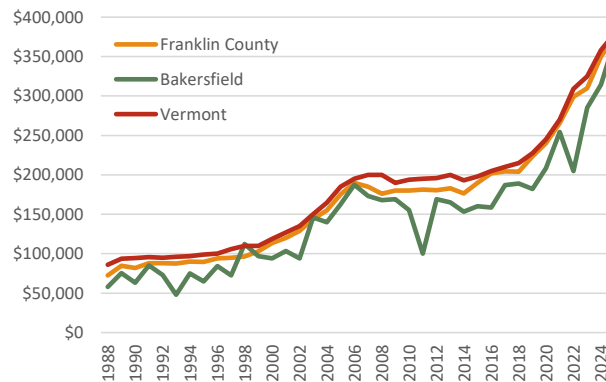


Figure 8.5: Median Primary Home Sale Price



Housing Affordability

Housing costs have increased rapidly statewide in recent years (Figure 9.5), which makes access to affordable housing an important issue across Vermont. Bakersfield's median home sale price has more than doubled since 2019. The median cost of a home in Bakersfield was \$370,000 in 2025, which is similar to the county (\$375,000) and state (\$379,000) median.

According to the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, a household would need a median income of \$123,748 to afford the median home in Bakersfield. This means that currently only the top 20% of Bakersfield households by income can affordably buy a home in their community.

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According to the 2024 American Community Survey, 1 out of 5 homeowner households in Bakersfield are cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs.

Because the portion of renter households in Bakersfield is very small, it is difficult to obtain accurate data about the affordability of rental units. The estimated median rent in Bakersfield is \$1,200 (2024 ACS), which is affordable for a household with an income of \$48,000. This indicates that rental units are generally affordable, but the supply of rental units is still very small (only 27 total).

Housing Needs

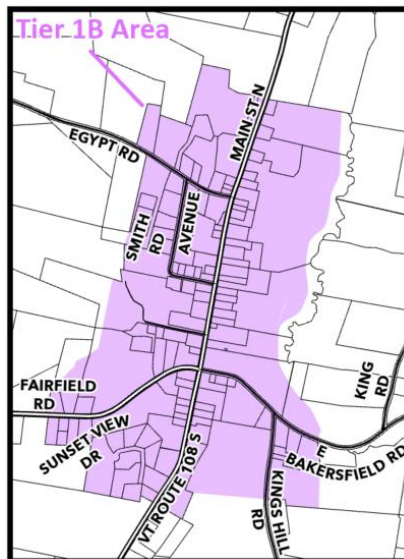
Bakersfield's future depends on increasing the supply and affordability of housing in the Town. Otherwise, future generations may have to leave the community to find housing elsewhere. As required by state law, the housing goal for Bakersfield is to have at least 28 new housing units by 2030 and at least 82 new housing units by 2050. If development trends of the last 5 years continue, Bakersfield will have 18 new units by 2030. Meeting housing goals will require a major change in the amount of housing built in Bakersfield.

Housing cost and supply are largely determined by large-scale economic forces outside of the Town's control. However, there are still steps that the Town can take at a local level to support housing. Bakersfield has opted in to Tier 1B, which makes housing developments of up to 50 units in areas of Bakersfield Village exempt from Act 250 (see map). Tier 1B areas are based on the NRPC Regional Plan and are separate from zoning boundaries. The Town can also review its zoning regulations to ensure that they are not overly restrictive.

Housing Goals

2030: 28-43 units

2050: 82-168 units



Defining Affordable Housing

At an individual level, housing is considered affordable when a household spends 30% or less of their total income on housing. At the community level, affordability is defined based on the metropolitan statistical area or county median household income. Bakersfield is within the Burlington-South Burlington Metropolitan Statistical Area (Chittenden, Franklin and Grand Isle Counties), and has a similar median income to the MSA as a whole. Therefore, this plan uses the MSA median income to determine affordability.

Rental housing: Rent affordable to a household earning 80% of the MSA median income (\$71,692)

Home purchase: Mortgage affordable to a household earning 120% of the MSA median income (\$107,538)

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Most new housing should be built in Bakersfield Village and the surrounding High-Density Residential zoning district. The Town supports gentle infill in the Village, such as adding accessory dwelling units, duplexes, and small multi-unit apartments that fit the existing historic settlement pattern. The Town also supports rehabilitation of historic structures for housing where appropriate.

Outside of the village, development should be at a rate consistent with the rural nature of the area. The Town supports Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), which allow for the clustering of development to conserve rural countryside and the working agricultural and forest landscape. The Town also supports affordable housing options such as manufactured homes. Additionally, the town of Bakersfield currently does not have specific housing for senior citizens. The town, county, and the state have all seen a steady increase in their median ages since 1970. Because the population is aging as a whole, steps need to be taken to ensure that there is adequate and affordable housing available for senior citizens. The Town currently has a purchase and sales option with a private developer to convert the Brigham Academy building in Bakersfield Village into units of senior housing. This project will be an important step in accomplishing the Town's housing goals.

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CHAPTER 9. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goals

- To promote a balanced, diverse economic base where residents have access to satisfying and rewarding job opportunities at a livable wage.
- To promote and sustain the local agricultural and forestry economies.
- To support the Village as the economic center of Bakersfield and encourage the growth of small businesses that serve the needs of local residents.
- To support and encourage low-impact, home-based businesses throughout the town.

Policies

1. Investigate opportunities to attract small businesses to the Village that serve the needs of the community, including a cooperative-based general store that sells products from local businesses.
2. Maintain zoning bylaws to support the development of home businesses and home industries that fit with the rural character of the community.
3. Support the maintenance and upgrade of broadband internet and cell phone service to support existing and future businesses.
4. Provide infrastructure in appropriate areas to attract and retain businesses that are consistent with land use goals.
5. Support agriculture and forestry related businesses and protect productive agricultural and forestry lands from conversion to incompatible land uses.
6. Commercial and industrial development should not place an undue burden on the Town in terms of services and facilities required from their development and its associated impacts.

The Bakerfield economy includes the natural resources, businesses, jobs, income and activities in the town and region that contribute to the economic well-being of local residents, businesses and industries. A healthy well-planned economy is one with well-paying jobs that match the skills of residents , which has a balanced tax base to meet community needs, where t important resources are protected, and which supports local businesses that provide services and products needed in the community. The future economy of Bakersfield must be one where goods and services are accessible, resources are used sustainably, local strengths are built upon, and all residents can achieve success.

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Local Economy

Employment Characteristics

Historically, the Bakersfield economy has relied heavily on agriculture, forestry and education. Today, the largest employment sector for Bakersfield residents is educational services, health care and social assistance. Figure 9.1 shows the industry sectors within which Bakersfield residents are employed.

Among workers who commute, 50% commute to other towns in Franklin County and 30% commute to Chittenden County (2023 U.S. Census OnTheMap Tool).

Less than 2% of Bakersfield residents work for Bakersfield based-employers. Note that this does not count self-employed or remote workers who live in Bakersfield. Data on remote work is difficult to obtain, but anecdotal evidence shows that remote work has grown since the COVID-19 pandemic and residents may have more opportunities to work from home.

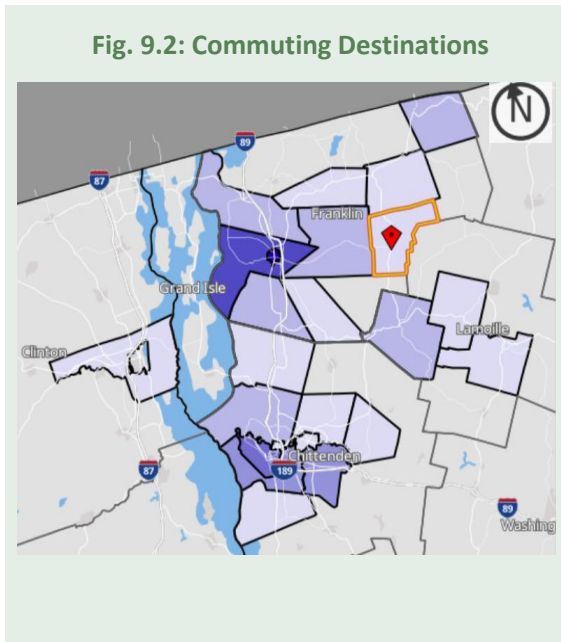
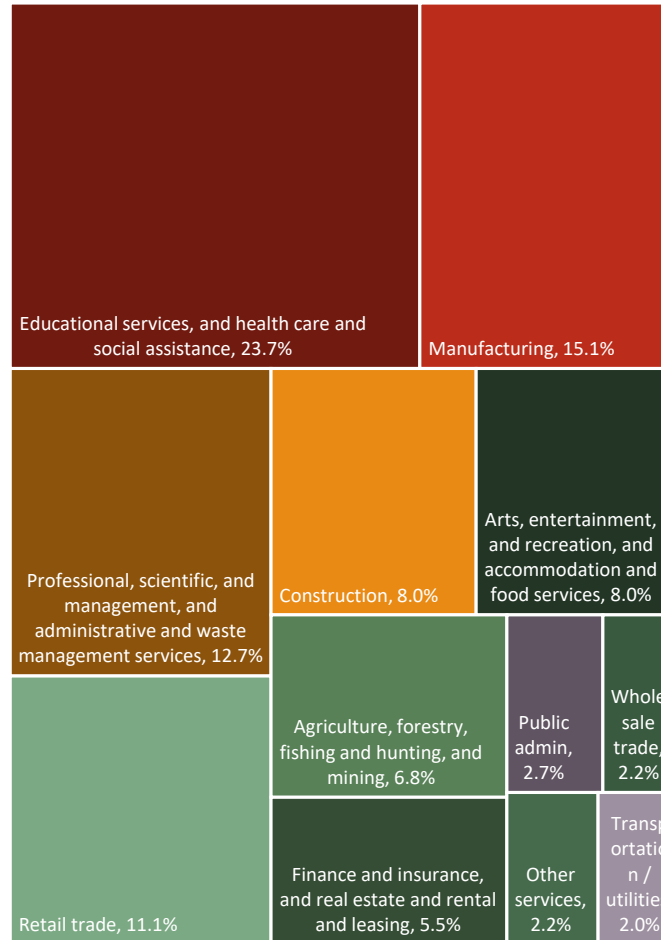


Fig. 9.1: Occupation of Bakersfield Residents



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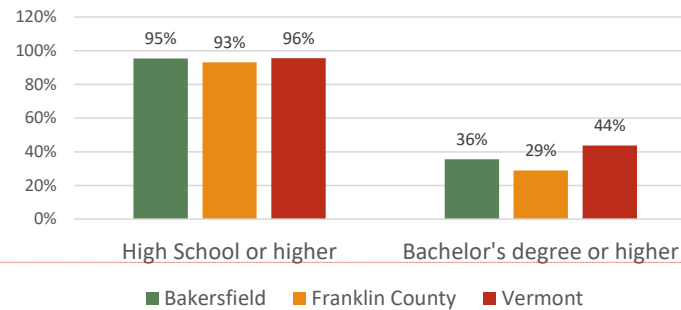
95% of Bakersfield residents over age 24 have a high school diploma or higher. This rate is roughly the same as in Franklin County and statewide. 36% of Bakersfield residents over age 24 have a Bachelor's degree or higher. This rate is higher than Franklin County as a whole but lower than the state average.

Local Businesses

Agriculture continues to have a substantial presence in Bakersfield. This includes five dairy farms in Bakersfield, and there are a growing number of small farms engaged in livestock and local/organic food production. There are also several maple sugar producers that process and market their own syrup, and two tree farms that raise and sell Christmas trees.

According to a 2024 report from the Vermont Department of Labor, there were 9 commercial establishments in Bakersfield that had 56 employees total. Main Street in the Village has historically been Bakersfield's commercial center, however there are currently no longer any businesses there beyond a gas station/convenience store and a small café. The Bakersfield Village Market general store closed in 2021.

Fig. 9.3: Educational Attainment Age 25+, 2024



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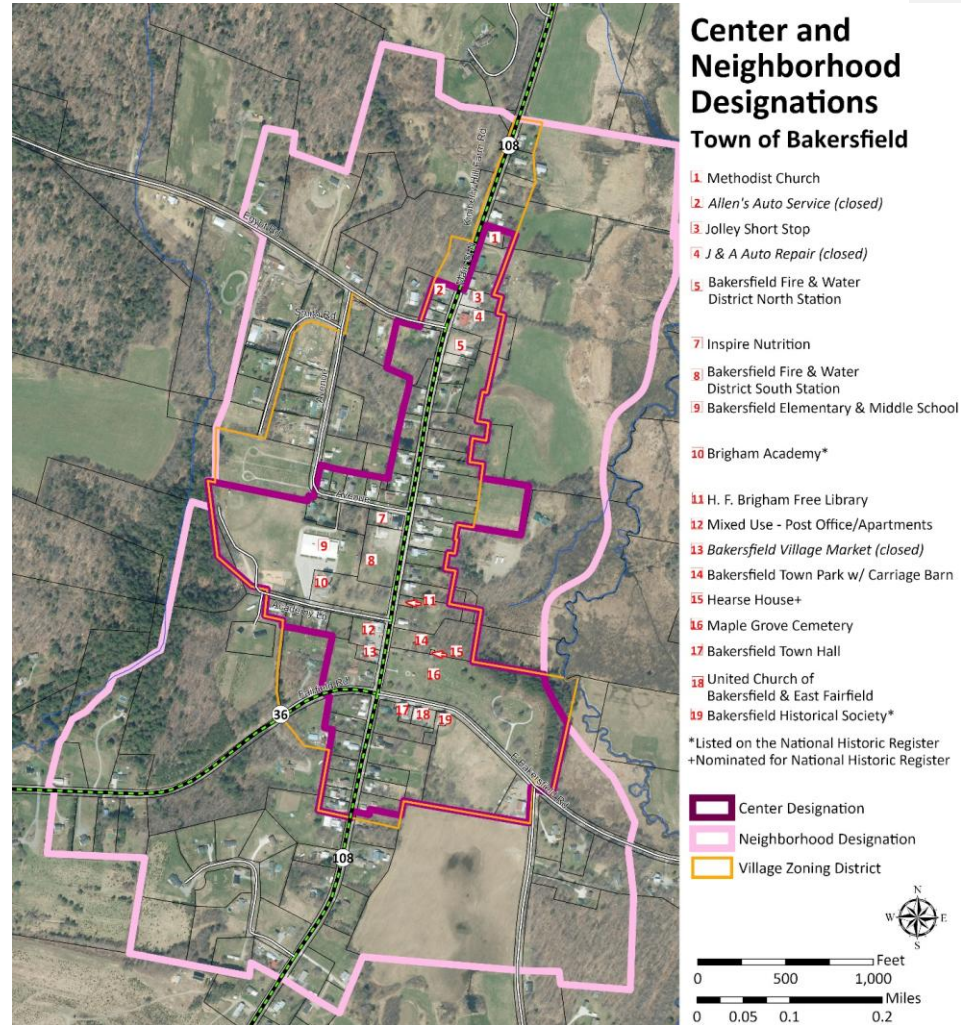
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Designated Center and Neighborhood

Bakersfield has a Designated Center which extends along Main Street, and a Designated Neighborhood which extends into the surrounding area. These areas are designated by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development. The Center and Neighborhood Designations qualify Bakersfield for grants, tax credits, and other incentives from the State of Vermont to encourage economic development in these areas.

Bakersfield gained a Center designation in 2011, when the program was known as the Designated Village Center program. In 2026, the Center area was expanded, and the new Neighborhood designation was established.

These designated areas are intended to foster investment in and around the Village. This will in turn further the goals included in this plan, such as promoting a mix of development in the village and focusing any economic development within Bakersfield within the village. It will also help further state planning goals such as maintaining “historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside” and “provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental standards.”



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Future Economic Development

General Store

Bakersfield's general store closed in 2021. There are currently no other local options available for purchasing groceries, food, and other day to day needs. Some items are available at the gas station convenience store, but it is not locally run and selection is limited. Residents largely have to travel to businesses outside of Bakersfield to eat and shop.

Public outreach has shown strong support for establishing a cooperative general store in the Village. A general store would allow residents to support a local business for their daily needs. Like many other small towns in Vermont, the general store would be a gathering place and a center of community that brings life to the Village. The store would also be an opportunity to sell products from local based businesses, further supporting Bakersfield's economy.

The Town should collaborate with community groups and investigate funding opportunities to bring a cooperative general store to the Village. Opportunities include the Village Trust Initiative, which has funded similar projects statewide. Strong local support is necessary for such a project to work, and outreach results show that this is a high priority for residents.

Brigham Academy

The Brigham Academy is envisioned as the foundation of Bakersfield Village. The Town currently has a purchase and sales option with a private developer to convert the building into senior housing, Adding a commercial component or community space would bring further economic benefits to the Village. The Town should continue to play an active role in its redevelopment to ensure that its restoration brings as much benefit to the Village as possible.

Survey Question: If you could change one thing about Bakersfield, what would it be?

"In a dream world, there would be a way to revitalize a town store. Communal, casual gathering places are historically essential to the fabric of a society, of any size."

"A small store, like a co-op, that carried fruits and vegetables, bread, local products, etc."

"We need to have the general store back. it was a great loss."

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Other Economic Development

Continued economic health for the Town of Bakersfield lies in the maintenance of viable agricultural soils to support all forms of agricultural activity and the provision of goods and services that support an agrarian economy. The Town encourages efforts that support its agricultural base, including the protection of primary agricultural soils and enrollment in the Use Value Appraisal (Current Use) program.

However, Economic and Labor Market information trends show that agricultural employment has been in steady decline, and more people commute outside of the Town to work. To complement agriculture in Bakersfield's rural economy, small home and farm based businesses are also encouraged. Locally produced products and services, including value-added agricultural products, can enhance the Town's economy and provide more economic opportunities for residents. One way to encourage the growth of small businesses would be to bring more reliable cellular and internet service to residents and businesses throughout the Town.

Tourists, attracted by the beauty of the town's agricultural landscape, may also play a greater role in the Town's economic future. Related development such as bed and breakfasts, farmers markets, craft shops, or eateries could add to the local economic base.

Challenges to Economic Development

The Town is faced with several challenges to local economic development. Many of these challenges are discussed in other chapters of the plan, but are referred to here as they relate to economic development:

- *Sidewalks and paths.* A safe pedestrian and bicycle environment in the Village will contribute to its economic vitality. The Village currently has a small sidewalk network along Main Street. Continued efforts to improve safe walking and biking could attract future development and encourage tourism. As new development occurs in these areas, attention should be given to improving and adding new bike and pedestrian connections.
- *Sewer Infrastructure.* A major barrier to attracting new business in Bakersfield Village is the lack of septic capacity. Bakersfield does not currently have a public wastewater system. At present, there is no plan to add a public wastewater system in Bakersfield. Shared wastewater solutions may be necessary to meet economic development goals in the Village.
- *Cell Service and Internet.* To be able to serve small businesses and provide opportunities for working at home, the Town needs reliable access to internet and cell service. Much of Bakersfield lacks cell service, which is a major barrier to economic development. Expanding cell and internet service would bring major economic development benefits.

Working to implement the goals of the Bakersfield Town Plan as a whole will help to address these challenges and make economic growth possible.