



BAKERSFIELD, VERMONT

# TOWN PLAN

Bakersfield, Vermont

*Adopted by the Bakersfield Selectboard on XX, 2026*

## VISION STATEMENT

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The purpose of this plan is to guide Bakersfield to a better future while preserving what makes this community special. The following statement describes a future supported by Bakersfield residents and the Town that guides the goals and policies of this plan:

*Bakersfield is a quiet, small town with a strong sense of community where people are friendly and neighbors know each other. The Town is Franklin County's gateway into the Green Mountains, where the natural landscape and beautiful setting provide scenic views, peace and quiet and opportunities for recreation. A working landscape of active forests and farms of all sizes continues to be an essential part of the Town's identity and economy. The village center is historic, walkable and supports small businesses that serve the needs of the community and provide places to meet with friends and neighbors.*

Placeholder: Photo

### ***Survey Question: What do you like most about living in Bakersfield?***

*"My beautiful property, my wonderful neighbors"*

*"The history and people in the community who strive to make our town a better place while protecting our historic spaces"*

*"The quaintness, sidewalks, school, the village greens, music in the park, events that bring the community together like July 4<sup>th</sup>"*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## Purpose

The purpose of a municipal plan is to help guide decision-makers to chart the future of a community. A plan is a town's vision for the future. It states related goals and objectives based upon a brief reflection of the past and an analysis of existing conditions. A plan is developed from an established planning program which has involved the public in a variety of ways. Through this collective effort the vision and recommendations have been developed with the best interests of the town as a whole in mind. In other words, a Town Plan is a calculated vision which is put together by the residents of the town.

This Town Plan will help Bakersfield control its future by providing it with the means to direct change. A Town Plan does that by providing the community with a plan of action, or blueprint, which shows a community what it will be like in the future. A Town Plan can help determine what things are going to stay the same and what things are going to change. It defines how those changes are going to happen, and how quickly, or slowly, they are going to take place. A Town Plan gives Bakersfield the power to guide change, and the pace at which change will occur, so that change does not control the town's future. If the recommendations of the plan are implemented, the quality of life in Bakersfield can be positively affected.

Bakersfield Town Officials engage in an ongoing planning program for additional reasons including:

- providing additional information and data to guide decision-makers in developing new policies;
- identifying areas where additional study is needed; and
- providing a foundation for amending the zoning and subdivision bylaws.

Policies within the municipal plan are based on an analysis of current conditions, the input of many residents, housing and population projections, and development trends in the town and the surrounding region. Though many of the goals and policies of this plan are long-term, it is expected that Bakersfield will re-examine them periodically and amend the Plan as needed and as required by law.

## BAKERSFIELD

2026 Town Plan

### Authority

The town of Bakersfield is authorized to prepare and adopt a Municipal Plan via Chapter 117, Title 24 of the VSA (Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act). Section 4382 of the Act dictates what needs to be included in a plan. The intent of the law is to encourage a municipality to "engage in a continuing planning process that will further several stated goals." The Act further states that municipal plans shall be re-examined, updated, and re-adopted every eight years. This process should be ongoing, whereby the Plan is continually reassessed and revised to meet the changing needs of the community. Consequently, there will be future opportunities to review and amend the plan. Residents, community groups, or anyone with an interest in the town is encouraged to provide input into this ever-continuing process at any time.

### Planning Program and Community Outreach

Planning and zoning in Bakersfield began with zoning regulations adopted in 1966. The first Town Plan was adopted in 1992, and the Plan has been updated every 5-8 years since. The most recent major zoning update was in 2012. These are intended to be "living" documents which have been, and will continue to be, updated many times to reflect the ever-changing conditions in Bakersfield. The 2026 Bakersfield Town Plan builds on the previous town plans and furthers the effort to maintain a strong, vibrant community.

The 2026 Bakersfield Town Plan update was completed with assistance from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and support from a Municipal Planning Grant awarded through the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development. This planning process began with a survey of Bakersfield residents. More than 80 Bakersfield residents responded to the survey and provided the planning commission with valuable input on their goals and visions for the community. Residents were also invited to participate in a Community Workshop, which was held in November 2025 and attended by over 50 members of the community. The 2026 Town Plan incorporates the feedback generated from these outreach efforts.



*The Town Plan Update Community Workshop was held on November 6, 2025. Many updates to the goals and policies of this plan were based on the discussions that took place at the workshop.*

## BAKERSFIELD

### 2026 Town Plan

The town of Bakersfield continues to encourage public participation at all levels of the planning process. All Selectboard, Planning Commission and other town meetings are open to the public. Residents are encouraged to attend to offer input and voice their opinions. In addition, Bakersfield has adopted a Declaration of Inclusion which states a commitment to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community.

## The Structure of the Plan

The Bakersfield Town Plan is divided into chapters that address both the required elements of 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117 and other key areas of concern. Each chapter contains background information, including past trends, current status, and future needs intended to inform the town's planning efforts. At the end of each chapter is a set of goals and policies that have been developed by the Planning Commission which are based on the available information and intended to move Bakersfield toward the Vision as highlighted at the beginning of this plan. For the purpose of this plan, the terms "goals" and "policies" are defined below:

- **Goals** reflect the "desired future condition" – although some may not be attainable for many years;
- **Policies** are the strategies to attain the goals.

The Town Plan also concludes with an Implementation Chapter that makes recommendations and identifies specific actions for the town to take in the next five years and beyond.

### ***Bakersfield Declaration of Inclusion***

*"The Town of Bakersfield condemns racism and welcomes all persons, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, disability, or socioeconomic status, and wants everyone to feel safe and welcome in our community.*

*As a town, we formally condemn all discrimination in all of its forms, commit to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community, and will strive to ensure all of our actions, policies, and operating procedures reflect this commitment.*

*The Town of Bakersfield is and will continue to be a place where individuals can live freely and express their opinions."*

# BAKERSFIELD

2026 Town Plan

## Community Profile

The Town of Bakersfield is located in Franklin County in the northwestern part of Vermont. Bakersfield shares borders with the towns of Fletcher, Fairfield, Enosburgh, Montgomery in Franklin County, and Waterville and Belvidere in Lamoille County. Bakersfield is within 20 miles of the City of St. Albans, Franklin County’s largest city, and approximately 40 miles from the City of Burlington, Vermont’s largest City.

## Population

The population of the Town of Bakersfield has fluctuated over the past two centuries (Figure 1.X). In the mid-1800s, the town hit its peak population with more than 1500 residents. Following this peak, the population steadily declined until reaching a turning point in the 1970s. Like many other towns in the Northwest Region, the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought significant growth to Bakersfield. From 1970 to 2010, the

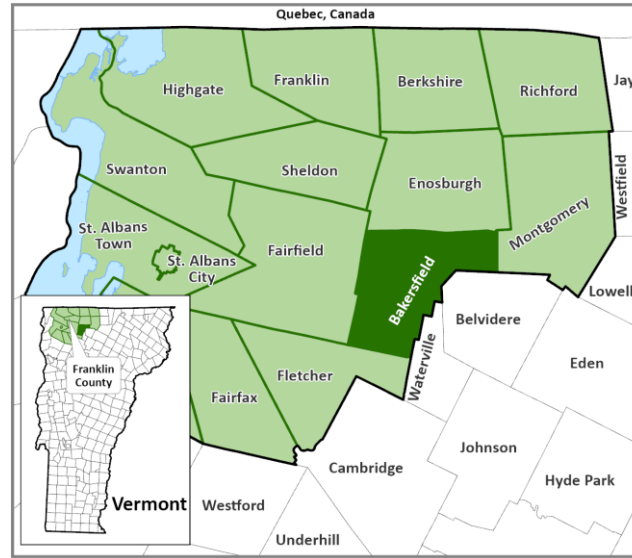
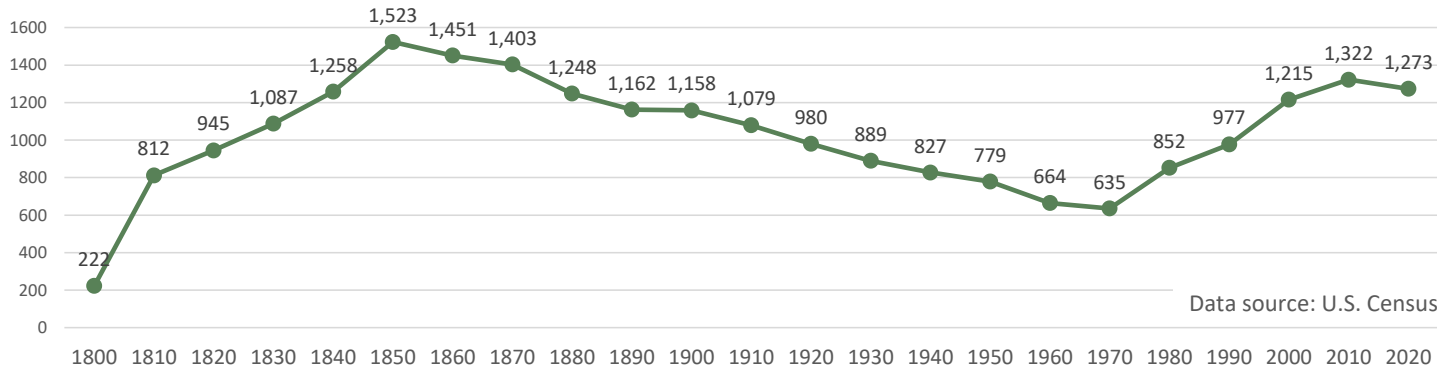


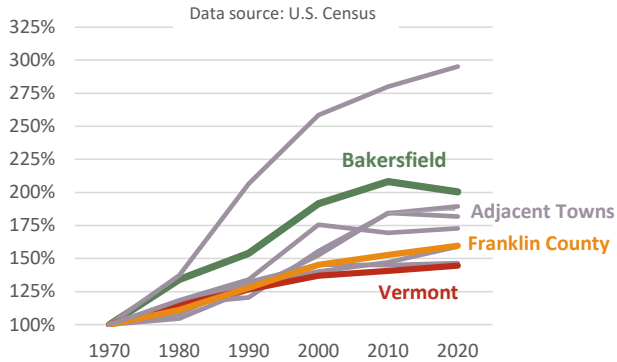
Figure 1.X: Bakersfield Population Trend, 1800-2020



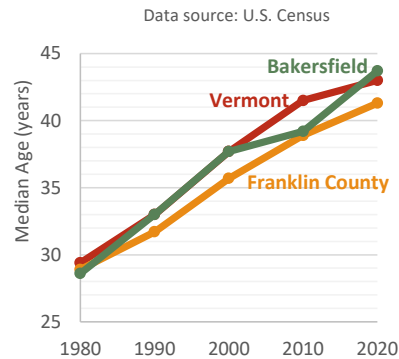
# BAKERSFIELD

2026 Town Plan

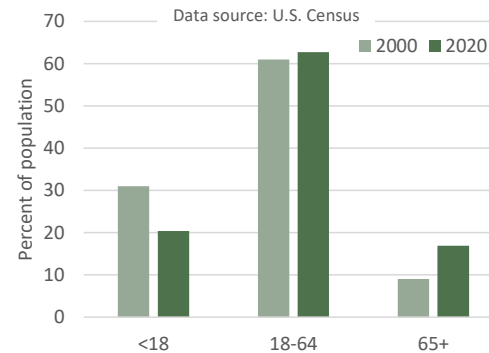
**Figure 1.X: Population Change Since 1970, Bakersfield and Surrounding Area**



**Figure 1.X: Median Age, 1980-2020**



**Figure 1.X: Bakersfield Population by Age Group, 2000-2020**



town’s population more than doubled. However, growth has since leveled off, and the most recent 2020 Census reported a slight decline in Bakersfield’s population.

## Age

Like many towns in Vermont, the population of Bakersfield is aging. In 2020, the median age for Bakersfield residents was 43.7 years. This number has increased by over 15 years since 1980, a similar trend to Franklin County and Vermont as a whole. Bakersfield’s 18-64 population has remained mostly steady since 2000, while the percentage of individuals under the age of eighteen has declined and the percentage age 65 and older has increased.

## Special Populations

The US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) provides information about the number of people with various levels and types of disabilities. The percentage of Bakersfield’s population with a disability is 14%, roughly the same percentage as in Franklin County and Vermont. More specific information on disability status in Bakersfield is difficult to obtain due to the small sample size of the ACS.

### Additional Data

More data is available in the following chapters:

**Households and housing units:** pg. XX  
(Housing Chapter)

**Employment and income:** pg. XX  
(Economic Development Chapter)

**Educational status:** pg. XX  
(Community Services Chapter)

## 2. HISTORIC AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

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### *Goals*

- To preserve important historic and archaeological resources in Bakersfield
- To recognize and respect Bakersfield's rich history in decisions regarding land use and development

### *Policies*

1. Protect sites of archaeological and/or historical significance
2. Encourage the adaptive reuse of the Brigham Academy and other historic buildings to meet the needs of the Bakersfield community.
3. Encourage efforts to secure grants and raise funds for the preservation of historic and archaeological resources
4. Identify sites of potential archaeological and/or historical significance, and produce a document and map that locates and describes these sites
5. Encourage appropriate design and land use compatible with the historic character of the village
6. Encourage the planting of trees in the schoolyard and parks, and throughout the town

### **Town History**

Bakersfield has a rich history, which is summarized in this chapter beginning on the next page. Special thanks to Nancy Hunt for all of her work in compiling this chapter.

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Abenaki, Mahican and Iroquois people have lived in the area for thousands of years. The European settlement of Bakersfield began in the late 1700s.

#### 1791: Charter granted by the State of Vermont

- 10,000 acres of land were granted to Luke Knowlton, a land surveyor, who then sold it to Joseph Baker, a settler from a well-to-do family in Westboro, Massachusetts.

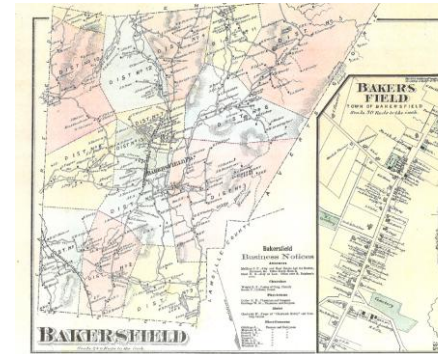
Starting in 1800, Bakersfield's population began to grow rapidly. Over the next 50 years, the Town would grow from 200 residents to over 1,500. Many were families who emigrated from areas near Boston.

#### 1839: Bakersfield's first Secondary School, South Academy, is founded

- Thirty-one townspeople contributed sums ranging from ten to seventy-five dollars to build South Academy (today's Bakersfield Historical Society building). At its peak the school had 361 students from all over Vermont, New York, New England and Quebec who took room and board for \$1.25 per week in Greek Revival houses along Main Street (some of which are still standing today).

#### 1844: North Academy founded

- In 1844, the Methodists built a second academy, North Academy on a hill across the road from the Methodist Church. The two academies competed for excellence and established Bakersfield as an exceptional center for secondary education in northern Vermont.



This 1871 Beers Map shows the even distribution of the population in farms throughout the thirteen districts of Bakersfield and a concentration of residents in the village center.

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In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, meeting the demand for goods and services needed by the student population brought economic prosperity to an otherwise agricultural town. Two stages a day made round trips to St. Albans. The instructors and graduates who continued to live in Bakersfield enhanced the cultural environment of the community for years.

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During and after the Civil War (1861-1865), Bakersfield experienced its first decline in population, while the percentage of Irish and French Canadian residents increased.

#### 1867: South Academy converted into St. George Catholic Church

#### 1877: Brigham Academy established

- Peter Bent Brigham died in 1877, leaving a bequest of \$30,000 for the improvement of education, and the townspeople voted to build a high school. The building was completed and dedicated in August 1879. The north wing, built in 1900, doubled the size of the building.

#### 1877: St. Johnsbury and Lamoille County Railroad completed

- A depot only a few miles away in East Fairfield provided convenient transportation for Brigham Academy students and their families, as well as access to larger markets across northern Vermont and beyond for local merchants, tradesmen and farmers.

#### 1878: Telegraph line reaches Bakersfield

- Line went from East Fairfield to the home of Mrs. Bradley Brigham (site of the present library) because she had learned Morse code. In 1899 that line was replaced with a telephone line to a public phone in the J.A. Perkins Variety Store (now an apartment block on Main Street opposite the Avenue).

#### 1888: Agricultural Census lists over 100 farms in Bakersfield

Earlier farms were self-sufficient sources of food including grains and livestock for family use with small surpluses to barter or sell. After the Civil War, farms began specializing in dairy cattle. Over time, many local businesses such as tanneries, creameries, slaughterhouses, farm implement and feed stores provided the infrastructure needed for a strong agricultural economy.



*The historic hearse house (1890) sits in the village cemetery, while its carriage is on display at the Shelburne Museum.*



*The historic hearse house (1890) sits in the village cemetery, while its carriage is on display at the Shelburne Museum.*

Despite a 43% decrease in resident population between 1870 and 1940, Bakersfield was a vibrant, self-sufficient and prosperous community. The influx of students (as many as 160 in 1900) paid room and board in private homes, supported local stores and services, and entertained the townspeople with concerts, drama productions, athletic competitions, and literary publications.

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During the 1950s and 60s, the automobile brought changes to Bakersfield. A growing number of residents found access to more goods and services in St. Albans, Essex, and elsewhere. The cultural dynamic changed from a self-sufficient and vibrant community to that of a bedroom town.

**1950s:** The dirt road to St. Albans is paved and becomes Rt. 36. Rt. 108 is paved and widened.

**1967:** The town votes not to make the state-mandated improvements to Brigham Academy, and it closes as a high school.

- A new K-8 school was built in 1987, and the Brigham Academy building has remained vacant since. The flow of students that had formerly brought prosperity and vitality to the village reversed course and left each weekday for Enosburg, BFA in St. Albans or Essex.

**Most of the population growth since the 1970s has occurred in the rural areas of town, especially to the north and east of the village.** The improved highways that enabled long time Bakersfield residents to leave the town for better jobs, goods and services also allowed people from Chittenden County to move to Bakersfield and commute to their jobs. Landowners with timber and open land sold lots for residential development to meet this demand. Even though the population has doubled, commercial activity in the village is limited. **Many of the historic houses, public buildings, and barns in Bakersfield remain intact.**

More information on the Town's history is available from the Bakersfield Historical Society at [historicbakersfieldvt.org](http://historicbakersfieldvt.org).

*"The automobile has changed many things... The cars whisk people off to work every morning...People used to sit on their porches to see their neighbors. Now, they look out at the forests and mountains behind their houses and have outdoor cookouts and picnics... There are two general stores where once there were five, but you can buy many things you never could before and at fairer prices...The town had two doctors. Now townsfolk go to the two hospitals in St. Albans..."*

-- Elise Wells,  
*Bakersfield: The Way It Was* (1976)



Since 2009, the Town has sponsored Bakersfield's own 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration with activities on the village green, street dancing and fireworks by the town garage.

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## GRAND ISLE

### Town Plan

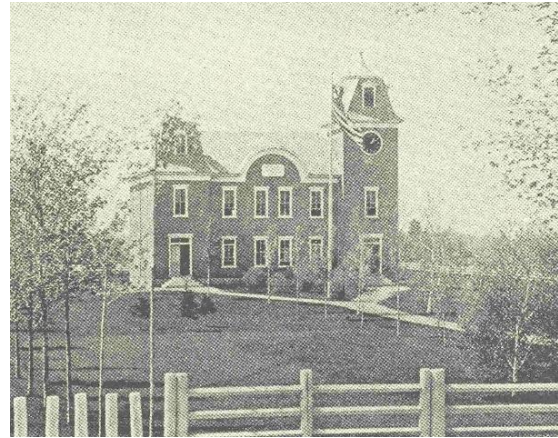
## Historic Resources

Historical cultural and archaeological resources are irreplaceable and provide a sense of continuity between the past and the present and help us identify who we are. It is important to preserve and promote these resources whenever possible. The Bakersfield Historical Society was established in 1997 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit cultural and educational organization dedicated to community awareness and the preservation of Bakersfield's heritage. A grant from the Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance guided the organization in developing a collection management policy to properly conserve its extensive archive relating to the people, places, things and events in Bakersfield. The Historical Society has the only existing comprehensive collection of Brigham Academy catalogues, programs, photographs, and literary publications. They reveal the quality and extent of the academy's curriculum and student activities including athletics, plays and musicals. The building is open on a regular basis from May to October or by appointment. The Board of Directors meets monthly to plan programs and exhibits that have included participation in the Vermont History Expo. It publishes four newsletters a year and depends upon memberships, donations and fundraisers to maintain its building for community use.

### ***State and National Historic Register***

There are over 100 buildings, houses and barns in the town of Bakersfield that are listed on the Vermont State Register of Historic Structures (as conducted in 1985). So far, two of these are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and one nomination is pending.

- ***Brigham Academy (listed 1995):*** The Brigham Academy Restoration Plan, completed in 1995, found that the building continues to be structurally sound and with proper renovation would be appropriate for educational and community services, or potentially elderly housing. So far, the clock/bell tower has been repaired and the roof replaced with grants from the Preservation Trust of Vermont/Vermont Division of Historic Preservation and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), respectively. In 2003, voters approved the Brigham Academy agreement at a warned joint meeting of the Bakersfield Town and School district to renovate 75 percent of the building for school use and 25 percent for town use. The VHCB holds an easement to retain the front lawn of the Academy building as an open space including its alley of maple trees. A Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development was used in 2012



**The Brigham Academy as it was constructed in 1879.**  
Credit: Bakersfield Historical Society

## GRAND ISLE

### Town Plan

to assess the Academy Building for future renovation. The architectural firm conducting the assessment reported the foundation and other infrastructure were sound enough for complete or partial renovation of the building for future uses. In 2013, the Board of the Bakersfield Elementary and Middle School voted to sell its share of the Academy to the Town. Execution of this sale was completed in September 2014.

- **South Academy/St. George's Church (listed 2001):** Saving the South Academy/St. George's Church from demolition was the first project of the Bakersfield Historical Society. Taxpayers provided \$10,000 as seed money so that funds could be raised through grants (Preservation Trust of Vermont, Vermont Division of Historic Preservation, and the Vermont State Legislature via the Cultural Facilities Coalition) as well as a capital campaign to repair the hand-hewn post and beam structure and bell tower, replace the roof and chimney, upgrade the lighting and electrical systems, install a kitchen as well as a code compliant bathroom and handicapped ramp. The masonry on the main building still needs to be repaired and the newer bricks on the 1906 addition need to be replaced. The Bakersfield Historical Society is currently located in the building.
- **Hearse House (nomination pending):** The Hearse House, owned by the Town and maintained by the Bakersfield Cemetery Commission, was nominated by the UVM Historic Preservation Program for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. It is a unique funerary structure; its elegant hearse carriage that was stored in the rear is on display at the Shelburne Museum. Currently its windows are broken and the beam between the front rooms and the rear garage needs to be replaced. The Cemetery Commission uses the space for storage of cemetery benches and urns; the mower is stored in the rear. The outside was repainted by high school students as part of a Community Service project.

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### Other Significant Sites

Residents and visitors entering Bakersfield from the South on Rt. 108 are welcomed to Bakersfield at the Fletcher line by a historic farmstead. Two other barns reveal changes in agricultural technology that took place during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Old Stage Road on the east side of Town is an ancient road that continues up Kings Hill past stone foundations to the District 9 School House.

A concentration of mostly historic village houses begins with the Daniel Dean place across from Larry's Tree Farm and continues north to the landmark federal brick houses at the four corners. To the east is a row of public buildings: Town Hall (1909) with its paneled and tin-clad interior, Congregational Church (1845) and South Academy (1840; remodeled 1906)/Bakersfield Historical Society. This road continues out to East Bakersfield and the historic Malone farm (1850, 1890), Cook Cemetery and more.

Main Street continues north on Rt. 108 past the village cemetery/hearse house/village common, and the iconic Brigham Academy building (1879/1900) with its deep lawn and alley of maple trees. Across Main St. to the east is the town library (1950) as well as a row of mostly historic

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and well maintained private houses on both sides of the street. The Methodist Church (1854) and the Hazeltine house (1800) mark the northern end of the historic village, yet a keen eye will spot other houses on the Vermont State Register on the east side of the road until its end at the Albert Brigham house at the fork. There are many historic farmhouses, including two stone houses, the site of the former Johnson saw mill and more on the Joyal and Witchcat roads. There are many historic farms and barns along Egypt and Lawyer roads as well.

There are many other historic buildings and landmarks in Bakersfield not included on the historic register. Smaller landscape features that often go unnoticed are increasingly considered of historic value and importance. These include old barns and outbuildings, stone walls, corner stones, markers, “witness trees,” old apple orchards, lilac bushes planted around former homesteads, and clumps of orange day lilies. These features say as much about the region’s rural and agricultural heritage as many of its more readily recognized historic landmarks, but are often disturbed, removed or demolished without any thought. Recognizing the need for more public education, the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation in 1994 published Stonewalls and Cellarholes: a Guide for Landowners on Historic Features and Landscapes in Vermont’s Forests.

A study conducted by UVM’s historic preservation program found that incremental changes over time, including cumulative alterations to historic structures, and the abandonment, deterioration and demolition of outbuildings and barns, have a profound impact on historic character and significance. It notes that the removal of agricultural buildings in particular suggests a failure to connect the preservation of buildings with the preservation of rural and community character. In Bakersfield, many historic homes and farms are under private ownership. There is currently little incentive or financial assistance to encourage the preservation of these structures. The Vermont Division of Historic Preservation does offer grants of up to \$20,000 for the restoration and repair of historic agricultural buildings.

In 2011, Bakersfield was granted Center designation by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development. This gives the Town and residents access to tax credits for historic preservation projects in the village center. In 2026, Bakersfield also received a Neighborhood designation that gives additional benefits to the area immediately surrounding the village. More information on the designation program is available in the Economic Development chapter.

## Archaeological Resources

Archaeological resources provide evidence of human habitation starting from prehistoric times. A number of important archaeological sites have been found in Northwest Vermont. These include evidence of several types of prehistoric habitation and use, including villages, hunting and fishing camps, trails and trade networks, and burial grounds. Other archaeological sites include remnants of historic settlement and use, such as old foundations and cellar holes; quarry, mill, kiln and foundry sites, and unmarked cemeteries and roads. Although these sites are often buried and no longer visible on the land, they are nevertheless important for the story they tell of the collective past of the area.

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**Commented [A5]:** And more recent times? E.g. much evidence of Abenaki settlements is from much more recent time period

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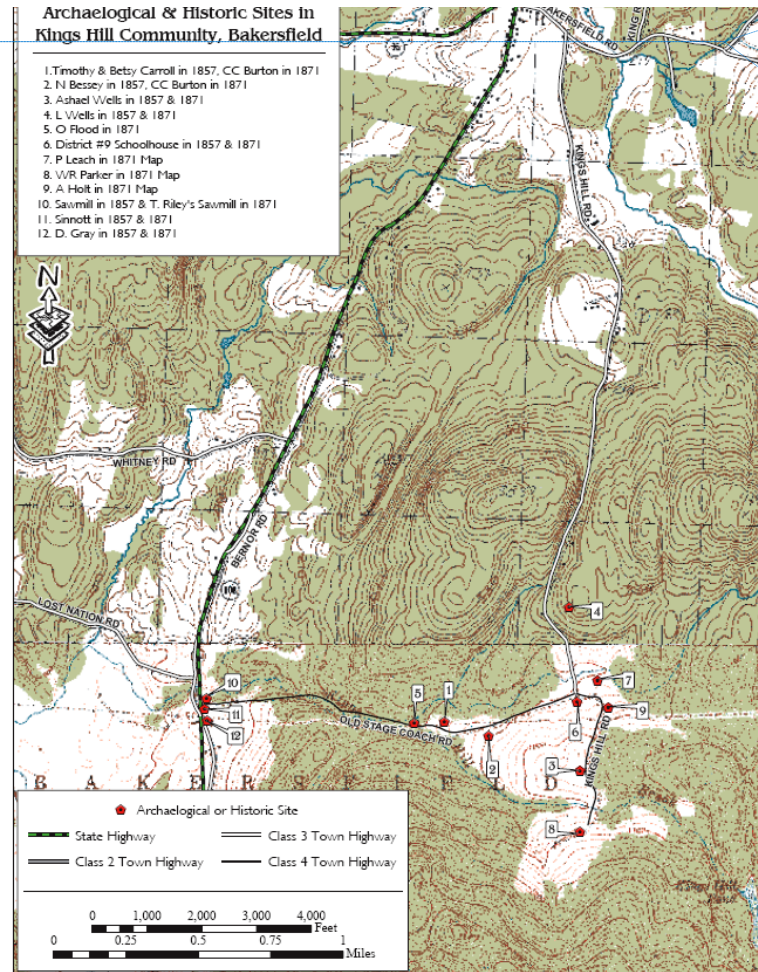
### Town Plan

The Division for Historic Preservation maintains listings of known archaeological sites within the state, which is made available on a “need to know” basis in order to protect their integrity. At least 312 recorded archaeological sites have been identified in Franklin County. This figure likely represents only a small fraction of all significant sites in the region, since intensive investigation of site locations has not been undertaken. Archaeological sites are protected under state and federal law, including Act 250, the Vermont Historic Preservation Act (22 VSA, Chapter 14), and under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

For planning purposes the Division has identified more broadly defined “sensitive areas,” using modeling based on known site conditions, in which archaeological sites are known or expected to occur. These include a 200 foot buffer along all major rivers and tributaries in the region, particularly in the vicinity of major confluences, and the Lake Champlain shoreland, which is considered highly sensitive. Development in known or anticipated sensitive areas should be reviewed with particular attention given to the possibility of buried sites. The Vermont Archeological Society estimates that most of Vermont’s archaeological sites have not yet been found. A Predictive Model, developed by the State Agency of Transportation, has greatly improved the ability to predict where historic and prehistoric sites are likely to be found.

In Bakersfield, the Kings Hill area in the southeastern portion of town has a notable number of cellar holes and stone foundations along Stage Coach Road and at the junction with Kings Hill Road. These sites provide intact archaeological evidence of a 19<sup>th</sup> century community that is described on 1857 Wallings Wall map and 1871 Beers Atlas. This area includes the high fieldstone wall of the C. Bessey stage coach inn and the foundation of

Figure 2.X: Archaeological and Historic Sites in the King’s Hill Area



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### *Town Plan*

Betsey and Timothy Carroll's farmstead (Betsey Carroll's papers are in the Vermont Historical Society Collection). In this same vicinity, the District No. 9 schoolhouse still stands intact, and serves as a camp to a local forester. On Kings Hill Road are the fieldstone foundations of Lucien Wells' complete farmstead, including a farmhouse, barn, silo, and well.

There are also anecdotal accounts of cellar holes and other artifacts in the area of East Bakersfield and Sornborger Place, but they are not as significant as the Kings Hill area. The Sornborger papers are available in the "Special Collections" at the University of Vermont.

**Right: The former District No. 9 schoolhouse is evidence of the settlement that was once in the King's Hill area. Credit: Nancy Hunt**

**Below: Evidence of the Wells farmstead built ca. 1845 and burned in 1934 can still be found in the King's Hill area. Credit: Bakersfield Historical Society**



## 6. ENVIRONMENT AND RESILIENCE

### Goals

- To protect and enhance the quality of wetlands and watercourses, wildlife habitats, ground water and aquifers, populations of rare and endangered species, forests, scenic viewsheds and all other irreplaceable natural resources.
- To encourage and foster an all hazards disaster resilient community

### Policies

1. Restrict the density of development near high quality wetlands and watercourses, wildlife habitats, ground water and aquifers, populations of rare and endangered species, forests and all other irreplaceable natural resources to levels that will have minimal impact.
2. Support the purchase and protection of natural or fragile areas by local or state conservation agencies.
3. Prohibit all land development on slopes greater than 25 percent and maintain vegetative cover.
4. Regulate development on slopes greater than 15 percent to avoid environmental degradation and conditions that create health hazards.
5. Carefully control runoff and erosion should during all phases of construction.
6. Prohibit development in areas where the water table is less than 1.5 feet below the surface.
7. Prohibit new construction within the Wellhead Protection Area, as designated by the Vermont DEC.
8. Encourage the use of Low Impact Development (LID) strategies to treat stormwater on-site.
9. Promote the natural balance of the hydrologic regime by controlling excess runoff and maintaining natural water infiltration and storage capacities.
10. Promote development in proximity to wetlands, streams and ponds that preserves their value for education, science, aesthetics and recreation.
11. Develop a plan to establish a Town Forest.
12. Evaluate the flood hazard regulations for opportunities to incorporate additional measures to increase public safety and reduce future damages.
13. Consider adopting River Corridor bylaws to discourage future development in areas of high risk for fluvial erosion.
14. Encourage the protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.

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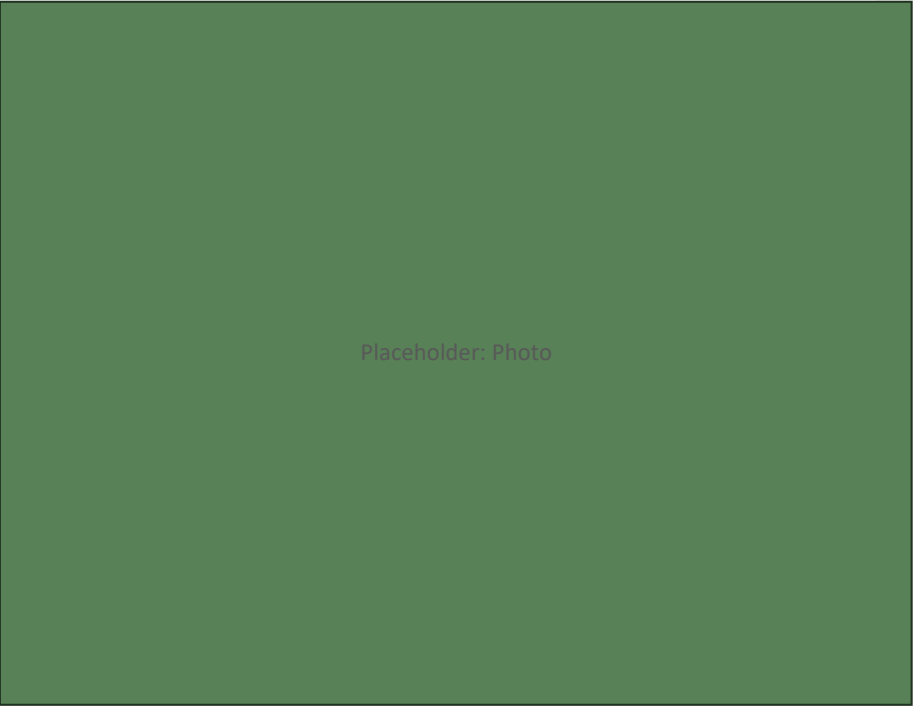
#### ***Policies (continued)***

15. Explore participation in the FEMA Community Rating System (CRS) to secure a discount on flood insurance.
16. Reduce damages to public infrastructure resulting from all hazards events through hazard mitigation planning and project implementation.
17. Continue to participate in the Franklin County Mutual Aid Agreement.

Bakersfield is rich in natural resources, including high quality forestland, abundant water resources, and valuable agricultural soils. These resources contribute significantly to the town's rural and scenic character, provide opportunities for recreation, and support the local economy. In the 2025 Town Plan Survey, over 70% of residents supported protecting and preserving farms, forests, natural areas and scenic resources as the most important planning goals. Through proper planning and management, Bakersfield can work to protect and conserve the valuable natural resources that make our community a unique and enjoyable place to live. Proper planning will also ensure that our community is resilient to flooding and all other environmental risks.

### **Land Resources**

The Town of Bakersfield spans two biophysical regions: the Champlain Valley and the Northern Green Mountains region. The Town generally rises in elevation as you move from west to east, varying from under 600 feet to over 2500 feet.



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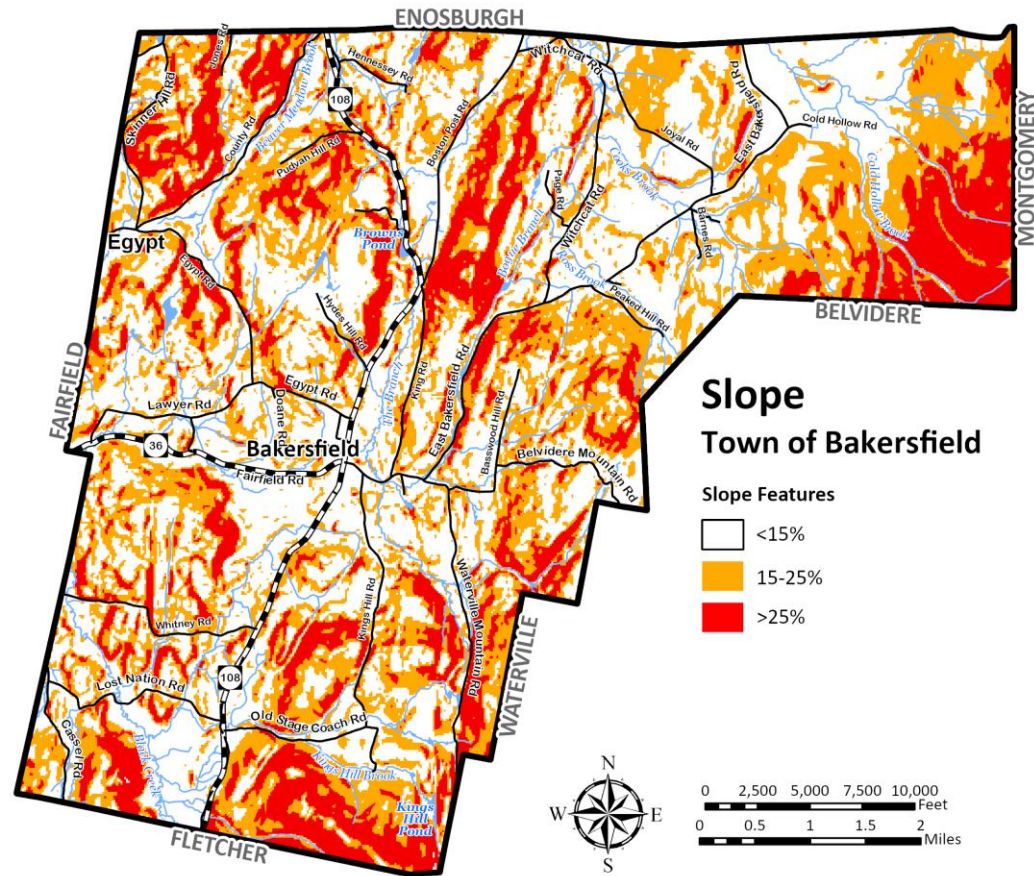
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## Elevations and Slopes

The high elevation areas of eastern Bakersfield include steep slopes, shallow soils, and exposed, fractured bedrock. These areas are largely forested and are not well-suited to development. Development on steep slopes can create a number of environmental problems, including increased stormwater runoff, erosion and the possibility of landslides. Septic tank disposal fields on slopes greater than 15 percent can also result in partially treated effluent seeping downhill or rising to the surface. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides general guidelines for assessing slope limitations as shown in Table 8.1.

**Table X.X: Slope Classifications**

0-3%	generally suitable for most types of development but may require drainage
3-8%	most desirable for development because these areas generally have the least restrictions
8-15%	suitable for low-density development with particular attention given to erosion control, runoff, and septic design
15-25%	unsuitable for most types of development and septic systems, construction costly, erosion and runoff problems likely
>25%	all types of construction should be avoided, careful land management for other uses is needed



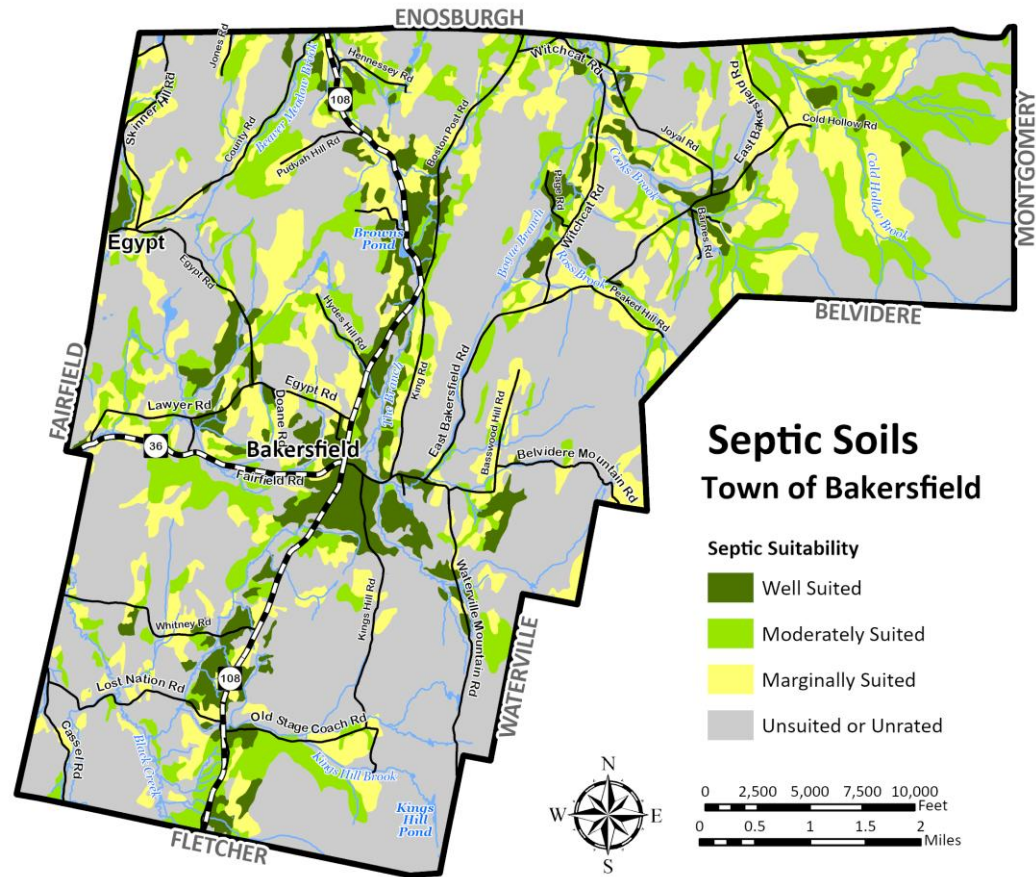
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### Soils

Soils are one of the most important environmental factors influencing the use of land in rural areas. Good, fertile soils represent a 10,000 year investment - a valuable and limited resource. In planning for growth and development, it is important to target development in areas with appropriate septic capacity. The septic suitability of Bakersfield soils are shown to the right.

The ability of soils to support farming and forestry is also an important consideration in Bakersfield land use planning. Local agriculture depends upon the availability of high quality soils in large, contiguous parcels to allow for economical hay and field crop production. Farmland conversion and fragmentation are of particular concern in Bakersfield. Keeping prime agricultural soils in agricultural use is one of the goals supported in this plan. Prime forestry soils are also important to conserve. Areas of forest soil can help determine which tracts of forest land should be maintained long-term for commercial use. Sustainable management of soils through best management practices (BMPs) can ensure that farms and forest lands remain productive in the future.



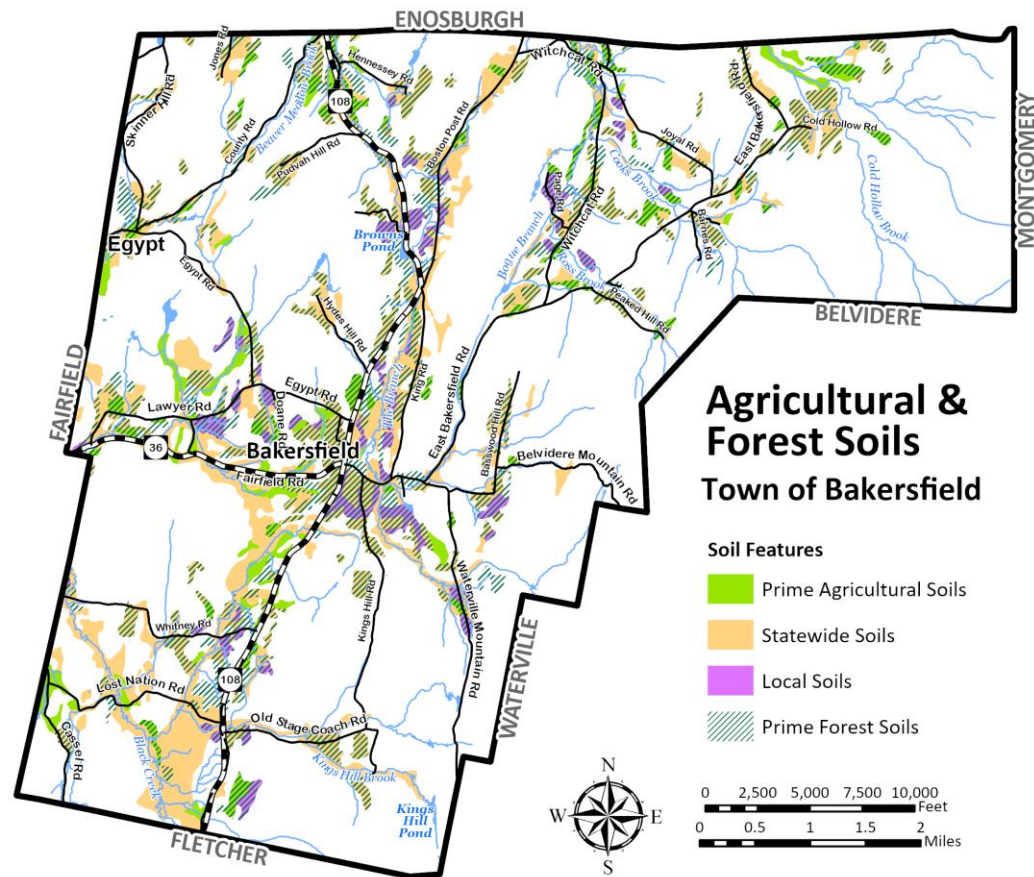
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## Resource Extraction

Earth resources, including sand and gravel deposits, are important natural resources particularly for their use in road maintenance and construction. However, it is important to recognize that these resources are finite and that the geologic processes that create them can take tens of thousands of years to occur. In Bakersfield, their use must be carefully balanced with the consequences of their extraction, and even then should be used only when high public benefit is in evidence. In 2014, the Town purchased land for a gravel pit and this should provide for the public needs for the foreseeable future. Other extractions in town, especially for commercial purposes, should be restricted.

Improper or excessive resource extraction is extremely damaging to the natural and scenic resources of Bakersfield, with far-reaching implications for water quality and the archaeological and aesthetic resources of the region. Sand and gravel deposits often serve as important areas for aquifer recharge and filtration. Disturbance of these areas results in a reduction of their natural ability to retain and filter groundwater, resulting in degraded water quality. On-site storage and disposal of materials at extraction sites can cause contamination of groundwater through the leaching of hazardous materials into the water table. Removal of top soils may also have far-reaching impacts and should be discouraged.



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Cultural resources are also at risk of degradation through improper earth resource extraction, including the accidental destruction of buried archaeological sites, and diminished scenic qualities which may negatively affect land values and opportunities for future use. Noise, dust, and increased traffic on roads near extraction sites can increase road maintenance costs and negatively impact the quality of life in Bakersfield.

To minimize negative impacts on the natural and cultural environment, a focus on appropriate site development that minimizes visual impact and reduces the risk of resource degradation shall be coupled with post-operative attempts at proper mitigation and site reclamation. Prior to permitting extraction, the Bakersfield Planning Commission may require a plan for the rehabilitation of the site during and at the conclusion of extraction or processing activities and appropriate guarantees to allow for enforcement and to ensure rehabilitation at the operator's expense.

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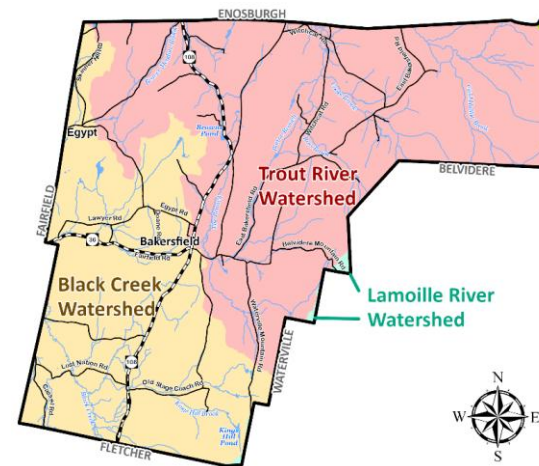
## Water Resources

Bakersfield has rich water resources, including rivers and streams, wetlands, and groundwater resources (Figure 8.4). The town's waters offer sustenance, scenic beauty, ecological values, and recreational opportunities and are important to the social, economic and cultural character of the community.

### Surface Water

Bakersfield is situated within the watershed of the Missisquoi River. The Missisquoi Watershed encompasses much of northwestern Vermont and southern Quebec. All of this area drains into the Missisquoi River Basin and then into Lake Champlain. This watershed has been identified as a high priority area for the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation due to its contribution to phosphorus runoff and water quality issues in northern Lake Champlain.

The two major subwatersheds in Bakersfield are the Black Creek and Trout River subwatersheds (Figure 8.5). Flooding and erosion are major issues within these subwatersheds. Stormwater runoff from roads, roofs, driveways and other surfaces also degrades local water quality and exacerbates flooding. During rain events and snow melt, stormwater carries dirt, oil, debris and other pollutants from these surfaces into our waterways.



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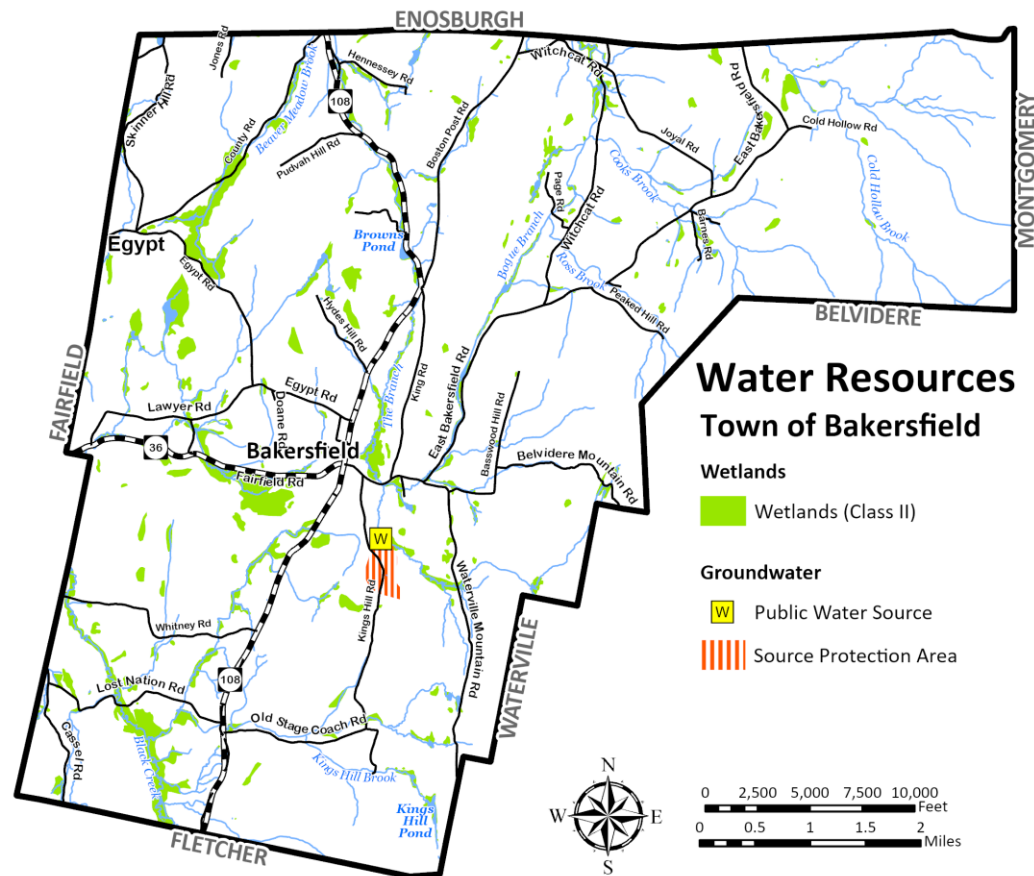
## Wetlands

Wetlands are important for a variety of reasons. The extensive biological activity of wetlands allows them to absorb nutrients and purify the water. Wetlands also regulate water levels of streams by storing large quantities of water during periods of high runoff and gradually releasing water during low flow periods. Wetlands also provide habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals, including a high number of threatened and endangered species.

Bakersfield has many Class II wetlands identified on the Vermont Significant Wetlands Inventory Maps. These mapped wetlands receive protection from the State of Vermont, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Federal Environmental Protection Agency.

## Groundwater

Clean groundwater is a valuable resource in Bakersfield, since many residents depend upon springs and shallow wells for their water. Water from the surface slowly seeps into the ground to form groundwater aquifers. Activity in these groundwater recharge areas can affect the quality and quantity of the potential water supply, especially in areas with a seasonal high water table of 0-1.5 feet where there is unconfined groundwater at or near the surface for part of the year. Failed septic systems, leaking gas tanks, road salt,



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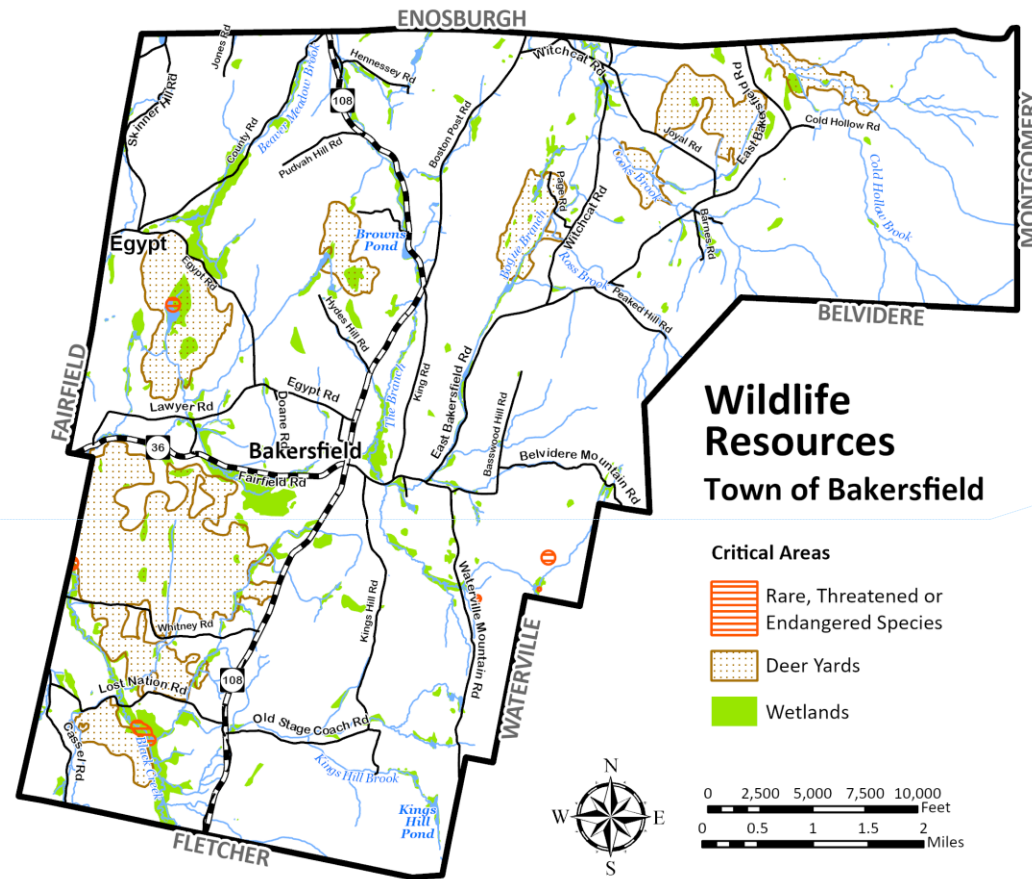
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industrial wastes and chemical application in agriculture are all common sources of groundwater pollution. Once a groundwater system is contaminated it is expensive and difficult, if not impossible, to fix.

In an effort to protect the municipal water supply, Bakersfield has adopted an aquifer overlay district, which is intended to discourage new development and maintain the high quality of drinking water for village residents. Commercial extraction of water is discouraged town-wide in Bakersfield to protect the quantity of water available in aquifers.

## Wildlife Resources

The Town of Bakersfield is host to abundant flora and fauna typical of the region. Bear, deer, moose, and small mammals occupy our fields and forests. Over 90 species of breeding birds have been documented in Bakersfield. A heronry (breeding colony of herons) in the western part of town has been monitored by state wildlife personnel for several years and is a protected area. More than fifteen of Vermont's forty breeding reptiles and amphibians have also been recorded within the town's boundaries. Vernal pools, ponds, and other wetlands within the town provide critical breeding habitat for amphibians.



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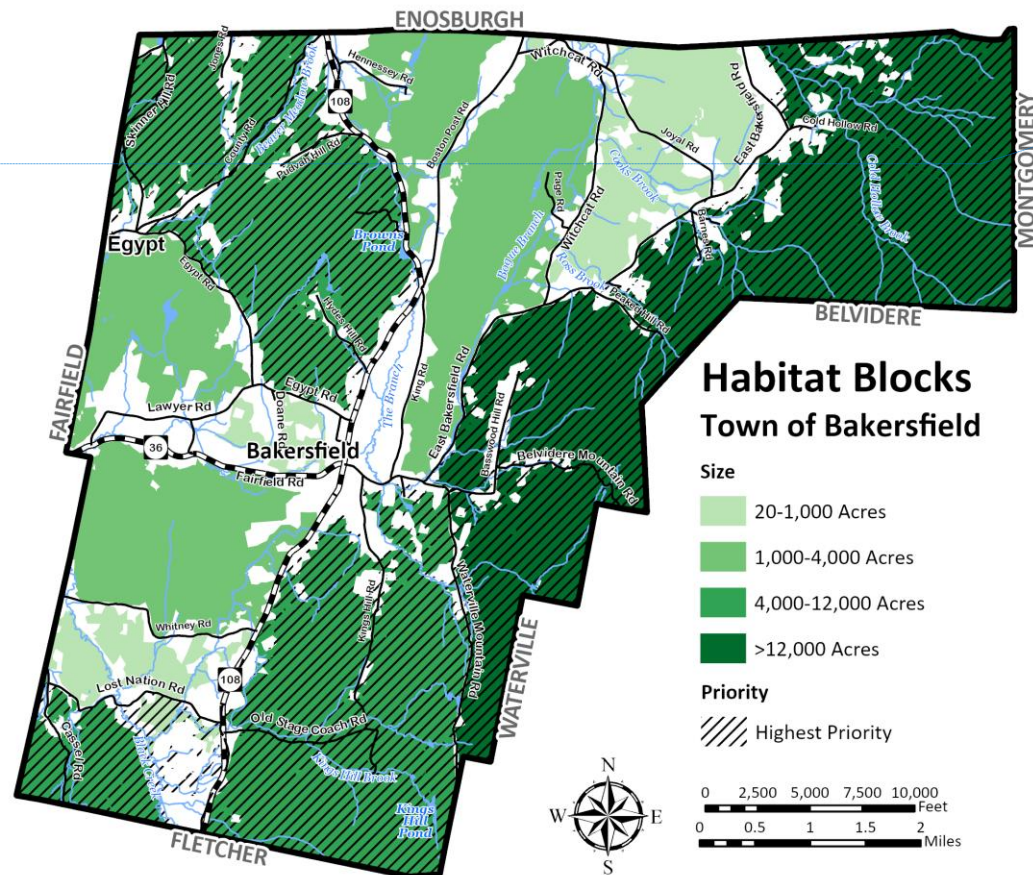
Invasive plant and animal species pose problems for our forests, wetlands, and waterways. So far, very little research has been done to inventory Bakersfield for the presence of invasive species.

Deer wintering areas provide critical habitat for whitetail deer. These areas of hemlock, spruce, fir, cedar, and pine forest provide shelter from deep snows and permit easier winter travel for animals. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has targeted deer yards for protection. These and other critical habitat areas are depicted in [Figure 8.6](#).

Black bears prefer mountainous and forested landscapes just like those found on the slopes of the Green Mountains. Black bears have a significantly large home range and because of this, their survival rate decreases when larger areas are divided up into smaller units and into isolated forestlands. When land is developed in scattered locations, the black bear habitat areas are decreased.

### Habitat Blocks

Approximately 72 percent of Bakersfield is covered by forest. Bakersfield's forests provide habitat for many kinds of wildlife, stabilize soils, absorb runoff, add to the scenic value of the landscape, and provide a living for Bakersfield residents who rely on logging or profits from their woodlots. Large, unfragmented stretches of



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forest in the eastern part of Bakersfield are critical habitat for mammal and bird species that require forest interior.

Many areas east of VT Route 108 have been identified as “highest priority” core habitat blocks by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. This means that they are areas of contiguous, unfragmented forest that are critically important to protecting native species. The same habitat blocks have also been “highest priority connectivity blocks” that provide connection along the “spine” of the Green Mountains between Vermont and Quebec.

It is important to minimize forest fragmentation in Bakersfield. Even low densities of development and rural roads can fragment habitat blocks. Roads and homes disrupt animal travel, resulting in invasive species taking root, and creating more conflict points between humans and animals. Bakersfield has mostly avoided significant fragmentation of its forests and important habitats. Many habitat blocks are located in the Town’s Conservation district, which will help prevent future development and fragmentation of these areas.

## Scenic Resources

The scenic beauty of Bakersfield is among our community’s greatest assets. Yet, despite the importance of scenic beauty to our community and sense of place, scenic and aesthetic concerns are often difficult to quantify, and can be challenging to incorporate into comprehensive planning endeavors. In order to protect these resources, the Town will need to identify these resources and encourage innovation in design and layout of development so that the visual impact can be minimized. The use of vegetative buffers and other screening methods will be encouraged to help reduce the visual impact of development in the Town. This includes the regulation of cellular and wind energy systems to the extent possible.

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## Environmental Resilience

### Hazard Mitigation Planning

Due to the effects of a globally changing climate, severe weather events have become more common in Vermont in recent years. Hazard Mitigation is any sustained action that reduces or eliminates long-term risk to people and property from natural and human-caused hazards and their effects. The Town of Bakersfield is actively engaged in hazard mitigation planning and adopted a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) in 2020. The LHMP evaluates potential risks to the community and the strategies that address those risks. Bakersfield is also represented on the [Local Emergency Planning Committee District 4](#) serving Franklin County and is a member of the Franklin County International Firefighters Mutual Aid Association. This plan summarizes many of the risks addressed in the LHMP. For additional information on these risks and Bakersfield’s hazard mitigation planning efforts, the full LHMP is available on the Town website and at the Town Office.

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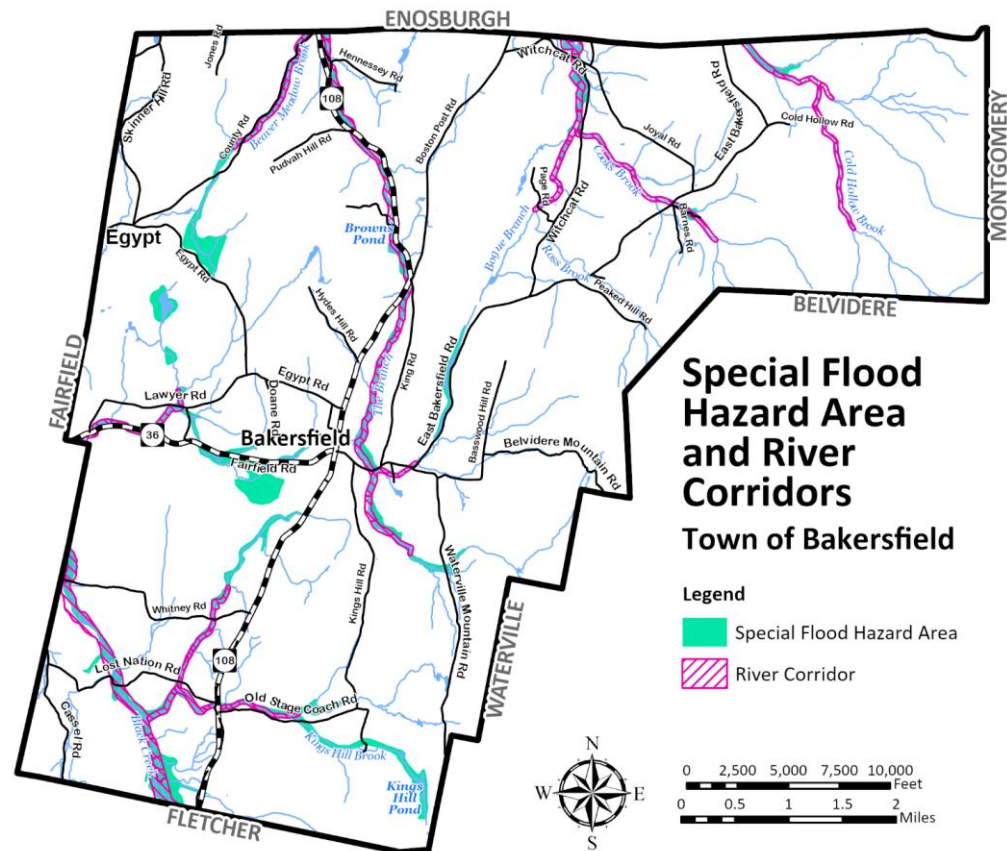
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## Flooding

Flooding is a natural and common occurrence in Vermont, but floods have been increasing in recent years due to climate change. The best protection against loss of life and property is to not build in areas prone to flooding. Flooding can occur in two ways: inundation and fluvial erosion.

Inundation flooding occurs when the water level of a river, stream or pond rises beyond its banks and flows into nearby land. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps areas that have a 1% chance of flooding each year. This area is known as the special flood hazard area (SFHA). The SFHAs in Bakersfield are along the Tyler Branch, Black Creek and their tributaries. Development within these floodplains can have many potentially damaging consequences, as construction may obstruct the natural flow of water or displace soil and create higher water levels during floods.

Appropriate uses of floodplains are those that allow the river to access the floodplain during high flows, including agriculture, open space, and recreation. Bakersfield's zoning bylaw restricts development within the SFHA. These regulations comply with the standards set by FEMA for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program, a federal program which allows residents and businesses to purchase government-backed flood insurance. Official Special Flood Hazard Area maps from FEMA can be found in the vault at the Town Office or online at the FEMA Map Service Center.



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#### Fluvial Erosion

A second type of flooding is known as fluvial erosion. Fluvial erosion is the destruction of riverbanks caused by the fast movement of rivers and streams. Fluvial erosion occurs when heavy rains or alterations to the river channel cause the water to move faster. Fluvial erosion is a common cause of road and bridge washouts during flooding events. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has mapped River Corridors across the state that are at risk for fluvial erosion. To help prevent damage related to fluvial erosion, Bakersfield's development bylaw restricts development in River Corridors. Regulating River Corridors also means that Bakersfield can receive a higher amount of recovery funding from the state in the event of a disaster.

#### High Winds

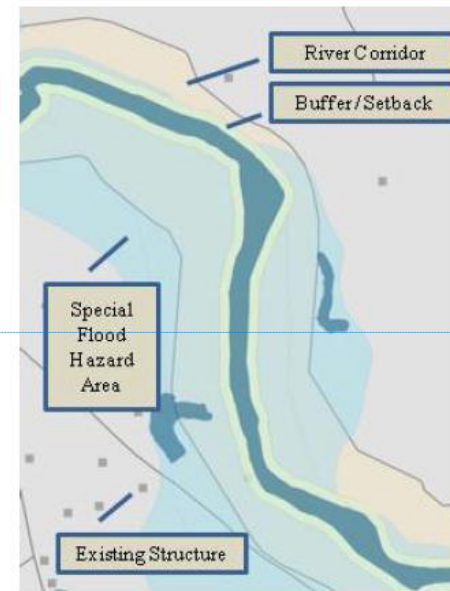
High winds are a hazardous threat to the Town and most commonly accompany other storm events. Violent windstorms are possible in Bakersfield, and high winds are common along the Cold Hollow Range on the eastern part of Town as well as along the Branch, Beaver Meadows Brook and Bogue Branch.

Power lines and trees are most vulnerable to high winds. Power outages may occur resulting in significant loss of business as well as threatening public safety. The Town has a limited ability in quickly restoring lost power caused by damaging high winds. Cleaning up debris following high wind events can be costly depending on the severity of the event.

#### Structure Fires

Structure fires can occur anywhere. The Town Fire Department receives an average of 6 structure fire calls per year. The Fire Department also provides assistance to other Towns through Franklin County Mutual Aid. The Fire Department actively upgrades its equipment through federal grant programs.

In the village area of Bakersfield, structures that are relatively close together raise the risk for multiple structure fire. Older historic buildings that lack fire alarms and sprinkler systems are greater at risk for damages. New building construction codes and standards which address fire safety are expected to lessen this risk.



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#### ***Winter Storms***

Winter storms affect the entire Town and generally cause disruptions to public and private services. The primary impacts of a storm typically include the disruption to transportation networks, school closings and occasionally telecommunications and power outages. Vulnerable populations such as the elderly, those dependent on medical equipment and specialized health or physical care are at risk to winter storms. Also at risk are farms and associated structures and livestock. Barns can collapse due to heavy snow loads. Dairy cattle are susceptible to mastitis if they are unable to be milked.

The Town is equipped to handle typical winter emergencies, including keeping roads open and repairing downed infrastructure. The town has access to machinery, including bulldozers, plows, ATVs and snowmobiles, should they be needed in the event of a storm.

#### ***Air Quality***

Air quality is generally high throughout Vermont, especially in rural communities such as Bakersfield. Motor vehicles are the largest source of air pollution in Vermont, which can create localized areas of poor air quality where traffic is congested. Air quality can also be impacted by weather patterns which carry pollutants from other areas. In recent years, wildfire smoke from Canada has impacted Bakersfield in summer months. All efforts should be taken to maintain good air quality in Bakersfield.