

Fairfax Town Plan 2018-2026

**Implementation Plan**

Listed below are strategies that the Fairfax Planning Commission recommends to implement the goals and policies of this Town Plan.

<b>Responsible Parties</b>	TM (Town Manager), PC (Planning Commission), RD (Recreation Director), SB (Selectboard), DRB (Development Review Board), Town (to be determined)
<b>Partners</b>	NRPC (Northwest Regional Planning Commission), FCRCC (Franklin County Regional Chamber of Commerce), FCIDC (Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation), FPR (VT Forest, Parks, & Recreation), VANR (VT Agency of Natural Resources), DHCD (VT Department of Housing & Community Development), USFWS (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service), VTTrans (VT Agency of Transportation), PPP (Public Private Partnership)
<b>Timeline</b>	S-Short (1-4 years), M-Medium (5-8 years), L-Long (>8 years), O-Ongoing
<b>Critical Action</b>	Highest priority actions that are critical to meet the Goals and Policies of this Town Plan

Actions	Resource	Timeline	Critical Action
<b>Local Economy (see Page 19 for section Goals and Policies)</b>			
1. Develop strategies to encourage centralization of public services and commercial amenities in the Village to promote a healthy localized economy.	TM, PC	O	<a href="#">sidewalks</a>
2. Inform eligible applicants of the Village Center Tax Credit program to improve historic structures in the designated Village Center.	Historical Society, Committee, Zoning Dept., <a href="#">Communication</a>	S	<a href="#">pamphlet</a>
3. Develop strategies and consider implementation incentives that support desired development and encourage businesses to locate or expand in Fairfax.	<a href="#">Franklin County Industrial Development Corp.</a> , <a href="#">SB with PC</a>	O	✓
4. Market and publicize community events to attract residents and visitors.	<a href="#">RD, Comm Comm</a>	O	
5. <a href="#">Implement</a> a creative, high quality signage and wayfinding program.	Town, <a href="#">M, P, C</a>	S	<a href="#">Maybe complete</a>
<b>Facilities, Utilities, &amp; Services (see Page 30 for section Goals and Policies)</b>			

Deleted: possible Party & Partners

Deleted: 21

Deleted: TM

Deleted: Town,

Deleted: Develop

Deleted: FCRCC

Deleted: 32

Deleted: 1. Conduct a market study of the regional economy and residential buildout to outline the types of development the service area could support as a driver for water and sewer improvement... [1]

Fairfax Town Plan 2018-2026

Actions	Resource	Timeline	Critical Action
2. Develop a plan to expand Town water and sewer systems, including providing a back-up water source, to enable centralization of public services and commercial amenities at higher densities of development in the Growth Center and Mixed Use Districts.	Town (Utility Dept.)	O	✓
3. Work on increasing Town-wide support for funding community infrastructure in the Village, with specific attention to wastewater treatment and water supply.	Town, <a href="#">Comm Comm</a>	<a href="#">Q</a>	✓
4. Hold annual meetings of the Planning Commission, Development Review Board, and Selectboard to coordinate the implementation of the goals, policies, and recommendations in this Plan.	SB, DRB, PC	<a href="#">Q</a>	✓
5. Review the Community Facilities, Utilities, and Services Plan yearly to assess that progress is being made to meet community needs. <a href="#">Maintain the Capital Improvement Program and Budget that serves as a five-year plan to be revised and adopted on an annual basis.</a>	TM, <a href="#">SB</a> , <a href="#">Town</a> , <a href="#">PC</a>	O	<a href="#">✓</a>
6. Request regional approval of the Town Plan to make the Town eligible for Municipal Planning Grants and enable the Town to assess impact fees.	Town	S	
9. Pursue the implementation of projects identified in the 2018 Fairfax Stormwater Master Plan. <a href="#">One done, one under design.</a>	<a href="#">DPW</a> , <a href="#">BFA</a> , <a href="#">TM</a>	S/O	
10. Provide outreach to citizens and businesses emphasizing the importance of the solid waste collection and recycling programs.	<a href="#">Casella (Vendor)</a>	O	
12. Continue to provide a town-wide household hazardous waste collection program.	Town	O	

Deleted: possible Party & Partners

Deleted: S

Deleted: semi-

Deleted: S

Deleted: Utility Dept.

Deleted: 7. Maintain the Capital Improvement Program and Budget that serves as a five-year plan to be revised and adopted on an annual basis. (... [2])

Deleted: TM, Highway Dept., VANR, NRPC, Watershed Groups

Deleted: Town

Deleted: 11. Increase capacity for composting by promoting household and commercial establishment composting to meet the state target by 2020. (... [3])

Deleted: 13. Appoint a town representative to participate in the update and implementation of the Fairfax Community Library 5-year Strategic Plan. (... [4])

Fairfax Town Plan 2018-2026

Actions	Resource	Timeline	Critical Action
14. Investigate and promote viable options for expanding communications infrastructure (broadband internet access and cellular service) in Fairfax. <a href="#">Appointed a rep for Northwest Fiberworks.</a>	NWCUD	S/O	✓
16. <a href="#">Continue to work</a> with public and private partners to assess the gaps in broadband and cellular service by town highway and evaluate the level of service customers can access.	Town	O	
<b>Recreation (see Page 31 for section Goals and Policies)</b>			
1. Pursue <a href="#">Grant</a> programs to secure funding for recreational projects that that are consistent with the recreational goals of the Town.	TM, RD	O	✓
5. Complete renovations to the Fairfax Community Center to enable the facility to serve as a venue for services, activities, and events that support community residents of all ages. <a href="#">Maybe done</a>	RD, Fairfax Community Center Non-profit	S	✓
7. Periodically evaluate the current and future recreational needs of the residents and ability of existing infrastructure and facilities to fulfill this target.	RD	O	
<a href="#">8. Trail Maps for all parks with uses – Example: horse riders, ATVs, bikes</a>			
<b>Education &amp; Childcare (see Page 36 for section Goals and Policies)</b>			
2. Support the use of the Community Center for child enrichment programs.	RD, School	O	✓
<b>Community Health (see Page 38 for section Goal and Policies)</b>			
1. Annually review Town financial support for public health and human service agencies.	Town	O	✓
2. Provide municipal facilities as a venue for public health education and screening.	Town	O	✓
3. Provide a venue for health-related classes (i.e. yoga, aerobic, etc.).	Town	O	✓

Deleted: possible Party & Partners

Deleted: Town, PC, NRPC, Committee, Public

Deleted: 15. Investigate the use of existing municipal property and land for development of cellular and broadband services (... [5])

Deleted: Communicate

Deleted: L/

Deleted: 33

Deleted: State and Federal

Deleted: S/

Deleted: 2. Increase the availability of recreation department programing to the residents of Fairfax. (... [6])

Deleted: 6. Develop an operational plan that outlines the use of the Community Center. (... [7])

Deleted: 1. Offer childcare at Town Meeting and other town-sponsored events. (... [8])

Deleted: 3. Provide opportunities for students to participate in civic life by including student representatives on Town boards, committees, and commissions; work with school administration to ensure it meets curriculum. (... [9])

Deleted: 4. Assess zoning (sign standards, setback requirements, etc.) for barriers to on-site farm stands and direct marketing outlets (farmers' markets, community supported agriculture pick-up sites, etc.).  
Town (... [10])

Fairfax Town Plan 2018-2026

Actions	Resource	Timeline	Critical Action
<b>Housing (see Page 43 for section Goal and Policies)</b>			
4. Study the feasibility of design standards for the North and South Village that considers the historic character of the community.	MPG	L	Should town investigate? Survey?
7. Support the development of a network of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure within a half-mile radius of village services for walking and a three-mile radius for biking.	Town, SB, PC, Public	O	Add official map as ongoing & implemented
<b>Transportation (see Page 48 for section Goals and Policies)</b>			
2. Review and revise as needed municipal road standards to ensure that they reflect the “complete streets” principles.	Town, PC, Highway Dept.	O	Needs to be re-done
3. Pursue the short-term solution to connecting the North and South villages with shifting the striping on the Route 104 Bridge to accommodate a wider shoulder on the west side, as identified in the 2015 Pedestrian Connectivity Feasibility Study between the North and South Villages report.	Town, PC, VTrans	S	✓
4. Implement a network of safe, connected non-motorized facilities in both the North and South Villages as identified in the 2015 Pedestrian Connectivity Feasibility Study between the North and South Villages report as well as the official Town Map.	Town, PC	O	
5. Evaluate the feasibility of the Town taking over the Class 1 section of town highway within the Growth Center to implemented identified improvements.	Town, VTrans	S	✓
6. Implement wayfinding and gateway signage to promote traffic calming.	Town, PC	S	✓

Deleted: possible Party & Partners

Deleted: 42

Deleted: 1. Review the Development Regulations and look for areas where affordable housing could be further encouraged ... [11]

Deleted: PC

Deleted: 5. Conduct a housing needs assessment to gain a better understanding the types and affordability of the current housing stock and guide decisions to accommodate the growing population ... [12]

Deleted: M/L

Deleted: ✓

Deleted: 47

Deleted: 1. Review and evaluate Road and Driveway Standards (Sec 7.6F) of development regulations to ensure they meet public safety standards. ... [13]

Deleted: M

Deleted: Continue to explore opportunities to form

Deleted: .

Deleted: Pursue

Fairfax Town Plan 2018-2026

Actions	Resource	Timeline	Critical Action
7. Participate in the regional Transportation Advisory Committee to facilitate coordination with Regional Planning Commission and VTrans on plans and policies that are in the best interest of the region and the Town such as improvements to the Route 104 corridor.	Town	O	
8. Participate in regional discussions on transit service that can serve the needs of residents.	Town	O	
9. Secure funding for the completion of the Sidewalk Master Plan.	Town	<u>Q</u>	✓
10. Prioritize the repair and implementation of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure within the Growth Center to allow students to safely walk or bike to school.	Town	<u>Q</u>	✓
<b>Energy (see Page 54 for section Goals and Policies)</b>			
1. Investigate the installation of a municipal net-metering facility to offset municipal electric use. <a href="#">Fire station - done</a>	Town, PC, NRPC	O	
4. Review and maintain the Building Inspection, Code Enforcement, and Fire Safety Ordinance to incorporate any changes to national rooftop solar installation methods and standards.	SB, Fire Dept.	<u>Q</u>	
6. Promote the use of the residential and commercial building energy standards by distributing code information to permit applicants.	Zoning Dept.	S/O	
9. Implement recommendations from the 2012 NRPC evaluation of street lighting in Town, including switching to LED lighting.	Town, Green Mountain Power	S	
10. Review local policies and ordinances to limit water and sewer services to those areas of town where additional development will not contribute to sprawl.	Town, PC	<u>Q</u>	

Deleted: possible Party & Partners

Deleted: S

Deleted: S

Deleted: 11. Review the results of the 2013 Fairfax Village Non-motorized Travel Plan with the Town Highway Department to identify short- and long-term opportunities. (... [14])

Deleted: 50

Deleted: 2. Investigate installation of a community-based renewable energy project. (... [15])

Deleted: S/

Deleted: 5. Coordinate with Efficiency Vermont and state low-income weatherization programs to encourage residents to participate in weatherization programs available to Fairfax residents. (... [16])

Deleted: 7. Create an Energy Committee and/or appoint an Energy Coordinator to coordinate energy-related planning and projects in Fairfax. (... [17])

Deleted: L

Fairfax Town Plan 2018-2026

Actions	Resource	Timeline	Critical Action
11. Study potential need for a park and ride in Fairfax with a particular focus south of the village	Town, PC, NRPC, VTrans	L	✓
12. <a href="#">Pamphlet</a>	<a href="#">Comm. Committee</a>	L	✓
<b>Natural Resources (see Page 69 for section Goal and Policies)</b>			
1. Periodically review the site plan and subdivision review standards for preserving natural, scenic, and cultural resources, and evaluate for conformity to the Town Plan.	PC	O	✓
3. Participate in the Agency of Natural Resources' Tactical Basin Plan process as plans are updated on a 5-year rotation.	Town (TM, Highway Dept., Utility Dept.), NRPC, VANR	O	<a href="#">In process</a>
4. Promote readily available educational efforts from regional and state partners aimed at assisting the municipality and residents to employ steps they can take to improve water quality.	Town, NRPC, VANR	L/O	
5. Strengthen regulations in the flood hazard areas beyond National Flood Insurance Policy minimums and consider adoption of the state river corridors to protect floodplain and stream resources and support public health and safety. <a href="#">Re-did wetlands to meet state and flood hazard regs.</a>	PC, NRPC, VANR, DHCD	L	
<b>Land Resources (see Page 80 for section Goals and Policies)</b>			
4. Consider expansion of the land use mapping capabilities of the Town to assist in development review.	Town, PC	<a href="#">O</a>	
6. Expand water and wastewater capacity in the villages to achieve the desired levels of density that would support the plan vision.	Town, Utility Dept.	S/O	✓
7. Consider implementing design standards in the North and South Villages.	PC	L	
9. Periodically review the regulations to ensure that the regulatory tools support the vision.	PC	O	

**Deleted:** possible Party & Partners

**Deleted:** Promote and provide information about the GoVermont website which provides information to citizens about ride share, vanpool, and park-and-ride options.

**Deleted:** Town, Energy Committee, NRPC, VTrans

**Deleted:** 13. Plan for and install electric vehicle charging infrastructure on municipal property. (... [18])

**Deleted:** 66

**Deleted:** 2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the subdivision review standards to minimize impact to (or protect) prime agricultural soils and existing farmland and forest resources. (... [19])

**Deleted:** 6. Conduct a scenic resource inventory to identify important community resources (i.e. views, viewsheds, corridors) to guide regulatory and non-regulatory protection measures. (... [20])

**Deleted:** 77

**Deleted:** 1. Review the planned unit development standards to evaluate the protection of significant agricultural lands, forest lands, meadows, and wildlife habitat from fragmentation and conversion in the Residential and Rural Districts; and to discourage strip development along existing roads. (... [21])

**Deleted:** M

**Deleted:** 5. Produce and maintain a map that identifies infrastructure and amenities for all roadway, sidewalk, and trail users.  
Town (... [22])

**Deleted:** 8. Identify sites appropriate for use as park-like gathering areas and increase the amount of plantings and (... [23])

Fairfax Town Plan 2018-2026

Actions	Resource	Timeline	Critical Action
10. Consider site improvements and amenities such as bike racks and canoe/kayak storage to encourage use of natural destinations.	Town, RD	O	
11. Develop a street tree planting program in the North Village.	Town, Committee	L	
12. Identify areas for landscape enhancements in the South Village.	Town, Committee	L	
13. Transitional areas of residential development in the Rural Planning area will be monitored and evaluated by the Planning Commission during this Town Plan cycle to inform revisions to the development regulations.	PC	M	

Deleted: possible Party & Partners

## Section 7 Land Resources & the Built Environment

### Historic Resources

The initial growth of Fairfax was fueled in part by access to waterpower. Throughout the history of this area, the Lamoille River and several of its tributaries were utilized to drive mills. Fairfax Falls has been the most heavily utilized hydropower location in the Lamoille drainage.

Historical buildings and structures give perspective on the Town's rich past. The Fairfax Falls, and the Fairfax Village Historic District as well as many homes, farms, buildings, bridges, are on the Vermont State Register of Historic Places (see Appendix 1, Table 6.1). The Maple Street Covered Bridge, also known as the Fairfax Covered Bridge, is the only structure in the Town to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. This structure was listed in 1972 and is an important part of the village landscape.

*162 documented historic structures in Village & Town*

There are thirteen cemeteries in Fairfax. Preserving the history of the Town and its residents is very important for the community as well as visitors and care should be taken to preserve these places.

### Archaeologically Sensitive Areas

Archaeological resources provide evidence of human habitation dating from prehistoric times. This includes evidence of prehistoric

habitation and use, including villages, trails, trade networks, and burial grounds, as well as remnants of historic settlement and use, including old foundations and cellar holes, quarry, mill, kiln and foundry sites, and unmarked cemeteries and roads.

*Local resources such as the Lamoille River, streams, and wetlands would have supported native populations relying on subsistence activities such as fishing, hunting, & gathering*

For planning purposes, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation has identified "sensitive areas" that 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.

The Lamoille River running westward from Fairfax Village is designated as being an archaeologically sensitive area. In addition, the corridor running eastward from Fairfax Village is expected to have moderate to high archaeological sensitivity. Portions of the Olin, Swift, Tracy and Beaver Meadow Brooks may also contain archaeologically sensitive sites. Development in known or anticipated sensitive areas should be aware of the possibility of buried sites.

### Scenic Resources

Scenic resources including ridgelines, foregrounds of distant views, open land, vistas, and historic villages and settlements should be considered during planning. These

**Deleted:** in the immediate vicinity

**Deleted:** With its 88-foot descent,

**Deleted:** The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation has placed

**Deleted:** as well as the Fairfax Falls, and the Fairfax Village Historic District, in the

**Deleted:**

**Deleted:** cognizant t

**Deleted:** o the

**Deleted:** should be considerations in planning and development,

scenic features contribute to the local quality of life, a sense of place, and in defining the rural character of the Town enjoyed by residents and visitors.

The scenic views in Fairfax extend from the winding curves of the Lamoille River to the peak of Mt. Mansfield, with a varied pattern of wooded hills and open farm fields in between. Views of the river can be enjoyed from points along Routes 104 and 104A, Goose Pond Road, Hunt Street, and River Road. Mt Mansfield can be seen from several roads throughout the town. Many roads in Fairfax allow for the enjoyment of a drive through countryside with tree covered roads, wide open farmland, and views of the neighboring hillsides and mountains.

Future development should be encouraged to protect this landscape through proper siting, avoidance of steep slopes and hilltops and by furthering the existing historic settlement pattern of the town. Implementation of flexible zoning which pays more attention to the character of the landscape than to strict dimensional requirements may enable the Town to preserve its rural character and scenic resources, while not imposing overly restrictive conditions on potential future growth.

### Natural Resources

#### Topography & Geology

Fairfax is located in the rolling hill terrain of the central uplands of Franklin County with a total elevation gain of 500 feet (see **Topographic Limitations Map**).

The bedrock geology in Fairfax was created by historical glacial activity, receding waters of

the inland sea, and weathering. A fault-line, the Hinesburg Thrust, runs adjacent to the western edge of the town and marks the boundary between two distinct geological areas: the Champlain Lowlands and the Green Mountains. Glacial erosion and deposition has left many hilltops scoured to bedrock, thin layers of till overlying much of the rest of the landscape, and (glacial) lake-deposited silts and clays filling many of the valleys. Over the next few thousand years, numerous small streams and the Lamoille River carved valleys and created Fairfax Falls.

#### Earth Resources

Streams from the melting of the glacier deposited thick areas of sand and gravel in various places in the town. These areas could be extracted for use in construction and roadways.

Currently there is only one active quarry extracting resources in Town. To minimize negative impacts on the natural and cultural environment, new and expanded extraction operations should be sited to minimize visual impact, reduce the risk of resource degradation, and be coupled with plans for erosion and sediment control during active operation and eventual site reclamation. Appropriate guarantees shall be required to ensure the rehabilitation at the operator's expense.

**Deleted:** and

**Deleted:** are instrumental

**Deleted:** , so prized by its inhabitants.

**Deleted:** namely

**Deleted:** Streams from the melting of the glacier deposited thick areas of sand and gravel in various places in the town.

**Deleted:** further modified the topograp

**Deleted:** hy,

**Deleted:** ing

**Deleted:** ting perhaps the most dominant geologic feature of the town,

**Deleted:**

**Commented [e16]:** This language would not be specific enough to be used in an Act 250/Section 248/248a process.

**Deleted:** There is potential for sand and gravel extraction in Fairfax; the areas of deposition relate back to the geology of the area

**Deleted:** be sensitive to these often unprotected elements of the landscape.

**Deleted:** P

**Deleted:** g

**Deleted:**

**Deleted:** for development,

**Deleted:** for construction, and

**Deleted:** development which fits the

**Deleted:** n

**Deleted:** should be encouraged.

**Commented [e18]:** Or must/shall if want to be stronger in language for Act 250 review purposes

**Deleted:** a focus on appropriate site development that

**Deleted:** s

**Deleted:** and

**Deleted:** s

**Deleted:** should be

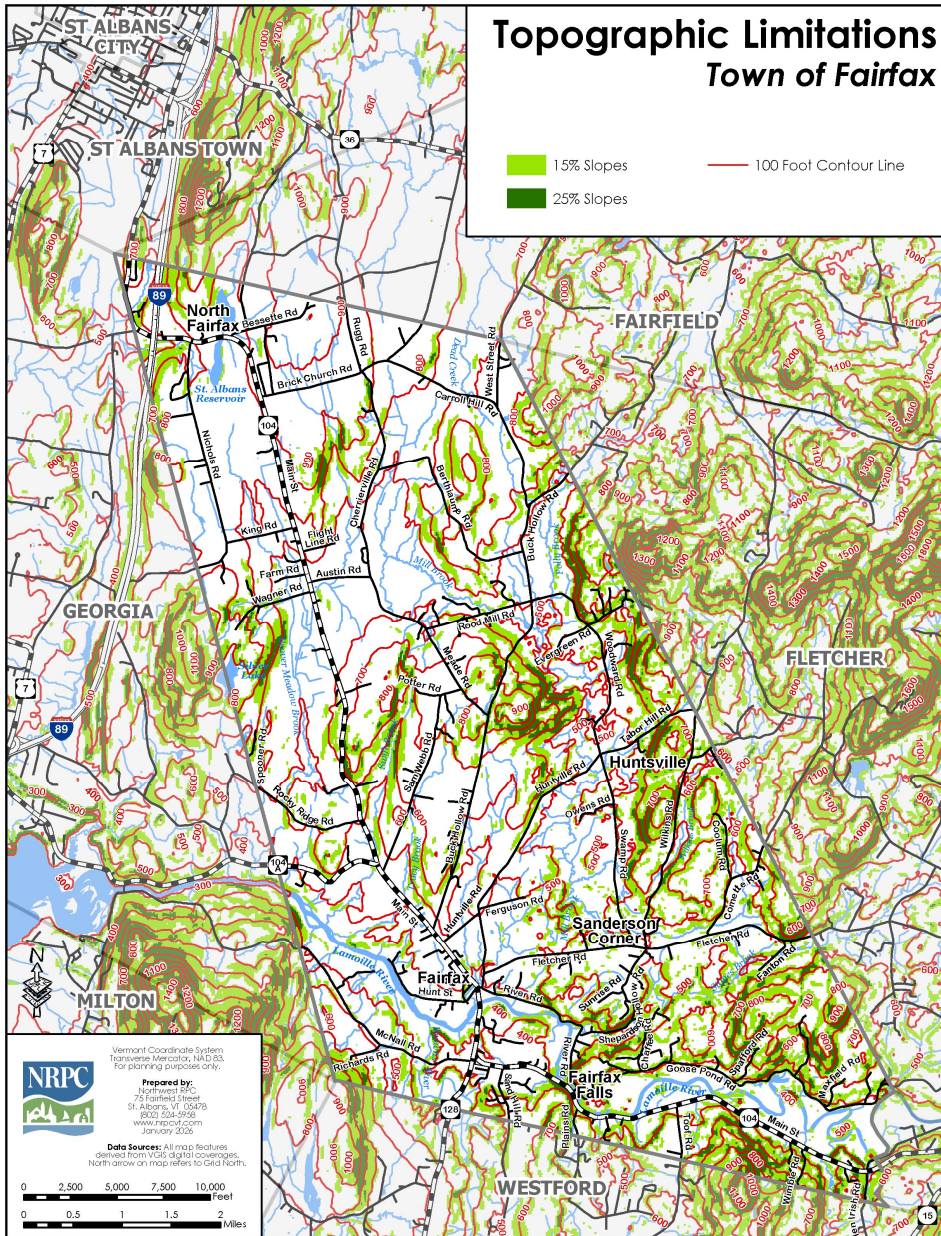
**Deleted:** post-operative

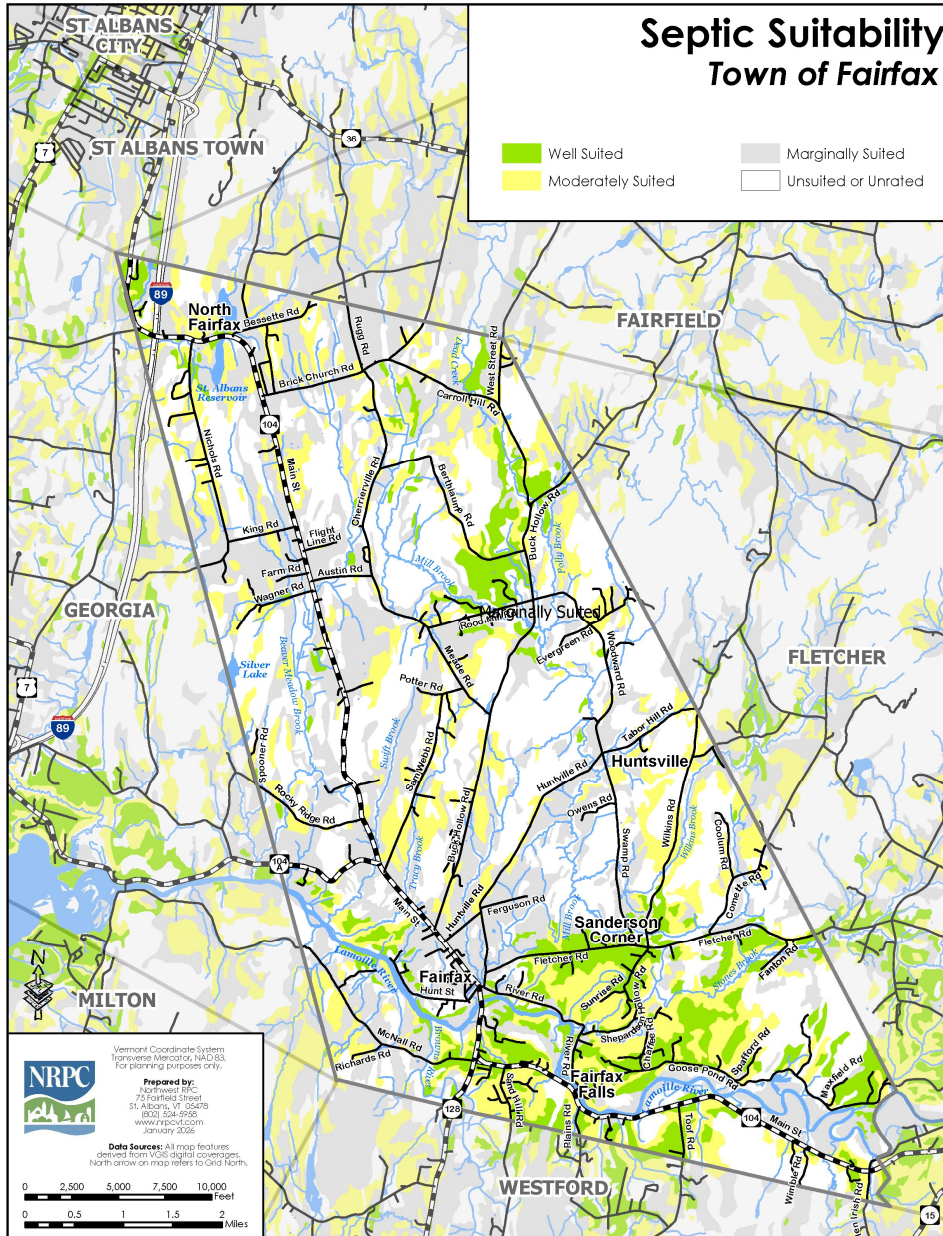
**Commented [e17]:** Is this still the goal? While some aspects of the town's rural zoning address this- the zoning does also continue to have dimensional standards.

**Deleted:** Topography, or the shape of the land surface, is a function of the underlying bedrock, soil cover, and the effects of weather over time.

**Deleted:** r

**Deleted:** elates back to the





**Slope**

Slopes pose an important consideration for development; development in steep slope areas can result in destabilization, runoff and environmental damage. Development on steep slopes should be regulated to address these impacts.

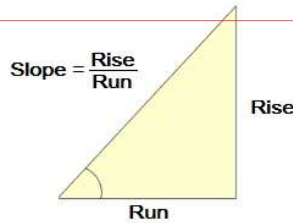
In general, land that is nearly level (less than 8% slope) is better suited for farming and most types of commercial and residential development. Development on steep slopes (more than 15%) may increase the costs of road maintenance, stormwater and erosion problems, and access for public services (school bus, fire service, etc.). Steeply sloping land is usually best used for timber production, which minimizes the potential for erosion and provides wildlife habitat, recreation, and open space. Steep slopes over 15% and 25% are shown on the **Topographic Limitations Map**.

**Soils**

Soils are an important factor in determining the use of land in rural areas. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) digital soil survey provides information on soil attributes, which include:

- suitability for on-site septic disposal
- prime agricultural attributes
- frequency of flooding
- depth to bedrock
- slope classifications
- drainage information
- potential for woodland productivity

*Slope is the inclination, or change in elevation, of land over a horizontal distance, and is often expressed as a % (# of feet of vertical rise over 100 feet of horizontal distance or run).*



These factors should be viewed in combination when assessing the ability of the land to support a certain use or activity.

The majority of the land area in Fairfax is marginally suited or not suited for an on-site septic system. See the **Septic Suitability Map** for a complete septic suitability survey of the Town.

**Prime Agricultural Soils** are soils which are the best for crops, based on the following attributes:

- natural fertility retention qualities
- high organic matter content
- favorable drainage
- level to gently rolling slopes
- sufficient depth and textural qualities

*Prime Agricultural Soil has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.*

**Deleted:** as it pertains to factors such as bearing capacity and drainage

**Deleted:** Development on steep slopes, the removal of vegetation, and the injection of effluent by onsite sewage disposal may increase runoff, erosion and the possibility of mass movement or slumping unless properly designed.

**Deleted:** as

**Deleted:** also

**Deleted:** These types of uses are not incompatible, but steep terrain with multiple uses requires careful land management and appropriate land use controls.

**Deleted:** on-site sewage disposal. In total, 37% of the total land area is not suited based on soils for onsite sewage disposal.

**Deleted:** environmental

**Deleted:** is an invaluable resource for land use planning and accessing numerous

**Deleted:** can be characterized as having

**Deleted:** ,

**Deleted:** ,

**Deleted:** , /

**Deleted:** ,

- high available moisture content.

A significant portion of Fairfax's soils are primary agricultural soils (**Agricultural Soils Map**). Generally, these soils are located in areas which are currently used for farming.

The same qualities that make prime agricultural soils useful for farming also make them some of the most suitable for residential and commercial development. Finding innovative ways to balance future growth with maintaining farmland is central to the planning process for Fairfax.

Conserving agricultural resources is important to preserving rural character and sustaining the traditional and economic resources which farming provides to Fairfax. However, this must be balanced with farmers' ability to benefit from the economic value of developing portions of their land.

Preservation of existing productive farmland should be considered when reviewing development. Regulations should not completely prohibit growth in these areas, but should ensure site planning that is sensitive to these irreplaceable resources, while enabling landowners to realize a fair economic return.

The Town also strongly encourages non-regulatory efforts to preserve farmland in Fairfax, such as via the purchase of development rights by land trusts.

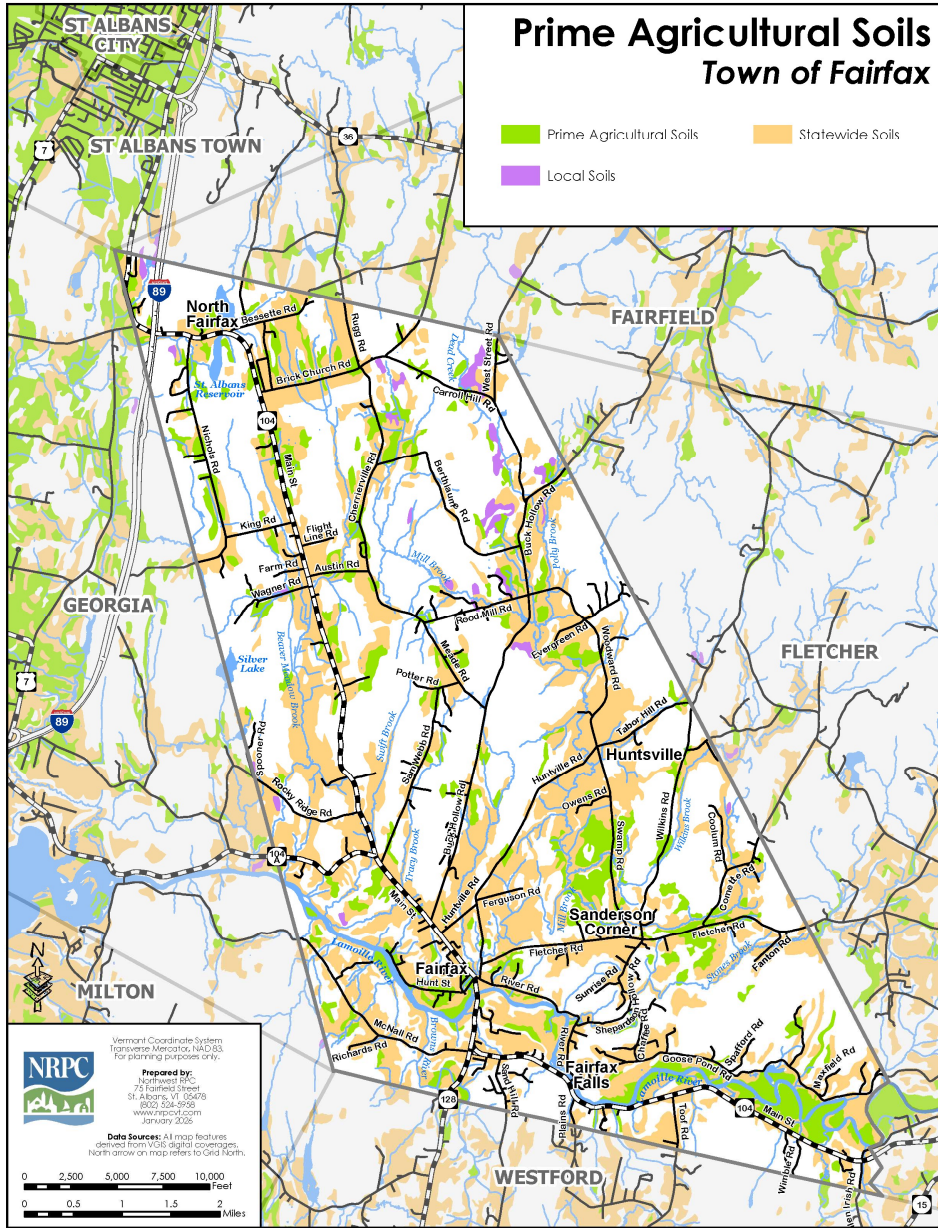
**Forest Resources**

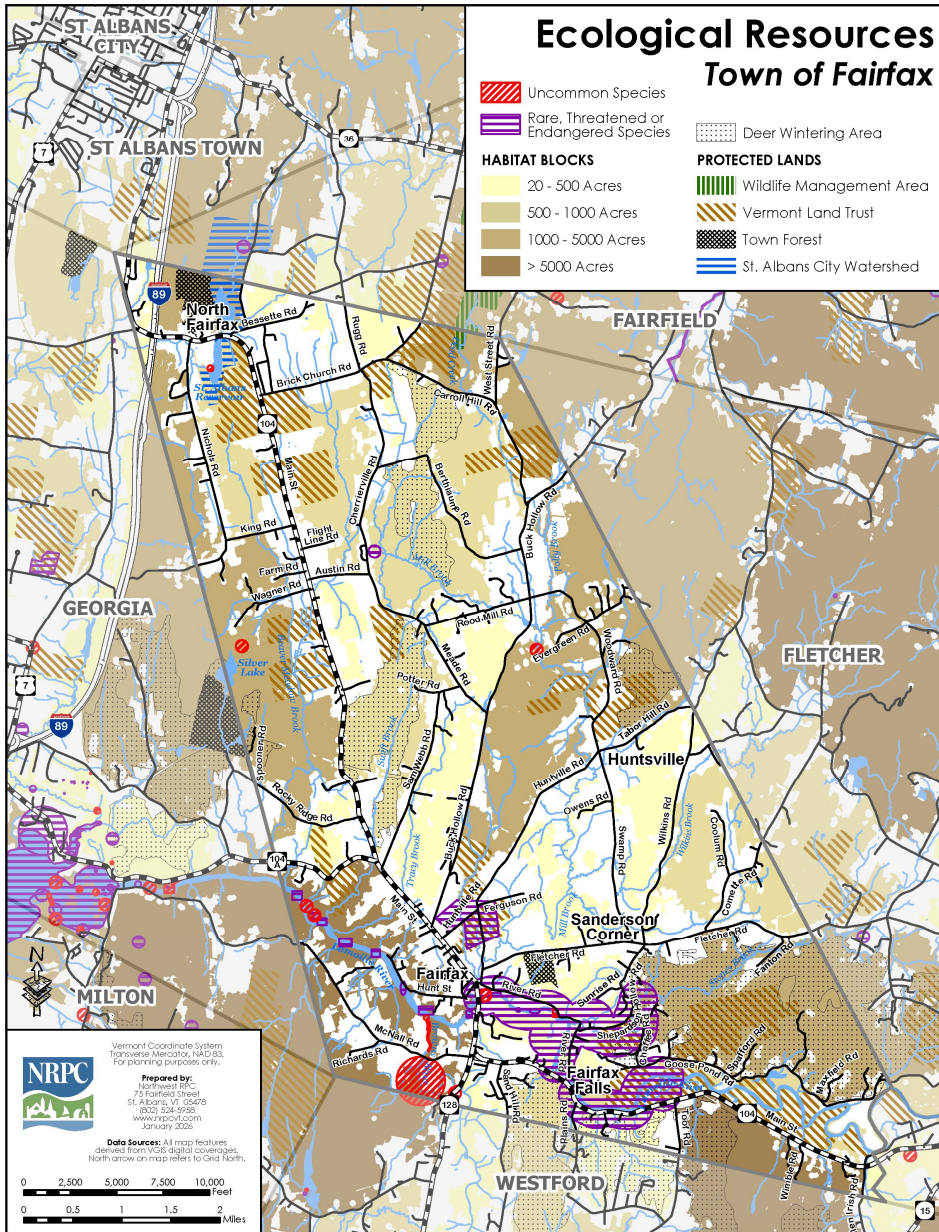
Much of Fairfax's landscape is heavily wooded with a mixture of hardwood and softwood types. According to 2011 National Land Cover Dataset, 13,130 acres or 50% of the land in Fairfax consists of coniferous, deciduous or mixed forests. See the **Working Lands Map** for a depiction of forestland in the Town.

Wood and wood products are becoming increasingly valuable commodities. Productive local woodlands can provide a source for raw materials for various forest products industries and value-added products such as maple syrup. The State of Vermont requires that forestry operations be conducted in accordance with the Acceptable Management Practices for Maintaining Water Quality on Logging Jobs in Vermont (AMPs) to protect water quality. The conversion of productive forest land to low density development could have impacts on maintaining viable commercial forestry operations.

Forests also provide a range of other benefits and services; forests play a role in water supply protection, flood control, wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and air quality. Careful management of these resources could reap several economic benefits for recreation and tourism.

- Deleted:** as well as a
- Deleted:** These factors in combination make such soils intrinsically suitable for crop production.
- Deleted:**
- Deleted:** contains areas recognized by the NRCS, or by the State of Vermont, as having
- Deleted:** potential
- Deleted:** T
- Deleted:** .0
- Deleted:** areas of high productivity potential coincide well with
- Deleted:** in agricultural production.
- Deleted:** P
- Deleted:** areas
- Deleted:** have few local regulatory protections, and from a purely physical perspective, are often extremely
- Moved (insertion) [3]**
- Deleted:** critical resources
- Deleted:** F
- Deleted:** should
- Deleted:** character, and
- Deleted:** agriculture and silviculture
- Deleted:** comply with the Vermont Water Quality Standards and discourage discharges from logging operations.
- Deleted:** Vermont's working landscape
- Deleted:**
- Deleted:** primary agricultural soils
- Moved up [3]:** Finding innovative ways to balance future growth with maintaining critical resources is central to the planning process for Fairfax. To ensure that these important resources will be
- Deleted:** proposals. Effective conservation of prime agricultural resources may be practically achieved by concentrating conservation efforts on existing productive farmland. Conserving agricultural resources is important to preserving rural character, and sustaining the traditional and economic resources which agriculture and silviculture provides to Vermont's working landscape. Finding innovative ways to balance future growth with maintaining critical resources is central to the planning process for Fairfax. To ensure that these important resources will be available for agricultural use in the future, mechanisms to enhance agricultural opportunities should generally be encouraged and supported. This interactive process between landowners and the Development Review Board will not
- Deleted:** will
- Deleted:** To best implement conservation practices, soil resources should be measured against the economic viability and practicality of its use and the Fairfax Town Plan as a whole.
- Deleted:** ¶

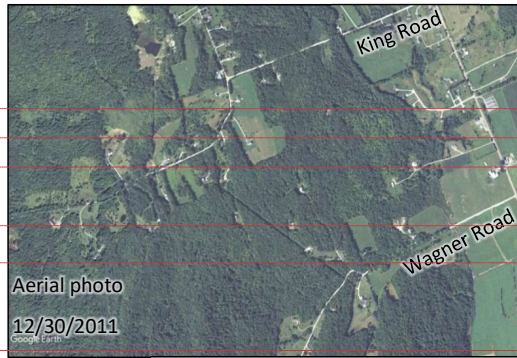




**Keeping the Forest Connected**

Ninety-five percent (95%) of forestland in Fairfax is privately owned and managed. Having large areas of land in private ownership poses two risks for forest resources:

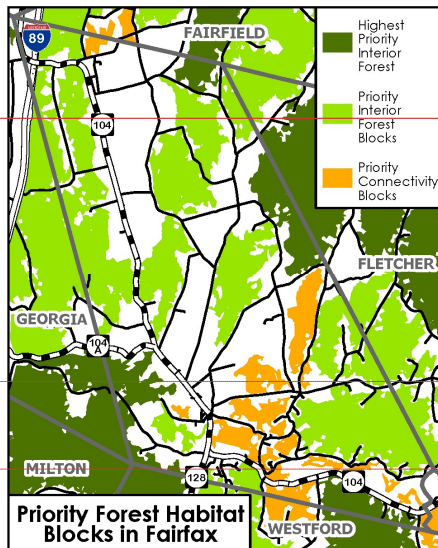
1. A forest owned by multiple people results in different land management priorities
2. As land is subdivided it will result in land clearing and smaller parcels.



Forest fragmentation is the conversion of a contiguous area of forest by land development. Signs of fragmentation occurring off Route 104 along the Fairfax/Georgia town line are shown above.

A trend seen in Fairfax and around Vermont is the incremental impacts of low-density development that physically breaks up continuous forest. The number of small parcels 0-5 acres in Fairfax has increased 38% from 2005 to 2020 (Vermont Grand List via VT Parcelization).

Many species of wildlife, especially large mammals, utilize forested habitat to travel from place to place. When forestland is cleared either for development or agriculture it can alter where wildlife live and how they move. To understand which areas may have more value for wildlife the VT Fish and Wildlife Dept (FWD) has mapped and prioritized Forest Habitat Blocks. These areas identify contiguous forest that do not have internal development or roads (except recreational trails) (Ecological Resources Map). The areas of highest priority are those which have the most acres of undeveloped forest and those areas which connect multiple large blocks.



- Deleted:** The
- Deleted:** that covers much of the community is vulnerable to fragmentation as over 95% of the land area
- Deleted:** The Town of Fairfax owns and maintains less than 1% of the land area in the community; aside from the tip of Fairfield Swamp WMA that dips into the northern corner there are no other state or federal lands in town.
- Deleted:** ;
- Deleted:** a
- Deleted:**
- Deleted:** and as

- Deleted:** The priority of habitat blocks is identified in the VT Biofinder 2016<sup>1</sup> and shown in the Priority Forest Habitat Blocks inset below. The highest priority habitat blocks in Town correspond to the larger habitat blocks with the least amount of internal development that disrupts internal or core habitat. ¶
- Deleted:**
- Deleted:** e;
- Deleted:** w

- Deleted:** but may include recreational trails, wetlands and other natural features such as a stream corridor
- Deleted:** The large majority of the habitat mapped on the Ecological Resources map serves a role as either core habitat or as a habitat connector to enable travel.

**Wildlife Habitat**

There are several unique natural habitats in Fairfax, including wetlands, deer habitat, and locations of rare, threatened, and endangered species (**Ecological Resources Map**).

Wetlands - Wetlands are semi-aquatic lands that are flooded or saturated by water for varying periods of time during the growing season. Wetlands provide habitat for threatened and endangered species in greater numbers than other habitat types. Many species of fish, small mammals, large mammals, and many species of waterfowl and migratory birds are dependent on wetlands for their habitat requirements.

Wetlands also provide many other benefits to Fairfax's residents, including:

- Naturally filtering stormwater
- Storing water during flood events
- Recreational and scenic beauty

Deer Wintering Areas - Deer wintering areas are forested areas which serve as winter habitat for white tail deer. These areas have features such as edible softwood and protection from wind that increase the winter survival rates of deer populations. In Fairfax the largest mapped wintering range borders the Town of Fletcher along and south of Stones Brook (**Ecological Resources Map**). Protecting these areas supports the long-term health of deer populations.

Black Bear Habitat - The forested areas in the far southeastern part of Town are considered important seasonal bear habitat, which include feeding areas and travel corridors. These areas are considered critical to the black bear's long-term survival in Vermont.

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species Habitat - Numerous locations within the Town have been identified which support populations of designated rare, threatened, or endangered plants and animals.

**State-identified Significant Natural Communities**

A natural community is made up of a group of plants and animals, their physical environment, and the natural processes that affect them. State-identified significant natural community are those which are either rare in Vermont, or are extraordinary examples of a particular natural community type, due to large size or lack of past disturbance. Fairfax has five identified natural communities classified as "uncommon"; these communities range from forested swamps to floodplain forest to hemlock forests (**Ecological Resources Map**).

Deleted: Vermont state agencies have identified

Deleted: Locational data and descriptions for these areas have been entered into the Vermont Nongame and Natural Heritage Program database. The species identified have very particular habitat requirements, or have been identified because they are at the edge of their natural range, are vulnerable to collection or disturbance, or have difficulty reproducing.

Deleted:

Deleted: s an

Deleted: a wide floral and faunal diversity, including habitat for

Deleted: interacting assemblage of

Deleted: in numbers which are disproportionately higher than are found in

Deleted: Many species are dependent on wetlands for their habitat requirements including

Deleted: m

Deleted: A s

Deleted: has been determined by the State of Vermont to be significant, either because it is a

Deleted: natural community without many occurrences

Deleted: because it is an

Deleted: .

Deleted: Many of these natural communities are considered uncommon, since the soils that support the species are uncommon. To learn more about Natural Communities visit BioFinder 2016 - <http://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/BioFinder2016/>.

Deleted: ¶

Deleted: provide critical habitat for

Deleted: and other species of vertebrates.

Deleted: Smaller areas in central Fairfax and along the southern border with Chittenden County have also been recorded. These mapped areas support micro-climatic conditions—combinations of elevation, vegetation, and solar aspect—that significantly increase the winter survival rates of deer populations, and therefore critically impact Vermont's landscape ecology. These areas have been targeted for protection by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Deleted: The black bear is a sensitive indicator of the health of Vermont's forest.

## Water Resources

### Groundwater

Groundwater is defined as all water that exists beneath the surface of the earth. Groundwater is replenished from precipitation (e.g. rain & snow) or by surface water that seeps into the soil.

A Source Protection Area (SPA) identifies the land area where the groundwater serves a public water source. These areas must be protected from any activities and/or businesses that would harm the potability of water supplies. There are six SPAs within Fairfax, including around the St. Albans Reservoir, around the water supply well for the Fairfax Municipal Water System, and four community water supply wells for residential developments (**Water Resources Map**). The Town may refer any proposed development in a SPA to the water provider for comment to assure that public and private drinking water remains available and clean.

*All Fairfax residents rely on groundwater as their source of drinking water. This includes individual or community wells or springs, as well as the Fairfax Municipal Water system.*

### Surface Water

Surface water accounts for 1,824 acres of land in Fairfax, or roughly 7% of the overall acreage. Fairfax is situated among three major drainage basins that all lead to Lake Champlain. The majority of Fairfax is part of the Lamoille River Basin; the Lamoille River flows over 84 miles from its headwaters in Glover to the outer Mallets Bay in Lake Champlain. There is an extensive brook

### Working Together for Water Quality

The VT Agency of Natural Resources maintains Tactical Basin Plans for each drainage basin in Fairfax (Lamoille Basin-7, Missisquoi Basin-6, and Northern Lake Champlain Basin-5). A Tactical Basin Plan (TBP) lays out the current condition of surface waters and aquatic habitat, describes problems occurring with water quality, designates strategies to be taken by State Agencies, and establishes partnerships to improve water quality.

system within Fairfax that includes Beaver Meadow, Mill, Wilkins, Stones, Polly, Swift, and Tracy.

There are two significant surface water bodies in Fairfax, Silver Lake and St. Albans Reservoir. St. Albans Reservoir, located in North Fairfax, is a public water supply source for St. Albans' drinking water. Silver Lake straddles the border between Georgia and Fairfax, in the central-western area of town. Many surface waters in Fairfax exhibit unique wildlife habitat including the known natural areas of Beaver Meadow Brook and Wilkins Brook.

### Streambanks and Shorelines

Vegetation along streambanks and shoreline not only shades the water, keeping it cooler and thus more tolerable for certain species of fish, but also provides cover for other wildlife, is aesthetically desirable, and prevents erosion.

Deleted: infiltrates deep

Deleted: of land that likely recharges or passes groundwater through it to...

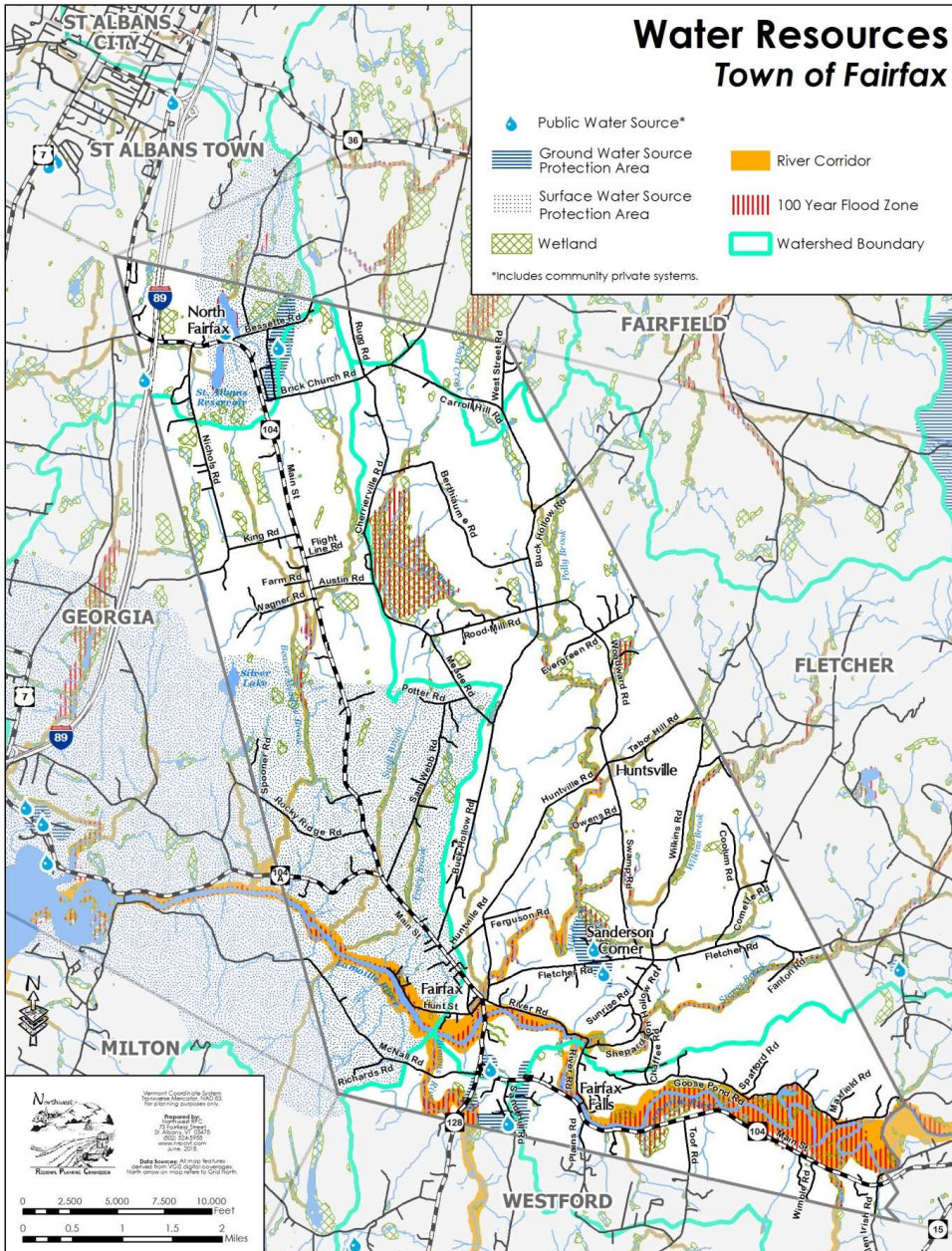
Deleted: the

Deleted: as defined by the Agency of Natural Resources.

Deleted: recharge

Deleted: are to

Deleted: .1



Removal of this vegetation for development or conversion to agricultural uses is detrimental to water quality for the Town and the state. The effects of erosion is often more severe downstream than at the point of erosion itself, including decreased water quality and increased risk of flooding.

The Town strongly encourages the maintenance or construction of vegetative buffers along streams and rivers. For farmers, the short-term drawbacks of reduced tillable acreage are more than offset by the long-term decrease in erosion of land. Road construction projects should avoid filling, dredging or gravel extraction in or near rivers and streams.

The State of Vermont regulates the buffer area on all lakes and ponds greater than 10 acres; in Fairfax this includes the St. Albans Reservoir North and South as well as Silver Lake. The Shoreland Protection Act prohibits new clearing and development within 100 feet of the mean water level of these waterbodies and places limits on clearing and development from 100 to 250 feet from the mean water level. The intent of the regulation is to limit bank erosion, to protect shoreland habitat, and to improve water quality.

**Wetlands**

Wetlands provide critical habitat and play an important role in regulating stream discharge. They store large quantities of water during periods of high runoff and gradually release water during low flow periods. When wetlands are developed, floods get worse and streams are more likely to dry out during crucial low flow periods. Wetlands also aid in maintaining water quality by absorbing and filtering nutrients in the water.

Wetlands in the Town range from less than 1 acre to over 350 acres (Fairfax Swamp on Mill Brook between TH 13 and TH 16). There are over 1,300 acres of identified wetlands in the Town (National Wetlands Inventory). The state issues permits for projects that impact a wetland or its 50 foot buffer only if it is determined that the uses will either have no undue adverse impacts on protected function or that impacts are mitigated.

**Flood Resilience**

Fairfax's location along the Lamoille River makes it at risk for flooding. Climate change is expected to make flooding worse in the future. In the past 50 years Vermont has seen an increase in total annual precipitation by 7 inches. Vermont is anticipated to continue to get wetter with storms that are more frequent and intense.

Deleted: ¶ [1]

Deleted: ,

Deleted: as a whole

Deleted: on

Deleted: downstream environments

Deleted: , resulting in

Deleted: from additional suspended sediments, increased nutrient loading from overland runoff

Deleted: due to losses in flood storage capacity and increased velocity.

Deleted: M

Deleted: waterbodies should be adamantly pursued.

Deleted: T

Deleted: bank stabilization power of buffers, which results in long term conservation of important agricultural resources.

Deleted: avoid buffer areas, and

Deleted: should be avoided. Further, maintenance of roads should utilize the best mechanisms and standards.

Deleted: Flooding is a natural occurrence and a hazard that may become more prevalent as the climate change

Deleted: s;

Deleted: i

Deleted: Effective July 1, 2014

Deleted: the

Deleted: imp

Deleted: lemented a

Deleted: statewide buffer regulation

Deleted: (including Lake Champlain)

Deleted: this regulation applies to

Deleted: in Fairfax.

Deleted: essentially

Deleted: Predicting the occurrence of flooding is nearly impossible so the best protection against loss of life and property is to not build in areas prone to flooding and to restore a ¶

Deleted: Loss of this storage capacity would not only adversely affect

Deleted: stream behavior but would also increase

Deleted:

Deleted: reduce stream flow during

Deleted: quality

Deleted: y; the biological activity of a wetland area enables the absorption and assimilation of nutrients and thus purifies to some extent the water that is discharged.

**Flooding in Vermont can occur in two ways: inundation and fluvial erosion**

	Inundation Flooding	Fluvial Erosion
<b>What is it?</b>	When water rises in a stream after storm events and submerges the floodplain or the adjacent low-lying land	When fast moving waters, typically in steep areas, cause erosion of the land surrounding the streams and rivers
<b>Tools to identify areas in community prone to this risk.</b>	FEMA Flood Rate Insurance Maps (FIRMs) outline the <b>Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)</b> also known as the <b>100-year floodplain</b> , this area has a 1% or greater chance of flooding in a given year. <u>Current FIRMs were created in the 1970s and have been "effective" since 1982. New FIRMS are expected to be completed in 2028.</u>	Vermont Agency of Natural Resources <b>River Corridors</b> outline the minimum area adjacent to a river that is required to accommodate changes to the river over time. These areas are based on the individual conditions of streams and rivers including topography and the existence of public infrastructure.

helps to minimize risk to property and provides water quality benefits.

Floodplains are areas adjacent to rivers and streams. They provide important functions including storing and slowing the speed of water after heavy rain, reducing the amount of localized and downstream flooding.

Land in the floodplain tends to be flat and fertile for farming, resulting in historical development and removal of vegetation along river and stream banks. Development in the floodplain has several negative impacts, including restriction of flood flows, decreasing in flood storage capacity and increasing the risk of erosion and landslides.

The best protection against loss of life and property is to not build in areas prone to flooding and to restore natural floodplains. Limiting development in flood and river corridor areas will minimize risk and provide streams the opportunity to reestablish a stable, equilibrium condition. Maintaining vegetated buffers around waterways also

**Special Flood Hazard Area**

The Special Flood Hazard Area maps the portions of the floodplain with a 1% or greater chance of flooding each year (see **Water Resources Map**). The Town of Fairfax has adopted Flood Hazard Area regulations as part of its development regulations. Regulation of the Special Flood Hazard Areas (100-year floodplain) protect the health, safety, and welfare of its residents and allow the community to participate in the National Flood Hazard Insurance Program (NFIP).

Currently less than 2% of all structures in the community lie within the 100-year and 500-year floodplain. This does not quantify the impacts of repairs to utilities, roads, bridges, and culverts after flooding events.

- Deleted:** It
- Deleted:** is important to note that the existing
- Deleted:** While this information is the best available, the hydrology that these maps are based on is out of date and does not account for subsequent shifts in waterbodies or effects of building in the floodplain
- Deleted:** .
- Deleted:** waterbodies' access to floodplains where possible. ¶
- Deleted:** The floodplain
- Deleted:** s
- Deleted:** the storage
- Deleted:** weather events and slowing the velocity of the water in the river channel. This in turn can
- Deleted:** e
- Deleted:** River channels are constantly undergoing a physical adjustment process that results in stream bank erosion or sediment deposition. Land nearby streams is particularly vulnerable to erosion damage by flash flooding, bank collapse, and stream channel changes.
- Deleted:** ¶  
There are several areas of 100-year floodplain in Fairfax including along the banks of the Lamoille River, Mill Brook, Beaver Meadow Brook, Browns River and several small tributaries (see
- Deleted:** Historic land uses in Fairfax
- Deleted:** adopted a stand-alone
- Deleted:** resulted in floodplain encroachments and removal of vegetation along
- Deleted:** Encroachments of development into
- Deleted:** areas have
- Deleted:** Regulation Ordinance in September of 2006, which places an additional set of regulations on
- Deleted:** es
- Deleted:** as identified by Federal Emergency Management Association's (FEMA); flood hazard areas are also subject to the Development Regulations for the Town of Fairfa
- Deleted:** x. These regulations
- Deleted:** ,
- Deleted:** es
- Deleted:** and to
- Deleted:** Appropriate uses of floodplains are those that can accommodate this inundation cycle and such as agriculture, open space and recreation.
- Deleted:** . It should also be noted that about two-thirds of Vermont's flood-related losses occur outside the mapped floodplains revealing a fundamental limitation of the FEMA identified floodplain delineation.

Where significant historic development already exists in the floodplain and river corridor, such as in Fairfax's village areas, efforts to protect development must be carefully considered and planned. Historic practices used to protect development, such as dredging and armoring, resulted in increased stream speeds and erosion that increase flooding over the long-term.

The Lamoille Watershed Hydraulic Model included several opportunities to restore floodplain to reduce flooding within the Village by creating new flood storage.

### River Corridors

Across Vermont, much of the damage caused by floods is caused by fluvial erosion. Fluvial erosion occurs when the river moves fast and laterally, which results in erosion and the movement of the river over time.

River Corridors are areas at risk for fluvial erosion. For rivers and streams of a watershed area of more the2 square miles , river corridors are mapped based on field data. For streams with a watershed area of 0.5 to 2 square miles, the ANR advises using a 50-foot setback on each side of a stream with the intention of protecting stream stability and natural flow. The **Water Resources Map** shows both types of River Corridors in Fairfax.

River Corridor regulations currently apply only to Act 250-related land development and land development not regulated by municipalities

(like agriculture). The state is currently considering options to regulate development in the river corridor, with final rulemaking expected in 2028. Local adoption of river corridor regulations would provide financial benefits to the Town in the event of a federally declared natural disaster through the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF).

### Hazard Mitigation Planning

Several homeowners along the Lamoille River in the village area are concerned about riverbank erosion along their property. In addition, the Town Highway system has experienced many erosion events along the road shoulder or near culvert inlets during periods of high precipitation and rapid run-off within proximity of the Lamoille River and its tributaries. Fairfax will explore regulatory changes to land in the floodplain and use of river corridors as a way the community can enhance its protection of assets and infrastructure.

Planning for future flooding events is important to ensure that a community is flood resilient. ~~The flooding hazards discussed above are described in greater detail in the 2017 Fairfax Hazards Mitigation Plan (HMP). The HMP also identifies areas of town that are more at risk, critical infrastructure to protect, and strategies for the town to take to mitigate against hazards and increase resilience. The Fairfax Hazards Mitigation Plan, as adopted by the Select Board every 5 years, is incorporated by reference into this plan.~~

## Natural and Cultural Resources Goal and Policies

### Goal:

- Preserve, protect and improve the natural, cultural, and scenic resources, which help define the Town's rural character, natural environment, and traditional working landscape.

**Deleted:** Municipalities may adopt River Corridor maps and regulation as a part of their development regulations. Adoption may

**Deleted:** ¶  
¶ Fairfax has adopted zoning regulations that begin to address fluvial erosion hazards on rivers and streams in the community. Specifically, Fairfax has adopted a 50-foot vegetative buffer on either side of streams to help control soil erosion and protect water quality. These regulations state all structures that require a permit be setback at least 50 feet from all named streams. Given the existing regulations it may be relatively straightforward for the Town to transition to regulating River Corridors Fairfax should investigate adopting River Corridor standards as a part of the Development Regulations.¶

**Commented [e19]:** To be updated after final draft of new LHMP

**Deleted:** generally align with the 100-year floodplain and are delineated in two ways. Field data is used map the corridor in rivers and streams with a watershed area of more than 2 square miles.

***Policies:***

- To maintain the historic, cultural, and scenic sense of place in the Village, including the historic district, sites, cemeteries, landscape features, and archaeological sensitive areas.
- To protect natural, scenic, and recreational areas so that they may be maintained as destinations for hiking, biking, and other physical activities.
- To facilitate appropriate extraction of earth resources that minimizes impacts on the natural and cultural environment.
- To consider topography, geology, and soils in land development review to allow reasonable and wise use of the land while protecting the quality of the environment and the public good.
- To maintain and improve the quality of important agricultural soils and connectivity of forestlands when considering the future development of the Town.
- To prohibit land development on slopes greater than 25% and ensure careful review of land development on slopes of 15% to 25% to prevent runoff, soil erosion, ensure adequate wastewater disposal, and other impacts on resources.
- To protect the surface and ground water resources in the Town and ensure appropriate development and intensity of use in Water Source Protection Areas.
- To discourage development that increases the community's risk from natural and man-made hazards, and to limit new development within the floodplain and state defined river corridor areas.
- To protect fragile and sensitive resources, and endangered species, including but not limited to critical habitat, wetlands, significant natural communities, and floodplains.

**Land Use**

The residents of Fairfax have had a long history of working the land.

- By the 1880's, the lumber and mill-oriented industry began to shift to dairy farming.
- The population in 1940 was 1,229 residents. At the same time, there were 80 farms with a total of 2,400 milking cows.
- In 1950's Fairfax's employment base began to diminish and the Fairfax branch of the Cooperative Creamery shut down.

Since the Town's population boom in the 1990s, Fairfax has been transitioning from an agrarian-based community to a rural suburban community. The increase in residential development is changing the visual landscape and increasing the demand for services. The Town is challenged with maintaining the rural agricultural character and small village setting while accommodating population growth and new residential development.

**Existing Land Use**

Although the community has gained additional residential development, the forest land and agricultural fields are still the dominant land features today (see Existing Land Use Map).

127 new homes built 2020-2024  
Agriculture

Similar to the trend seen around the state, Fairfax has lost many dairy farms in the last twenty years. In most cases the land itself is staying in production owned by a few larger consolidated farms. As of 2024, there are 33 farm parcels with a total acreage of 7,761 acres. The number of farm acres has decreased roughly 3% since 2006. This reflects the overall pattern of farm consolidation with some loss of farmland to development.

Maple syrup has become an increasingly important source of income for agricultural operations across Franklin County. In 2022, 15% of all maple syrup produced in the United States was produced in the county.

Forests

Approximately 50.8% of Fairfax is covered by forest (2011 National Land Cover Database) that is a mix of coniferous and deciduous forest types. The existing forestland may be well-suited for use as small woodlots and low-impact recreation; large scale forest products operations may be limited by the existing land ownership and forest parcel size.

Working Lands

Fairfax has a large amount of undeveloped land that exists as forests and farmland. The most widely used program to enable land to remain undeveloped is the Use Value Appraisal program or "Current Use" that is administered by the state Department of Taxes. Enrolled parcels are taxed according to the use rather than fair market value; as of 2025, 110 parcels were enrolled in the Current Use program (see **Working Lands Map**).

**Deleted:** several

**Deleted:** en

**Deleted:** ; three dairy farms sold their herds during the writing of this Town Plan. In

**Deleted:** and being owned and or managed by fewer operations

**Deleted:** As of the 2015 grand list there are 29 parcels categorized as "farm" which equates to 7,677 acres or 31% of the land area. This is down from a listing of 46 farms in the 2006 grand list and an associated 8,051 acres or 32.7% of the land area.

**Deleted:** that of

**Deleted:** therefore

**Deleted:** farm land

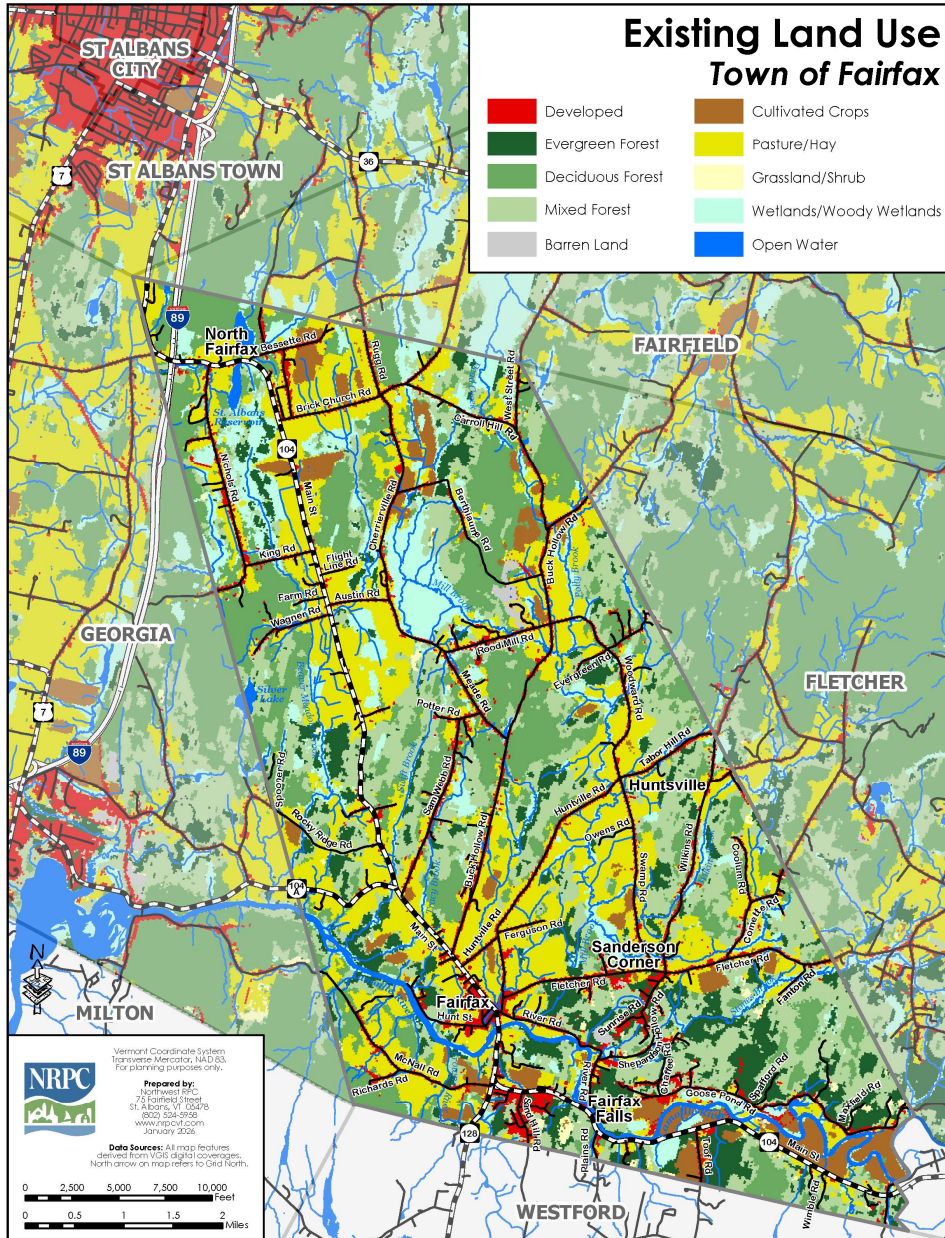
**Deleted:** the 2015 Grand List 99

**Commented [e20]:** Are there still 8 dairy farms in Fairfax?

**Deleted:** 357

**Deleted:** Residential buildings built since 2006

**Commented [e21]:** How many dairy farms are there in Fairfax as of 2026





Both farm and forest land are being conserved or managed in Fairfax through available programs:

- **52% of the land area** is enrolled in the Current Use Program
- **6% of the land area** is protected by a Conservation Easement

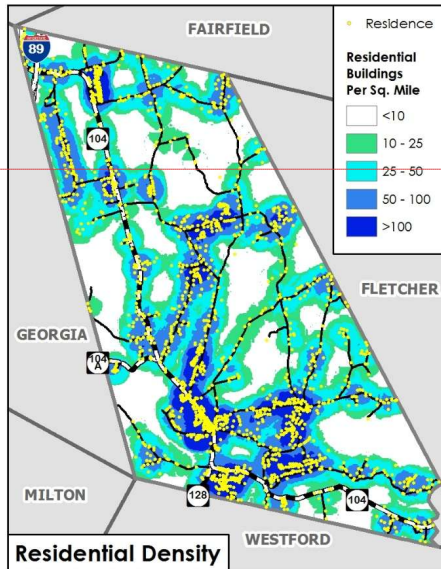
Conserved Land

Thirty-three parcels or 1,540 acres in Fairfax have conservation easements with the Vermont Land Trust; all but one of these parcels is also enrolled in the Current Use program. The Vermont Land Trust works with landowners to conserve land by the purchase of development rights; this ensures this land will remain perpetually open and the land is managed for forestry and/or agriculture.

More than half of all land is in current use. The current use is a property tax program that taxes land used for farming and forestry according to its value as currently used, as opposed to the theoretical value of the land if developed. Land in current use can be developed if a tax penalty is paid.

Residential Dwellings

The highest density residential land use in Fairfax is concentrated within the historic settlement areas (the north village where water and sewer infrastructure exists, the south village, and North Fairfax) and the residential zoning district. However, given the population growth in recent years, residential development of all scales is occurring outside these settlement areas. Clusters of concentrated development exist along Nichols Road, Sam Webb Road, Rood Mill Road, Buck Hollow Road, and Woodward



Road. Each yellow dot in the *Residential Density* figure represents a residential building.

Commercial Establishments

The majority of commercial uses in the Town are concentrated within the North Village, and the South Village near the intersection of Route 104 and Route 128. The predominant commercial development in Fairfax is service-oriented, including restaurants, shops, gas stations and convenience stores. Commercial development in the Village area is limited by the capacity of the municipal sewer and water service.

**18** Commercial businesses in the Village

Deleted: 45

Commented [e22]: Not sure where this county of village businesses came from or what the boundaries used were (e.g. old village center designation or old zoning).

The Village – North and South

Fairfax is anchored by two Villages- the North Village located along VT 104 north of the Lamoille River and the South Village located at the intersection of VT 104 and VT 128 south of the Lamoille River.

North Village has retained the pattern of traditional historic development with buildings close to the street, sidewalks and a mix of uses. Residents take pride in the remaining historic architecture which should be preserved. These elements that reinforce the local character of North Village contribute to a shared sense of place and community vitality.

*The North Village could be enhanced with private investments such as the addition of awnings, wayfinding, and engaging storefronts along the length of Main Street to enhance the pedestrian realm and add character.*

South Village is characterized as automobile oriented with a lack of sidewalks and businesses setback from the road with parking lots serving as the main visual appeal upon first glance. This style of development differs from the North Village and the rhythm of development set by buildings adjacent to the street.

Both villages have areas where wide commercial driveways create safety conflicts between cars and pedestrians.

The 2020 Growth Study found that between 2010 and 2020, only 15% of new housing units

**Village Strengths & Assets**

- Small town feel
- Scenic views- farms, rivers and mountains
- BFA school
- The Community Center
- Community- people & events
- Park & Bike/Recreation Path
- Small locally-run businesses
- Sidewalks in North Village
- Historic character of North Village

**Village Challenges**

- Lack of shared community identity/reason to go
- Increasing # of chain businesses
- Lack of crosswalks
- Lack of walking/biking connection between Villages
- Fast traffic speeds
- Water and sewer capacity
- Concerns that new development doesn't fit with historic

were built in the former North Village Growth Center. From 2020-2024, building permit data shows roughly 30% of units were built within ¼ mile of the North Village. In the more commercial South Village, only 3 housing units have been built since 2020.

**Commented [e23]:** Will add updated map of North and South Village

**Deleted:** A starting point for the 2012 Village Visioning project was the engagement of residents, local business owners, and students to define the vision for the village areas, meaning how the village should look, feel, and function. From there a series of public outreach events identified assets and challenges in the community, places of importance, opportunities to improve the streetscape, and a visual preference survey on architectural style for design guidelines.

**Deleted:** and it is important that these features of the village be

**Deleted:** Landscaping and screening standards were revised in 2016 to more specifically address the use of vegetation in site design and both screen commercial properties as well as define landscaping to offer shade and visual interest.

**Deleted:** ¶

**Deleted:** <object>

**Deleted:** ¶ ... [2]

**Deleted:** The 2016 Village Gateway study took a deeper dive into proposing modifications to the streetscape in each Village to provide pedestrian scale amenities and aid in calming traffic speeds along the corridor.

**Deleted:** <object>Assets and Strengths of the Village (Source: 2012 Village Visioning Project) ... [3]

### Fairfax Village Plans, Studies and Projects

*Over the last 15 years, the Town has completed many plans, studies and project related to the North and South Village.*

**2012:** The ***Fairfax Village Visioning Study*** engaged residents on how the village should look, feel and function.

**2013:** The ***Village Non-Motorized Travel Plan*** examines non-motorized transportation routes in the Villages.

**2015:** The ***Town of Fairfax Pedestrian Connectivity Feasibility Study between the North and South Villages*** studied possible options to improve walking and biking between the North and South Village. The state-owned bridge crossing the Lamoille River presents the largest challenge for connecting the Villages.

**2017:** The ***Fairfax Gateway Study*** looked at methods of defining Fairfax’s two villages as a cohesive “place” by making improvements at the northern and southern edges of the Villages. The plan identified 3 possible gateway areas where signage and pedestrian improvements would make it more clear you are entering Fairfax’s villages.

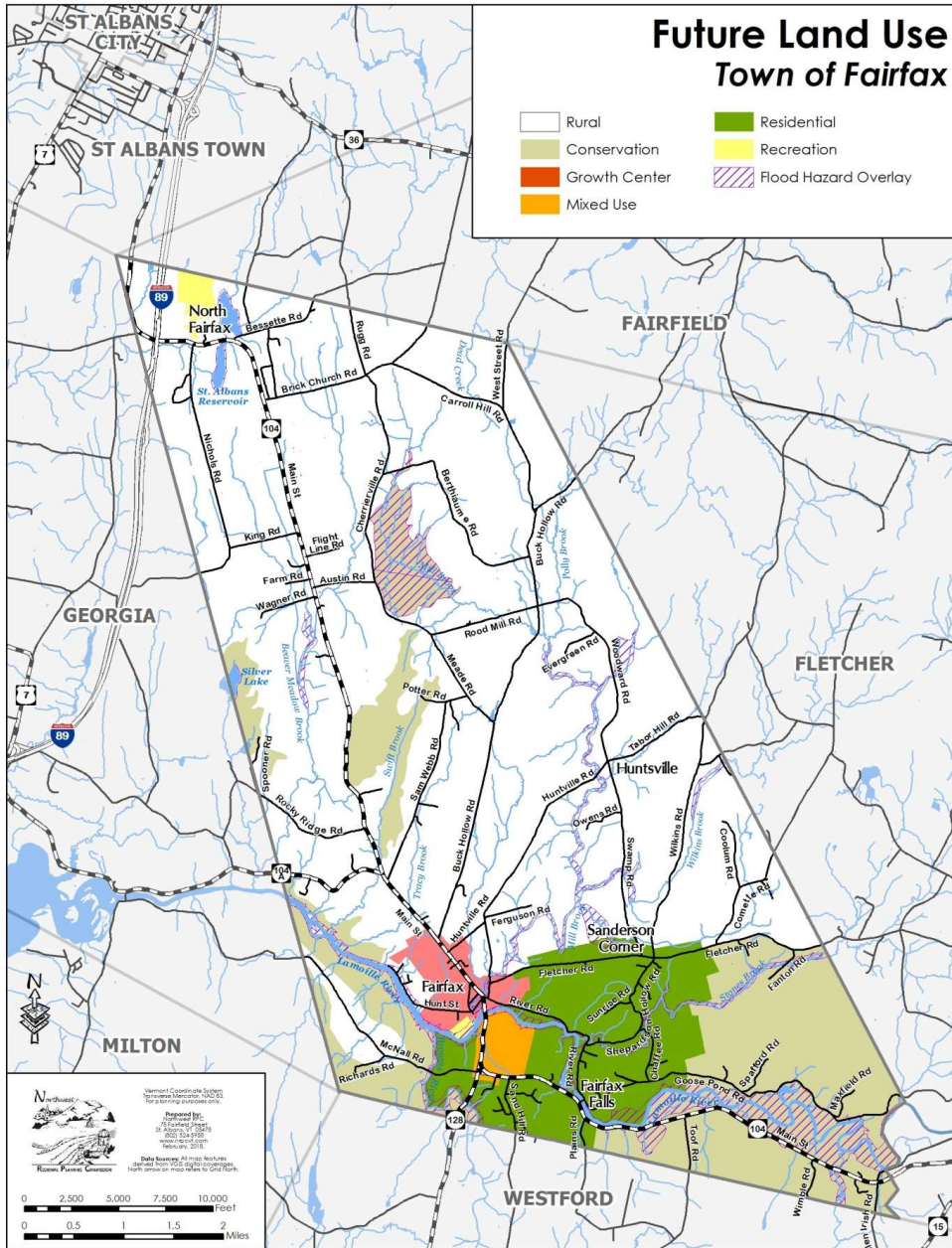
**2020:** The ***Town of Fairfax Growth Study*** analyzed current development patterns and expected future growth given development regulations and physical constraints on growth (e.g. wetlands, steep slopes). The study found that based on the adopted zoning at the time, it was likely that ¾ of all growth would be in the Rural District. This result led to the 2024 update of the zoning regulations.

**2024:** The ***Fairfax Bylaw Modernization Project*** updated the Fairfax Development Regulations, implementing some of the recommendations of the growth study including changes to the Village Zoning District and increasing the size of the Residential Zoning District. These changes aim to encourage growth outside of the Town’s working farm and forest lands.

**2024:** The ***Fairfax Official Map*** shows existing and planned town utilities, facility land and other public improvement, with a focus on the villages. The Official Map integrates public facility planning into development review process, creating an avenue for the Town to negotiate for land acquisition if desired.

Deleted: <object>Assets and Strengths of the Village (Source: 2012 Village Visioning Project) ... [4]

Deleted: 1



Commented [e24]: Should there be any changes from current zoning map?

Future Land Use

development to be adequately absorbed by

Future Land Use Vision

Fairfax should grow and develop in a manner and intensity that reflects its traditional land use patterns and encourages a mix of uses in its villages. The majority of land in town should be rural, with open lands supporting a small-scale local economy and preserving natural environment. A smaller portion of land is set aside for residential neighborhoods and mixed-use village centers. Strip development and sprawl are minimized.

Through proactive planning, this community vision can be translated into actions that best serve the people, the culture, and the land itself.

Across several decades of planning, residents have expressed a strong desire for the higher densities of future growth to occur in a smaller area, with the remaining land being kept in uses such as agriculture, open space, forestry, and some low density rural residential development.

To reach this goal, the Town has two Village Districts (North Village and South Village) as well as Residential District. The Village Districts are intended to provide mixed residential and commercial development with pedestrian friendly streets, "neighborhood" living, an integrated street network, shops, government services, schools, parks and playgrounds. The Residential District will provide additional land for medium-density residential neighborhoods. Together, these districts will accommodate the majority of growth in Fairfax.

Achieving this vision of growth will require not only municipal regulations but also municipal services and infrastructure in these areas. Efficient municipal water distribution and wastewater treatment systems is of the highest importance for higher density

development. Town policies for expansion and improvement of these systems is the keystone of a successful future.

While the Town encourages the majority of development into the Village areas, it is also important to balance the desire to maintain rural open lands with the rights of individual landowners. Subdivision and site design standards should encourage the clustering of residences to prevent strip development and reduce the parcelization of agricultural, forestry, and meadow lands. Building sites should respect natural resources and aesthetic qualities of the land. These factors shall be considered for large subdivisions of 10 lots or more while they are encouraged for smaller developments.

Opportunities for intact preservation of forest and agricultural resources through single or common ownership should be encouraged.

For example, cluster development around the forest perimeter with common or single ownership of the forest interior)

- Deleted: Characteristics of Growth Centers
  - Deleted: <#>incorporates a mix of uses¶ provides public spaces organized around a focal point¶ promotes denser development than that outside a growth center supported by existing or planned infrastructure¶ results in concentrated development surrounded by rural countryside¶ planned in accordance with chapter 117 planning goals and with smart growth principles ¶ supports the purposes of Act 250¶ ~ ~ ~¶ (As enacted into Law under Title 24 § 2791)...
- Moved (insertion) [4]
- Formatted: Font: (Default) Myriad Pro Light, 12 pt
- Formatted: Default, Left
- Deleted: The overall policy concerning future land use shall be to encourage Fairfax to grow and develop in a manner and intensity that reflects its traditional land use patterns and encourages a mix of uses in the defined growth areas, especially where infrastructure exists.
- Deleted: the land. In this regard,
- Moved [4]: Through proactive planning, this community vision can be translated into actions that best serve the people, the
- Deleted: ¶ ... [5]
- Deleted: ¶ ... [6]
- Deleted: Planning for improvements and acquiring the n ... [11]
- Deleted:
- Deleted: designated growth areas
- Deleted: E
- Deleted: ing
- Deleted: area
- Deleted: and balancing the
- Deleted: with aesthetic and cultural considerations in th ... [12]
- Deleted: s
- Deleted: , including encouraging
- Deleted: the
- Deleted: defined a high density, mixed use growth center ¶ ... [7]
- Deleted: that is intended to accept the majority of future ¶ ... [8]
- Deleted: , and flexible zoning that allows for development of
- Deleted: b
- Deleted: that
- Deleted: s
- Deleted: a mixture of residential, multi-family and comme ... [9]
- Deleted: should be incorporated into development review ... [13]
- Deleted: ¶
- Deleted: ¶ ... [10]
- Deleted: The provision of efficient
- Deleted: paramount

**Future Land Use Planning Areas**

This section is intended to guide future land use and development decisions as well as provide a framework for future zoning amendments. Future land use in the Town of Fairfax is defined by the following planning areas as shown on the Future Land Use Map and described below.

Village - The Village encompasses and extends out from the traditional village center in Fairfax developed with a mix of uses and a compact settlement pattern. Infill development should be designed and sited to extend the settlement pattern, built form and scale of Fairfax's traditional village center through an interconnected road network shared by motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. The district should continue to host community services, recreation amenities and small businesses that draw people to the village and contribute to a high quality of life for village residents. The village is served by municipal water and sewer systems allowing it to accommodate higher densities of residential development, including larger multiunit residential buildings. The village should offer a range of housing options to suit the needs of a diverse population.

Residential - The Residential planning area is intended to provide opportunity for residential growth extending out from the Fairfax village center. The configuration of lots, layout of roads and driveways, and placement of buildings should be regular with variation when necessary to respond to the terrain and natural features on the site. A connected road and pedestrian network should link neighborhoods and provide convenient access to village services and amenities. Residents should enjoy access to recreation lands and open space.

Neighborhoods should offer a range of housing options to suit the needs of a diverse population.

Rural - The Rural planning area is intended to provide opportunity for residential living in a rural setting and to support Fairfax's rural economy and way of life. The configuration of lots, layout of roads and driveways, and placement of buildings should be varied in response to the terrain and natural features on the site with building sites sensitively located along the edges of fields or pastures, and lot lines, roads or drives following hedgerows, fence lines or stone walls. In forested areas, clearing for access, house sites and view corridors should be minimized to the greatest extent feasible and development should be sited in proximity to existing road and utility corridors to avoid further encroachment into currently undisturbed areas.

Conservation - The Conservation planning area includes areas generally not physically suited for development, which should be protected for their inherent natural resource and ecological value. An overall low density of development should be maintained to minimize environmental impacts and retain rural character. Conservation subdivisions that cluster house sites and preserve open space may be required to achieve those purposes.

Flood Hazard Overlay - The purpose of this overlay area is to prevent increases in flooding caused by development in flood hazard areas, to minimize future public and private losses due to flood, and to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare. Designation of this area is also required for

**Commented [e25]:** Updated language is from the purpose in zoning districts

**Deleted:** ¶

**Deleted:** This planning area is intended for low density residential development beyond what is accommodated by the Growth Center and Mixed Use planning areas. Agriculture and significant forestland does not dominate in this district and soils are generally suitable for on-site septic systems. Clustering of building lots and planned unit developments are recommended in these areas in order to preserve open land, forestland, and rural character. Linear strip residential development should be discouraged.

**Deleted:** updates and

**Deleted:** L

**Deleted:** , for future purposes, has been defined

**Deleted:** in

**Deleted:** *Growth Center*

**Deleted:** This planning area is intended to primarily consist of viable agricultural and forest land within the Town; it consists of areas with significant prime agricultural soils, areas in current agricultural use, and significant forestland not included in the Conservation planning areas. Most importantly, the landscape of rural open countryside and forestland shall be maintained. It is the intent of this designation to encourage viable forest practices and the long-term viability of agricultural uses into the future, and to protect these areas from incompatible forms of development; provisions should be made to encourage the long term viability of agricultural uses. This area can accommodate a small portion of future residential development at low densities if clustered or sited to conserve productive agricultural and forestry soils, meadowland, and to maintain rural character

**Deleted:** This planning area encompasses the traditional village center in Fairfax consisting of a mixture of residential, multi-household, and commercial land uses on smaller building areas than are allowed in other parts of town. The Growth Center is designed to accept the majority of future growth, which shall be designed and sited to further the traditional characteristics of village centers. Such characteristics include pedestrian friendly streets, sidewalks and walkways, neighborhood living, an integrated street network, shops, government services, schools, parks, and playgrounds.¶

**Deleted: Mixed Use** - This planning area is intended for mixed use development near the junction of VT Rte. 128 and VT Rte. 104. The Mixed Use area is intended to maintain the small scale commercial, residential, and recreational uses currently in existence, while complementing and providing connection to the Village. Pedestrian accessibility shall be required in future development applications to promote walkable, village scale development. Community wastewater treatment should be required for any new development to encourage density and clustering of uses. Safe pedestrian connection to the Village should be considered through sidewalks or other pedestrian paths.¶

**Deleted:** This planning area defines land generally not physically suited for development, or which should be protected for their inherent value as significant wildlife habitat and forest land. These areas include deer wintering areas; bear habitat; lq ... [14]

**Deleted: Recreation** - This planning area consists of those areas owned by the Town, which have been set aside for future development as sites for public recreation. Construction should be limited to necessary public facilities associated with recreat... [15]

continued participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and is regulated under the Town's Flood Hazard Area Regulation Ordinance. Included are all areas in Fairfax identified as areas of special flood hazard on the National Flood Insurance maps.

## Land Use Goals and Policies

### Goals:

- Maintain a compact and vibrant village center surrounded by a landscape of farms, forestry, and rural countryside.
- Promote development and investment within the North and South Villages that reinforces the importance of these Villages as the Town's social and cultural center.
- Maintain and protect open space while accommodating community growth to ensure a network of land is available for use as recreation, working lands, and forest land.
- Create a safe and accessible environment that invites and supports pedestrian use, community events and an active lifestyle.

### Policies:

- To provide future services and public facilities within the *North or South Villages* that support pedestrian and other non-vehicular travel, are organized around a central focal area, and include public spaces that promote social interaction.
- To encourage the economic viability of local agriculture, forestry, and related industries.
- To discourage sprawling development patterns/strip development.
- To encourage an interactive permitting process between landowners and local planning officials to facilitate site sensitive planning and awareness of local and state permitting.
- To limit development on lands unsuited for that purpose, including fragile and sensitive resources, such as critical habitat, wetlands, steep slopes, prime agricultural soils, and floodplains.
- To encourage infill development and the rehabilitation of historic structures and features that are a part of Fairfax's character.
- To consider long term plans for the entire parcel and adjacent lands during development review and address their potential cumulative impact.
- To encourage the clustering of development in the rural areas of town to preserve the open rural landscape.
- To coordinate the preservation of forestland, working agricultural land, and open space throughout the Town to create connected corridors of undeveloped land.
- To provide access to parks, shared-use paths and trails, or open spaces within reasonable distance of residential areas.
- To allow select agricultural practices in open spaces set aside in permitting – e.g. community gardens or small agricultural enterprises in open spaces of cluster housing.
- To encourage new residential and mixed-use developments to include sidewalks, outdoor open space, recreational facilities, and community gardens to promote active living.

## Fairfax Town Plan 2018-2026

---

- Encourage redevelopment of mixed use buildings on lots to provide both residential and commercial activity.
- To define and establish meaningful public spaces within the Village and surrounding network that enhances placemaking and encourages community gathering.