

Fairfax Town Plan 2027 - 2035



Adopted by the Fairfax Selectboard on

[DRAFT]

Acknowledgements

Prepared by the Fairfax Planning Commission with assistance from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission.

This project was funded in part by a Municipal Planning Grant administered by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development.

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Appendix 1. Fairfax Enhanced Energy PlanA-1

Section 1: Planning with a Purpose

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

What's In the Plan?

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

The plan starts with a broad vision that reflects what Fairfax residents want for our shared future. This vision then informs the Plan's goals, policies and actions across many topics.

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

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

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

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

Structure of the Town Plan

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

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

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

❖ **Town of Fairfax Historical Record**

❖ **2026 Fairfax Town Outreach Summary**

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

Role of the Planning Commission

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

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

programming to direct the course of future growth and development;

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

Resident Participation

Resident participation is important in all levels of the planning process. There have been opportunities for involvement throughout the Town Plan update process as well as during projects that implement goals and policies of the Plan (see inset Resident Participation). These efforts are intended to foster the broadest level of public participation possible, and to utilize the planning process as a vehicle for exercising an inclusive, community-wide vision for the future of Fairfax.

Resident Participation: *A History of Involvement*

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

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

1984 The first Town Plan was adopted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2026 A community planning sessions was advertised to all postal customers in Fairfax with 35 attendees in person and 10 responses online .A final presentation was held in October 2026. , X residents attended.

Overall Community Vision

Fairfax is a thriving small town rooted in its agricultural heritage. The scenic beauty of Mount Mansfield and the Lamoille River provide the background for traditional villages and rural farmland. Small local businesses and clean industry provide amenities and a strong tax base. Fairfax's residents enjoy a strong public school system, community facilities, road network and recreational facilities. Balanced budgeting ensures future generations can afford a safe and healthy life in Fairfax.

Key Community Goals

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

Section 2: Achieving the Vision

“Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.”

-- Will Rogers

Implementing the Plan

The implementation of the goals and policies of this Town Plan falls into two general categories: regulatory and non-regulatory options. Regulatory options consist of Development Regulations and Town Ordinances that further the goals and policies in the Plan. Non-regulatory implementation options include, but are not limited to, capital planning, special studies, and advisory commissions.

Regulatory Implementation Strategies

Development Regulations

The majority of policies outlined in the Fairfax Town Plan will be implemented through the Development Regulations. The purposes of the Development Regulations are to implement the Fairfax Town Plan and to further the purposes of the Act [Title 24, Chapter 117, Section 4302 of V.S.A]; specifically, to promote the public health, safety, comfort, convenience, economy, and general welfare of the community. The Development Regulations require that all land development, including the subdivision of land, obtain all permits and approvals as required in the regulations before it is commenced. The Development Regulations should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to implement the goals, policies, and implementation strategies of this plan.

Regulatory Implementation Actions Since 2018 Plan Adoption:

Ongoing Maintained an active capital budget and plan.

2020 Completed a Growth Study which analyzed current development patterns and expected future growth given development regulations and physical constraints on growth

2024 Adopted an Official Map which shows existing and planned utilities and facilities, providing an avenue for the Town to negotiate land acquisition during development review.

2024 Amended the Development Regulations to implement recommendations of the Growth Study including changes to the Village District and increasing the size of the Residential Zoning District.

Town Ordinances

The Town has adopted many regulatory ordinances that implement the goals and policies of the Town Plan.

Non-Regulatory Implementation Strategies

Capital Planning

A Capital Improvement Budget and Program (CIP) is a tool that will allow the Town to plan for municipal improvements by linking long-term municipal expenditures and development plans with municipal budgeting to avoid sharp increase in the tax rate from one year to the next. It also makes the Town's financial management and decision-making process more visible to the voters. Capital budgeting in Fairfax is essential in planning needed improvements such as expansions to the Village water and sewer systems and road improvements.

Fairfax has been levying an impact fee, which implements the Capital Budget and Program, since 2003. An impact fee is levied on new development to help mitigate its fiscal impacts on the community. Under state law (24 V.S.A. §5200), the purpose of authorizing impact fees is "to enable municipalities to require the beneficiaries of new development to pay their proportionate share of the cost of municipal and school capital projects which benefit them and to require them to pay for or mitigate the negative effects of construction." Fairfax's impact fee is important because it offsets a portion of the burden of additional services incurred by new development from the existing taxpayers.

Non-Regulatory Implementation Actions Since 2018 Plan Adoption:

- 2018** Expanded Village Sidewalk network north along Main Street to Huntville Road.
- 2025** Acquired Garland Park parcel.
- 2026** Expanded Village Sidewalk network north along Main Street past Buck Hollow Road to Nan's Mobil.

Special Studies and Projects

Development Regulations and capital planning work best at implementing the goals and policies of municipal plans when they are coupled with studies and projects initiated or recommended by the Planning Commission (see inset of Non-Regulatory Implementation Actions).

Implementation Plan

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

Responsible Parties	TM (Town Manager), PC (Planning Commission), RD (Recreation Director), SB (Selectboard), DRB (Development Review Board), Police Advisory Committee (PAC) Town (to be determined), Fire Department, Department of Public Works (DPW)
Partners	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), VTrans (VT Agency of Transportation), PPP (Public Private Partnership)
Timeline	S-Short (1-4 years), M-Medium (5-8 years), L-Long (>8 years), O-Ongoing
Critical Action	Highest priority actions that are critical to meet the Goals and Policies of this Town Plan

	Action	Section	Responsible Party	Timeline	Critical
Budget/Finance					
1	Develop and maintain the Capital Improvement Program and Budget that serves as a five-year plan to be revised and adopted on an annual basis.	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	TM, SB, PC	Ongoing	Yes
2	Develop and maintain asset management and financial planning for the water and wastewater systems to ensure their long-term feasibility.	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	TM, SB	Ongoing	Yes
3	Pursue grant programs to secure funding for recreational projects that that are consistent with the recreational goals of the Town.	Recreation	TM, RD	Ongoing	No

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	Action	Section	Responsible Party	Timeline	Critical
4	Secure funding for continued implementation of the Sidewalk Master Plan and the Pedestrian Connectivity Feasibility Study	Transportation	Town	Ongoing	No
5	Identify and obtain funding to implement projects identified in the 2018 Fairfax Stormwater Master Plan.	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	DPW, TM, BFA	Short (1-4 years)	No
<i>Develop/Construct</i>					
6	Complete implementation of projects identified in the 2018 Fairfax Stormwater Master Plan.	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	DPW, TM, BFA	Short (1-4 years)	Yes
7	Complete second phase of 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.	Recreation	RD, Community Center	Short (1-4 years)	Yes
8	Implement the Pedestrian Connectivity Feasibility Study.	Transportation	Town, SB, PC	Ongoing	Yes
9	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.	Transportation	Town, PC, Vtrans	Short (1-4 years)	Yes

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	Action	Section	Responsible Party	Timeline	Critical
10	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 Map.	Transportation	Town, PC	Ongoing	Yes
11	Prioritize the repair and implementation of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure within the Village to allow students to safely walk or bike to school.	Transportation	DPW, Town	Ongoing	Yes
12	Expand water and wastewater capacity in the villages to achieve the desired levels of density that would support the plan vision.	Land Resources	Town, DPW	Short (1-4 years)	Yes
13	Continue to implement wayfinding and gateway signage to promote traffic calming.	Transportation	Town	Short (1-4 years)	No
14	Investigate the installation of a municipal net-metering facility to offset municipal electric use. (Fire station - done)	Energy	Town, PC, NRPC	Ongoing	No
15	Implement recommendations from the 2012 NRPC evaluation of street lighting in Town, including switching to LED lighting.	Energy	Town, Green Mountain Power	Short (1-4 years)	No
16	Consider site improvements and amenities such as bike racks and canoe/kayak	Land Resources	Town, RD	Ongoing	No

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	Action	Section	Responsible Party	Timeline	Critical
	storage to encourage use of natural destinations.				
17	Develop a street tree planting program in the North Village.	Land Resources	Town, Committee	Long (> 8 years)	No
Engage/Educate/Inform					
18	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.	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	SB, DRB, PC	Ongoing	Yes
19	Coordinate with the Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation (FCIDC) to support desired development and encourage businesses to locate or expand in Fairfax.	Local Economy	FCIDC, SB, PC	Ongoing	Yes
20	Provide outreach to citizens and businesses emphasizing the importance of the solid waste collection and recycling programs.	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	Town, Casella (Vendor)	Ongoing	No
21	Inform eligible applicants of the Downtown & Village Tax Credit program to improve historic structures in the designated Centers & Neighborhoods.	Local Economy	Historical Society, ZA, CC	Short (1-4 years)	No
22	Market and publicize community events to attract residents and visitors.	Local Economy	RD, CC	Ongoing	No

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	Action	Section	Responsible Party	Timeline	Critical
23	Work on increasing Town-wide support for funding community infrastructure in the Village.	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	Town, CC	Ongoing	No
24	Support the use of the Community Center for child enrichment programs.	Education & Childcare	RD, BFA	Ongoing	No
25	Provide municipal facilities as a venue for public health education and screening.	Community Health	Town	Ongoing	No
26	Provide a venue for health-related classes (i.e. yoga, aerobics, etc.).	Community Health	Town	Ongoing	No
27	Promote the use of the residential and commercial building energy standards by distributing code information to permit applicants.	Energy	ZA	Ongoing	No
28	Create and distribute community informational materials on energy efficiency.	Energy	PC	Long (> 8 years)	No
29	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.	Natural Resources	Town, NRPC, VANR	Long (> 8 years)	No
30	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. Re-did wetlands to	Natural Resources	PC, NRPC, VANR, DHCD	Long (> 8 years)	No

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	Action	Section	Responsible Party	Timeline	Critical
	meet state and flood hazard regs.				
<i>Evaluate/Study/Plan</i>					
31	Study options to increase police coverage in Fairfax including the possibility of a municipal police department.	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	SB, PAC	Medium (5-8 years)	Yes
32	Update the Fairfax Sidewalk Master Plan.	Transportation	SB, PC, DPW	Short (1-4 years)	Yes
33	Evaluate improvements to the intersection of Main Street, Maple Street and River Road.	Transportation	SB, PC, DPW	Medium (5-8 years)	Yes
34	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 Village and Residential districts.	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	DPW	Ongoing	Yes
35	Request regional approval of the Town Plan to make the Town eligible for Municipal Planning Grants and enable the Town to assess impact fees	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	SB	Short (1-4 years)	Yes
36	Investigate and promote viable options for expanding communications infrastructure (broadband internet access and cellular service) in Fairfax. Appointed a rep for Northwest Fiberworks.	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	NWCUD	Short (1-4 years)	Yes

	Action	Section	Responsible Party	Timeline	Critical
37	Continuously evaluate the current and future recreational needs of the residents and ability of existing infrastructure and facilities to fulfill residents' needs, with a focus on improving recreational opportunities for seniors.	Recreation	RD	Ongoing	Yes
38	Consider locations and need for additional expanded municipal services or facilities, such as a fire station, if determined to be necessary based on future development of the area.	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	TM, Town	Short (1-4 years)	No
39	Consider forming an economic development committee to support economic development.	Economy	Town	Medium (5-8 years)	No
40	Continue to work 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.	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	Town	Ongoing	No
41	Study waste collections options to provide for hazardous waste collection including whether Fairfax should join the Northwest Solid Waste District.	Facilities, Utilities, and Services	Town	Ongoing	No
42	Trail Maps for all parks with uses – Example: horse riders, ATVs, bikes	Recreation		Medium (5-8 years)	No
43	Study the feasibility of design standards for the North and South Village that considers	Housing	PC	Long (> 8 years)	No

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	Action	Section	Responsible Party	Timeline	Critical
	the historic character of the community.				
44	Evaluate the feasibility of the Town taking over the Class 1 section of town highway within the Growth Center to implemented identified improvements.	Transportation	Town, Vtrans	Short (1-4 years)	No
45	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.	Transportation	Town	Ongoing	No
46	Participate in regional discussions on transit service that can serve the needs of residents.	Transportation	Town	Ongoing	No
47	Review and maintain the Building Inspection, Code Enforcement, and Fire Safety Ordinance to incorporate any changes to national rooftop solar installation methods and standards.	Energy	SB, Fire Dept.	Ongoing	No
48	Review local policies and ordinances to limit water and sewer services to those areas of town where additional development will not contribute to sprawl.	Energy	Town. PC	Ongoing	No
49	Study potential need for a park and ride in Fairfax with a particular focus south of the village	Energy	Town, PC, NRPC, VTrans	Long (> 8 years)	No

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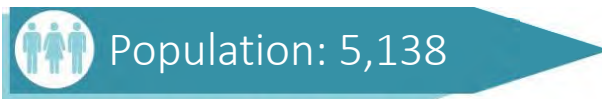
	Action	Section	Responsible Party	Timeline	Critical
50	Periodically review the site plan and subdivision review standards for preserving natural, scenic, and cultural resources, and evaluate for conformity to the Town Plan.	Natural Resources	PC	Ongoing	No
51	Participate in the Agency of Natural Resources' Tactical Basin Plan process as plans are updated on a 5-year rotation.	Natural Resources	TM, DPW, NRPC, VANR	Ongoing	No
52	Consider expansion of the land use mapping capabilities of the Town to assist in development review.	Land Resources	Town, PC	Ongoing	No
53	Identify areas for landscape enhancements in the South Village.	Land Resources	Town, Committee	Long (> 8 years)	No
54	Identify possible options for a public parking area in the Village.	Transportation	TM, PC Town	Short (1-4 years)	No
55	Study options to regulate data centers.	Land Use	PC	Medium (5-8 years)	No
Regulations					
56	Seek funding to revise municipal and private road standards.	Transportation	Town, PC, DPW	Short (1-4 years)	Yes
57	Consider implementing design standards in the North and South Villages.	Land Resources	PC	Long (> 8 years)	No
58	Periodically review the regulations to ensure that the regulatory tools support the vision.	Land Resources	PC	Ongoing	No
59	Transitional areas of residential development in the Rural Planning area will be monitored and evaluated by the Planning Commission	Land Resources	PC	Medium (5-8 years)	No

	Action	Section	Responsible Party	Timeline	Critical
	during this Town Plan cycle to inform revisions to the development regulations.				

Section 3: Community Profile

The Setting

The Town of Fairfax is located in the western foothills of the Green Mountains and characterized by open farmland and wooded slopes with panoramic views of Mt. Mansfield and the Lamoille River. It is the southernmost municipality in Franklin County. Fairfax is served by several State Routes that link the Town with St. Albans, the Interstate and communities to the east and south.



Understanding Population Projections

Population projections provide a good estimate of future growth; these estimates are based on past trends from two time periods. From 1990-2000 much of the state experienced a surge of population growth; this period was used to calculate a “high growth” estimate. The following decade, 2000-2010, experienced slower growth and thus provides a “low growth” estimate.

The People

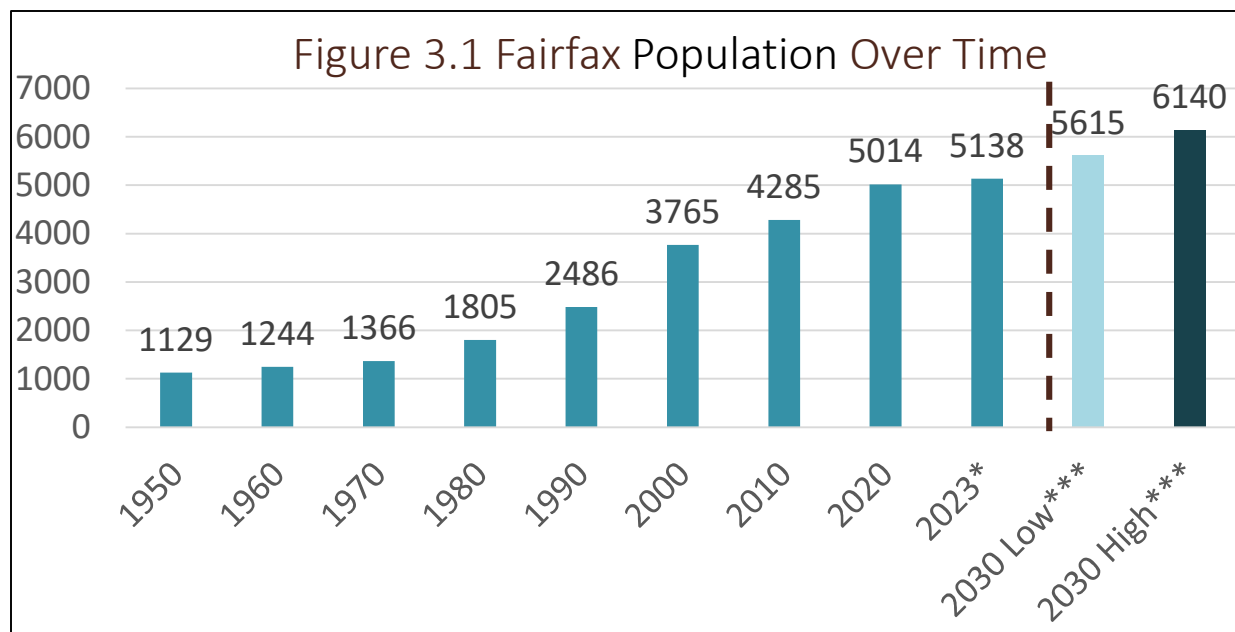
The Population is Growing. Fairfax’s population has risen to historically high levels; due in large part to a period of sustained, accelerated growth that began in the 1970’s and has continued to the present decade. As shown in Figure 3.1, Fairfax has more than tripled its population between 1960 and 2020 and has a significantly higher growth rate than that of the County as a whole. Forecasts for future growth show Fairfax’s population continuing to grow at a similar rate.

#2

From 2000 – 2020, Fairfax was the 2nd fastest growing municipality in the County.



Population expected to grow 9%- 20% by 2030





Median Age: 40.5

The Population is Aging. The majority of residents are between the ages of 18-64. The number of residents over 65 has increased since 2000. However, Fairfax residents remain younger than the state average with nearly ¼ of residents ages 0 – 17.

Defining a Household

A **household** is all people who occupy a housing unit regardless of relationship, such as a person living alone or multiple unrelated individuals or families living together.

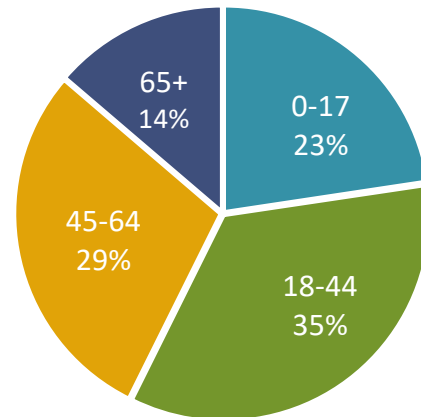
A **family** is two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption in the same housing unit.

Household Composition is Changing. The number of 1- and 2-person households has increased since 2000 by 73% and 27% respectively. These two groups make up the majority of households in Fairfax. The American Community Survey also reports a higher number of households do not have children under the age of 18.



No related children under 18 years.

Fairfax Population by Age (2023)



Households: 1,990

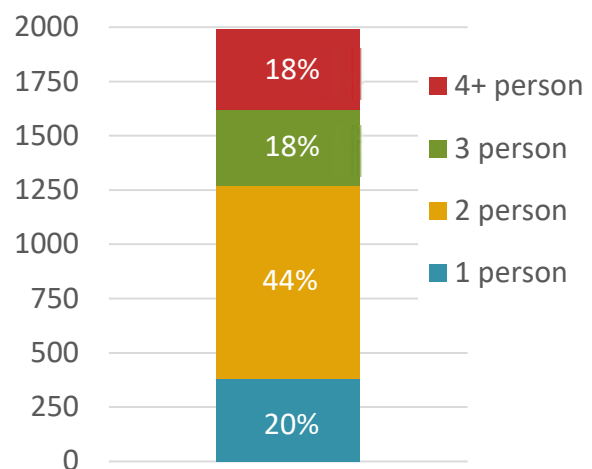
Average Household Size: 2.58



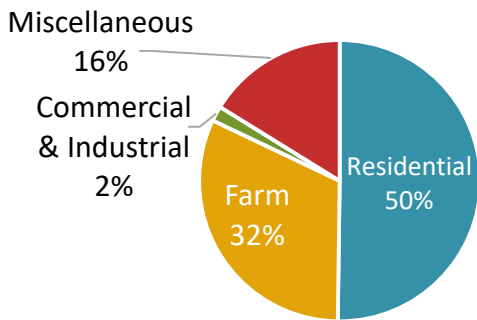
Families: 1,447

Average Family Size: 2.92

Household Size (2023)



% Total Land Area by Category (2024)



Half of all land in Fairfax is residential.

Fairfax has a higher density than many communities in the County. Fairfax has a population density of 129.1 people per square mile, compared to just 78.8 people per square mile in Franklin County as a whole. The majority of the land in Town is considered residential.

3.5% of population below poverty level (*Franklin Co. 10.1%*)

Median Household Income: \$119,063

Higher than average household income. On average, residents of Fairfax bring home a larger income than the median of both Franklin County and the three county areas of Chittenden, Franklin, and Grand Isle Counties.



Median Home Sale Price: \$510,000

High rate of homeownership. The majority of residents own their home leaving little inventory for rental properties. Fifteen percent of homeowners are cost burdened (paying more than 30% of their income towards housing).



83%

Percent of residents who own their home (versus renting)

Workforce largely commutes to access employment centers. The majority of residents commute to Chittenden County for jobs. A small percentage of residents in Fairfax report to jobs in Town (8%). Working from home has become more common in recent years, with roughly ¼ of residents working from home in 2023. The top employment sectors of residents are management, business, science and arts occupations followed by sales and office occupations.



86%

Percent of Fairfax adults in the workforce.

Section 4: Economy

For the purposes of planning, the term “economy” refers to resources, production, jobs, income and activities that contribute to the economic well-being of residents and local businesses. The economy in Fairfax is supported primarily by the businesses and services in the Village, both within the historic core and to the south of the Lamoille River. The remainder of the Town’s economy largely consists of agricultural operations, agriculture-related businesses, and home-based businesses. The intent of this plan is to enable business and industry that will contribute to and maintain both the traditional village character and rural, agricultural setting.

Local Economy

According to the Vermont Department of Labor, there were 146 employers in Fairfax in 2025, nearly double the number in 2000. The largest industries include education services, manufacturing, construction and retail trade. The Village has a number of small retail businesses. Future commercial development is likely to be primarily in the service sector. Retail businesses and should be located in the Village district as identified in the Fairfax Development Regulations. Residents identified the need for additional retail options in town including a pharmacy, more restaurants and other small shops.

Despite the decline in the total number of dairy farms in Fairfax, there is an overwhelming desire to maintain the agricultural culture of the community. Ninety-three percent of the respondents to the 2017 Fairfax Town Survey stated that local agriculture was important. Agriculture in



Fairfax is seen as a part of the regional economy, a way to maintain the town’s rural character, and provides a source of local food. The Town should encourage efforts that support its agricultural base, including the protection of primary agricultural soils, support diversified agriculture, and support of tax abatement programs such as the Use Value Appraisal Program or Current Use. Agribusiness and other support and co-operative services should be encouraged to locate in Town. Home occupations and other small industries and businesses should also be encouraged as part of the rural economy to encourage local employment opportunities and a diverse economic base.

Challenges Related to Economic Development

The Town is faced with many challenges to local economic development. By working on these challenges, the Town will encourage the continued development of a healthy economy in the Village area. These challenges are discussed in other areas of the plan, but are briefly introduced here as they relate to economic development:

Sewer and Water Infrastructure – The Town’s sewer and water infrastructure is limited to the North section of Fairfax Village. Additional sewer and water infrastructure in the southern end of the Village would encourage new businesses to locate in Village realize the

goal of a compact village center surrounded by rural countryside.

Parking - Adequate parking is important to attract people to stop and shop in Fairfax.. Parking is currently adequate for the commercial activity in town today. Given the vision for the dense village center and commercial areas, it may make sense to encourage common parking lots.

Sidewalks - A safe pedestrian environment in the Village will contribute to its economic vitality. Continued effort to maintain and improve sidewalks in the will encourage people to walk and shop the village streets. Specific attention should be paid to providing safe pedestrian links from the northern end of the Village to the southern end of the village. Further discussion on sidewalks is located in the Transportation Section under Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities.

Traffic - Vehicle speed is an issue along Route 104 through Village and Residential Districts. The Town should consider opportunities to calm traffic speeds via infrastructure improvements and speed enforcement.

Opportunities Related to Economic Development

If addressed, economic challenges can also become opportunities for new investment.

Fairfax's broadband network has improved significantly over the last eight years, with most residents and businesses now having service that meets their needs.

Local Economy Goals and Policies

Goals:

- Promote a balanced, diverse economic base, with a focus on locally owned businesses.
- Encourage a vibrant local food economy with access to healthy foods.

Fairfax plans to continue to invest in its village areas. Village center revitalization is an ongoing process to improve a community's vitality and livability. Investment in these areas will expand access to employment, housing, education and schools, services, public facilities, and other basic needs. Supporting our villages also aligns with the statewide planning goals of encouraging compact development and maintaining the historic settlement pattern as stated in 24 V.S.A. § 4302.

Designated Areas

The Vermont Designation Program supports revitalization of centers and neighborhoods.

Fairfax's Village has 4 designated areas: a north and south center designation and two neighborhood designation areas.

Benefits available for designated centers and neighborhoods include:

- Access to tax credits;
 - Priority consideration for state grants
 - Priority consideration for state building and general services when leasing or constructing buildings;
- A special assessment district in a designated center may use funds for operating costs.

Fairfax hopes to promote the benefits of the designation program to village property owners to enhance participation in state programs.

Policies:

- Encourage a mixture of commercial uses including retail, personal and professional services, and restaurants in the Village district.
- Support the maintenance of and/or upgrade to reliable services that attract commercial development, such as broadband internet, cell phone service, and municipal water supply and wastewater treatment.
- Support agriculture and forestry related businesses, and protect productive agricultural and forestry lands from conversion to incompatible land uses.
- Promote opportunities to produce, process and distribute locally grown food products and forest resources.
- Support and encourage low-impact, home-based businesses.
- Consider developing ways to promote the Village as an attractive and supportive community where business thrives.
- Develop materials encouraging promotion and utilization of local businesses, marketing materials and tourism plan to encourage economic growth.

Section 5. Community Services, Facilities, & Utilities

A core function of local government is to provide services, facilities, and infrastructure to meet community needs. An important function of the Town Plan is to review accessibility, availability, condition, and capacity of municipal facilities, services, and infrastructure to meet the current and projected needs of the Town. The Fairfax **Facilities and Utilities Map** shows the location of these facilities.

Fairfax offers a wide variety of services to residents including roads, public safety, community library, recreational facilities, and trash and recycling pick-up. Water and sewer are provided by the Town in designated districts that serve the village.

Fairfax has experienced consistent growth since the 1980s and its population is projected to continue to rise. As the Town continues to experience growth pressures due to the proximity to job centers in Chittenden County, a need for additional or improved services and facilities will likely occur. Clear forethought and planning will be necessary to ensure that the rate of future growth in Fairfax does not exceed the ability of the community and the area to provide necessary facilities and services to maintain public safety, environmental integrity, and a high quality of life.

Local Government

The local governance in Fairfax is composed of full-time and part-time employees as well as volunteers (see Table 5.1). The Town Office serves as the administrative offices for much of Town government. The building came into service in 2014. It has two public meeting

Table 5.1 Fairfax Town Government

Departments, Boards, and Committees	Number of Members
Town Manager	1
Selectboard	5
Town Clerk/Treasures Office	2
Assessor	1
Animal Control Officer	1
Health Officer	1
Planning and Zoning Department	1
Highway Department	4
Water & Sewer	4
Town Constable	0
Fire Department	29
Emergency Management	1
Recreation Department	3
Library	8
Planning Commission	5
Development Review Board	5
Cemetery Commission	5
Fire Warden	1
IT staff	1
Justice of the Peace	12
Legislative Representation	1

rooms and is handicap accessible. The office houses working space for the Town Manager, Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, the Assessors, the Zoning Administrator, Recreation Department, and the Water and Sewer Departments. It also serves as a meeting place for the Selectboard, Planning Commission, Development Review Board, and Recreation Committee.

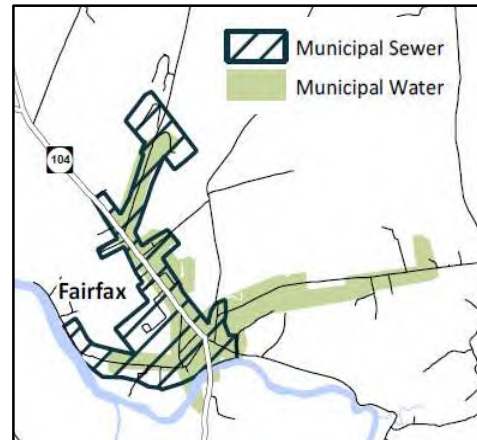
Municipal Finance

The majority of services and facilities are funded through local property taxes. The rate of growth in Fairfax should not exceed the ability of the community to provide services. As it stands today some services and facilities

Maintain a moderate tax rate was a key priority identified by residents during the 2026 outreach.



need improvements in order to meet current and future need. The Town utilizes the CIP as a tool to plan for the future needs and should maintain an annual adoption process as part of the budget development. The capital budget also gives the Town the ability to enact an impact fee to help offset the costs of capital expenditures. Impact fees were first assessed in 2003 and the Impact Fee Ordinance was last updated in 2012.



Municipal Properties

The Town is currently listed as the owner or part-owner of several pieces of property in town totaling 218.5 acres.

Public & Private Services

This section provides an assessment of the primary services available in Fairfax; additional information about each service is located in the Fairfax Community Data Profile report. The intent of this information is to provide an assessment of the available services in Fairfax and the ability of each service to meet the needs of current residents as well as accommodate future growth. The template below details how this information should be interpreted.

Service

General narrative of each service.

Fairfax Today:

"*Fairfax Today*" provides a report on the existing conditions and status of the system as it stands in 2026 to provide service to current customers.

Fairfax Tomorrow:

"*Fairfax Tomorrow*" provides a report on the ability of the current service accommodate new users or population growth.

Status Indicator:



= Meets the needs of the current level of users and *may* have available capacity to accommodate additional users



= Needs improvement and/or is at capacity and cannot accommodate more users

Next Steps: Statement outlining actions the Town should take related to each service.

Highway System Infrastructure

The Town Highway Department maintains 61.5 miles of Town roadways and a system of culverts and bridges. The Town has adopted standards for the construction and maintenance of the town highway system that include:

- Standards for driveways;
- Town Road standards; and
- Requirements of the Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP)

Fairfax Today:



The Town institutes a regular maintenance program and annually budgets for improvements.

Fairfax Tomorrow:



The Highway Department will continue to maintain the town system to meet the needs of the population. Continue capital planning to evaluate and finance infrastructure needs. There is a need to further evaluate driveway & road standards.

Next Steps: Future development from public and private investment should aim to connect roads to improve motorized and non-motorized accessibility.

Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities (Sidewalks, Paths, On-road facilities)

There is currently 4,731 feet of sidewalk located along VT Route 104 between Tuttle and Buck Hollow Road Streets as well as along Hunt and School Streets. Phase 1 of the Sidewalk Master Plan will be constructed in 2018 adding an additional 2,310 feet of sidewalk from Huntville Road to Hunt Street along VT Route 104. Several resources are available to provide guidance on infrastructure improvements as noted in *Section 5 Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities*.

Fairfax Today:



Sidewalks are present along 28% of the streets in the Growth Center. However:

- Gaps in the sidewalk system force pedestrians to walk in the streets
- South Village lacks sidewalks and there is no interconnection in between the areas.

Fairfax Tomorrow:



The current system does not meet the needs of the users for safe use. The following needs should be addressed:

- Continue construction and repair to achieve a safe, complete, and contiguous village sidewalk system.
- Improve connectivity to the southern village.

Next Steps

The Town should continue to pursue expansion of sidewalk infrastructure, including aiming for 500'-1000' of additional sidewalk infill by 2032.

Stormwater Infrastructure

Fairfax has a network of stormwater infrastructure throughout town that ranges by type and level of treatment:

- Catch basins and outfalls are present in the north and south village.
- Development creating 1/2 acre or more of new impervious surface is required to obtain a state stormwater permit and provide treatment, such as a stormwater pond.
- Roads throughout Town utilize best management practices to direct stormwater runoff off of the road and reduce the potential for erosion

Fairfax has a Stormwater Master Plan (2018) that identifies areas where additional treatment should be considered to reduce impacts from erosion and flooding and improve water quality.

Fairfax Today:

-  Taking strides to ensure that adequate infrastructure is in place.
- The Town provides maintenance to the municipally owned catch basins and outfalls;
- All private developments with existing permits are in compliance with state permits; and
- Town is in compliance with the Municipal General Roads Permit.

Fairfax Tomorrow:

-  To ensure the Town does not experience negative impacts from excess stormwater, the Town should continue to maintain existing infrastructure, aim to treat unregulated stormwater, and consider additional local requirements.

Next Steps: The Town should pursue implementation of projects identified in the 2018 Stormwater Master Plan and consider standards to encourage treatment of stormwater on development creating less than 1/2-acre impervious surface.

Cemeteries

There are 13 cemeteries in Town, of which 9 are private and 4 are public. The Town maintains or contributes funding to 7 cemeteries. The cemetery budget primarily funds mowing; other maintenance includes cleaning up vegetation and stones, and installing fence. Towns are required by statute to ensure town cemeteries have a maintained fence; funded by an annual appropriation.

Fairfax Today:

-  The Town maintains the vegetation at 7 cemeteries; additional funding is needed to perform restoration of damaged markers and mark boundaries.

Fairfax Tomorrow:

-  There is capacity for the public at 5 cemeteries for additional burial plots.

Next Steps: The Town will continue to maintain town-managed cemeteries.

Community Library

The Fairfax Community library is combined with the school library and located with the BFA-Fairfax building. Accommodates evening, weekend and online access to resources.

Fairfax Today:

-  The library accommodates a steady stream of public users and has increased programming to accommodate current needs
- School renovations have caused some disruptions to library services, but these are now completed.

Fairfax Tomorrow:

-  Library has capacity to serve existing and new customers. There is a need to further study whether the location of the library at the BFA-Fairfax is sustainable in the long-term.

Next Steps: The Town should coordinate with the library on the update and implementation of the Fairfax Community Library 5-year Strategic Plan.

Parks and Recreation Department

The Parks and Recreation Department offers recreation and fitness programs for the community and sponsors/co-sponsors a series of annual events in the community. The Department also maintains and manages community facilities including: Community Park and Recreation Path, 100-Acre Woods, Garland Park and Community Center (see additional information under *Recreation Facilities* later in this section).

Fairfax Today:

-  The program offerings continue to expand and the Town is conducting improvements to all 3 of the main recreational facilities.
- The Town received the donation of a new parcel of land- Garland Park.

Fairfax Tomorrow:

-  The Town will need to support improvements to facility space, such as the Community Center, for recreational programming in order to grow offerings and accommodate the need, especially for senior residents.

Next Steps: The Town should provide support and resources to identified improvements at the 100-Acre Woods, the Community Center, Garland Park and other opportunities to expand recreational programming and field space.

Utility Department – Village Water District

The Town water supply services approximately 299 connections in the Village, including the school. The total water supply has a capacity of 950,000 gallons per day. The Water Source Protection Area for the Village water supply is shown on the **Water Resources Map**; see Groundwater Section for more information.

Outside the municipal water service area, the majority of residents obtain their water supply by individual private wells.



Residential allocations based on 150 gallons per day per bedroom

Fairfax Today:

 User fees are not sufficient to maintain and improve the current system. Previously, lack of accurate information on system capacity lead to the denial of allocations which could increase user fees.

Fairfax Tomorrow:

 There is a need to expand the number of users. Ongoing work is needed to ensure adequate capital reserves and future planning. exists to fund system expansion.

Next Steps: The Town will continue to improve asset and financial management of the system.

Utility Department – Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF)

The WWTF serves approximately 472 connections in the Village. The system is able to treat 350,000 gallons per day.

Outside the municipal sewer service area, residents depend on individual and community septic systems.



Residential allocations based on 210 gallons per day per single-family residence

Fairfax Today:

 User fees maintain current system. Recent improvements have been limited to minimum measures; additional improvements are needed to ensure longevity of system.

Fairfax Tomorrow:

 The system is near capacity and only able to serve limited future wastewater needs within the village. No capital reserve exists to fund system expansion.

Next Steps: The Town should continue to explore and identify available options to expand capacity of the system.

Fire Service

Fire Department is an all-hazards response agency which responds to a variety of calls. The majority of the roster are volunteers. The Department has a full-time fire chief and twenty eight (28) paid on call fire officers and firefighters. In last 3 years the department has averaged 157 calls. The Department is responsible for rental fire safety inspections and inspection of newly constructed residential solar areas.

Year	# of Calls
2023	154
2024	154
2025	164

There are 33 fire hydrants connected to the system for use in immediate response to fires. The Fire Department has a map of other water sources available for emergency use, including fire ponds.

Fairfax Today:



Planning for future equipment purchases with regular contributions to a replacement fund in the Town Budget.

Fairfax Tomorrow:



The Fire Department is able to handle the needs of the community as it grows. The Department continues to evaluate if additional apparatus or an additional station may be required in the future.

Next Steps:

The Planning Commission and Fire Department should evaluate the driveway standards to ensure the intent is being met and is not creating an unfair burden to residents.

Rescue Service

Fairfax Rescue is a subscription service that provides ambulance and emergency rescue service in town. The service is funded by billing for ambulance service, use of a subscription plan, fundraising, donations, and from the voters of Fairfax, Fletcher, Georgia, and Westford.

Fairfax Today:



Fairfax Rescue is able to meet the needs of the community and serve at the Paramedic level 24-hour year-round service.

- Maintaining qualified volunteers is challenging with new requirements and needed training.

Fairfax Tomorrow:



Fairfax Rescue is able to handle the needs of the community as it changes and should aim to keep costs in line with services provided.

Next Steps:

The Town should continue to support Fairfax Rescue with an annual appropriation to retain the local provider of emergency services.

Law Enforcement Services

Community needs are met by a combination of providers:

- Fairfax contracts with the Milton Police Department for police services.
- Vermont State Police provide additional law enforcement
- Town Constable works in conjunction with the Milton Police Department primarily related to traffic safety issues.

Fairfax Today:



Law enforcement agencies are understaffed and not able to provide the level of coverage desired. The school resource officer position was terminated.

Fairfax Tomorrow:



Law enforcement services should be increased to provide additional service in the future. Explore options for its own police department as population grows.

Next Steps: The Town should evaluate the need for increased enforcement or its own police force.

Solid Waste & Recycling Services

The Town contracts for weekly curbside trash and recycling pickup; the fees for this service are collected with property taxes. As of 2015 it is a statutory requirement for all municipalities to establish unit-based pricing systems for residential municipal solid waste; meaning a user pays a set fee per container or per pound if by weight.

Fairfax Today:



All residents receive service, although in some cases service hauls only from the end of private roads.

Fairfax Tomorrow:



Contractors able to handle existing and new customers

Next Steps: The Town should monitor whether the contracted service is meeting the needs of residents and look for solutions to reduce the number of garbage receptacles at the end of private roads. Evaluate increasing number of hazardous waste days.

Telephone & Cellular Services

There is only one local telephone provider and multiple providers for long-distance service. Cellular service has improved in recent years but dead areas still exist in areas of town.

Fairfax Today:

-  Non-cellular service is acceptable and meets the needs of current customers.
-  Cellular service is spotty in Town and additional infrastructure is needed to ensure town-wide coverage, especially in the village, recreation parks and schools.

Fairfax Tomorrow:

-  Non-cellular service can meet the needs of new customers.
-  Cellular service providers can meet the needs of new customers however, as noted with existing conditions; additional infrastructure is needed to expand service.

Next Steps: The Town will work with public and/or private partners to assess where there are gaps in cellular service coverage.

Internet & Broadband Services

Internet service is available through various platforms: DSL, broadband and satellite services.

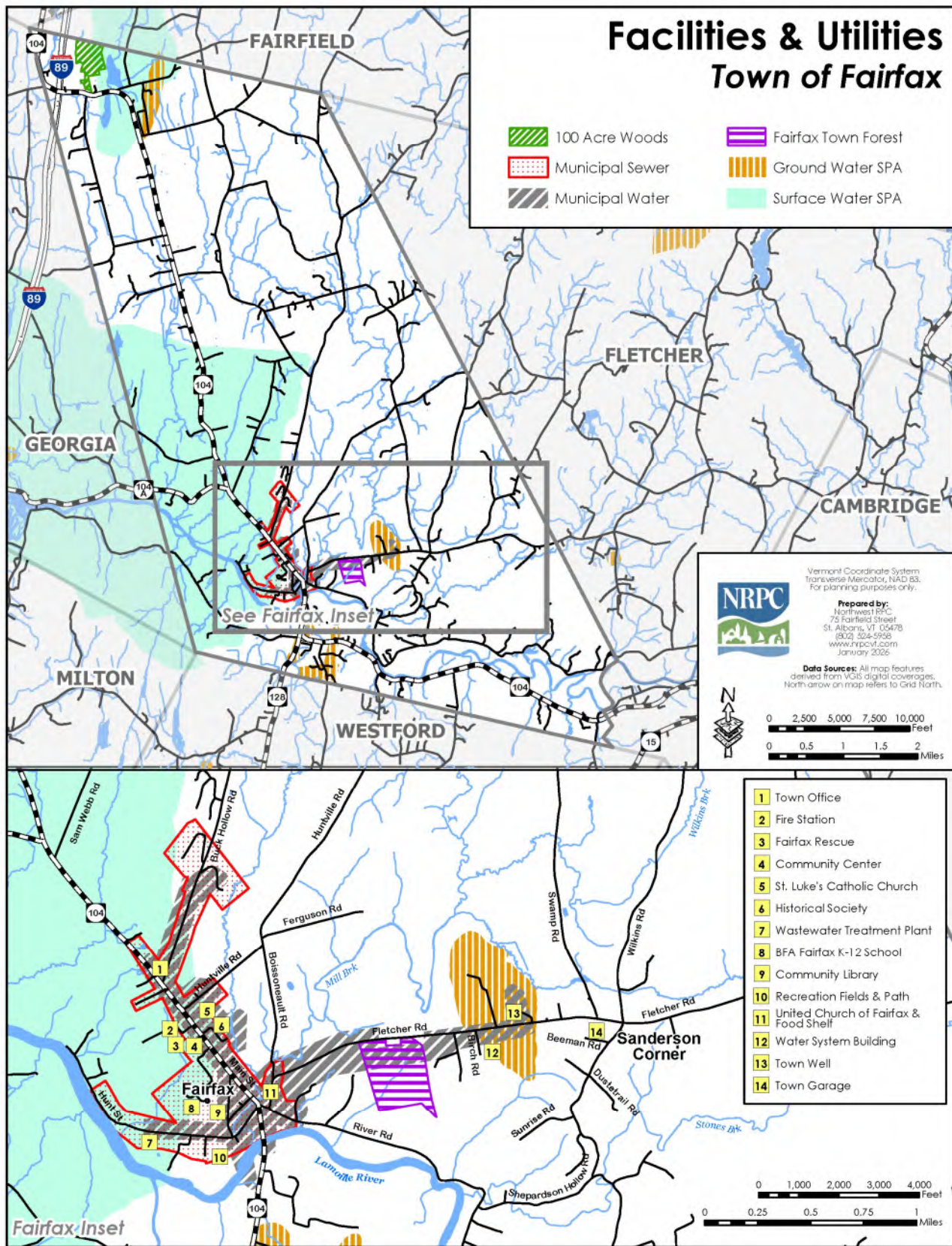
Fairfax Today:

-  The majority of Fairfax residents are now served by high-speed broadband. High-speed satellite options are also available.

Fairfax Tomorrow:

-  Service providers continue to expand and maintain high-speed services

Next Steps: The Town will continue work with Northwest Fiberworx and private partners to assess which roads are being served by providers and what level of service people can access.



Facilities, Utilities, & Services Goals and Policies

Goal:

- Provide and plan for municipal facilities and services to ensure the public's health and safety, and to improve the quality of life in Fairfax.

Policies:

- Maintain a public water and public wastewater system that meets state and federal standards, and provides for the future development needs of the town.
- Assess when improvements or expansions to the municipal water supply and wastewater treatment plant will be needed and how to finance them.
- Provide for the physical safety of Fairfax residents through quality fire, emergency response, and law enforcement services.
- Locate and maintain public facilities and services to encourage patterns of land use, population density, transportation strategies and street design to promote walking, biking, and public transportation.
- Balance growth with the Town's ability to provide expanded services and facilities.
- Improve stormwater management by the implementation of best management practices to reduce stormwater runoff and control erosion.
- Continue educational efforts to reduce waste generation and provide a variety of efficient, environmentally sound, and cost-effective long-term solid waste disposal options as identified in the Fairfax Solid Waste Implementation Plan.
- Support efforts to maintain and enhance the library.
- Expand communications infrastructure, such as broadband internet access, cellular service, DSL, etc. to serve residential and commercial needs.

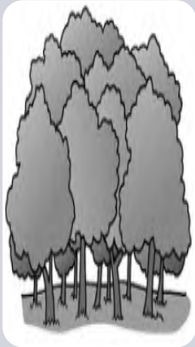
Recreation Facilities

The outdoors provides an abundance of recreation opportunities for Fairfax residents. The Lamoille River, which flows through the southern portion of town, is used for fishing and canoeing, and the wooded areas and fields found throughout the town are used for hunting and walking, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing. There is also a large

biking and running community as well as a variety of both team and individual sports program in which to participate.

There are five formal facilities in Fairfax for recreation activities and programming. Full descriptions of the facilities is available in the Fairfax Community Data Profile.

Formal Recreational Facilities in Fairfax



Community Park & Recreation Path

This 23-acre park provides over a mile of mixed surface paths by the Lamoille River, 2 multi-use fields, softball fields, horseshoe pits, restrooms and a pavilion.



BFA-Fairfax Facility

The Recreation Department coordinates with the School to utilize space for fitness programming; space is limited which constrains program offerings



100-Acre Woods

This 100-acre property is heavily wooded with a small network of trails. Planned improvements include demarcating the parking area and trails as well as constructing a trailhead.



Community Center

This facility aims to address the unmet needs for a venue for programming and to expand the services of afterschool programming and enrichment classes.



Garland Park
Donated by Newt Garland, the 63 acre parcel is wooded with walking trails and a parking lot.

Recreation Facilities Goals and Policies

Goals:

- Provide a broad range of quality community programs and services to the residents of Fairfax.
- Provide diverse community recreation areas, cultural programs, pocket parks and greens.

Policies:

- Maintain, improve and expand Town-owned recreation areas and facilities to provide multi-generational recreational opportunities.
- Encourage recreational and cultural programs that support personal growth, enhance family relationships, and encourage civic involvement.
- Support needed improvements and resources to strengthen access to the Lamoille River and other natural features and destinations.

- Seek to establish public access to outdoor recreational activities.

Educating Our Children

Quality education is essential to the health of a community. The Town is committed to working cooperatively with the local school district to meet facility needs, foster a safe and healthy school environment, and recognizing the critical role that all types of education play in Fairfax's vitality. State statute not only requires that town plans address the present and projected needs of the local public school system, but also requires that municipalities broaden educational and vocational training opportunities for all Vermonters. It is not the municipality's responsibility to make policy or spending decisions for the school—those are made by the school district, with the budget voted on annually by citizens. However, as both the municipal and school budgets are financed by property taxpayers, the impacts of the combined budgets must be considered, and large capital projects should be coordinated. Fairfax's public educational facilities are shown on the Fairfax **Facilities and Utilities Map**.

Existing Facilities & Enrollment

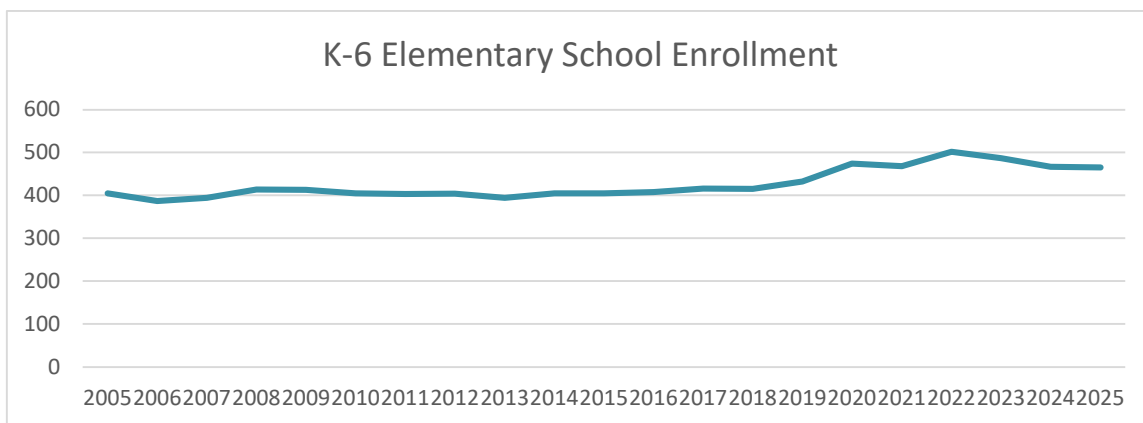
Bellows Free Academy Fairfax (BFA-Fairfax) is a public educational facility serving residents of Fairfax in grades PreK-12. The facility has a capacity of 1,200 students. The addition provided more classroom space, improved the

existing kitchen facilities, added parking, provided greater separation of elementary and high school facilities, and installed fiber-optic technology.

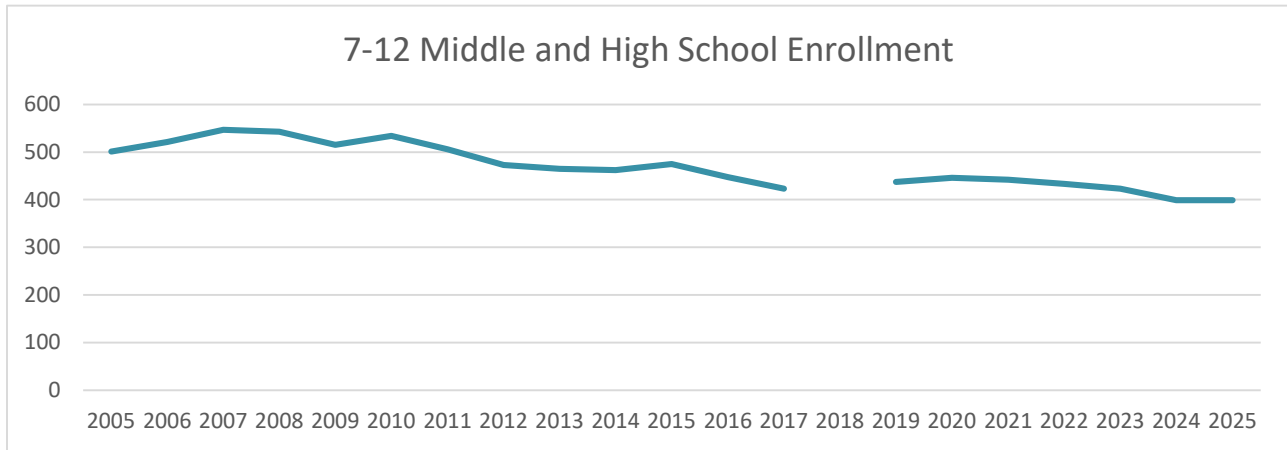
Total enrollment at BFA Fairfax has been relatively stable in the past 10 years. Middle and high school enrollment has dropped slightly, while Elementary enrollment has increased slightly. One factor that influences the high school enrollment is the number of students that tuition to BFA from choice towns. BFA Fairfax accepts tuition students from Fletcher in grades 7-12, as well as grade 9-12 students from Georgia, and fewer students from other communities.

Preparing for the Future

While Fairfax's population increased by 33% from 2000-2020, the number of children increased by only 21%. This reflects trends of fewer and smaller families, with more older households. A major improvement to the School was completed in 2025-2026 which will support increased Elementary enrollment and meeting the school's program needs. Based on enrollment trends and the new



Source: Vermont Agency of Education



Source: Vermont Agency of Education

***Note: 2018 removed due to lack of information of 8th grade enrollment*

improvements, BFA Fairfax has sufficient capacity for the near future.

Community Resource

BFA Fairfax is an important hub for community activities and provides coordinated public access to school facilities and grounds. Community use of the building typically includes meeting spaces used by local government, service organizations, adult recreation, self-help groups, youth activity groups, and cultural groups. Even though the school board has encouraged community use of the facility, the increase in school programs and security has started to restrict community use of the building. Gym space in particular is in high demand between November and March.

Higher Education & Adult Learning

Adults in Fairfax are generally well-educated, with roughly half of all residents having a bachelor's degree and 98% have a high school degree. There are several opportunities for continuing education at public and private educational institutions in nearby towns of St. Albans, Johnson, and Chittenden County.

Workforce Training

BFA Fairfax provides High School students access to vocational training at the Northwest Technical Center, Center for Technology at Essex, and Burlington Technical Center as well as access to courses through the Community College of Vermont. These programs provide students with skills sets they can directly apply in the labor force. The Vermont Woodworking School is a local opportunity to gain specialized skills in a trade.

Childcare

Childcare can be a growing concern for existing and prospective families, including finding quality care and paying for its cost. High quality, available childcare is a critical component supporting a stable workforce. As of 2025, 75% of children under the age of 6 in Fairfax had all parents in their household working. (American Community Survey). While some of these children may have informal or family childcare, likely a large portion of them require licensed childcare options. According to the Vermont Dept. of Children and Families in 2017, Fairfax had 9 childcare providers with 126 spots for children

under 6, including pre-k. Based on these estimates the need exceeds local childcare capacity by a large margin. For each available childcare spot, there are 3 children who likely need childcare. Given that the majority of residents commute outside Fairfax for

employment, residents may utilize services located in the neighboring communities. Data on other options, such as out-of-town childcare providers, stay at home parents, family care providers and un-registered childcare homes are not available.

Education and Childcare Goals and Policies

Goals:

- Provide educational services, childcare, and enrichment programs to meet the needs of the children and adults in Fairfax.
- Encourage youth to pursue higher education and vocational training opportunities that will make them an asset to Fairfax as adults.
- Foster an environment that stimulates lifelong learning.

Policies:

- Promote healthy and safe school environments.
- Provide students with safe ways to walk or bicycle to school through a network of infrastructure (i.e. sidewalks, crosswalks, trails) and traffic calming measures.
- Provide opportunities for community participation by families with young children.
- Maximize resources for the provision of a rich education for all students.
- Encourage the use of public and private facilities in offering multi-generational educational opportunities.

Community Health

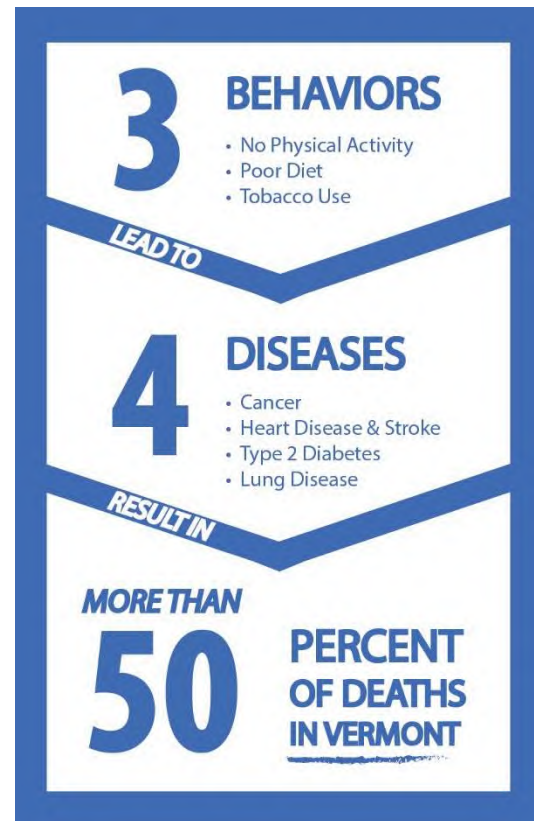
An individual's health and wellbeing can be strongly influenced by where they live; physical inactivity and poor nutrition are among the top causes of preventable death in the United States.

The Vermont Health Department has found a relationship between daily behaviors and an individual's long-term health. In addition, early use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs is associated with numerous problems later in life that can impact mental wellbeing as well as lead to higher risk behavior. Teaching our youth to build healthy habits will influence these health outcomes as they become adults.

The 2023 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey provides a glimpse at where the youth of Fairfax stand in making healthy choices. The following statistics are from the responses of BFA-Fairfax high school students.

- 23% of students participated in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day during the past 7 days.
- 19% of students ate 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables in the past 7 days.
- 23% of students drank alcohol in the last 30 days.
- 15% smoked cigarettes, or used an electronic vapor product in the last 30 days.

Municipalities can support their residents' ability to make healthy choices by influencing the way the community develops, facilitating access to healthy food, and adopting measures that limit the exposure of youth to tobacco and alcohol products. Measures Fairfax could take to address these include:



- Create a pedestrian oriented environment by encouraging mixed use concentrated development in the Village.
- Provide facilities for safe walking and biking in the community.
- Improve access to parks and recreational opportunities.
- Increase access to healthy food by supporting farmers markets and community gardens.
- Prohibit the use and disposal of tobacco, cannabis, and alcohol products and equipment on municipally owned lands.
- Restrict the visibility of advertisement for products containing alcohol or tobacco by incorporating standards into the zoning regulations that limit the area allowed for on-premises signs.
- Provide a venue where health-related education, screening events, and exercise classes can be offered.

Many of these strategies align with other goals and policies in the town plan and will be

addressed in the recreation, transportation and land use sections. To address *Health in All Policies*, the Town will consider actions they can take to prevent risky behaviors and support general wellbeing.

A recent program aimed at involving and educating students on their local food system is a successful example of how these strategies can play out in the community. In 2016, Bellows Free Academy began a School Farm program for High School students supported by two grants from the Vermont Farm to School Program. The school program has engaged local farmers, experts, and town residents who have volunteered to support the project financially or through technical assistance. This program engages students and the school with food system curriculum and a Club and results in creating healthy eating habits and larger engagement within the community.

Health Assets

Fairfax is in close proximity to three hospitals and a variety of medical offices from neighboring towns serve residents' needs. At the writing of this plan, there are several services that are located in town which include: two physicians, a pharmacy, and a physical therapy office. For seniors, the Town contributes financially to the Franklin County Home Health Agency and Age Well service agencies; Age Well provides services such as the volunteer program Meals on Wheels. See the *Fairfax Community Data Profile* report for additional information on health services. The quality of health and human services available now will continue to meet the needs of the Town well into the foreseeable future.

Community Health Goal and Policies

Goal:

- Support and encourage activities and community infrastructure, both social and physical, which enable and sustain the health and well-being of all residents.

Policies:

- Encourage opportunities to provide convenient access to health and human services for Fairfax residents.
- Provide diverse, meaningful programming with an emphasis on community health and wellness. Specifically target alcohol free, cross-generational activities for families, teens, and seniors.
- Support the local food system (growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consuming, and disposing of food).
- Collaborate with interested parties to complete a community food audit to identify existing access and future opportunities to increase access to healthy food.
- Improve the access to healthy food and model best practices related to promoting healthy communities.
- Financially support public health and human service agencies.

Section 6. Infrastructure: Housing, Transportation, and Energy

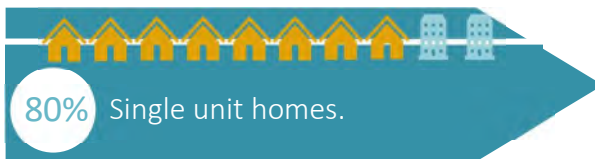
Housing

Fairfax is a bedroom community for residents who work in the Burlington and St. Albans areas. Homes in Fairfax are desirable because it is close to major commuting routes including Routes 104 and Interstate 89, as well as due to the shortage and the cost of housing closer to these employment centers. As a result, Fairfax has experienced continued growth since the 1970s, with population more than doubling from 1990 to 2020. Residential parcels represent 83% of the tax base in the community. The growth of residential parcels in Fairfax represents its transition from a rural farming town to a more suburban community.

Housing Stock

According to the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) there are 2,035 housing units in Fairfax. 127 units were built from 2020-2024. Roughly Two-thirds of all new units constructed from 2020-2024 were single unit homes while one-third of units were multi-units and ADUs. The housing stock in Fairfax is in good condition overall.

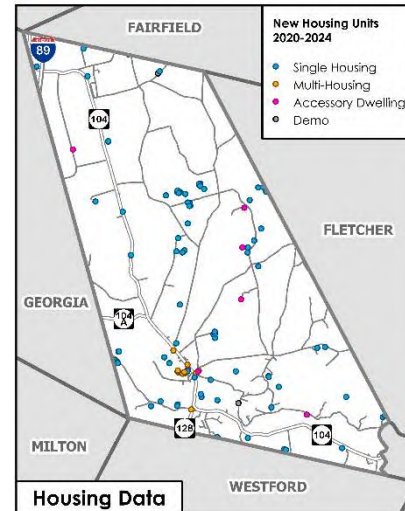
- ❖ Seventy percent of residential structures were built after 1980.



- ❖ Eighty percent of the homes are single-unit homes; multi-unit dwellings with more than 3 units make up only 7% of all residential units.

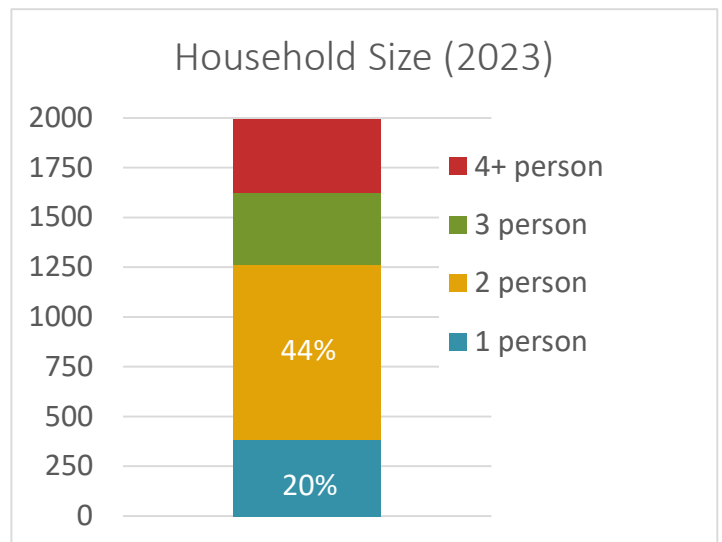
- ❖ Residential lots of less than 6 acres account for 60% of the total parcels but only 11% of the total land.
- ❖ Two to three bedrooms are the most common housing unit (76%) with 19% having four or more bedrooms.
- ❖ Rental units make up 17% of all housing units.

Types of



Households

The majority of Fairfax households have 1 or 2 people. Just under one-quarter of all households have children under 18. The number of small households is expected to increase as Fairfax's population ages.



Defining Affordable Housing

The goal of the Vermont's affordable housing definition is to calculate whether a household making a typical income for the area can afford housing. Overall, housing is considered affordable when the total cost of housing including mortgage/rent, utilities, taxes and insurance is less than 30% of a household's income.

For Fairfax, affordability calculations use the typical incomes in the three-county area of Chittenden, Franklin and Grand Isle County known as the Burlington-South Burlington MSA.

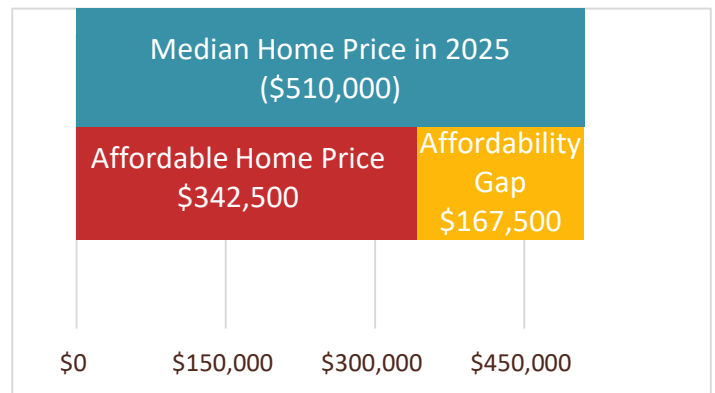
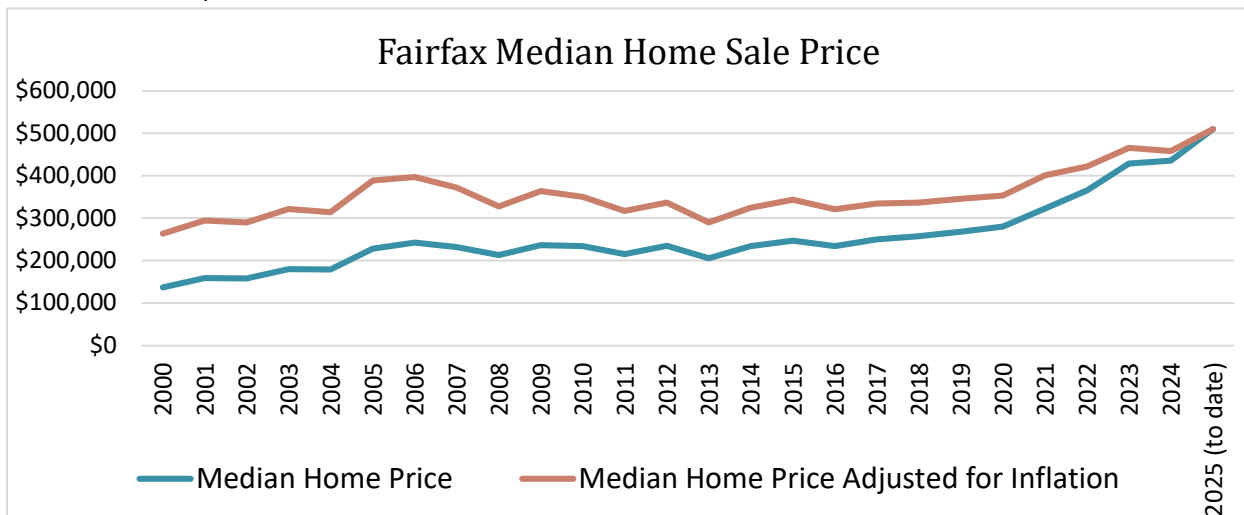
Owner-occupied housing is considered affordable if a household making 120% of the MSA yearly median income (\$114,596) can afford the median home sale price.

Rentals are considered affordable if a household making 80% of the MSA yearly median (\$76,398) income can afford the average rent.

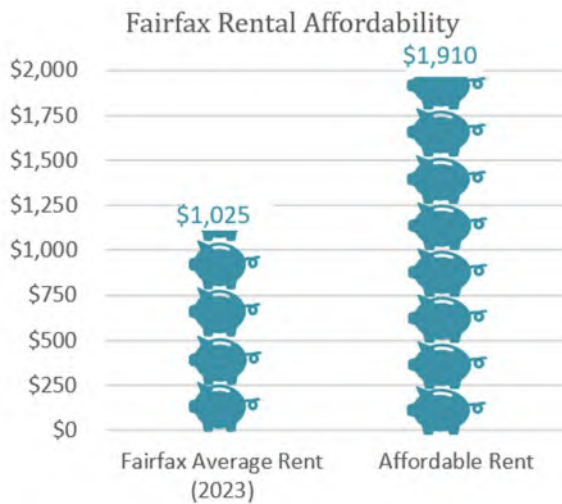
Affordability of Housing

Safe, adequate housing is one of our most basic needs. To foster a diverse community, the Town needs a variety of housing types and price points. It is important that first-time buyers, senior citizens (often on fixed incomes), and lower income residents are able to afford adequate housing in Fairfax.

Home prices have increased significantly in Fairfax over the last 10 years, even after adjusting for inflation. As a result, homeownership is not considered affordable.



Rental housing in Fairfax is more affordable than homeownership. The average rent in Fairfax is affordable to a household making 80% of the median income for the MSA. However, the number of available rental units is extremely limited. More than half of Fairfax’s current renters pay over 30% of their income on rent.

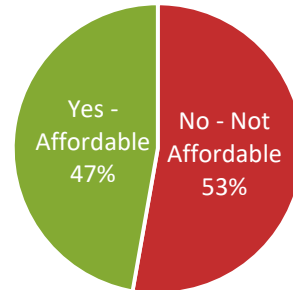


Specialized Housing Options

Communities also need housing for individuals and families with varying housing needs such as seniors and individuals in poverty. Different accommodations will be needed such as modifications to existing housing stock to make it accessible, assisted living arrangements, and smaller or lower cost housing options. If these housing options are not available, it may force some residents to relocate outside of Fairfax as they age or need additional levels of care.

The following is a list of population groups with special needs and a discussion of how well these needs are currently being met in Fairfax.

Existing Rental Households- Is Rent Affordable?



Seniors – Senior residents can have a variety of housing needs. Some seniors may be looking to downsize to smaller housing units or those located closer to the Village. Older households are more likely to be smaller. Half of all people living alone in Fairfax are over the age of 65. As noted above, many of Fairfax’s existing housing units are relatively large single unit homes which may make finding opportunities to downsize difficult.

Franklin Green provides 47 market rate condos; 30 additional units are planned.

Mountain View Apartments provides 20 subsidized rental units; income limits

There are two senior housing complexes for independent living, Franklin Green and Mountain View Apartments, which provide a combined total of 67 housing units

There are currently no assisted living facilities or nursing homes located in Fairfax. This means that seniors with higher support needs will require home-based care or need to move out of the community.

Living in Poverty – As of 2023, 3.5% of residents are considered to be below the poverty level. An additional 20% of residents are above the poverty line but would be considered low-income under the affordable housing calculation (household incomes of \$75,000 or less).

One development in Fairfax that has incorporated subsidized low-income housing is the Eastfield Condominium Development on Route 104 across from Minor's Store. This is a 32 unit 2-bedroom condominium development and 14 of the units are permanently affordable through the Champlain Housing Trust "Shared Equity Program". While the typical buyer of a CHT home averages an income of 60-70% of the MSA median, these units are open to all buyers with an income below 100% of the median.

The Town should evaluate the current affordability of the town's housing stock to ensure that there are opportunities for all incomes to find safe and adequate housing.

Future Housing Needs

In 2025 and 2026, the State of Vermont and the Regional Planning Commissions developed numerical goals for the amount of new housing needed by 2030 and 2050.

The housing goal is a range. The low-end estimate assumes household growth will continue at a similar rate to current trends, while the high-end estimate assumes Vermont's growth will increase to an average similar to the rate of growth over the last 70 years.

At the low end, the housing goal would require roughly 50 units of housing per year from 2025-2030 and 31 units of housing per year from 2030-2050. From 2020-2024,

Housing Goals

2030: 251-381 new homes

2050: 615-1,204 new homes

roughly 32 units of housing per year were constructed.

Options to Increase Housing Variety and Affordability

The Town recognizes that there is a need for more housing, including senior housing for the growing senior population and affordable housing for low and moderate-income households. The following are some identified ways the community can address these needs.

Standards provided in zoning regulations should be reviewed to identify if they are promoting opportunities to allow for a variety of housing types, while providing standards to maintain the character of the area and ensure adequacy of services. To accommodate a diversity of housing types and development near existing services, lot size and setbacks minimums should allow for more flexible design for development within village settings. Other forms of housing development that can be economically and structurally viable for affordable units are planned unit developments and other forms of cluster housing, accessory apartments, and multifamily housing. Mobile homes can also provide an opportunity for those who cannot afford conventional housing. Vermont land use law does not allow municipalities to discriminate against or segregate mobile homes.

Public infrastructure contributes to the availability of low cost housing. In particular, shared sewer and water connections allow for higher densities and lower land costs by minimizing the amount of land that is necessary to accommodate new development. Affordable housing developers often depend on these public facilities to reduce building costs. The expense of drilling wells and designing individual septic systems significantly increases the price the developers require for their efforts. Currently, municipal sewer and water infrastructure that serves the Village Center is near or at capacity. The potential for future growth in this area - at higher densities than in other parts of town – will be dependent on the availability of infrastructure.

Fairfax can also promote housing variety and affordability by promoting programs such as HomeShare Vermont. HomeShare Vermont assists elders and persons with disabilities to live independently in their own home by bringing them together with persons who are seeking affordable housing and/or care giving opportunities. This program represents an opportunity to expand housing opportunities while maintaining open space and other sensitive areas such as floodplains.

The development of housing can also be impacted by factors outside of the municipalities control, including cost of materials, availability of labor and physical constraints. Generally, Fairfax has adequate relatively flat land for housing growth. Labor and construction costs are known challenges across the State.

Housing Goal and Policies

Goal:

- Guide the Town in achieving well managed residential growth that includes a diversity of housing opportunities.

Policies:

- Ensure adequate housing options for people of all income levels, ages, household types, and housing forms.
- Promote lower-density residential housing in areas without municipal services and higher densities in parts of town with existing services (e.g. Village) or close to existing service boundaries.
- Monitor the conversion of long-term rentals into short-term rentals to determine if there is a negative impact to the housing supply.
- Encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of existing housing stock.
- Encourage infill development of small, existing lots.
- Encourage the development of housing that will minimize long-term living costs through high quality design and energy efficient construction.
- Provide a range of housing types within walking and biking distance of village services and amenities.
- Encourage land use patterns which are inherently more affordable by nature of cost of efficiencies associated with construction (e.g. shorter access roads, smaller lots, proximity to utilities).

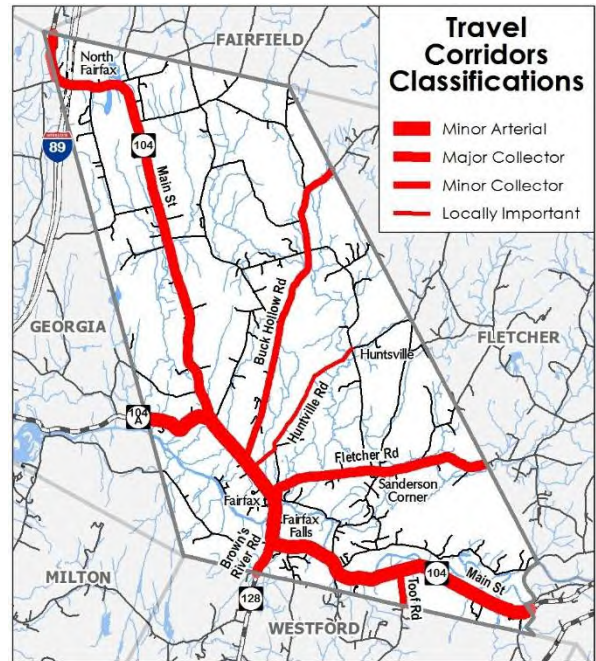
- Maintain the affordability and promote new development of rental housing opportunities.
- Enable affordable development in the Village by increasing sewer and water system capacities.

Fairfax Commuter Locations

gravel,
Class 4

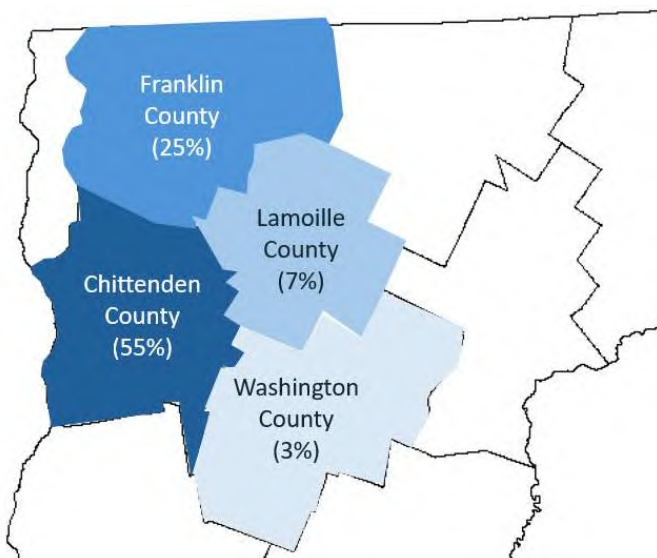
and private roads). The **Transportation Map**, shows the roads in Fairfax, the class of road, road surface, and streams which are important for locating culverts. Many of the local roads provide scenic views, but there are no locally or state designated scenic roads in the Town.

Roads are classified according to their use and ability to carry traffic. The Agency of Transportation has identified several roadways in Fairfax which are regionally important for their role as primary corridors for the flow of traffic around Franklin County. These travel corridors are important for the flow of commuter traffic and many also carry a significant volume of truck traffic.



Commuter Flow

The majority of Fairfax residents commute to Chittenden County (55%). According to the 2024 American Community Survey, the majority of employed persons living in Fairfax commuted to work by driving alone.



Just 8% of Fairfax residents work at Fairfax employers. However, this does not count those working remotely and self-employed residents. Estimates of current remote workers are difficult to interpret as existing data includes the pandemic years where a greater percentage of workers worked remotely.

Accessing Essential Needs

According to the 2017 Fairfax Town Plan Survey, residents primarily travel to St. Albans and surrounding towns to access retail

shopping (grocery, clothes, toiletries, etc.). A small portion of these services are accessed in Fairfax and via the internet. It should be noted that residents do utilize the services in the Village Center. Forty percent of respondents are patrons 5+ times a week at a business in the Village.

Transportation Services

Local Services

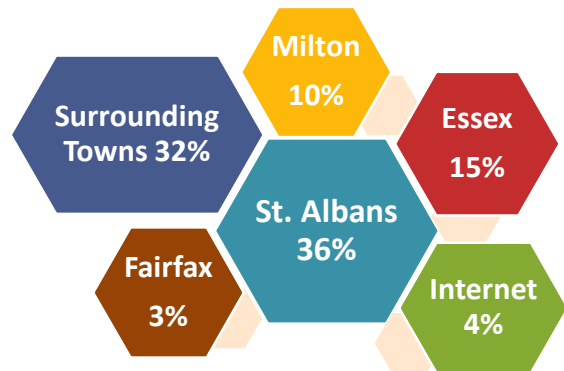
- ❖ Commuter Parking –The closest official commuter park and ride lot is located at Exit 18 in Georgia.
- ❖ Transport for Elders – Limited transportation services are provided through various service providers. Green Mountain Transit provides trips to medical appointments for Medicaid/Medicare patients.

Regional Services

- ❖ Public Transportation - There are no regional public transit routes that directly service Fairfax, nor does the Town provide any public transportation for its residents. The closest transit stop is located at the Georgia Industrial Park or St. Albans Town for the St. Albans Link Express, which provides service to Chittenden County. The lack of a regular public transportation service was noted as a concern by residents at the public outreach session.
- ❖ Train - Amtrak provides passenger rail service out of the St. Albans depot on the Vermonter line which extends down to Washington, D.C.

- ❖ Airport - The Burlington International Airport in South Burlington, the Plattsburgh International Airport in Plattsburgh, and the Trudeau Airport in Montreal provide air service to the region.

Communities that provide retail shopping for residents based on 2017 Town Survey



Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Creating a system of infrastructure that provides residents the opportunity to travel on foot or bike throughout Town has numerous benefits. There is a core system of sidewalks in the Village based around Route 104. Bicycle and pedestrian travel for recreation is accommodated by the Fairfax Recreation Path and Class 4 roads. Bicycle travel in the Village can be accommodated on the existing road network with some striped shoulders. Outside the Village however, this can be hazardous due to varying widths of shoulders. Route 104 and other roads in town would benefit from a dedicated bicycle lane and wider shoulders to provide a safe route as identified by the 2013 Non-motorized Travel Plan. Efforts to maintain and improve a network have been underway for many years.

Within the Village, the Town has identified a Sidewalk Master Plan with 3 phases. Phase 1 & 2 are completed, with the sidewalk extending until the Nan's Mobil property.

Residents at the public outreach event identified lack of crosswalks and a sidewalk to Nan's as issues in Town.

Safe Routes to School

Fairfax is a participant in the Safe Routes to School Program. The program actively encourages walking and bicycling by students and helps to identify infrastructure projects to make walking and bicycling safer. BFA Fairfax completed a School Travel Plan in 2010 that documented problems related to the journey to school and strategies to address these issues; this study is a valuable tool for planning and should be periodically updated.

Building a Sustainable Transportation System

Encouraging a pattern of higher density, mixed use development within the Village Center could help create more local job opportunities, lessening the demand on the existing road network to carry commuter traffic to destinations outside of Town for basic services. Promoting home occupations and local agriculture-related businesses would further assist in reversing current commuting trends.

Denser Village development will require improvements to municipal infrastructure in the Village and the South Village, including

Benefits of a defined system for walking and biking

- *Increase safety for all users*
 - *Fewer motor vehicles on the road*
 - *Promote better public health and active recreation*
 - *Encourage walking and bicycling to the school and other amenities*
 - *Contribute to Village revitalization and economic growth*
 - *Foster a greater sense of community*
-

water and sewer system improvements; continuing the extension of sidewalks, and the possible addition of new roads within the village. New roads should extend the current pattern of interconnected streets in a "neighborhood" street layout. The creation of interconnected "neighborhood" streets is provides efficient flow of automobile travel and create opportunities for safe pedestrian travel.

There is also the need for a pedestrian connection between the Village and South Village.

Official Map

To support an interconnected network of complete streets, the Town adopted an Official Map in 2024. The Official Map shows existing and planned town utilities, facility land and other public improvement. The Official Map integrates public facility planning into development review process, creating an avenue for the Town to negotiate for land acquisition if desired.

Standards for New Roads

The Fairfax Selectboard has adopted a Roads and Sidewalk policy in 2023. The purpose of this document is to protect the Town from undue financial burdens associated with maintaining existing roads and new construction of development roads. This document provides several additional benefits:

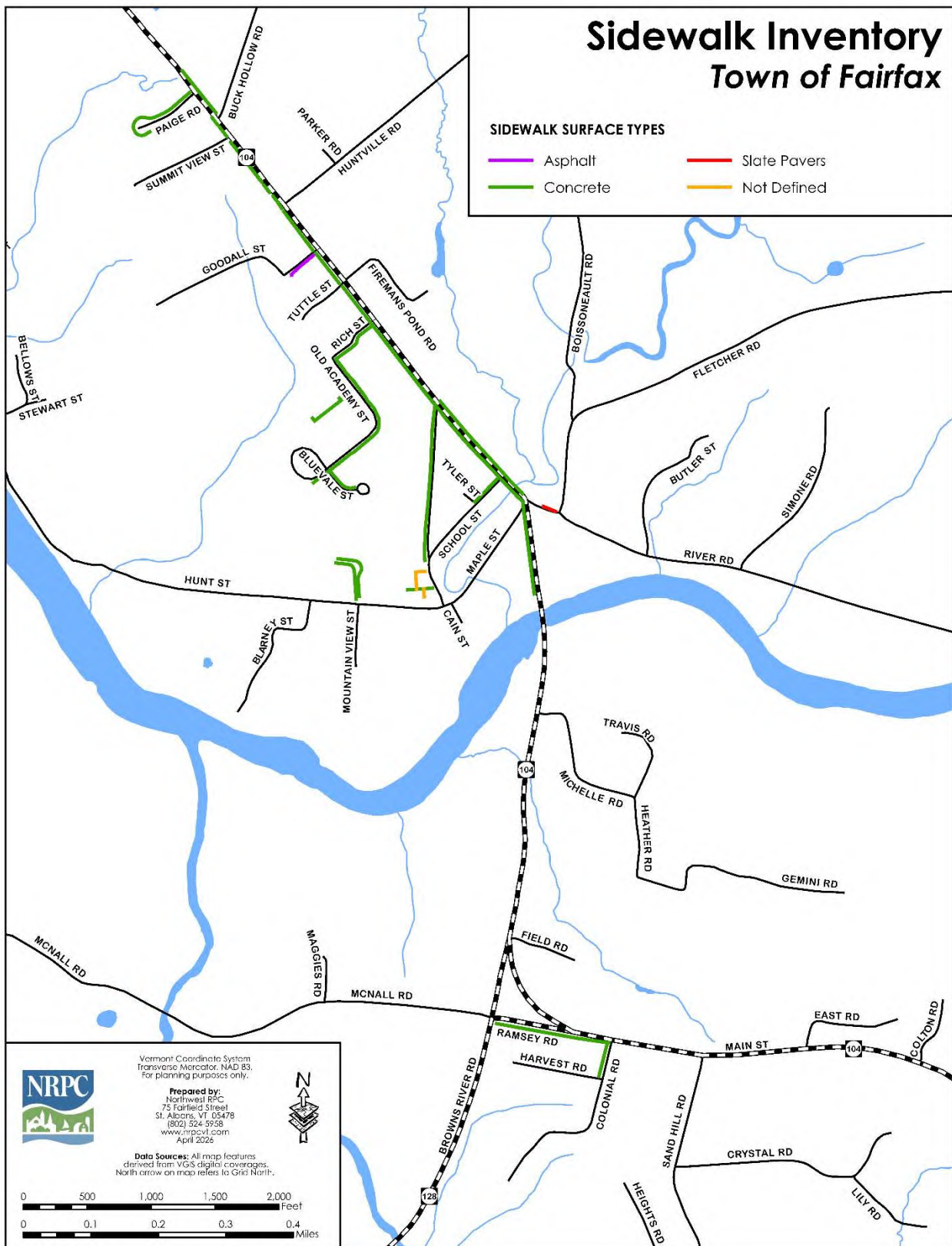
- Standardized road evaluation in regards to widths, surface type, safety and use;
- Ensure that any private roads are constructed reasonably to provide for adequate emergency responder access, and future pedestrian amenities; and
-

Assessing needs, designing improvements, & getting it on the ground

- 2006 - Initial investigation of sidewalk expansion in Village along Route 104 identified potential expansion of sidewalk on west side of VT 104 in three phases.
- 2010 – Town receives Transportation Enhancement grant from VTrans to design and construct phase 1 from Huntville Road to Hunt Street. As of January 2018, this project construction is expected in 2018.
- 2013 – Town-wide study to explore opportunities to connect residents outside the village with bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. (*Fairfax Non-motorized Travel Plan*)
- 2015 – Identified improvements needed to walk or bike from the existing network in the northern village center to amenities across the bridge in the south village. (*Fairfax Pedestrian Connectivity Feasibility Study between the North and South Villages*)
- 2017 – *Village Gateway Study* presents improvements to improve safety along Route 104 and promote community identity.
- 2018 – Sidewalk expanded to Huntville Road.
- 2026 Sidewalk extended to Town Office and Nan’s Mobil property.

2026-2032 Infrastructure Expansion Plan

- 2026-2027: Replace undersized culverts and improve drainage.
- 2028-2029: Road base stabilization.
- 2030-2031: Expansion of sidewalk network and crosswalks.
- 2032-2033: Connectivity & traffic reduction including studying location for a park & ride.



- Avoid creating future issues currently identified as problematic on existing streets (e.g. 'dead end' streets)
- Prioritize winter maintenance activities.

Reducing the Transportation Load on the Road

A Park-and-Ride would greatly benefit the community and the transportation infrastructure. As reported, the majority of Fairfax residents travel to other communities for employment, entertainment, medical needs, or supplies. Increasing the number of residents carpooling will reduce the number of cars on the road and can be beneficial for these residents by reducing their out-of-pocket costs on fuel and maintenance costs on individual vehicles. The Town should

investigate suitable locations where carpoolers can leave their vehicles considering informal "park and ride lots" at locations such as churches, where weekday park and ride needs do not usually conflict with the parking needs of the particular location.

In the past, it has been impractical to offer public transportation services in this rural community due to relatively low ridership potential and a diffuse pattern of land use. Due to the steadily increasing population and the fact that more residents are commuting out of town for employment, the potential for some level of public transportation services may too be increasing. The Town should engage Green Mountain Transit to examine possibilities for expansion of existing services.

Transportation Goals and Policies

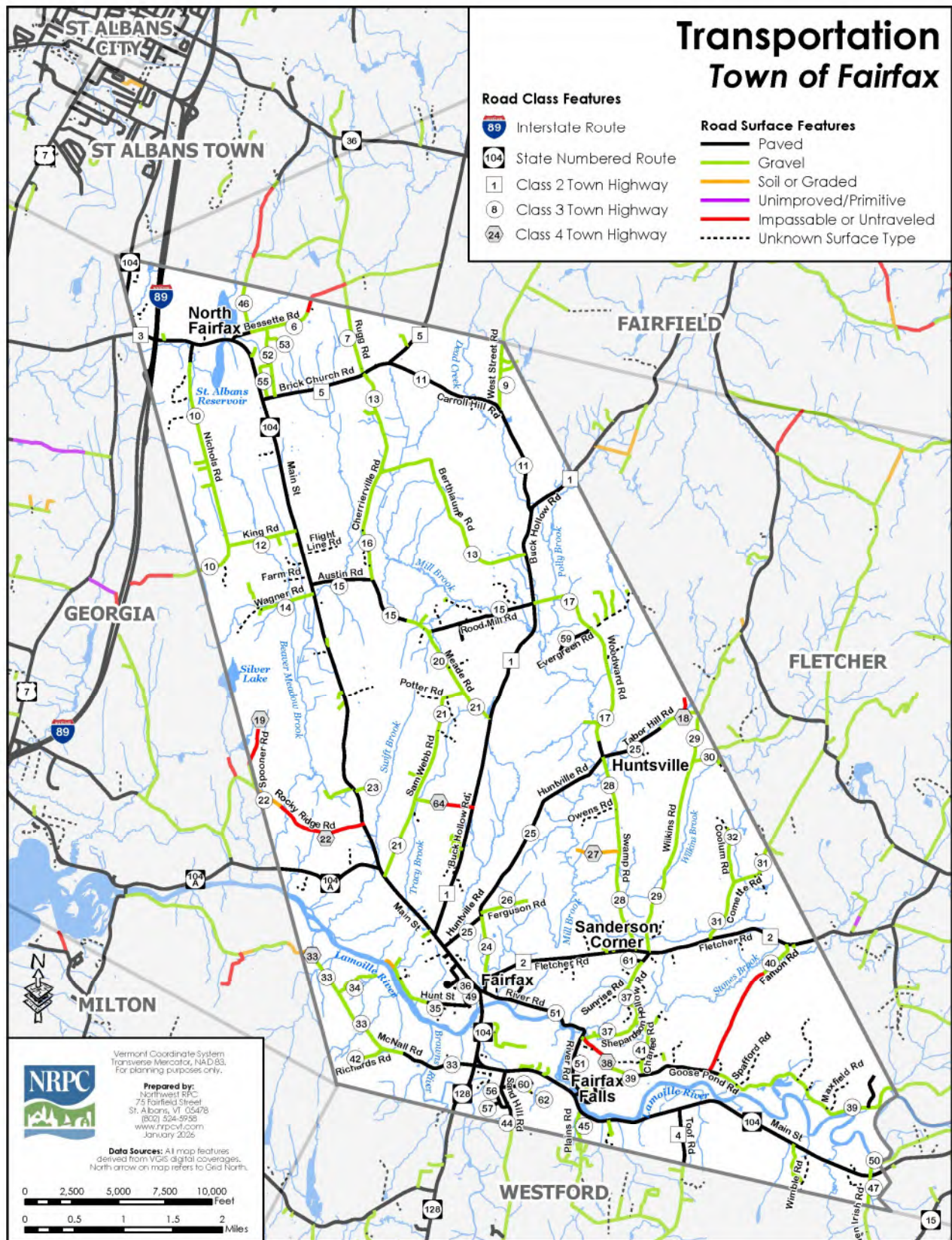
Goals:

- Design a transportation system that provides community-wide non-motorized connectivity to town assets and destinations.
- Provide a transportation system that is safe, connected, and sustainable to build, maintain, and access.

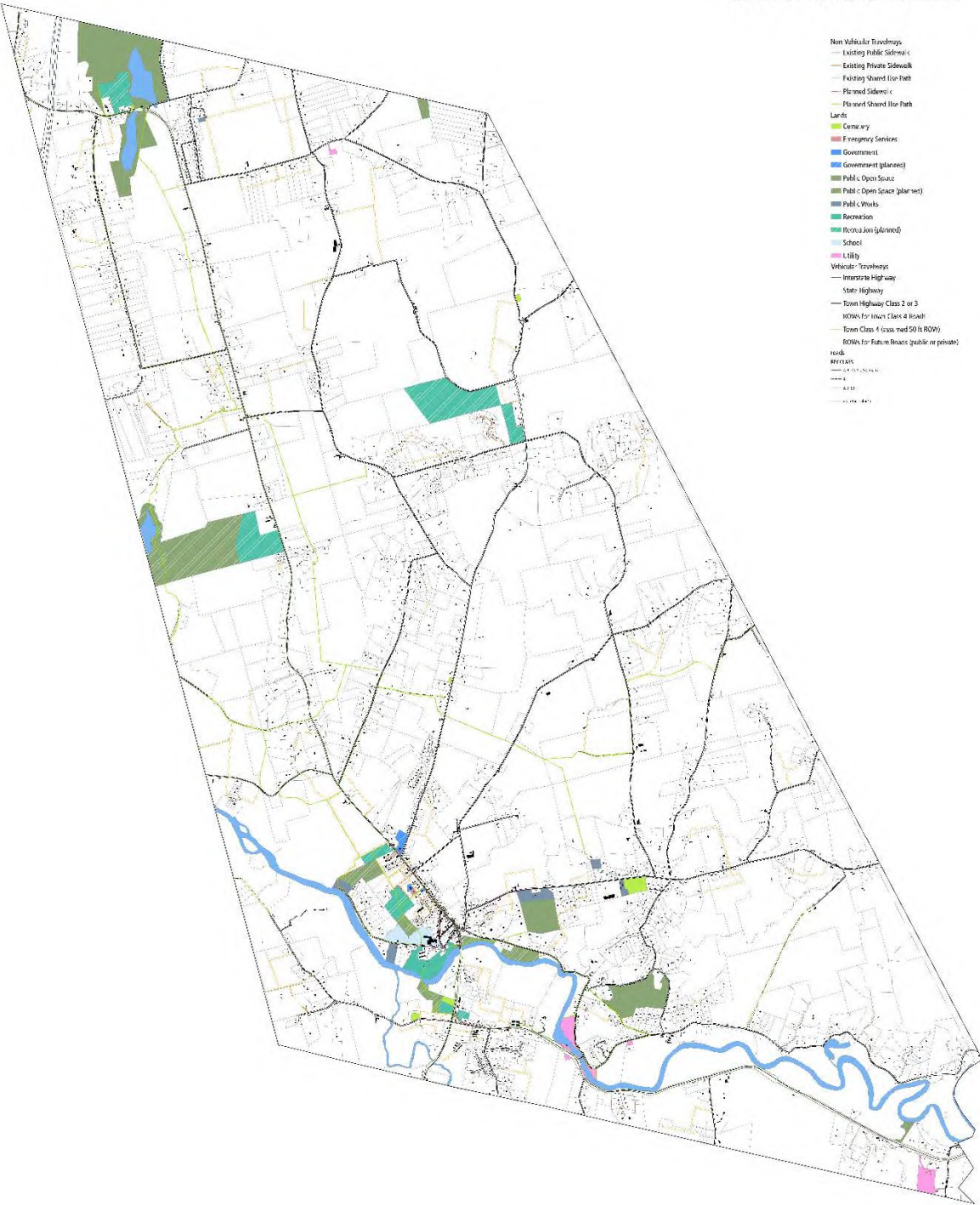
Policies:

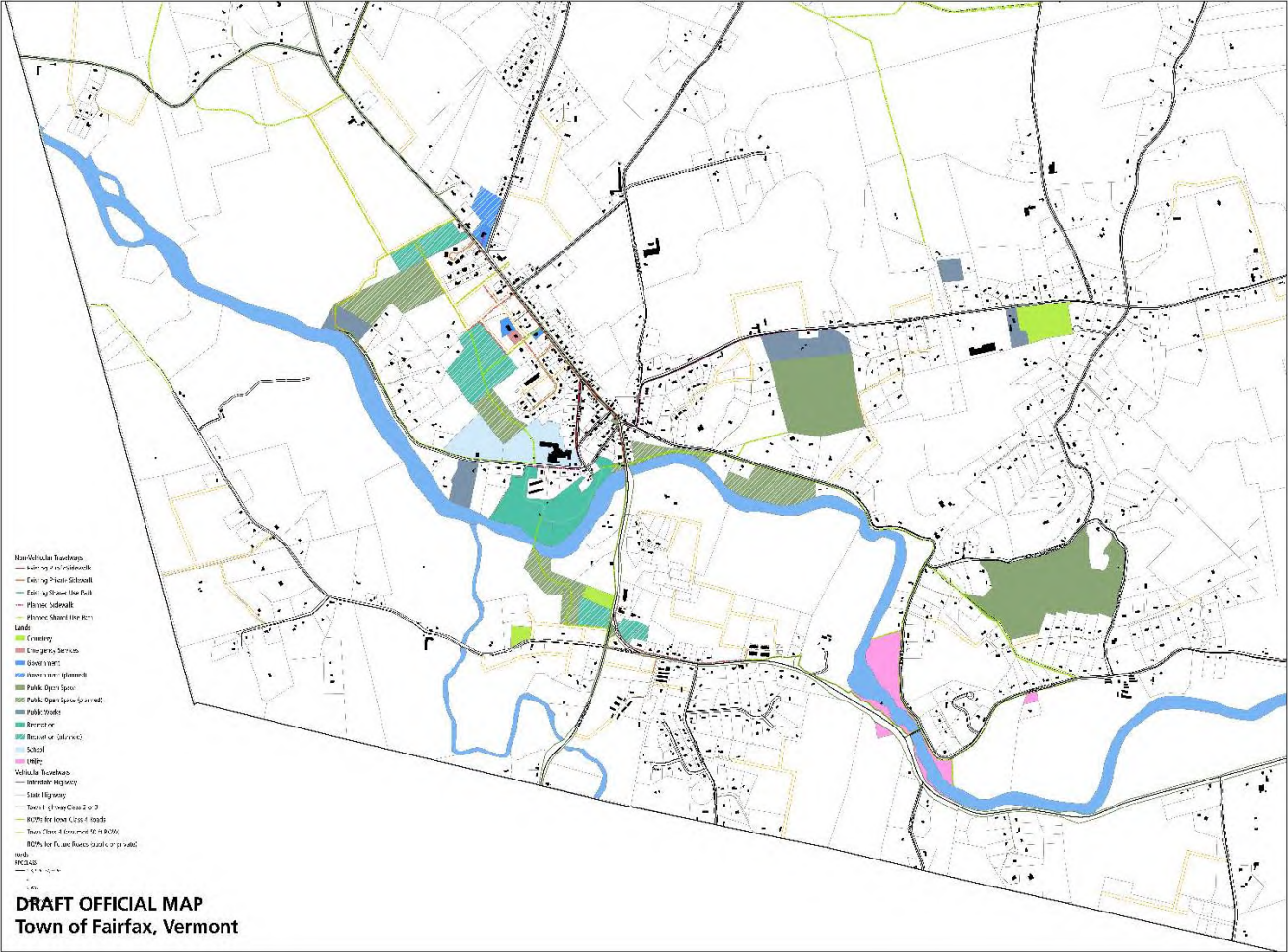
- Maintain public roads according to the adopted standards and at a level consistent with their use.
- Ensure new roads within the Growth Center shall be reviewed for the ability to contribute to the interconnected village street network and non-motorized infrastructure system.
- Apply the Vermont "Complete Streets" policy to its transportation system to ensure the needs of motor vehicles, public transportation services, bicyclists and pedestrians are being met. This complete street policy shall pertain to both town and private development streets.
- Create pedestrian-friendly village areas that incorporate pedestrian infrastructure (sidewalks, paths, and crosswalks), community amenities (i.e. street trees and wayfinding), and address the safety of motorized and non-motorized travel through traffic calming measures. Traffic calming techniques could include lateral shifts, roundabouts, bulbouts, or neckdowns, in order to reduce traffic speeds, increase safety and encourage pedestrian activity in the villages.
- Coordinate with state and regional partners on transportation improvements.
- Provide pedestrian and bike access to key community places that include the school, town facilities, recreation areas, and river access.

- Encourage appropriate provisions for bicycle and pedestrian use on designated routes, including proper signage and pavement improvements.
- Continue the sidewalk improvement program so that there is a network of continuous, safe, maintained, and accessible sidewalks in the Village.
- Use the comprehensive Fairfax Village Non-motorized Travel Plan in conjunction with existing programs and as a guide for walking and bicycling improvements within the Village.
- 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.



DRAFT OFFICIAL MAP
Town of Fairfax, Vermont



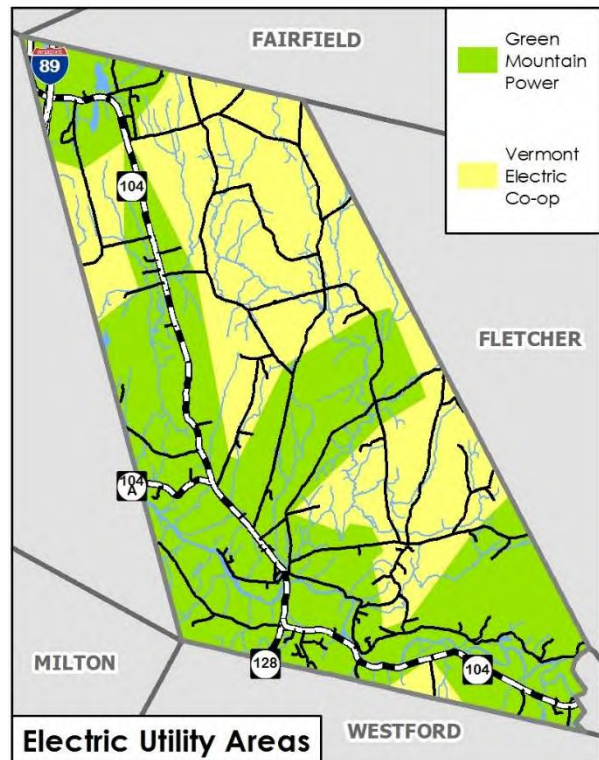


Energy

Vermont planning law states that municipal plans must include an energy strategy for the community. Such a strategy is intended to promote the efficient and economic utilization of energy. With the adoption of the 2018 Town Plan, Fairfax has incorporated an “Enhanced Energy Plan” in conformance with 24 V.S.A. 4352 and provided in Appendix 4. The enhanced energy plan takes the place of other energy-related plan requirements in 24 V.S.A. 4382. The Goals, Policies and Strategies from the Enhanced Energy Plan are provided in this document and in Appendix 4.

Practical energy planning and implementation results in positive environmental and economic returns to the community and energy providers. Conservation of energy lessens the demand for expensive new sources, and allows utilities to defer capital investments necessary to provide for additional capacity. This has benefits for residents, businesses, and ratepayers.

While it is recognized that energy supply and demand are directed largely by economic forces at the state, federal, and international levels, the manner in which the Town plans for future growth can have an impact on energy. For example, a highly dispersed and unplanned pattern of land use can waste both land and energy resources. The need for additional infrastructure and fuel consumption can be reduced with proper planning that includes job locations, public services and housing near the growth centers. The siting and design of buildings as well as the selection of appropriate energy systems can influence the efficiency and conservation of energy.



Fairfax Energy Snapshot:

- There are two utilities that provide electricity to residents, Green Mountain Power and Vermont Electric Co-op.
- The majority of residential buildings are heated with fuel oil (49%); other major sources are propane (25%) and wood (13%).
- The majority (72%) of renewable energy generated in Fairfax today is from the hydroelectric plant, Fairfax Falls.

Achieving the State’s goal of having 90% of energy used powered with renewables by 2050, and the other energy goals in state statute, will be difficult. Fairfax is committed to playing its part in working towards accomplishing these goals and in creating a more sustainable, less costly, and more secure energy future.

Energy Goals and Policies

Goals:

- Plan for increased electric demand with the support of Green Mountain Power, Vermont Electric Coop, and Efficiency Vermont.
- Reduce annual fuel needs and fuel costs for heating structures, to foster the transition from non-renewable fuel sources to renewable fuel sources, and to maximize the weatherization of residential households and commercial establishments.
- Hold vehicle miles traveled per capita to 2011 levels through reducing the amount of single occupancy vehicle (SOV) commute trips, increasing the amount of pedestrian and bicycle commute trips, and increasing public transit ridership.

Policies:

- Support the development and siting of renewable energy resources in the Town that are in conformance with the goals, strategies, and mapping outlined in the Fairfax Enhanced Energy Plan. Development of generation in identified preferred locations shall be favored over the development of other sites.
- Support energy conservation efforts and the efficient use of energy across all sectors.
- Support patterns and densities of concentrated development that result in the conservation of energy.
- Support public transit connections from Fairfax to other parts of the region if economically feasible in the future.
- Support the conversion of fossil fuel heating to advanced wood heating systems or electric heat pumps.
- Support the reduction of transportation energy demand, reduction of single-occupancy vehicle use, and the transition to renewable and lower-emission energy sources for transportation.

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

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

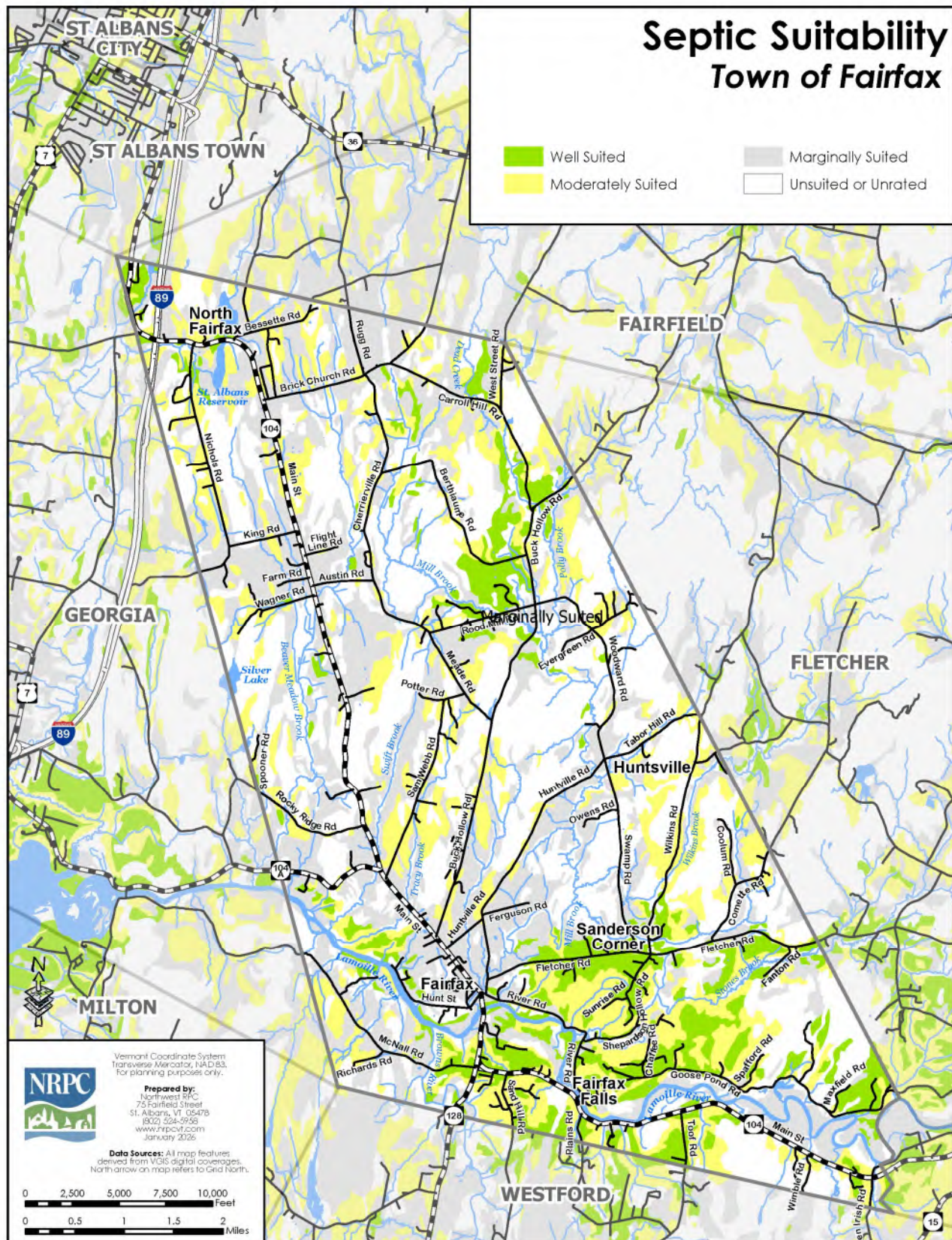
the inland sea, and weathering. A fault-line, the Hinesburg Thrust, runs adjacent to the western edge of the town and marks the boundary between two distinct geological areas- the Champlain Lowlands and the Green Mountains. Glacial erosion and deposition has left many hilltops scoured to bedrock, thin 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.





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.

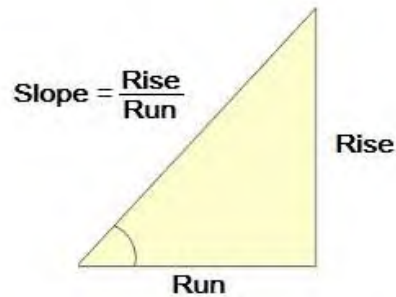
In general, land that is nearly level (less than 8% slope) is better suited for farming and most types of commercial and residential development. Development on steep slopes (more than 15%) may increase the costs of road maintenance, stormwater and erosion problems, and access for public services (school 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.

- *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.

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:

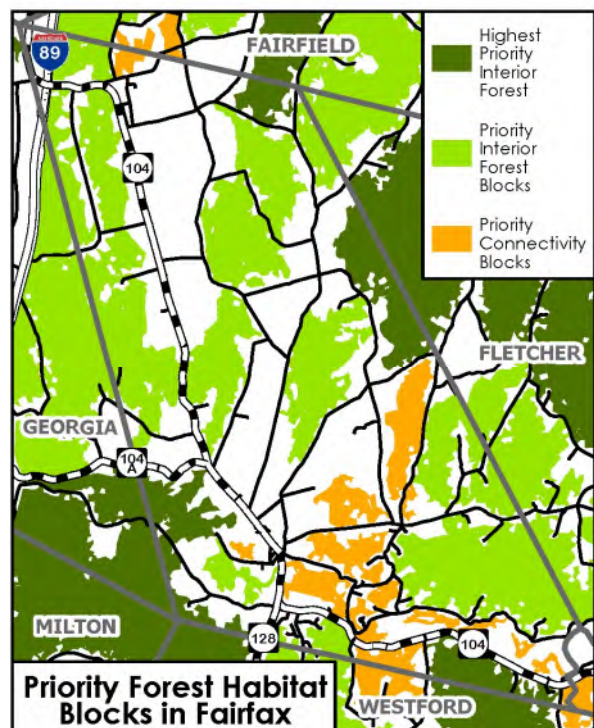
1. A forest owned by multiple people results in different land management priorities
2. As land is subdivided it will result in land clearing and smaller parcels.

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.



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.



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**).

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

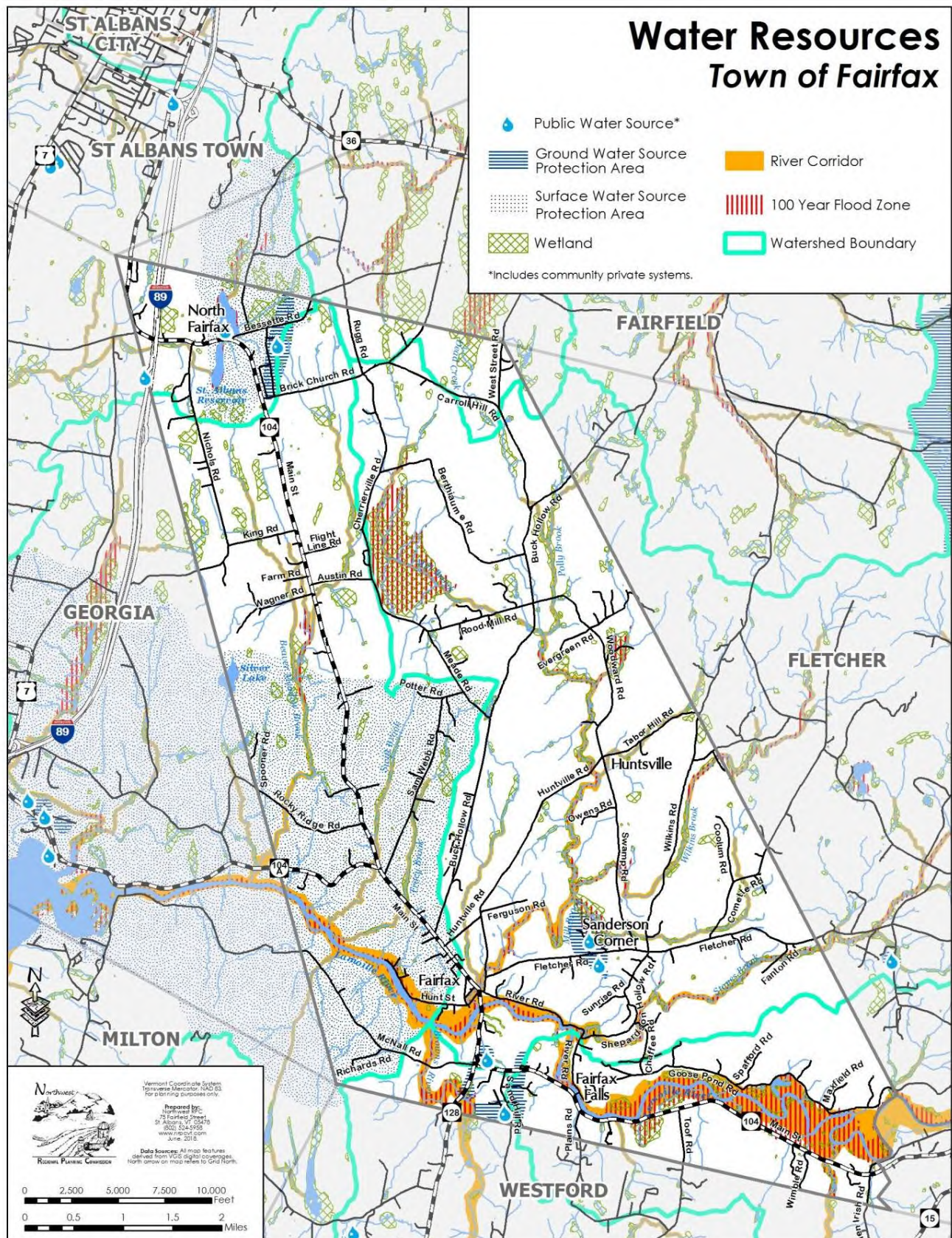
The VT Agency of Natural Resources maintains Tactical Basin Plans for each drainage basin in Fairfax (Lamoille Basin-7, Missisquoi Basin-6, and Northern Lake Champlain Basin-5). A Tactical Basin Plan (TBP) lays out the current condition of surface waters and aquatic habitat, describes problems occurring 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.



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.

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

	Inundation Flooding	Fluvial Erosion
What is it?	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
Tools to identify areas in community prone to this risk.	<p>FEMA Flood Rate Insurance Maps (FIRMs) outline the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) also known as the 100-year floodplain, this area has a 1% or greater chance of flooding in a given year.</p> <p>Current FIRMs were created in the 1970s and have been “effective” since 1982. New FIRMS are expected to be completed in 2028.</p>	<p>Vermont Agency of Natural Resources River Corridors 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.</p>

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

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

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.

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 than 2 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 2026 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.

Policies:

- Maintain the historic, cultural, and scenic sense of place in the Village, including the historic district, sites, cemeteries, landscape features, and archaeological sensitive areas.
- Protect natural, scenic, and recreational areas so that they may be maintained as destinations for hiking, biking, and other physical activities.
- Facilitate appropriate extraction of earth resources that minimizes impacts on the natural and cultural environment.
- 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.
- Maintain and improve the quality of important agricultural soils and connectivity of forestlands when considering the future development of the Town.
- 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.
- Protect the surface and ground water resources in the Town and ensure appropriate development and intensity of use in Water Source Protection Areas.
- 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.
- Protect fragile and sensitive resources, and endangered species, including but not limited to critical habitat, wetlands, significant natural communities, and floodplains.
- Balance the development of renewable energy sources with the need to protect natural and scenic resources.

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**).

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.

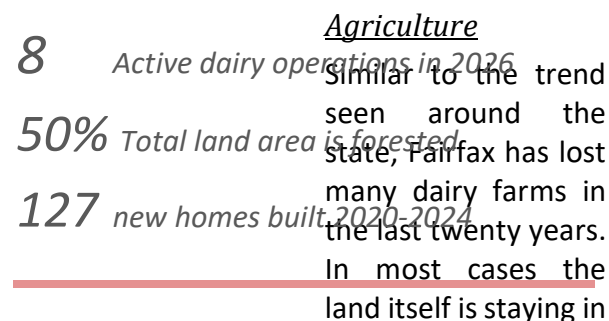
Maple syrup has become an increasingly important source of income for agricultural operations across Franklin County. In 2022, 15% of all maple syrup produced in the United States was produced in the county.

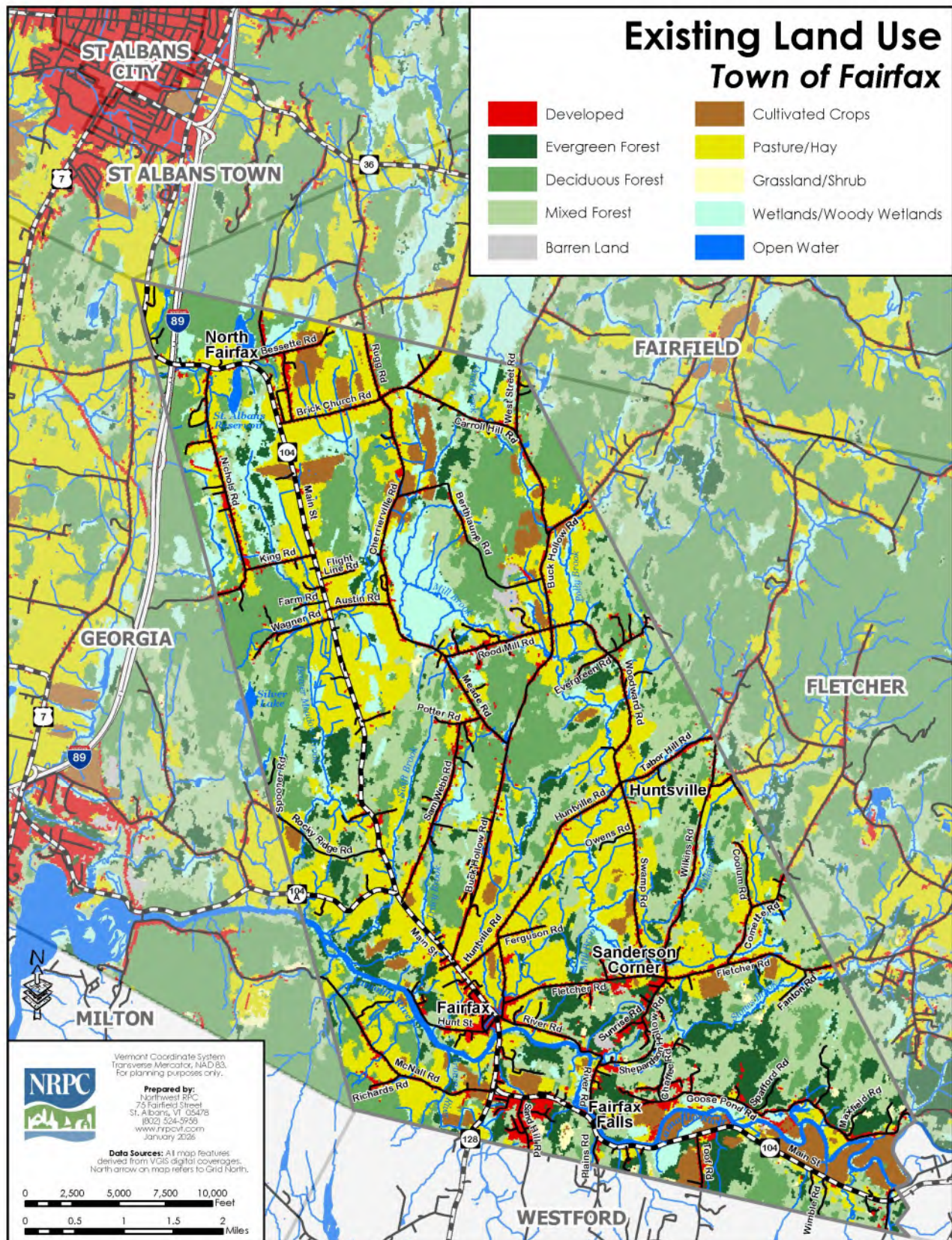
Forests

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**).





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

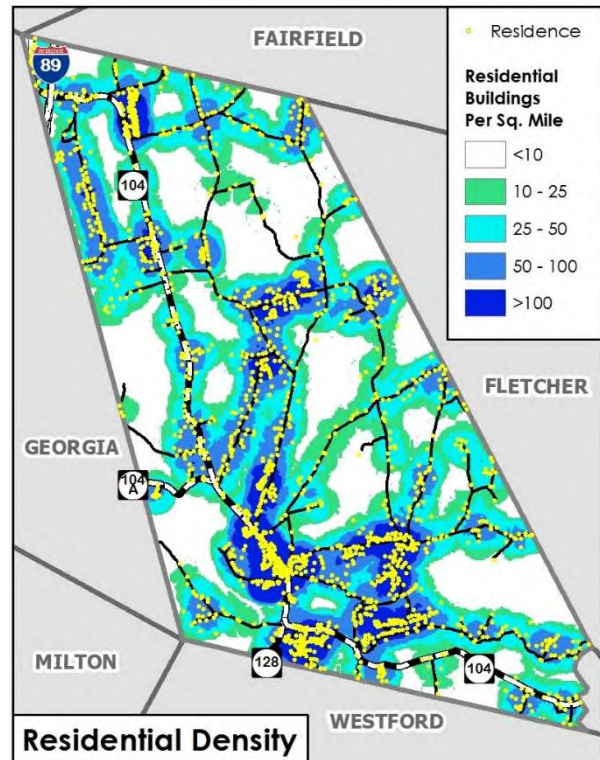
Conserved Land

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.

The Village – North and South

Fairfax is anchored by a Village with two parts- 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 parts of the village 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 were built in the former North Village Growth Center. From 2020-2024, building permit data

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

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.

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.

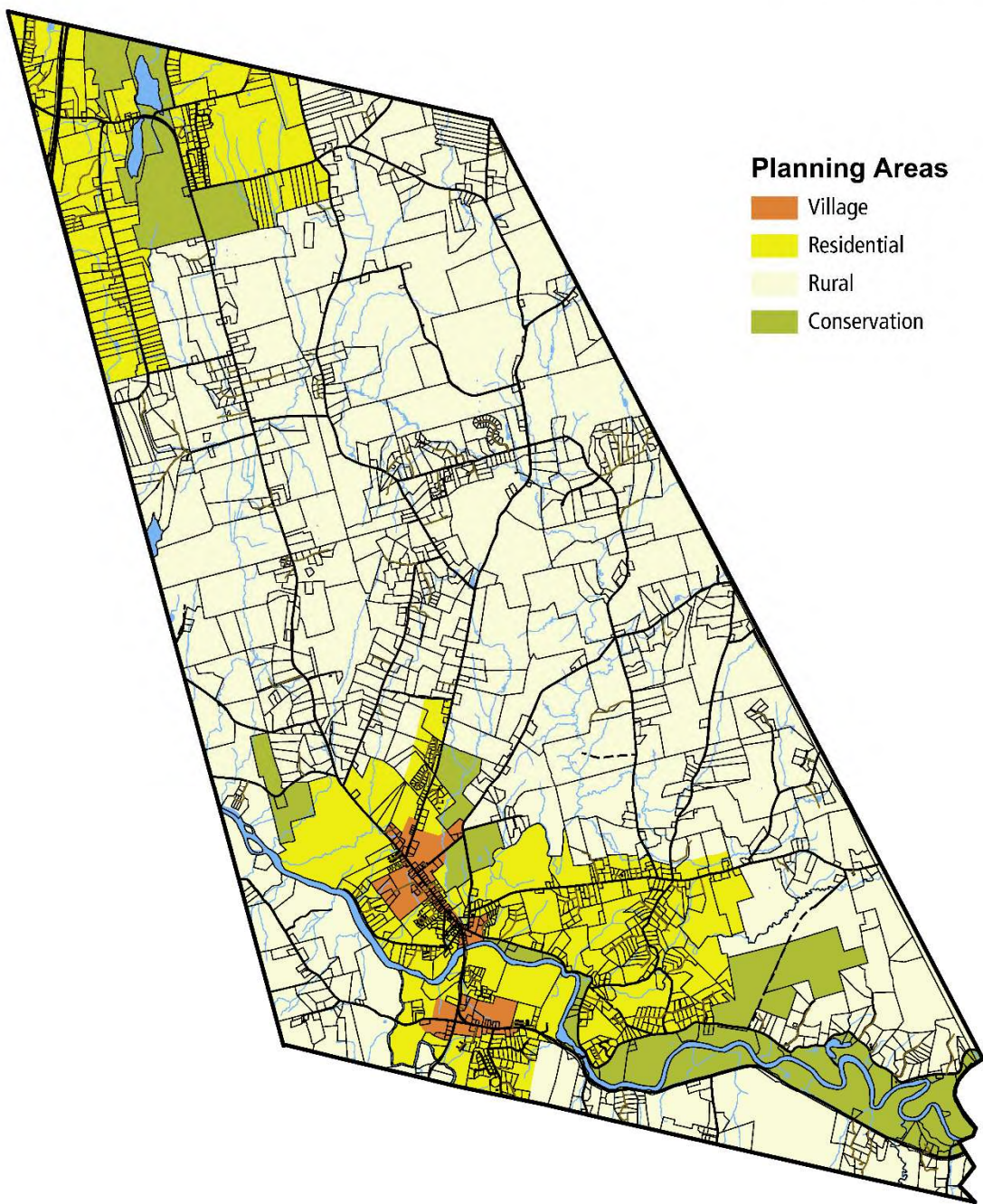
2017: The ***Fairfax Gateway Study*** looked at methods of defining Fairfax's two villages as a cohesive "place" by making improvements at the northern and southern edges of the Villages. The plan identified 3 possible gateway areas where signage and pedestrian improvements would make it more clear you 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 $\frac{3}{4}$ 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.

**Future Land
Use Map**
TOWN OF FAIRFAX, VT



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)

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

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:

- Provide future services and public facilities within the Village that support pedestrian and other non-vehicular travel, and include public spaces that promote social interaction.
- Encourage the economic viability of local agriculture, forestry, and related industries.
- Discourage sprawling development patterns/strip development.
- Encourage an interactive permitting process between landowners and local planning officials to facilitate site sensitive planning and awareness of local and state permitting.
- 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.
- Encourage infill development and the rehabilitation of historic structures and features that are a part of Fairfax's character.
- Consider long term plans for the entire parcel and adjacent lands during development review and address their potential cumulative impact.
- Encourage the clustering of development in the rural areas of town to preserve the open rural landscape.
- Coordinate the preservation of forestland, working agricultural land, and open space throughout the Town to create connected corridors of undeveloped land.
- Provide access to parks, shared-use paths and trails, or open spaces within reasonable distance of residential areas.
- 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.
- Encourage new residential and mixed-use developments to include sidewalks, outdoor open space, recreational facilities, and community gardens to promote active living.
- Encourage redevelopment of mixed use buildings on lots to provide both residential and commercial activity.

- Define and establish meaningful public spaces within the Village and surrounding network that enhances placemaking and encourages community gathering.
- Promote development of local small business such as small retail and restaurants.

Section 8: Compatibility with Adjacent Communities and the Region

It is important to recognize that municipalities do not exist apart from one another and that land use planning in one community can affect land use in neighboring communities. As defined in 24 VSA §4302, compatibility is judged on whether the plan, if implemented, will significantly reduce the desired effect of the other. This section considers the compatibility of proposed land use in this Town Plan with land use in adjacent communities.

Fairfax is located in southern Franklin County, bordering the Chittenden County towns of Milton and Westford and the Lamoille County Town of Cambridge. The towns of Georgia, St. Albans Town, Fairfield, and Fletcher border Fairfax in Franklin County. Fairfax is well connected to adjacent communities via several state and local highways.

Consideration of Land Use Planning in Adjacent Communities

Town of Georgia

The 2025 Georgia Municipal Plan calls for Conservation/Recreation and Agricultural Residential, along the border Fairfax's Rural and Residential District. Fairfax generally allows more residential development on its side of the border. Residential growth along the Georgia border should continue to be monitored for any potential conflicts. The Lamoille River crosses the municipal border and the floodplain is currently protected in both towns.

Town of St. Albans

The Town of St. Albans most recent municipal plan calls for the Rural District to border the Fairfax's Residential District. The allowable land uses in these districts are compatible; although Fairfax's plan focuses more on allowing for residential development. Route 104 is the transportation link that connects St. Albans Town with Fairfax. Route 104 has experienced high levels of traffic and increasing congestion, these communities continue to work together in implementing recommendations of the Route 104/104A Corridor Study.

Town of Fairfield

The Town of Fairfield's municipal plan calls for an Agricultural and Rural Residential and Fairfield Pond & Swamp District planning areas that abut the Rural District, Residential District and Conservation District in Fairfax. Generally the Agricultural/Rural Residential Planning Area, is compatible with the Rural & Residential Districts, although the Residential District allows a slightly higher density of residential development. The State-owned Fairfield Swamp Management District is located in Fairfield and crosses the border into Fairfax between Cadieux Road and West Street. This area is protected by the Fairfield Pond & Swamp District and the Fairfax Conservation District. Several Town roads connect Fairfield with Fairfax; currently, there are no issues with proposed land use compatibility or other multi-town issues that should be addressed jointly concerning these shared road corridors.

Town of Fletcher

The Town of Fletcher's municipal plan calls for three districts that border with Fairfax; the Village, Conservation, and Rural

Residential/Agricultural Districts. It is not anticipated that there would be compatibility issues with any of the districts with Fletcher; areas that should be reviewed include:

- The Fletcher Village District is intended to provide for residential and commercial development that serves the needs of the Town and borders the Fairfax Rural planning areas. While Fairfax's Conservation lands are not generally suitable for future village-scale development, the scale of development in the Fletcher Village District will likely not create compatibility issues.
- Fletcher's Conservation District is not intended for future development and borders areas of the Rural District in Fairfax. While the Rural District will allow for some residential development, the scale should not affect compatibility with the Conservation District; this plan recommends appropriate site planning to cluster development and maintain the quality of forestlands.
- The Rural Residential/Agricultural District in Fletcher borders Conservation lands in Fairfax. It is likely that the scale of development in Fletcher's Rural Residential/Agricultural District will not create any compatibility issues with Fairfax's Conservation lands.

Several Town roads connect Fletcher to Fairfax. Currently, there are no issues with proposed land use compatibility or other multi-town issues that should be addressed jointly concerning these shared road corridors.

Town of Cambridge

The Cambridge municipal plan proposes the Agricultural and the Rural Residential land use areas border Fairfax's Conservation Lands.

There is unlikely to be any land use incompatibilities between these two town borders. Route 104 is the transportation link that connects Cambridge with Fairfax. Route 104 has experienced high levels of traffic and increasing congestion, these communities continue to work together in implementing recommendations of the Route 104/104A Corridor Study.

Town of Westford

The Westford municipal plan identifies proposed land use districts that generally are compatible with the planning areas they border in Fairfax. Westford's R-3, R-5, and R-10 district border Fairfax. These areas allow for different scales of low-density residential and agricultural development. These are generally compatible with the Rural and Residential Districts in Fairfax, although Fairfax allows for higher densities of rural development. Route 128 is the main transportation connection between Westford to Fairfax. Currently, there are no issues with proposed land use compatibility or other multi-town issues that should be addressed jointly concerning these shared road corridors.

Town of Milton

The Milton municipal plan calls for the East Milton District that borders Rural District in Fairfax and there are no roads connecting the two towns. While Milton's district is more focused on conservation, these uses are unlikely to create a conflict given lack of roads between the Towns .

Consideration of Land Use Planning in the Region

To receive an Act 250 permit, a project must conform to the regional plan. The Northwest

Regional Plan, most recently adopted in 2026, proposes land use planning areas to encourage the conservation of valued resources and a development pattern that will maintain the character and quality of life important to this region. The majority of Fairfax is designated as Rural Agricultural & Forest and Rural General. A smaller amount of land mainly along waterways and bodies are designated as Rural Conservation. The Village area is designated as Village Center, Planned Growth Area, and Village Area. This is broadly compatible with Fairfax's local planning for growth in the Village District, although the municipal district is larger in size.

Appendix: Fairfax Enhanced Energy Plan

Introduction

The intent of this energy section is to meet the municipal determination standards for enhanced energy planning enabled in 24 V.S.A. 4352. The purpose of enhanced energy planning is to further regional and state energy goals, including the goal of having 90% of energy used in Vermont come from renewable sources by 2050 (90 x 50 goal), and the following:

- A. *Vermont's greenhouse gas reduction goals under 10 V.S.A. § 578(a);*
- B. *Vermont's 25 by 25 goal for renewable energy under 10 V.S.A. § 580;*
- C. *Vermont's building efficiency goals under 10 V.S.A. § 581;*
- D. *State energy policy under 30 V.S.A. § 202a and the recommendations for regional and municipal energy planning pertaining to the efficient use of energy and the siting and development of renewable energy resources contained in the State energy plans adopted pursuant to 30 V.S.A. §§ 202 and 202b (State energy plans); and*
- E. *The distributed renewable generation and energy transformation categories of resources to meet the requirements of the Renewable Energy Standard under 30 V.S.A. §§ 8004 and 8005.*

A positive determination of compliance with the requirements of enhanced energy planning, as provided by the Regional Planning Commission, will enable Fairfax to achieve “substantial deference” instead of “due consideration” in Section 248 applications for energy generation facilities (ex. wind facilities, solar facilities, hydro facilities, etc.) under Criteria (b)(1)-Orderly Development. In short, this means that Fairfax will have a greater “say” in Certificate of Public Good proceedings before the Vermont Public Utility Commission about where these facilities should or should not be located in the community.

To receive a positive determination of energy compliance, an enhanced energy plan must be duly adopted, regionally approved, and must contain the following information:

- A. An analysis of current energy resources, needs, scarcities, costs, and problems.
- B. Targets for future energy use and generation.
- C. “Pathways,” or implementation actions, to help the municipality achieve the established targets.
- D. Mapping to help guide the conversation about the siting of renewables.

Municipal Energy Consumption & Targets

Summary

The following section reviews current data and future targets for thermal/space heating, transportation, electrical energy use and energy generation. These targets are based on the overall goals of the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan. As required under Vermont state statute targets are set for 2025, 2035 and 2050.

Data and Modeling

While the data used in this plan offers insights into current needs and progress, it is also imperfect in multiple respects. Because of the relatively small population of Fairfax and the region, there is a high margin of error on data from the American Community Survey. Many other available data sources are not regularly updated or incomplete in their scope. Regardless, the data provided in this plan is the best available and still provides valuable insight.

Energy targets were created by the Department of Public Service using the LEAP (Long-range Energy Alternatives Planning) software to create a model of the demand for and supply of total energy usage in Vermont and the region. LEAP software is a system that allows users to create complex models of future energy use. The LEAP model does not identify specific costs that would be incurred in the future. Instead, it compares 2050 costs among various scenarios, in order to achieve the least-cost alternative to meet legislative goals. The LEAP model also includes impacts that do not result in out-of-pocket costs, such as impacts of pollution. Because of the model's

complexity, it is difficult to explain comprehensively. The following scenarios provide some background on the methodology and the inputs used to create both statewide and regional models in LEAP. Appendix A presents the full model results for the region and the state as well as a more thorough explanation of the model assumptions and methodology. Targets for generation were developed by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission in partnership with the Department of Public Service.

Thermal Energy/Space Heating

Residential Thermal Goals



Significantly decrease the use of fossil fuels including fuel oil, natural gas and propane.

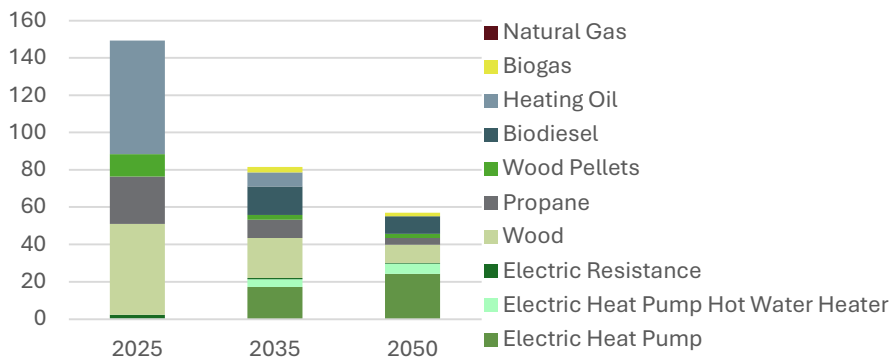


Significantly increase the number of residential cold climate heat pumps and heat pump hot water heaters



Increase the number of weatherized homes.

Residential Thermal Energy Use Target



Target Number of Residential Heat Pumps

Year	#
2025	573
2035	1541
2050	2271

Thermal energy use means energy used to heat homes, commercial and industrial buildings.

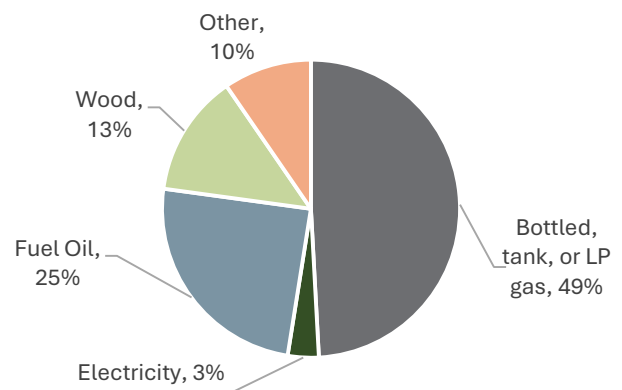
Residential Space Heating

Current Use

The most common fuels used for heating in Fairfax are bottled, tank or LP gas (propane) (49%), fuel oil (25%), and wood (13%). Overall, residential heating in the Town is 207.9 BBTUs, accounting for 40% of total residential energy use.

66 households have installed cold climate heat pumps through Efficiency Vermont's

Current Residential Thermal Energy Use by Type of Energy



programs. Cold climate electric heat pumps use less energy to provide the same amount of heat as fossil fuel heating systems.

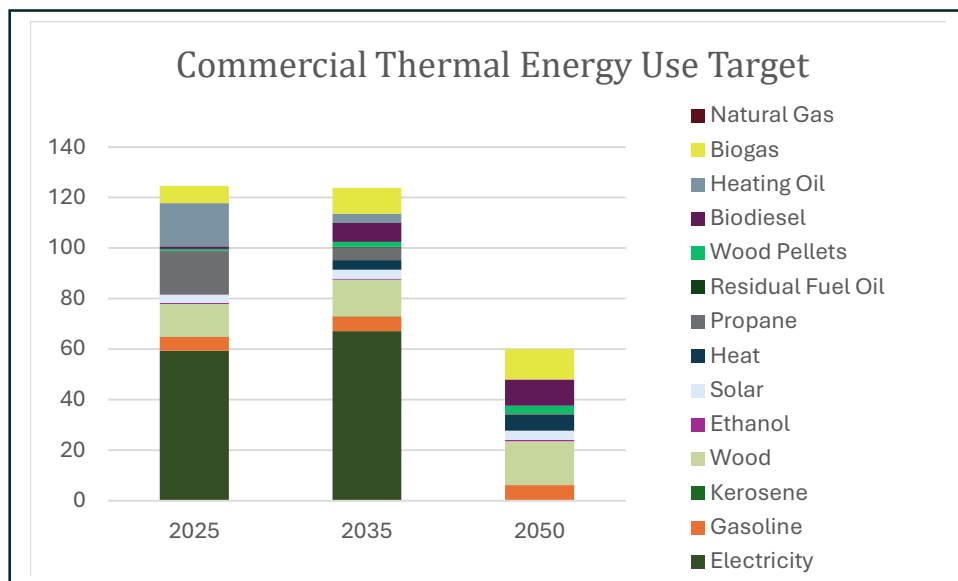
Target

The 2050 target is to significantly reduce residential thermal energy use by transitioning to more efficient electric heat pumps. Additionally, the target assumes that current homes will be weatherized to better retain heat, and new homes will be energy efficient.

Commercial Space Heating

Commercial Thermal Goals

- ↓ Significantly decrease the use of fossil fuels
- ↑ Significantly increase the number of commercial cold climate heat pumps and heat pump hot water heaters



Target Number of Commercial Heat Pumps	
Year	#
2025	379
2035	1145
2050	1465

Current Use

There is no survey data on commercial and industrial heating energy use, or the types of fuel used. Based on statewide trends and the businesses located in Fairfax, commercial and industrial heating use is estimated to be around 140.3 BBTUs per

year. One business has installed cold climate heat pumps through Efficiency Vermont's programs.

Target

Similar to residential heat use, the 2050 target for commercial and industrial heat use

is to reduce thermal energy use by significantly decreasing the use of fossil fuels and increasing the use of efficient heat pumps.

Transportation

Transportation Goals

- ↓ Decrease the total amount of miles travelled in personal vehicles.
- ↓ Significantly decrease use of fossil fuels including gasoline and diesel.
- ↑ Significantly increase the adoption of electric vehicles.

Transportation energy use includes gas, diesel and electric vehicles. It accounts for the largest percentage of energy use in Vermont.

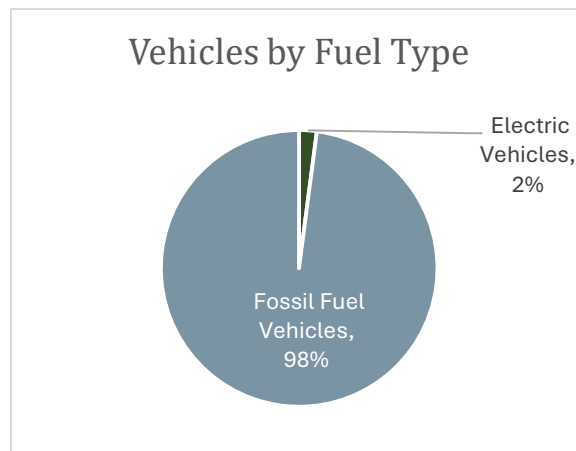
Land Use, Transit & Complete Streets

A key strategy to reducing the energy spent on transportation is to reduce the number of total miles driven.

Carpooling reduces the number of vehicles on the road and the total energy used. The Town should encourage carpooling.

The Town can also support a reduction in personal vehicle trips by encouraging compact land use patterns and complete streets that promote walking and cycling. It is one of the fundamental building blocks of a more efficient, resilient, and greener community. More information in the Transportation section.

Passenger Vehicles and Light-Duty Trucks

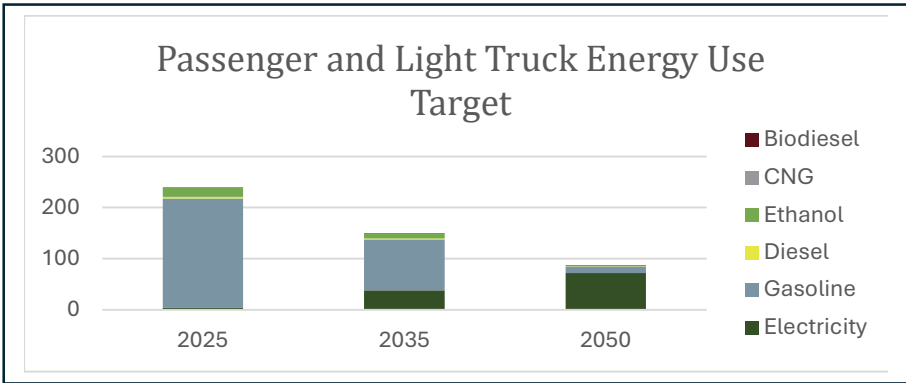


Current Use

The vast majority of personal vehicles and trucks in Fairfax use fossil fuels such as gasoline. Personal vehicle use represents roughly half of all residential energy use in Fairfax.

Target

The 2050 target for passenger vehicles and light duty trucks requires almost all vehicles to be fully electric by 2050. Electric vehicles are more efficient than gasoline and diesel vehicles, with typical



Target Number of Electric Vehicles		
Year	Plug-In Hybrid	Electric
2025	40	269
2035	38	3,253
2050	9	7,091

fuel economy equivalent to more than 100 MPG. Therefore, the switch to electric vehicles will reduce total transportation energy consumption. The 2050 target also assumes that the number of vehicle miles travelled will decrease 10% due to increases in carpooling, public transit, walking and cycling.

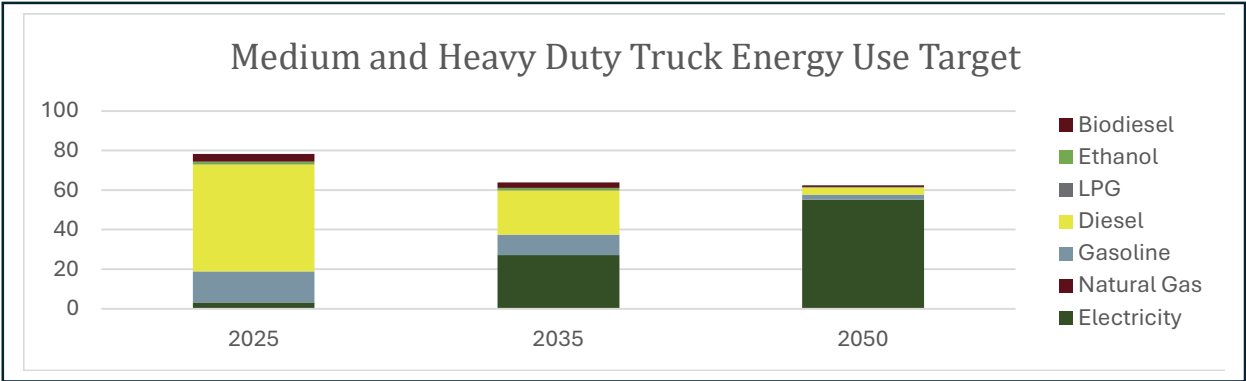
Target

Similar to passenger vehicles and light trucks, the target for medium and heavy-duty trucks is that the majority will be electric vehicles by 2050. Advancements in electric vehicle technology will be required to meet this goal.

Medium and Heavy-Duty Trucks

Current Use

There is no available on current energy use of medium or heavy-duty trucks. Diesel is the most common form of fuel for heavy-duty vehicles in Vermont (VTrans 2021, Vermont Transportation Energy Profile).



Electrical Goals



Electrical use will increase due to increasing use of electricity for heating and vehicles.

Electricity

Residential Electricity

Current Use

Electrical energy use in Town is equivalent to 75.9 BBTUs. 79% is residential and 21% is commercial.

Target

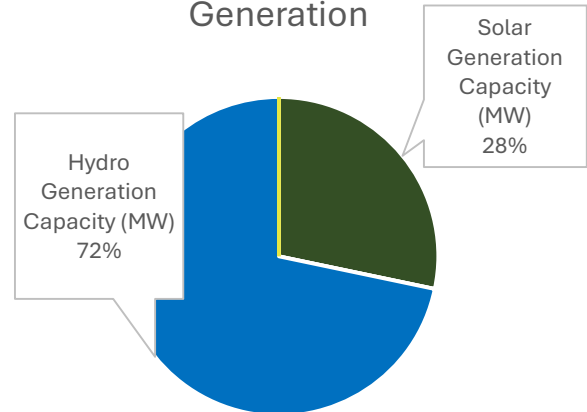
Data on electrical energy use is difficult to interpret. Increased energy efficiency of household appliances, lightbulbs and devices should bring electrical energy use down over time. However increased use of electricity for heating via heat pumps and for transportation via electric vehicles will increase electrical demand significantly. Therefore, the total amount of electrical energy use is expected to increase by 2050, even as total energy use declines.

Energy Generation

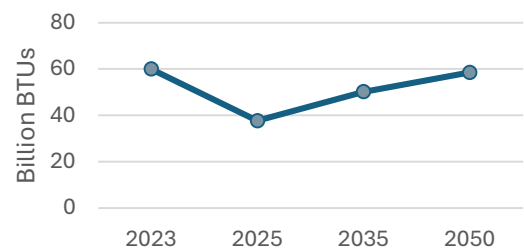
Energy Generation

As the amount of electricity needed for heating and transportation increases, some of that energy will need to be generated locally. This plan assumes about half of all electricity generation will occur locally. The overall renewable target is for 12.9 MW of new energy to be produced

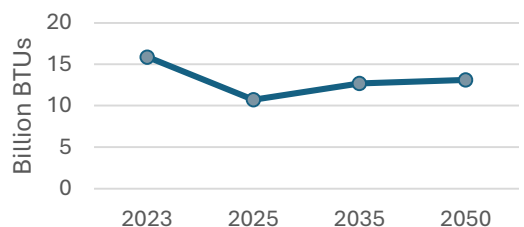
Current Renewable Energy Generation



Residential Electrical Energy Use Targets



Commercial Electrical Energy Use



in Fairfax, equivalent to the power needed for 2,208 homes.

Since availability of some renewable energy sources such as wind and hydro can vary widely based on the environment, the municipal target assumes all renewable energy will come from solar power.

Energy Generation Targets

Solar

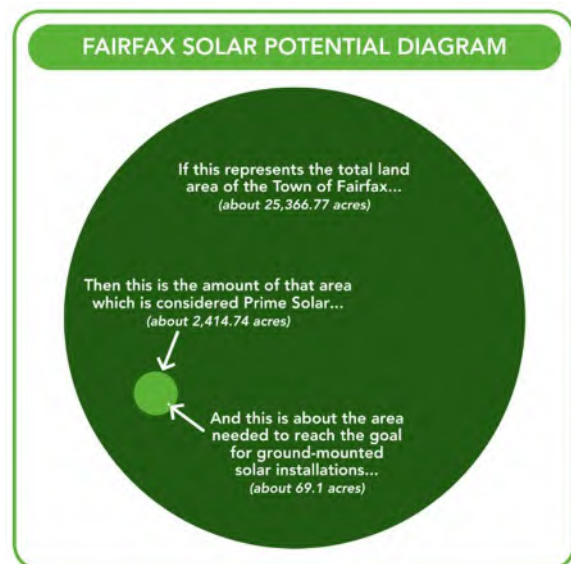
The Town currently has 1.7 MW of solar power generation. An additional 12.9 MW will be required to meet the 2050 goal. The goal assumes that 3.1 MW of this will be generated by rooftop solar systems. This is equivalent to roughly ¼ of homes and businesses having rooftop solar. The remaining 9.9 MW will be generated by ground-mounted solar, which is roughly 69 acres of solar fields.

Wind

The Town does not currently have any wind generation.

There is not much wind generation potential in Fairfax.

Smaller, net-metering scale wind generation may be possible throughout most of the region at lower elevations. More information is needed regarding the viability and affordability of these systems, but generally Fairfax views these types of facilities favorably provided that impacts to known constraints are avoided, impacts to possible constraints are mitigated, and site-specific concerns are addressed. Fairfax does not



support the construction of “industrial” or “commercial” wind generation facilities within the region. For more information, please see Section V.

Hydro

The Town currently generates 4.2 MW of electricity via hydroelectric dams. The main opportunities for expanding hydro power come from increasing the efficiency of the current dams and through lower impact “run of the river” projects which do not require new reservoirs.

Biodigesters

Biodigesters are facilities which convert food scraps or manure into renewable natural gas (RNG). RNG may be used directly in place of fossil fuel natural gas or burned in a generator to convert the energy to electricity. On-farm biodigesters generally require a minimum of 500 cattle. Thermal generation from a “district heating facility”—a central facility that would provide heat to

several structures is another potential use for biodigesters.

Energy Storage

One potential issue with increasing renewable energy production is that some renewables can only produce energy under the right environmental conditions. For instance, solar panels can only generate power when the sun is out. To address this, there will be a need for additional energy storage systems such as batteries. There is no specific target for energy storage.

New Technologies

New technologies continue to develop, including the emergence of geothermal heat as an electricity source. Investigating which technologies are suitable for our region and its residents will be an ongoing process. It is hard to know exactly what the future makeup of Vermont's electricity generation will be, but it is important to support a diverse, distributed, and robust set of generation facilities in the region. This will ensure resiliency, equity, and adaptability for the future.

Energy Generation Maps

Energy generation maps show the potential areas available for solar, wind, and hydro power, as well as existing biomass which could be used for wood heating. These maps exclude high priority resources which are known constraints. Energy generation facilities shall not be located in areas where known constraints exist.

The maps also consider lower priority resources as Possible Constraints. These resources often impact the siting process for generation facilities. New generation facilities shall not have an undue adverse impact upon possible constraints. Often, site-specific mitigation solutions are possible when possible constraints exist on a parcel. Therefore, possible constraints have been included in the area designated as "base" on the regional energy generation maps (solar, wind, biomass, hydro).

Equity, Feasibility, and Challenges

Equity

It is the policy of Fairfax that no segment of the population should, because of its racial, cultural, or economic makeup, bear a disproportionate share of environmental burdens or be denied an equitable share of environmental benefits. It is further the policy of the Fairfax to provide the opportunity for the meaningful participation of all individuals, with particular attention to environmental justice focus populations, in the development, implementation, or enforcement of any law, regulation, or policy.

Generation Siting

Fairfax finds it to be essential that all decisions regarding new renewable energy generation facilities take into consideration concerns about health and safety. The noise, vibration, glare, or other impacts from generation facilities shall be mitigated by developers to ensure that such impacts do not have an undue adverse impact upon neighboring properties.

It is hard to know exactly what the future makeup of Vermont's electricity generation will be, but it is important to support a diverse, distributed, and robust set of generation facilities in the region. This will ensure resiliency, equity, and adaptability for the future.

Split-Incentives- 83% of households are owner-occupied and 17% are renter households. In many rental housing options, the landlord is responsible for building maintenance while the tenant is responsible for utility bills. As a result, the landlord may not have a strong financial incentive to invest into home improvements such as weatherization or heat pumps and renters may face high utility costs with few options to address them. This is a particular problem given that in the Northwest Region the median renter household has half the income of the median owner-occupied household. Finding new ways to incentivize both landlords and tenants as well as provide targeted outreach and education on this topic could help to alleviate this issue.

Feasibility and Challenges

Fairfax faces several challenges in achieving the targets laid out in this plan which will require the cooperation and coordination of the federal government, state government, NRPC, and private sector.

High Upfront Costs- While efficient technologies such as heat pumps and

electric cars are more affordable to operate, they also tend to have higher up-front costs. Incentives have been created to help Vermonters, especially low-income Vermonters, access these technologies. Unfortunately, many residents still find a gap between the subsidized cost and the amount they can afford. Increased incentives, especially for middle income households, as well as the quickly improving technology, could help to alleviate this barrier for Fairfax's residents. There is also a need to substantially increase the capacity of existing programs for low-income residents, such as the low-income weatherization programs to reduce wait times.

Grid Limitations- The Vermont electrical grid was developed to have a one-way flow of electricity and distributed renewable generation can impact the function of the electrical grid. As with the rest of the United States, Vermont has historically depended on a small number of centralized power plants—the vast majority of which are located outside of the state.

Impact on Local Energy Companies- The changing energy landscape may have negative impacts on local energy companies, such as heating fuel and gas stations, that cannot evolve their business model. In the short term, this may hinder residents from accessing new, innovative heating and transportation technologies locally. In the long term, it may lead some local energy companies to disband, with lost jobs as a consequence. There are several programs in the state and region to help retrain workers

who currently work in the fossil fuel industry. Certain sectors, including weatherization and green technology installation, will require additional labor and can provide careers for those transitioning out of fossil fuel industries.

Despite the challenges involved in implementation, it is important to remember the key issues this plan hopes to address: energy security, environmental protection, economic need/opportunities, and equity. Without making significant changes to how Fairfax generates and uses energy, our energy future will be less secure, our environment less healthy, and our economic situation potentially dire. Fairfax Y finds that any and all progress toward the goals of this plan is important. A lack of action at the state, regional, and local levels may have serious consequences.

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Strategies

1. Support public utilities' efforts to increase customers' knowledge of their energy use. This may happen through increased outreach to and education of customers, but it may also occur through the use of new technology such as real-time monitoring of energy use.
2. Support the efforts of Efficiency Vermont to promote the selection and installation of devices, appliances, and equipment that will perform work using less energy (e.g., ENERGY STAR).
3. Consider and prioritize efficiency along with cost when replacing current systems in municipal buildings & municipally-owned buildings.
4. Consider opportunities to support municipal and community renewable energy facilities.

Appendix A: Energy Plan Data and LEAP Modeling

Under 24 V.S.A. § 4348a(a)(3) municipal enhanced energy plans must include data on current energy use by sector and municipal targets for 2025, 2035 and 2050 which comply with the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan. This appendix describes how current use and municipal targets were developed.

Current Use

Data on current energy use was developed using the Department of Public Service municipal consumption tool. The following details the data sources for each sector of energy use. The best available data sources were used.

There are several limitations on the data. With the exception of metered electricity and natural gas, there is no direct measure of energy usage. Therefore, the current use data relies heavily on state estimates of energy use per house or business. Additionally, at the town level, there is a high margin of error for U.S. Census American Community Survey data which impacts accuracy.

Thermal Energy Use

Residential thermal energy use was estimated based on the number of housing units in the municipality and the average state heating use per household. Commercial thermal energy use was estimated using data from the Vermont Department of Labor on the number and type of businesses and a statewide estimate

of the typical heating energy use of those types of businesses.

Transportation Energy Use

Transportation energy use was estimated based on the total Vermont DMV registrations for internal combustion and electric vehicles and statewide estimates of average vehicle mile travelled and fuel economy. Vermont registrations are based on address, differences between zip code address and municipal boundaries exist in some communities which make this data less accurate.

Electrical Energy Use

Metered electrical energy use is reported by the distribution utilities to Efficiency Vermont for residential and commercial uses. Farm operations may choose to select the residential or commercial energy rate.

2025, 2035 and 2050 Consumption Targets

The 2025, 2035 and 2050 municipal targets are based on a proportion of the regional targets found in the Northwest Regional Energy Plan. Regional targets were developed by the Department of Public Service based on the 2022 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan.

The 2022 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan included a Low Emissions Analysis Platform (LEAP) analysis of one pathway towards reaching the state's statutory 2050 energy goals. This scenario is known as the CAP mitigation scenario. Information on the

state's LEAP modeling process can be found at <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/document/2022-cep-analysis-greenhouse-gas-emission-reduction-pathways-vermont>.

The statewide LEAP model targets were then divided among the Regional Planning Commissions by the Vermont Department of Public Service. NRPC has divided each consumption target by municipality based on the percentage of current energy use in the municipality. For thermal energy use, the natural gas portion of the target was allocated only to communities with existing natural gas lines, as large-scale expansions of the existing natural gas pipelines are not expected.

2025, 2035 and 2050 Generation Targets

NRPC developed the regional energy generation targets using the Vermont Department of Service's generation scenarios tool. NRPC assumed that 50% of the regional energy supply would be

produced by renewable sources within the region. More information on the regional target can be found in the Northwest Regional Energy Plan.

The regional target was then divided by municipality based on total population, under the assumption that municipalities with higher population will have higher energy demand. These targets were divided between ground-mount and rooftop solar under the assumption that one-quarter of the total available rooftop solar potential will be developed.

Finally, the targets were adjusted to remove the ground-mount solar target for St. Albans City, as under regional policy the entire community is within a growth area where ground-mount solar is not appropriate. This adjustment had the impact of adding roughly 800 kW of ground-mount solar to all other municipal targets. All other municipalities have sufficient land area outside of growth areas for ground-mount solar.

Appendix B: Energy Resource Mapping Constraints

Solar, Wind and Biomass Maps

Known Constraints

- **Confirmed Vernal Pools:** There is a 600-foot buffer around confirmed vernal pools. (Source: ANR)
- **State Significant Natural Communities and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species:** Rankings S1 through S3 were used as constraints. These include all of the rare and uncommon rankings within the file. For more information on the specific rankings, explore the methodology for the shapefile. (Source: VCGI)
- **River Corridors:** Only mapped River Corridors were mapped. Does not include 50 foot buffer for stream with a drainage area less than 2 square miles. (Source: VCGI)
- **National Wilderness Areas:** (Source: VCGI)
- **FEMA Floodways:** (Source: VCGI)
- **Class 1 and Class 2 Wetlands:** (Source: VCGI)
- **Downtowns, Planned Growth Areas, Village Centers, Village Areas and Transitional Areas:** These areas are the current or planned areas of dense development in the region. Larger solar generation facilities are land-intensive and interrupt the desired pattern of smart growth development. This constraint does not apply to ground-mounted solar of 500 kW or less in all areas other than downtowns, roof-mounted solar, or parking lot canopy solar within such designated areas. The inclusion of this resource as a regional constraint is consistent with goals and policies of the Northwest Regional Plan. (Source: NRPC)
- **FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) Special Flood Hazard Areas:** Special flood hazard areas as digitized by the NRPC were used—just 100-year flood plain (500-year floodplain not mapped). The inclusion of this resource as a regional constraint is consistent with goals and policies of the Northwest Regional Plan. (Source: NRPC)
- **Ground and Surface Waters Drinking Protection Areas:** Buffered Source Protection Areas (SPAs) are designated by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). SPA boundaries are approximate but are conservative enough to capture the areas most susceptible to contamination. The inclusion of this resource as a regional constraint is consistent with goals and policies of the Northwest Regional Plan. (Source: Vermont Agency of Natural Resources [ANR])
- **Vermont Conservation Design Highest Priority Forest Blocks:** The lands and waters identified here are the areas of the state that are of highest priority for maintaining ecological integrity. Together, these lands comprise a connected landscape of large and intact forested habitat, healthy aquatic and riparian systems, and a full range of physical

features (bedrock, soils, elevation, slope, and aspect) on which plant and animal natural communities depend. The inclusion of this resource as a regional constraint is inconsistent with goals and policies of the Northwest Regional Plan. (Source: ANR)

- **Public Water Sources:** A 200-foot buffer is used around public drinking water wellheads. The inclusion of this resource as a regional constraint is consistent with goals and policies of the Northwest Regional Plan. (Source: ANR)
- **National Natural Landmark – Chazy Fossil Reef:** The Chazy Fossil Reef in Isle La Motte has been designated a National Natural Landmark by the US Department of Interior. (Source: NRPC)
- **Municipal Conservation Land Use Areas:** Conservation Land Use Districts, as designated in municipal plans, that include strict language that strongly deters or prohibits development have been included as a known constraint.

Possible Constraints

- **Potential and Probable Vernal Pools:** There is a 600-foot buffer around unconfirmed vernal pools. (Source: ANR)
- **Protected Lands:** This constraint includes public lands held by agencies with conservation or natural resource oriented missions, municipal natural resource holdings (ex. Town forests), public boating and fishing access areas, public and private educational institution holdings with natural resource uses and protections, publicly owned rights on private lands, parcels owned in fee by non profit organizations dedicated to conserving land or resources, and private parcels with conservation easements held by non profit organizations. (Source: VCGI)
- **Features from ANR's Vermont Conservation Design:** Highest Priority Interior Forest Blocks, Highest Priority Connectivity Blocks, Highest Priority Physical Landscape Blocks and Highest Priority Surface Water and Riparian Areas.
- **Deer Wintering Areas:** Deer wintering habitat as identified by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. (Source: VCGI)
- **Hydric Soils:** Hydric soils as identified by the US Department of Agriculture. (Source: VCGI)
- **Agricultural Soils:** Local, statewide, and prime agricultural soils are considered. (Source: VCGI)
- **Act 250 Agricultural Soil Mitigation Areas:** Sites conserved as a condition of an Act 250 permit. (Source: VCGI)
- **Class 3 Wetlands:** Class 3 wetlands in the region have been identified have been included as a Regional Possible Constraint. The inclusion of this resource as a regional constraint is consistent with goals and policies of the Northwest Regional Plan (Source: ANR)

- **Municipal Conservation Land Use Areas:** Conservation Land Use Districts, as designated in municipal plans, that include strict language that deters, but does not prohibit development.

Hydro Maps

Known Constraints

- **National Scenic and Recreational Rivers:** Known constraint; Missisquoi and Trout Rivers. This constraint will only be incorporated into the Hydroelectric Resource Map. Dams occurring within an impacted area will be displayed as such on maps. (*Source: Digitized by the BCRC from Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers, Wild and Scenic Study Management Plan*)

Possible Constraints

- **“303d” List of Stressed Waters:** Possible constraint. This constraint will only be incorporated into the Hydroelectric Resource Map. Dams occurring within an impacted area will be displayed as such on maps. (*Source: ANR*)
- **Impaired Water:** Possible constraint. This constraint will only be incorporated into the Hydroelectric Resource Map. Dams occurring within an impacted area will be displayed as such on maps. (*Source: ANR*)
- **State Significant Natural Communities and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species:** Rankings S1 through S3 were used as constraints. These include all of the rare and uncommon rankings within the file. For more information on the specific rankings, explore the methodology for the shapefile. (*Source: VCGI*)

Existing Generation Facilities

Fairfax, Vermont Act 174 The Energy Development Improvement Act

This map and the corresponding data is intended to be used to inform energy planning efforts by municipalities and regions. This may also be used for conceptual planning or initial site identification by those interested in developing renewable energy infrastructure. The maps do **NOT** take the place of site-specific investigation for a proposed facility and cannot be used as "siting maps."



Legend

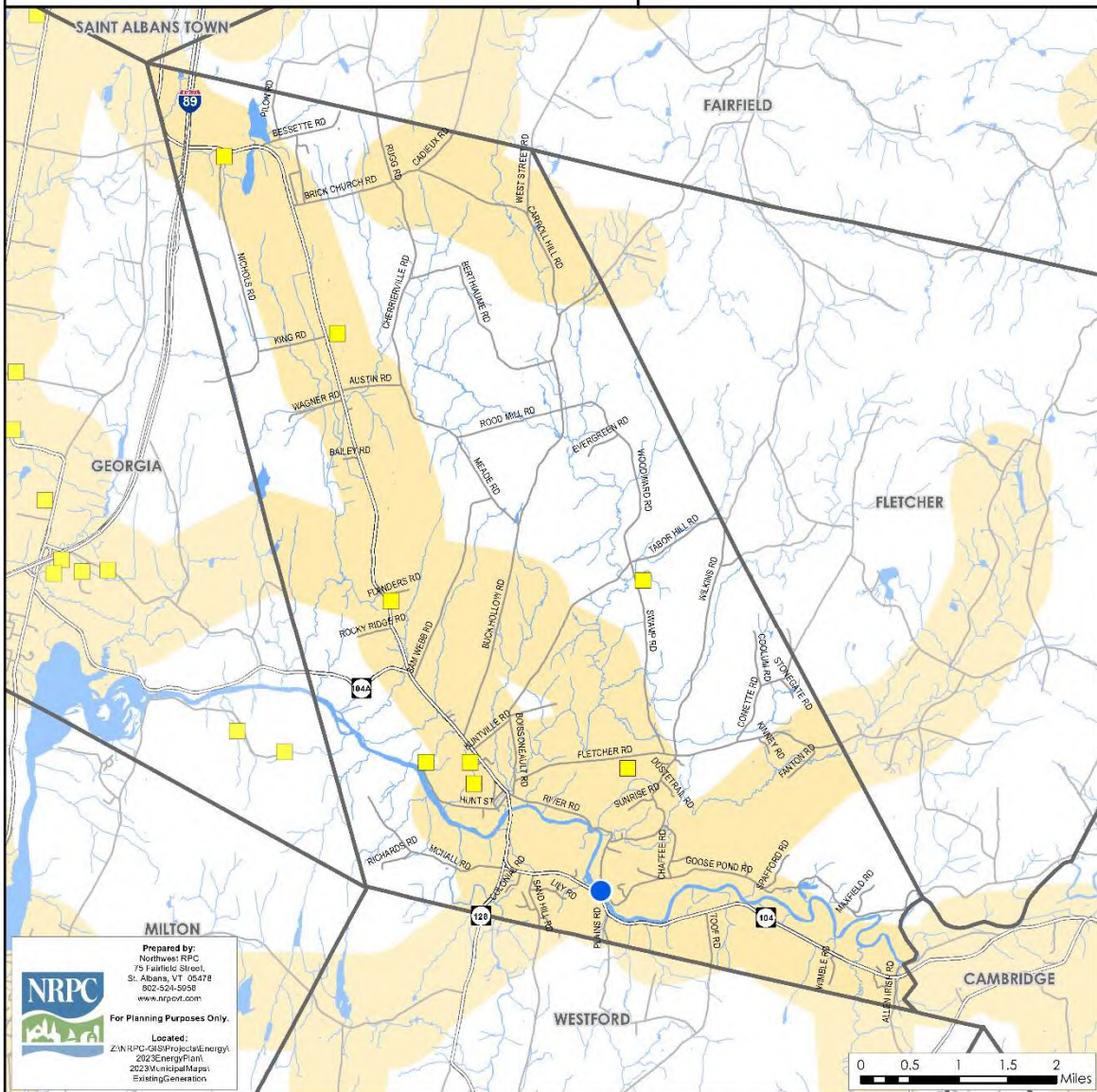
- ★ Biomass Facility
- Hydro Facility
- Solar Facility
- ▲ Wind Facility
- 1/2 Mile Buffer*
(3 Phase Power Line & Transmission Line)

Note: Only generators 15kW are shown on this map. A full list of all generators is available. The facility locations shown here are approximate and may not reflect exact location. Projects constructed after 2023 may not be shown.

*The half mile buffer shows where generation facilities can be located without significant loss of power in transit to transmission lines.

Sources: VCGI

Disclaimer: The accuracy of information presented is determined by its sources. Errors and omissions may exist. The Northwest RPC is not responsible for these. Questions of on-the-ground location can be resolved by site inspections and/or surveys by a registered surveyor. This map is not sufficient for delineation of features on-the-ground. This map identifies the presence of features, and may indicate relationships between features, but is not a replacement for surveyed information or engineering studies.



Utility Service Areas

Fairfax, Vermont Act 174 The Energy Development Improvement Act

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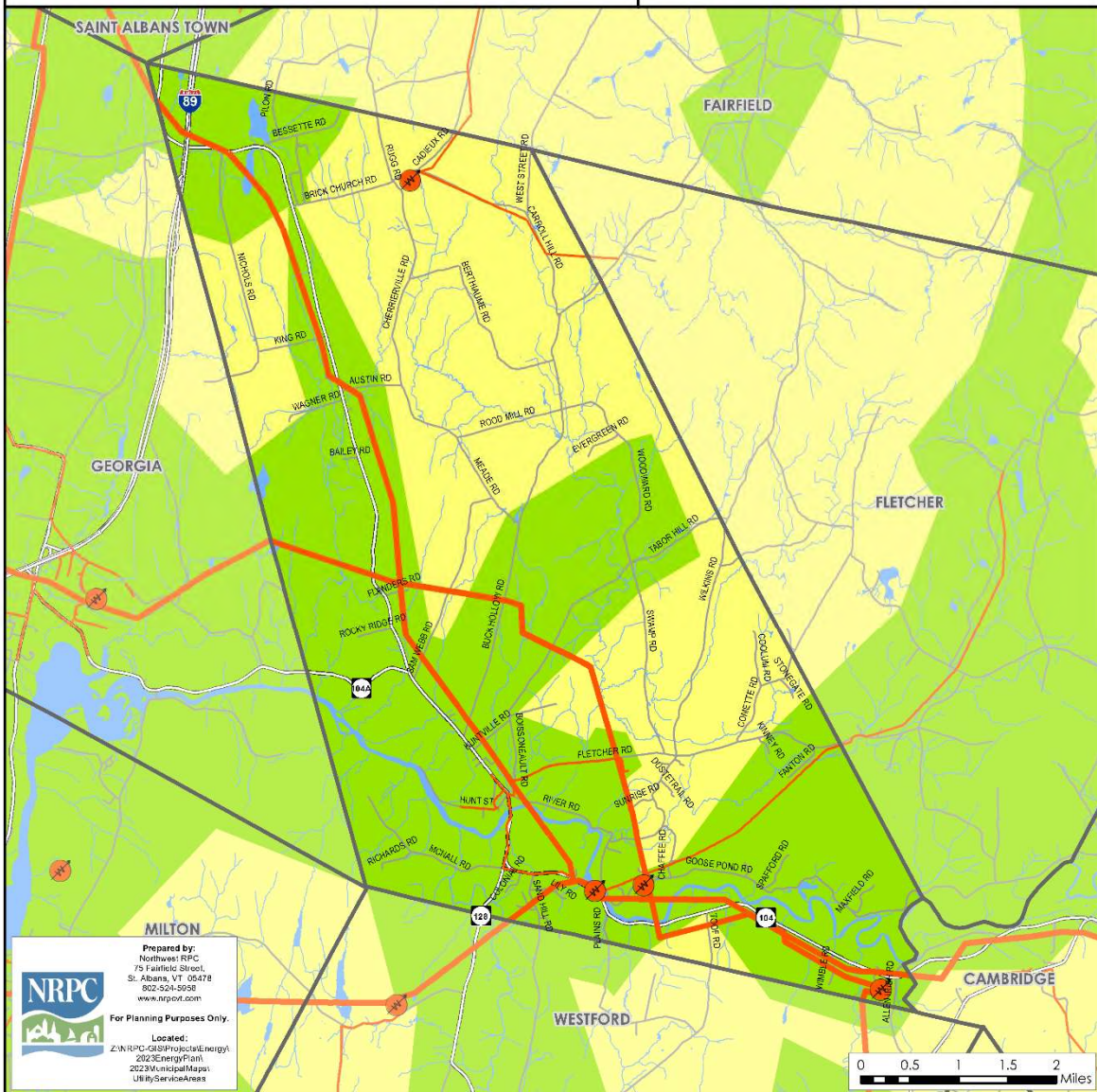
Legend

Utility Service Area Features

- Green Mountain Power
- Swanton Village Electric
- Vermont Electric Co-op
- Enosburg Falls Electric
-  Substation
- 3 Phase Power Line
- Transmission Line

Sources: VCGI

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Transmission & 3 Phase Power Infrastructure

Fairfax, Vermont Act 174 The Energy Development Improvement Act

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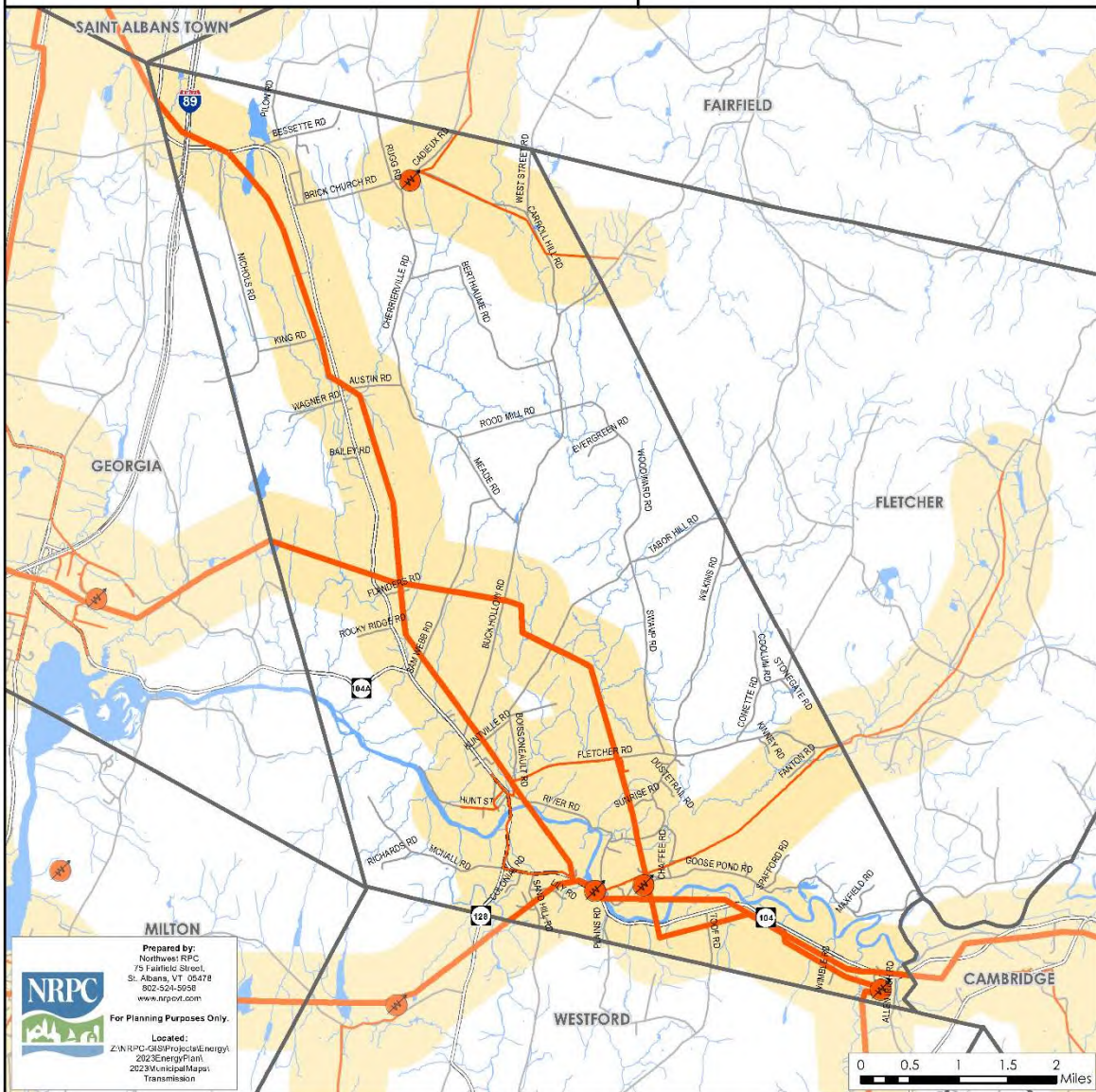
Legend

- Substation
- 3 Phase Power Line
- Transmission Line
- 1/2 Mile Buffer* (3 Phase Power Line & Transmission Line)

*The half mile buffer shows where generation facilities can be located without significant loss of power in transit to transmission lines.

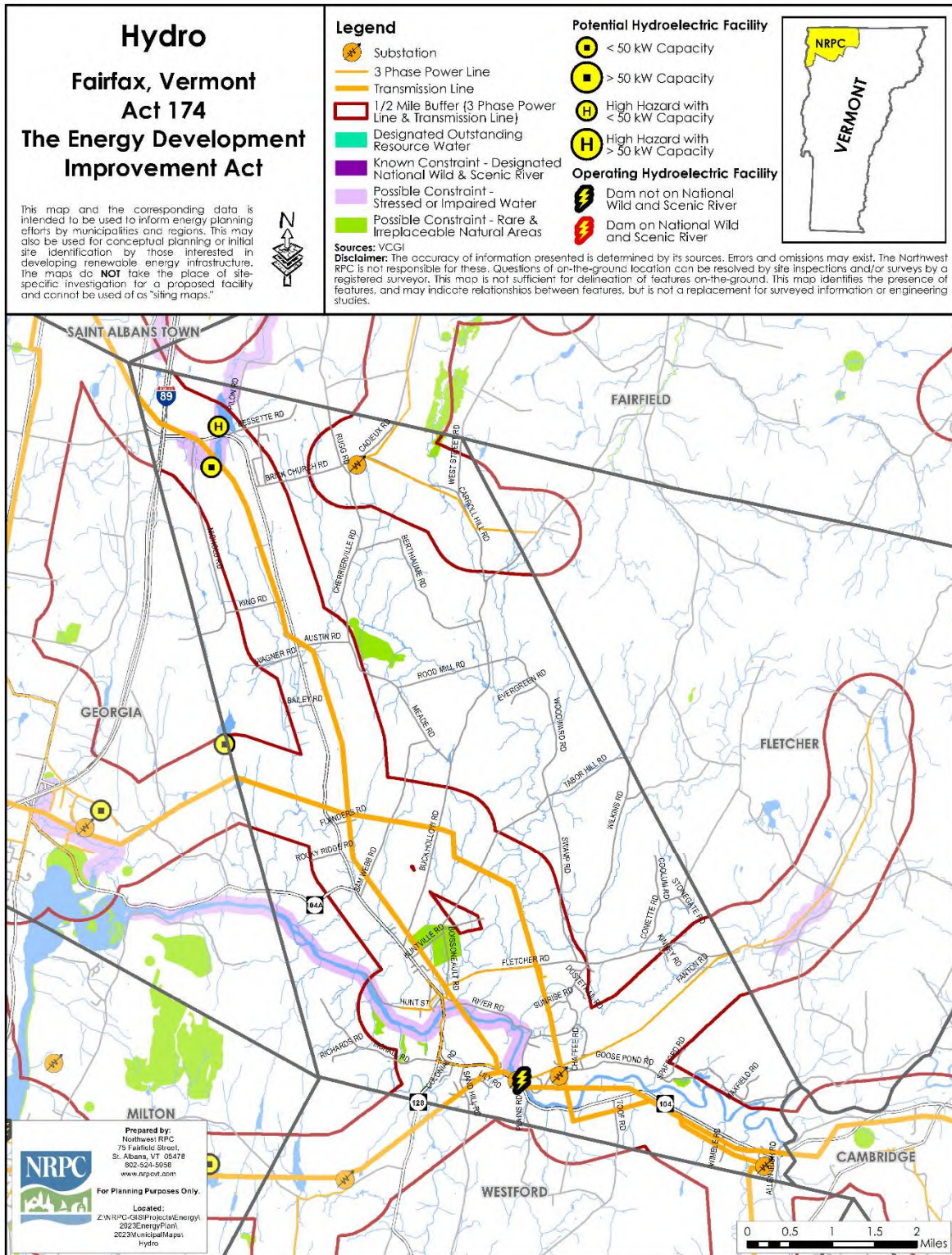
Sources: VCGI

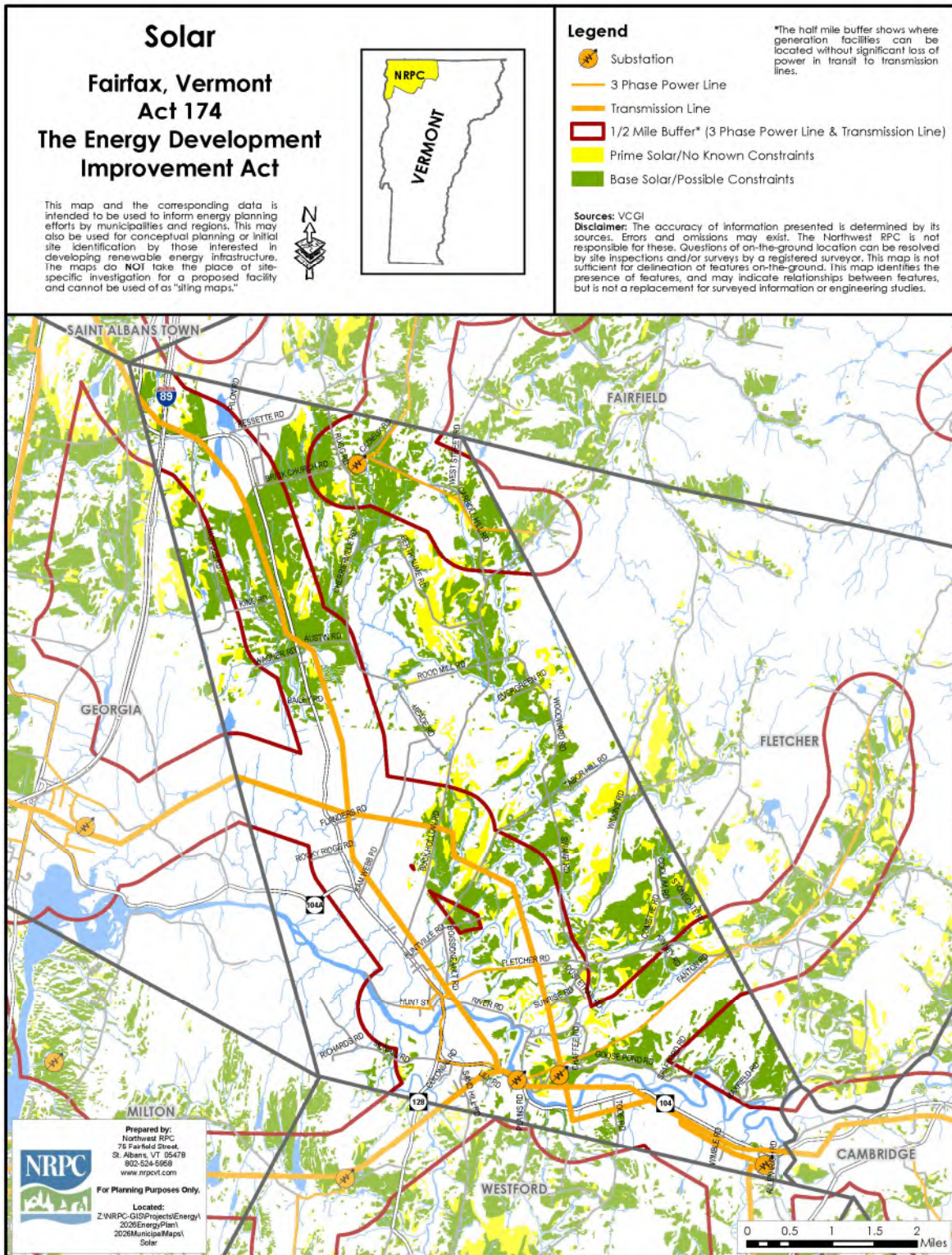
Disclaimer: The accuracy of information presented is determined by its sources. Errors and omissions may exist. The Northwest RPC is not responsible for these. Questions of on-the-ground location can be resolved by site inspections and/or surveys by a registered surveyor. This map is not sufficient for delineation of features on-the-ground. This map identifies the presence of features, and may indicate relationships between features, but is not a replacement for surveyed information or engineering studies.

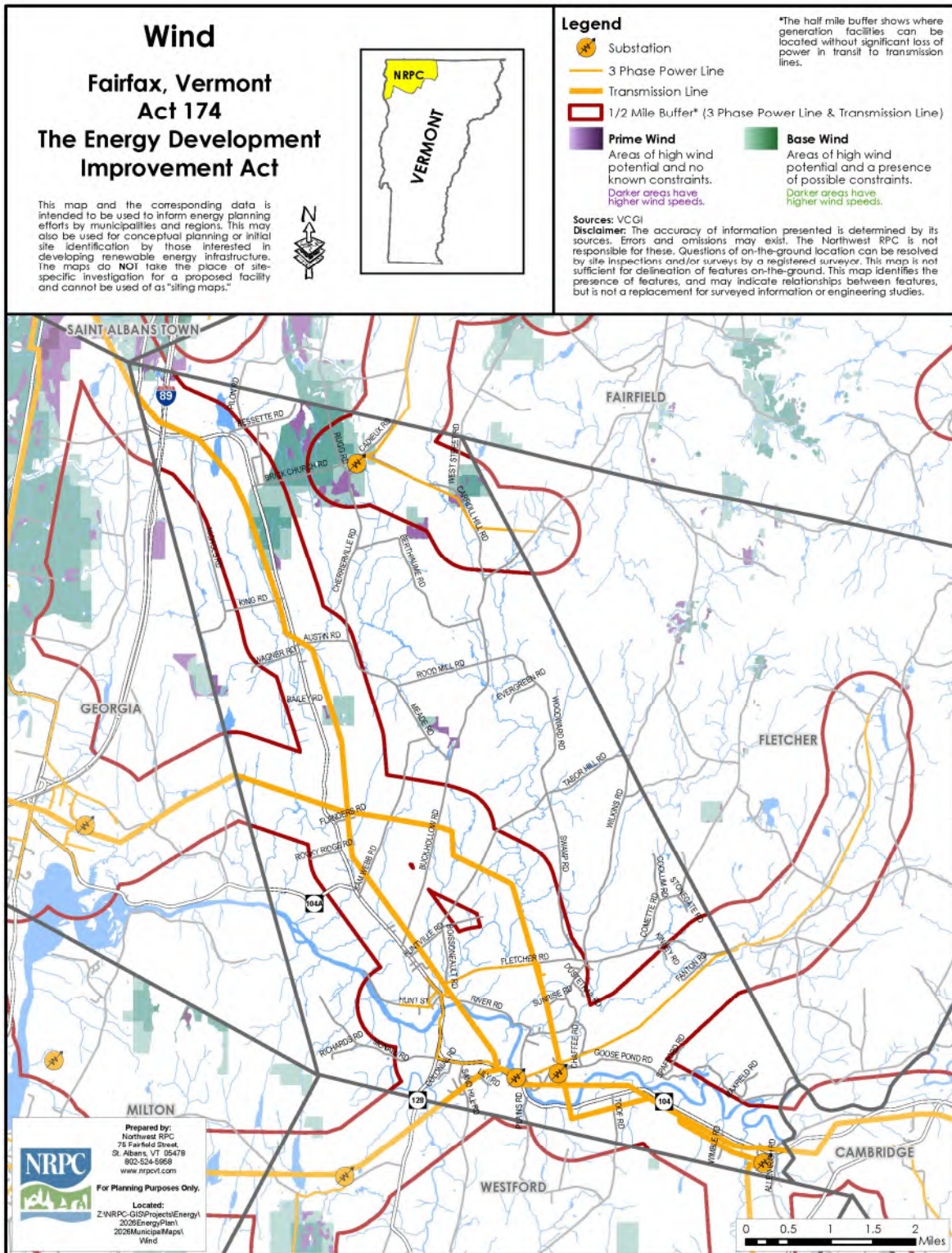


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Woody Biomass

Fairfax, Vermont Act 174 The Energy Development Improvement Act

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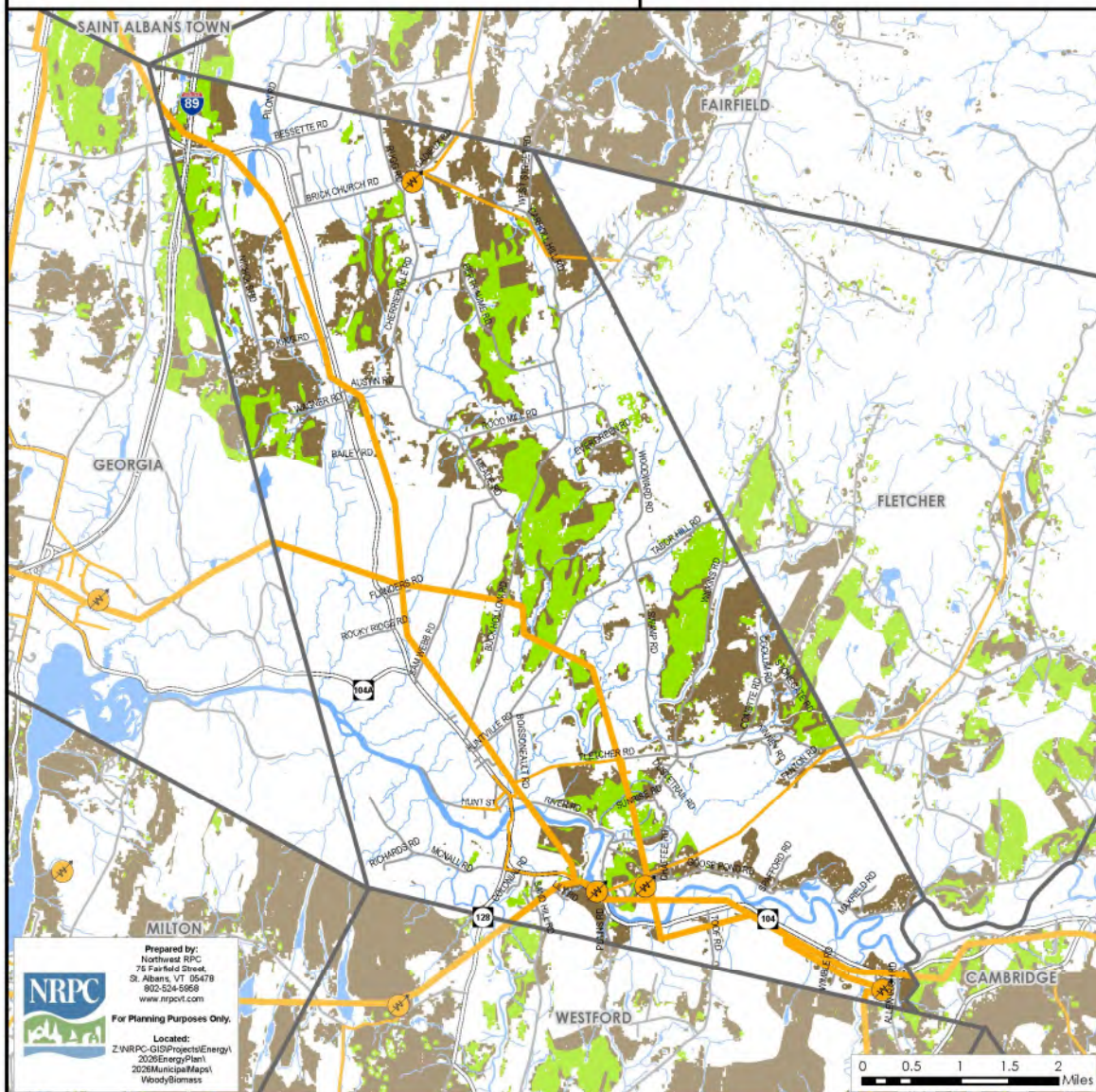
Legend

- ★ Biomass System
- ★ Methane Digester
- ⚡ Substation
- 3 Phase Power Line
- Transmission Line
- Prime Woody Biomass/No Known Constraints
- Base Woody Biomass/Possible Constraints

Note: The prime and base biomass shows where biomass, specifically cordwood, could potentially be harvested. The location of biomass generation facilities, including methane digesters, is more site specific and therefore does not have prime or base areas.

Sources: VCGI

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WoodyBiomass