

Municipal Planning Committee  
Notice of Public Hearing  
Guildhall, Vermont

NOTICE

This is to inform you that the Guildhall Planning Commission will be holding a public hearing to review the proposed Town Plan for the Town of Guildhall. The public hearing will be on **Thursday June 13, 2024 at 6:00pm** at the Guildhall Town Office Building, 13 Courthouse Drive, Guildhall, Vermont.

Statement of Purpose: The Guildhall Town Plan is a framework and guide for reaching community goals. It attempts to balance the wide range of competing interests and demands found in the town, to coordinate the pattern of development, the use of important natural resources and to address both current and long-term needs. The policies stated within this comprehensive plan were developed to preserve and protect the town's assets while providing a future vision for town officials, businesses and citizens of Guildhall.

The geographic areas affected: The Guildhall Town Plan affects the areas within the Town of Guildhall. The Town Plan contains policies and actions that could affect adjacent towns of Maidstone, Granby, and Lunenburg in relation to forest blocks, habitat connectors, transportation networks, recreation, and flood resilience.

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- Cultural, Historic, & Scenic Resources
- Regional Context
- Strategies for Implementation
- Maps
- Summary of Community Engagement Surveys

Place within the municipality where the full text may be examined:

The full text can be found at the Town Clerk's Office located at 13 Courthouse Drive, Guildhall, Vermont.

Public comment at this hearing is welcomed and encouraged using the following methods: (1) attend the in-person meeting (2) Mail public comment prior to the meeting to: Town of Guildhall, c/o Planning Commission, PO Box 10 Guildhall, Vermont 05905.



TOWN OF GUILDHALL  
Proposed MUNICIPAL PLAN

Adopted \_\_\_\_\_, 2024

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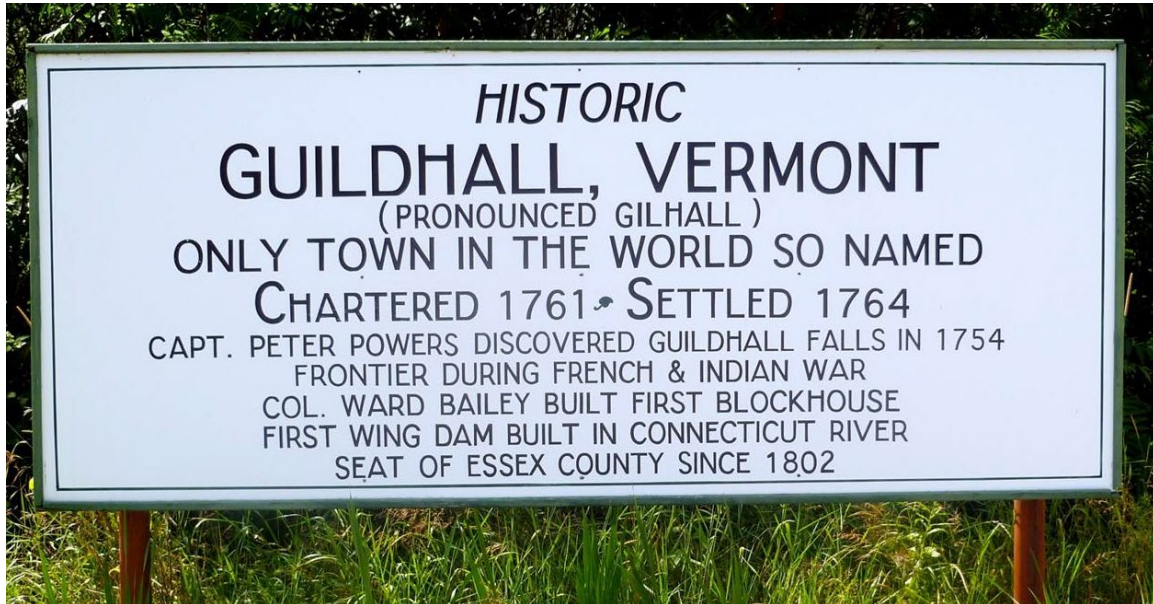
### **Adjacent Towns and Regional Plan**

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## Community Profile:

Guildhall Vermont is a town in and the shire town (county seat) of Essex County, on the eastern border of Vermont. Guildhall sits across the Connecticut River from Northumberland, NH. According to a large sign in the town center, it is the only town in the world so named.



The Guild Hall was built in 1795 making it the oldest building in all of the Northeast Kingdom. The historic village in which the Guild Hall sits is surrounded by historic buildings and creates one of the most picturesque Vermont Villages in the whole state.

The population of Guildhall is 262 individuals. The median age is 45.6 years, lower than the county median age of 51.6 years. Guildhall has experienced some in-migration, with approximately 11.8% of residents having moved to Guildhall from another state in the past year (2022 ACS 5-year estimates). New residents and housing development have placed pressure on the municipality to ensure that all dwellings are meeting the zoning regulations and the water and wastewater requirements set by the State of Vermont. The Town is additionally seeking ways for the community to connect.

## Statement of Purpose:

This Town Plan supersedes the August 2013 Plan for the Town of Guildhall and has been prepared in accordance with Title 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117. This Plan is intended as a policy guideline without the same legal standing as zoning and subdivision regulations. However, it is considered the development law of the State of Vermont by the District Environmental Commission's hearings under Act 250. The Town Plan is also given due consideration by the Vermont Public Service Board in deciding whether to issue a "certificate of public good" under 30 V.S.A. Section 248 for the siting of utility projects (e.g., industrial wind turbines, cell towers). Furthermore, under Vermont statutes, the revised plan is required justification to produce new or revised zoning and subdivision regulations.

The primary purpose of the Town Plan is to encourage the appropriate development of all land in the Town in a manner that will promote public health, safety, prosperity, comfort, convenience, efficiency, economy, and general welfare. The purpose is also to provide means and methods of planning for the prevention or minimization of such land development problems as may presently exist or which may be foreseen, and to implement such planning when and where appropriate. (Title 24 VSA, Chapter 117, Section 4302 and 4382, paraphrased.)

The Plan helps to define the community by laying out the general direction for future development. It also identifies local needs and desires. Each section of the Plan identifies issues and recommends actions to help resolve the Town's problems. This document, then, attempts to identify the areas and resources which possess economic, historic, natural, and scenic value and attempts to set reasonable priorities where two or more uses or values may overlap. The Plan provides guidelines for orderly growth and the intelligent appraisal of appropriate land use in Guildhall, while maintaining a reasonable flexibility to allow for the consideration of changing trends.

### **Community Engagement:**

The Guildhall Planning Commission was tasked with the preparation of the Town Plan. The Plan must be updated and readopted on an eight-year basis according to Vermont State Statutes. Work on this plan began in September 2023, with the bulk of the work commencing in January 2024. The Planning Commission distributed a community visioning survey to gather insights into where the Town should be heading over the course of the next eight years. Topics of inquiry in the survey included housing, the natural environment, recreation, local economy, social and cultural opportunities, education, transportation, energy, and improving the use of historical resources within the community. The public was invited into the planning process throughout the creation of the Plan.

### **Vision and Goals:**

The Town of Guildhall will be a place that:

- Encourages and guides conscientious development, following local and state regulations to protect the natural environment and bolster its community, and
- Preserves and enhances its historical assets, most notably the Village Historic District, to create a vibrant village environment.

Through these two levers, Guildhall will maintain the integrity of its natural environment, enhance the historic built environment, and build the sense of community amongst Guildhall's people.

# 1. Future Land Use

*GOAL: Maintain the forested landscape and healthy waterways while supporting appropriately scaled development in the established village cluster and along the main roads in Guildhall.*

The composition of Guildhall’s land is 82% forested, 9% agricultural, shrubland, and pastures, 2% developed, and 7.5% woody wetlands and less than 0.5% open water. (ANR Natural Resources Atlas)

<https://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/anra5/>

Land Cover Type	Percentage of Total Land Cover in Guildhall
Forest	81%
Agriculture	9%
Wetlands	7.5%
Developed Land	2%
Open Water	>.5%

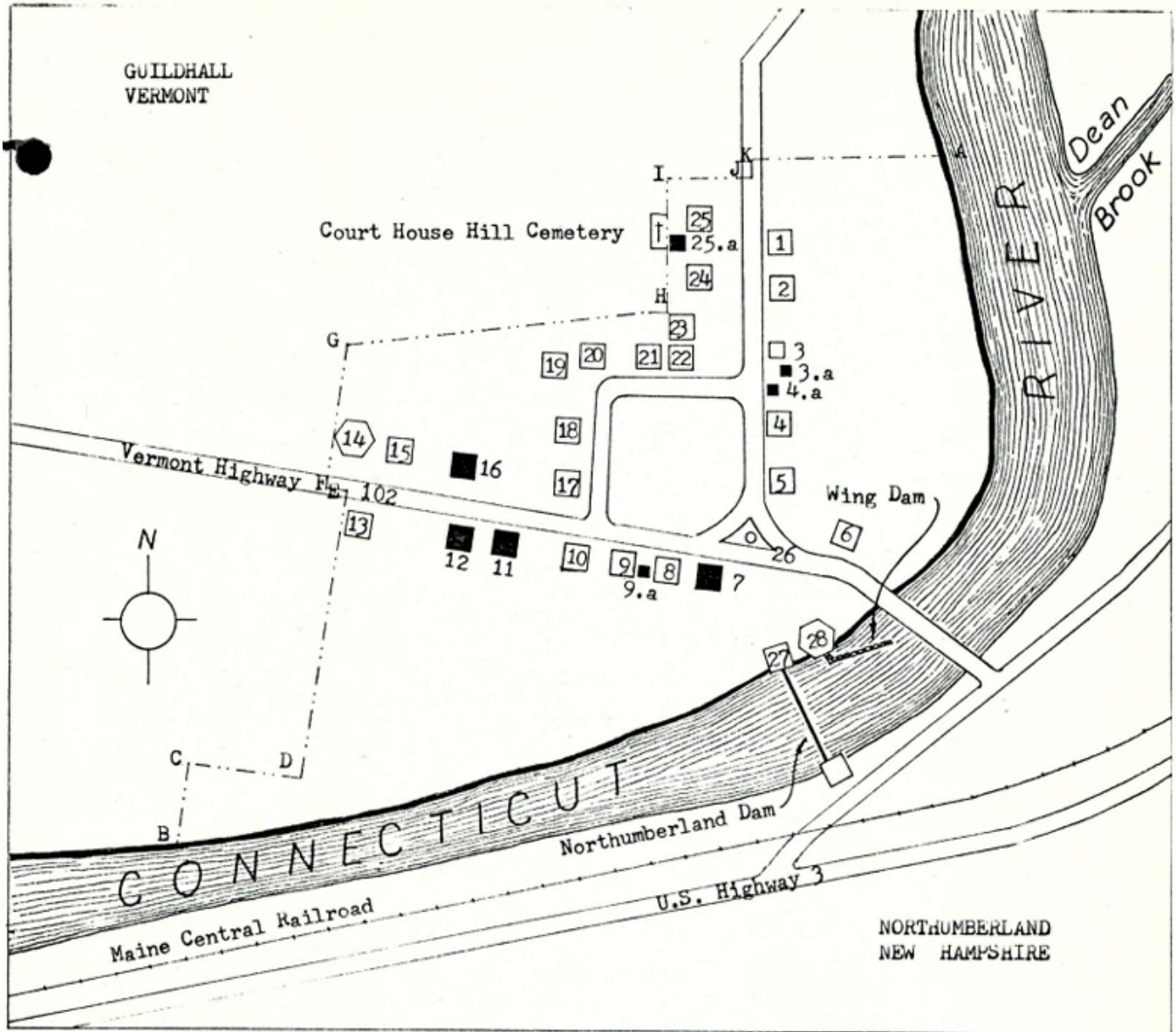
From the data, Guildhall’s development has been quite condensed (2%), being pocketed in the historic village center and along Route 102. Much of the municipality remains as forest and woody wetland landscapes, with agricultural lands sited along the Connecticut River floodplains. The Guildhall Zoning Bylaws help regulate land development and are one tool to help guide the future land use of the municipality.

## DEVELOPED LAND

There are eight zoning districts in Guildhall: Village Historic, Rural 1, Rural 2, Rural 3, Agricultural, Forestry Conservation, Alternative Energy and Forest Conservation, and Industrial.

**Village Historic District-** This district is generally defined as extending from the Maidstone Town Line along Route 102 to the fire hydrant in front of the Peaslee Farm. Within the district there is a “noteworthy collection of Greek Revival buildings erected during the village’s period of greatest vigor” in the mid- 19<sup>th</sup> century (National Register Nomination, 1980). The village is defined as the nucleus of Guildhall, with predominantly single-household dwellings and public buildings and uses. The compact nature of the village gives it distinction and should be preserved. The main trunk of the municipal water system serves this area, but lot sizes must be large enough for onsite sewage disposal.

In the center of the village is an area of great historical charm, architectural merit, and scenic beauty. It includes the Guildhall Common, Courthouse Hill, the Guild Hall, the Essex County Judicial Center, Community Church, the former Colonel E.C. Benton Summer Home, and the Guildhall Public Library. There are design criteria for historic buildings within the Village District. This part of the municipality is well suited for Village Center Designation.



## GUILDHALL VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT

APPROXIMATE SCALE:  $\frac{1}{4}$ " = 85'0"

May 1980

**Rural District:** This district primarily follows the roadways through the town where housing is the predominant use with other permitted and conditional uses interspersed. The Rural District has three distinct districts within it, corresponding to the level of infrastructure available along the roadways (primarily the class of road). Rural Lands 1 has a minimum lot size of 1-acre, Rural Lands 2 has a minimum lot size of 2 acres, and Rural Lands 3 has a minimum lot size of 5 acres.

**Agricultural District:** Guildhall is one of the few places in Essex County with a concentration of prime agricultural lands. The prime agricultural lands hug the Connecticut river, with a small extension of farmland following North Road. Guildhall recognizes the value of its prime agricultural land. The Agricultural District within the zoning bylaws is designed to maintain these lands for agricultural purposes. The minimum lot size in the district is 25 acres.

**Forestry Conservation District:** Over 81% of the land within the town's boundaries is forested lands. This district requires a minimum lot size of 10 acres and works to protect the natural resource value of the forested landscape. Land in this district is essentially undeveloped, lacks access to public roads, are vitally important to wildlife and the maintenance of wildlife habitats, have irreplaceable or significant natural, recreational, or scenic value, and often have other constraints that limit development. This district recognizes that some of the lands have the potential for forestry use and should be conducted within a forestry management plan.

**Alternative Energy and Forestry Conservation District:** This is a district within Guildhall's current Zoning Bylaws (2013) and follows Morin and LaMotte roads. It is identical to the Forestry Conservation District with additional siting standards for energy resources, including electricity poles and lines. It may be beneficial to the Town to adjust the Zoning Bylaws to provide siting standards for all renewable energy generation equipment and structures and eliminate this district. It does not appear on the Zoning Map (2013) and is otherwise indistinguishable from the Forestry Conservation District. Limiting development along Morin and LaMotte Road is not viewed as being in the best interest of the Town at this time but the Town would like to retain the 25 acre minimum lot size along these two roadways.

**Industrial District:** This district provides a location for the establishment of a variety of types of manufacturing, light industry, commercial activities, and earth resources extraction. The district is important to the town in providing a diversified tax base and an employment sector. Because of the manufacturing and light industry nature of some businesses and the potential for conflict with other uses, this district has been created to provide the space needed for those uses.

The Zoning Bylaws require uses to meet the Performance Standards; measurements to ensure the use of the land has as minimal a negative impact on adjacent lands and people as possible.

**Village Center Designation** can support the goals of the existing Village Historic District by supporting business development and encouraging those businesses to improve their historic structures. Village Center Designation can also help create a vibrant village center where the community comes together for events, activities, and daily necessities by giving priority consideration to various Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD), VTrans, and Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) grants and incentives including ACCD's Municipal Planning Grants, State Historic Preservation grants, Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) grants, VTrans Bike/Ped and Transportation Alternatives grants, Northern Border Regional Commission Grants, ANR Water and Wastewater subsidies and loans, and various other state grants and resources (Vermont ACCD Village Center Designation benefits). Village Center Designation can also support the development of housing.

## **FOREST BLOCKS and HABITAT CORRIDORS**

Forests provide enormous benefits and a range of critical goods and services: water supply and water quality protection, flood control and protection, clean air, carbon sequestration, outdoor recreation, and scenic beauty. All of these benefits are known as ecosystem services because of the irreplaceable value they provide for humans. Forest blocks and riparian areas also support wildlife habitat and biodiversity through habitat connectivity, allowing species to migrate and maintain genetic variability. All forest blocks larger than 20 acres and connectivity areas are mapped statewide in BioFinder, a database and mapping tool developed by the Agency of Natural Resources and partners to support stewardship and conservation.

When viewing the data, habitat connectors should be considered at two scales: landscape and local. Landscape scale connectivity is important for connecting wildlife populations throughout the region and beyond. The habitat connectors between mountain ranges allow for diverse and abundant wildlife populations that can withstand the effects of disease or other significant impacts. On the landscape scale, there is some overlap between forest blocks and habitat connectors. However, very small forest blocks of minimal habitat or forestry value can actually function as connecting habitat.

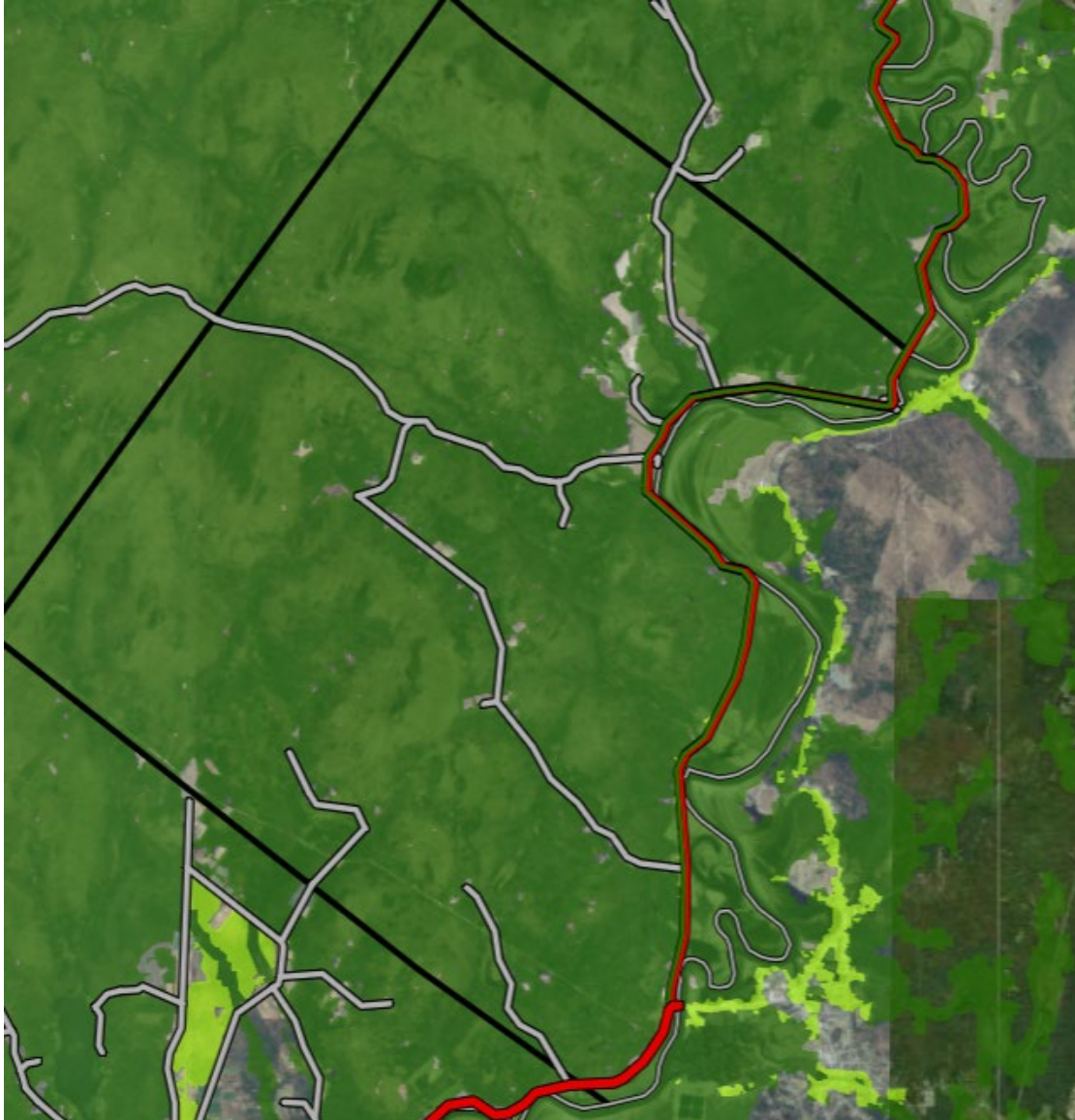
On the local scale, smaller forested blocks support biological diversity and connectivity, even though they may provide less interior forest habitat. Nearly all of Guildhall's forested landscape (81% of all land cover in the municipality) is "highest priority" forest blocks and provide critical connectivity blocks as well as is depicted in the map below by the dark green color that covers nearly the entire Town.

### **Vermont's Conservation Design:**

Vermont Conservation Design is a prioritization tool that identifies the lands and waters most important for maintaining Vermont's ecologically functional landscape; a vision to sustain Vermont's biodiversity. An "ecologically functional landscape" is one that contains the full range of Vermont's native species, habitat types, and natural processes, while also allowing for shifts in their distributions over time in response to environmental change. The landscape must be well-connected at multiple spatial scales to facilitate species movement.

The foundation of the design is a network of **intact and unfragmented** Highest Priority Landscape Blocks, which for Guildhall is its forests, connected with one another by a system of Highest Priority Surface Waters and Riparian Areas (the streams and Connecticut River). With this backbone, there is a nesting of Highest Priority Natural Community and Habitat Features to ensure that smaller scale features and more specialized habitat types, such as wetlands and vernal pools are included in conservation design.

Guildhall has large tracts of intact and unfragmented Highest Priority forest blocks, connected with Highest Priority surface waters such as the Dutton, Washburn, Jones, Emery, Sheridan, Catbow, and Hudson brooks flowing toward the Connecticut River. Interspersed throughout the municipality are woody wetlands and vernal pools. Guildhall has the natural elements present and of high quality to sustain ecological functions. Guildhall wishes to maintain the integrity of its natural landscape.



Highest Priority Interior Forest Blocks Map  
ANR Biofinder

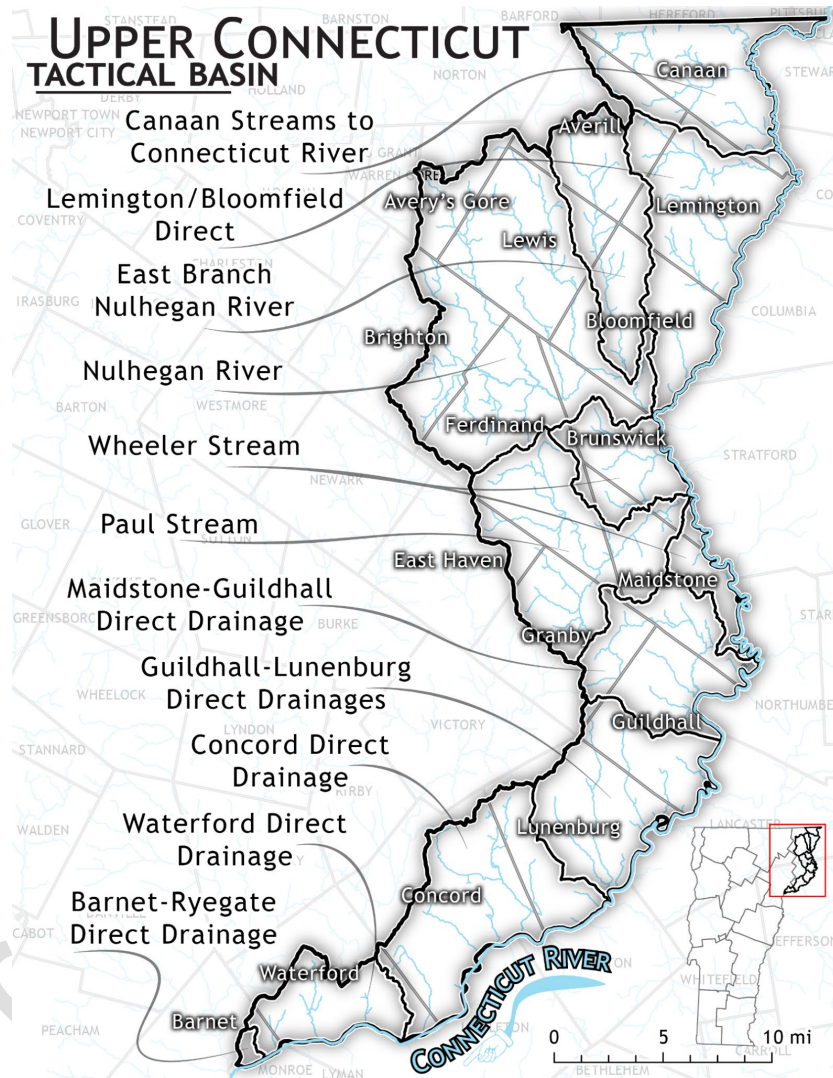
*Nearly all of Guildhall is Highest Priority Interior Forest Blocks, shown in dark green*

### **WATERWAYS and WETLANDS**

Guildhall is part of the Upper Connecticut watershed. Goals for the Upper Connecticut watershed were just updated in 2021 and are summarized in the Basin 16- Tactical Basin Plan. The Basin Plan works to protect, maintain, enhance, and restore the biological, chemical, and physical integrity of Vermont's water resources. Specific goals that pertain to the waterways within Guildhall are outlined in the Tactical Basin Plan ([Basin 16 - Basin Planning for the Upper Connecticut River Direct Drainages | Department of Environmental Conservation \(vermont.gov\)](https://www.vermont.gov/conservation/basin-16)).

Wetlands make up 7.5% of the land cover in Guildhall. Many of the wetlands in Guildhall are wooded wetlands, nestled in among the forested landscape. The wetlands and vernal pools in Guildhall are noted as “highest priority” for conservation in the ANR Biofinder App.

Overall, more than six percent of Basin 16 is wetlands including many wetlands that have the best conditions in the state. Many wetlands along the Connecticut River have been converted to agricultural use and so wetland restoration efforts are a focus for the Connecticut River floodplain.



**Future Land Use Opportunities:**

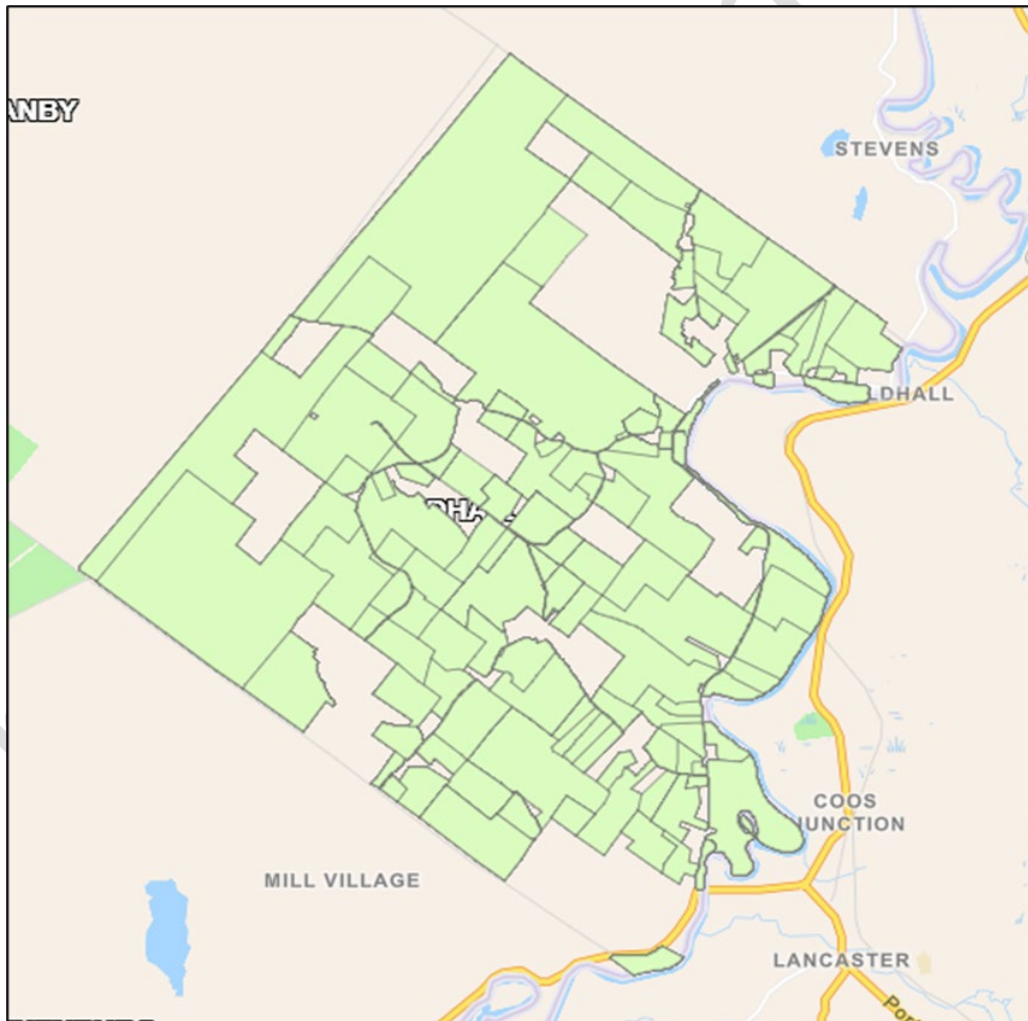
There has been an increase in development activity in Guildhall over the past ten years. New residents are moving to town and building new housing. The Grand List notes twelve new residential housing developments, eight existing housing units seeking permits for expanded living areas, and ten new seasonal camps built since 2013. New residents unfamiliar with Vermont development regulations will need information shared with them

by the municipality about the local zoning bylaws, State required permits, including water and wastewater permits, and natural constraints on development such as prime agricultural lands, wetlands, river and stream corridors, and special flood hazard areas. More information about special flood hazard areas and stream corridors can be found in the next section.

**Continue to promote the Current Use Program and Conservation Easements:**

Current Use Program:

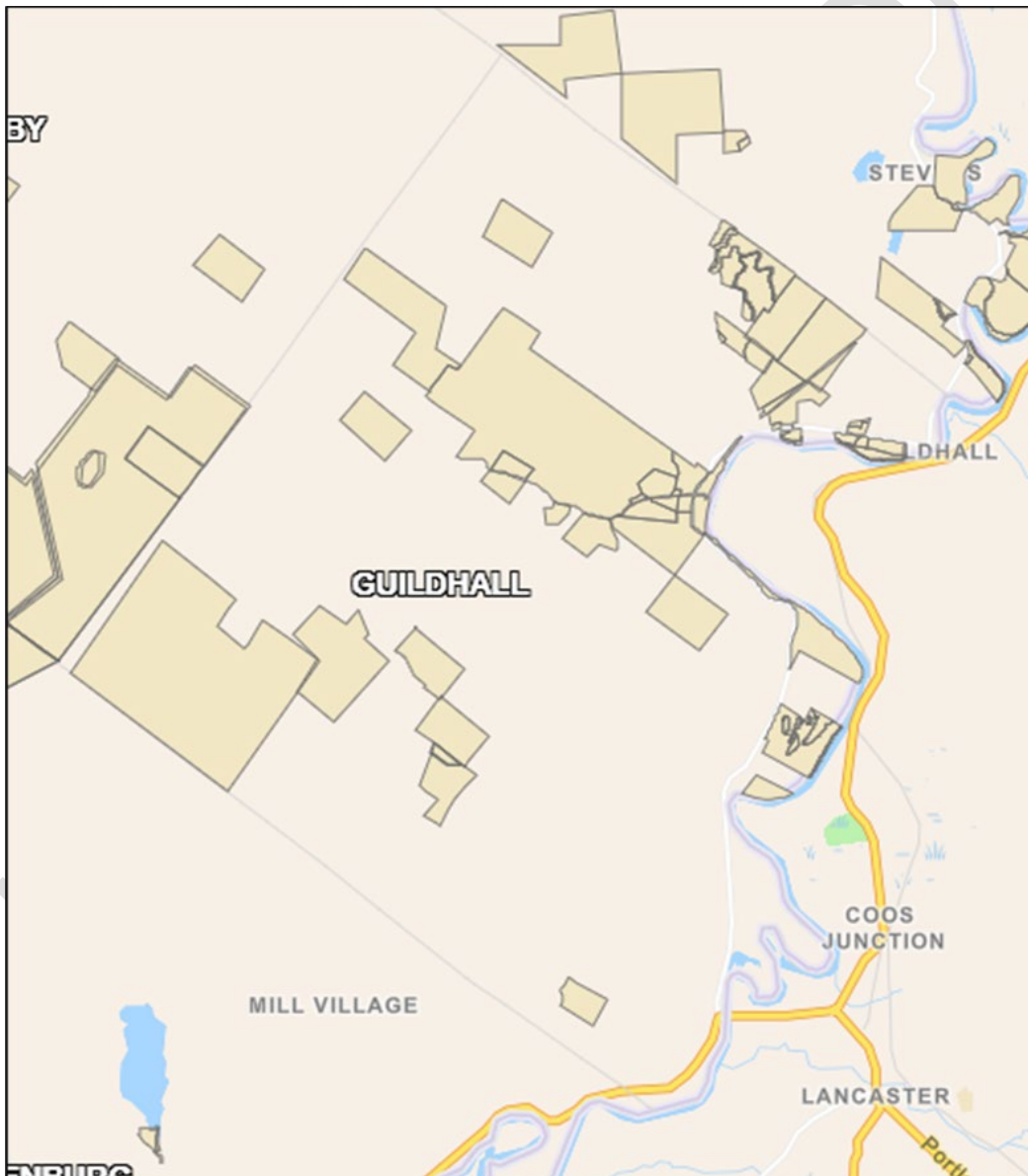
Vermont’s Use Value Appraisal (UVA) Program, commonly known as “Current Use”, enables the valuation and taxation of farm and forest land based on its agricultural or silvicultural value instead of its development value. The primary objectives of the program are to keep Vermont’s agricultural and forest land in production, help slow the development of these lands, and achieve greater equity in property taxation on undeveloped land. If land is removed from the program and is developed, the landowner must pay a land use change tax. As of the writing of this plan, 15,098 acres of 20,857 total acres are in the Current Use program. Since 2013, 432 acres have been added to the total acres enrolled in Current Use. Please see the shaded portions on the map below.



Parcels Enrolled in Current Use

Conservation Easements:

Land Trusts, such as the Vermont Land Trust or The Nature Conservancy, use conservation easements as a way to preserve prime agricultural lands, protect natural areas, and limit the number of subdivisions that can occur on a parcel. Conservation easements may be placed on a property title when the property owner requests to conserve an area or sells the development rights to a land trust. Conservation easements, once executed, are a permanent element within a property's title and are maintained through property transfer. They may only be removed through the permission of the land trust, which usually requires swapping for other land and a detailed case as to why the property now needs to allow development. Property subject to a conservation easement is not removed from the Town's Grand List. Approximately 3,475 acres, 17% of Guildhall land area, have conservation easements. Please see the shaded portions on the map below.



Conserved Land in Guildhall

**Actions:**

- Seek Village Center Designation for the current Village Historic District.
- Encourage the Current Use Program and Conservation Easements as a way to preserve, protect, and maintain the highest priority forest blocks and habitat connections that are present in Guildhall.
- Continue to use Special Flood Hazard Area bylaws to prevent loss and damage to people or property.
- Work collaboratively with other organizations to meet the goals set in the Tactical Basin Plans for Basin 16 (Upper Connecticut) to support high water quality and protection of wetlands and vernal pools.
- Connect all development with local and state regulations to ensure construction and reconstruction meet the standards and protect the natural environment.
- Update Zoning Bylaws to provide siting standards for renewable energy generation infrastructure and identify the areas in town where such infrastructure could be located.
- Eliminate the Alternative Energy District and absorb the district into the Forestry District.

## 2. Flood Resilience and Hazard Mitigation

*GOAL: Protect people and property from flooding and other natural hazards.*

Guildhall has areas along the Connecticut River that are in the Special Flood Hazard Area primarily near the Fellows Farm. See Appendix II for the FEMA maps. These spaces have a 1% chance of flooding each year. The FIRM maps are from 1991 and show the areas in town that are at risk of flooding. Zones marked A or AE are within the 100-year floodplain. Zones marked A with a hatched pattern on top are areas of land that are part of the floodway, meaning they typically are taken over by the river and become part of the river channel when the water levels rise. Guildhall does have zoning regulations for development within the Special Flood Hazard Area.

Guildhall did not experience significant impacts from the Vermont flooding event in July 2023. High waters in the Connecticut River were accommodated by the floodplain.

Areas along rivers and streams are dynamic, shifting and changing over time. Development within 50 feet of a river or stream should be limited. This provides the river or stream space to adjust its meander without potentially damaging property or infrastructure. It is in stream channel changes that Vermont experiences the biggest losses in flooding events. The ground beneath structures falls away as the river changes its meander over the land. Many of the streams in Guildhall are quite small. The Town will promote the use of natural vegetative buffers along streams and hopes that individual property owners will take caution when developing close to streams.

Guildhall could experience other natural hazards including, but not limited to:

- Winter Hazards (Blizzard, Hail, Ice Storm, Nor'easter, Snow events, and Extreme Cold),
- Drought,
- Forest fires,
- Extreme Heat and Heat Wave, and
- Invasive Species and Infectious Disease.

Any of these hazards could have impacts on energy availability, transportation networks, and public health and safety. Efforts to mitigate negative impacts should be taken, both by individuals within the town and by the Town itself.

Actions:

- Maintain, adopt, and update a Local Emergency Management Plan.
- Provide information to landowners on the importance of stream bank protection, erosion and runoff reduction methods, and riparian buffers.

### 3. Recreation

*GOAL: Maintain and enhance outdoor recreational opportunities for Guildhall residents and visitors.*

Most recreation in the Town of Guildhall takes place informally on private lands and on networks expanding beyond the town boundaries.

Hunting, fishing, and trapping have been long standing Vermont recreation traditions. Most hunting, fishing, trapping, and other public recreation is conducted on private land. [Private Land and Public Access | Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department \(vtfishandwildlife.com\)](https://vtfishandwildlife.com). To maintain the benefits of private land for public recreation, the municipality should share messaging from the State and other organizations about respecting the gift of using private lands for public use as well as educate and encourage landowners to follow Vermont's long-standing tradition of open land access.

Monadnock Bull Sable forms a large reserve of land that is protected through the Forest Legacy Program (FLP). The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is a conservation program administered by the U.S. Forest Service in partnership with State agencies, in this case Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation (FPR) to encourage the protection of privately owned forest lands through conservation easements or land purchases. Protection of private forests through FLP maintains a multitude of public benefits including:

- Opportunities to hunt, fish, and camp,
- Clean and abundant drinking water,
- Habitat for fish and wildlife, and
- Timber, fuel wood, and other forest products.

For information about the recreation opportunities at Monadnock Bull Sable, please visit [www.fpr.vermont.gov](http://www.fpr.vermont.gov)

The central green in Guildhall is commonly referred to as the Common and is privately owned by Essex County. Some community recreation and events take place on the green. Those interested in larger organized events and recreation should seek permission from the Essex County Court. For passive recreation activities such as picnicking, walking, and lawn games, the Essex County Court just asks users to leave the village green in better condition that they found it. This ensures that the green continues to be a well maintained and inviting space.

The Connecticut River Paddlers' Trail passes through Guildhall on its 400-mile journey from the river's headwaters to the Long Island Sound. There are a series of primitive campsites along the trail that are open to the public. <https://www.connecticutriverpaddlerstrail.org/crpt7/> Within Guildhall there is a clearly marked and easy to navigate public access point and portage at the Wyoming Dam.

VAST Snowmobiling is a popular winter activity in the highlands of Vermont and New Hampshire. Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) manages the statewide network of trails for snowmobiling. Within Guildhall, the Connecticut Valley Sno-Riders Club helps to groom the trail network in and around Guildhall,

conduct trail maintenance, and coordinate trail access agreements with landowners, and organizes events and rides.



VAST Trail Map (2024)



In community outreach, it was noted that Guildhall has an Amateur Airplane Club that meets to fly model airplanes. The group is called the Guildhall Fun Flyers. Others mentioned the desire to have improved shoulders along Route 102 to make bicycling safer and to expand the sidewalk system in the village.

**Actions:**

- Inform residents and visitors about private land for public recreation and how to respect this gift.
- Participate in meetings concerning VAST to stay abreast of trail developments.
- Advocate to VTrans for “share the road” signs along route 102 to help make the bicycling experience safer for riders.

## 4. Community Facilities and Services

*GOAL: Plan for, finance, and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet current and future community needs.*

### Local Government:

The Town of Guildhall is governed by a system of boards and commissions including a three-member selectboard, the lister board, a Zoning Review Board & Planning Commission, Water Commission, Cemetery Commission, the Tree Warden, and Auditors. The Town Clerk manages elections, keeps the Town's land and vital records, issues dog licenses and performs many other duties. The Town Treasurer manages the Town's finances. The Historic District Commission approves building permits within the historic district, and functions under the Planning and Zoning Review Board. These elected and appointed positions keep the town running smoothly. The Town does have zoning and has a zoning administrator to implement and enforce the zoning regulations.

### Public Buildings:

The municipality has many buildings that are available for public use. Some are owned by the municipality and others are owned by organizations or the county. The Guildhall Elementary School used to be a town owned asset but is now in private ownership and is used as a seasonal residence.

1. The Guild Hall – This building is located on the west side of the village green along Route 102. The main building was built in 1795 making it the oldest building in the Northeast Kingdom. This part of the building serves as the Town Hall and hosts public meetings and gatherings. There is a small stage within the Town Hall, too. The Town Offices are also located in the Guild Hall building.
2. Guildhall Public Library- This building is owned by the library and overseen by the Library Board of Trustees. The building is open seasonally with limited hours. The building is on the National Register of Historic Places.
3. Essex County Meetinghouse- Located in the northwest corner of the village green, this building is owned by the Essex County Court. The Court is seeking to improve the use of this building for public events by installing an ADA compliant bathroom.
1. Essex County Court House- Located on the Northside of the village green, this building serves judicial functions for the entire county of Essex. The Essex County Sheriff's Department is also based out of this building.
2. The Eben Judd Justice Center- Located on the northside of the village green. The building houses the offices for the Essex County sheriff.



Guildhall Library

Public Safety:

Guildhall is a safe place to live. Current police services consist of the Essex County Sheriff's Department and Vermont State Police. For fire protection and ambulance services, Guildhall has a contract with the town of Lancaster, NH. Mutual aid for the areas is available via this contract.

Sewage:

Guildhall does not have a public sewage system. Sewage disposal is accomplished through on-site septic systems with drainage fields including mound and pressure systems. In 2007, the State of Vermont - Agency of Natural Resources assumed the responsibility of permitting and overseeing all septic systems. For updated regulations refer to the current state standards.

Solid Waste Disposal:

Guildhall is a member of the Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District (NEKWMD). Currently, the town's solid waste is hauled by a private contractor to Mt. Carberry Landfill in Berlin, NH. Since the situation with solid

waste in Vermont is very dynamic and the Selectmen should continue to stay informed and involved with this issue. The community hosts an annual Bulky Day in collaboration with NEKWMD. Periodically Bulky Day includes hazardous waste collection, too.

Water System: There are 11 fire hydrants on the town water system, plus two dry hydrants (North Road and Grandy Road) both pulling from natural water sources.

The Guildhall Water User line extends approximately 2 miles from the Hawkins residence just north of the common and to the Dupuis residence just south of the "North Cemetery". Water comes from Groveton, NH with about 54 properties in the system. There are fire hydrants evenly spaced throughout the line. The municipality collects payment from users of the system to pay for maintenance, pay rent to the Town of Groveton, and pay for repairs. The Town currently has a loan with USDA from the last water line upgrade/project in 2006 with 12 years remaining (2036).

Health Services:

The closest health care facilities are the Weeks Medical Center located in Lancaster, NH and Groveton, NH. The Caledonia Home Health Care Agency is the home care provider for Guildhall residents.

Public Electric Utilities:

The town is served by two public electric utilities (Vermont Electric Cooperative and Green Mountain Power).

Telecommunications:

Towers and related infrastructure require careful consideration in Guildhall. These structures could be placed in highly visible locations such as mountaintops, ridgelines and in residential areas. As new telecommunications infrastructure develops in the Town, the Town should ensure that the municipal Zoning Bylaws provide guidelines for limiting imposition on the historic and scenic character of the community.

Internet & Broadband:

Connecting to the internet is becoming more of a necessity and less of a luxury. Having reliable and affordable high-speed internet access is a must for small, rural communities. Education, health care, social services, and employment are available through the internet. These are services and opportunities that are not often available within the community or region.

Many residents report using Star-Link for internet service which provides up to 300 mbps. NEK Broadband is a municipal non-profit organization serving the entire Northeast Kingdom. Their mission is to provide high quality, affordable and reliable broadband internet service to all residences currently connected to the electrical grid. While Guildhall citizens wait for NEK Broadband to reach their homes, other internet providers are providing some internet service, often with lower connection speeds.

Education:

Guildhall Elementary School closed in 2016 due to low enrollment. At that time there were 20 students in grades K-6 from Guildhall and surrounding communities. The Town now provides school choice and students are tuitioned to other schools for all educational services grades K-12. Guildhall joined nine other towns to create

the NEK Choice School District. Guildhall has one board representative on the eleven-member board. NEK Choice SD also shares Essex North Supervisory Union (ENSU Business Office) in Canaan, VT with the Canaan School District. The board oversees numerous school options, both public and independent, that provide a wide variety of opportunities and experiences (30+ School Choices).

All area high schools provide a variety of continuing education courses for adults. Vermont State University at Lyndon, White Mountain Community College in Berlin and Littleton, NH and Granite State College in Littleton, NH provide education opportunities at the collegiate level.

Actions:

- Continue to contract for public safety services, including fire protection and ambulance services.
- Continue to advocate for the expansion of high speed, affordable and reliable internet access to all E911 addresses in the municipality.
- Continue to maintain the water system within Guildhall village.
- Provide information to year-round and seasonal residents about the water and wastewater requirements that the State of Vermont requires by referring them to ANR.
- Continue to promote the use of The Guild Hall for community events.

## 5. Transportation

*GOAL: Provide a safe, well maintained, and passable road system for Guildhall residents and visitors.*

The primary mode of transportation for Guildhall residents is private vehicles with nearly all travel conducted in private cars, trucks, and SUVs. Guildhall residents travel, on average, over 14,000 vehicle miles each year. This is higher than urban or suburban dwellers, mostly due to the nature of the rural landscape that requires driving to get to essential goods and services. Many rural landscapes rely on well-maintained roadways to get people to the places they need to go.

Because driving is a required part of daily life for nearly all residents of Guildhall, it is important for the municipality to continually maintain and update the roads to meet current standards (for public safety and for environmental impact.)

### Roads & Highways:

There is a total of 24.5 miles of highway (excluding Class 4 and Legal Trails) in Guildhall. The breakdown by highway class is below:

US Highway 2	1.1 miles
State Highway 102	7.8 miles
Class 2 (Town)	4.0 miles
Class 3 (Town)	11.7 miles
Class 4 and Legal Trails	5.4 miles.

The Town maintains all Class 2 and Class 3 Town Highways with an independent contracted road crew. The crew plows, repairs, and grades the roads. The Guildhall Road Commissioner oversees all town class roadways and removes trees as needed. The State of Vermont maintains US Highway 2 and State Highway 102. All Town highways have a speed limit of 35 miles per hour. Within Guildhall Village, the speed limit is 30 miles per hour.

The town complies with the Vermont state highway standards. A copy of the standards is available in the town office. The Town also requires truck weight permits on town roads, and driveway permits. Permits for town road access should request a permit from the selectboard. Driveway permits along State roads are acquired from the District Office of Transportation in St. Johnsbury, VT.

The Municipal General Roads Permit, Act 64, requires municipalities to develop and implement a customized, multi-year plan to stabilize their road drainage system, bring road drainage systems up to basic maintenance standards, and implement additional corrective measures to reduce erosion. Towns can apply for funding through the Better Back Roads Program. Technical assistance is available through the County Conservation District, VTrans Maintenance District, Vermont Local Roads, and NVDA.

ATVs are not allowed to ride on the road network in Guildhall with the exception of travel from Point A to Point B (Town Ordinances 2022). ATV users should utilize authorized trail networks or private land with permission for recreational riding.

Connecticut River Scenic Byway:

The Connecticut River Byway is a two-state, 500-mile byway, spanning the west and east shores of the Connecticut River. It is the only designated National Byway in Vermont, traveling down Route 2 from Canaan, through Guildhall, and southward all the way to the Massachusetts border. Beautiful scenery along the byway includes charming historic villages and landscape of riverside farmlands. Vermont Vacation says the following about the Connecticut River Scenic Byway:

*“Because rivers were once the predominant corridors of settlement, industry and commerce, it’s no wonder that the [Connecticut River] byway includes museums, historic sites and architecture. River towns are still vital centers today, and offer unique dining and shopping in renovated historic buildings. There are also crafts and antique shops, galleries, theater and a wide range of festivals”*  
(Vermontvacation.com).

The Town wishes to continue to promote the Scenic Byway as a part of the overall scenic quality of the town.

Bridges & Culverts:

There are three bridges in Guildhall. The first is a small bridge crossing Cutler Mill Brook. The second is a large bridge crossing the Connecticut River in the north end of town and connecting Guildhall to Northumberland in NH. The third is a newly reconstructed bridge crossing the Connecticut River in the south end of town and connecting Guildhall to Lancaster, NH. The two bridges connecting Guildhall to New Hampshire are owned and maintained by New Hampshire. There are three culverts noted on the Vermont General Highway Map (2023). Approximately every three years, NVDA provides local bridge and culvert data to the Town.

Public transportation:

Public transportation in the Northeast Kingdom region is supported primarily by Rural Community Transportation (RCT). There are currently no routes connecting with Guildhall, but rides are available through RCT’s on-demand program. RCT partners with Medicaid and other funding sources to provide on-demand, individual rides to and from school, health care appointments, jobs and more.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure:

Accommodation for pedestrians is limited in Guildhall. There are a few sections around the Common that have sidewalks. There is a short stretch of sidewalk from the library traveling north on Route 102. The shoulder on Route 102 is wide enough to accommodate bicycle travel.

Regional Transportation:

Given the rural nature of Guildhall and surrounding towns, there are limited rail, air, and public transportation options available. The closest rail line for freight is the New Hampshire Central Railroad, which passes through Northumberland, NH right across the Connecticut River. <https://newhampshirecentralrailroad.com/>

The closest airport is Mount Washington Regional Airport located outside of Whitefield, NH. For passenger air service, the closest airports are Burlington International Airport, Boston-Logan Airport, and the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport. There is also Jetport out of Portland, Maine. Some residents opt to fly out of Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Electric Vehicles and Electric Vehicle Charging:

Vermont Energy Dashboard reports that there are two (2) all-electric vehicles registered in the Town of Guildhall as of 2021. There is no public EV charging in Guildhall. The closest public EV charging stations are located in NH; there is a free level 2 charger at Garland Mill in Lancaster, NH. Most owners of electric vehicles do their charging at home and work. For the part of Guildhall serviced by Green Mountain Power, GMP provides a rebate to EV owners and a free home electric vehicle charging system to new electric vehicle owners. For those addresses served by Vermont Electric Co-op offers rebates for utility account holders that purchase an electric vehicle and offers those account holders level 2 electric vehicle chargers at no cost.

There is currently no public EV charging available in Guildhall. Given the county seat and the presence of the County Courthouse, public EV charging could benefit people traveling into Guildhall for court functions.

**Actions:**

- Maintain bridges and culverts ensuring they remain in good condition and are appropriately sized.
- Participate in Connecticut River Scenic Byway management plan updates.
- Advocate with VTrans for “Share the Road” signs to be posted along Route 102, for at least one mile west of the village, to signal to vehicles that bicycle and pedestrian transportation coexists on the roadway.

## 6. Energy

*GOAL: Improve energy efficiency, promote energy conservation, and pursue renewable energy sources for transportation, thermal and electrical energies.*

Energy is a critical element in any community. It powers our lights, keeps our homes warm and cool, and helps us get to places for goods and services. As the dynamics of energy and energy prices continue to shift and change, it will become even more important for small towns such as Guildhall to know the amount of energy consumed and work toward improving energy conservation and efficiency.

### Energy Generation

The Town is served by two electric utility providers: Green Mountain Power in the south and west portions of town and Vermont Electric Coop to the North and East. There are six sites in Guildhall that produce solar electricity with a total electrical capacity of just under 53 Kilowatt Hours (Vermont Energy Dashboard, 2021). Three heat pump units, approved by Efficiency Vermont, have been installed in Guildhall. There is no wind or hydro power generation in the municipality.

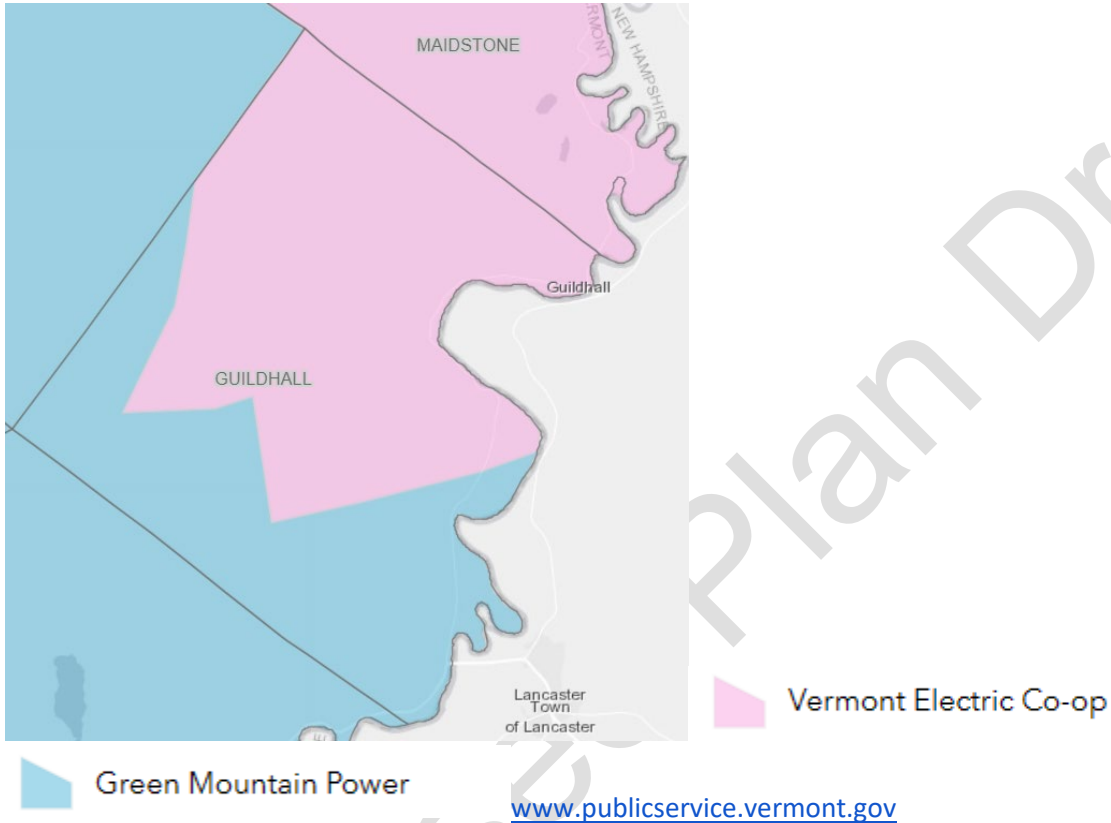
The municipality supports small-scale residential renewable energy generation. For renewable energy generation at a larger scale, the municipality does not want such infrastructure to interfere with prime agricultural lands, forest and habitat blocks or other sensitive natural areas, or negatively impact scenic, historic, or cultural resources. The municipality recognizes the need to update their zoning bylaws to clearly identify the areas in the municipality that may be potential sites for renewable energy generation at the larger scale. For small scale, residential freestanding renewable energy generation infrastructure a permit may be needed.

### Energy Consumption

Thermal: Our homes require heating to be livable in the winter months. And, with ever increasingly warm summers in Vermont, cooling is becoming less of a luxury and more of a necessity. The amount of energy to heat and cool our homes is considered thermal energy. Many factors influence the amount of thermal energy needed. The age of a home, the size of a home, the quality of insulation and weatherization, and the efficiency of the heating and cooling systems will contribute to thermal energy load.

Electrical: Electricity is supplied by either Green Mountain Power in the southern third of the municipality or by Vermont Electric Cooperative, in the northern two-thirds of the municipality. Green Mountain Power (GMP) is the largest power utility in the state of Vermont. The GMP website shares that its energy portfolio is 100% carbon neutral and over 75% renewable. These numbers do take into account purchased “renewable energy credits” called RECs. This means that GMP may be producing or buying energy via a fossil fuel source, but they are able to offset that production by selling other renewable energy credits or purchasing credits to cover the non-renewable energy.

Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC) is a “member owned electric distribution utility that provides safe, affordable, and reliable energy services to over 33,000 members in 75 communities.” (<https://vermontelectric.coop/>). VEC’s current power supply portfolio includes hydro (64%), wind (10%), solar and other renewable energy sources (8%), farm methane, wood (3%), nuclear (15%), and natural gas/oil sources. The VEC Board has committed to procuring a zero-carbon-emission power supply by 2023 and 100 percent renewable by 2030.



**Transportation:** Given the rural nature of Guildhall, with the need to use outside resources for groceries, healthcare, and much of the employment, transportation is a large component of overall energy use. It is estimated that the number of vehicle miles traveled annually is around 14,000. Using calculations from 2017 ([www.nvda.net](http://www.nvda.net)), there were 195 registered vehicles in the municipality. Overall, this accounts for 2,730,000 vehicle miles traveled and 14,639 MMBTUs (the measurement unit for the amount of energy used by those vehicles).

Seventy-nine percent of Guildhall’s workforce travels outside of the municipality for work ([www.housingdata.org](http://www.housingdata.org)). The average commute time is 27 minutes, consistent with the county average.

### Energy Conservation and Efficiency

Efficiency Vermont calculated the energy burden for each town in their 2019 report. Energy Burden is the dollar amount that a household spends on energy (thermal, transportation and electrical) compared to the household income. From the data, Guildhall ranks quite high in energy burden with most households spending

over 12.9% of their income on energy. “Transportation costs, for which there are few assistance programs, constituted the largest portion of energy spending, especially in rural areas. Because transportation efficiency measures are not covered in the state’s energy efficiency programs, Vermonters have little assistance in reducing their transportation energy costs” (Efficiency Vermont, 2019). Despite the costs associated with transportation in a very rural part of the state, the biggest influence on energy burden is not the amount of energy consumed, but income levels that remain low which requires a higher percentage of income to cover basic energy expenses. It is very hard to increase wages but there are several easy things that households and the municipality can do to reduce energy use, which in turn reduces the expense for energy.

#### Transportation

- Encourage upgrades to fuel efficient vehicles and fuel switching. Two programs that can support purchases in more fuel efficient or electric vehicles are Mileage Smart and Drive Electric VT. Both resources provide quality information about efficient car choices.
- Carpooling, trip chaining, and active transportation (walking and bicycling) can help reduce vehicle miles traveled, saving energy and money.
- Continue to improve Broadband connectivity to promote remote working. If there is access to high-quality, reliable, and affordable broadband, some industries may be able to accommodate remote working. With fewer vehicle miles traveled, this can have significant impacts on a household's transportation energy expenditure.
- Support compact development in existing village clusters to maintain the traditional land use pattern that residents and visitors associate with the history and character of the region and help reduce the amount of travel time and travel miles.

#### Thermal

- Weatherization is the number one way to reduce thermal energy load. There are many incentives through Efficiency Vermont that can support the weatherization of houses, including older homes that tend to be drafty, leaky and poorly insulated. Updating the heating and cooling systems to energy efficient models and renewable energy sources, in a well weatherized home, can also help to cut thermal energy load.

#### Electrical

- Use less energy. This includes air drying clothing, switching out incandescent light bulbs for LED light bulbs, improving air sealing and insulation and selecting energy efficient heating and cooling systems, and upgrading to energy efficient models for appliances. There are many rebates available at [www.encyvermont.com](http://www.encyvermont.com) that can help make those electric efficiency improvements more economical.

#### Actions:

- Encourage residents to explore renewable energy sources for transportation, electrical, and thermal energy.
- Provide information to residents about opportunities to reduce thermal, transportation, and electrical energy uses by sharing information about rebates and incentives provided by state partners.

- Support the expansion of high-speed broadband internet that can support residents employed in hybrid and remote work opportunities, which can also reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled for some residents.
- Continue the Town's work with the Municipal Energy Resilience Program and seek funding sources to make the suggested energy efficiency improvements in Municipally owned buildings.
- Update Zoning Bylaws to provide siting standards for renewable energy generation infrastructure and identify the areas in town where such infrastructure could be located.

Proposed Plan Draft

## 7. Housing

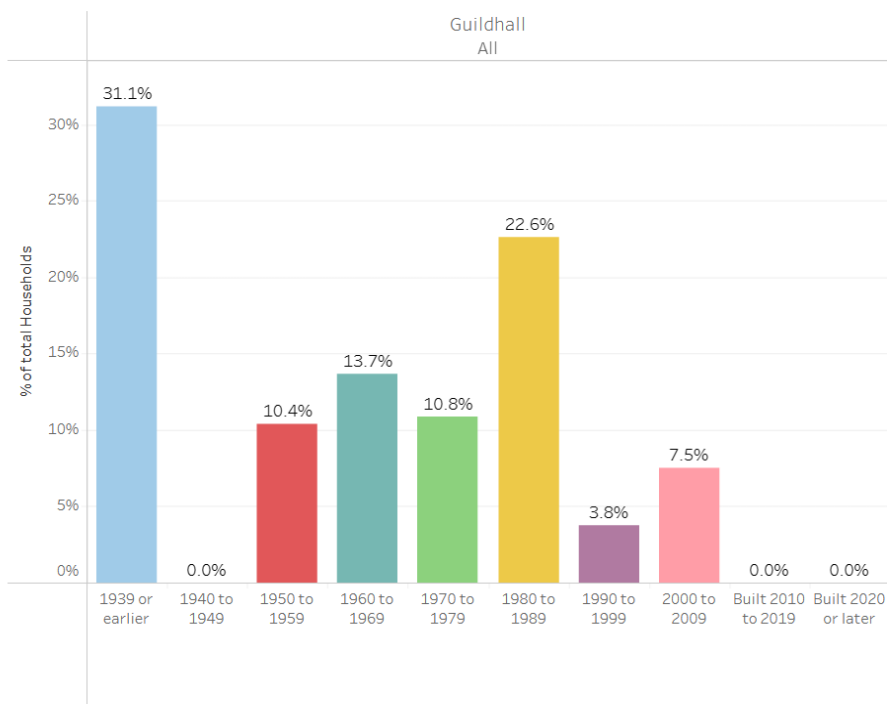
*Goal: Strengthen the quality, availability, efficiency, and affordability of local housing working to ensure the housing needs of low- and moderate-income households are met by public and private actions.*

### Existing Conditions:

- There are 161 housing units in Guildhall. 114 are occupied and 47 are vacant (2020 Decennial Census). Vacant includes housing units that are seasonal, recreational, or occasional use structures.
- 31% of homes in Guildhall were built pre-1939. Guildhall saw another increase in home starts between 1980-1990 with 23% of the housing stock constructed in this decade. Estimates indicate few home starts since 2009 ([www.housingdata.org](http://www.housingdata.org))

### Year structure built

Estimated housing units by year structure built



Source:  
U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (Table B25034, B25036), 2018-2022

- Homeownership dominates the housing market in Guildhall with over 98% of housing units being owned (2022 ACS Estimates).
- 57% of homes are 2–3-bedroom units and 34% are even larger at 4+ bedrooms (2022 ACS Estimates).
- The average household size is 2.5 persons, lower than the county average household size of 2.7 (2022 ACS Estimates).
- Primary home sales in Guildhall are keeping pace with the state median price of \$325,000. In 2022, median home sales price of \$375,000 exceeded that of the state. The chart below shows the variability in median home sale price, most likely due to the smaller housing stock in Guildhall ([www.housingdata.org](http://www.housingdata.org)).

## Primary home sales

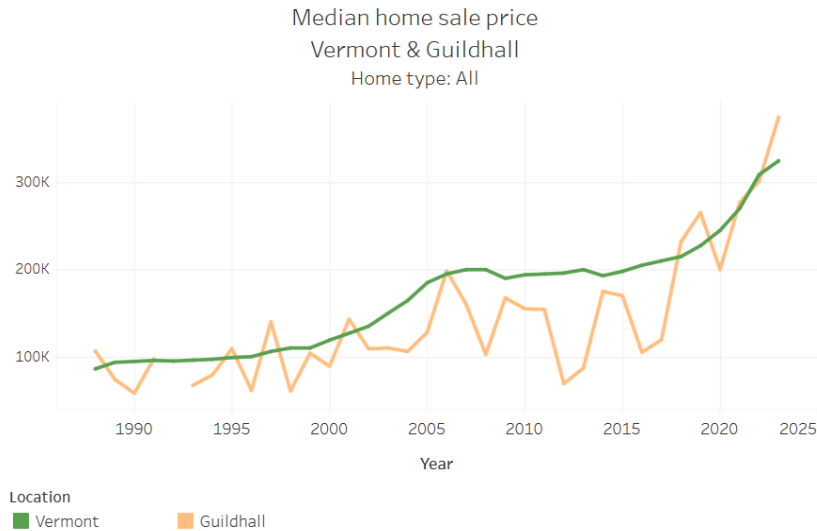


View home sales by:

- Median home sale price  
 Number of home sales

Home type

All



### Housing Opportunities:

There are several housing opportunities for the Town of Guildhall.

- Approximately 40% of households in Guildhall heat with wood (2022 ACS Estimates) and 53% heat with fuel oil or kerosene. The remaining households use a mix of propane or other heating sources. These estimates indicate an opportunity for Guildhall to encourage households heating with non-renewable fuels to switch to more renewable energy sources for heating. There is an additional opportunity to encourage other energy efficiency and weatherization improvements to the existing housing stock.
- In July 2023, the State of Vermont passed the Vermont HOME Act, often referred to as S. 100. In the bill the State made universal amendments to zoning in an effort to increase the number of housing units throughout the state. S.100 now allows any homeowner to modify an existing single-household dwelling into a two-household dwelling as a permitted use anywhere that a municipality permits a single-household dwelling. Additionally, any owner-occupied single-household dwelling is permitted to create an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) on the parcel with fewer restrictions related to size. The Planning Commission should include S.100 bill language in the Town zoning bylaws.
- The Guildhall Zoning Administrator has noticed that some new residents are not aware of the required state permits associated with new construction or major renovations. These include water and wastewater supply permits and wetland permits. The Town can support new residents in navigating the state permits required by referencing them to Vermont Permit Navigator found here: [Permit Navigator \(vermont.gov\)](https://www.vermont.gov/permit-navigator).

### Housing Needs:

While the total population of Guildhall has remained relatively stable over the past seventy years, within the range of 169-270 (Decennial Censuses), the size of households is shifting, the overall population is aging, and new residents are moving into the Town. As household size continues to decrease and the population continues to age, housing that can accommodate mobility modifications for aging adults may become more important in Guildhall's future. As new residents move to town, the municipality may need to share information about zoning regulations, requirements for state permitting, and share resources applicable to housing such as energy efficiency opportunities.

### ACTIONS:

- Encourage housing (re)development across a broad spectrum of types and sizes, including but not limited to accessory dwelling units, two- and three-unit buildings, smaller sized units for smaller sized households, and clustered housing units (cottage communities) that can support all income levels, including individuals of low- and moderate incomes, and the aging population.
- Continually update Guildhall Zoning Bylaws to match state legislation, including the HOME bill, S. 100.
- Provide information resources for homeowners, building owners, and mobile homeowners about funding opportunities that improve energy efficiency in homes (Efficiency Vermont, Heat Squad, NETO), update and bring rental units back on the market (Vermont Housing Improvement Program), support the replacement of poor-quality mobile homes with high quality modular homes (Efficiency Vermont-Mobile Home Replacement Program).

## 8. Local Economy

*GOAL: Maintain the working landscape and provide the labor force with new economic opportunities.*

### Existing Conditions:

Utilizing *On The Map* database by the US Census Bureau, there are 89 people living in Guildhall that are part of the workforce. For those 89 individuals, the top industries in which they are employed are:

- 15% Retail Trade
- 16% Health Care and Social Assistance
- 11% Manufacturing
- 14% Construction
- 10% Educational Services

Within Guildhall there are 31 jobs offered, most occupied by individuals coming from outside of the Town to work here, primarily from the St. Johnsbury region. Thirteen of the 31 jobs are in manufacturing (42%) and 18 of the jobs are in Public Administration (58%).

Carroll Concrete is the leading manufacturing business in town. Carroll concrete has a crushing plant and provides a wide array of sand and gravel products.



Guildhall is the County Seat for Essex County hosting the Essex Civil, Criminal, Family or Probate court. The Court is open Monday through Friday. Guildhall is also the location of the Essex County Sheriff's Office.

For Guildhall residents that work outside of the municipality, 15.3% of workers travel to St. Johnsbury for employment, 5% go to Littleton and 4% to Lancaster, NH. Many people in the workforce are traveling to other locations to get to their jobs (59%). The average commute time is 23 minutes (2022 ACS Estimates).

There is a small assortment of local businesses within Town. They include a licensed home childcare provider, pet groomer, small engine repair, two air-bnb rentals, Beatie Enterprise-gravel pit, and Stable Connections-a horse therapy business.

The landscape continues to be part of Guildhall's economy. Logging for timber is prevalent and primarily done by individuals living outside of town. Agricultural lands that lie near the Connecticut River are leased to small businesses for farming. Lenahan's Potato Farm at Sparrow Arc Farm recently purchased the Peaslee Farm and continues to harvest potatoes on a much larger scale. Sparrow Arc Farm is in partnership with *Just Cut* at The Center for an Agricultural Economy.

Economic Opportunities:

The old Guildhall Country Village Store has new energy behind it with two locals exploring how to create a small cafe and general store in the ground floor space. With the closest grocery stores being in Northumberland and Lancaster, NH, the reinvention of the Guildhall Country Village Store could be a great way to improve proximity to basic food amenities. Having a space where the community can gather, shop, and support a local entrepreneur would provide economic, social, and historic preservation benefits. Since COVID-19, some employment sectors have been able to shift to an all remote or hybrid format. This shift has decoupled employment with a fixed location. As remote and hybrid workers continue to work from their homes rather than offices, the municipality should support the expansion of high speed, affordable and reliable internet connection for all e911 addresses in the Town. This not only supports the workforce, but it can also support other aspects of people's lives like educational and healthcare services.

**Actions:**

- Promote community support of local businesses.
- Support the expansion of high speed, affordable, and reliable broadband internet access to all households in the community.

## 9. Historic, Cultural, and Scenic Resources

GOAL: Maintain and improve the Town’s historic, cultural, and scenic resources in ways that can maintain our Town’s identity and heritage, support social interaction and connection, and be drivers of the local economy.

### Historic Resources:

The central area of the village surrounding the Common, originally named Guildhall Falls, is the oldest community in Northeastern Vermont. It is historically significant as an early commercial and industrial center and as the county seat for Essex County. This village has been included in the National Register of Historic Places. The village contains a collection of noteworthy Greek Revival buildings with exceptional architectural quality that documents the rural prosperity that existed here in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

In addition to the historical significance of the Village Area, the scenic qualities of the Guildhall Village area should be preserved through historic district regulations. The Town’s Bylaws designate this part of town as the “Historic District”. The bylaws should continue to allow the use of buildings to evolve with the times but preserve the outward appearance and historical integrity of the buildings and built form or “fabric” of the village.

Other historically significant sites in Guildhall include the Old Home Crawford Historic District and the Charles E. Benton Homesteads. Both are identified as local historic sites. The original school districts throughout Guildhall are marked with interpretive plaques. The Old Guildhall Grist Mill is another historic landmark in the Town.

### Cultural Resources:

There are several cultural events and resources in Guildhall. The public library is open six months of the year, from mid-May to mid-October. The library is staffed by paid employees and is open a few hours each week. The Masons utilize the second floor of the library as their home base. The Masons host two very successful events every year including the Lobster and Steak Feed which is held on the Common and Mother’s Day Breakfast at the Guild Hall.

The Groveton, NH high school alumni association has historically hosted the high school reunion each year in late June or early July on the village green, which is owned by the Essex County Court. The event was well attended and provided a very festive atmosphere. The alumni association has decided to move the reunion to the high school in Groveton.

The Town Hall, the Guild Hall, offers a Cabin-Fever free concert and music series on the second Saturday of the month from October to March. This is greatly appreciated by the community as a way to get out and see neighbors and friends while enjoying good local music and entertainment.

The Essex County Meetinghouse, owned by the Essex County court, has been the site of a well received art show in 2023. The Essex County Court is working to improve usability of the space by installing ADA compliant restrooms so that more events can take place in the building.

Scenic Resources:

Guildhall has a portion of the only designated National Scenic Byway in Vermont, the Connecticut River Byway, that travels down Route 2. Along the route there are plentiful scenic, historic, and recreational opportunities.

The scenic resources of the Guildhall Historic District cannot be understated. The Historic Resource Survey conducted in 1979 says that the Guildhall Historic District is an *“outstanding collection of primarily early to mid-19th century public and residential buildings remaining in the area around the Guildhall common. Ranging in style from Federal to Colonial Revival, the structures are in a good state of preservation. The Guildhall Common Historic District affords a glimpse of former rural prosperity in the Northeast Kingdom, as evidenced by the District’s uncommon architectural quality”*. (Allen Hodgdon, 1979).

Zoning has played a part in keeping the Historic District’s character intact. As new development is proposed in the District, the municipality should ensure that the development maintains the aesthetic of the District and provides for the community as well as visitors. Development could include unique dining and shopping in renovated historic buildings as well as craft and antique shops, galleries, and other cultural offerings.

Actions:

- Support the establishment of an Event Committee to support existing events as well as promote new events for the community.
- Encourage the adaptive reuse of historic resources that provide for the community as well as visitors.
- Update the Historical Design Review guidelines in the Guildhall Bylaws to maintain the uniformity of the village to preserve the collective and relational appearance of all the buildings in the Village. Any new development or redevelopment within the Village Historic District should be allowed to work within existing nonconformities of the building and lot.



Guildhall Gristmill

## **10. Adjacent Towns and Regional Plan**

This plan recognizes that Guildhall does not exist in isolation from the region and will be affected by what happens in the surrounding municipalities, both in Vermont and New Hampshire. The relationship between this plan and the development trends and plans for the surrounding area and the Northeast Kingdom Regional Plan has been considered. For purposes of this Plan, the surrounding area includes the Towns of Maidstone, Granby, and Lunenburg in Vermont and the Towns of Northumberland and Lancaster in New Hampshire.

Review of the land use plans of surrounding communities suggests that the future land use pattern promoted by the Plan is generally compatible with our neighbors. Surrounding communities promote low-density land development and continuation of resource-based uses (such as agriculture) in outlying areas and higher density and commercial uses in existing built-up areas. Sensitive areas (such as flood plains) are also identified and targeted for conservation as they are in Guildhall.

Proposed Plan Draft

## Implementation Plan

Throughout this plan there are policies and actions to guide the future development of Guildhall. Over the course of the next eight years, the Town has prioritized the following three goals to make progress:

<p><b>Goal #1: Update the Guildhall Municipal Bylaws</b> to meet new requirements and shifting development patterns, which include the siting of renewable energy generation infrastructure, the HOME bill (S.100) updates, and Village Historic District review guidelines.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Eliminate the Alternative Energy District and absorb the district into the Forestry District.</li> <li>● Update Zoning Bylaws to provide siting standards for renewable energy generation infrastructure and identify the areas in town where such infrastructure could be located.</li> <li>● Update the Guildhall Zoning Bylaws to match state legislation, including the HOME bill, S. 100.</li> <li>● Update the Historical Design Review guidelines in the Guildhall Bylaws to maintain the uniformity of the village to preserve the collective and relational appearance of all the buildings in the Village. Any new development or redevelopment within the Village Historic District should be allowed to work within existing nonconformities of the building and lot.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Responsibility:</b> Guildhall Planning Commission</p>	<p><b>Timeline:</b> Year 1 and ongoing</p>	<p><b>Resources:</b> Volunteer time, NVDA, Municipal Planning Grant</p>

<p><b>Goal #2: Encourage community events</b> that utilize and enhance the historic structures in town and build a sense of community.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seek Village Center Designation for the current Village Historic District.</li> <li>● Continue to promote the use of The Guild Hall for community events.</li> <li>● Support the establishment of an Event Committee to support existing events as well as promote new events for the community.</li> <li>● Encourage the adaptive reuse of historic resources that provide for the community as well as visitors.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Responsibility:</b> Guildhall Planning Commission, Guildhall Library, Guildhall Masons, Guildhall Event Committee</p>	<p><b>Timeline:</b> Year 1 and ongoing</p>	<p><b>Resources:</b> Volunteer time, Better Places grant, Vermont Community Foundation SPARK grant or NEK Fund, Tillotson Foundation</p>

**Goal #3: Protect natural resources and ensure development meets zoning and permit requirements.**

- Encourage the Current Use Program and Conservation Easements to preserve, protect, and maintain the highest priority forest blocks and habitat connections that are present in Guildhall.
- Continue to use Special Flood Hazard Area bylaws to prevent loss and damage to people or property.
- Work collaboratively with other organizations to meet the goals set in the Tactical Basin Plans for Basin 16 (Upper Connecticut) to support high water quality and protection of wetlands and vernal pools.
- Connect all development with local and state regulations to ensure construction and reconstruction meet the standards and protect the natural environment.
- Provide information to landowners on the importance of stream bank protection, erosion and runoff reduction methods, and riparian buffers.
- Provide information to year-round and seasonal residents about the water and wastewater requirements that the State of Vermont requires by referring them to ANR.

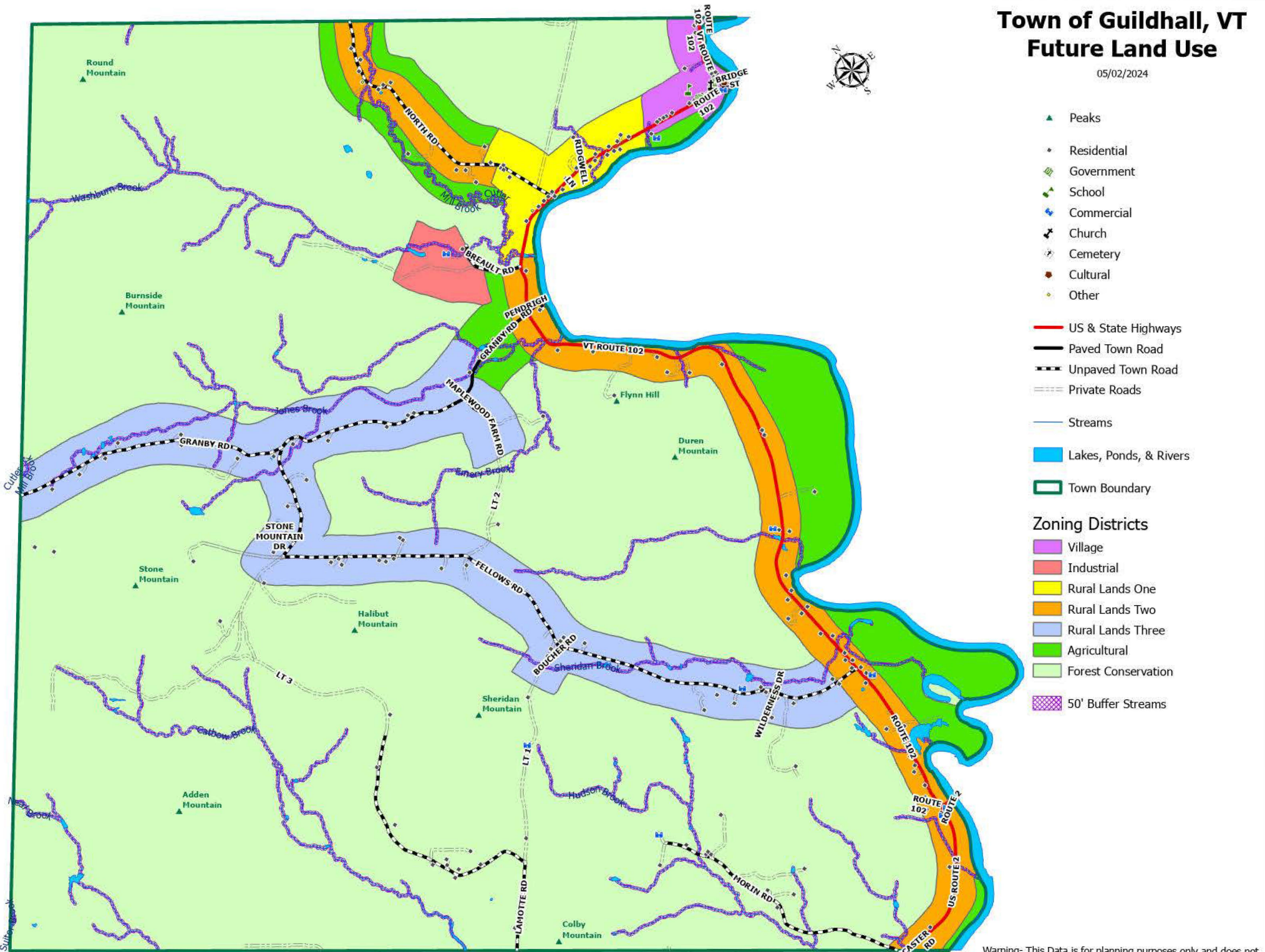
**Responsibility:** Guildhall Planning Commission, Guildhall Zoning Administrator

**Timeline:** Year 1 and ongoing

**Resources:** Volunteer time, ANR Permit Navigator, Tactical Basin Plan partners, Act 250 District Coordinator

# Town of Guildhall, VT Future Land Use

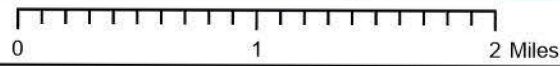
05/02/2024



- ▲ Peaks
- ◆ Residential
- ◆ Government
- ◆ School
- ◆ Commercial
- ◆ Church
- ◆ Cemetery
- ◆ Cultural
- ◆ Other

- US & State Highways
- Paved Town Road
- - - Unpaved Town Road
- - - Private Roads
- Streams
- Lakes, Ponds, & Rivers
- Town Boundary

- ### Zoning Districts
- Village
  - Industrial
  - Rural Lands One
  - Rural Lands Two
  - Rural Lands Three
  - Agricultural
  - Forest Conservation
  - 50' Buffer Streams



Warning- This Data is for planning purposes only and does not replace a survey and/or engineering study. Because this map is developed from various scale sources, there may be some discrepancies between data layers.

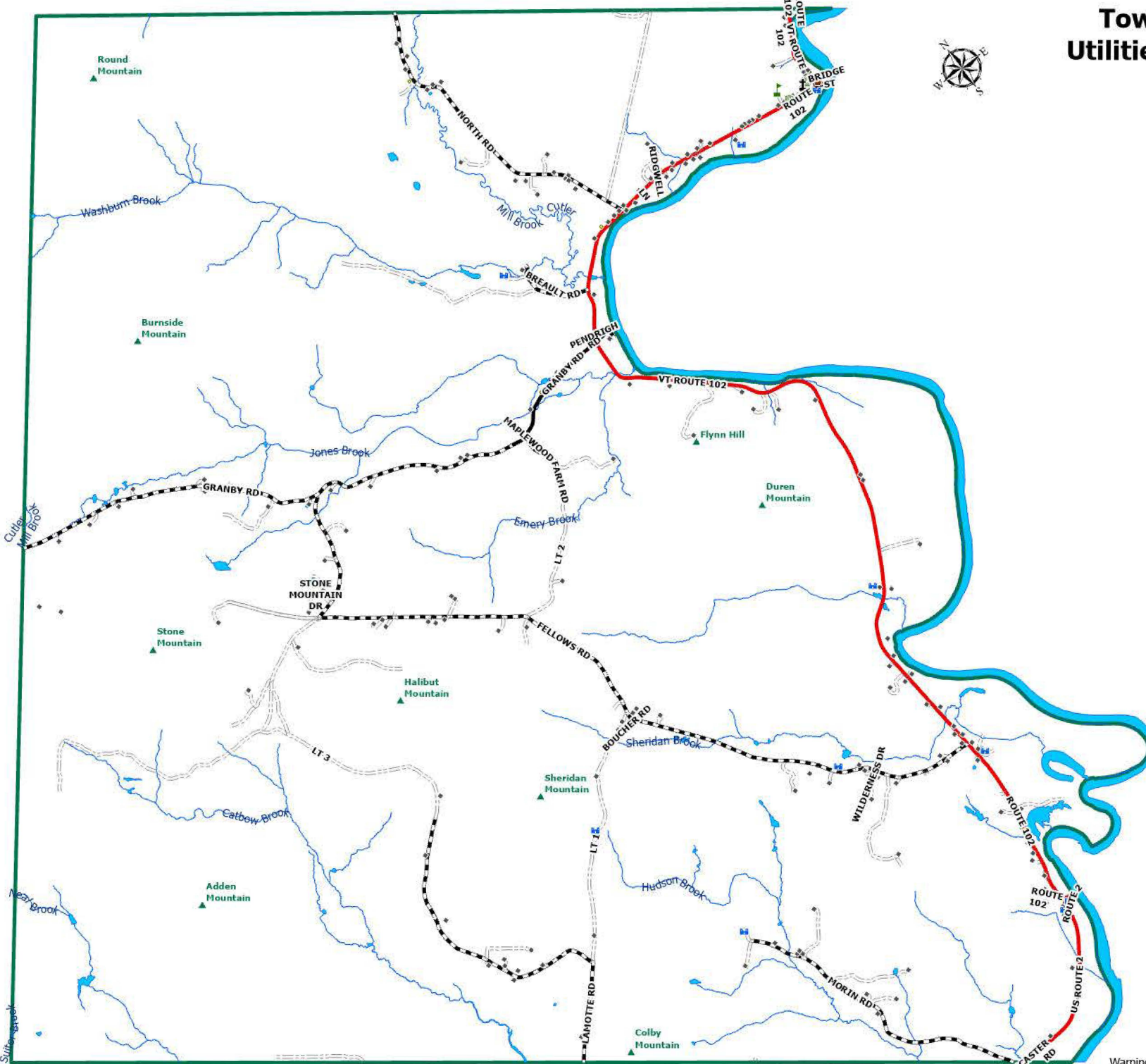




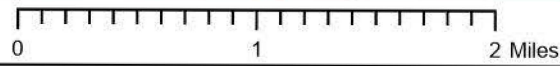


# Town of Guildhall, VT Utilities and Facilities Map

05/02/2024



- ▲ Peaks
  - ◆ Residential
  - Government
  - ▲ School
  - ◆ Commercial
  - ✙ Church
  - ✙ Cemetery
  - Cultural
  - Other
- 
- US & State Highways
  - Paved Town Road
  - - - Unpaved Town Road
  - - - Private Roads
  - Streams
  - Lakes, Ponds, & Rivers
  - Town Boundary



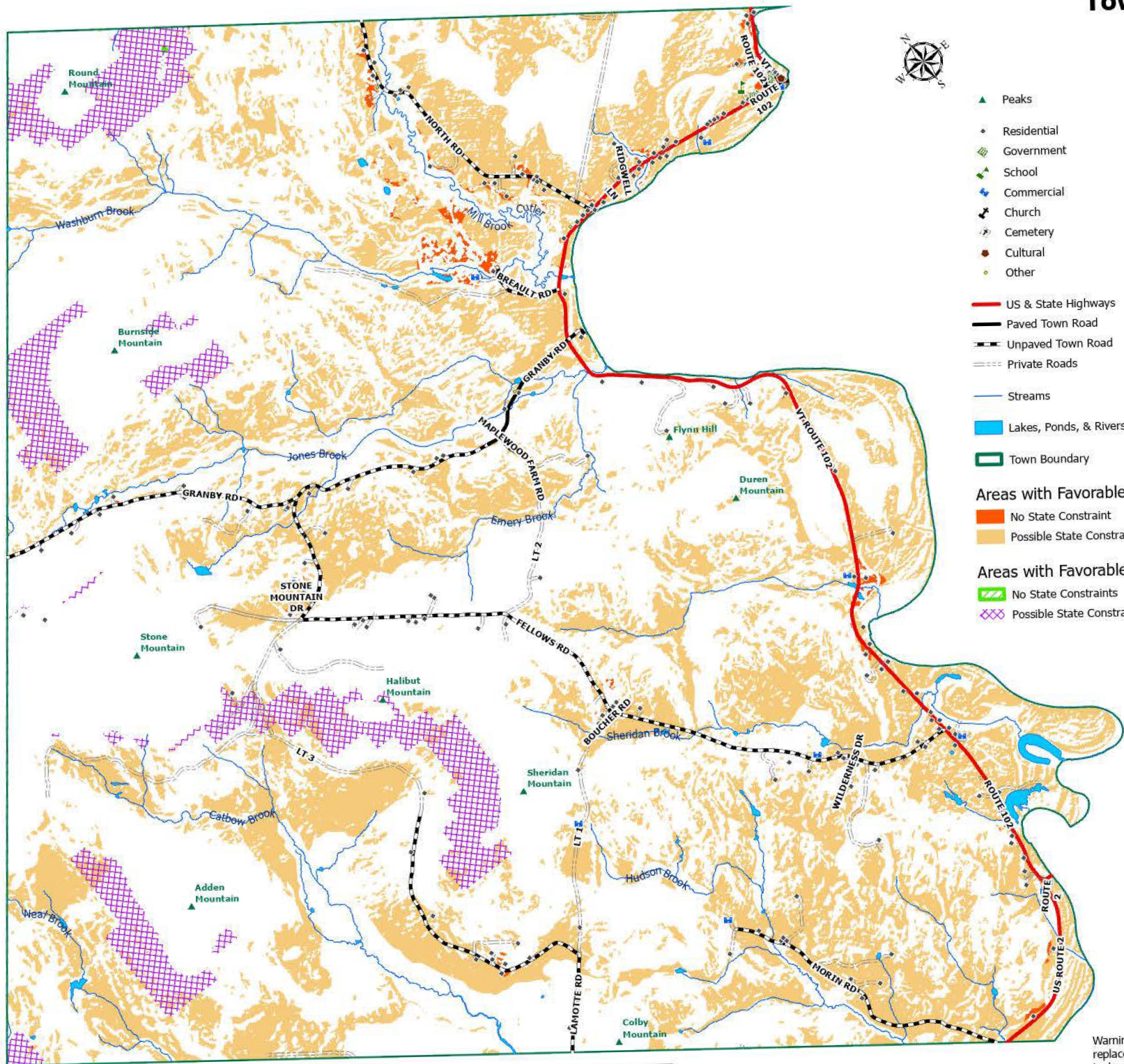
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# Town of Guildhall, VT Energy Map

05/02/2024



- ▲ Peaks
  - Residential
  - ◆ Government
  - ◆ School
  - ◆ Commercial
  - ◆ Church
  - ◆ Cemetery
  - ◆ Cultural
  - ◆ Other
- US & State Highways
  - Paved Town Road
  - - - Unpaved Town Road
  - ⋯ Private Roads
  - Streams
  - ▭ Lakes, Ponds, & Rivers
  - ▭ Town Boundary
- Areas with Favorable Potential for Solar Energy Facilities**
- ▭ No State Constraint
  - ▭ Possible State Constraint
- Areas with Favorable Potential for Wind Energy Facilities**
- ▭ No State Constraints
  - ▭ Possible State Constraints

Warning- This Data is for planning purposes only and does not replace a survey and/or engineering study. Because this map is developed from various scale sources, there may be some discrepancies between data layers.