

DHCD Municipal Plan and Bylaw Intake

Submitted by: Anonymous user

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Municipality

Walden

Regional Planning Commission

Northeastern Vermont Development Association

Submitter Details

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Submitter's Title

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Select your Submission

Municipal Plan

Type of Municipal Plan Submission

Proposed

Date of Public Hearing

Dec 4, 2024

Upload Public Hearing Notice

DOCX

Notice of Public Hearing Walden Approval .docx
15.7KB

Upload Municipal Plan

PDF

Draft Town Plan_Walden 10.31.24.pdf
3.8MB

Have you submitted the Municipal Plan to your Regional Planning Commission?

Yes

Notice of Public Hearing

The Walden Planning Commission hereby provides notice of a public hearing being held pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4384 for the purpose of hearing public comment regarding the proposed 2024 Walden Town Plan.

The public hearing is scheduled for Wednesday, December 4th, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. in the Walden Community Library, located at 135 Cahoon Farm Rd, West Danville, VT 05873 and via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84004797743?pwd=Z3t6cWcaSqC2R2JcatQdezXY39BbAU.1> .

The purpose of the hearing is to receive public comment on the proposed Town Plan. Written comments can be submitted to Zarina Castro, Chair of the Planning Commission, via email at zarinalawvt@gmail.com, or Jesse Noone, NVDA Regional Planner at jnoone@nvda.net. The proposed Plan will affect all areas in the Town of Walden. The Planning Commission has been working with NVDA since April 2023 to develop the town's plan.

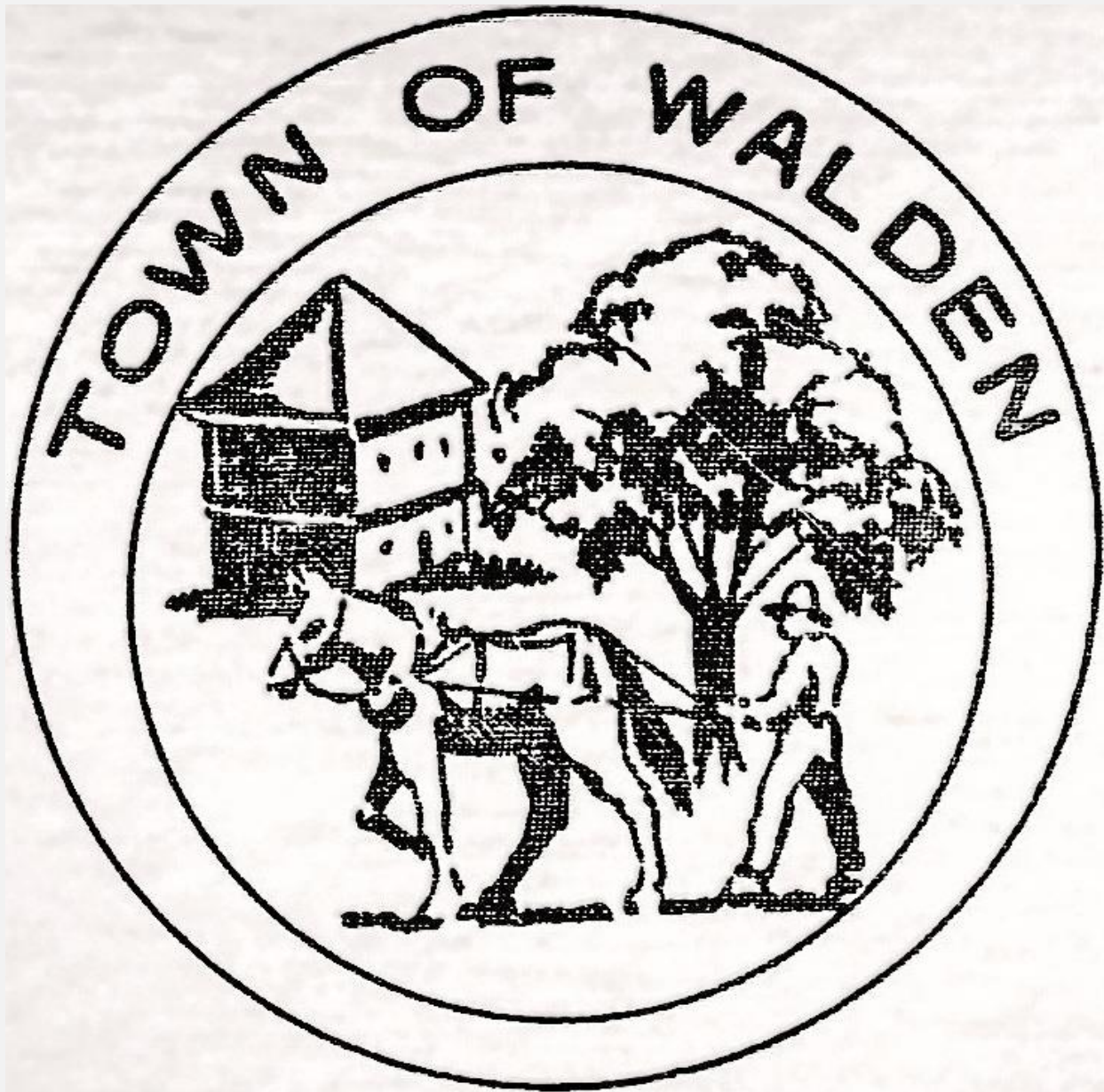
The Town Plan is consistent with the goals established in 24 V.S.A. §4302, and the revisions do not alter the designation of any land area. The proposed Walden Town Plan includes all the required elements set forth in the Act [§4382].

Table of Contents:

- I. Rural Tradition**
- II. Community Cohesion**
- III. Working Lands**
- IV. Ecological & Infrastructure Resilience**

You can view the proposed plan online at <https://waldenvt.gov/> under the heading, "News". Both physical & digital copies of the proposed Town Plan are available via email upon request from the Walden Town Clerks Office, located at 12 VT-215, West Danville, VT 05873 at tc@waldenvt.gov.

Walden Town Plan



Draft: November 2024



Acknowledgements

The Planning Commission would like to thank the efforts of the Town Clerk for continually offering support in the town's efforts in establishing continuity in their Commission, communication with the broader community, and compiling town information helpful to the research, process, and development of this plan. The Planning Commission would also like to thank the Selectboard for direction in developing this plan and working together to meet a larger goal for the benefit of the people of Walden.

Thank you to all community members who attended meetings, submitted survey responses, and contributed local raffle prizes to help guide the Planning Commission and foster community engagement.

Thank you to the members of the community that contributed to shaping the historical knowledge within this plan.

Lastly, the Planning Commission would like to thank NVDA for offering routine technical assistance and bolstering community interest without the need for grant funding.



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Overview

Walden established a Planning Commission in 2023 with the purpose of developing a Town Plan. Walden's Selectboard appointed members and reached out to the Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) for consultation on development of the plan. An NVDA representative and the three-member Commission met once or twice each month to discuss the inner workings of the community; determine where and how to conduct research and outreach; and develop the policies, goals, and strategies to implement goals laid out within this plan. The Commission established listening sessions, conducted a survey, and routinely invited community members to meetings to discuss the contents of this plan. It is the goal and intent of the Planning Commission that this plan reflects the core values of its long-standing community members while acknowledging that changes and newcomers have arrived, particularly since 2020.

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to provide a window into the past, an inventory of the present, and a template to promote a better future for Walden. The Town Plan gathers all resources to present to the community, while stating the directions the community would like to go and the goals they would like to achieve.

This section meets the required element: *statement of objectives, policies, and programs.*

Ultimately, the plan should act as a resource for the community and a guide for the municipality. As the town's first ever Town Plan, there are centuries of history that could be documented. However, the Planning Commission's main goal is articulate how Walden would like to maintain its current rural quality and lifestyle while still presenting opportunities for growth.

How to Use This Plan?

This plan defines the long-term vision for the Town of Walden; a starting point for future Town Plans to build from. The goals, strategies, and priority actions serve as a blueprint for achieving the vision set forth. This plan serves as a guiding support for municipal officials in future-decision making. The content within this plan can bolster grant opportunities, define language and outcomes for any potential Act 250 hearings and Section 248 sightings, and potentially direct efforts that serve its community members in a long-range vision.

The Planning Commission decided to meet the required elements required by statute ([24 V.S.A. § 4382](#)) through a series of values identified in the planning process. The values are Rural Tradition, Community Cohesion, Working Lands, and Ecological and Infrastructure Resilience. These four values represent the overarching principles of Walden community, both in the past and looking towards the future. The Planning Commission understood the importance of distinguishing the values that brought Walden to the present while still charting a vision for the future. The plan is in no way a regulatory document and does not advocate for any such regulatory authority for municipal officials at this time.

Regional Context

Research to develop this plan included reviewing the plans of adjacent communities for context and alignment of goals and visions. The Planning Commission sees this plan bolstering municipal connectivity and coordination with the communities of Danville, Hardwick, Stannard, and Greensboro in the Northeast Kingdom, and Cabot and Woodbury in Washington County. The Planning Commission sees alignment with each town and does not anticipate anything within this plan to adversely affect the surrounding communities. Walden promotes partnerships to achieve aligned goals to build regional capacity.

This section meets the required element: *A statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities*

Implementation Plan & Priority Actions

How Was This Established?

This section gathers the most important actions laid out in this plan. Through 18 months of monthly meetings and discussions that brought out understanding of Walden's capabilities, capacity, and desires to bring community together, the priority actions below represent this plan in a summary review.

This section meets the required element: *recommended program for implementation of the plan.*

I LOVE THIS TOWN. I THINK IT'S JUST ABOUT PERFECT. DON'T GO CHANGING TOO MUCH HERE (SURVEY COMMENT, 2024)

PRIORITY ACTION : ESTABLISH A LOCATION FOR A YEAR-ROUND MULTI-USE COMMUNITY CENTER

ASSOCIATED GOALS: PROMOTE LOCAL GATHERINGS ON A TRADITIONAL BASIS; TO GET THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER

STRATEGIES:

- DEVELOP A COMMUNITY TRUST OR NON-PROFIT DEDICATED TO TOWN
- COORDINATE WITH AFTER-SCHOOL EVENTS TO ATTRACT RESIDENTS TO GATHER
- SEEK GRANT FUNDING FOR PLANNING DESIGNS
- CONDUCT OUTREACH FOR LOCAL INTEREST

TIMELINE - MIDTERM 1-5 YEARS - NUMEROUS SMALL TASKS CAN BE TAKEN TO BUILD CAPACITY

RESPONSIBILITY - PLANNING COMMISSION, SELECTBOARD MUST BEGIN COORDINATIVE EFFORTS

RESOURCES - PRESERVATION TRUST OF VERMONT; VERMONT COMMUNITY FOUNDATION; VT COUNCIL ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT; NEKCA; NEK PROSPERI; NEK ORGANIZING

PRIORITY ACTION : DEVELOP A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

ASSOCIATED GOALS: CLEARLY DEFINE HOW INFORMATION WITHIN TOWN WILL BE BROADCASTED; PROMOTE COHESION BETWEEN THE TOWN AND SCHOOL

STRATEGIES:

- CONTINUE TO USE TOWN WEBSITE AS MAIN SOURCE OF TOWN AND LOCAL INFORMATION
- WORK WITH SCHOOL TO DEVELOP A LISTSERVE
- INVENTORY ALL PLACES OF OUTREACH (WEBSITE, FRONT PORCH FORUM, ETC.)
- CONSIDER A TOWN NEWSLETTER
- ESTABLISH A MUNICIPAL IMAGE THAT WOULD ASSOCIATE WITH ANY TOWN INFORMATION

TIMELINE - SHORT TERM 1-2 YEARS

RESPONSIBILITY - TOWN CLERK, PLANNING COMMISSION, SELECTBOARD; ENSURE TOWN CLERK HAS RESOURCES AND CONTINUED SUPPORT

RESOURCES - VERMONT LEAGUE OF CITIES AND TOWNS (VLCT), NORTHEASTERN VERMONT DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (NVDA), VERMONT PLANNING INFORMATION CENTER (VPIC)

PRIORITY ACTION : PRIORITIZE FORESTED HABITAT

ASSOCIATED GOALS: TO BE A CLIMATE RESILIENT COMMUNITY; TO ENSURE ALL RESIDENTS UNDERSTAND THEIR OPTIONS IN FOREST LAND MANAGEMENT; ENSURE HEALTHY HABITAT FOR POLLINATOR COMMUNITIES

STRATEGIES:

- ENGAGE WITH COUNTY FORESTER TO DEVELOP MUNICIPAL BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMP)
- SUPPORT LOCAL PRESERVATION EFFORTS OF ADJACENT COMMUNITIES
- ENSURE RESIDENTS ARE AWARE OF CURRENT USE AND OTHER EASEMENT PROGRAMS
- SUPPORT ALL WORKING LANDS BY PROMOTING CURRENT USE AND USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS
- ENSURE NEW RESIDENTS ARE AWARE OF STATE LAWS REGARDING DEVELOPMENT

TIMELINE - THROUGHOUT - THE PLANNING COMMISSION CAN BEGIN LOCAL OUTREACH AND DEVELOP INFORMATION PACKETS

RESPONSIBILITY - PLANNING COMMISSION, SELECTBOARD

RESOURCES - NVDA, COUNTY FORESTER, VERMONT FISH AND WILDLIFE, NORTHWOODS STEWARDSHIP CENTER, NORTHERN FOREST CENTER

PRIORITY ACTION : IMPROVE BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY

ASSOCIATED GOALS: ENSURE RESIDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO SUPPORTIVE SERVICES; CONSISTENT AND RELIABLE INTERNET SERVICES

STRATEGIES:

- CLARIFY WHAT NEK BROADBAND PROVIDES AND CONTINUE TO SUPPORT EXPANSION BY INCREASING POTENTIAL SUBSCRIBERS
- PRIORITIZE POTENTIAL SUBSCRIBERS ALONG RT 15 TO CONNECT TO HARDWICK AND WEST DANVILLE
- IDENTIFY PROGRAMS SIMILAR TO USDA RURAL BROADBAND
- REACH OUT TO THE VERMONT RURAL BROADBAND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SPECIALIST

TIMELINE - MID TERM 1-5 YEARS

RESPONSIBILITY - PLANNING COMMISSION, SELECTBOARD, TOWN CLERK

RESOURCES - VLCT, NVDA, NEK BROADBAND

PRIORITY ACTION : INCREASE SUPPORT OF THE WALDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

ASSOCIATED GOALS: MAINTAIN AND INCREASE QUALITY OF EDUCATION FOR LOCAL CHILDREN; ENCOURAGE HOUSING STABILITY FOR YOUNG FAMILIES TO GROW AND INVEST IN OUR COMMUNITY; ADDRESS THE DISCONNECTION WITH THE SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY'S RESIDENTS; PROMOTE LOCAL GATHERINGS ON A TRADITIONAL BASIS

STRATEGIES:

- SHARE RESOURCES BETWEEN TOWN AND SCHOOL, PARTICULARLY IN COMMUNICATION
- BROADCAST SOCIAL EVENTS THROUGH TOWN COMMUNICATION
- CONTINUE TO PROMOTE AFTER-SCHOOL EVENTS THAT COULD ALSO BE AVAILABLE TO LARGER COMMUNITY

TIMELINE - THROUGHOUT

RESPONSIBILITY - PLANNING COMMISSION, TOWN CLERK, WALDEN SCHOOL

RESOURCES - VLCT, NVDA, CALEDONIA CENTRAL SUPERVISORY UNION (CCSU)

Introduction

Walden is located in northwestern Caledonia County surrounded by the towns of Danville, Cabot, Greensboro, Woodbury, Hardwick and Stannard. Chartered in 1781, Walden has an area of 37.3 square miles consisting of rolling hills and valleys, streams and forests, with over 10,826 acres in the Steam Mill Brook Wildlife Management Area owned by the State of Vermont. These lands are open to regulated hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking and wildlife viewing. Walden has Lyford Pond and Coles Pond both connected to Joe's Pond in Danville by Joe's Brook flowing through town. Walden is known for its elevation and abundant snowfall. The highest point is the summit of Stannard Mountain, near the town's northern border, with an elevation of 2,579 feet.

Residents are active, employed in businesses at distances of an hours' drive, working online, or on home-based trades. Walden currently has one store, four working dairy farms and one main highway (VT Route 15) passing through Danville & Hardwick. Walden has separate community clusters/villages in Noyesville, Walden



Station/Walden Heights, South Walden, North Walden/Coles Pond. The town operates its own Pre-K through 8 Elementary/Middle School in Noyesville. All secondary students are tuitioned to high schools of their choice.

The picturesque town of Walden boasts four brilliant seasons and seasonal activities: roadside kiosks, truck gardening, maple sugaring with open sugarhouses, snowmobiling on maintained VAST trails, and the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail all year round. Hidden spectacular views are worth the search and keep visitors returning.

Walden has a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and a Highway Equipment Replacement Plan that can be viewed within the Annual Report. Paving is done every eight years on schedule. Sometime capital projects may be funded through the General or Highway accounts. These plans serve to supplement larger projects, and being able to qualify for grants after the adoption of this plan will allow the Town to plan further.

History

Walden straddles the Kittredge hills, the highest point of which is the summit of Stannard Mountain, near the town's northern border, with an elevation over 2,579 feet (786 m) above sea level. The terrain is hilly and mostly forested. It is said that Walden was once considered a great place for sleigh rides because it had 'nine months of winter and three months of late Fall'. People from Cabot used to joke that you could tell if someone from Walden was at your door for a visit because you could hear them stamping snow off their boots - even in July. These conditions, no doubt, influenced the character, worldview and historical trajectory of the town and its residents. Walden has a rich history, some of which is in the archives of the historic society and is available at the Walden Library.

Walden was part of the traditional lands of the Abenaki people long before Europeans settled the area. Evidence of camps, stone structures, and tools have been found over the years. There are Walden residents with Abenaki ancestry today. Former Walden resident and Abenaki elder, Carol Irons, explains that the Abenaki were seasonal nomads. "For thousands of years our people lived with this land as a relative and we thrived. When the ice broke up, we fished and traveled along the rivers. In the summer we gathered food and medicines. In the Autumn we hunted. Winters were spent along waterways in areas protected by evergreens and hills. In the spring we sugared. When the settlers came, they built homesteads along rivers chasing the Abenaki upstream and into the hills." Since the Abenaki traveled seasonally by waterway this hindered their mobility.

The Bayley Hazen Road was the first road built into and through Walden. It was constructed with military funds procured by Jacob Bayley and Moses Hazen in 1776. Jacob Bayley's family owned a general store in Newbury which at the time was the end of the line.

The first settlers of European descent were the Perkins family. They settled along the Bayley Hazen Road on the ridge running parallel to and south of Rt 15 on the Foster's place. Mills, schools, churches, stores and a meeting house were soon constructed. The forested hills were cleared. Coopers, blacksmiths, carriage makers, millers and farming (mostly potatoes, butter and maple syrup and candy) were the main employment from the 1780s through the 1800s.

In 1872 the railroad connecting St. Johnsbury to St. Albans was completed after much controversy and difficult negotiations. The local Grange was started in East Hardwick in 1872 by Charles Bell of Walden, who would later become governor of Vermont. Governor Charles Bell (1904 - 1906) was born and raised in Walden in a home on Noyestar Road. He was elected to the state House of Representatives in 1882 and to the state Senate in 1894. He was a member of the Board of Railroad Commissioners from 1894 to 1896, a member of the State Board of Agriculture from 1897 to 1904, and Secretary of the State Board of Cattle Commissioners from 1898 to 1902. As governor, he supported centralized schools and favored restricting the newly-invented automobile to a few roads. In addition, legislation was enacted during his administration forbidding the employment of

children in mills, workshops, and factories. After serving one term, Bell returned to farming. He died in New York City and was buried in Walden, Vermont.

A creamery was built in 1893 in East Hardwick and one in South Walden in 1894, to serve the burgeoning bovine dairy producers. Most of these farms had 6 - 12 cows. In 1940 electricity extended its reach into Walden. The bulk tank arrived in the early 1960s requiring dairy farmers to get more cows to stay in business. In the '50s, there were approximately 30 -35 family farms shipping milk. In the early 60s there were 23. There are currently three in 2024.

In 1963 the Cole's Pond Casino opened, featuring the Tommy Dorsey Band with Frank Sinatra, Jr.. BB King and his band were also among the notable musicians who performed to terrific crowds. The Casino closed in the mid-80s because it became difficult to get the big names that had once played there. The building is no longer in existence.

The binders titled 'Walden 200' contain many fascinating details of Walden's history. Some of the residents from the past kept meticulous journals from which a picture of daily life and monumental events can be ascertained. The binders are kept at the Walden Library.

Today Walden residents still value living with the land. It requires both independence, and interdependence. That worldview has always been a part of Walden.

Those whose families have lived in Walden a substantial amount of time has fond memories of growing up here. Below are some words from long-standing residents:

"It would probably be seen as drudgery today, but hard work gave us a sense of continuity and permanence of life, tied to the very earth. It produced an incredible resiliency of common folks. It set the children on an honest path. I had very little, but I had everything. Life was free in the barn, woods, fields and brooks. We lived resolutely with the seasons, sometimes in celebration and sometimes in spite of it."

"I am sad that the farms have disappeared and there aren't so many people working the land. We kids loved working and farming. Small farms are essential to a thriving community."

"I have very fond memories of Walden the way it used to be. For example, parents used to rotate making and serving lunch at the one room schools. Before I was old enough for school, when it was my mother's turn, she would bundle me up, put me and the pot of food in the sled and walk over to The Heights School to deliver it. I went off to college in California and lived in Alaska, but I always came home to Walden and my family."

"To be rich isn't what you have in your bank account. It is what you have in your heart"

Community Profile

This section was informed by U.S. Census and American Community Survey data. More data on the community and background information can be found in Appendix A.

Though changes have occurred in this bucolic region of the state, Walden's population has only grown by about a modest 2% in a ten-year period.

Population in Walden	
2010	936
2020	956

Though Walden's pace of population increase represents a modest impact, the rate of housing growth and occupation of households have likely contributed to the feelings of change within the community. Despite a 2% increase of people in the area and 3.4% growth in housing units, houses that are occupied have more than doubled that pace at 9.1%. A decline in vacant units indicates that part-time residents who had once used their properties as seasonal have turned into full-time residents in the area.

	2010	2020	Change	% Change
Total Population	936	956	+20	2.1%
Housing Units	597	617	+20	3.4%
Occupied Units	374	408	+34	9.1%

In the last decade, these demographic changes indicate that Walden's status as a bedroom community is being held in high value, despite not having any local services. A large increase of residents in the labor force has coincided with a modest increase in population, and people moving in are willing to travel longer distances to work. It's possible that having a newer, rural elementary school and high school choice has attracted those with newborns who are preparing themselves for elementary school years while living in a rural landscape.

However, any new community member that either has children or is in the workforce (or both) must usually travel long commutes to satisfy either. Based on the sizable increases in household median income and the sizable portion of the population with an income-to-poverty ratio of 2.0 (doing well) and over, this is likely not an issue for many new community members.

Walden is an attractive place to raise a family for those who prioritize what the quiet nature provides, and the community rural life can offer. More people converting their seasonal homes into full-time residences increases the demand on regional amenities given that the town also must outsource all social and essential services. Fortunately, many newcomers to Walden hold many similar values to long-standing residents, which is likely what attracted them to Walden living in the first place.

Rural Tradition

Rural tradition is Vermont tradition. But even in Walden you are further from most things, closer to the land and closer to your neighbors. Early Walden consisted of several small communities that each had their own school, church, shops, and mills. Today, tradition is marked by working soils, home businesses, and an abundance of wildlife.

KEEP WALDEN WILD

Survey Comment, 2024

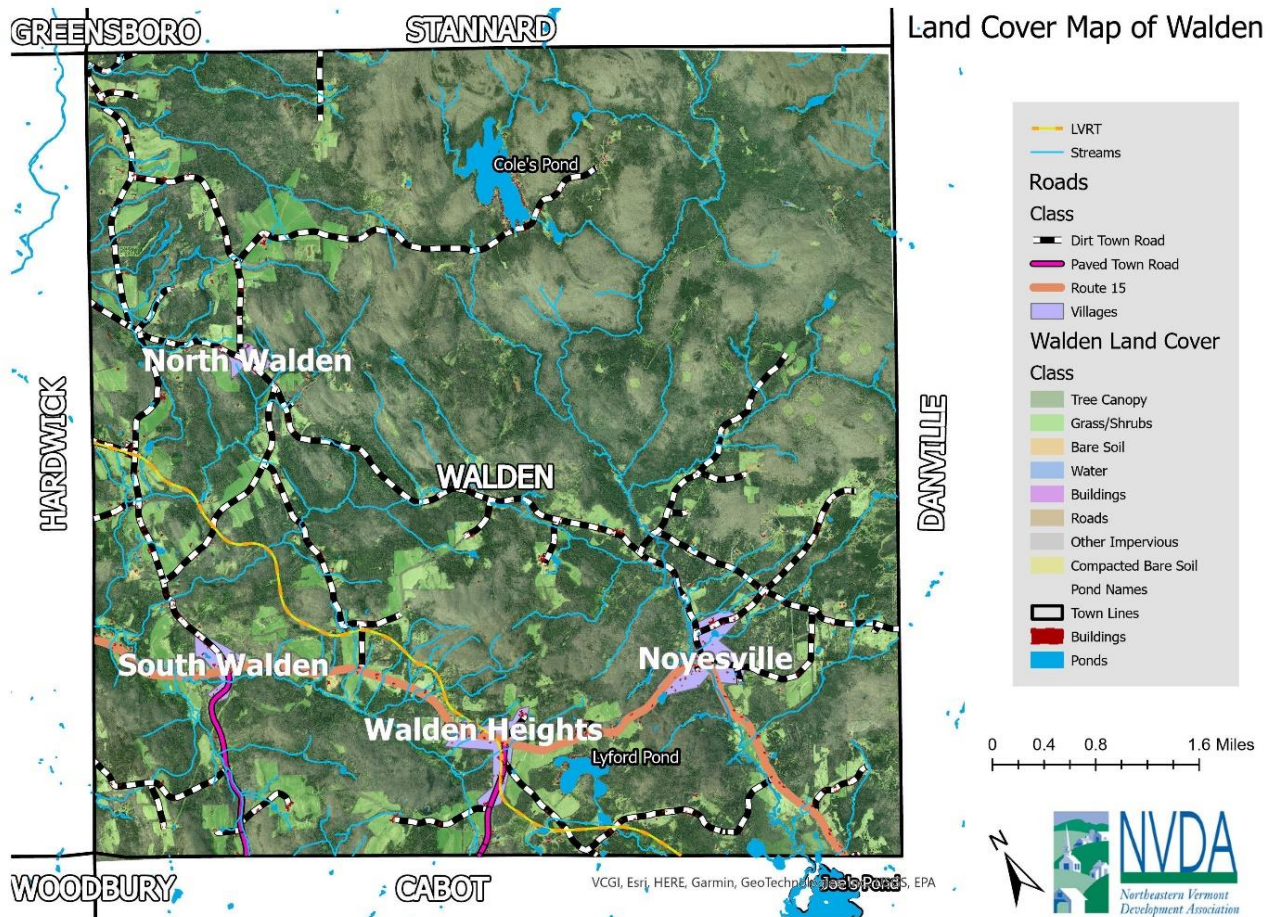
Photo Credit: Dia Michaud



The Lay of the Land

Walden covers 23,810 acres of land and has a higher elevation than most other towns. The terrain is heavily forested with an abundance of wildlife, with about 20,000 acres of land in mixed woodland and one of the largest Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) in the [Steam Mill Brook](#), second to only the West Mountain in the entire state. For two and half centuries, the people who have called Walden home have revered the natural habitat and living close to what it offers. From homesteads to working the land to being buried in it, Walden exemplifies Vermont's austere relationship to the tradition of land use.

Few changes have occurred in the history of Walden's land use. While small settlements have come and gone, it has been rare for an established village to endure or larger industries or businesses to exist. Walden has been traditional in its land use – large lot rural properties, vast farmland, forestry, and cottage industry. There are many small local businesses that furnish what they produce on their land.



The [Bayley-Hazen Military Road](#) was the original main thoroughfare through town and upon which the town was founded, which established Walden Station (now referred to as Walden Heights) and South Walden. North Walden and Noyesville were also established. Though Walden currently has no established village center, these four neighborhoods are markers for the town. As transportation changed from Bayley-Hazen Rd. to Route 15, residents and hamlets became more pronounced along the highway.



Housing

Vermont is experiencing pressure from organizations to increase the state's population by 150,000 in the next few years. The organization pitches economic development opportunities to sell this population growth. Although most of this growth is intended for town and city centers, the impacts would be broad and not compatible with the way Walden residents see

This section meets the required element: *housing element*

the future of our town. This, combined with the national housing shortage evident in Vermont as well, has sparked a legislative response aimed at increasing the number of housing units.

However, much of the shortage is due to the rise of the profitable tourism-related trend in which new or existing housing stock is converted to seasonal homes and [short-term rental units](#) (18.3% seasonal vacancy rate in Caledonia County, according to 2022 5-Year ACS Estimates). This removes a significant amount of existing housing stock, availability of limited developers, and incentives for developers to focus on making more equitable middle housing. These houses are unavailable to full-time Vermont residents and newcomers alike, thus driving up housing costs and limiting the available building footprint to build new, attainable [middle-housing](#). For a town like Walden that does not have a village center or amenities to provide a broad range of newcomers, citing multiplex housing within town limits seems unfeasible and impractical. Walden residents have expressed their desire for the town to maintain its current character including the natural beauty, quiet and wildlife habitat for future generations. While the town welcomes conversation to improve local livability, affordability, and housing attainability, there is no appetite for a development rush.

Maintaining the current character of Walden was a strong theme expressed by residents. It is important to note that a town with affordable land that is without bylaws or zoning to protect land or inform growth is strictly limited in its ability to maintain the current character if these trends and pressures were to continue. Town residents are mostly dependent on outside resources for essential services. Costs associated with this can include gas consumption from increased travel times to work or childcare, utility expenses, and food insecurity. Walden residents expressed interest in a broad discussion on topics including food security, interdependence, and resilience for the future, which are all extremely important factors when considering housing and homes for the future in Walden. Community cohesion is a value held by residents.

Among Walden residents, housing stability for all residents is prioritized before considering the development of new housing. Greater stability leads to greater community cohesion and vitality. Addressing the needs of current residents and respecting Walden's ecological capacity is reflected in the goals and strategies of this Town Plan. It is not in the best interests of the community at this time to seek new development. We propose support for greater housing security through respectful, appropriate scale, promoting local prosperity.

[S100 Housing Bill](#)

In June of 2023, the State of Vermont passed Senate Bill 100, or Housing Opportunities Made for Everyone (HOME) Act, which requires towns to address the missing middle housing in Vermont. The goal of the act is to enable new opportunities for housing developments that meet local needs while removing exclusionary language in housing development. Vermont Natural Resources Council provides a [good summary](#) of the bill, some changes include:

- Municipalities cannot require more than one parking space per unit

- Municipalities must allow duplexes and multi-unit dwellings where single-unit homes are allowed.
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) must not be more restrictive than single-unit homes
- Requirements and allowances in areas served by municipal water and wastewater

Utilities and Facilities

The Town of Walden owns five parcels of land. The largest is 17 acres of the sand pit and Town Garage on Route 15. There is a three-acre parcel of the Town forest on Route 15. The Town Clerk's office and Fire Department building encompasses 2.5 acres on Route 15 and Route 215. The town owns the recreation field on Audet Place that is 2.4 acres. Lastly, the Town owns a picnic ground on Coles Pond that is 1.6 acres. The Town does not own the school building or land, including Watson Field.

The Town Clerk's office is used for all land records and voting other than Town Meeting Day. The safe for land records is at capacity and must be enlarged or augmented soon. At recent Town Meetings, there have been discussions about a new building for the Town administration that would include space for community gatherings. Survey participants also expressed an appetite for community meeting places. If the Town administrative offices included space for the Walden Community Library, it would enhance the library's ability to offer community activities year-round.

This section meets the required element: *utilities and facilities plan*



The Town appropriates funds yearly for a number of capital expenses. Information about the funds is as follows:

Fund Name	07-01-2022 Balance	2022-2023 Appropriation	2023-2024 Appropriation	06-30-2023 Balance
Highway Equipment and Major Repair	\$30,115	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$251,250
Capital Improvement	\$69,357	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$251,250
Fire Truck Replacement and Major Repair	n/a	\$6,000	\$6,000	n/a
Reappraisal	\$4,793	\$9,500	\$9,500	\$14,295
Preservation	\$9,949	n/a	n/a	\$13,093
Town Clerk Renovation/Construction	\$32,414	n/a	n/a	\$32,509

The Town has three paved roads – seven miles of Route 15, which is a state highway, and 2.5 miles of Route 215 and Cabot Road, both of which are class two roads, for which the town is responsible. The remaining roads of the Town are gravel, classes 2, 3 and 4. Noyestar Road and Stannard Mountain Road are class 2 gravel roads. Of these gravel roads, 33.48 miles are class 2 and 3 roads, 10.02 miles are class 4 roads, and 3.4 miles are a legal trail.

There are two church buildings in the Town, one on Noyestar and one on Bayley-Hazen Road. Neither operates church services year-round, though the facilities are used by other local organizations for community events.

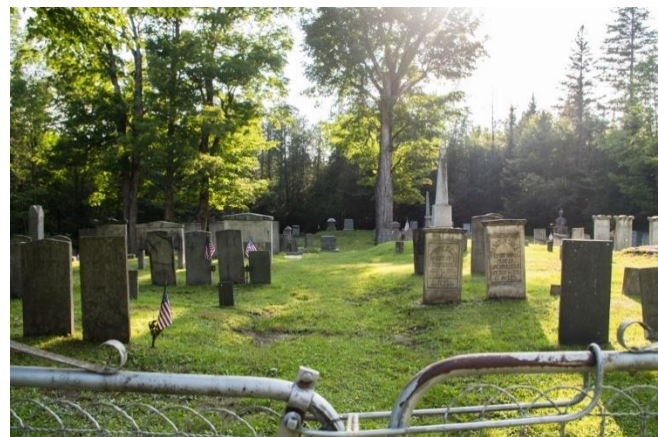


There are no cell phone towers in the Town of Walden. Parts of the town receive cell service from towers in Hardwick, Danville, or Cabot. There was a strongly voiced sentiment by many residents that we should not have any cell towers, and there was also strong sentiment that there should be no restrictions on what landowners do with their property. We have seen conflict in other communities which have grappled with these tensions. We recommend having a group study the issue to determine whether the Town should have any such restrictions regarding cell towers in Walden.

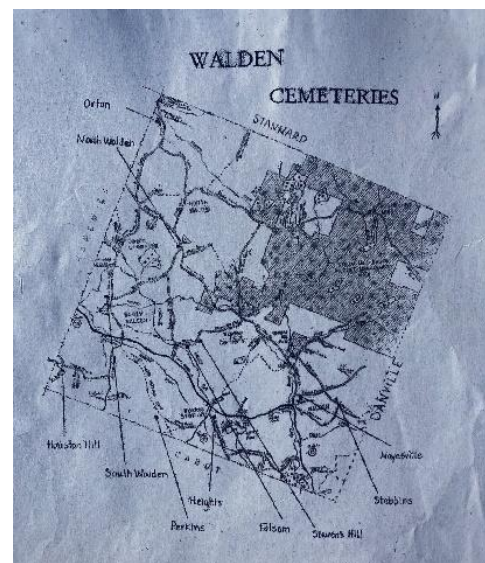
The Town contracts with The Caledonia Sheriff's office for police response to the town. The Town also contributes to Hardwick Rescue Service and CALEX for providing ambulance services for the Town. There is a volunteer Walden Fast Squad which provides first responder services to the Town. The volunteer Walden Fire Department provides fire services to the Town. There were no complaints from survey participants about the ambulance and fire protection services available in the Town and people appreciated the care provided. There were some voiced concerns about speeding on some town roads, and how law enforcement could assist with the issues.

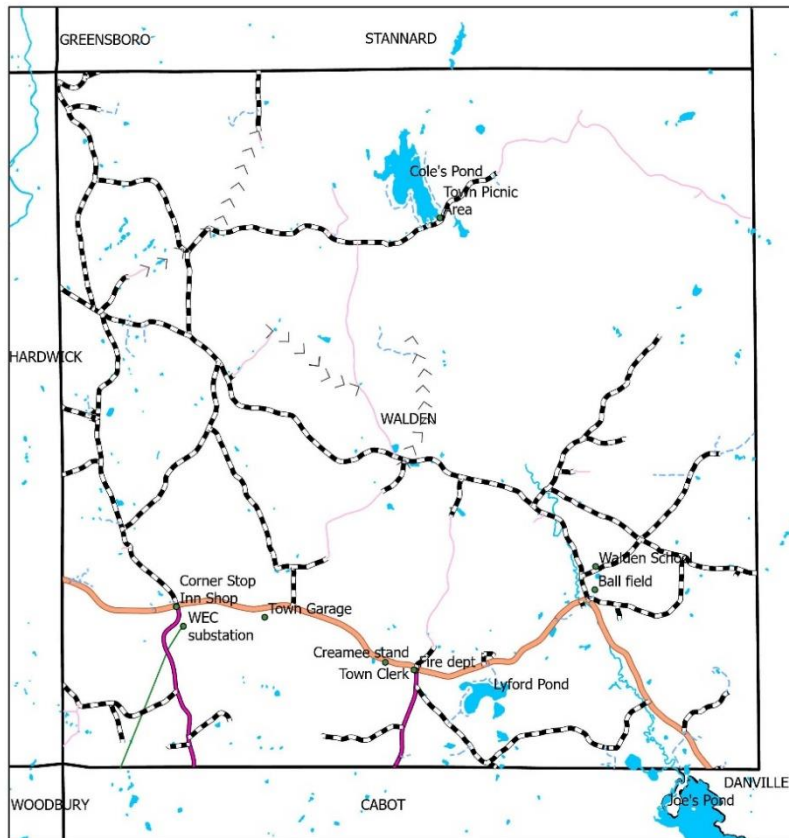
The Walden Library is run out of a building at the Walden School. Volunteers run it. In the past years, it has provided town-wide activities for the community. These have included a star gazing gathering with a person from the Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium, activities on the day of the solar eclipse in 2024, pie and ice cream socials, and activities for children in the community. Most have been well-attended by community members and visitors.

The Town of Walden has ten cemeteries: Fulsom, Orton Road, Heights, Houston Hill, North Walden, Noyesville, Perkins, Stebbins, Steven's Hill, and South Walden. Of these ten, three have available space for the sale of lots – they are Heights, Noyesville, and South Walden cemeteries. The cemeteries are open May-November weather permitting, year-round for green burials. A number of these cemeteries are on private property where permission to enter is a courtesy by landowners.



The Town applied for grant help from the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) for energy-based renovations of the Town Office building. The MERP grant will provide a generator, EV Charger, new lighting for both the office and Fire Station, upgraded electrical, bathroom exhaust fan, and heat pumps. In addition, Walden had installed a 17.28kW solar array system offsite at the Town Garage. An emergency generator should be installed through this grant.

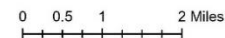




Facilities/Utilities Map

Legend

- Selected Buildings
- Roads**
- Category**
- Route 15
- Paved Town Road
- Dirt Town Road
- Class IV Road
- Private Road
- Legal Trail
- Electric Transmission Lines
- Town Lines
- Ponds
- Pond Names



Goals to Maintain Rural Tradition

Maintain rural landscape that prioritizes farming, forestry, outdoor recreation, wildlife, and all its rural characteristics

Encourage housing stability for young families to thrive in our community

Explore ways in which the town can thrive and maintain Walden's rural, natural character

Strategies

Attract informational organizations to provide free information to community members in reducing associative housing costs

Provide information and educational support in lowering utility costs

Continue to support NEK Broadband's expansion of services to Walden residents

Continue to support the great work the local road foreman does

Community Cohesion

Walden has always been a close-knit community. Connectedness to the land, helping one's neighbor, and working hard are all community hallmarks. However, with recent changes, not having public services or intentional places to meet has hindered community growth.

I STAY HERE FOR THE PRIVACY, FORESTS, FARMS, UNIQUENESS, AND THE FEELING LIKE I KNOW MY NEIGHBORS! (SURVEY COMMENT, 2024)

Education – Bringing the Schools Together

Walden School Background

Traditionally, Walden had four elementary schools for each of the villages - Star School, South Walden School, Noyesville School, and Walden Heights School. In 1995, the schools consolidated to the Walden School they are today. The four original schools still stand today and are commemorated for the history they hold.

This section meets the required element: *Education facilities plan*

The Walden School is a Pre-K-8. Enrollment in 1998-99 was 139, with the most recent numbers in the table below. The recent decline in student population is due to more kids being homeschooled than before. However, this trend seems to be changing and there have been younger families moving to town in recent years. The school now enjoys a high level of engagement. Today, Walden celebrates where its education roots come from and is excited about its trajectory and what it can offer to the community in the future.



Since the new school has been constructed and the State's school system restructured, Walden School is now a part of the Caledonia Cooperative School District (CCSD) along with Barnet and Waterford School. The district is one of five under the [Central Caledonia Supervisory Union](#) (CCSU). The CCSU provides educational leadership and overall administration for the districts. The [CCSD](#) has its own board, whereas the CCSU provides support and sharing costs with all five districts.

FY	Enrollment Count	Free & Reduced Students	# High School Students
2018	85	44%	N/A
2019	76	48%	39
2020	87	48%	40
2021	76	50%	40
2022	81	38%	35
2023	81	37%	37

Childcare and After School Programs

There does not seem to be a huge need for more childcare at the school during this time, though more local providers are always welcome. However, the Walden School reports that those who seem to need after school programs take advantage of it and that there isn't an overdemand.

In addition to the after-school programs, Walden School hosts a number of both school functions and community functions that are open and available to all members of Walden. Concerts in the winter and spring, the annual trick or treat parade, the Montshire museum night, and the Veteran's special breakfast are just a few events held. The Community Library has also held ice cream socials and star gazing events.

The school would love to have more people join and get more people together in the community, and the town and school could coordinate and broadcast events such as events at the Community Library, Green-Up Day, and the use of the nature trails.

Advancing Education Locally

For continuing education, opportunities are offered at [Green Mountain Technology and Career Center](#) (GMTCC) in Hyde Park, where eligible students in grade 10-12 can prepare themselves for college and career through twelve separate applied learning programs. Both high school requirements and free college credits along with industry certifications can be earned.

The [St. Johnsbury Academy Adult Education Program](#) works to develop career skills that can be applied to local businesses and economies. They feature online courses, skill-building training, and credential programs. Career fields include computer technology, culinary arts, health sciences and nursing, professional skills, and skilled trades.

The [Lyndon Institute Adult Career and Technical Education](#) program is another regional educational resource that offers on-campus and online learning opportunities. Current courses offered include Licensed Nurse Assistant (LNA), Phlebotomy, and Welding.

Lastly, there is the [Northeast Kingdom Learning Services](#) (NEKLS) in the area that offers alternative education for the modern world, helping people obtain high school diplomas and beyond with a wide range of teaching and learning services.

Land Use

Land Use & Community

This section meets the required element: *land use plan*

The lack of a village center has had its pros and cons for Walden. The dispersal has likely contributed to maintaining the town's very rural and natural landscape. Yet, it has also likely contributed to the inability to maintain a post office or general store over the years. Most of all, not having a dedicated center for people to congregate socially, whether intentionally or while doing daily tasks, has likely contributed to the difficulties in getting the community together. Especially in the wake of the pandemic, the benefits of social interaction are more pronounced and establishing a hub where people could gather, hold events, garden, share information, and more can build resilience for Walden community members.

Identifying a place for a community center amongst these four villages could help give Walden a "community fulcrum". Rather than consider developing a brand-new structure, the town could look into the viability of restoring a church or community school.

Directing Future Land Use

Currently, the desire to remain unregulated is a priority for the majority of Walden residents. The right of private property owners to work their land as they see fit is recognized in many communities in the Northeast Kingdom, and Walden is no different. Walden currently does not have the municipal capacity to administer any type of regulation or permitting processes. However, the consensus of feedback from the community is to deter large development, residential or industrial, as well as energy sitings that could change the treescape. A great number (81%) of respondents to the community survey said they would want to see farming and forestry as future uses, with outdoor recreation (54%) and cottage industry (51%) as the next highest responses. While the town will remain unregulated to zoning and land development, the residents would like to see ecological habitats protected and contiguous.

As it relates to Act 250, Walden welcomes residential development that is mindful of how it's built related to keeping the natural environment intact. It promotes types of housing that can help with the ability to downsize and assists with general affordability and attainability for working families to call Walden home. However, Walden is not interested in nor does it have the infrastructure to be a speculative site that would alter the landscape at the cost of rural values. New housing is to be planned to avoid fragmentation of forestland and built on a scale that maintains the rural character of the historic neighborhoods of Walden.

Section 248 of [30 VSA §248](#) requires utilities and companies to obtain approval for the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) for projects including electric generation and transmission facilities. Companies must obtain a Certificate of Public Good (CPG) through a hearing before breaking ground on such projects. As it relates to Section 248, numerous comments in the survey concerning ecological priority and community well-being suggest that cellular towers that impede

the visual landscape, expose local residents to unwanted frequency exposure, and/or disturb ecological habitat are not wanted and should be discouraged.

Future land use will look much of the same as it has for the past two and a half centuries. The town promotes and will look to support working lands industries and small home-based startups that can help the local community. The town would like to look into ways of enhancing the LVRT as an asset and other recreational opportunities.

Other Uses of Significance

In place of not having a community center, the Community Library has provided opportunities for everyone in town to get together with different events. A pie and ice cream social, music, stargazing, solar eclipse viewing, open houses, a crafting club, and a Lego club are just some of the events recently held. The Walden Community Library is a combined school and public resource, and they hope to continue providing a space and events for people to gather.

One of the land uses of great importance and tradition for Walden are the ten cemeteries. The Walden Cemetery Commission manages the condition, maintenance, and purchase of burial sites. Though three sites have available space, the Selectboard Report mentions that cemeteries are full. The town may have to consider purchasing another plot of land for burials in the future.

Goals to Maintain Community Cohesion

Develop a Town Communications Plan

Promote local gatherings on an annual, traditional basis

Establish a place or places for community gatherings on a consistent basis

Support efforts of the Walden Elementary School to maintain and increase quality of education for local children

Improve Broadband connectivity

Strategies

Evaluate whether the Town should expand its contracted police protection to encompass speeding issues or whether there are other suitable approaches to the issues

Support the Walden Community Library's community events. Continue to promote after-school events that could also be available to larger community

Ensure residents have access to elder care and other supportive services

Clarify what NEK Broadband can provide and continue to support the expansion of broadband within the town

Explore re-establishment of Recreation Committee

Working Lands

All one has to do is take a drive on Walden's dirt roads to see the scale of economy and industry the town possesses and seeks to keep. Local providers are scattered throughout town that offer services from their home, mostly for neighbors and drive-by distribution. Many people conduct private forestry and agriculture such as cattle and maple syrup, and local farm goods like eggs and vegetables. People have known each other for generations with this type of service share. Walden residents support local industries that land open and wildlife intact.

Economic Development

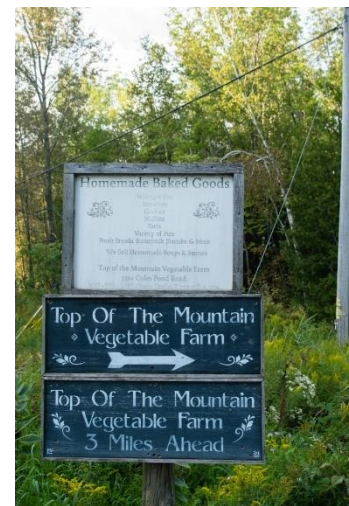
Walden has a few prominent retail establishments – a small store, a

This section meets the required element: *economic development plan*

seasonal ice cream stand, and a maple sugar establishment, all on Route 15. These are the extent of retail businesses. The town once sustained a larger store, but it has not been in operation for decades, and the building no longer exists.

Walden does have a number of significant produce farms, many loggers who log in Walden and elsewhere, a tree farm, and a few dairy farms. A large proportion of residents raise livestock and grow fruit and vegetables for personal consumption. Dairying has traditionally been the foremost farm occupation. Like many towns in the Northeast Kingdom, Walden has seen a [challenge in sustaining dairy farms](#) over the years.

Additionally, there are many home-based (“cottage”) businesses in Walden. Residents run childcare, construction, insulation and excavating businesses, a nail salon, floor services, poultry establishments, sugaring operations, income tax services, attorney offices, and fine art from their homes in Walden.



The survey results showed little appetite among respondents for more retail establishments.

WE DON'T NEED ANY MORE MICROBREWERIES

Survey Comment, 2024

Probably because of the cottage industries, the need for internet among those who work outside of the home, and for general research and entertainment purposes, there were many voiced concerns about reliable internet access. There were no voiced concerns about reliable cell phone coverage. There was hope expressed that NEK Broadband would be able to address internet access in the foreseeable future, and it appears that the hope is well placed! NEK Broadband is reporting that by early 2025, portions of the town should have access to reliable internet service from there, and the other portions of the Town are scheduled for completion thereafter.



INTERNET SERVICE IS IMPERATIVE FOR OUR BUSINESS, AND I FEEL THAT NEK BROADBAND IS GOING TO ADDRESS THAT. I DO NOT REQUIRE ANY CELL SERVICE AND CERTAINLY DO NOT WANT ANY TOWERS IN WALDEN. (SURVEY COMMENT, 2024)

Natural, Historic, Scenic, and Cultural Resources

Overview

Walden is an exceptionally scenic hill town with historic buildings and a rich history. The town straddles the ridge of the Kittredge Hills and offers spectacular long-distance views as well as beautiful old farms, and stunning natural features. The land has long informed the settlement patterns, cultural and historical use, as well as the character of the town. Traditionally this hillside was summer hunting grounds for the Abenaki. The Bailey Hazen Road, which was the first road cut into Abenaki territory in 1776, runs north/south on the west side of town.

This section meets the required element: *Statement on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic, and historic features and resources*

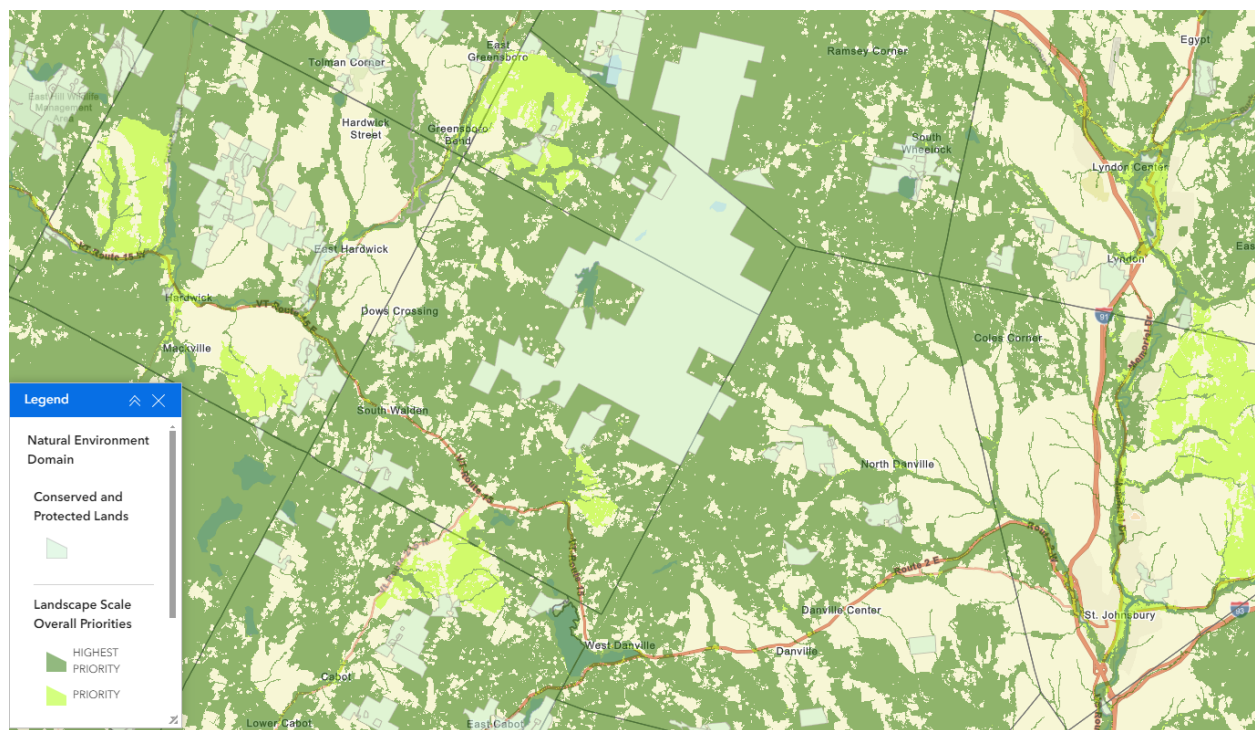
YOU CAN SEE STARS AT NIGHT. YOU CAN SEE FOXES, DEER, OWLS, BEAVERS, AND EVEN A MOOSE IF YOU'RE LUCKY

There are four historic one-room schoolhouses that still stand, and many folks in town who attended them still standing as well. There is no official village designation, which is in part due to

Walden's hilly terrain with no major rivers or train stops that would have resulted in a town settlement in the past. Steam Mill Brook Wildlife Management Area is located mostly in Walden and partly in Standard and Wheelock. Our forests and fields provide rich habitat for Walden's non-human residents, as well as corridors for them to travel and connect to other habitats. Walden residents cherish Walden's scenic wonders. 'Keeping Walden like it is' was a theme expressed by residents.

Subdivision and Forest Trends

Another downside to dispersed settlement is the potential to fragment wildlife through property subdivision and large-lot rural residential development. Walden's forested landscape is a vital habitat corridor with Hardwick on the west and St. Johnsbury and Danville's agriculture in the southeast, connecting habitat migration from Central Vermont to the Kingdom.



The [VT Parcelization](#) site has tracked the subdivision of land into smaller tracts since 2005 as Vermont has become a more desirable location for homesteads. Parcels of land over 200 acres have decreased by almost 800 acres. Parcels of land with dwellings under 25 acres have increased. On the plus side, residents have increased forestland in the Current Use program by about 1,500 acres.

Without the ability to regulate subdivisions, speculation of land in Walden could lead to vulnerable habitat as the market dictates development. The town and its community will eventually have to decide which value is of greater importance to them – the value of doing what you want with your

land unencumbered or the value of protecting priority wildlife habitat and our rural character. 63% of survey respondents marked that the loss of farm and forest land as a concern, the second highest response behind litter on the road (Appendix B). 75% of survey respondents felt Walden was defined by the large blocks of forest and farmland.

Tools to Protect Forestland

Use Value Appraisal, or “Current Use” as it is commonly known, is a property tax incentive available to owners of agricultural and forestry land in Vermont. Eligible landowners can enroll in the program to have their land appraised at its Current Use (farming or forestry) value rather than fair market value. For landowners with 25 or more acres, the program allows landowners to save on property taxes, helps conserve forest and farmland, and supports the working landscape.

Many Walden landowners are already well aware of this program and have their working lands into the program. By reducing the economic burden on farmers and forest owners, the state sustains the working landscape, supports the owners that work the land, and helps maintain the state’s traditional settlement pattern.

Walden has 63 forest parcels of land in the program amounting to 7,342.65, and 16 parcels of farmland enrolled at 791.64 acres.



Historic Buildings

Walden has four historic one room schoolhouses, The South Walden School, The Noyesville School, The Star School, & The Heights School, which are now privately owned. There is the Historic Noyesville Church and a historic Meeting House on the Bailey Hazen Rd in South Walden which has been used as a church at times. The historic Inn on the corner of Rt 15 and Cabot Road where The Corner Stop Inn Shop is currently located is another treasured historic remnant of Walden’s past.



Areas of interest

The Bailey Hazen Road has a rich and interesting history. Pitched as necessary to military security by military men with family general stores in Newbury, the road was financed by the federal

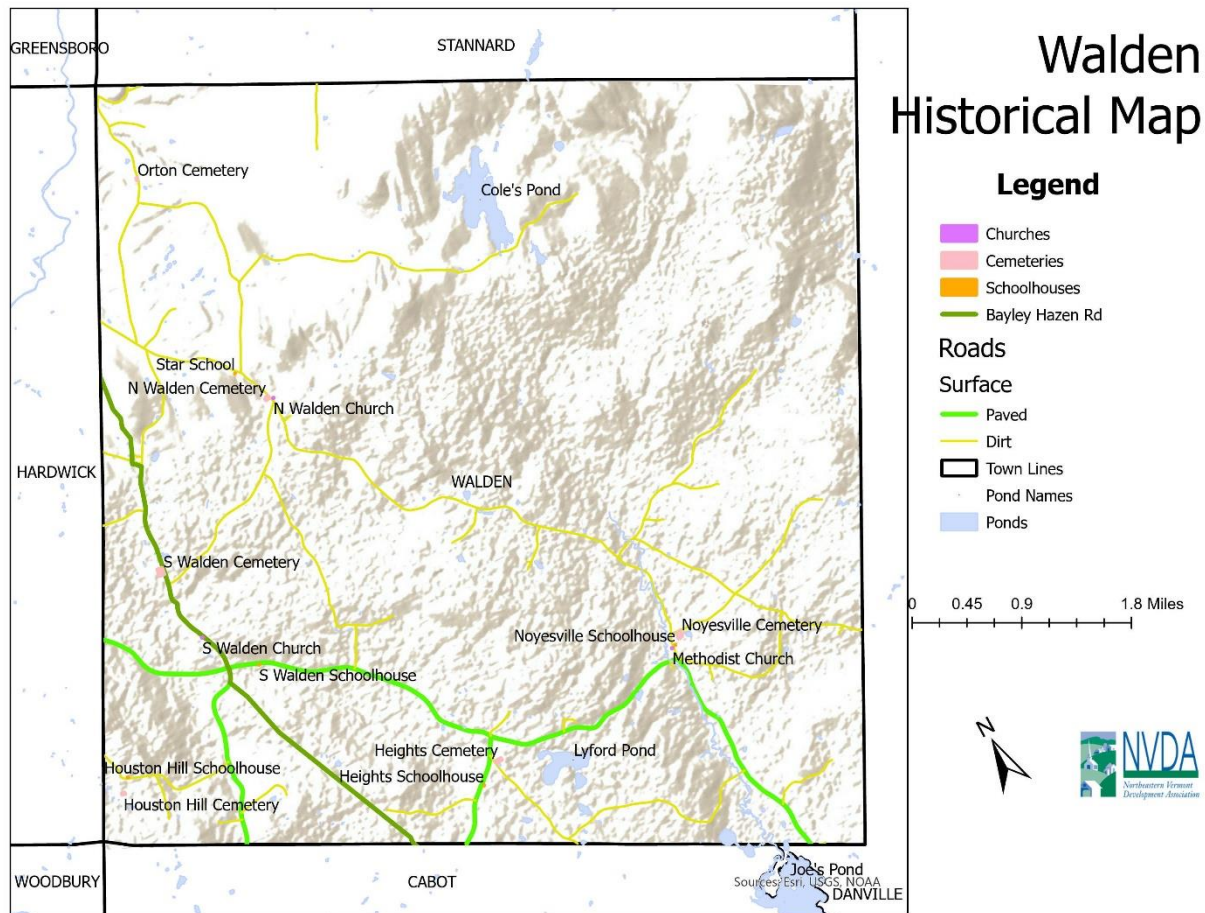
government and benefited both Jacob Bayley and Moses Hazen's family stores as they were the last outpost before homesteaders ventured in to settle land in Abenaki territory. Some of the Northeast Kingdom's oldest buildings are located along this route.

There are numerous natural features in town that most residents would like to remain secret.

When highlighting the scenic qualities of Walden, it is notable that there are few places that don't qualify as such.

"Beauty awakens the soul to act." Dante Alighieri

Walden's natural beauty feeds our souls, and our residents feel strongly about protecting it.



Goals to Maintain Working Lands

To preserve Walden's priority habitat, scenic resources, historic structures, forest blocks and wildlife connectivity.

Support the wide array of farming endeavors, healthy forest management practices, and small cottage business

Promote current levels of industry in town

Prioritize forested habitat by ensuring town residents are aware of Current Use and Vermont Land Trust easement programs

Strategies

Pursue a local Best Management Practices (BMP) for Walden forestlands

Explore tax breaks, incentives, and relief for landowners

Establish a local trails and scenic sites crew/committee that supports landowners in preserving viewsheds and overall scenic exploitation

Explore ways to support local economic endeavors by utilizing the LVRT

Ecological & Infrastructure Resilience

Whatever differences there are among Walden residents, there was almost unanimity on the issues of what residents like about living in Walden and what makes it a special place. Living close to the land, that Walden is a beautiful place, and that there is access to outside recreation, all received overwhelming support from those who responded to our survey. Additionally, residents listed features of the



land – agriculture and forestry and that there are large blocks of forest and farmland – as very important features of what makes Walden a special place.

Given the importance of the land to us all, ensuring that Walden is resilient ecologically and that its infrastructure remains strong, adaptable, dependable is important to maintaining the land and its features.

WE LOVE HEARING THE TREES POP WHEN IT IS -20. (SURVEY COMMENT, 2024)

Flooding & Natural Hazards

Local Hazard Planning

The Town’s Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) incorporates the goals of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to implement “hazard mitigation measures to save lives and property and reduce the financial and human costs of disasters.”

This section meets the required element: *flood resilience plan*

Regarding Walden in particular and ice storms, in December 2013, the Walden LHMP states that “Walden received the most significant damage to forest stands in recorded history and power was disrupted for over seven days.” Additionally, in January 2015 “a major ice storm disrupted power for up to six days for some customers.”

Flooding

The current Walden LHMP lists the following hazards with a highly likely or likely probability of

impact to the community. These are cold/snow/ice/wind; fluvial erosion and flash flooding; infectious disease; and structure fire; hail; and drought. Within the past ten years, there have been five federal disaster declarations within the State of Vermont that have affected and been declared in Caledonia County:

Date	DR #	Incident	Total Public Assistance	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program – Approved Dollars
April 2014	DR-4178-VT	Severe Winter Storms & Flooding	\$1.8 Million	
June 2017	DR-4330-VT	Severe Winter Storms & Flooding	\$11.7 Million	\$593,310
March 2020	DR-4532-VT	COVID-19	\$494.9 Million	\$7,405,646
July 2023	DR-4720-VT	Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides	\$61.1 Million	\$3,835,946
July 2024	DR-4810	Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides	\$6.0 Million	

Clearly, there have been many, many other storms in recent memory that have affected the region and were not federally declared disasters. Walden has experienced in 2024 several severe flooding episodes, indicating that these are not “once in 100 years” flood events and that metric might have to be adjusted moving forward. Flooding that affects roads, driveways, and properties may well continue to be issues yearly. These will continue to affect the town and private landowners, who may need support in mitigating the effects of future severe rainfall events.

As a result of the July 2023 flooding event, eighteen of Walden’s roads were affected. The total cost was over \$255,000, of which over \$120,000 was for outside labor and equipment, over \$10,000 was for rented equipment, and over \$3,000 was for mutual aid. FEMA will pay 90 percent of the cost, which is very fortunate. As of the summer of 2024, the Town had not received either the FEMA or State funding and was obligated to borrow to pay for the work. Although not the Town’s responsibility, there were homes with flooded basements, and private driveways that washed out.

As a result of the July 2024 flooding event, three roads in Walden had severe damage, the other roads had side ditches that washed out. The total cost was almost \$130,000, all of which falls on the Town unless the State has emergency funds that can be used to help affected towns. There were also homes in Walden with water in basements and damage to land and garages.

National Floodplain Insurance Program (NFIP)

The National Flood Insurance Program allows property owners to purchase flood insurance for buildings and their contents in participating communities. Municipalities can choose to participate—this choice is voluntary. Towns that do participate enable flood insurance availability

for every resident, not just those mapped in the floodplain. About 90 % of Vermont's communities participate in the NFIP. Without NFIP, flood insurance is not available or must come from private sources and is prohibitively expensive. Participating in the NFIP does not make flood insurance cheaper, but rather enhances the availability of it being offered in the first place. To participate, a community must regulate all new development in Special Flood Hazard Areas to ensure it is safe from flood damage. FEMA administers the insurance program.

To join, the town will need to adopt and enforce floodplain bylaws that meet the minimum NFIP standards. Once the bylaws are adopted, the community would need to select a local administrative officer, review board, and permitting process for floodplain development projects. The state floodplain manager at Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will assist the community with evaluating new projects by providing written technical review comments.

Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF)

An important source of federal disaster aid is FEMA Public Assistance, which the town can apply to repair public infrastructure (like roads). FEMA reimburses towns for 75% of eligible costs. Communities that do not participate in NFIP can get Public Assistance for some repair locations but not if the damage is located within a mapped Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).

Through the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF), the state also contributes toward Public Assistance eligible projects on top of the FEMA share, starting at 7.5% of the total cost. If Walden joins NFIP and takes certain other steps to become flood resilient, the state share will increase to 12.5 or 17.5%, depending on what steps the community takes. You can learn more about the state program [here](#).

Other Hazards & Water Quality

Undoubtedly because of Walden's elevation and forested land (we do grow moss on our snow!), the Walden LHMP states that there are no concerns about the effects of extremely hot temperatures. Nonetheless, extremes in cold temperatures are of concern, especially if the severity and duration of these events increases when there are other technological (e.g. power outage, fuel oil delivery disruption) and societal (ability to purchase heating fuel) factors. The safety of livestock during extreme cold is also a real concern for Walden.

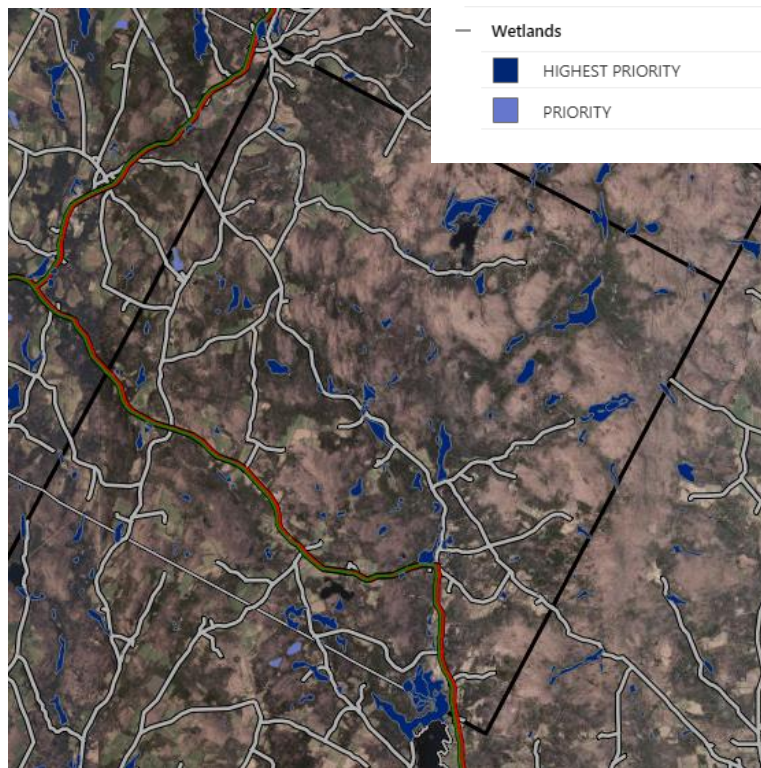
According to the Walden LHMP, high winds only occasionally "cause damage to the town, normally in downed power lines."

Regarding erosion in Walden, the Walden LHMP notes that it occurs on a consistent, but small-scale, basis around the town's streams and rivers. The practice of channelization of rivers and streams in order to maximize agricultural land uses and facilitate the development of transportation infrastructure contributes to the disconnection of much of Vermont's streams from their flood plains. This can come at a great cost and hazard to public safety. Walden residents were directly affected by this from the July 2023 and July 2024 flooding when flooding in Hardwick

and nearby Lamoille and Washington Counties affected transportation options as Routes 15 and 215 were closed following the flooding. The State provided current data on the closing of state highways, but there was no reliable source of information about the state of local roads in the immediate aftermath of the flood.

River corridors, headwater streams and habitat connectors of Statewide significance make up much of Walden. Whatever we do in Walden flows downstream.

In the Walden LHMP, drought, defined as a water shortage, results in a loss of potable water, affects crops and livestock, and makes conditions prime for wildfires. Walden only has private water sources, has business and families which grow crops and raise livestock, and is home to forests and ecosystems that rely on water. All could be disrupted with warming trends and changes in climate.



Energy

Conservation should be held as the highest priority when addressing energy use for the future. Reducing use not only saves money but it minimizes the impact on the natural world. Survey results indicate that Walden residents cherish the small scale, rural character of our ridge-top town and want it protected.

This section meets the required element: *energy plan*

The old railroad system which carried goods in both directions is no longer. Trucking is relied on now. It is an unfortunate paradox of 'progress' that we continue to expand our fossil fuel use for economic efficiency and profit instead of scaling down which is required if we are to address the climate extremes we face. On these larger economic issues, Walden cannot have but a minor part. Despite this, Walden must be responsible and accountable in future decisions regarding our town.

The push to transition to industrial scale renewables is controversial. The promise that large scale renewables will replace fossil fuels has not been demonstrated. In fact, fossil fuel use has continued to rise as the build out of utility scale renewables has been implemented.

WE DON'T WANT WIND TOWERS OR CELL TOWERS IN TOWN. WE FARM AND RAISE BEES. IF WE WANT TO SUPPORT FARMING AND FOOD GROWING, WE CANNOT HAVE CELL TOWERS! KEEP WALDEN NATURAL AND WILD. DON'T LET IT BECOME AN INDUSTRIAL PARK. (SURVEY COMMENT, 2024)

Large scale projects don't serve localities. They exploit localities. They are very disruptive to community cohesion and the land. We encourage conservation first, and small-scale independent sourcing of energy.

We encourage Walden residents to reduce energy consumption. Resources for energy efficiency and reduction in use: [Efficiency Vermont](#), [Energize Vermont](#), and [Heat Squad](#). We encourage Walden to practice good neighbor policy when it comes to the consideration of renewable siting on their property.

Most Town residents are covered by Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WEC) for their electrical utility, the first source of Walden's electricity since 1940. A small portion of the northeast corner of Walden (along Walden Mountain Road) is covered by Green Mountain Power (GMP). A smaller portion of western Walden is part of Hardwick Electric. A number of residents generate their own power through solar, wind or water.

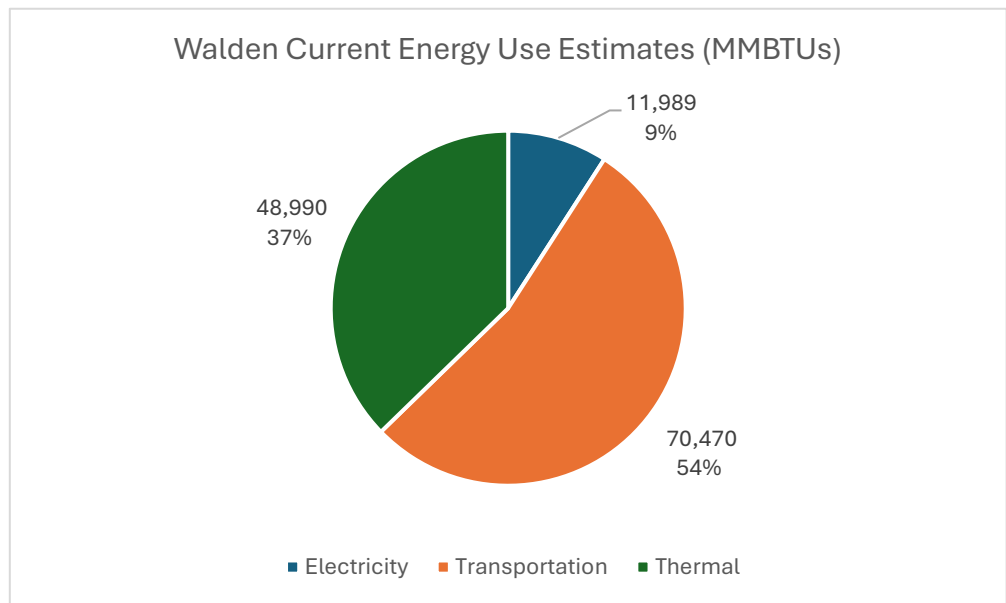
WEC provided the following data regarding outages, duration and repair times for the Walden area:

- There were approximately 45 outages in 2024 as of early September that affected parts of the Walden membership.
- There were 64 outages affecting Walden members in 2023 and 91 in 2022.
- There are standard metrics used to stand for outage impacts both of duration and number of members impacted. Customer Average Interruption Duration Index (CAIDI) is one such metric.
- The WEC target is 2.7 hours average per member household. The 2023 CAIDI for the entire 41 towns covered by WEC is 3.2.

WEC offers many incentives for customers to become more energy efficient. Full information can be accessed at www.washingtonelectric.coop/energy-coach-home/. They also offer credits to customers who participate in the Power Shift Program. More information on this program can be found at <https://www.encyvermont.com/powershift>.

The only land telephone service in the Town is provided by Consolidated Communications (ConCom). ConCom also provides internet services (DSL and fiber) and television programming. Cloud Alliance provides wireless internet, and there are satellite internet service and cable television providers. Northeast Kingdom Broadband, a not-for-profit Communications Union District with a governing board made up of town representatives, provides internet services to parts of Walden, with more planned, permitted and funded, in the next few years.

Current energy estimates were developed using multiple sources with assistance from NVDA in August 2024, including the Vermont Department of Public Service, Efficiency Vermont, U.S. Census American Community Survey, and Vermont Department of Labor.



Transportation

In total, there are about 60 miles worth of traveled road in Walden.

This section meets the required element: *transportation plan*

Almost 10 miles worth are Class IV and are not maintained by the town; 7 miles are state highways maintained by VTRANS. The town maintains RT 215 and paves every eight years as well as Cabot Rd. Driving backroads through residential areas allows beautiful scenes and viewpoints as well as harking back to Vermont's rich, rural history.



Walden's main arterial road is

Highway 15, with connections to Hardwick in the northwest and Danville in the southeast. Highway 215 connects southward to Cabot and Washington County. Most traffic in Walden goes through the town on these paved roads, with no other roads being paved within town limits. The accessibility of these two highways is paramount for jobs, services, and other resources.

The conditions of the roads are well-maintained by the hard-working foreman and road crew. With mud season being longer and rain events becoming more drastic, however, the degradation of gravel roads is becoming more of an issue for all towns.

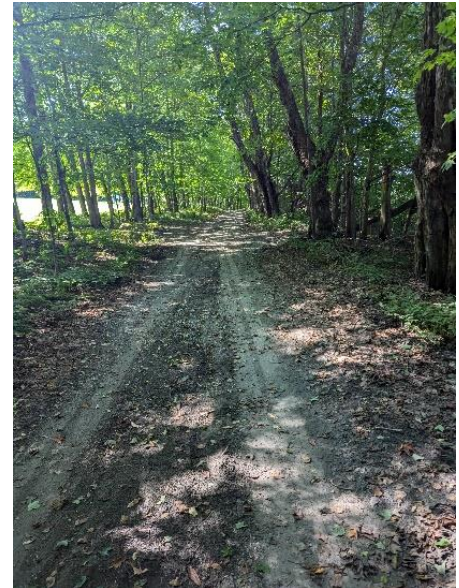
Road Mileage by Class in Walden	
State Highway	7.16
Class II	9.14
Class III	33.48
Class IV	9.94
Total	59.75

Road Conditions

Through engagement with the community, some issues that have come up with Walden's Road systems include speeding, walkability, and designations between Class III & IV roads. Local residents are often the only drivers on the gravel roads and have a higher level of comfort driving. However, there are tight intersections, areas of construction, and a general concern for safety that has highlighted a desire for slower, more responsible community driving. Calls for greater police presence by state and county sheriffs have been suggested.

Walden's gravel roads are not only beautiful to walk on but are often local residents' only option in recreation. The town could look into signs that display sharing the roads with pedestrians.

Road class designations are determined by the local Selectboard. Classification of town highways can be read in statute [VSA § 302](#). Property owners may require upgrading and maintaining class IV roads to meet town highway standards. The Town has a Class IV Road & Trail Policy that is available at the Town Clerk's office.



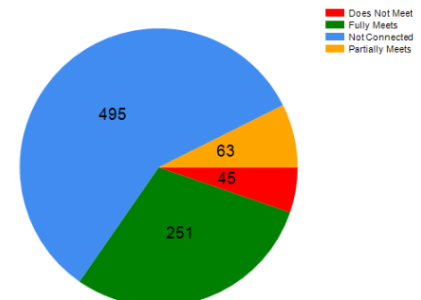
The Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) reporter shows many road segments still need to be assessed for stormwater-related erosion. Most road segments that have been recorded fully meet standards. It is an ongoing process for Walden.

Within the town's Annual Report is a detailed highway budget and capital improvement schedule. Three projects that are included for the 2024 fiscal year are the Watson Road Culvert, Stannard Mountain Road, and the Noyestar Intersection Project. The Highway Department takes advantage of numerous aid programs, including the [Better Roads Program](#), the [Municipal Grants-In-Aid](#), and the [Highway Equipment Grant](#).

Walden

Number of Segments in Municipality: 854

Road Segment Meeting Standards



Other Forms of Transportation

LVRT

The [Lamoille Valley Rail Trail](#) (LVRT) is a tremendous asset for access, recreation, and mobility, and could also spur small economic enterprises with the right type of planning. 93 miles of multi-use path that spans from St. Johnsbury to Swanton going directly through Walden. From Walden Heights to Joe's Pond Parking is about 5 miles. There is also access to West Danville, Greensboro Bend, East

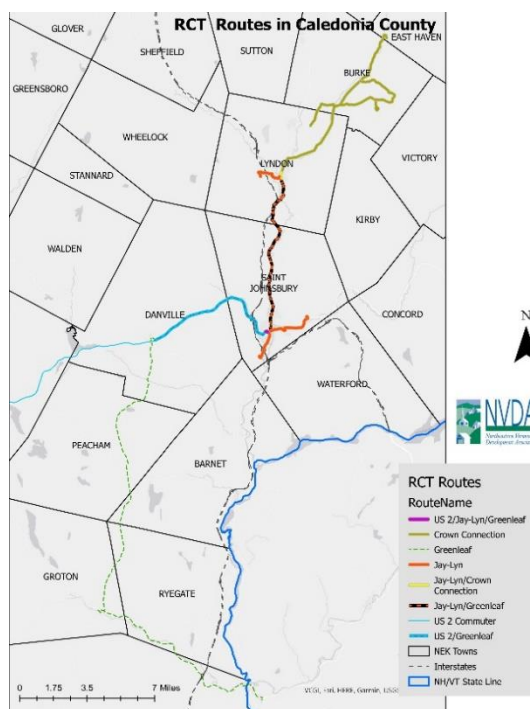


Hardwick and downtown Hardwick. Many people cycle the paths in warmer months and snowmobile in the winter months. With numerous people coming to use the trail during all seasons, it presents a keen economic opportunity to utilize the parking areas near the path by the fire station for small seasonal stands. You can see a list of attractions along the LVRT [here](#).

Additionally, it enables alternative modes of transportation that are very much needed in the region and can connect to the Rural Community Transportation stops in Hardwick and West Danville.

RCT

The [Rural Community Transportation](#) (RCT) bus service serves both the Northeast Kingdom and Lamoille County. Walden is in a unique position to be within reach of two commuter routes. While Walden residents are not served by RCT's fixed bus routes, residents can access services through on-demand Medicaid/Medicare schedule pick-ups near their house to utilize these routes.



Other Transportation

Regionally, there is rail in Montpelier and air travel in Burlington and Boston. Walden has adequate access to Route 2 and Route 15.

Goals to Maintain Ecological and Infrastructure Resilience

To encourage energy conservation and maximize community independence from external sources that do not serve the local community

The town will continue to maintain the quality of roads to ensure residents have access to essential and supportive services

To mitigate against the harm and costs of future road deterioration

Ensure healthy habitat for pollinator communities

Reduce at a minimum, and prevent to the maximum extent possible, the loss of life and injury resulting from all hazards

Discourage large-scale energy development and establishment of cell towers.

Strategies

Form and support energy committee in Walden to explore this issue more deeply

Modernize designation process of Class III & IV Roads

Assist in assessing damages from hazards to the Town and to people, property, and businesses

Identify funding sources for Town and individuals for appropriate mitigation efforts

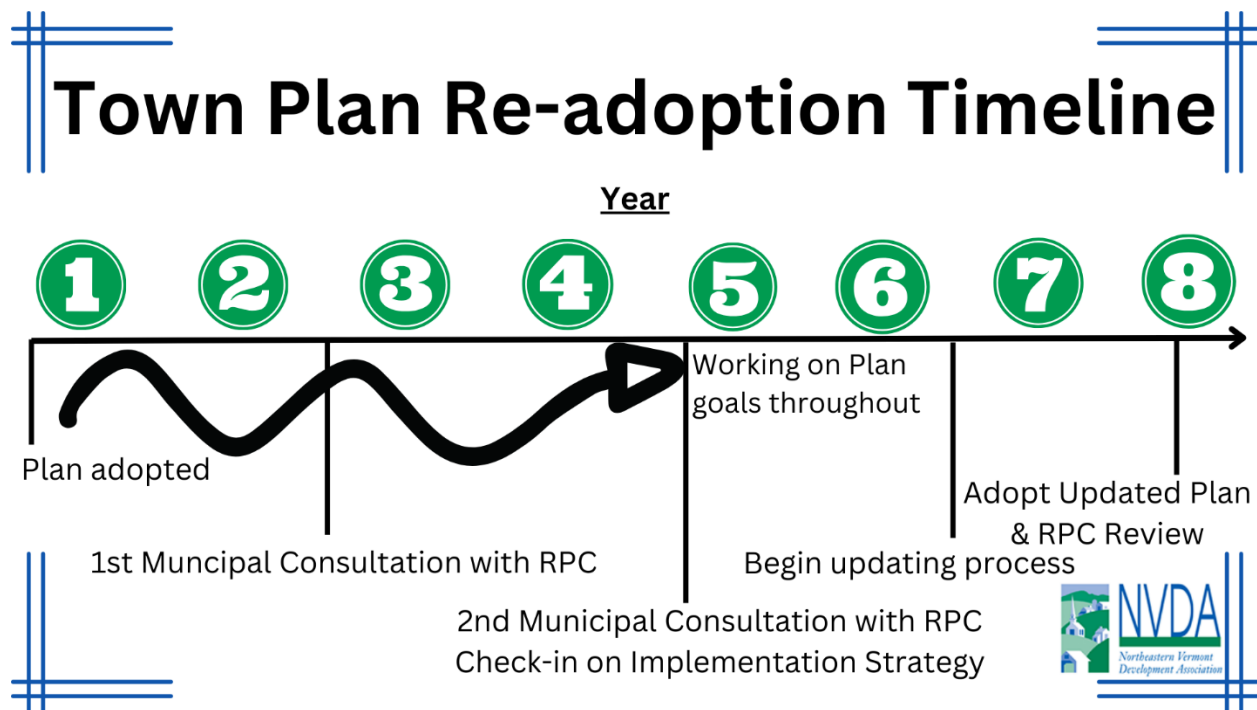
Anticipate release of FEMA's updated flood hazard areas

Support local preservation efforts in adjacent communities

Evaluating The Plan

Evaluating progress, both in performance and conformance with the community, is one of the most important steps in developing a comprehensive plan. The town's municipal government should work to create benchmarks for achievement as this plan is utilized and referenced, to build progress and capacity for the town. Instituting timelines, group evaluations, and developing committees to pursue goals in this plan are basic tools to ensure this plan is functional to the community and does not accumulate dust on the shelf.

Below is a basic timeline created by NVDA to keep the town in a basic framework towards updating their next plan. Between now and 2033, Walden should be actively working to implement this plan as it is adopted. With the guidance of two consultations with NVDA, the town's Planning Commission will be prepared to keep continuity through plan conformance, enabling a smoother process in updating their plan.



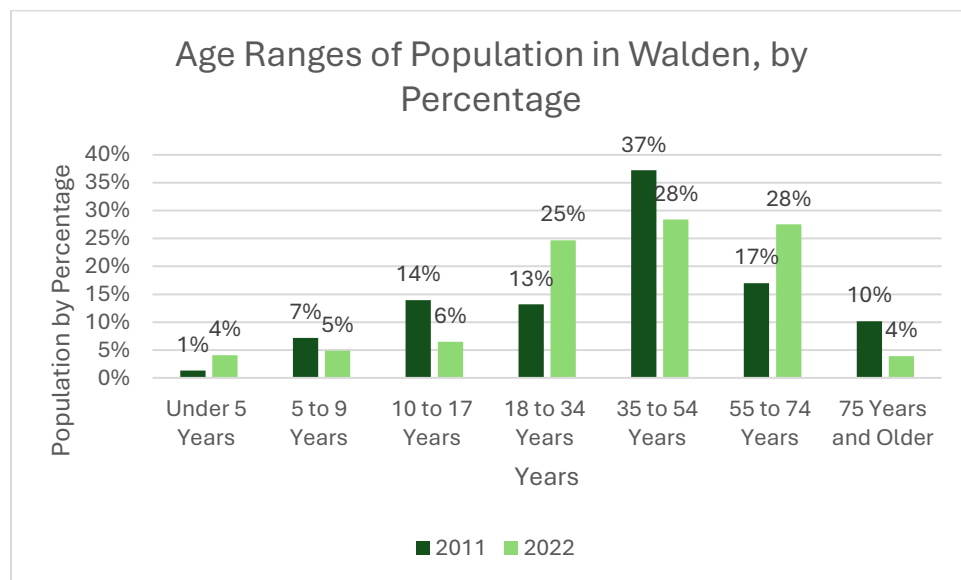
Appendix

A. Community Profile Data

Note: The following data are provided by the American Community Survey 5-year estimates. These data, estimates compiled from 2018-2022 and 2007-2011, are intended to give a snapshot of changes over approximately a ten-year span. Survey data is gathered monthly by U.S. Census representatives and are used to inform census data that is retrieved every ten years. Contextually, however they are not intended to be used as literal counts and therefore percentages are used to mark notable changes in community demographics. The data are used as a way to inform planning and decision making.

Data for population and housing, however, were pulled from the 2010 and 2020 U.S. Decennial Census and therefore are literal representations.

Walden has experienced growth rates in children under 5 years old, 18-34 years old, and 55-74 years old. A rise in the young adult population and young children can indicate that young working families are seeing potential in Walden as a place to raise children. However, declines in school-aged children and 35-54 years old who are further in their careers suggest challenges to support working families in Walden. The largest growth among age groups (18-34 years, at a 12% increase) represents people in their earlier working lives have moved to Walden. In 2022, roughly 14.6% of the population over 3 years of age were enrolled in school. Walden Elementary students attend high school throughout the region.



Despite the increase in occupied units, Walden does have roughly 32% of its housing inventory vacant, virtually all held for private seasonal uses as secondary homes. Walden's housing stock is virtually all single-unit housing, with about 10% representing mobile housing. Roughly 9% of the community are renters. The average household size is 2.4 people per unit. The way residents heat their homes are mixed with wood, fuel oil, or propane gas.

Seasonal Vacancy Rate	2011	2022	% Change
Walden	35.9%	32.4%	-3.5%
Caledonia County	17.5%	18.3%	0.8%
Northeast Kingdom	26.6	26.6%	0.0%

Walden as a whole has experienced an increase in their housing value, especially in the mid-range market. The median house value for owner-occupied units has increased by about 20.7% in Walden, a slightly slower rate than that of Caledonia County at 25.6%.

Median House Value for Owner-Occupied Housing in Walden Compared to Caledonia County			
	2011	2022	% Change
Walden	\$159,400	\$192,400	20.7%
Caledonia County	\$157,400	\$197,700	25.6%

Overall, housing in Walden maintained its modest value in affordability while production of housing has increased at a much higher rate at the local level (3.4%) than compared to the county level (0.4%). Coupling that unique trend with the higher increase in occupied housing and it is clear that Walden is facing a production and population strain. When you consider that there is no available rental housing or opportunities to downsize, the availability for people to move to Walden rests solely in their financial ability to build or purchase. A town with affordable land that is without zoning or bylaws to inform growth or protect land has no recourse to maintain its current character if the trends were to continue.

Income

Walden's median household income has grown at a much quicker rate than surrounding communities. Walden has seen an increase of 93% whereas Caledonia County has seen a 42% median income increase. This is a dramatic increase for a bedroom community that outsources amenities and no local working economy.

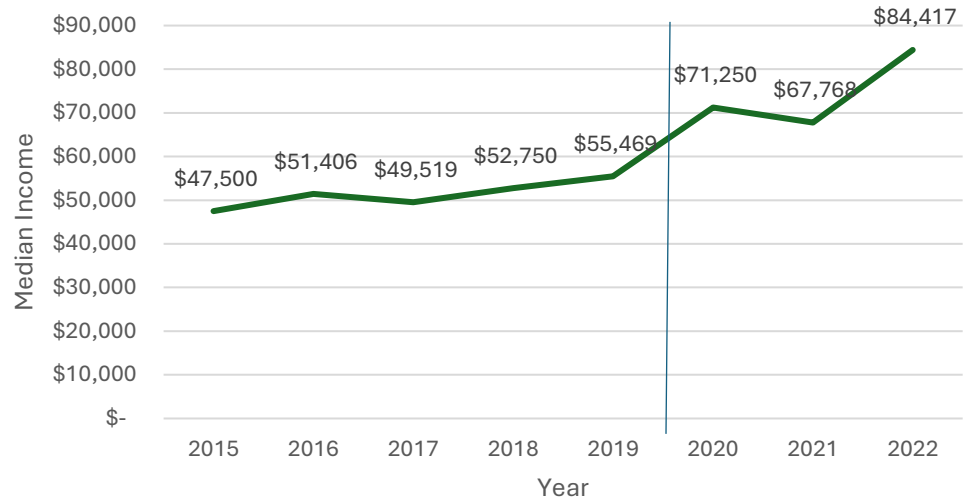
Median Household Income	2011	2022
Walden	\$43,833	\$84,417
Caledonia	\$44,433	\$62,964

In particular, median household incomes have increased dramatically since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. A year-by-year look at median incomes shows that residents that have moved to Walden since 2020 are arriving with higher incomes.

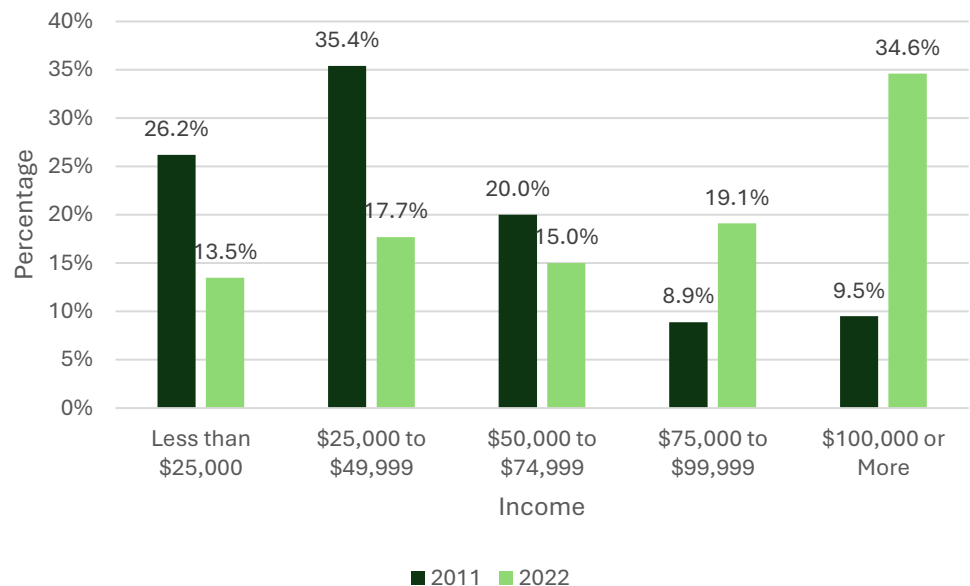
Households with higher incomes have grown substantially in the span of the two surveyed periods. 54% of households in Walden have a median income higher than \$75,000 and represent 35% more of the Walden's population in the last decade.

These trends are also outpacing county numbers. 2022 households

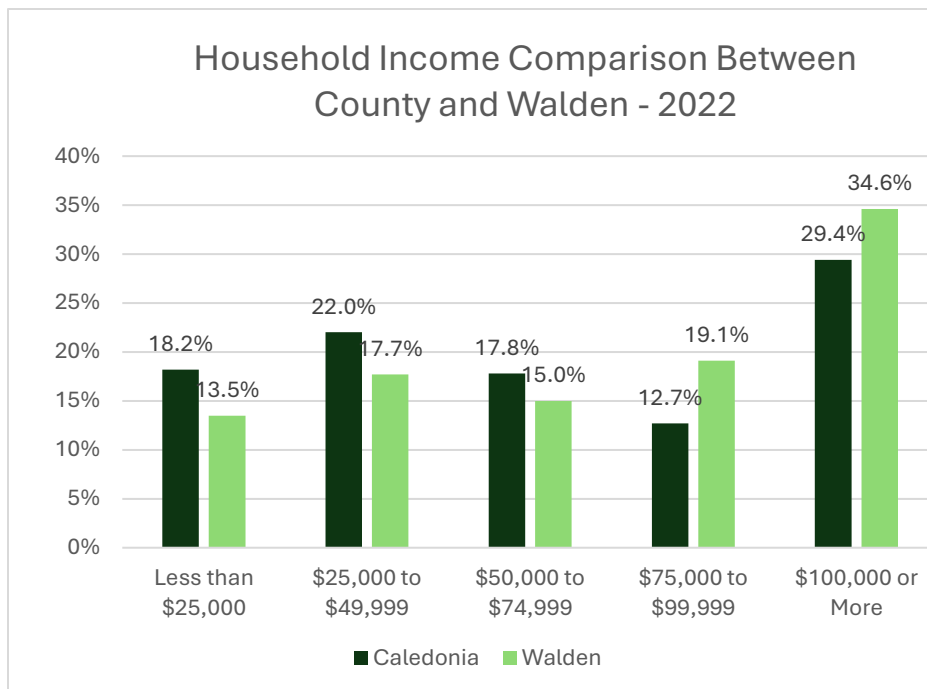
Median Household Income in Walden by Year



Household Income in Walden by Percentage



with median incomes higher than \$75,000 represent 11.6% more of Walden’s population when compared to Caledonia County as a whole. These demographic changes in income represent a change in needs and disposable income for Walden’s broader community.



Despite these patterns in Walden both in the last ten years and in comparison, to the county, many community members still have incomes that struggle to make ends meet. Considering the income levels used to determine [Medicaid eligibility](#) by the Department of Vermont Health Access along with the average household size of 2.4 in Walden (62% of Walden households are 1-2 people in 2022), as well as the median family income in Walden of \$84,417 in 2022, it’s fair to wonder if needs are being met for the population with household incomes below \$50,000. Once again, there is a disparity in lifestyle as indicated by the differences in income and needs of households and families.

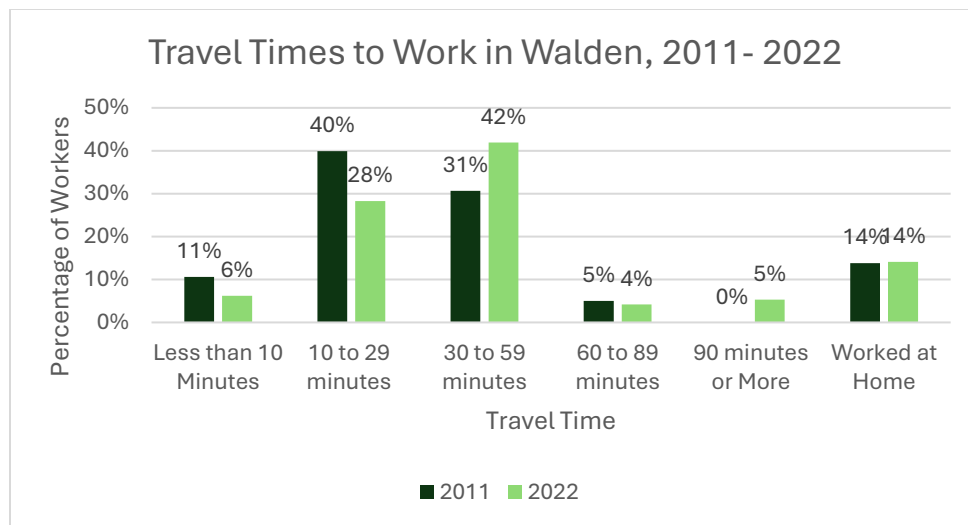
Employment

The civilian workforce has grown by about 52% from 2011 to 2022. In that same timespan, unemployment has decreased by over half, from 4.1% to 2.4%. Although the number of people in the community who’ve entered the workforce has increased, Walden still has about 25% of its population not in the workforce in 2022. More people working means more people commuting and can mean a greater desire for social services (childcare, schooling, social events, etc.).

Walden Population 16 Years and Over	2011	2022
In Labor Force	59.0%	74.8%
Not in Labor Force	41.1%	25.2%
Unemployed	4.1%	2.4%

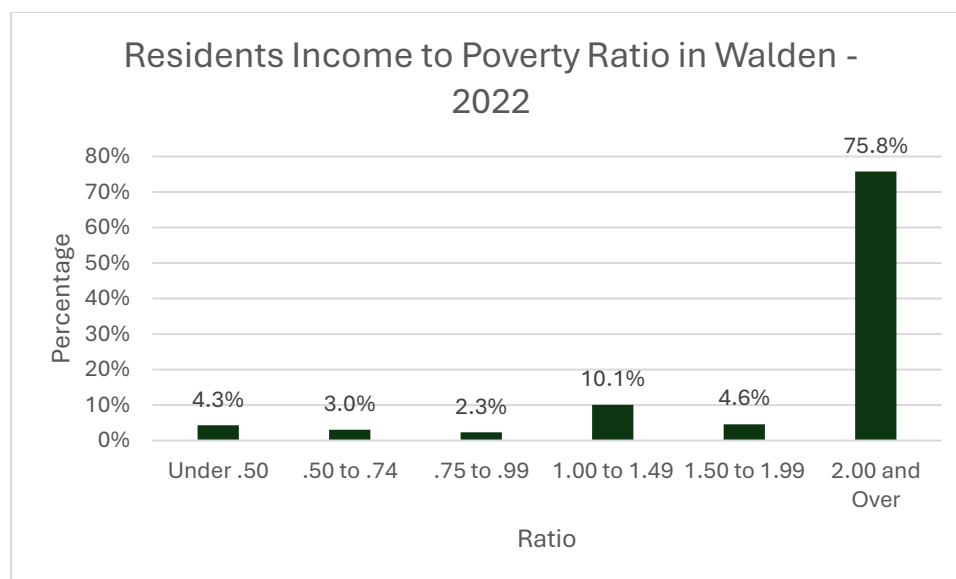
The general occupations most residents are employed under include Professional (17%), Construction (15%), Business/Finance (11%), and Office (10%). Travel times to work have increased dramatically since 2011 in Walden, including about a 5% increase of population that travels 90 minutes or more. Overall, over half of the community commutes 30 minutes or more to

work each day. The prevalence of people working from home has not changed since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.



Economic Stability

Most of Walden’s families are at or above the poverty level. However, about 10% of the total population has an income to poverty ratio below 1.0, which is described as [“doing poorly”](#). This means that this portion of the community’s income is at or below the [2020 Poverty Level](#). Despite this, a large portion (76%) of the population have an income-to-poverty ratio of 2.0 or over, or “doing ok”.



Of the owner-occupied housing in Walden, roughly 60% have a mortgage. Additionally, of all owner-occupied housing 23% are considered cost-burdened, meaning that they pay at least 30% of their income on ownership costs. Almost 10% are severely cost-burdened, paying over 50% of their income. Roughly 9% of children under the age of 18 are living in poverty.

B. Walden Survey Takeaways

(84 Responses Total)

January 24, 2024



- The majority of respondents are full-time residents **(88%)**
- **16%** of residents drive their children to school, ranging 5-25 miles a day, with most comments saying that St. Johnsbury Academy is their destination. One comment used the Park & Ride in West Danville.
- **42.5%** of respondents think Walden would benefit from a Town/Village Center. **22.5%** reported No preference/Unsure, leaving the room open for conversation and information on the topic. Comments included:
 - *I don't think it has to be a town center. It could just be a general store/cafe/meeting space combination.*
 - *do you mean a Town Hall? If so, would there be use for the one other than Town Meeting Day? If not, the answer is no. If there are plans to have a meeting space for multiple uses on a regular basis (once a month or so), then yes*
 - *It would be great to have a central gathering place, but creating a town center means focused growth in designated area and I do not think I like that idea*
 - *Can't think of a suitable location*
 - *More to the point - Walden needs to bring back the post office (have its own address) and general store. Walden school needs to its doors to the community for any purpose; i.e exercise, yoga class, meetings, singing. Anything!*
 - *Post Office & General Store with gas, diesel, and food to go*
- Based on the highest responses, in the next ten years respondents would like to see 1) Farming & Forestry **(81%)**, 2) Outdoor Recreation **(54%)**, and 3) Cottage Industry/Home-Based Business **(51%)**. Other topics with less than 50 % consensus include Small Retail (less than 3,000 sq ft, independently owned) **(40%)**, and Value-added Processing **(44%)**, and affordable housing **(40%)**. Comments include:
 - *Homesteading*
 - *Neighborhood interdependence networks based on ecological principles – Nature's health should be our priority*
 - *Some movement on adopting zoning regulations*
 - *Music festivals – food festivals*
 - *Diner or Soup and Sandwich place*
 - *Walden doesn't have the density to support most retail/business. Danville and Hardwick are nearby and fill those needs. We should focus on what is achievable in Walden. Seniors need healthcare, which is too far from Walden, so pushing senior housing here doesn't make sense to me. I'm half time in Walden, half time in Boston, and get all my health services in Boston*
 - *No motorized recreation*
 - *We don't need anymore microbreweries*

- *Music festival that raise money for local churches, clubs, etc.*
- *All ages community recreation center (indoor/outdoor)*
- *Farming and music festivals*
- *More town-wide gatherings*
- Based on the highest responses, respondents like the following about living in Walden: 1) I can live close to the land (**79%**) and 2) It's beautiful (**76%**), and 3) I like the small-town environment (**61%**). Access to recreation, affordability, and school choice for high school were also considerations. Comments include:
 - *You can see stars at night. You can see foxes, deer, owls, beavers, and even a moose if you're lucky*
 - *Peacefulness, no light pollution, surrounded by nature and the stars in the night sky*
 - *I like access to nature, peace, and quiet, low population density, access to the stars at night without significant light pollution. Old Vermont culture*
 - *I love living on Coles Pond*
 - *No zoning*
 - *Not densely populated and we hope it remains this way; privacy*
 - *No zoning*
 - *Privacy*
 - *Rural Environment*
 - *No Zoning- let me pay my taxes and decide what I do with my property*
 - *It's where I grew up*
 - *Look*
 - *The town clerks are very friendly and helpful*
- Based on the highest responses, respondents find the following most challenging living in Walden: 1) Inadequate internet/cell service (**49%**), and 2) Lack of Village Center (**32%**), and 3) The taxes are high (**30%**). Note that these have less than 50% consensus. Comments include:
 - *Attitude of superiority by urban transplants, many of whom that all "woodchucks" are stupid/racists/right-wingers*
 - *If the global system collapsed tomorrow, we wouldn't have a plan in place to support one another. Also, we have cell reception AND WE DON'T WANT IT!*
 - *Ongoing property tax increases*
 - *Ongoing increases in property taxes*
 - *Not having our own zip code! I am constantly battling companies to explain to them that I live in Walden but my address is Hardwick*
 - *It's becoming developed and we are losing wildlife*
 - *Lack of resident involvement in town government and community organizations*
 - *Inadequate internet/cell*
 - *Utilities are expensive, power outages. There is not enough outreach for encouraging participation in town government. Internet is terrible, but I don't care about cell service*
 - *Internet is the bane of my existence, but I see help on the horizon with NEK Broadband...cell service is not a priority at all. Public transportation to connect with Route 2 commuter and Morrisville would be great!*
 - *Most of the above (choices) seem like positives*
 - *Illegal activity like atv's on roads, guns day and night, and fireworks year-round all without police involvement*
 - *If you choose to live here, there are no challenges!*
- **What defines Walden and makes it a special place?**

Agriculture and forestry	75%
Large blocks of forest/farm land	75%
Small-town environment	70%
Our wildlife management area	65%
The Fire Department	51%
Outdoor recreation opportunities	50%
Amount of conserved land (Vermont Land Trust and Current Use)	47%
The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail	45%
Number of farms	43%
Sense of history	40%
A commitment of stewardship	28%
Pre-K-8 school that is well supported by the community	24%
The Community Library	23%
Church/Community dinners	11%

“Amount of conserved land” was written additionally on three occasions. Other comments include:

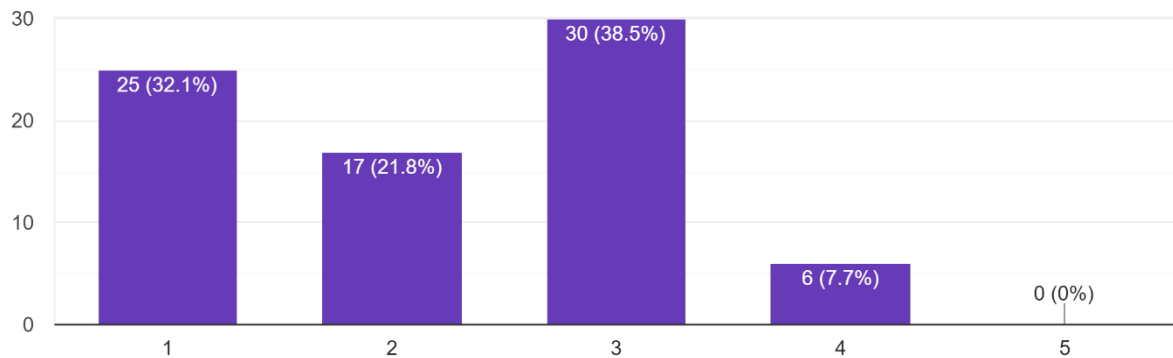
- *People who make a long-term commitment to live here – families for generations and new people who make Walden their forever home*
- *Most people mind their own business*
- *That there are still roads without power lines, and that people on those roads live off-grid (a good thing)*
- *Wildlife, quiet, beauty, and no industrial development, like telecom towers and wind towers and solar installations. We love looking at the stars at night (we appreciate the night sky). Seeing moose in our fields. The Fosters, Greaves, and Augeris make Walden special. We love hearing the trees pop when it is -20.*
- *Commitment to stewardship needs to be developed*
- *Lack of zoning*
- *The lack of light pollution. The beautiful natural landscape*
- *The lack of industrial development*

- Based on the highest responses, respondents find that taxes **(81%)**, heating/fuel **(52%)**, and maintenance/upkeep **(44%)** contributed most to their housing costs. Comments include:
 - *Groceries*
 - *Electric, internet*
 - *Internet. Cable internet isn't available to me so I have to pay for data plans which are unreliable and expensive with everything being technology based now.*
 - *What contributes the most? Then you should not choose more than one*
 - *Needing a car*

- **65%** of respondents expected a member of their family to need elderly care in the next 5-10 years. More affordable housing was the only other choice with more than one response at **19%**.

How hard or how easy is it for you to access health care?

78 responses



1 = Very Easy 2= Somewhat easy 3= Neutral 4=Somewhat difficult 5= Very difficult

- Regarding residential development over the past decade, **29%** of respondents felt that the rate of residential development is just right, **29%** of respondents felt there is not enough good housing for seniors who want to live independently, **28%** felt residential development is encroaching into natural assets and agricultural lands, and **29%** felt there are not enough affordable rental options. A comment was made that there should have been an option to check that said, “There is not enough affordable housing for young people and families”.
- 63%** of the respondents’ farm in some capacity, with **28%** that keep livestock and/or grow vegetables for personal consumption. **15%** said farming is their primary occupation, with another **16%** being part-time producers/growers.

What areas should Walden focus on over the next eight years?

	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Not a Priority
Address speeding vehicles	22	15	20	13
Make Walden more resilient to flooding	14	25	16	10
Create more opportunities for community events	16	28	17	7
Establish better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure	12	16	17	14
Encourage investment in affordable housing	15	13	18	12
Encourage investment in senior housing	9	20	19	10
Promote local business	18	25	13	2
Improve internet access/cell services	32	5	5	6
Protect agriculture and forest lands	36	10	2	0

Promote conservation of natural resources	35	9	4	0
Establish a Conservation Commission	12	19	9	6
Encourage investment in rental housing	4	11	16	12
Encourage outdoor services (e.g. hiking, cross country skiing, snowmobiling)	18	13	12	3
Address noise disturbances	7	8	14	16
Increase police protection/highway patrolling	13	15	17	8
Identify appropriate sites for large scale renewable energy generation (wind, solar, hydro)	9	12	11	17
Developing an Energy Commission	5	10	17	14

Are any of the following a concern to you?

Litter along the road	70%
Loss of farm/forest land	63%
Trash/litter/burn barrels	54%
Environmental pollutants	54%
Water quality	52%
Invasive Species	52%
Species protection	44%
Runoff from roads	44%
Rural residential sprawl	41%
Speeding in town	41%
Agricultural practices that harm the environment	41%
Industrial/utility scale wind turbines	30%
Noise	13%
Lack of electric vehicle chargers	7%
Light pollution	7%

Comments include:

- *Cell towers, wifi transmitters, and the possibility (however remote) that Walden becomes the site of the next landfill, once Coventry is closed.*
- *Telecom towers, electromagnetic emission, in general*
- *Lack of community events*
- *My greatest concern is global warming and related issues*
- *Biased questionnaires*
- *No 4-wheelers, motocross cycles ANYWHERE in town*
- *Guns, fireworks, atv's*
- *The speeding along town roads*
- *Lack of gathering spaces*
- *Lack of access to sports and activities for the school*

- **49%** of respondents use wood as their primary heating source. **32% use propane, and 9% use wood pellets. Only 5% uses fuel oil.** 66% said they did not want an energy audit if it were affordable.
- Based on the highest responses, respondents would like to receive information or training on wildlife habitat improvement (**47%**), forest and woodlot management (**38%**), and **tax and estate planning (34%). Wetland preservation, succession planning, and soil and water conservation all has 28%.**

What is the **BEST** way to let you know of meetings, events, decisions and what is happening in Walden?

Front Porch Forum	83%
An enhanced Walden webpage	38%
E-Newsletter	33%
A proposed Walden Facebook page	23%
Newspaper notices	17%
In-town postings	17%
Information sent home with child from school	5%

Comments include: Radio; phone call to landline; mailings; email; video recordings of selectboard meetings; Roger Fox's updates; local postings in nearby general; not everyone has a computer; post at corner stop inn shop

Is there anything else you would like us to know?

Rather than trying to make Walden attractive to a transplant from Boston who wants to telecommute, let's try to make Walden attractive to Amish farm families. In other words, don't pander to those who say we "need" broadband in every home in order to be an attractive place to live.

We should be asking bigger questions like, can Walden feed its residents as industrial collapse advances? Can we help keep each other warm and clothed? Can we support families with young kids in these conditions? What is our plan to protect Nature from exploitation when things become dire? How can we make the ecology of Walden healthier than when we arrived? How can we live in healthy reciprocity with the first Walden residents, bear, moose, bobcat, beaver, birds? How can we protect pollinators? And please write into the plan that we will not accept industrial wind, solar or telecom towers in Walden.

I would like to see Walden promote local sustainability for our small community

The Town Crew does an excellent job and is always there if needed

I live here because there is no major shops. i like the small town just the way it is.

Crime should be of concern. Barking dogs that affect neighbors. Road intersections should be built up and safer. Lowered speed limit along Rt 15 Cabot Rd Bailey Hazen South Walden intersection. More police presence. The town needs a level of zoning to protect neighbors investments. Sex offenders should have to register in this town if they own property here, especially when it's next to a daycare. More police. Walden Watch signs posted everywhere. More police.

I love this town. I think it's just about perfect. Don't go changing too much here

Keep Walden wild

I love Walden and while I'm open to increasing the small town feelings with community events and a possible town center, I'm not interested in changing it into a busier town or city-like town. I stay here for the privacy, forests, farms, uniqueness, and the feeling like I know my neighbors!

I think you missed an option in the question; "Regarding residential development over the past decade: What statements do you agree with?" you did not include "Residential Housing opportunities have been limited by lack of new housing for middle and low income people."

I think what would make Walden better is a Mayor or some entity to boost awareness of civic info, and also community and cultural events. It happens on a small scale, but with no centrally located town center, folks are pulled toward other town centers which lie in 3 or 4 different directions. I think this function used to be served by the churches, but no more--this is a different time.

Love living in Walden

While I understand the need for affordable housing in Vermont, I think it's best located near the jobs and services those residents need (i.e. in towns like Hardwick, St. J, etc, where folks can walk to work, school, stores, jobs). Walden seems to me to be far better suited to uses that require wide open spaces such as farming, forestry, recreation. Getting fiber installed for fast Internet access would support the many folks who are now working from home - there are a lot of young professionals in places like Boston or New York who'd happily work from far less expensive homes in Walden if they could. Senior housing in Walden, far from medical support services, doesn't make sense to me.

Thank you!!

We like the town the way it is. We hope it doesn't become like the town we left.

This questionnaire is condescending and I find it offensive. No, I'm liberal.

Walden has a lack of community feeling. Having no zoning has led to poor land management in areas of Walden by land owners. People using their land as junkyards is concerning for the environmental impact. The speeds at the intersection of Route 15 with Cabot Rd and Bayley Hazen is unsafe with the poor visibility pulling onto Route 15.

I would like to see the volunteer firefighters receive a tax discount or another meaningful recognition of their valuable service. Please do not lump cell phone and internet service together. Internet service is imperative for our business and I feel that NEK Broadband is going to address that. I do not require any cell service and certainly do not want any towers in Walden.

I do not use a cell phone and am not in favor of building cell towers in Walden.

Renters who pay no property taxes are able to vote on town expenditures. Non-resident tax payers have no input on how money is spent. I understand there is no way around it. I have great respect for the volunteer fire department.

Absolutely no industrial wind or cell towers in Walden ever! Walden is a bedroom community and should remain so. Towers here would be against the public good. Transplanted Vermonters have unreasonable expectations in this rural environment, whether it be broadband to work remotely or doing anything they want with ATVs and guns. They should not be able to influence local culture to the detriment of tenured residents.

No towers for wind or cell/internet

We visit the Town Plan issue about every 10 years. Can we make it 20?

Our selectboard needs Selectboard Institute training provided by VLCT.

No zoning

Has Walden considered a community solar farm?

Free community dinners (Noyesville Church? South Walden Church?), a supply hub for community members to go to for emergencies or other kinds of help needed, multiple town centers that we can walk or bike to, have a Walden Northeast Kingdom Learning Service, expand the library, music park(s), a town without EMF's, light pollution and industrial scale renewable energy projects (keep it local and small), minimal pavement and we need an excavator to efficiently address flooding issues with our roads.

Some of these questions are hard to answer. More than yes or no. I do appreciate the challenge of a questionnaire. Thanks for doing it. Appreciate the time and energy put in.

We don't want wind towers or cell towers in town. We farm and raise bees. If we want to support farming and food growing we cannot have cell towers! (see studies on microwave radiation effects on bees at saferemr.com) Keep Walden Natural and Wild. Don't let it become an industrial park. Put a statement in the plan addressing this .

Re: Town Centers - We have to consider the people who live in the places that would be designated "centers". They should be consulted. People who want a town center want it in one of the 'other' neighborhoods, not their own.