



TOWN OF WALTHAM
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NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

The Waltham Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on September 23rd, 2024 at the Waltham Town Hall, 2053 Maple Street commencing at 5:30 PM to solicit public testimony on proposed amendments to the Town Plan of Waltham. The planning commission will discuss and vote on the proposed changes directly after this public hearing.

Summary of Amendments

The updated Plan includes newer data from the Agency of Natural Resources delineating forest blocks, connectivity blocks, and priority wetlands. As a result, the Natural Resources, Land Use and Flood Resiliency sections of the plan have been substantially expanded to incorporate this information and to meet the new requirements of 24 V.S.A. §4382.

The updated Plan includes the results of a resident survey, the most current demographic, labor market and housing data as well as updated maps. Other sections of the plan have also been updated and revised to reflect progress on certain goals (such as renovation of Town Hall), and the Plan has been reorganized to include goals and objectives within each respective section, along with a separate implementation section.

The previously approved Enhanced Energy Plan is summarized in the updated Plan and is incorporated, without changes, as an Appendix. It is not attached, but it is available on request.

A copy of the Draft 2024 Town Plan is available at: Waltham Town Offices during regular business hours of 9 am to 3 pm Tuesdays and Thursdays, or at <https://www.walthamvt.org/> under [Resident Resources](#). For more information, contact the Town Clerks office at waltham.vt@gmail.com and at 1 (802) 877- 3641.

Zoom Meeting Information

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87061039363?pwd=SCNjwL7E4nHuJl4SYRnQuNYS9K2C9C.1>

Meeting ID: 870 6103 9363

Passcode: 266812

Waltham Town Plan



“Corcoran’s on Green Street” by Rob Popick

Approved by The Waltham Planning Commission 8/19/2024

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Photo 1: **Caption**

Introduction

On behalf of all the residents and landowners in the Town of Waltham, the Planning Commission offers the following Waltham Town Plan. We have worked hard to create a forward-looking plan that will help guide our town in the coming years. This Town Plan has been updated with a great deal of help from the Addison County Regional Planning Commission to comply with the current Vermont State municipal planning requirements.

We have endeavored to create a Plan with a vision which balances private property rights with stewardship of important community assets. Waltham is a very special place, and we hope that most of its residents appreciate the shared vision put forth in the Plan and support the Town in its efforts to work towards this vision.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

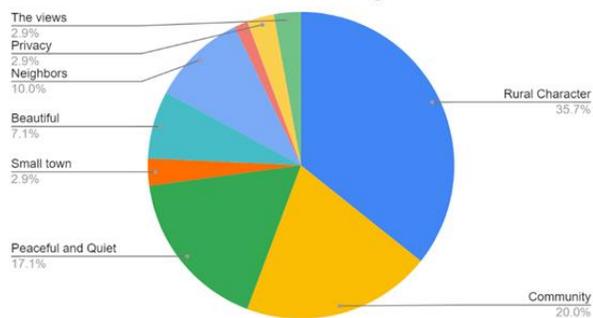
Warmest Regards,
The Waltham Planning Commission

Vision for Waltham

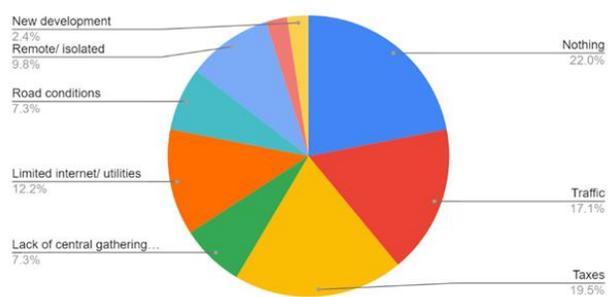
The Waltham Town Plan sets forth a vision for the future planning of Waltham. This document looks at historical data and statistics as well as describing current conditions, character, and challenges. Based on this content, the plan establishes goals, objectives and actions intended to implement the planning vision. This Plan will serve as a comprehensive reference for Waltham residents and local officials, guiding public policy and future community planning decisions.

In the summer of 2023, the Waltham planning Commission conducted a community survey designed to understand how residents see Waltham, their likes and dislikes, hopes and ideas for the future. The results of this survey were used to inform the guiding principles and vision statement for the 2024 municipal plan update. See survey question examples below.

What Do You Love About Living in Waltham?



Is There Anything you Don't Like About Living in Waltham?



What planning initiatives would you like to see in Waltham?

- Better access to outdoor amenities
- Preservation/ Protection of the natural environment
- Increase bicycle and pedestrian safety
- Invest in public facilities

*Waltham seeks to preserve and enhance the natural and timeless beauty and the unique features of this special place. These features include our vistas, forests, natural habitats, rural landscape, recreational opportunities, and historic structures. Waltham desires to preserve and enhance its strong sense of community, neighborliness and stewardship, while attracting and enabling families and others to settle here. **2024 Vision Statement***

Waltham Today

Introduction

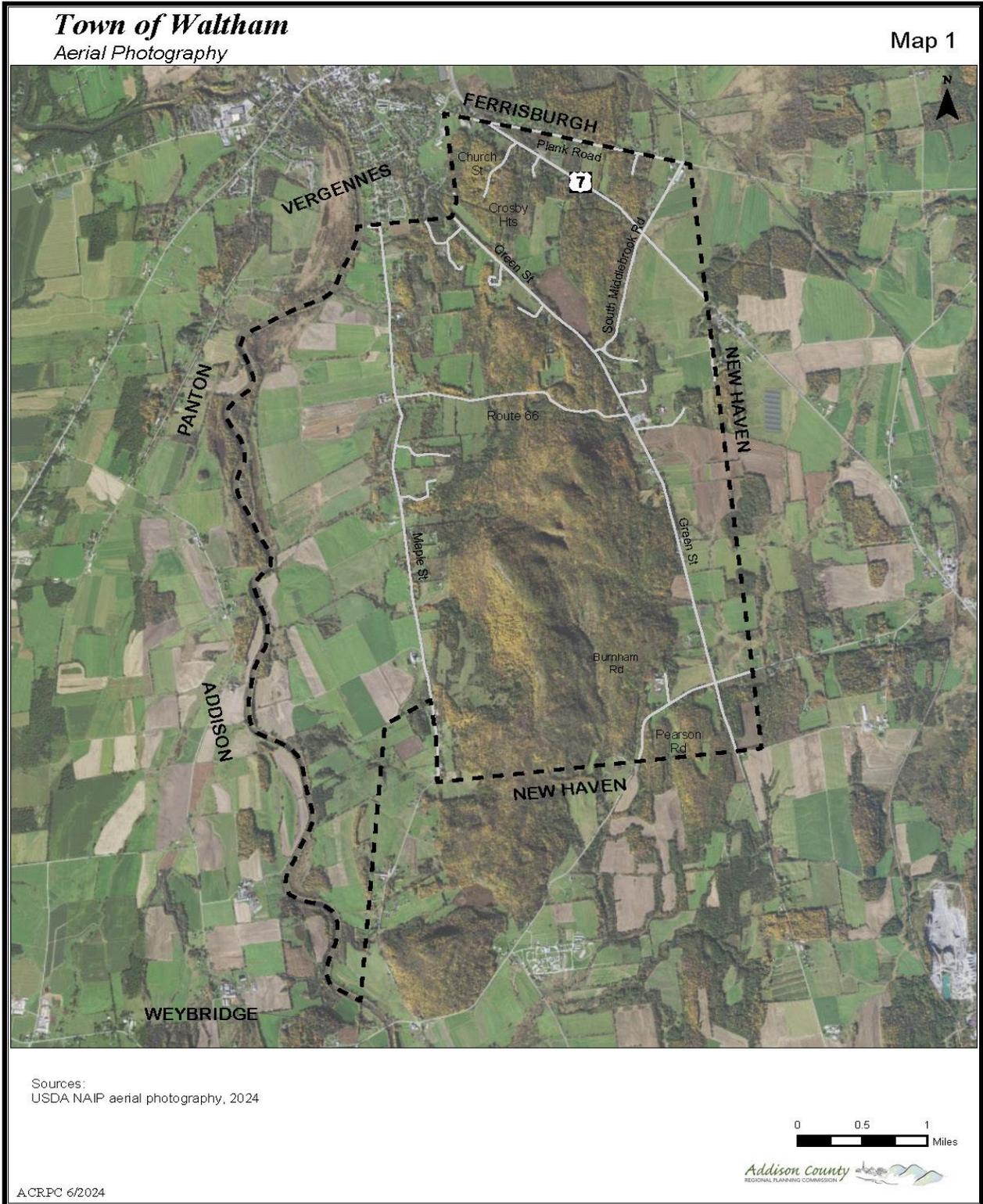
Waltham, a small, rural town lies just south of Vergennes near the center of Addison County in west-central Vermont. Otter Creek flows along the western boundary of the Town. Plank Road separates Waltham from Ferrisburgh on the north. Straight administrative lines separate Waltham from New Haven on the south and east. Buck Mountain, the primary topographical feature in Waltham stands in the center of town south of Route 66.

Population change is tied directly to the availability of local jobs, housing stock and children leaving the state, temporarily or permanently. Waltham’s population, as recorded by the 2020 Decennial Census, stands at 446. The population dropped 40 residents since 2010, marking this the first period of population decline since the 1960 decennial count. In 2022, the population decreased again by 6 people for a total of 440, as determined by the Waltham town records.

Although most people work outside of Waltham, Waltham’s relatively small population allows most residents to know many of their neighbors. Waltham’s smallness enables residents – old and new – to meet and get to know one another, creating community. Waltham desires to preserve its strong sense of community, neighborliness, and stewardship. We are grateful and proud of our community’s agricultural roots and wish to preserve them. Farming activity predominates along the Otter Creek Valley and east of Buck Mountain. This working landscape promotes Waltham’s scenic landscape and rural values. These values are reinforced by our shared civic engagements including town meetings, school events, and community events at the town hall. This Plan seeks to foster, preserve, and promote Waltham’s community values.

Table 1: Vital Statistics for the Town of Waltham, VT	2000	2010	2020	2022**	Road Statistics	2000	2010	2022
Total Population	479	486	446	440*	Total Roads	13.59	13.59	13.59
People Under 18	136	95	84	57	State Highways	2.56	2.56	2.56
People Over 65	56	90	178	178	Town Roads	11.03	11.03	11.03
Median Age	40.9	48.1	52	58.5	Paved	7.39	7.39	9.09
Number of Households	184	240	188	170	Gravel	3.29	3.29	1.61
Average Household Size (people)	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.5	Land Use	2002	2012	2016
Housing Units	185	270	216	249*	Total acreage	5890	5890	5890
Owner Occupied	155	240	160	226.6*	Farmland	3593	3593	3022
Renter Occupied	30	30	43	23	Forestland	1767	1767	2445
Median Household Income	\$46,389	\$61,667	\$86,250	\$103,500	other land use	766	766	442
<i>Sources: U.S. Census, UVM Land Use land Cover Maps</i>								
<i>* Data from Waltham Grand List, **Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey, 5-year estimate</i>								

Map 1: Aerial Photography



Roots and Traditions

Waltham, a rural town of only nine square miles, lies in the broad valley of the Otter Creek south of the City of Vergennes. It was settled after the American Revolution, mostly by small farmers. Buck Mountain, which bisects the town, gets its name from one of the old families in the area. It remains forested and largely uninhabited. Today, most of the open land continues to be used for diversified agriculture. A significant part of the open land in Waltham, especially along Otter Creek, has been conserved for agricultural purposes.

Waltham never had a charter of its own. Instead, it came about through an unusual set of circumstances. When Vergennes was incorporated out of parts of New Haven, Ferrisburgh and Panton it was given 1,200 acres. History tells there was some feeling in the neighborhood that more land from New Haven should have been included so in 1791 about three square miles were taken from New Haven and given to Vergennes. That proved an equally unpopular move, so in 1796 the extra acreage was taken away from Vergennes and incorporated into a separate town. When the residents of the new town held their first town meeting they elected Phineas Brown moderator. He suggested that this town be named for his hometown of Waltham in Massachusetts. In that city it is said that the name derives from Waltham in England. “Walt” meaning woods or forest and “ham” meaning home, hence “forest home”. The new Vermont town had fine stands of ash, beech, birch, butternut, maple, oak and walnut so the name fit appropriately. In 1804 a piece of Addison was added to Waltham giving Waltham its irregular shape and present size.

Waltham’s first major piece of infrastructure, the Waltham Turnpike, crossed the town from 1808 to 1828. Waltham has never had its own post office, village, or railroad station – most of the needs of its residents have been met by the City of Vergennes and the larger towns surrounding it. Waltham’s historic settlement pattern has been altered but has not been significantly changed by modern developments (See Map 2: Settlement Patterns in Waltham, 1857, Pg. - 12 - for a comparison). Farm fields still predominate along Maple and Green Street. Woodlands predominate on the steep slopes and thin soils of Buck Mountain. Residential development continues to be centered in the northern part of town on the outskirts of Vergennes. Pockets of open land help keep neighborhoods distinct. (See Map 3: Generalized Land Cover/Land Use, Pg. - 14 -). Several well-preserved houses, a few

Land Cover by Percent



Source: US NLCD, 2016.

Figure 1: Waltham Land Cover By Percent

TOWN OF WALTHAM Sites listed in the State Register of Historic Places (For locations see town map.)

1 House, c.1885
Vernacular-Italianate style, gable roof, 2½ stories.
Features: cornice caps, cornice brackets.
Related carriage barn.

2 House, c.1860
Gothic Revival style, Georgian plan.
Features: Gothic wall dormer, polychrome slate, Italianate porch, distinctive door, rafter tails, bargeboard.

3 House, c.1805
Stone, Cape Cod.
Features: porch.
Related barn.

4 House, c.1815
Stone, gable roof, 1½ stories.
Related late bank barn, shed.
Features: ventilators.

5 House, c.1840/c.1865



Brick, gable roof, 1½ stories.
Features: lintels, cornice brackets, Gothic Revival porch.
Related late bank barn, carriage barn.
Features: transom.

6 E. F. Benton Farm

a. House, c.1830
Georgian plan.
b. Stable, c.1880
Vernacular-Italianate style.
Features: hoist, cupola.
c. Late Bank Barn, c.1910
Gambrel roof.
Features: ventilators, highdrive, hoist.
d. Chicken Coop, 1880
Gambrel roof.
e. Barn, c.1920
f. Sugarhouse, c.1920
Features: ventilator.
g. Barn, c.1890
Features: rafter tails.

7 House, c.1840
Vernacular-Greek Revival style, Georgian plan.
Features: entry entablature, entry pilasters, sidelights.
Related smokehouse.

8 House, c.1820
Georgian plan.
Features: sidelights.

9 House, c.1835
Greek Revival style, brick, sidehall plan, 1½ stories.
Features: full entablature, corner pilasters, entry entablature, entry pilasters, sidelights.
Related barn.

10 School, c.1845
Gable roof, 1 story.
Features: transom, entry entablature, bank of windows.

11 (Farm)

a. House, c.1850
Vernacular-Greek Revival style, sidehall plan, 1½ stories.
Features: entry entablature, corner pilasters, entry pilasters, reveals, sidelights, cornerblocks.
b. Barn, c.1850
Features: carriage bays, transom.
c. Carriage Barn, c.1870
Features: carriage bays.
d. Granary, c.1910



e. Shed, c.1980

12 Old Saxton Farm

a. House, c.1820
Vernacular-Federal style, brick, Georgian plan.
Features: gable fanlight, lintels, sidelights.
b. Carriage Barn, c.1900
Features: rafter tails.
c. Barn, c.1865
Features: cornice brackets, unusual window.
d. Granary, c.1870
Features: cornice brackets.
e. Silo, c.1930
f. Milkhouse, c.1920

13 House, c.1830/c.1870
Vernacular-Italianate style, hip roof, 2 stories.
Features: cornice brackets, corner pilasters, entry pilasters, sidelights, porch.
Related late bank barn.
Features: cupola, peaked lintelboards, carriage bays.

14 Late Bank Barn, c.1880
Architect/builder: Alanson Edgerton
Features: cupola, weathervane.
Related ground stable barn.
Features: ventilators.

15 Everts Farm
a. House, c.1870
Italianate style, hip roof, 2 stories.
Features: corner pilasters, peaked lintelboards, cornice brackets, bay window, enriched frieze, porch.
b. Carriage Barn, c.1870
c. Carriage Barn, c.1890
Features: rafter tails.
d. House, c.1930
e. Barn, c.1880
f. Shed, c.1970
Board and batten.
g. Ground Stable Barn, 1878
Features: belvedere, weathervane, unusual window.
h. House, c.1940
Gable roof, 2 stories.
i. Shed, c.1970
j. Silo, c.1970
k. Shed, 1969
Board and batten.

16 House, c.1830
Vernacular-Greek Revival style, brick, Georgian plan.
Features: sidelights, cornerblocks, lintels, marble, gable fanlight, triangular window.

17 Sprague Farm
a. House, c.1855
Classic Cottage.
Features: cornerblocks, Queen Anne porch.
b. Carriage Barn, c.1865
Features: carriage bays, weathervane.
c. Granary, c.1855
d. Garage, c.1920
Features: rafter tails.
e. Shed, c.1920
f. Shed, c.1960
g. Shed, c.1940

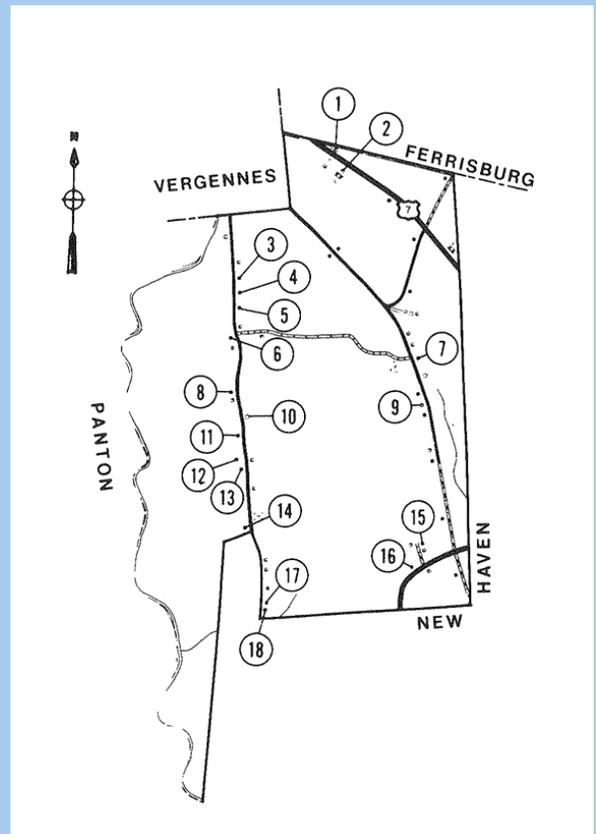
18 House, c.1850



Greek Revival style, Georgian plan.
Features: corner pilasters, entry entablature, entry pilasters, sidelights.

artifacts can be found in Waltham, typically near water and along ridge and mountain tops. Waltham encourages all its landowners to be good stewards of their property to help preserve significant artifacts and resources.

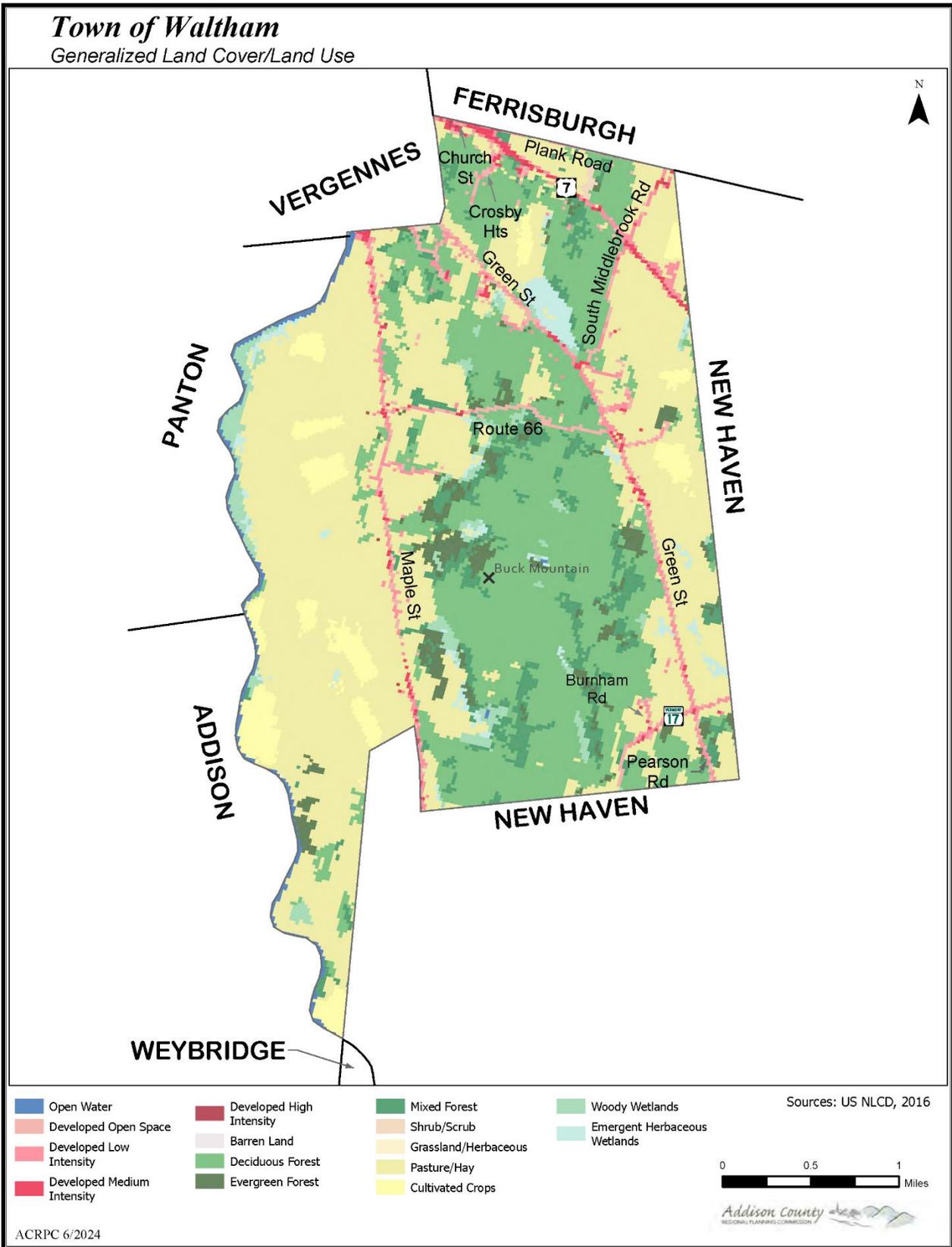
Figure 2: Sites Listed in the State Register of Historic



Places

Data Courtesy of: Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, The Historic Architecture of Addison County--Vermont State Register of Historic Places, 1992

Town of Waltham
Generalized Land Cover/Land Use



Waltham Today: Goals and Objectives	
Goal 1	Preserve the historic and cultural traditions, structures and values that comprise Waltham’s rural character and make it a special place to live.
Objective A	Encourage citizens to preserve significant historic and pre-historic resources. Encourage application for Historic Registry if appropriate.
Objective B	Support maintenance and preservation work of the Cemetery Commission. Inventory and map sites.
Goal 2	Foster and continue to build a sense of community. Maintain and promote opportunities and places for rural neighbors to meet and converse.
Objective A	Support the on-going improvements and renovation work on the Town Hall and grounds.
Objective B	Preserve and promote Town Meeting as a rural democratic method of government and use it as an opportunity to create community.



Photo 2: Waltham Town Hall

Population & Housing

Population

For nearly the entire nineteenth century Waltham had a population of about 250 people. In 1910 the population declined to about 200 and remained around that level for the next 60 years. Between 1960 and 1990 Waltham’s population more than doubled from about 200 to over 450. Waltham’s population growth rate during the 1980s exceeded the state average, with the population in Waltham increasing by 15.2 % compared to the statewide population growth rate of 10% during the same time. People moving into Waltham, rather than unusual rates of birth or death, is the reason for the elevated rate.

Waltham’s growth rate slowed significantly moving into the twenty-first century and has declined in the last twelve years. The 2020 population numbers are well below the State of Vermont’s earlier projected low population estimates for Waltham at 492. The 2020 Decennial Census, however, recorded the population at 446. Data from the Town Clerk’s office indicates that the population dropped again to 440 in 2022. Due to Waltham’s small population and the high margin of error seen in the 2020 US Decennial Census, it is important to look at population trends and comparisons to current regional and state population counts.

The present make-up of Waltham’s population is relatively older than county and state averages. As of the 2020 census, Waltham’s median age was 52 years (up from 48.12 years in 2010), compared to a county average of 43.7 years (up from 40.4 years in 2010) and a state average of 42.8 years (up from 41.0 years in 2010). The median age in 2022 in Waltham, according to the American Community Survey (ACS) was 58.5. This data indicates that Waltham is an older community in a state with the second oldest population in the nation. As of 2020, Waltham’s population of people under age 18 years was

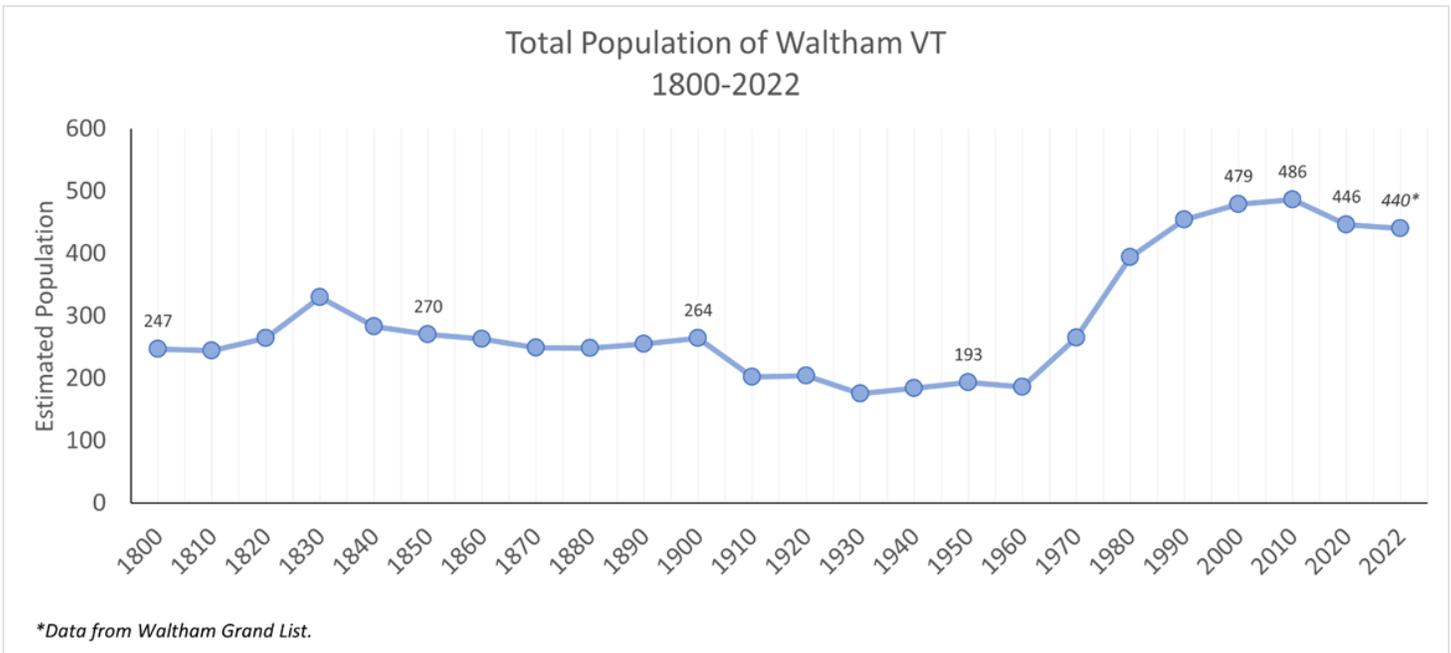


Figure 3: Waltham Population 1800 – 2022; Source: 2020 US Decennial Census

level with county and state numbers at 17%. Waltham’s percentage of people over 65, however, was at 36% in 2020 versus a county average of 20% and a statewide average of 19.4%. Accordingly, Waltham’s population presents many of the same challenges stemming from an ageing population that the rest of the state will continue to face. These include:

1. Keeping older people active in the community.
2. Increased elder services for residents, senior living facilities and medical services.
3. Providing for older people to remain in their homes.
4. Declining school age population.

Waltham recognizes that because of its small, rural nature, its local government cannot implement programs to address these issues. Many of the human services needed stem from State or regional resources. However, this Plan does encourage increased density and affordability of housing in the Northern Residential Land Use Area, which should encourage school enrollment and support older residents wanting to downsize. Additionally, its support for accessory apartments and for transit and human services will help to address the mobility and activity needs of its elderly citizens.

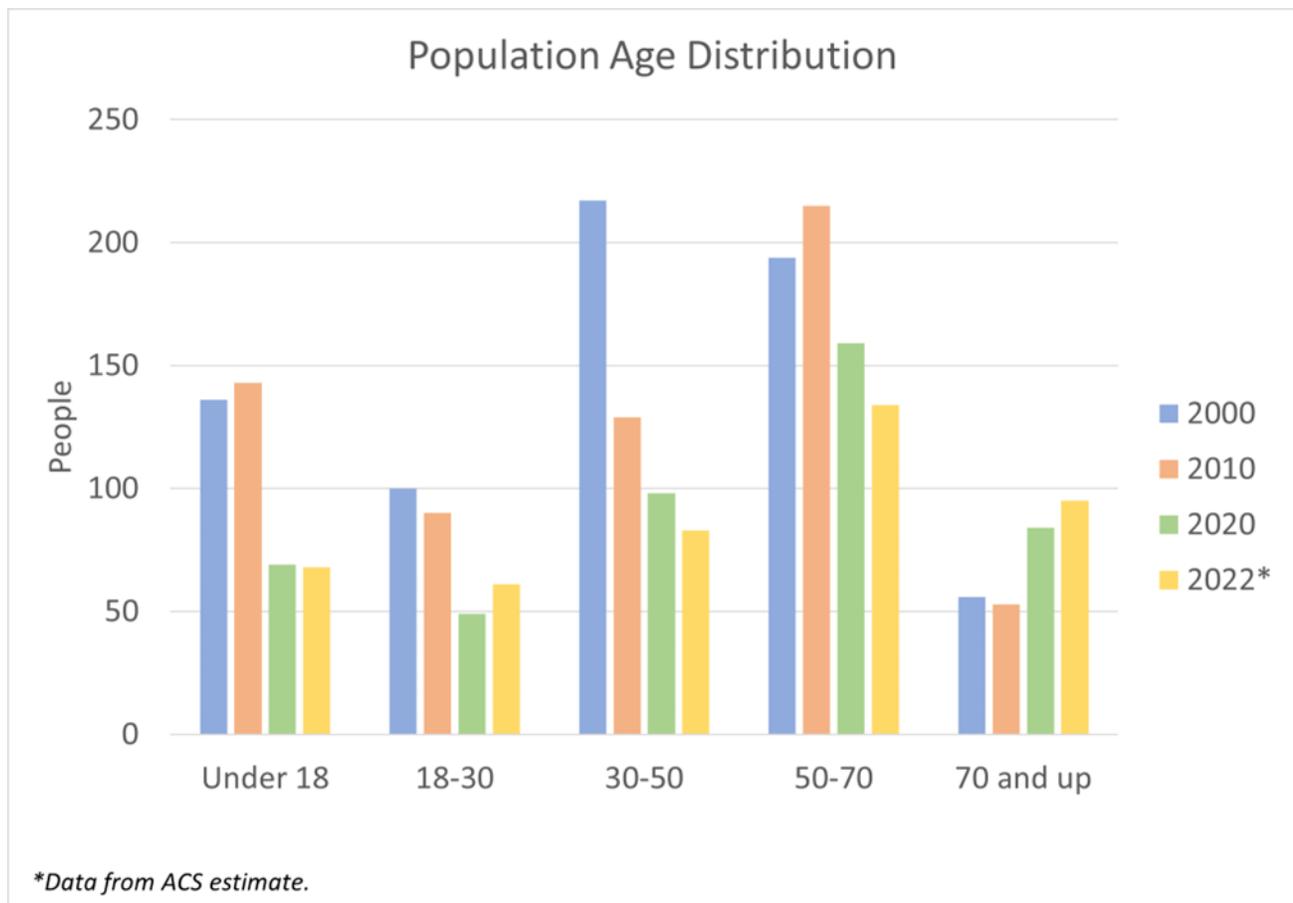
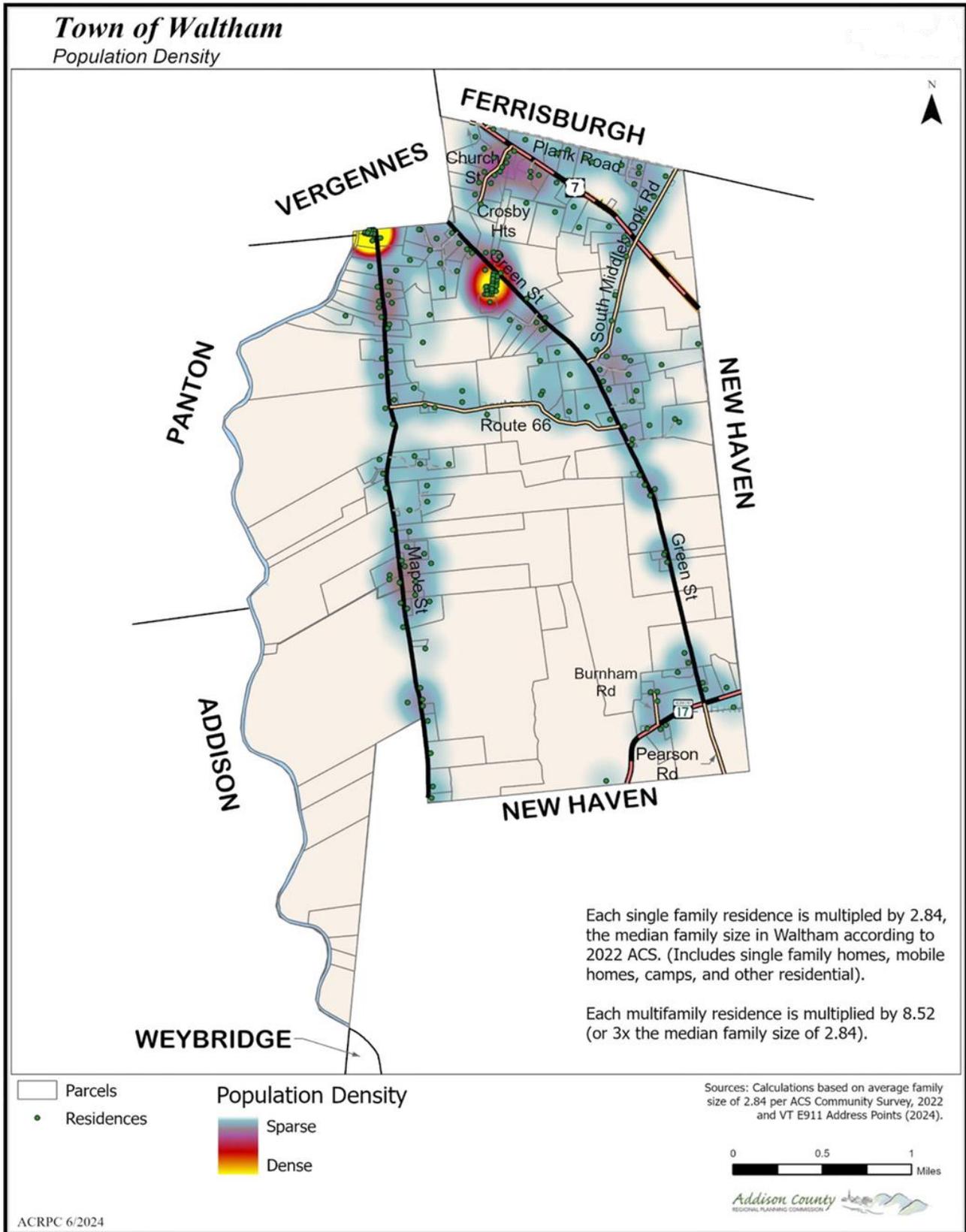


Figure 4: Age Distribution; Source: 2020 US Decennial Census

Map 4: Population Density



Housing

A goal of this plan is to ensure that Waltham’s housing stock is adequate to house those who currently live in the town as well as plan for future population growth and demographic change. Available housing needs to be safe, energy efficient, sustainable, and accessible for the community’s aging and vulnerable populations. Waltham’s population has declined over the past two decades, yet the demand for housing and the number of housing units have increased. This need is due, largely, to a change in household size and a shortage of housing that meets the needs of this new household composition.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

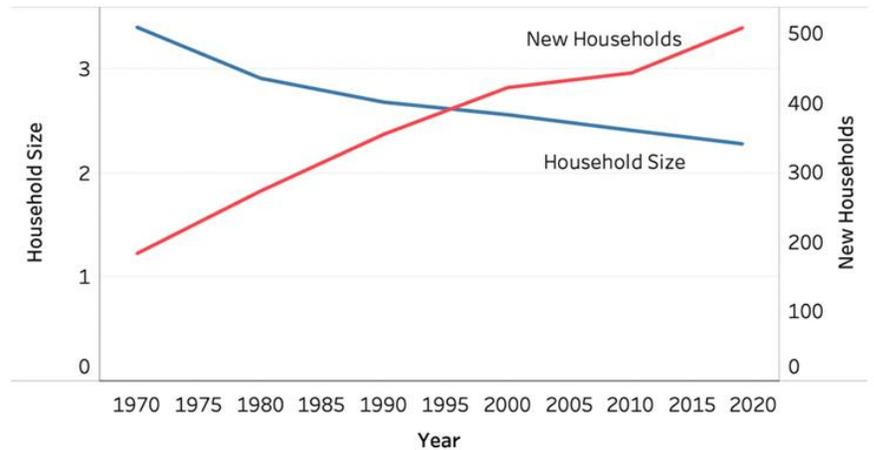


Figure 5: New Households Compared to Household Size in the Addison Region (1970-2019)

Household Characteristics

A household is composed of one or more people who occupy a housing unit. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, family households consist of two or more individuals who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. Non-family households consist of people who live alone or who share their residence with unrelated individuals. For this plan, Waltham does not distinguish between types of households. Regionally, there has been a decrease in the size of households over the past twenty years,

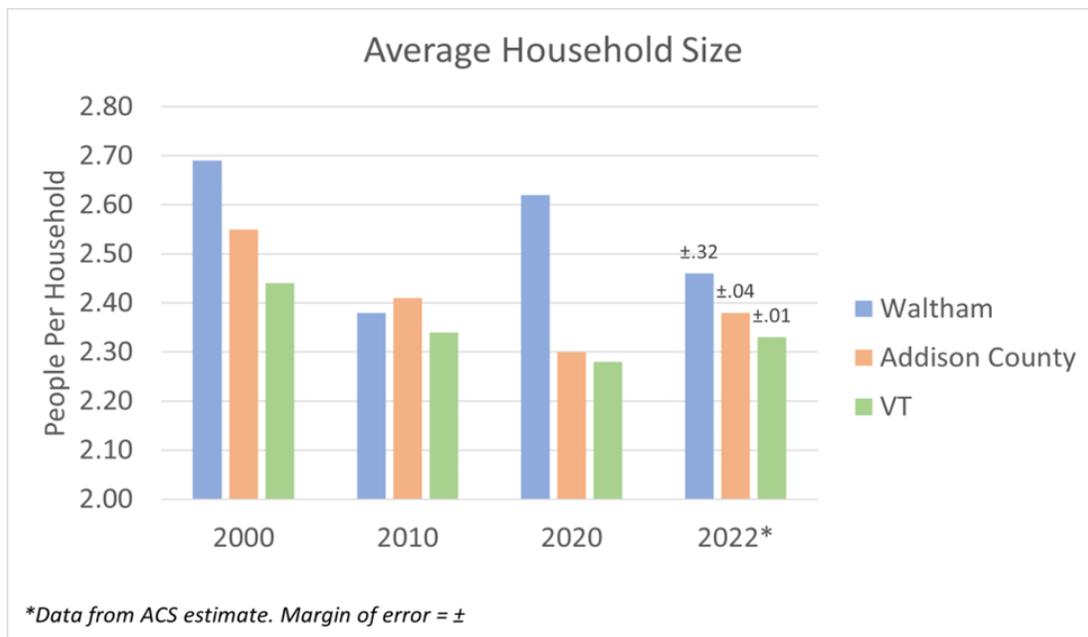


Figure 6: Average Household Size

due to smaller families, single parents, and seniors living longer and aging in place. Waltham’s average household size has remained higher than the Region and State averages during this same period.

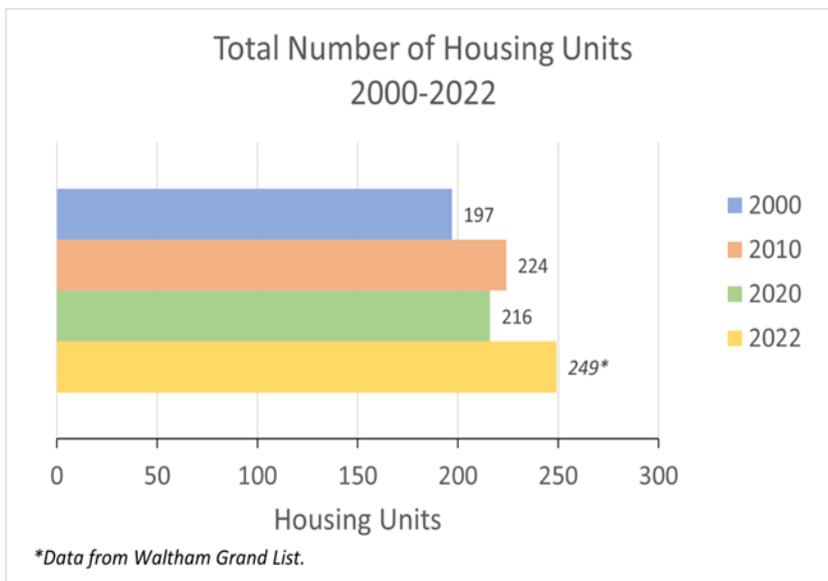
Housing Stock

This section discusses the amount, type, location, age, and affordability of Waltham’s existing housing stock. Data presented in this section is extracted from three primary sources – U.S. Census, VT Dept. of Health, and the Town records. Data from these sources are close, but do not match exactly because of record keeping errors, omissions, purposes of data collection and margin of error.

Number of Housing Units

According to U.S. Census data, there were 81 homes in Waltham in 1970, 183 in 1990, 197 in 2000, and 224 in 2010. The average annual rate of housing growth was 6.25% – about five homes per year – during the 20-year period from 1970 to 1990. From 1990 to 2010 the annual growth rate, mirroring the slower growing population, also slowed to about 0.7% annually. That trend continued, as building permit data shows that no more than two new lots were created and no more than three building permits issued in each year, from 2011-2015.

Table 2: Building Permits and Lots Created by Year		
Year	Building Permits:	Lots Created:
2011	3	2
2012	1	1
2013	1	0
2014	2	2
2015	0	2
2016	15	0
2017	3	0
2018	1	5
2019	0	0
2020	0	0
2021	3	0
2022	1	0
2023	2	5
2024	1	8



As noted in **figure 6**, the 2020 Decennial Census value for the number of housing units is 216. This number is inconsistent with the existing permit information and known housing developments. In 2016, for example, fourteen housing units were created at McKnight Lane, a new community in the Northern Residential Area. Data from the Waltham grand list estimates that the number of total households in 2022 is 249. Despite anomalies of specific data points, it is the overall trend of the housing growth rate that is important to

Figure 7: Total Number of Housing Units 2000-2022

understand. From 2016-2024, 26 building permits have been issued, averaging 2-3 homes per year, and 11 lots have been subdivided.

In 2010, Waltham’s vacancy rate was about 9%, as compared to about 16% in Addison County. In 2020, 13 properties in Waltham were identified as vacant.

Housing Type, Location, & Age

Like the rest of the rural towns in the Addison Region, Waltham has a high percentage of single-family, detached housing and a relatively small percentage of multi-family units. The landscape along Green Street and Maple Street, the two north-south routes through town, is primarily comprised of large historic farmsteads, fields and woodlands, with newer homes located further back from the roads and accessed by long drives.

There are several subdivided areas of smaller lots, notably on Crosby Heights, along Route 7 and in the Northern Residential area adjacent to Vergennes. Many of the homes in these areas tend to be newer, built after 1980. Over fifty percent of the current housing in Waltham was built between 1970-1990, as indicated in Figure 8 below, and corresponds with the population increases during this period.

Waltham has two mobile/manufactured home parks, High Manor Park on Green Street and McKnight Lane on Maple Street near the border with Vergennes. High Manor Park, built in the late 1970’s, has twenty-three housing units, McKnight Lane, built in 2016 consists of fourteen housing units in seven duplex structures. McKnight Lane’s manufactured homes are affordable, net-zero energy units developed by Addison

County Housing Works. The construction of these units significantly increased the number of rentable housing options in Waltham. Currently, Waltham has no structures with more than two units of housing. The percentage of ownership to renters, throughout Addison County, has consistently hovered around 75% and 25% respectively since the 1970’s.

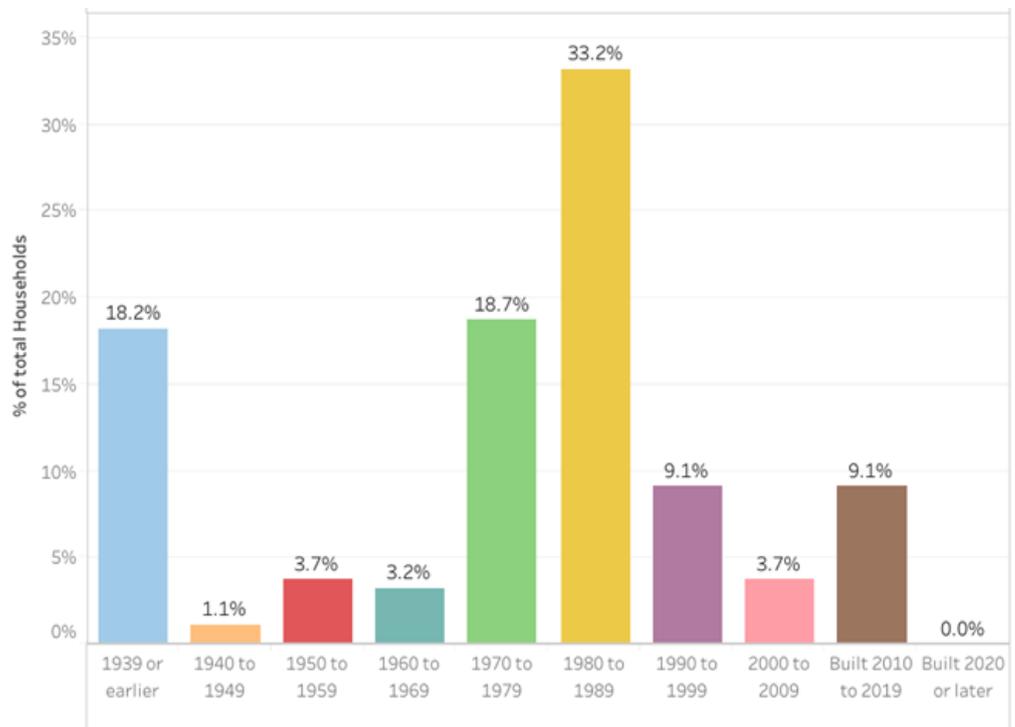


Figure 8: Housing stock by year built; Source: [xxxxxxx]

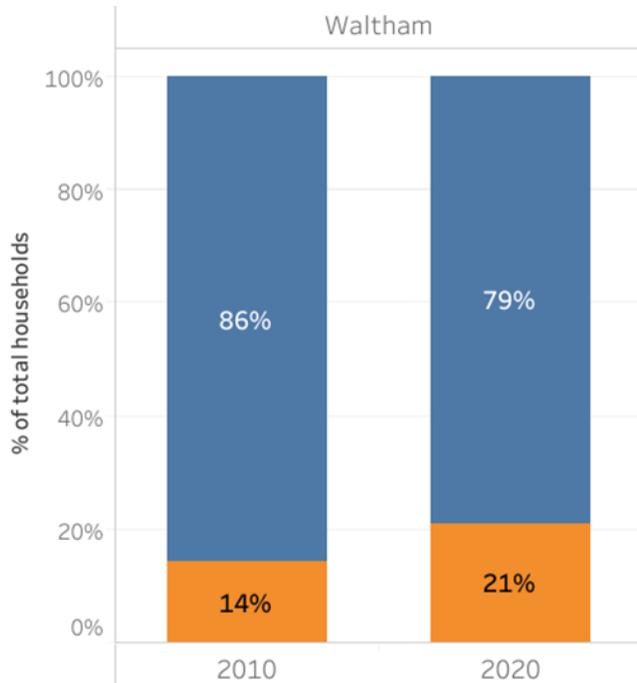


Figure 9: [Title; also needs legend and source]

Housing Costs

From 2016 to 2023 the median price for all housing types, in Waltham and Addison County region, increased significantly. Waltham saw a 60% increase in single family home prices compared to 52% for the region. In Waltham, between 2019 and 2023, mobile homes with land increased 80% compared to 57% for the region.



Photo 3: [Caption]

Median gross rent, for the same period, rose from \$1031 to \$1650 in Waltham, a 60% increase, and \$898 to \$1153 in Addison County, a 28% increase. Waltham’s higher increase in gross rents could be a result of the lack of rental options and/or rental properties that are larger and/or more expensive.

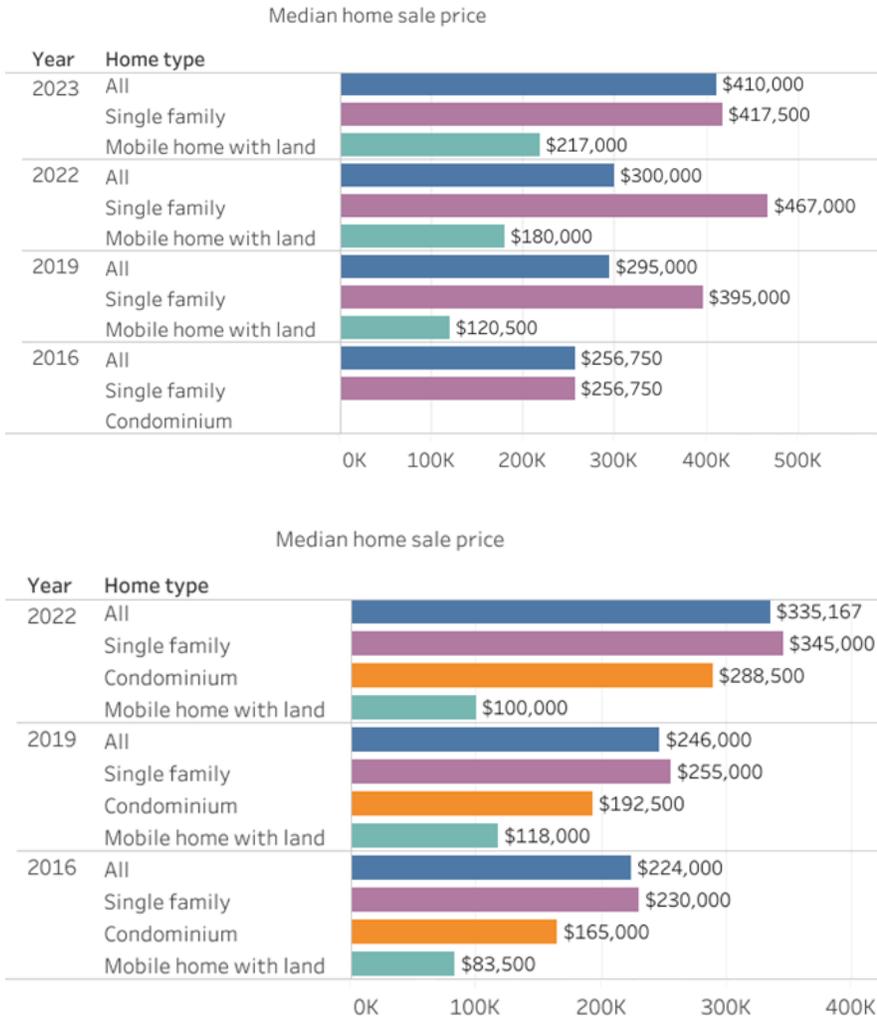


Figure 10: Top - Median Home Sale Price in Waltham; Bottom - Median Home Sale Price in Addison County

Household Income

Household income has increased during this same period. Between 2016-2022, Addison County homeowner’s median income increased 39% to \$97,058, and renter’s median income increased 29% to \$49,127. Waltham’s homeowner’s median income increased 38% to \$103,500. Waltham 2016 renter’s median income was comparable with Addison County’s for the same period, but rental income data was not available for the years 2022-2023.

Housing Affordability

Housing is considered affordable if total housing costs do not exceed 30% of the combined income of the household. Housing costs include rent, mortgage, taxes, insurance, utility, and heating costs. When households spend more than 30% of their income on housing,

it often becomes difficult to pay for basic living expenses, such as food, transportation, health care and childcare. This definition, however, only applies to homeowners, making less than 120% of the area median income (AMI), and for renters making less than 80% of AMI. These income thresholds are also based on household size.

The lack of affordable housing remains a regional problem that will require coordinated, regional action. Since 2018, Waltham has made changes to its Zoning and Subdivision regulations to encourage

more affordable housing. These include provisions for more housing unit density near Vergennes and the encouragement of Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) throughout the town.

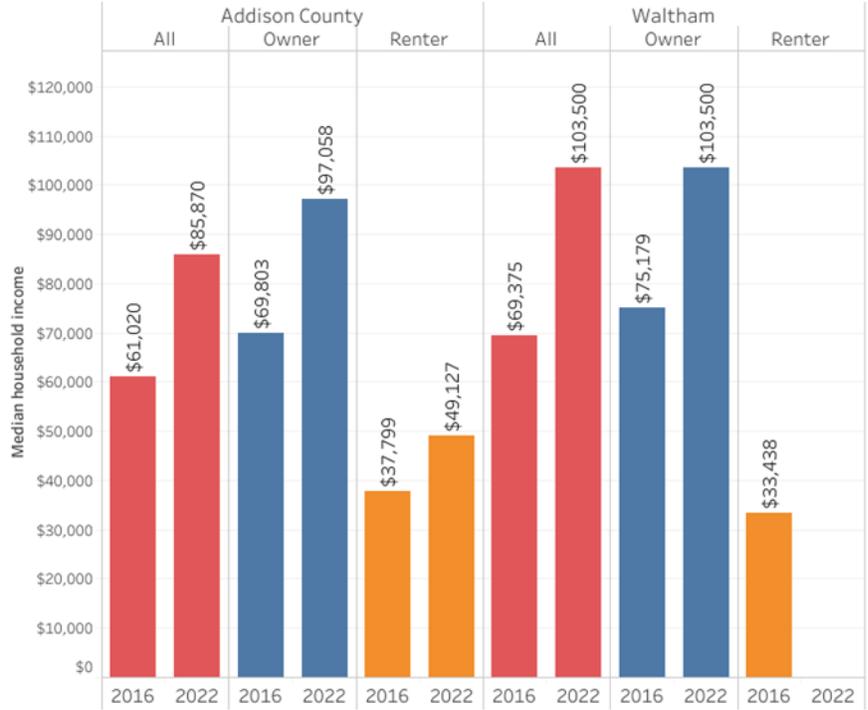


Figure 11: Median Household Income in Waltham & Addison County

Population & Housing: Goals & Objectives	
Goal 1	Promote increased housing opportunities in the Northern Residential Land Use district.
Objective A	Continue to update zoning regulations that allow for increased density; smaller lot sizes, reduced setbacks, and flexible parking standards.
Objective B	Ensure that proposals for multi-unit housing projects include a mix of housing sizes and prices.
Objective C	Support new/renovated housing that is within walkable distance to retail, municipal services, recreational and educational facilities, and public transportation.
Objective D	Encourage the Select Board to investigate the possibility of extending water and or wastewater lines from the City of Vergennes into the Northern Residential Land Use Section.

Goal 2	Provide a range of housing opportunities to meet the needs of Waltham's current and future residents of all ages and incomes
Objective A	Support the development of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families.
Objective B	Update zoning bylaws to meet the required state statutes allowing the creation of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) or duplexes in existing single-family homes.
Objective C	Provide regulatory incentives to cluster homes and development while preserving undeveloped or agricultural land.
Objective D	Support the provision of housing that will allow elderly residents to continue to live in the community.
Goal 3	Promote innovative and sustainable planning, design, and construction of homes to achieve energy efficient goals, reduction in housing costs and minimize environmental impacts.
Objective A	Encourage any new residential development to be energy-efficient and promote use of the Vermont Energy Star Program and consider opportunities for renewable energy generation.
Objective B	Through the zoning permit process, provide information on energy efficiency, accessory apartments, vegetative buffers, septic system design, and other housing options that will help meet town goals. ZA and the DRB should reference the Town's Enhanced Energy Plan.



Photo 4: title & source

Making a Living

Introduction

The interrelationships among population, jobs and housing must be considered when planning. The Economy section of the plan looks at employment patterns of the workforce in Waltham, where and how its residents are employed and how these patterns have changed over the years.

Waltham is a small, rural town with very few commercial operations. Waltham has never had a village center or green. Instead, it looks to Vergennes as its center of commerce. Most of the farms and farmlands are in conservation or Current Use and do not contribute to the economic base of the town as in the past. A few businesses are located along the 1.6 mile stretch of route 7 and Home-Based Businesses and Home Occupations exist throughout town. Since 2020, the trend of working remotely has increased the number of people who live and work in Waltham.

As seen in Table 4 below, the number of Waltham residents in the labor force has consistently declined in the last 22 years. Of the 440 residents in 2022, 178 are 65 years and older or 37% of the population. As the population grows older, Waltham is also seeing a decrease in the 18 year and under population totals. These two factors have resulted in a reduced labor force in the community.

Table 3: Employment Status (population 16 years and over in the labor force)

Years	2000	2015	2020	2022
Labor Force	265	254	239	196
Percentage	71.10%	65.10%	57.50%	53.80%
Work From Home	38	19	24	23
Self Employed	56	18	28	19
Unemployed	0	6	6	6

Regional Job Centers

Waltham is a “bedroom” community. In 1999, 81 percent of the jobs in the Addison Region were in Middlebury, Vergennes and Bristol, but in 1998 these regional job centers provided only 42 percent of the region’s housing. These patterns continue today. Many of the region’s workers lived in outlying rural communities, like Waltham. Waltham operates in a regional economy and must cooperate with neighboring towns to strike the right balance among population, jobs and housing. As the Addison Region struggles with an acute lack of housing, Waltham is working to increase housing opportunities, specifically in the Northern Residential Planning Area, to support the regional economy as well as its own.

In 1980, 186 workers lived in Waltham, but only 24 percent of them worked in the town. By 1990 the percentage of residents working in Waltham decreased to 9 percent, or 21 people. In 2000, the US Census indicates that 17 percent, or 45 people worked in town, 38 of these people working from home. The increase in employment in town in 2000 is most likely due to an increase in self-employment, home occupations and home-based business. Since the pandemic, however, more people, region-wide are working from home, either as an employee working remotely or self-employed. The town’s recent investment in Maple broadband will support this trend of remote and home-based employment.

In 2022 Waltham had 190 workers, 16 years or older. According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimate, 155 of them travelled out of town with 51 of those workers travelling out of the county for employment. 35 people worked within the Town of Waltham, 23 of those working from their homes.

Industry

The following chart identifies the industries in which Waltham residents are employed and how it has changed in the past 22 years. The greatest number of workers throughout this period have been employed in the education, healthcare and social services sectors, followed by manufacturing, retail

trade, and food service, accommodations, arts and entertainment categories. Employment in the Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining industries has continued to decline during this time.

Table 4: Industry of Waltham's Labor Force

Industry	2000	2015	2020	2022
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	14	17	17	12
Construction	25	22	24	19
Manufacturing	31	29	32	23
Wholesale trade	19	10	4	1
Retail trade	35	32	28	22
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	8	1	10	13
Information	5	12	4	4
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	10	23	4	4
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	22	16	15	11
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	60	62	61	41
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	15	14	13	21
Other services (except public administration)	11	2	13	15
Public administration	10	8	8	4

Making a Living: Goals & Objectives	
Goal 1	Support a strong and diverse regional economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities for residents and maintains high environmental and social standards.
Objective A	Cooperate with neighboring municipalities to maintain and create jobs to support the region's work force.
Objective B	Support and participate in regional planning (ACRPC) and economic development (ACEDC) efforts.
Goal 2	Support the creation of Job opportunities that enable people to work within Waltham.
Objective A	Allow for adaptive reuse of existing structures, including agricultural buildings, for small businesses, industries, or home occupations.
Objective B	Strengthen the town's agricultural economy. Encourage manufacturing and marketing of locally produced value-added products and small-scale farming operations.



Photo 5: Moving the Town Hall to its current location on Maple Street

Schools & Childcare

Schools

All of Waltham's children attending public school do so in Vergennes. In fact, the old schoolhouse was converted to the Town Clerk's office in 1993, so that no school facilities exist in Waltham. In Waltham and other towns throughout the state, total elementary school enrollments, which had increased through the mid-1980s, began to decrease in the 1990s. In the spring of 2015, there were only 46 school age children (k-12) in Waltham, a significant decrease from 81 in 2005 and close to 100 in 2000. In 2020, there were 41 school age children and in 2022 this total dropped to 34 children in Waltham and enrolled in school. This decline in student enrollment and rising school costs overall has led to an increase in the cost per pupil enrolled. In some small communities, this trend can lead to a disparity in educational opportunities and a greater tax burden for residents.

In 2015, the state legislature passed Act 46. In part, this bill calls for school districts to come together in addressing the following issues: quality and equity of educational opportunities, operational and administrative efficiency and the rapidly rising cost per pupil. The assumption inherent in the bill is that by consolidating into larger school districts, these issues can be resolved, delivering an education that parents, voters and taxpayers value.

In 2016, the voters of the Addison Northwest Supervisory Union (ANWSU) approved the creation of a unified union district, including Addison, Ferrisburgh, Panton, Vergennes and Waltham- The Addison Northwest School District.

Childcare

Like many other services, including schools, childcare facilities for Waltham’s children are largely provided in other larger communities. Waltham does have one Childcare Provider, the Ark Daycare at the Victory Baptist Church, which offers PreK and kindergarten facilities as well as after-school care. There are a few small home-based providers, but most childcare opportunities outside the home occur in the regional centers, predominantly Vergennes, but also Middlebury and Bristol.

The Addison Northwest School District (ANWSD) provides public education funding for all 3–5-year-olds in the district. These programs, located at Ferrisburgh Elementary School, unfortunately, have limited spaces and availability. The ANWSD, however, will pay for 10 hours/week for 35/weeks each year (school year) of tuition funding for children to attend PreK at prequalified community-based PreK programs.

This Plan takes the position that like schools, it is appropriate that childcare occur in more centralized places nearer to other services, like the City of Vergennes. However, it also has opened the idea of childcare being provided within Waltham, by encouraging home-based businesses and zoning regulations which specifically allow for Daycare facilities.

Schools and Childcare: Goals and Objectives	
Goal 1	Support the operation and mission of the Vergennes school facilities and the Addison Northwest School District that serve the town of Waltham.
Objective A	Partner with Vergennes to use school facilities, during non-school hours, to provide space for adult education, community meetings, recreation, and similar activities.
Objective B	Support the development of affordable housing for families with school age children.
Goal 2	Support a diversity of childcare options within Waltham.
Objective A	Ensure that childcare is permitted as a home-based business use within certain zoning districts.

Transportation

Introduction

Waltham's transportation system is principally a system of public roads. The private automobile provides the primary means of getting around. Green and Maple Streets are popular routes for bikers. Buck Mountain has trails on private land that are heavily used for hiking and skiing. Otter Creek is popular with recreational boaters. The town has no airport, railroad, or bus service. For these reasons, this section focuses primarily on Waltham's Road system and regional public transportation facilities. Other sections of this Plan describe the importance and role of public waterways, bike lanes and community trails.

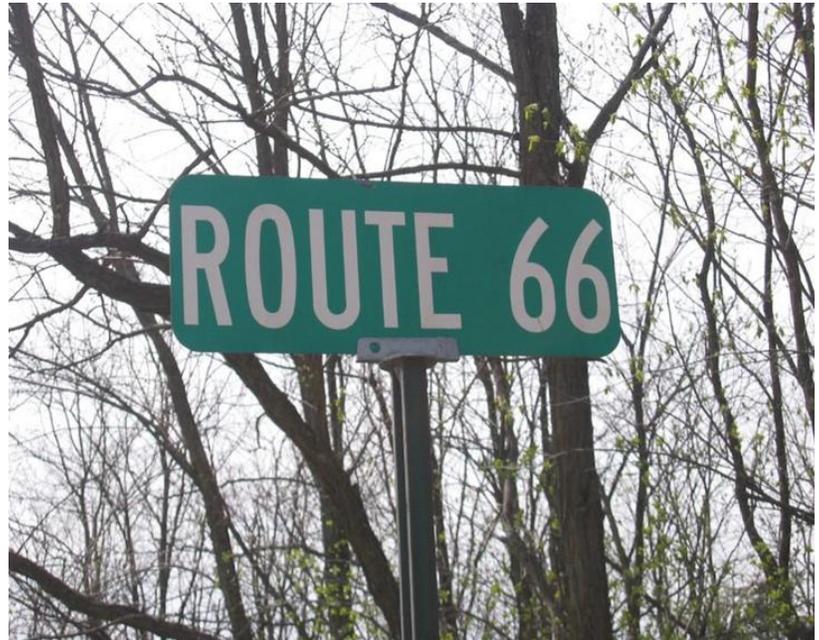


Photo 6: [caption]

Currently, there are 13.6 miles of public roads in Waltham – the town owns and maintains approximately 11 miles and the State owns and maintains approximately 2.6 miles. The town roads vary from regional collectors (Green and Maple Street Extensions) to lightly used roads serving primarily residents (e.g., Route 66). About 85 percent of the town roads are paved (9.09 miles). The rest, (1.61 miles) is gravel. Since the last plan update, small sections of Plank Rd. (0.75 miles), South Middlebrook Rd. (0.5 miles), and Rt. 66 (0.44 miles) have been paved. State highways include short sections of U.S. Route 7 (1.6 miles) and Vermont Route 17 (0.9 miles) (see Map 5: Transportation, Facilities, & Education, Pg. - 35 -).

Town Roads

In general, Waltham's roads safely and efficiently carry existing traffic. Waltham does not have any plans to construct any new roads. Rather, this Plan involves maintaining its existing infrastructure.

Future increases in traffic volumes, the rerouting truck traffic along Route 17 out of Vergennes or the creation of inefficient land use patterns could negatively impact road conditions. To avoid this, this Plan includes and advocates for concentrating future development in residential neighborhoods near Vergennes or in clusters along Waltham's major routes, limiting access points (e.g., driveways, side street intersections) by clustering development, supporting adding bike lanes and community trails if funded from sources other than Waltham's property taxes, and supporting public transportation. In contrast to investments that enable more traffic to move through town, these steps would complement the other goals of the town to concentrate development, conserve open land, conserve energy and protect our rural character and scenery.

In 2023, due to recent concerns regarding increased speeds and the costs of enforcement, the Selectboard amended the Town of Waltham Traffic Ordinance to include a change in speeds on the town roads to a rate of speed no greater than 35 miles per hour, unless otherwise posted.

According to the Annual Report, the Town Highway Department had a budget of \$118,050 in 2024. Currently, Waltham contracts out all its roadwork. As a relatively small town, Waltham believes it is more effective for its taxpayers to hire contract services rather than to hire employees and invest in relatively expensive trucks and other maintenance equipment. Instead, its budget has and will continue to focus on maintaining its existing system of roads. Periodically resurfacing roads accounts for the largest share of the long-term highway budget in most rural towns.

Private Roads

Private drives that intersect with town roads continue to be a maintenance problem for the Town. This Plan supports enforcing standards requiring driveways to meet the requirements of VTrans Specification B-72 for roads and driveways intersecting with Town roads.

Waltham may allow private developers to create new roads. The new roads will remain private as it is the Town's policy not to take over any new roads. Additionally, developers will be required to build the roads to town standards, so as not to impact either the town's existing maintenance budget or the safety of the road. Developments will be encouraged to reduce curb cuts by clustering development and limiting access points onto town roads.

State Roads

Route 7 and Route 17 both travel through the Town of Waltham. The Selectboard meets regularly with representatives from the Agency of Transportation to coordinate activities concerning these roads, comment on policies and pursue grant resources. Route 7 constitutes the main north south link in the region, supporting all the region's businesses and people. Waltham supports access management on this roadway to limit curb cuts to maintain or improve existing travel time from point to point on Route 7.

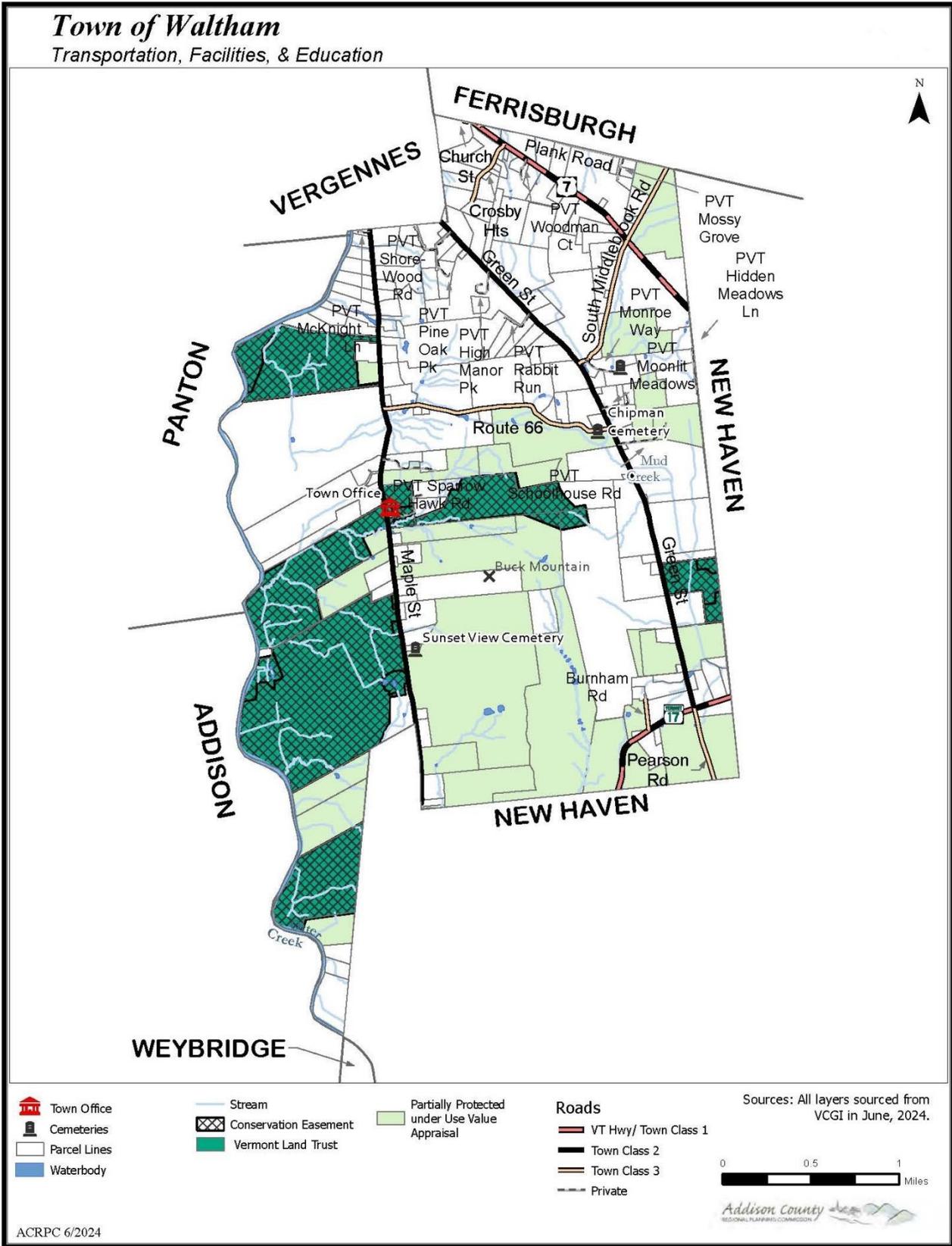
Public Transportation, Park & Rides, Bicycles, & Pedestrians

Currently, Waltham is not served by local, regional, or state fixed-route public transportation systems. However, Tri Valley Transit (TVT), the regional transit provider, operates a shuttle service between Vergennes, Bristol, and Middlebury, its "Tri-town service". TVT is currently reviewing optimizing that service route. If ridership or other incentives could be developed to induce it to travel to Vergennes via Maple or Green Street, this Plan supports that deviation in service routes. TVT also operates commuter services from Vergennes and Middlebury to the City of Burlington, which travel on Route 7 through Waltham. The nearest stop to that service is the park and ride in Ferrisburgh at the corner of Route 22A and Route 7.

Both Maple Street and Green Street are popular routes for bicyclists during the warmer months of the year. While Waltham does not have the funds to widen the roads to create additional lanes to support this traffic, it acknowledges the volume of traffic and the desirability of the routes. Accordingly, if funds

outside of the property tax can be found to help create improvements to support the bike use of these routes, this Plan also supports those improvements.

Map 5: Transportation, Facilities, & Education



Transportation: Goals and Objectives	
Goal 1	Contribute to a region-wide transportation system that is safe, efficient, sustainable and promotes the energy, natural resource, and land use goals of this plan.
Objective A	Maintain or improve the current level of service on all public roads in town.
Objective B	Manage roads to meet community needs and maintain a rural character, keeping roads gravel where appropriate.
Objective C	Ensure that Waltham’s Road and Driveway standards are clear and enforceable regarding development and maintenance.
Goal 2	Provide a multi-modal transportation infrastructure of bike lanes, pedestrian paths, public transportation, and ride sharing.
Objective A	Support bicycle use on Maple and Green Streets and pedestrian paths throughout town, especially in conjunction with new development and transportation projects.
Objective B	Encourage TVT to investigate a route from Waltham to Vergennes utilizing Maple or Green Street.

Public Facilities

Because of its small size, Waltham has relatively few public facilities other than its schools and roads. Among those facilities are the Town Hall, a small parcel of land on Otter Creek, and firefighting equipment. Solid waste and recycling facilities are shared with other municipalities (see Map 5: Transportation, Facilities, & Education, Pg. - 35 -).

Town Hall

The Town Hall is a source of community pride. For many years the town's records were kept in a portion of the Town Clerk's home. In 1993 a portion of an old town schoolhouse was renovated to house and protect our records and provide us with a suitable place to conduct town business. The facility should serve the town well for many years to come. The Town's current plan is to maintain the Town Hall as a functioning municipal office and to ensure it can efficiently and sufficiently meet the needs of the community, accommodating Town Meeting and other large community functions. Waltham has allocated a portion of its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for improvements to the Town Hall. The town will continue construction upgrades to the building and plan for future improvements to the surrounding grounds.

Land on Otter Creek

The town owns an approximately 3-acre parcel on Otter Creek accessed by a 25-foot strip of land that runs approximately 1 mile from Maple Street down to the parcel's location on Otter Creek. Presently, the 25' strip of land owned for access is unmarked and unimproved. No place exists along Maple Street for parking. The land by the river has no public facilities such as picnic tables, fireplaces or a canoe launch. Such improvements and additional rights-of-way to the river and along the river would make the stream corridor more accessible and enjoyable to residents and visitors. No other public access to Otter Creek exists within Waltham. Currently one either needs to cross private property or drive to Vergennes or Weybridge to access the river. This Plan advocates investigating, marking and mapping the town owned property and determining its potential to safely provide a public recreational area and access to the river.

Recreational Trails & Facilities

Other than the access to the land on Otter Creek noted above and the long strip of land accessing it, Waltham does not own any trail or other recreational facilities within the Town of Waltham. Waltham does have an interest in and contributes to the athletic facilities at its schools and the pool in Vergennes and encourages its residents to use them. While Waltham does not have plans to create any networks of trails, it recognizes that many people hike on the private trails in and around Buck Mountain. Buck Mountain, in the towns of New Haven and Waltham, is an important, significant local and regional recreational resource. It offers splendid views of the region because of its steep sides, exposed summit and relative isolation from other mountains. Buck Mountain is all privately owned and there is no guaranteed public access to it. Fortunately, most current landowners allow the public to use the mountain for hiking, skiing, picnicking, and hunting on the old logging roads or timeworn footpaths across their lands.

This Plan acknowledges and thanks the generosity of the landowners that allow the public to use those trails. It also supports efforts by private landowners and non-profit entities to reach voluntary agreements between themselves to conserve properties for forestry, diversified agriculture, natural resources, public access or a combination of all the above.

Water & Wastewater Infrastructure

Most of Waltham lacks public sewer or water system service. Most areas are served by individual wells and septic systems. While this generally works fine in the more rural areas, it constrains development of any density. This Plan promotes denser development in the Northern Residential Land Use Section of Waltham. As seen on the zoning map (Map 6: Zoning Districts, Pg.- 39 -), this planning area is adjacent to the City of Vergennes, close to the existing development and services the city offers and close to existing city water and wastewater infrastructure. In past community surveys, over 50% respondents, concerned about affordable housing, supported extending water and wastewater facilities from Vergennes into the Northern Residential Land Use Section. Accordingly, this Plan would support efforts to work with the City of Vergennes to extend water and or sewer into the 2.5-acre zoning district of the Northern Residential Land Use Section.

Telecommunications

The telecommunication infrastructure in the Town of Waltham has greatly improved over the past few years. The town was one of 20 communities to join the Addison County Communications Union District (ACCUD, a group of Vermont towns that have banded together, allowable under recently passed state law, with the objective of establishing reliable, affordable, high-speed broadband in Addison County. As a member of the ACCUD, Waltham is now serviced by Maple Broadband, a not-for profit provider, community-based fiber optic technology, available to all households and businesses.

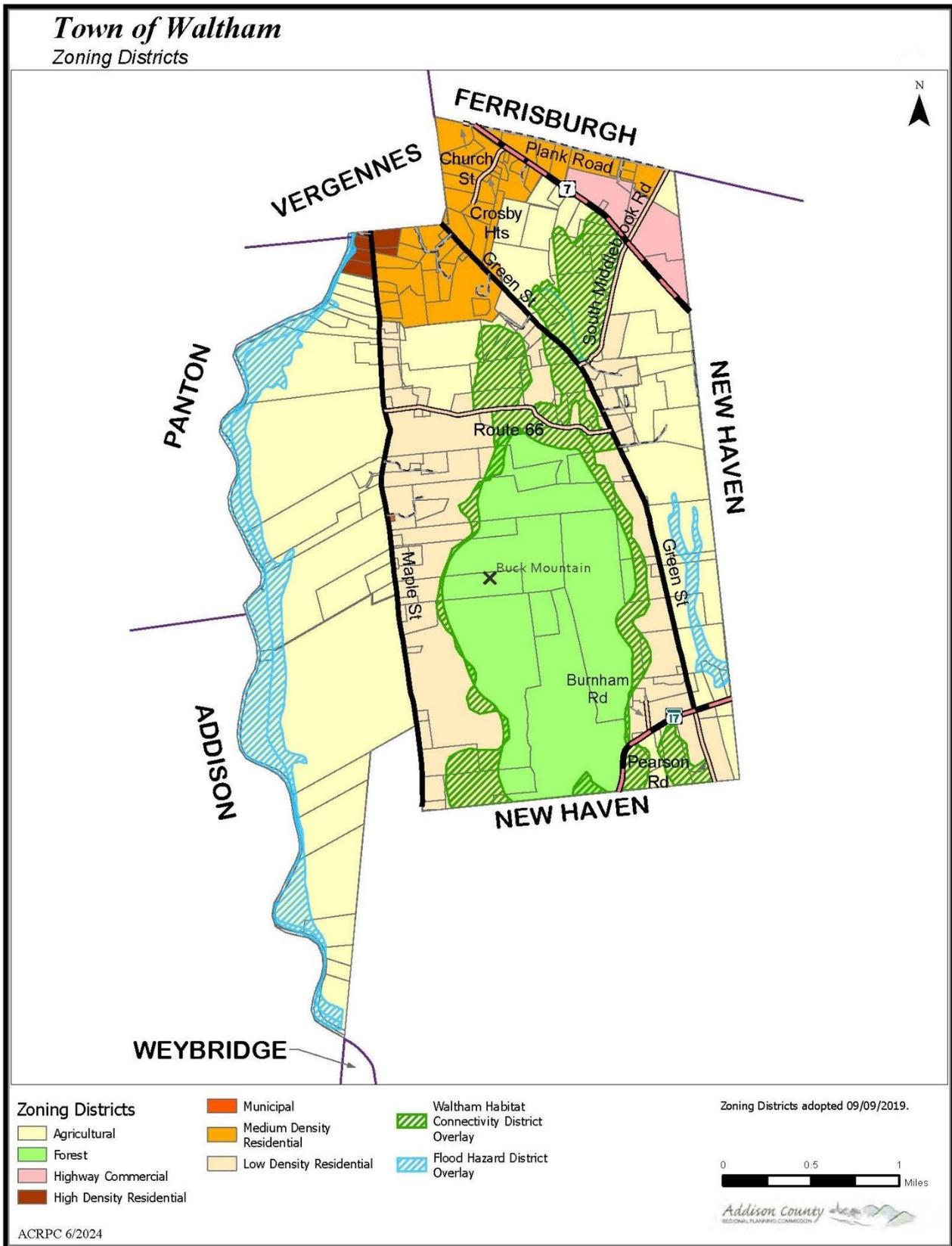
To preserve the aesthetic interests of the community, Waltham has adopted a relatively restrictive Telecommunications Ordinance, largely designed to keep towers off the top of Buck Mountain.

Waste Management & Recycling

Waltham is a member of the Addison County Solid Waste District (ACSWD). The ACSWD operates a transfer station in Middlebury open to all residents of member municipalities. The transfer station receives waste from haulers and transports it to a disposal site outside the region. The district also provides household hazardous waste and other special waste collection dates throughout the year and cost effectively provides service for Waltham and the rest of the district. This Plan endorses the policy and plans of the Addison County Solid Waste District with respect to waste disposal.

Waltham shares a recycling facility with the City of Vergennes and the towns of Addison, Panton and Ferrisburgh. The facility is operated by a private contractor and provides services on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings. This Plan supports Waltham's cost-effective participation in the recycling center.

Map 6: Zoning Districts



Police, Fire, & Emergency Services
Waltham does not provide police, fire or rescue services. Police services are provided by the State police, generally out of the New Haven barracks. Fire and rescue services are provided by the City of Vergennes Volunteer Fire Department and Vergennes Area Rescue



Photo 7: Caption

Squad respectively. Waltham has an annual Local Emergency Management Plan updated by a volunteer Emergency Management Coordinator. The LEMP provides contact information for town officials and information for activating a Municipal Emergency Operations Center, as well as potential shelters, resources, and additional Public Information and Warning information.

Government

As the previous subsections of this Plan regarding facilities and services demonstrate, Waltham remains a small town that has adopted a “small is beautiful” approach to local government. Waltham recognizes that its sole tax base stems from the taxation of properties listed on its grand list.

The property tax is an “ad valorem” tax, meaning that the tax bill is proportional to the value of the property rather than proportional to the use of services. As such, it is logical that some properties would pay more in taxes than they cost the town to provide services while other properties would pay less in taxes than they cost the town to provide services.

The Tax Bill

Waltham’s taxes are largely driven by school costs, as over two-thirds of Waltham’s property tax bill goes to schools and about one-third goes to general town administration and highway department expenses. Municipal taxes remain low in Waltham.

Ongoing operating costs – such as salaries, fuel, maintenance, supplies – make up most of Waltham’s budget and will continue to do so. Annual operating costs overall tend to increase as towns grow, more services and additional staff are required to meet the needs of a larger population. Capital expenditures, payments for buildings, roads, bridges, equipment and other facilities, can fluctuate year to year depending on a variety of factors. For this reason, Waltham maintains and contributes annually to a capital reserve fund to adjust for increased expenditures, eliminating sudden jumps in residents’ tax bills.

In 2023, the Town of Waltham collected **\$1,224,578.00** in tax revenue. **\$861,975** was paid to the school district and the balance, \$362,603 went to the General Town Budget, including administration, highway department and capital expenses*. *Waltham 2023 Town Report

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

In 2021, Waltham received **\$138,000** in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The following projects were identified for funding and are in various stages of completion.

- Maple Broadband Fiber Project,
- Improvements to the town's IT system,
- Town website improvements,
- Digitizing of town land records,
- Improvements to the Town Hall,
- Improvements to the outdoor spaces in conjunction with the Town Hall improvements.

Public Facilities: Goals and Objectives	
Goal 1	Promote the sustainable use of Town-owned properties.
Objective A	Support the on-going improvements and renovation work on the Town Hall and grounds.
Objective B	Work towards developing a town owned solar array.
Goal 2	Ensure that Waltham's public facilities can accommodate the services needed by residents and actively plan to meet future demand for the community.
Objective A	Support The Selectboard's exploration of a Capital Plan.
Goal 3	Develop and enhance public lands in Waltham.
Objective A	Establish a public access to Otter Creek.
Objective B	Work to establish a town forest, encompassing Buck Mountain and adjacent forests.

Energy

Introduction

In November 2022, Waltham adopted and received regional approval of an Enhanced Energy Plan as outlined by Act 174 (2016) which gives communities the opportunity to revise their municipal plans to obtain a “Determination of Energy Compliance.” Waltham’s intent with this Energy Plan is to adopt the State and regional energy mandates allocated to Waltham and to meet the goals and targets set forth herein. Receiving a Determination of Energy Compliance gives the Waltham Enhanced Energy Plan “substantial deference” before the Public Utilities Commission’s (PUC) Section 248 permitting process (30 V.S.A. § 248) and increases the Town’s control over the siting of renewable energy projects. In addition to receiving substantial deference, the other two main goals to be achieved by this energy plan are generating local renewable energy and reducing the overall use of energy.

In writing this plan, Waltham recognizes that the identified goals and policies will impact residents differently based on their life situation. This plan seeks to minimize inequity through the promotion of free and reduced-cost services, available through Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, Neighborworks of Western VT, Efficiency VT and others.

Below is a summary of Waltham’s Enhanced Energy Plan. The full plan can be found as an appendix to this document.

Energy Conservation Targets

Waltham’s intent with this Energy Plan is to adopt the State and regional energy mandates allocated to Waltham and to meet the goals and targets set forth herein. See the tables below for target numbers to meet the 90 X 50 State goal.

Table 5: Energy Conservation Targets	2025	2035	2050
Residential - Increased Efficiency and Conservation (% of municipal households to be weatherized)	2%	9%	47%
Commercial - Increased Efficiency and Conservation (% of commercial establishments to be weatherized)	17%	18%	51%
New Efficient Wood Heat Systems (in units)	0	1	7
New Heat Pumps (in units)	19	46	90
Renewable Energy Use - Heating	47.4%	60.6%	87.7%
Electric Vehicles	34	229	448
Biodiesel Vehicles	7	13	18
Increase Electric Efficiency and Conservation	10.8%	37.2%	59.2%
Total Municipal Renewable Generation Target (in MWh per year)	1,528	2,236	2,966

Energy Goals

Given the large changes that Waltham will need to make in pursuit of its energy targets, Waltham adopts the following Goals for itself and its citizens.

Thermal Goals	Increase the Town's thermal energy efficiency and self-sufficiency by reducing its energy use, and reducing its carbon footprint to meet town, regional, and State targets under Vermont's Comprehensive Energy Plan.
	Reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses and substances that cause acid rain.
Transportation Goals	Increase the switch to electric and biodiesel vehicles to meet fuel switching targets.
	Maintain or reduce vehicle miles traveled per capita by reducing single and low occupancy vehicle trips.
Electrical Goals	Reduce reliance on nonrenewable energy sources such as oil and gas, and shift reliance to renewable electrical energy sources, thereby reducing carbon emissions and acid rain.
	Increase electricity conservation by Town, commercial, and residential users to achieve the stated targets.
	Increase the use of efficient electrically powered appliances, lighting, outdoor power, and other equipment used by the Town and in commercial and residential facilities to achieve the stated targets.
	Conserve renewable and non-renewable energy resources.
Land Use and Generation Goals	Meet increased electric demand in partnership with Green Mountain Power and Efficiency Vermont while maintaining progress to achieve energy targets.
	Enable new renewable generation in areas designated as preferred or allowed under this plan.
	Mitigate the negative consequences of installation and decommissioning of large renewable energy development projects.
	Implement land use development patterns promoting a densely settled community center surrounded by rural and working landscape so as to achieve energy and transportation efficiencies and preserve agricultural lands, scenic view sheds, and natural resources.
	Promote Land Use planning that supports reducing energy usage and conserving resources.

Natural Resources

Rivers & Streams

Waltham's surface waters are held in trust by the State for the common and public use of all citizens. The state's policy is to protect and manage public waters to provide the greatest net benefits to present and future citizens of the State. Some



Photo 8: Caption

of the benefits rivers and streams provide include: a high-quality water supply; fish and wildlife habitat; aquatic and shoreline vegetation; recreational opportunities; scenery; hydropower or other commercial or agricultural uses.

Although only the State can set standards, classifications or restrictions on the management and use of public waters, Waltham can participate in the State's determinations and regulate land uses that can affect the public's use and enjoyment of those waters and the riparian ecosystems they help create. The Otter Creek and small unnamed tributaries to Little Otter Creek drain the surface waters of the Town. Waltham's drainage system is a small part of a much larger drainage system. The Town's uses of land and water affect that regional system and are affected by it. Otter Creek, from North Dorset to Vergennes, is about 100 miles long and drains a large area of Vermont. Most of the drainage basin is upstream of Waltham. Sewage treatment plants, parking lots, highways, fields and forests drain into Otter Creek along its course. To protect surface water quality, inter-municipal coordination, planning and action are needed since activities affecting water quality at any point in the system affect water quality of all downstream points in the system. We must think and act regionally and locally to effectively manage and protect our surface waters. Waltham largely prohibits building in the floodplain and most of the property in Waltham along Otter Creek falls within the floodplain, the Creek is largely protected from direct development impacts. In effect, the floodplain serves as a natural riparian buffer to most activities. On Waltham's small streams, this Plan chooses not to impose any set buffer, but rather advocates that landowners exercise good judgment in the use of their property. Establishing a

good, vegetated buffer along streams often serves a multitude of functions. It reduces erosion and soil loss, it provides wildlife habitat near a water source that wildlife relies on, it cools the water under the vegetated canopy, thus improving water quality for fish habitat. The trees also provide a source of food for fish as woody debris and insects fall into its waters.

The Otter Creek corridor provides excellent opportunities for boating, hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing, bird watching and photography. Since much of the Otter Creek in Waltham is directly influenced by the hydro-dam immediately downstream of Waltham at the falls in Vergennes, the Otter Creek upstream in Waltham generally sits at high levels making it navigable to small boats for nearly its entire length. However, the only guaranteed public access to the river in town is provided by a long right-of-way that parallels a fencerow on the northern boundary of the Kayhart farm discussed in detail in the Public Facilities Section of this Plan.

This Plan advocates for the care of the natural resource's functions of Otter Creek, its reasonable use as a source of clean renewable hydro-power downstream in Vergennes and its use for low-impact outdoor recreation

Wetlands

According to 24 VSA 4303 (19) "wetlands" are defined as:

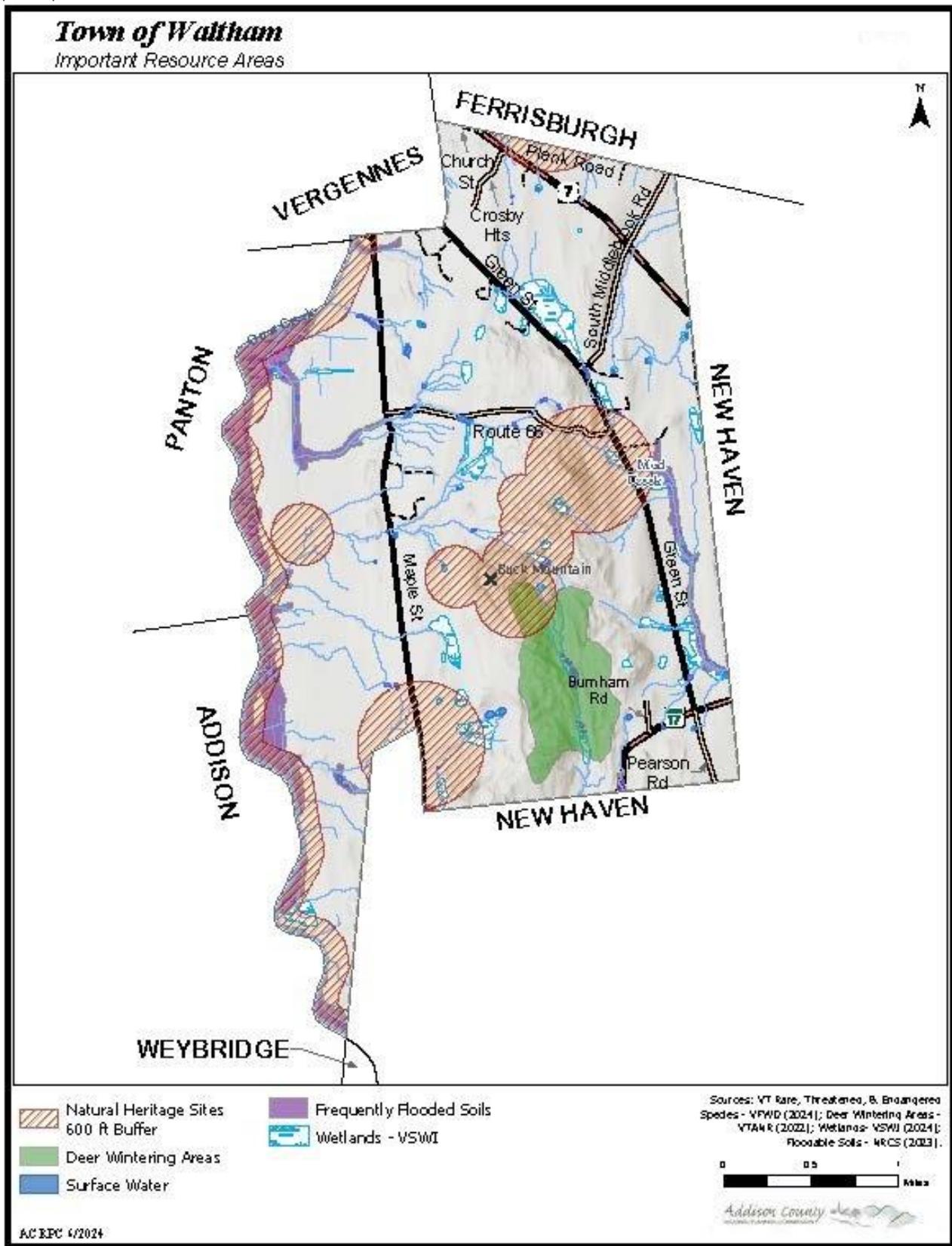
Those areas of the state that are inundated by surface or groundwater with a frequency sufficient to support vegetation or aquatic life that depend on saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction. Such areas include but are not limited to marshes, swamps, sloughs, potholes, fens, river and lake overflows, mud flats, bogs and ponds, but excluding such areas that grow food or crops in connection with farming activities.

The State of Vermont has rules that classify wetlands into Class I, Class II and Class III wetlands. The rules provide that Class I and Class II wetlands provide functions, noted below, that are worthy of protection and therefore protect them as significant wetlands. The Vermont Wetland Rules recognize the following functions for significant wetlands:

- Water storage for flood water and storm runoff, Surface and groundwater protection and purification, Fisheries habitat,
- Wildlife and migratory bird habitat, Hydrophytic vegetation habitat, Threatened and endangered species habitat, Education and research in natural sciences, Recreational values,
- Open space and aesthetics, and
- Erosion control via binding and stabilizing soil.

A map depicting Class II wetlands lying within the Town of Waltham is attached as Map 7: Important Resource Areas, Pg. - 46 -. As the map illustrates, Waltham has relatively few Class II or presumed significant wetlands. This Plan supports the State system of protecting significant wetlands.

Map 7: Important Resource Areas



AC EPC 4/2024

Groundwater

As a residential and agricultural community, Waltham depends almost entirely on groundwater for domestic and commercial use. With the exception of the households that purchase water from the Vergennes municipal water supply, Waltham residents rely on wells – ranging from shallow dug wells to deep drilled wells – and springs for their domestic water needs. This Plan supports and protects the residential use of groundwater.

Shallow water sources are particularly susceptible to nearby surface contaminants such as septic leachate (including household hazardous wastes), road salt, pesticides, oil and gas from underground tanks or surface spills, waste disposal sites, and agricultural fertilizers and pesticides. Upslope recharge areas for shallow dug wells and springs are important to protect.

Deep wells are better protected from nearby surface contaminants but remain susceptible to contamination from the same sources at the points where water enters the ground. These entry points, or aquifer recharge areas, can be located both near and far from a well. The characteristics and depths of the soils above the aquifers and the land uses occurring within the boundaries of the aquifer and its recharge areas influence aquifer protection.

The State of Vermont regulates both the siting of wells and wastewater systems. Those regulations provide for adequate separations from water and wastewater systems to prevent contamination and from one residential water system to another to reduce any interference between the two sources. Household hazardous wastes regularly enter groundwater when people pour toxic chemicals down their drains. This directly threatens public health when the drain discharges to a septic system, as

Photo 9: Caption



certain cleaning products can travel large distances within a groundwater aquifer. Some basic categories of hazardous household products include drain openers, paint strippers and thinners, paint, adhesives, oven cleaners, wood and metal cleaners, pesticides,

herbicides, grease and rust solvents, and starter fluids. Not all products in these categories are toxic. One way to reduce the risk of groundwater contamination is to increase people's reliance on non-toxic alternatives. Another is to promote Waltham's participation in household hazardous collection days run by the Addison County Solid Waste District.

Soils, Agricultural, & Earth Resources

Geologic processes that began hundreds of millions of years ago shaped Waltham's land – the hills and valleys, rocks, and soils. The resulting characteristics of the land and their pattern on the landscape both enable and constrain human activities and biological systems. For example, deep, well-drained soils enable us to grow crops or build effective septic systems; ledges prevent us from doing so. Recognizing and understanding the land's opportunities and limitations are the underpinnings of sound development and efficient conservation and utilization of natural resources.

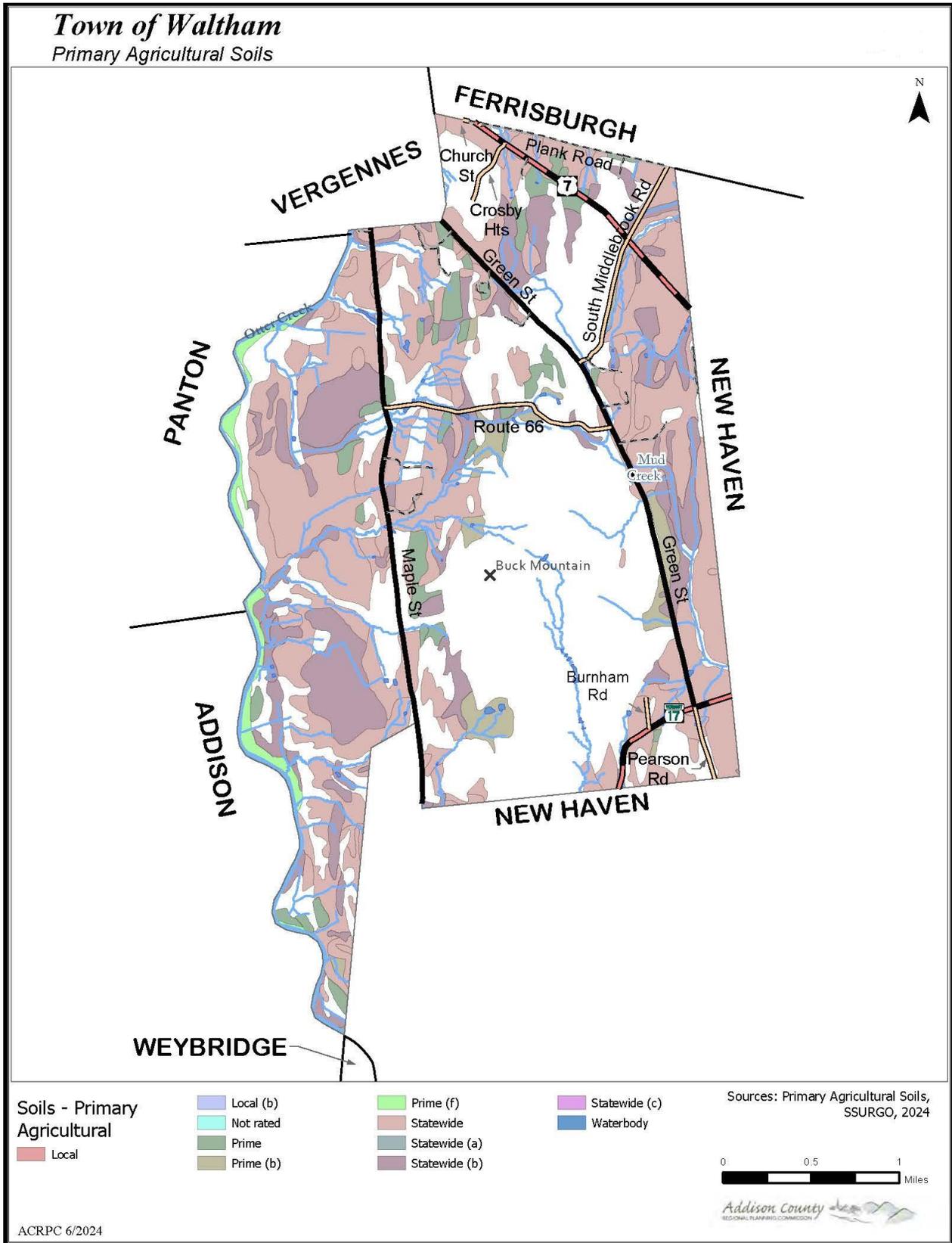
The glaciers, lakes and seas that covered Waltham many thousands of years ago deposited the dirt and stones we now call soil. For the most part, Waltham's soils have changed relatively little since the last glacier retreated; an organic layer of topsoil has formed, Otter Creek has deposited alluvial sands and gravels in the floodplain, agricultural operations have depleted and replenished soils, and wind and water have caused erosion.

We must acknowledge and respect the benefits and limitations of the soils present in Waltham. To help us do this, the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS – formerly the Soil Conservation Service) inventoried and described Addison County's soils and mapped their locations.¹ The mapping units vary according to basic soil type (series), texture of surface soil, slope, stoniness, and other characteristics that affect land use.

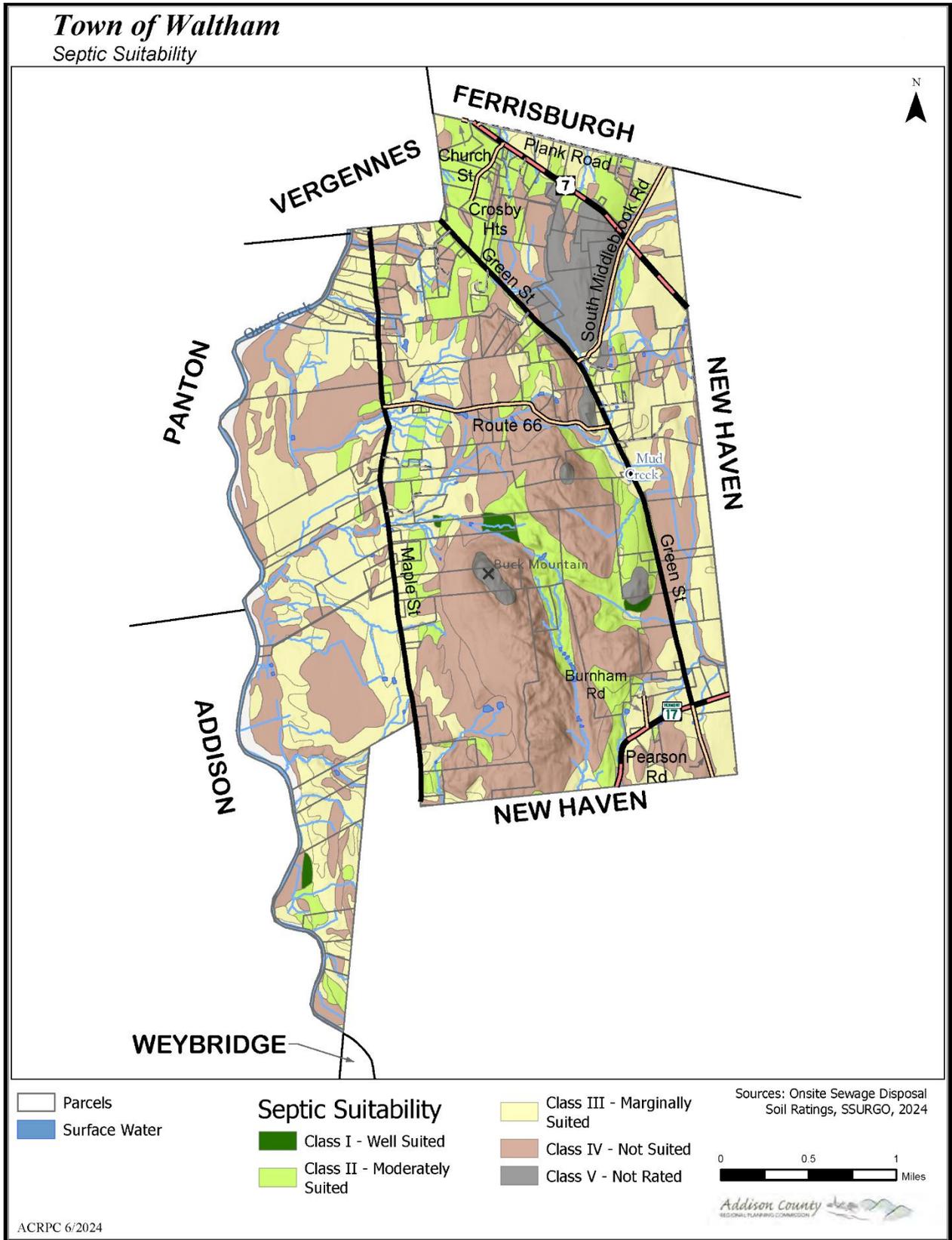
The NRCS assessed the limitations of each soil mapping unit for roads, buildings, septic systems, and other uses and compiled their conclusions into a State Soil Survey Database (SSSD). The SSSD is used to produce maps showing the location of each soil in Waltham and the relative values of the town's soils for agricultural production (see Map 8: Primary Agricultural Soils, Pg. - 49 -and septic systems (Map 9: Septic Suitability, Pg. - 50 -). While useful to town planning, these maps are not accurate enough to be used for site-specific planning or design.

¹ USDA Soil Conservation Service. 1971. Soil Survey of Addison County Vermont.

Map 8: Primary Agricultural Soils



Map 9: Septic Suitability



Capability of Soils for Agricultural Production

Agricultural land is an essential, irreplaceable, natural resource. Human life, as we know it, cannot continue without agricultural land and diversified agriculture. Waltham's agricultural land is an integral part of the lifestyles and traditions of the town and region. It plays a large role in our health and happiness. It shapes the beauty and function of our habitat. Waltham has an important stake in conserving its agricultural lands.

The NRCS classifies soils based upon their capability of growing food and crops. In 1985, the NRCS rated soils throughout Vermont and classified their agricultural values into several groups.² In 1988, the statewide analysis was refined to reflect local conditions in Addison County. The NRCS recommends use of the county ratings for local and regional planning.³

The relative values of the Addison County soils decrease from Group 1 to Group 8. The first five soil groups have the physical characteristics needed to meet the Act 250 definition of "primary agricultural soils" – Groups 1-2 meet the national definition of "prime" farmland and Groups 3-5 are of "statewide" importance. According to the NRCS:

- Prime farmland soils have the soil quality, growing season and moisture supply needed to economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.
- Soils denoted as statewide have good potential for growing crops but have one or more limitations that restrict choice of crops. They require more intensive management than prime soils.

It is essential that Group 1-5 soils be retained as a base for agricultural productivity. Stripping of these soils for commercial sale or other commercial purposes are prohibited in Waltham.

Groups 6-7 have severe limitations on agricultural production and Group 8 soils are considered to have no potential. Highly developed (so-called "urban") lands of greater than 40 acres and water were excluded from the classifications.

According to the NRCS ratings, Addison County has a higher percentage of primary agricultural soils than the state as a whole and Waltham has a higher percentage than the county as whole. Most of this soil is still being used for agricultural production in Waltham and the town hopes this will continue well into the future

Earth Resources

Waltham does not have large areas of valuable earth resources like sand, gravel, shale, slate, marble, or other rock aggregate. In fact, other than small pits used as part of existing farm operations, only one small historic shale extraction site exists, across the road from the Clerk's office. The pit has not operated for a long period of time. The Town recognizes that sand and gravel are economically valuable

² USDA Soil Conservation Service. 1985. Agricultural Value Groups for Vermont Soils.

³ USDA Soil Conservation Service. 1988. Agricultural Value Groups for Addison County Soils.

commodities. It also recognizes that a quality local supply of these materials is beneficial to the Town, especially the road crews for construction and maintenance. This Plan allows that properly controlled extraction operations of naturally occurring deposits of loose sand, loose gravel, and loose shale with a total excavated area less than one half acre in size may be appropriate in specified rural zoning districts within the Agricultural/Residential Section. However, since the noise and truck traffic associated with quarrying, rock crushing and mining operations are incompatible with the rural character, stewardship and scenic values desired by the town, this Plan specifically opposes and prohibits any type of rock aggregate quarrying or mining of any hard rock, including sandstone and gravel conglomerates, everywhere in the Town of Waltham.

Forest Resources

As this Plan notes, the name “Waltham” means forest home. Like the open space provided by the working agricultural landscape, the forested working landscape provides many similar and important benefits to Waltham’s culture and way of life. This Plan supports keeping large blocks of productive forest land, especially in the Mountain/Forested Land Use Section, available for forest production, open space, and recreation.

The Town of Waltham contains several areas of contiguous forestland that have been identified as “Highest Priority” and “Priority” Forest Blocks with a range of ecological and ownership characteristics described below. Forest Blocks and Habitat Connectors were identified through Vermont Conservation Design by the VT Agency of Natural Resources.

Definitions

“Forest Block” means a contiguous area of forest in any stage of succession, not currently developed for other uses. These areas can include recreational trails, wetlands, and agricultural and silvicultural uses currently exempt from municipal land use regulation.

“Connectivity Block” means land or water that links wildlife habitat within a landscape, allowing the movement and migration of animals and plants and the functioning of ecological processes. These may include recreational trails, wetlands, and agricultural and silvicultural uses currently exempt from municipal land use regulation.

“Forest Fragmentation” means the division or conversion of a forest block by land development other than by a recreational trail or use exempt from municipal land use regulation.

Highest Priority Forest Blocks

These blocks are identified as ‘highest priority’ across the State due to the size of their contiguous interior forest land. These are the largest forest blocks, from all biophysical regions, and provide the foundation for interior forest habitats and associated ecological functions. The highest priority areas are those that are critical for maintaining an ecologically functional landscape. In Waltham, the highest priority block identified by the Vermont Conservation Design include:

Buck Mountain Block

The Buck Mountain Forest block is part of a nearly 2,000-acre continuous forested habitat block. Approximately 1,500 acres of that block fall within Waltham, which accounts for nearly 1/4 of the town's total area. Situated in the southern Champlain Valley, and sitting at over 800 feet in elevation, Buck Mountain serves as an important forest habitat resource and a unique landscape feature that supports a diversity of species and natural communities.

The predominantly northern hardwood forest which comprises this forest block is broken up by uncommon and important natural communities. Patches of northern hardwood talus woodland, transition hardwood limestone forest, red cedar woodland, and dry oak-hickory-hophornbeam forest are represented and add to the biological diversity of the Buck Mountain block. Sections of Clayplain forests can be found at lower elevations. This forest type is one of the rarest in Vermont and this Plan supports identifying clay plain remnants and managing them to preserve the diversity of plants and wildlife found in this type of forest.

The Buck Mountain Forest block has also been identified as having the presence of uncommon plant and animal species, as well as rare, threatened, or endangered plants and animals. A large area within the block has been mapped as deer wintering habitat.

Priority Forest Blocks

These forested blocks are also important resources, but there is more flexibility for conserving the ecological integrity of these areas. However, their protection remains critical for maintaining species' habitat and ecological function. In Waltham, the priority blocks identified by the Vermont Conservation Design include:

Otter Creek Block

Sections of this 143-acre forest block cross the town boundary and run along the banks of the Otter Creek. The roughly 53 acres of the block that lay within Waltham contains class II wetlands and are comprised of floodplain forest community types, including silver maple-ostrich fern riverine floodplain forest. The Otter Creek contains a diversity of species including rare, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species. Additionally, the riparian habitat along the banks supports the movement of species across the landscape.

Route 66 Block

This block is situated to the North of the Buck Mountain block and between Route 66 and Green Street. The 174 acres contain sections of class II wetland and areas of Clayplain forest. This block serves an important role in allowing for greater connectivity between larger contiguous forested blocks outside of Waltham and the Buck Mountain block.

Route 17 Block

Located at the southern edge of Waltham, this area is a portion of a 450-acre forested block that runs south into New Haven. Areas of Clayplain forest can be found throughout this block.

Middlebrook Block

This 159-acre block running along Middlebrook Road sits to the North of the Route 66 block and continues a “pathway” of forest connectivity. A large section of class II wetland overlaps the southern edge of this block.

Crosby Heights Block

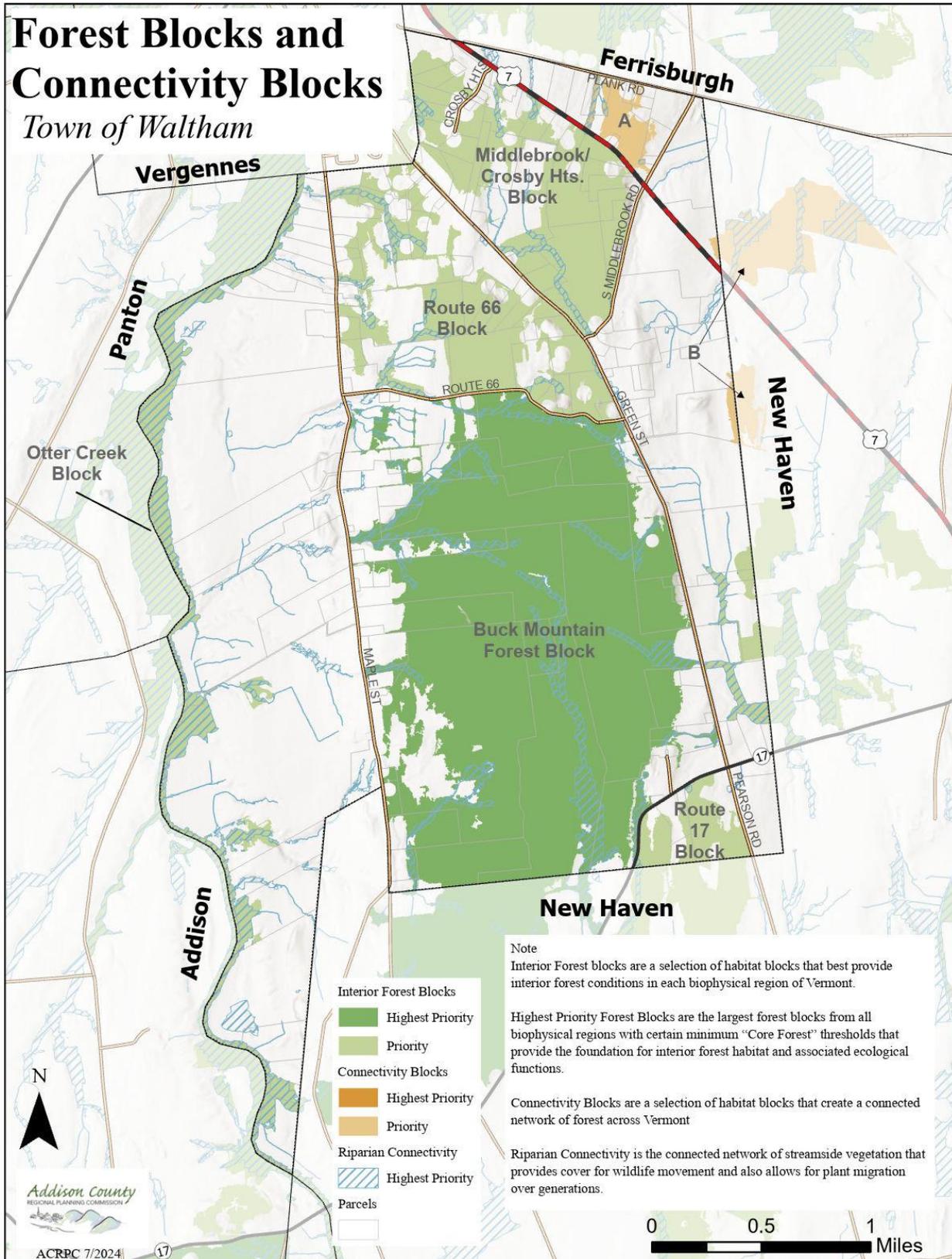
These 111 acres of forest cover is bisected by Crosby Heights and acts as a connecting point between larger blocks in Ferrisburgh. This block is a part of the “pathway” of forest connectivity between the large Buck Mountain block and other large blocks to the North.

Connectivity Blocks

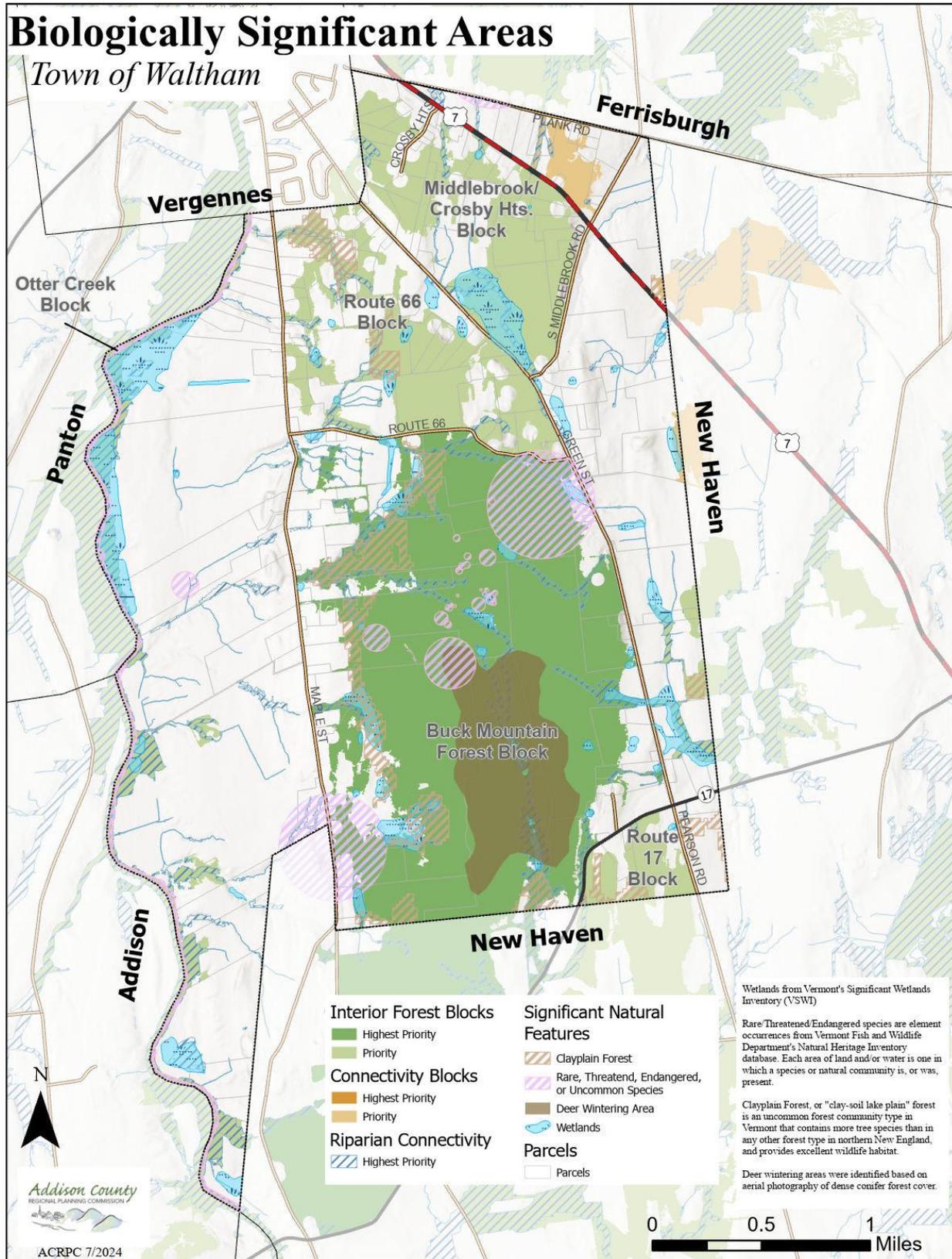
Connectivity Blocks are the forest, riparian and surface waters that provide connectivity at a local and regional scale (across Vermont and to adjacent states and Québec) and connectivity between all Vermont biophysical regions. It is important to protect and enhance the margins of these habitat connectors especially where they intersect other habitat and forest blocks by maintaining natural stream buffers, shrub and tree cover and limiting development in these areas of connectivity. These areas provide cover and shelter for animal species moving between larger habitats and are critical for maintaining viable populations.

- A. Located between Route 7 and Plank Road, this 40-acre block acts as an important connection point between larger forest blocks outside of Waltham and the Buck Mountain block.
- B. Located primarily in New Haven, these connectivity blocks are regionally significant and tie into Waltham’s wetland ecosystem.

Map 10: Forest Blocks & Connectivity Blocks



Map 11: Biologically Significant Areas



Wildlife

Waltham’s rural setting of farms and forests offers an abundant and important habitat to the plants and animals that inhabit the Champlain Valley. Part of the joy offered by the rural landscape stems from the ability to observe or hunt healthy abundant wildlife. Waltham’s abundant water and diverse terrain offer varied habitat and food sources for a variety of wildlife. This Plan encourages all of Waltham’s property owners to plan for and consider wildlife impacts as they manage their property. It also supports retaining the working landscape that helps to sustain wildlife populations.

Scenic Resources

Waltham offers spectacular views of the Adirondack and Green Mountains, scenic ridgelines, open farmlands, the Otter Creek, unbroken woodlands, scenic roads and historic houses and barns. This resource, as much as anything else encompasses the “rural values” that Waltham embraces, and this Plan is designed to support and maintain. Maple Street is an extremely popular route to bicycle due to the gentle gradient and spectacular views of Otter Creek, the Champlain Valley and Adirondack Mountains it offers. Residents and visitors hike Buck Mountain partially because the cool forest trails provide an enjoyable walk up to its rock ledges that offer tremendous views all around the Champlain Valley. This plan specifically opposes and prohibits commercial wind generating towers on Buck Mountain within the Mountain/Forested Land Use Section.

Natural Resources: Goals and Objectives	
Goal 1	The quality of Waltham's ground and surface waters and wetlands will be maintained.
Objective A	Promote and encourage landowners to participate in educational or other activities that support fish habitat or recreational uses on Otter Creek. (shorten)
Objective B	Require that all land development conforms to local, state, and federal water quality regulations. Encourage landowners to incorporate naturally vegetated buffer strips along stream/ river shores.
Goal 2	Waltham's native biological diversity, including plant and wildlife habitats will be conserved.
Objective A	Encourage landowner participation in programs, including state and federally funded programs, which are intended to aid in conservation and protection of important species, habitats, and natural communities.

Objective B	Work to prevent the spread of invasive, exotic species.
Objective C	Support systematic inventory and assessment of Waltham's natural resources, including plants, animals, natural communities, and wildlife corridors to inform local land use regulations and policies that protect these important resources.
Goal 3	Protect, maintain, and improve the ecological integrity and function of all of Waltham's Forest Blocks and Habitat Connectors.
Objective A	Protect the town's highest priority and priority forest blocks by discouraging development that fragments or requiring significant clearing of these identified areas.
Objective B	Revise Waltham's Development Regulations to support forest Integrity in the town.
Goal 4	Protect and enhance the natural beauty and scenic characteristics of significance to the local landscape. Provide and maintain adequate levels of recreation facilities and programs to serve residents of the town.
Objective A	Establish a town forest which encompasses Buck Mountain and adjacent forests with multiple public access points (Rt 66, Green St., Maple St., and Rt. 17)
Objective B	Establish a public access to Otter Creek.

Flood Resilience

Introduction

Flood damage has become more common and costly throughout Vermont. Achieving flood readiness through safer placement of new development and public infrastructure, protecting the functions of the watersheds that protect us, adapting our critical infrastructure and preparing for emergencies can avoid and reduce flood damage and costs associated with it.

Following the devastation caused in July and August 2023, and by Tropical Storm Irene in 2011, the damaging power of flooding—and the threat it poses to hundreds of Vermont communities—remains fresh in the minds of nearly all Vermonters. Considering these threats, the State of Vermont, and communities all throughout its borders have begun to act. While Waltham is not considered one of Vermont's most susceptible communities, it is essential that the town identify pragmatic, long-term approaches to reducing the risks and costs of floods and erosion.

Vermont State statutes 24 VSA Chapter 117 §4302 and §4382 require municipalities to include a Flood Resilience Element in municipal development plans adopted after July 1, 2014. The statute requires towns to identify flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas and strongly encourages towns to avoid development in those areas. If new development is to be considered in such areas, it should not increase the possibility of flooding and fluvial erosion. The statutes also promote the protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.

Floodplains, Flood Hazard Areas, & Fluvial Erosion

Floodplains are the areas adjacent to water bodies that are subject to periodic flooding. As a result, floodplains perform several important functions, primarily relating to erosion and flood control and wildlife habitat. In unmodified floodplains, fluvial erosion is moderated by woody vegetation and landforms that help detain water, debris, ice, and sediment. These natural floodplains reduce water pollution and recharge aquifers and provide downstream water resources, including larger streams, ponds, and lakes. The gradual release of floodwater minimizes erosion, streambank scouring, and downstream flooding. Often floodplains provide excellent farmland because of the rich soil deposits left after the waters depart. In Waltham, much of its best farmland is in the floodplain along Otter Creek.

Floodplain areas can be identified for different intervals of risk based on the likelihood of projected volumes of water. These are identified as the Flood Hazard Area on maps prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Nearly all the floodplain in Waltham lies on its western border immediately adjacent to Otter Creek. A small portion is located along Mud creek, in the wetland area north of the Green Street- South Middlebrook Road intersection and additional low-lying areas to the east of Green Street.

Flood Resilience Management

The development and implementation of flood emergency preparedness and response planning are critical for mitigating potential flood related risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic

structures, and municipal investments. The objective of flood resilience management is to enhance a community’s ability to anticipate, avoid, withstand, respond to, and recover from the adverse effects of routine and seasonal as well as exceptional flooding events.

The Town of Waltham, through its municipal planning and regulations, is working towards becoming a flood resilient community and a good municipal partner in its shared watersheds. The following section summarizes the actions that Waltham has already completed in its effort to become a more flood resilient community.

Emergency Relief & Assistance Fund

In the event of a Federally declared disaster, the Town of Waltham can make a claim for funds to assist in post-disaster relief. The Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) provides state funding to match federal public assistance after such disasters. Waltham’s eligible public costs are reimbursed by federal taxpayers at 75%. For disasters after October 23, 2014, the State of Vermont will contribute an additional 7.5% toward the Town's costs. For communities that take specific steps to reduce flood damage, the State will increase the contribution to 12.5% or 17.5% of the total cost.

The Town of Waltham currently (2024) qualifies for 82.5% relief (including 7.5% from state contributions) through the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund. Waltham complies with Vermont Road and Bridge Standards and has an annually updated Local Emergency Management Plan (2024).

Waltham has not enrolled in NFIP nor developed a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. River corridor protection regulations are not currently in place but could be considered in a future update of Waltham’s land use and development regulations.



Figure 12: Steps for Municipalities to Receive Additional Emergency Relief Funds Through ERAF

National Flood Insurance Program

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is administered through the Federal Emergency Management Agency and provides a source of flood insurance for buildings in communities that choose to participate. Nearly ninety percent of communities in Vermont participate in the National Flood Insurance Program. Flood insurance is available for buildings and their contents anywhere in participating communities. Without access to the National Flood Insurance Program, flood insurance from private sources may be unavailable or prohibitively expensive.

To participate in the National Flood Insurance Program, a community must regulate all new development in high-risk Special Flood Hazard Areas to ensure that new development is safe from flood damage. In 1985 the Federal Emergency Management Agency created Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) that identify Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) that are the areas of greatest concern for inundation flooding. These are commonly referred to as the base flood or “100-year flood” area (more accurately meaning, a 1% chance of flooding each year). The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) floodplain management regulations must be enforced in these areas, and the mandatory purchase of flood insurance applies. FEMA, in conjunction with the US Geological Survey, is in the process of updating these FIRMs. The updated version is expected by 2027.

There are no critical or public structures located within the mapped Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) of Waltham, which are along Otter Creek and Mud Creek. A comparison of E-911 locations in Waltham and a digitized flood map found a total of 0 residential structures located in the current (1985) FEMA mapped SHA floodplain.

At the writing of this plan, June 2024, the Town of Waltham was not participating in the National Flood Insurance Program but is working towards that goal.

Town Road & Bridge Standards

The Town of Waltham has adopted and meets the Vermont Agency of Transportation Town Road and Bridge Standards. This includes the “hydrologically connected” local roads covered by Municipal Roads General (stormwater) Permit standards, as well as town highways. The Selectboard of the Town of Waltham most recently passed and adopted the standards on July 1, 2019.

Local Emergency Management Plan

The Local Emergency Management Plan (formerly called the Local Emergency Operations Plan) establishes lines of responsibility during a disaster as well as vulnerable populations, shelters, and resources. The LEMP should be updated every year after Town Meeting. The Town of Waltham updated and adopted its short form LEMP on June 5, 2023, and will continue to do so annually.

Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

A Local Hazard Mitigation Plan helps communities identify important local hazard issues, prioritize next steps, and provide access to funding through the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program. The Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is also one of the mitigation actions needed to qualify for numerous sources of additional post-disaster funding through FEMA and the state of Vermont.

The Town of Waltham has not previously developed a Local Hazards Mitigation Plan. The town has been offered funding through the Building Resilient Infrastructures and Communities program which can be used to hire a contractor to complete the plan. The LHMP development process includes assembling a Hazard Mitigation Committee, developing strategy for outreach to the public and community stakeholders, conducting a Hazard Inventory/Risk Assessment and identifying local areas of concern, and determining community mitigation strategies and future actions. The process usually takes between nine months to a year to complete, and LHMP's are good for 5 years after the date of FEMA approval.

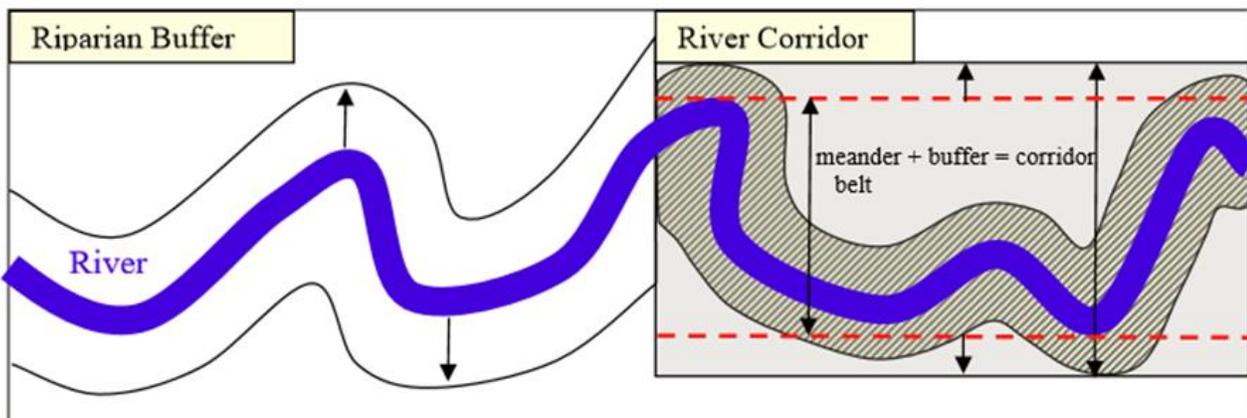
River Corridor Protection Regulations & Special Flood Hazard Areas

River Corridors are the area that a stream or river needs to maintain fluvial geomorphic equilibrium, that is, the space in which streams and rivers will move. River Corridors include the width of the meander belt of a river and an additional 50' buffer to allow for a stable bank. The Vermont Rivers Program has developed the Statewide River Corridor, using map-based data on watershed catchments, stream gradient, reference channel width, meander belt widths, valley walls, and major transportation features, to identify corridors of all rivers and streams with watersheds over two square miles across the state. For small streams, with watersheds less than two square miles, the state has set a default width measured on the ground as fifty (50) feet from the top of the stream bank as the corridor. Communities may conduct their own geomorphic assessment, a field-based study of the physical condition of local rivers and major tributary streams, to determine River Corridors more accurately.

River Corridor Maps do not indicate any required action on the part of municipalities. They are developed to facilitate ANR's responsibilities in Act 250 to protect public safety from fluvial erosion hazards and to regulate activities exempt from municipal regulation under the Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rules. Regulations that reference river corridors include:

- State regulation of berms as described in the Stream Alteration Rule.
- Act 250 regulated land use in floodways.

Figure 13: Comparing a Buffer Setback to a River Corridor



Comparing a buffer setback to a river corridor. Adapted from Ohio DNR, Rainwater and Land Development Manual, 2006 Ed., Ch 2. Post Construction Stormwater Management Practices, p. 21.

- ANR floodway determinations; and
- State regulation of developments that are exempt from municipal regulation.

A municipality may regulate land uses within River Corridors by adopting those areas as part of its zoning regulations. The town of Waltham has not adopted the state River Corridors in its zoning bylaws but may consider doing so.

If the Town of Waltham were to adopt a River Corridor overlay in its zoning bylaws, in addition to the other steps mentioned previously, it would be eligible for increased funding for public-infrastructure damage repair in the event of a federally declared disaster. In Waltham, approximately 481.29 acres (8.14%) are contained within the State-identified River Corridors, primarily along the waterways and the land around Otter Creek that are already included in the Special Flood Hazard Area and already restrict development through conservation easements held by the Vermont Land Trust.

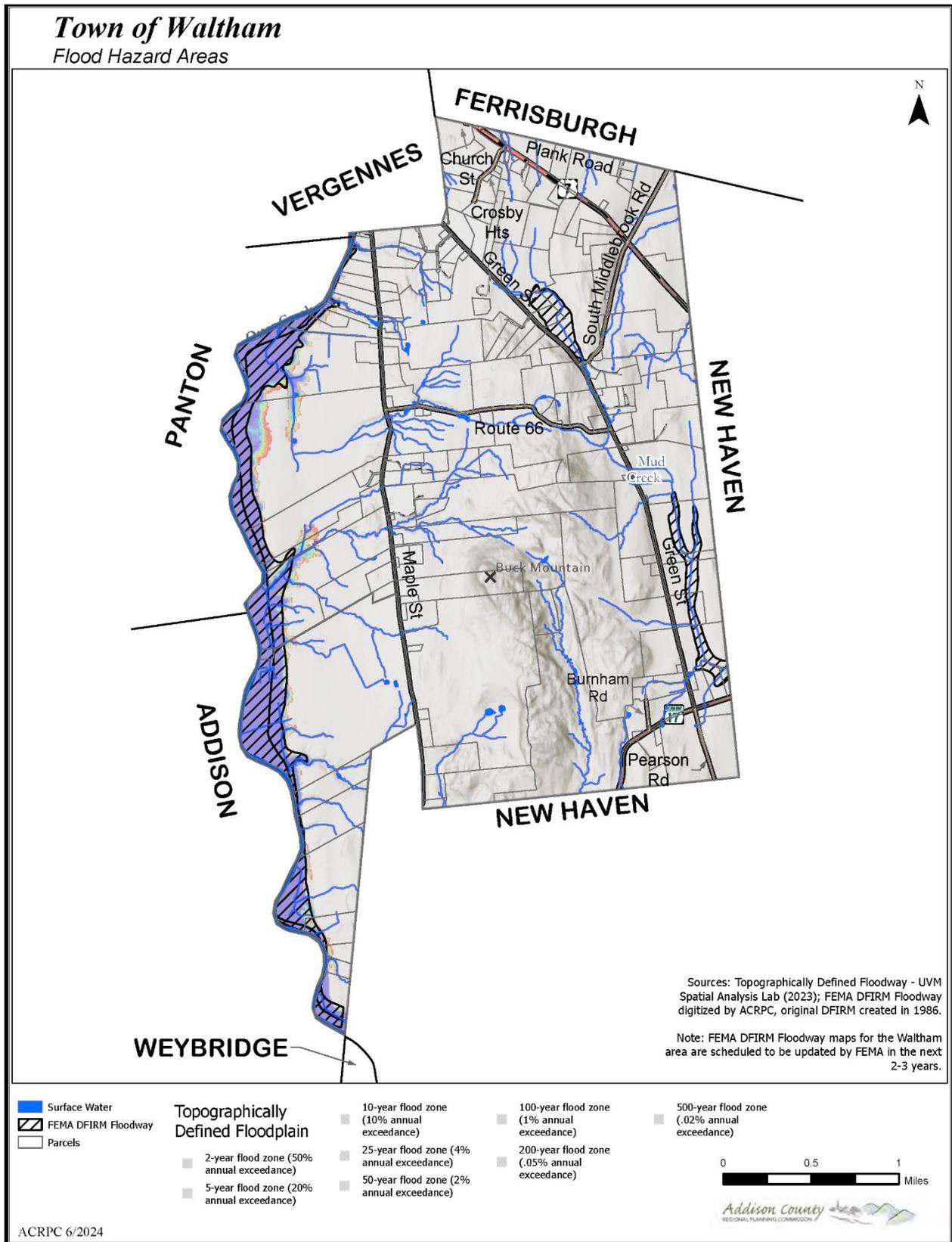
Waltham recognizes the need for and community protective benefits of efforts exceeding the NFIP minimums. Waltham’s eligibility for many types of funding would benefit from an improved ERAF rating and compliance with Vermont’s recent and evolving flood resilience recommendations and rules. These

objectives would be served by prohibitions on land development and/or building of new structures in mapped flood hazard zones. Waltham can improve its flood resilience and secure its access to emergency relief funding by adopting revised and updated floodplain regulations.

Table 6: Emergency Relief & Assistance Fund (ERAF) - State Post-Disaster Funding			
Flood Hazard Mitigation Actions	Action Dates	Responsible	ERAF Status (5/2024)
1. Road and Bridge Standards	07/01/2019	Waltham	Yes
2. Local Emergency Management Plan	06/05/2023	Waltham	Yes
3. National Flood Insurance Program		Waltham	No
4. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan	Expired	Waltham	No
5. River Corridor Protection			No
		Waltham current ERAF Rate:	7.5%

Source: Flood Ready Vermont, Waltham, 2024 Community Reports

Map 12: Flood Hazard Areas



Flood Resiliency: Goals and Objectives	
Goal 1	Protect the health, safety, and welfare of all Waltham residents and visitors
Objective A	Ensure that new development does not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion and extend provisions to development activities that might increase the amount and/or rate of runoff and soil erosion of upland areas.
Objective B	Prohibit all development in the 100-year floodplain as defined on the most recent FEMA maps. Existing structures should be floodproofed to the “Design Flood Elevation” with the lowest floor 2 feet above the “Base Flood Elevation” and shall be flood-proofed whenever they are “substantially improved.”
Objective C	Maintain and upgrade roads, bridges, and culverts to flood resilient standards.
Goal 2	Improve Waltham’s flood resilience and achieve the highest possible Vermont ERAF funding rate by enrolling in programs, developing local plans and adopting updated floodplain regulations.
Objective A	Maintain a current Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP), updated each year following Town Meeting and before May 1, to keep Waltham better prepared for emergencies.
Objective B	Enroll in the National Flood Insurance Program as soon as possible, including required steps to update floodplain management regulations to meet or exceed NFIP minimum requirements, or adopt one of the Vermont DEC model flood hazard regulations that are designed to be NFIP compliant, and adopt the most current Special Flood Hazard Area determined in updated Flood Insurance Rate Maps.
Objective C	Accept funding from the state of Vermont to develop a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) and achieve FEMA approval.
Goal 3	Protect and restore floodplains and stream buffers
Objective A	Support ownership-conservation of floodplain and river corridor areas through conservation easements.
Objective B	Support the re-naturalization of floodplains and reforestation of stream and river corridors.

Land Use

Introduction

Our town's rural character and welfare are determined largely by its land and land uses; by the mixture of farms, forests, and houses; by the patterns of buildings on the landscape; and by the sense of community that comes from people of mixed incomes living and working together.

This section of the Plan describes the types and patterns of Waltham's current land uses and our vision of how the land should be used in the future to protect and promote the town's rural character, scenic resources and future. We recognize that land characteristics and existing types, intensities and patterns of land use vary from one section of town to the next. We have tried to point out those differences and use them as a basis for shaping realistic land use goals.

This Plan – particularly as it relates to land use – must be read and implemented as a whole. Waltham's housing patterns, transportation system, public facilities, economy, natural and scenic resources, recreation facilities, and energy infrastructure all relate to each other and impact the Town's land use patterns. and inform the goals and objectives of this Land Use Section.

Current Land Uses

Aerial photographs of Waltham depict the location of distinct land uses. Land use classifications include farmland (including croplands, pastures, orchards, and clusters of farm dwellings, barns, and other buildings), forest land, other open land (including some wetlands, and generally undeveloped non-forest lands not currently being used for diversified agriculture), surface water and roads. Areas identified as predominantly farmland, forest land and other open land may include houses, barns, and other structures that – due to limited size, density and number – are subordinate to the predominant land use. GIS analysis of the general land categories noted above indicates that 91 percent of Waltham is predominantly open with rural dwellings mixed in along the edges of fields and forests: farm (61%), forest (30%). Water covers 6% of Waltham, with the remaining percentages divided between built commercial, transportation or residential uses. See Map 13: Land Use Planning Regions, Pg. - 68 -. The pattern of farms, forests, and neighborhood clusters varies substantially from one part of town to another. These differences must be considered when setting land use goals for future priorities and action.

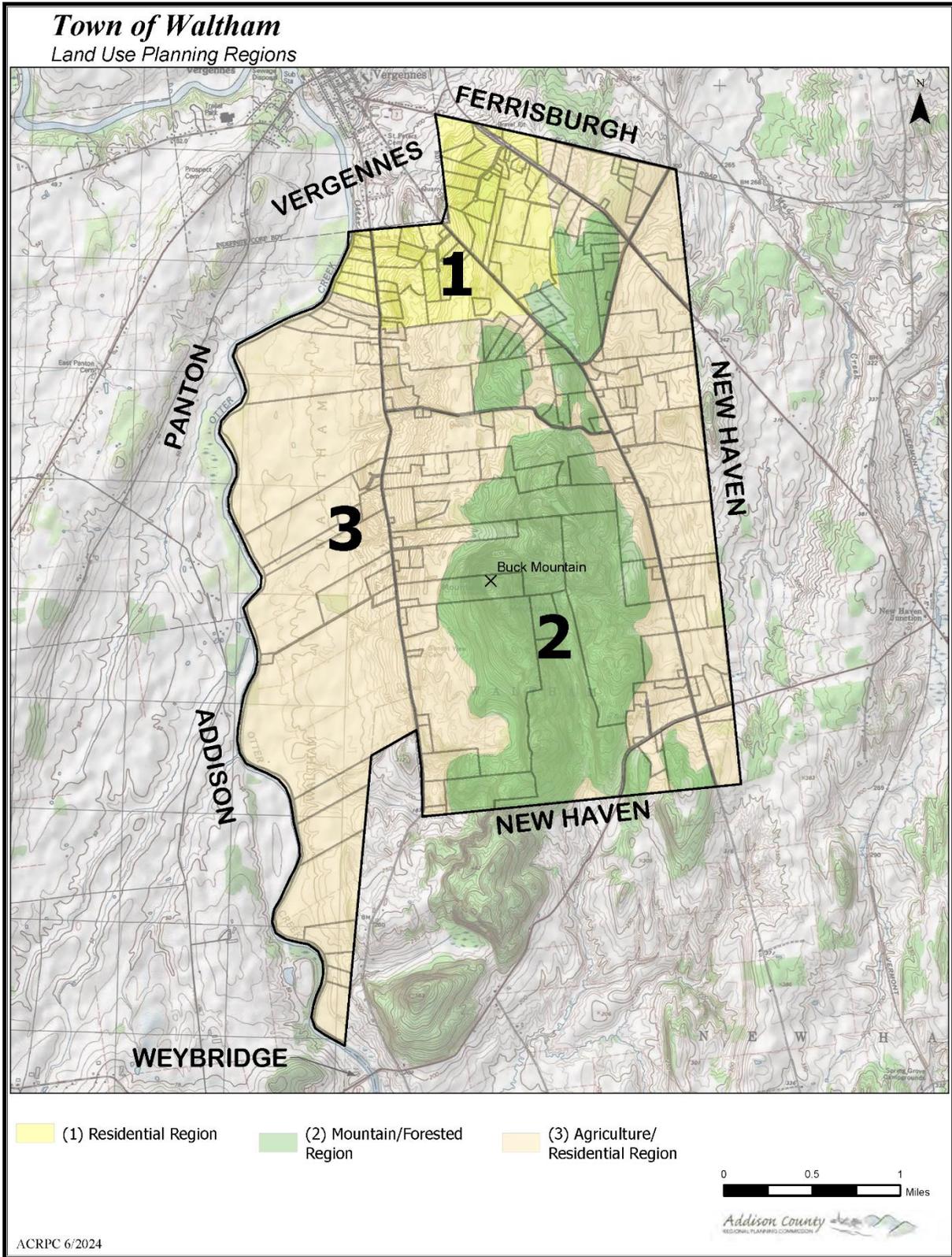
Northern Residential Region- 1

The Northern Residential Region is located adjacent to Vergennes. Over half of the town's housing is located here. Residential development is the existing predominant land use, with denser development closer to Vergennes and larger residential lots as well as farm and forestland to the South and East. The purpose of the Northern Residential Land Use Region is to provide a designated area for future housing and small commercial opportunities, encouraging denser, compact, neighborhood development, close to the existing amenities in Vergennes.

DESIRED CONDITIONS: This constitutes the best area for residential and other new developments. If new development occurs, whether residential or commercial, it should be located near existing settlements,

clustered on small lots, sited to preserve views and avoid strip development. Planned unit developments (PUDs), that preserve shared open spaces and cluster development, are appropriate for this section. Farmland is a modest, but desirable component of this region. Productive soils and proximity to large agricultural parcels of farmland, in the other land use areas, makes conservation and preservation of farmland and open space in this region a logical design consideration. Provisions shall be made to minimize clearing of natural vegetation and otherwise conserve large undeveloped woodlands, farmlands to help keep neighborhoods distinct. The inclusion of sidewalks and bike paths should be encouraged for new developments in this section to facilitate pedestrian access to Vergennes and between neighborhoods. The type and scale of any commercial development shall be compatible with the section's primary uses – residential, mixed use, and small commercial and small agricultural operations and farming. Accordingly, the scale of these enterprises shall be consistent with that of the barns or single-family homes nearest to it. Similarly, architectural style should complement the existing structures nearest to it. To promote increased density in this planning section, updates to zoning regulations such as dimensional standards, allowable uses, accessory dwelling units, multi-family units, adaptive reuse and parking requirements should be considered.

Map 13: Land Use Planning Regions



Mountain/Forested Section - 2

This section comprises most of the higher elevation, steeper and forested land in the central and southern portions of the Town. Most of this land is steep, rocky, and forested. This Section also contains a significant large wetland on the east side of Green Street just north of the intersection with South Middlebrook Road. Some good agricultural soil is found along the edges. It contains the Town's largest woodland and is very important to wildlife and recreationists. All the area is privately owned, and there is no guaranteed access. The purpose of the Mountain/Forested Land Use Section is to protect regionally significant valuable wildlife habitat and travel corridors recognized by Vermont Fish and Wildlife in the 2014 publication, "Vermont Habitat Blocks and Habitat Connectivity", and to preserve the economic, recreational and scenic resource value of Waltham's limited forested lands.



Photo 10: Aerial Photograph of Waltham, 2006

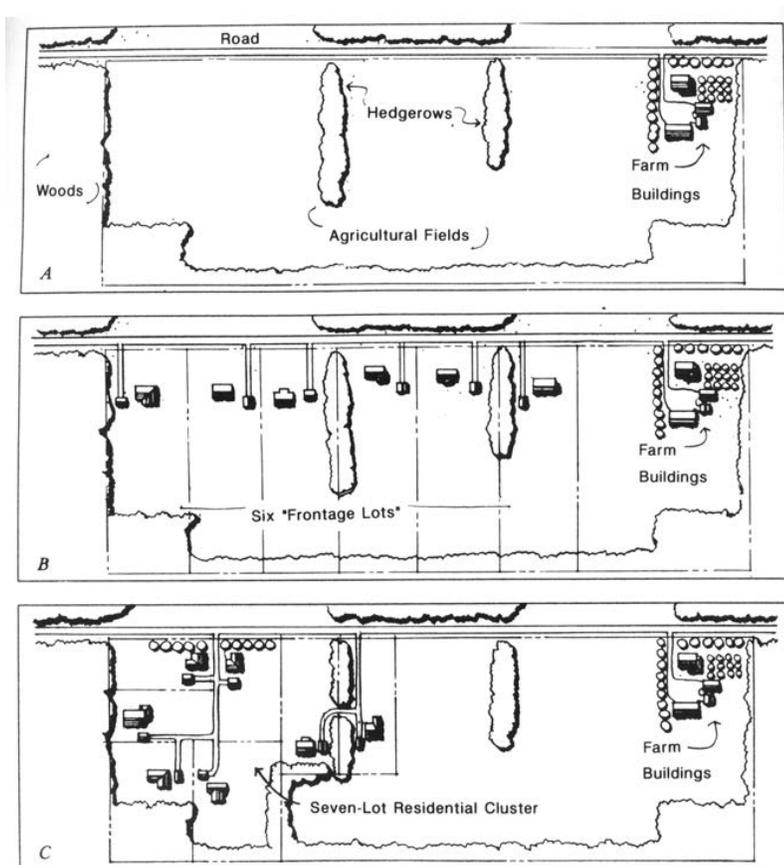
DESIRED CONDITIONS: Future development shall not impair the significant wildlife habitat, water quality, recreation and scenic aesthetic benefits of this land use section. The overall housing density should remain low. Ideally new buildings and other new development should be sited close to the road, near the edge of the forest; any new development in this area shall not be sited in prominently visible locations on hillsides or ridges and must minimize clearing of natural vegetation.

Wherever possible, new buildings and other new developments should be sited to preserve views, behind a vegetative screen, along a road, and should share a common access road (curb cut) and avoid residential strip development.

Agricultural/Residential Region - 3

This section comprises the remainder of the Town not in the Mountain/Forested and Northern Residential Sections. It is the southern portion of the town and surrounds the Mountain/Forested Section. It contains the majority of the town's farmland. Much of the land is flat, fertile, and well suited

Figure 14: Conservation Design Concepts, from *Managing Change: A Pilot Study in Rural Design & Planning* (Doble et al., 1992)



for agriculture. Parcel sizes are generally the largest in town. Outside of a pocket of relatively dense housing, the overall housing density is low. The purpose of the Agricultural/ Residential Land Use Section is to preserve traditional rural and agricultural uses and the outstanding scenic quality of the Champlain Valley visible from Buck Mountain overlooks while accommodating low-density residential development.

DESIRED CONDITIONS: Diversified agriculture should remain the dominant land use in this section, and the right to farm shall be guaranteed. The overall ratio of functional farmland to buildings should remain high. Subdivisions of land to create building lots should leave parcels of sufficient size and productive capability to be economically viable for farming. New subdivisions are encouraged to be

developed as Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), clustered lots with shared access and infrastructure, thus avoiding strip development and setting aside parcels of open land with productive agricultural soils and preserved views. Specific design standards shall apply to new residential and commercial development in this section in recognition of the existence existing of a concentration of agricultural lands and to protect the significant scenic resources existing throughout much of this section. Development in this section shall not be sited in prominently visible locations on hillsides or ridgelines and must minimize clearing of natural vegetation.

Conservation Design Concepts

Conservation Design is an approach for communities to add desperately needed new housing more sustainably. A Conservation Subdivision plan has the same number of lots allowed as conventional zoning, but is laid out in a clustered pattern, conserving a major portion of the site as permanent continuous open space. Shared road access, infrastructure and open space benefit the community, socially, economically and environmentally. By employing a Planned Unit Development zoning process, that has specific design standards, this type of development can be achieved.

Below is another example of how the same parcel can be developed using different zoning approaches. Clustering with a PUD separates density from lot size, permitting property owners to develop the allowable density on small lots in exchange for permanently protecting the remainder of the parcel as shared open space.

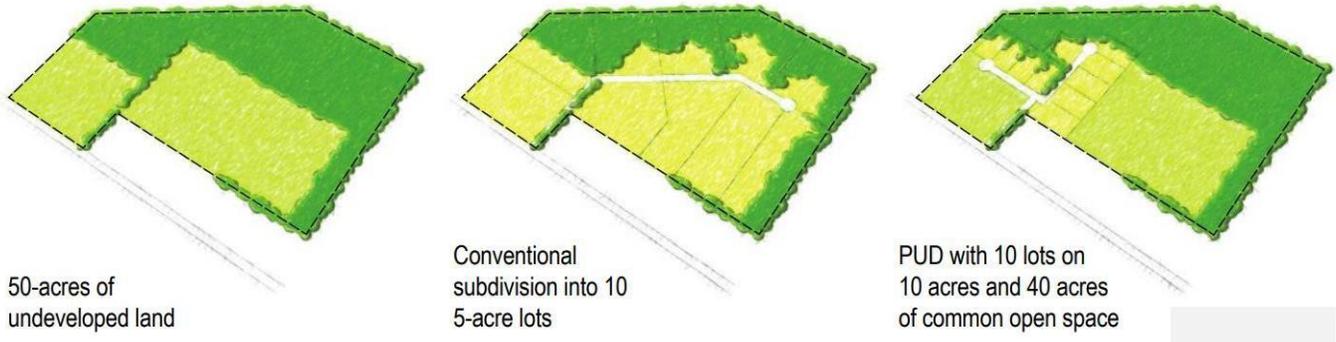


Figure 15: A Comparison of Zoning Approaches

Land Use: Goals and Objectives	
Goal 1	Support land development based on the historic settlement patterns of compact neighborhoods surrounded by working farms and forest lands.
Objective A	Encourage growth in the Northern Residential Section with innovative zoning provisions that promote density. Important bylaw revision topics are dimensional standards, allowable uses, accessory dwelling units, multi-family units, adaptive reuse, parking requirements.
Objective B	Work with the state and/or other funding organizations to develop water and wastewater solutions that will allow and support increased housing and small commercial opportunities in the Northern Residential area.
Goal 2	Preserve Waltham's working landscape and its rural residential development patterns in the Agricultural/Residential and Mountain/Forested Land Use Sections.
Objective A	Promote the use of planned unit developments (PUDs) in rural areas, clustering development, to preserve open space for diversified agriculture, forestry and wildlife habitat.
Objective B	Support individuals' efforts to preserve open space within the town by supporting private voluntary conservation easements and the Current Use program
Goal 3	Maintain and preserve ecologically significant undeveloped lands and scenic views throughout Waltham.
Objective A	Cooperate with Landowners to protect and enhance the significant local, state and regional recreation qualities of Buck Mountain
Objective B	Encourage new development to be located to minimize adverse impacts on recreation resources and important scenic views.



Photo 11: Miedema Home on Rt. 66 and Maple Street. Artwork by Rob Popick

Compatibility with Surrounding Communities

Vergennes

The City of Vergennes is Waltham's immediate neighbor to the north. It generally constitutes Waltham's center for commercial activity, employment and services. Waltham has aligned its North Central Land Use Section in the 2.5-acre zone as shown on Zoning Map #5 to create its greatest area of housing density, similar to that called for by Vergennes Medium Density Residential District on its border. Accordingly, the land uses in Waltham and Vergennes are compatible and complementary.

Ferrisburgh

The Plank Road divides Waltham from Ferrisburgh on its northern boundary. This Boundary also lies almost entirely within the Northern Residential Land Use Section of Waltham. It provides for housing at a moderate density, with some forestry and farming mixed in. Ferrisburgh's Town Plan of 2006 identifies the land adjacent to Waltham in this area as Ferrisburgh's Rural Residential District. Ferrisburgh's Plan calls for low to medium density residential development in this area, a use relatively like and compatible with Waltham's proposed uses.

New Haven

Waltham borders New Haven on its eastern and southern boundaries. Waltham’s Agricultural/Residential Land Use Section calls for primarily agricultural uses interspersed with rural residential development. The Mountain/Forested Land Use Section focuses on preserving the forest block surrounding Buck Mountain. New Haven’s Plan designates its boundary area with Waltham as either Rural Agricultural Land Use Area all along Waltham’s eastern border and a portion of Waltham’s southern border or Forest District on the portion of Waltham’s southern border near Buck Mountain, where the forest straddles the town line. Accordingly, the land uses in the Towns are compatible and complementary.

Addison & Panton

On its western border, the Otter Creek separates Waltham from the Towns of Addison and Panton. In this Area, Waltham’s Agricultural/Residential Land Use Section calls for primarily agricultural uses interspersed with rural residential development. Similarly, both the Towns of Panton and Addison Have Rural Agricultural land use areas along the floodplains of the Otter Creek. Accordingly, the land uses in all three Towns are compatible and complementary.

Compatibility with Surrounding Communities: Goals & Objectives	
Goal 1	Assure that Waltham’s Town Plan and zoning regulations do not conflict with those in adjacent towns.
Objective A	Consider adjacent town’s municipal plans, zoning and subdivision regulations when updating Waltham’s planning and zoning documents.
Objective B	Follow proper notification procedures when holding public hearings.

Implementation Plan

Introduction

Upon its adoption, this plan will serve as a statement of public policy of the Town of Waltham. It is important that those who seek guidance from, rely upon or utilize this plan recognize that the purpose of the plan is not to prohibit or prevent reasonable development or to dismiss the rights of property owners in the use and development of their land.

A plan has little value if it is not carried out. The Waltham Planning Commission is devoted to drafting a “living” town plan that will guide Waltham’s development for the next eight years. This plan is the product of collaboration between the Planning Commission and the community at large through public information hearings, as well as discussions with the Select Board. A 2023 Planning Survey highlighted residents' likes, dislikes and their vision for the future.

This document is the result of time, thought, effort and the imaginings of many. It should be the source by which all town decisions are gauged. Zoning and subdivision regulations will be extensions of the plan and reflect its goals and objectives.

Large farms are continuing to be sold, but more small-scale organic agricultural businesses can be seen. An increasing number of residents working from home, or who have home-based businesses helps support Waltham’s economy.

This plan should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains a useful planning tool, moving Waltham toward a shared community vision.

Implementation Actions

In 2024, the planning commission identified the following priority tasks:

ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
Continue to update zoning regulations that allow for increased density; smaller lot sizes, reduced setbacks, and flexible parking standards	PC	0-2 years
Update zoning bylaws to comply with state statute, permitting accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and duplexes in all zoning districts that allow single family homes.	PC	0-2 years
Continue work on the redevelopment of the Town Hall and surrounding grounds.	SB	On-going

Create a public access to Otter Creek on the town owned land.	SB/PC	3-5 years
Continue to support the Town Picnic and other community-wide events.	SB	On-going
Publicize the availability of various educational resources, for the municipality, local businesses and residents, addressing conversion to renewable electrical energy sources.	PC/Energy	On-going
Work toward the establishment of a fund that will protect and enhance important habitat and scenic landscapes in Waltham.	SB	3-5 years
Hold education programming for residents addressing invasive species and coexistence with wildlife.	PC	On-going
Enroll in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and work towards becoming a Flood resilient community.	SB/PC	0-2 years