

WALTHAM TOWN PLAN 2016



APPROVED BY WALTHAM SELECTBOARD ON
SEPTEMBER 6TH, 2016

Cover Art: “Corcorans on Green Street” by Rob Popick

The Town of Waltham would like to thank Rob for the use of his works in the printing of this Town Plan.

The Town of Waltham would also like to thank everyone who made the creation of this plan possible.

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1. INTRODUCTION



On behalf of all the citizens and landowners in the Town of Waltham, we the Planning Commission offer the following Waltham Town Plan. We have worked hard to create a fair and balanced Plan that provides strong overall vision complimented by realistic and achievable goals and action steps to help implement the vision. This Town Plan has been updated so as to bring it into compliance with new Vermont planning requirements.

We have endeavored to create a Plan with a balanced vision that promotes private property rights and stewardship, but also defines and protects important community assets. We hope that each individual associated with the Town of Waltham will take the time to read the Plan. Hopefully, each will learn something about the place we call home and the people that inhabit it. We also hope all will appreciate the shared vision created by the Plan and participate in the action steps necessary to implement the Plan and achieve the vision it creates.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Warmest regards,

The Waltham Planning Commission

2. PURPOSE STATEMENT



Above: Moving the old schoolhouse to its present location where it serves as the town hall.

The Waltham Town Plan (the “Plan”) creates and defines a long-term vision for the Town of Waltham. The Plan provides historical data and statistics to provide context for those making community decisions. It describes Waltham’s current conditions, character and challenges. It also establishes goals and action items intended to implement the vision of the Plan. The Plan should serve as a primary reference for all individuals and entities making community decisions and should guide local officials setting public policy.

3. WALTHAM TODAY

Waltham Today

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.

Waltham’s population, estimated for 2010, stands at 486. The population has grown only slightly, by seven people, since the 2000 Census when the population was 479. Population growth is tied directly to jobs offered in Vergennes, Middlebury and the Burlington area, a relatively easy commute.

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. The working landscape still creates much of the small scale, rural and scenic values that define Waltham’s shared community values. These values are re-enforced by our shared civic engagements including town meeting, school events, and community events at the town hall. This Plan seeks to foster, preserve and promote Waltham’s community values.

Because of its small size and proximity to Vergennes, Waltham has never had a village center or green. Instead, it looks to Vergennes as its center of commerce and for many social activities. Nevertheless, Waltham still has Vermont’s traditional settlement pattern. It has relatively compact neighborhoods in the northern part of town near Vergennes surrounded by working farms and forests. Most houses are on lots less than three acres in size and are clustered in the northern section of town near Vergennes. Farmlands and forests cover the vast majority of Waltham. Farming activity predominates along the Otter Creek Valley and east of Buck Mountain. Large blocks of forest land are found on Buck Mountain. This Plan seeks to support and re-enforce these diversified land use patterns.

Figure 1: Vital Statistics for the Town of Waltham, VT

Population	1990	2000	2010	Housing Units	1990	2000	2010
total	454	479	486	total	176	197	204
Increase during the previous decade	60	25	7	Increase from previous decade	44	21	7
average annual growth rate	1%	1%	0%	owner occupied	133	146	175
under 18	89	138	95	renter occupied	33	32	29
over 65	41	46	90	vacant	10	19	20
				avg. household size	2.73	2.69	2.38
Public Roads	1990	2000	2010	Area	1992	2002	2012
Total	13.24	13.59	13.59	total	5890	5,890	5890
State Highway	2.56	2.56	2.56	farmland	2474	3593	3593
Town Roads	10.68	11.03	11.03	forest land	2003	1767	1767
paved	7.39	7.39	7.39	other	1413	766	766
gravel	3.29	3.29	3.29				

Sources: U.S. Census, UVM Land Use land Cover Maps

Map 1: Aerial Photography

Town of Waltham
Aerial Photography

Map 1



Sources:
USDA NAIP aerial photography, 2003



This map is intended for planning purposes

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, the majority of 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 home town 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.



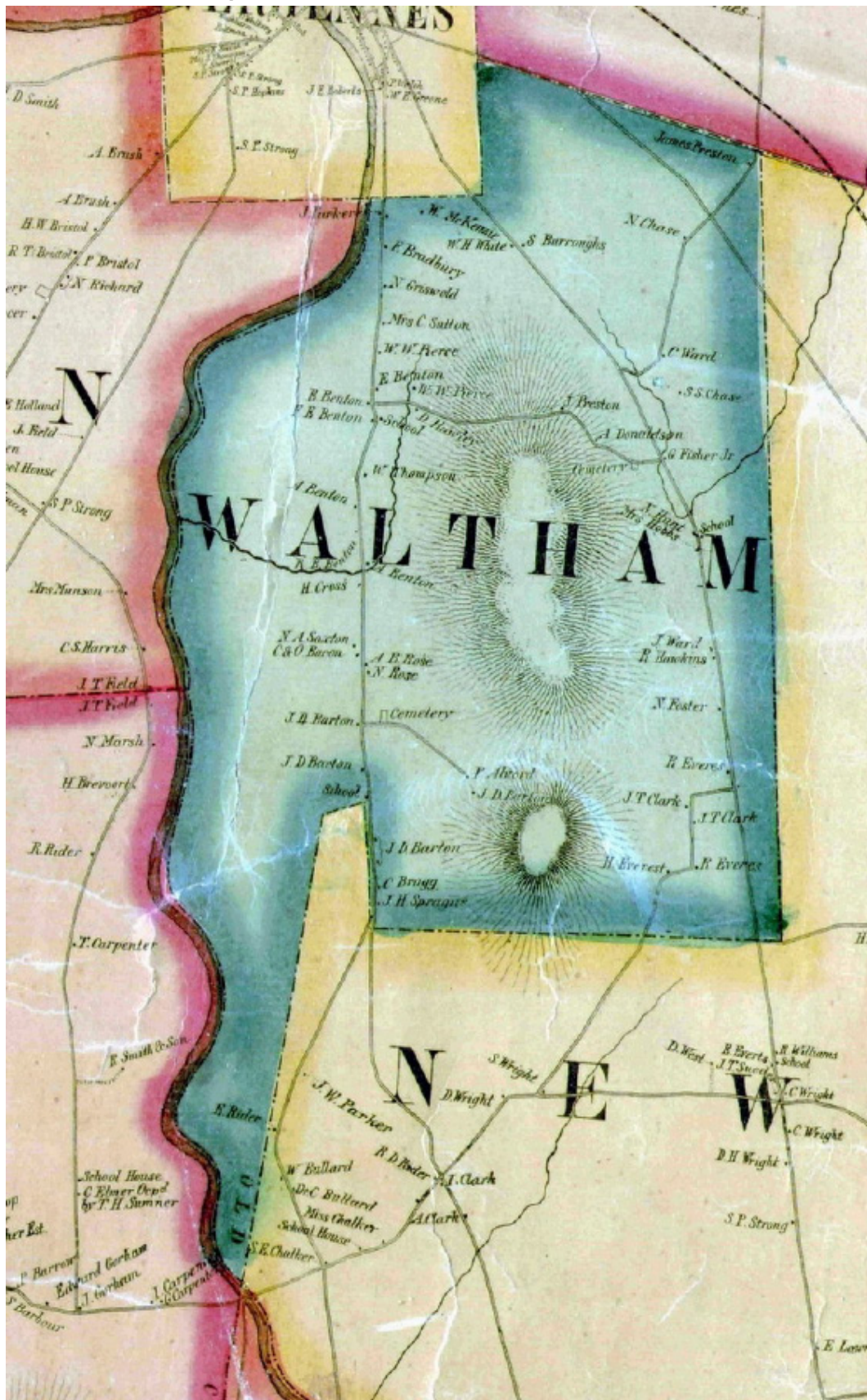
Above: 2015 Photo of De Mieden Farm

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, page 7 “Settlement Patterns in Waltham,” 1857 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 10, page 51). A number of well-preserved houses, a few particularly handsome barns and the former District 2 schoolhouse, converted to the Town Clerk’s office/community house in 1993 attest to the pride and productivity of our historic town. Eighteen structures are listed on the State Register of Historic Places. The scale and architecture of these structures helps to define Waltham’s character and should be considered when planning for new development. The oldest, a stone house on Maple Street Extension, was built in 1805 (See Map 3, page 8 Depicting Historic Structures in Waltham for more detailed information). Waltham values its significant historic structures and encourages their owners to preserve them. Waltham also has three cemeteries in town, the Town Cemetery on Sunset Hill on Maple Street, and two small private cemeteries on Rt. 66 and Monroe Way respectively. The Town cemetery is currently managed and maintained by a voluntary cemetery commission composed of citizen volunteers. This Plan supports their work to preserve these landmarks within the Town of Waltham.

Beyond the modest Town structures, government and shared rural heritage and traditions, most “cultural’ activities in Waltham take place in the nearby City of Vergennes. Waltham residents use and support the cultural institutions of Vergennes. The Town of Waltham contributes taxes to the Bixby Library every year. Private individuals support the Vergennes Opera House and other fraternal and social clubs and the Cities’ restaurants, shops and businesses.

Waltham’s cultural resources (physical remnants of prehistoric and historic human activities) and traditions are essential links to our recent and distant human past. Both pre-historic and historic physical 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.

Map 2: Settlement Pattern in Waltham, 1857



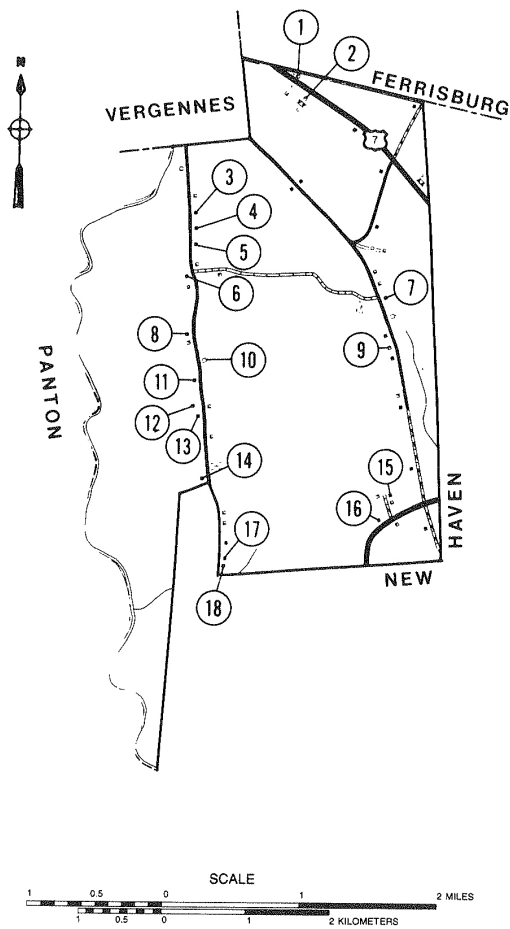
1857 H.F. Walling Map Courtesy of Old Maps in West Chesterfield, NH

Map 3: State Register of Historic Places

WALTHAM 263

TOWN OF WALTHAM MAP

Sites listed in the State Register of Historic Places
(Numbers correspond to Register listings that follow).



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

Figure 2: Sites Listed in the State Register of Historic Places

264 WALTHAM

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

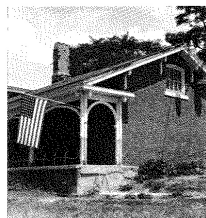
1 House, c.1885
 Vernacular-Italianate style, gable roof, 2 1/2 stories.
 Features: cornice caps, cornice brackets.
 Related carriage barn.

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, 1 1/2 stories.
 Related late bank barn, shed.
 Features: ventilators.

5 House, c.1840/c.1865



Brick, gable roof, 1 1/2 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, 1 1/2 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, 1 1/2 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.

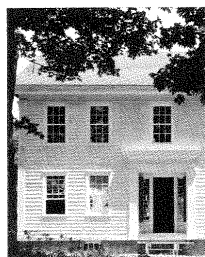
14 Late Bank Barn, c.1880
 Architect/builder: Alanson Edgerton
 Features: cupola, weathervane.
 Related ground stable barn.
 Features: ventilators.

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.1865
 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.

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

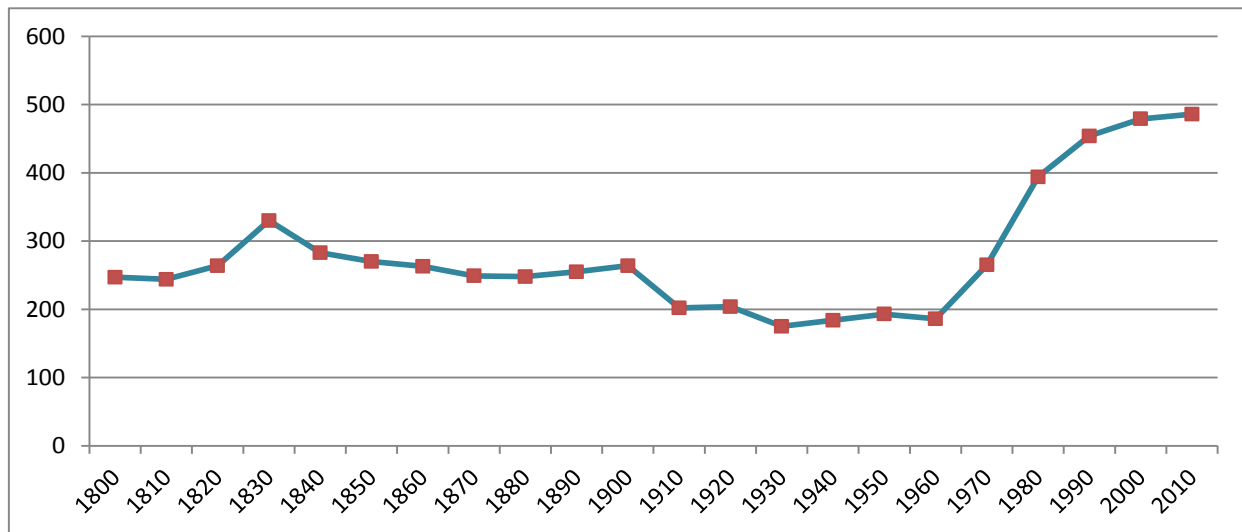
4. POPULATION AND HOUSING

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 percent compared to the statewide population growth rate of 10% during the same time period. People moving into Waltham, rather than unusual rates of birth or death, is the reason for the elevated rate.

Waltham's 2010 population was estimated at 486. Moving into the twenty-first century, Waltham's growth rate has slowed significantly and current numbers are far below the State of Vermont's low population estimate of 552 for Waltham in 2015 (the high estimate for 2015 is 604). If the trend of the last twenty-five years continues to hold true, Waltham's population will continue to fall well below forecasted estimates for the next several decades. With this trend in mind, Waltham recognizes that its slow and steady population growth relieves some of the growth pressure it felt under previous plans and will not be as severe moving forward.

Figure 3: Waltham Population 1800 – 2010

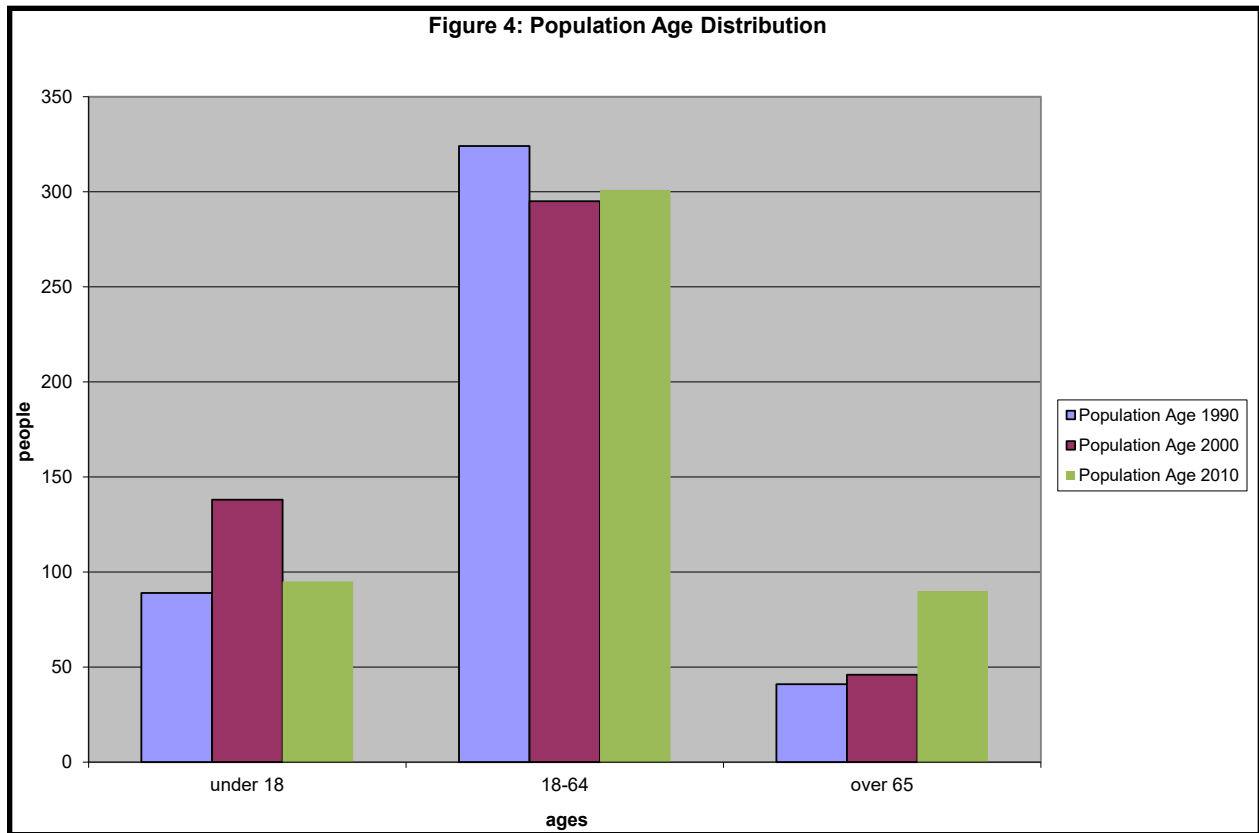


Source: U.S. Census and Vermont Historical Society

The present make-up of Waltham’s population is relatively older than county and state averages. As of the 2010 census, its median age was 48.6 years (up from 39.1 years in 2000), compared to a county average of 41.3 years (up from 36.10 years in 2000) and a state average of 41.5 years (up from 37.7 years in 2000). This data indicates that Waltham is an older community in a state with the second oldest population in the nation. As of 2010, Waltham’s population also had a slightly smaller population of people under age 18 (19.5% as compared to a County average of 20.4% and a statewide average of 20.7%). Waltham also had a slightly greater percentage of people over 65, 18.5 % versus a county average of 13.9% and a statewide average of 14.6%. Accordingly, Waltham’s population presents many of the same problems stemming from an aging population that the rest of the state will face. These include:

1. Keeping older people active in the community;
2. Providing for older people to remain in their homes; and
3. Declining School enrollments.

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 generally stem from State or regional resources. However, this Plan does encourage increased density and affordable housing in the Northern Residential Land Use Area, which should encourage school enrollment. Additionally, its support for accessory apartments and for transit and human services should help to address the mobility and activity needs of its elderly citizens.



Source: U.S. Census

Housing

This section discusses the amount, type, size, condition, location, density and affordability of existing housing and the community's needs and desires for future housing. Data presented in this section are extracted from three primary sources – U.S. Census, VT Dep't of Health and Town Lister's records. Data from these sources are close, but do not match exactly because of record keeping errors, omissions and different classifications and purposes of data collection.

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 (See Figure 5, page 13). The average annual rate of housing growth was 4.2% – 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 1.0% annually (See Figure 7, page 14). That trend appears to have continued as building permit data shows that no more than two new lots have been created and no more than three building permits have been issued in each of the last five years.

Zoning and Subdivision permits for new homes and lots issued and recorded in the Town Report since 2002 are as follows

	Building Permits:	Lots Subdivided:
2002:	0	2
2003:	3	1
2004:	4	1
2005:	2	1
2006:	3	0
2007:	0	0
2008:	0	0
2009	2	0
2010	0	0
2011	3	2
2012	1	1
2013	1	0
2014	2	2
2015	0	2

Waltham Town Reports –Zoning Summary 2002-2015

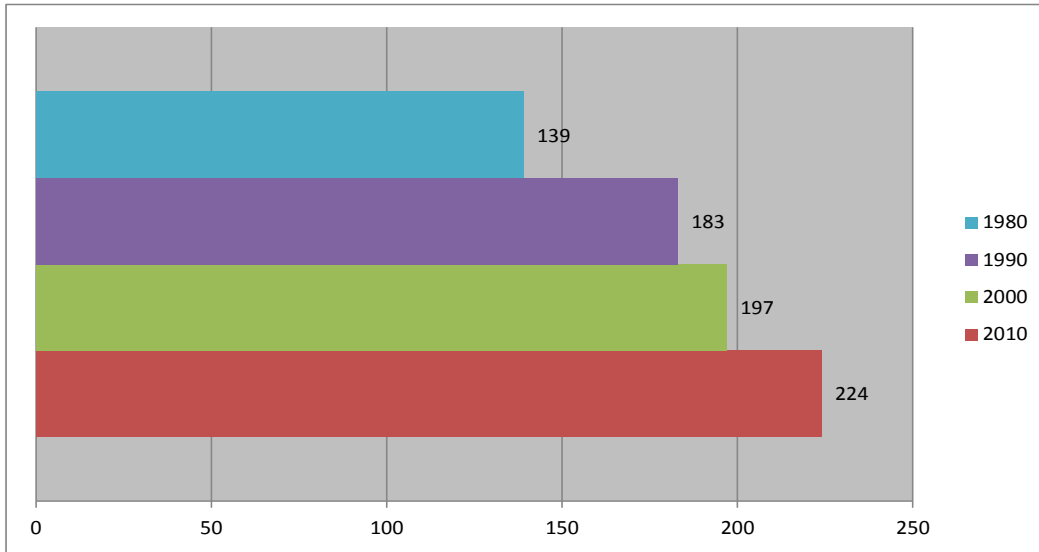
Types of Housing Units

Like the rest of the region, Waltham has a relatively high percentage of single family, detached (stand-alone) houses and relatively low percentage of buildings of multi-family dwelling units. It has no structures with more than two units.

Occupancy of Housing

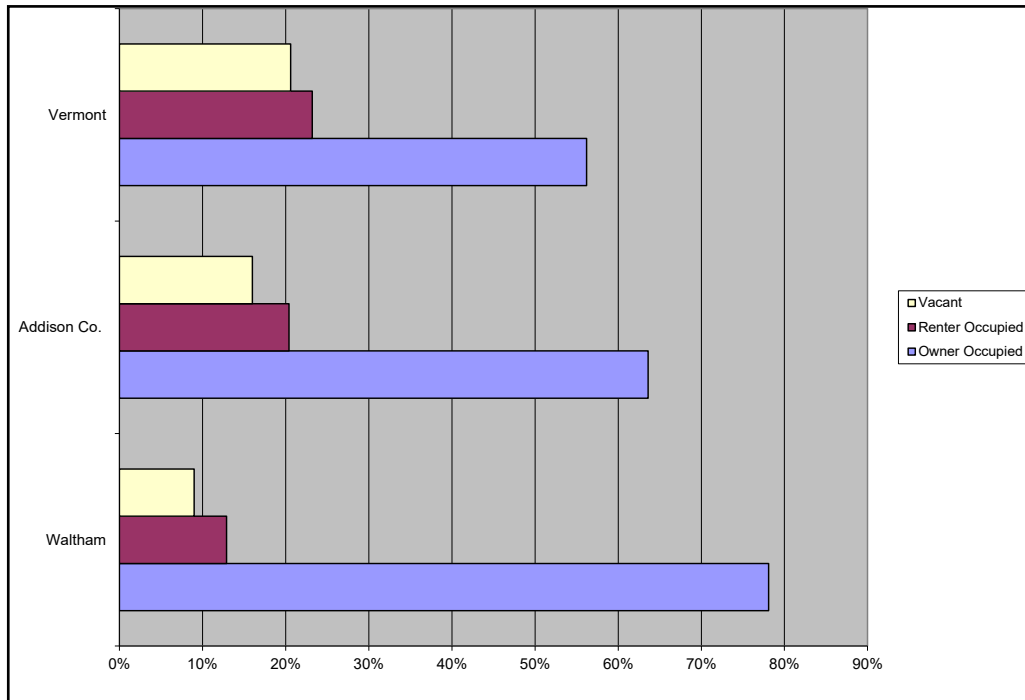
Like most other rural towns in Addison County, Waltham had a higher percentage of owner occupied housing (78%) and a lower percentage of renter occupied housing (13%) than the region or state (See Figure 6, page 13). As of 2010, Waltham’s vacancy rate was about 9%, as compared to about 16% in Addison County and 21% across Vermont. Also as of 2010, Waltham’s average household size of 2.38 fell roughly half way between Addison County’s (2.41) and Vermont’s (2.34) (See Figure 8, page 15).

Figure 5: Total Number of Housing Units 1970 – 2010



Source: U.S. Census

Figure 6: Percentage of Owner- and Renter-Occupied Housing



Source: U.S. Census

Figure 7: Comparison of Households to Housing Units 1970 – 2010

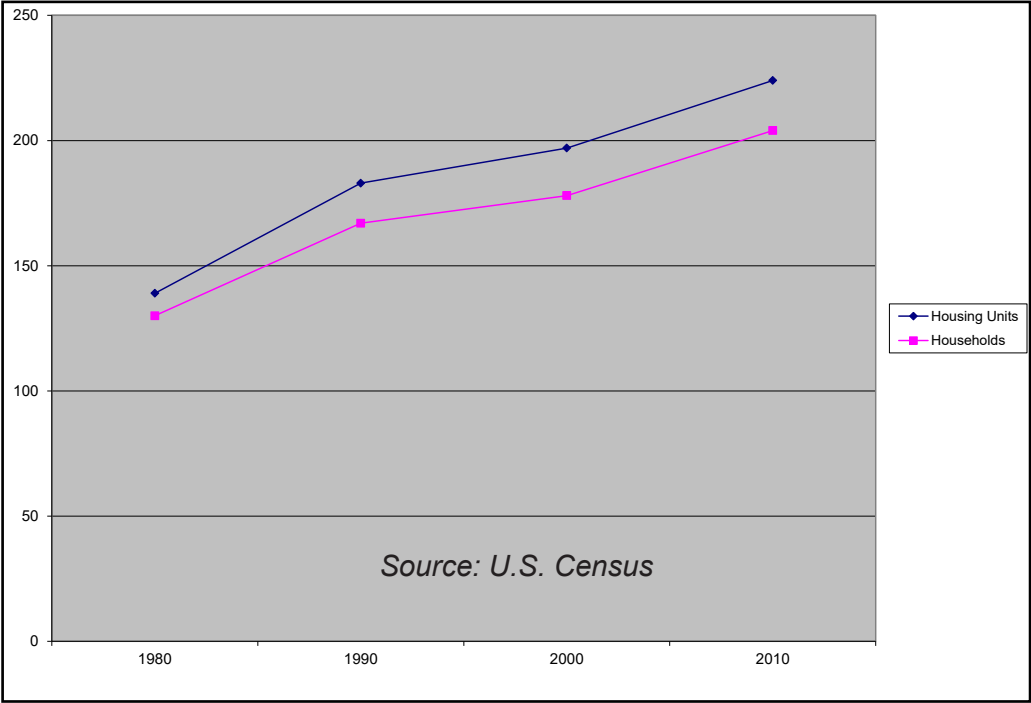
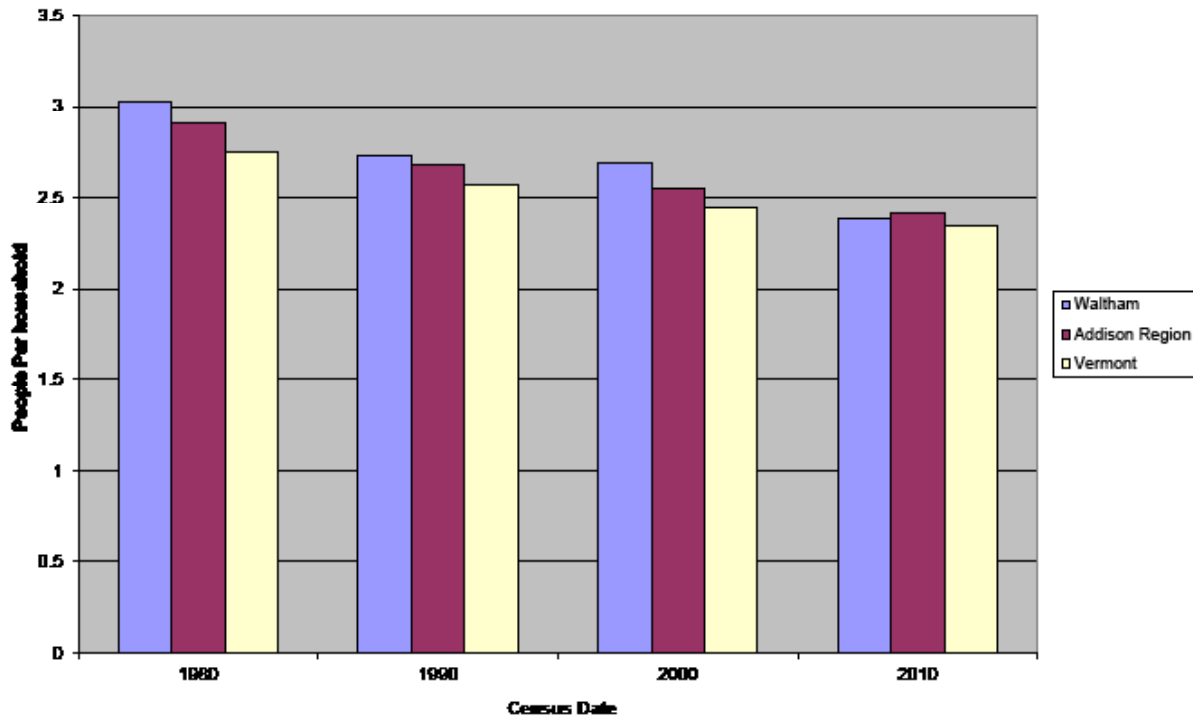


Figure 8: Average Household Size



Source: U.S. Census

Cost and Affordability of Housing in Waltham

Ultimately, cost and affordability of housing will determine who lives in a town. This Plan defines affordable housing as that which a household making the county's median income could afford if no more than 30 percent of its income was spent on housing costs. For homeowners, housing costs include payments for principal and interest due on the mortgage, property taxes and property insurance. For renters, housing costs include rent and utilities.

The median household income in Waltham is about \$62,000, which is greater than the median household incomes of both Addison County (about \$57,500) and Vermont (about \$54,000), thus the ability to afford in Waltham is greater than elsewhere in the region and throughout the state. The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Waltham (\$258,000) is also much greater than elsewhere in Addison County (\$234,500) and throughout Vermont (\$216,800). This appears to indicate that it is more expensive to live in Waltham as compared to elsewhere in the state. However, when considering the fact that 25% of owner-occupied units in Waltham are at or above the affordable housing threshold mentioned above, as compared to 33% for Addison County and 32% for Vermont, living in Waltham tends to be more affordable than elsewhere.

Nevertheless, the lack of affordable housing remains a regional problem that will require coordinated, regional action. This Plan and several previous changes made to the Zoning and Subdivision regulations are intended to encourage more affordable housing in Waltham. These include provisions for more housing unit density near Vergennes, encouragement of PUDs and other recent changes.

5. MAKING A LIVING



Introduction

The interrelationships among population, jobs and housing must be considered when planning for the future. This section of the Waltham plan describes where and how Waltham residents are employed, and how the creation of jobs in the region could affect population and housing growth in Waltham.

In 1990, there were 246 employed workers residing in Waltham – an increase of 32 percent from the 1980 level. The VT Department of Employment and Training’s annual employment figures for 1999 record 300 workers in Waltham and an unemployment rate of only 2.0 percent. In 2005, the labor force remained at roughly 300 individuals and the unemployment figure remained low at 2.3%. In both cases, this unemployment rate was lower than the regional and state figures of 3.2 percent and 3.0 percent respectively.

In 1980, 186 workers lived in Waltham, but only 24 percent of them (44 people) worked in Waltham. Thirty-seven percent worked in Vergennes, 10 percent worked in Middlebury and nine percent worked in other Addison County towns, roughly 80% of Waltham’s workers had relatively short commutes. Most of the remaining 20 percent of the work force was employed in Chittenden County. By 1990, the percentage of residents working in Waltham had decreased to nine percent (21 people). However, the 2000 Census shows that the working population in Waltham has increased back up to 45 people. This still only constitutes about 17 % of the total population, but shows that the trend to work within Waltham may have reversed itself and may be weighing toward working in Waltham. Please see Maps 8a and 8b, pages 48-49 showing where

people who work in Waltham live (8a) and where people who live in Waltham work (8b) This Plan desires to increase the number of people working in Waltham. The town benefits by having working adults in the community during the workday. People remain closer to their children (even though Waltham’s children are educated in the nearby City of Vergennes) or their elderly neighbors or relatives. People are available to serve on local service or social organizations. In general, they can put time otherwise spent in a car to good use by interacting with other members of their family or community.

Figure 9: Place of Employment for Waltham Residents

	Worked in Waltham	Worked elsewhere in Addison Cty	Worked outside Addison Cty	Worked outside Vermont	Total
Absolute 1990	21	154	59	5	239
Percent 1990	9%	64%	25%	2%	100%
Absolute 2000	45	124	89	1	259
Percent 2000	17%	48%	34%	<1%	100%

Source: U.S. Census

Regional Job Centers

Clearly, Waltham is a “bedroom” community. In 1999, 81 percent of the jobs in the Addison Region were located in Middlebury, Vergennes and Bristol, but in 1998 these regional job centers provided only 42 percent of the region’s housing. Most of the region’s workers lived in outlying bedroom communities, such as Waltham. Because Waltham operates in a regional economy we must cooperate with neighboring towns to strike the right balance among population, jobs and housing. Up to a point, the right kind of new jobs created in Middlebury and Vergennes will help provide employment for the natural growth in Waltham’s working-aged population. Beyond that point, creating new jobs in the region will put pressures on Waltham and other nearby towns to provide housing and services to the new workers. The number and type of jobs created will directly affect the nature and extent of growth pressures. While encouraging people to work within Waltham and providing additional opportunities to do so are an important part of this Plan; the Plan also recognizes that the majority of Waltham’s residents will find employment elsewhere.

6. LAND USE

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 other goals. 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. Housing, transportation, public facilities, natural resources, recreation and energy development relate to land use and to each other. Each topic is covered in other sections of this Plan, yet all relate back to and must be read in harmony with this Land Use Section.

Current Land Uses

Aerial photographs (1:5,000 scale ortho-photos) of Waltham depict the location of predominant 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 10, page 54.

The pattern of farms, forests, and neighborhood clusters varies substantially from one part of town to another. These differences must be taken into account when setting land use goals for future priorities and action. In the last Town Plan Waltham's Planning Commission divided Waltham into four Land Use Sections (See Land Use Map 4, page 47). This Plan reduces those into three Land Use Sections. The Planning Commission believes the boundaries chosen for each new section are logical, easily identifiable and allow residents to easily locate them on a map and on the ground.

Descriptions of Individual Sections of Town

Northern Residential Section

The Northern Residential Section is located close to Vergennes. Over half of the town's housing is located in this section. Residential development is the predominant land use, but the clusters of housing are kept distinct by large pockets of farm and forestland. The purpose of Northern Residential Land Use Section is to provide a designated space for the majority of the future growth in housing opportunities in Waltham.

Desired Conditions: This constitutes the best area for residential and other new development. 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 residential strip development. Provisions shall be made to minimize clearing of natural vegetation and otherwise conserve large undeveloped woodlands, farmlands and other open land to help keep neighborhoods distinct. The type and scale of any commercial development shall be compatible with the section's primary uses - housing 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. Farmland is a modest, but desirable component of this section; productive soils and proximity to large blocks of farmland in other sections makes conservation of this farmland practical and economically viable.

Mountain/Forested Section

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 of 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.

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 development 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 Section

This section comprises the remainder of 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 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 dwellings are encouraged to be developed as PUDs, clustered on small lots to preserve views, avoid strip development, and leave the largest possible portion of open land and the most productive soils in agricultural productivity. Specific design standards shall apply to new residential and commercial development in this section in recognition of the existence 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.



Above: Aerial Photograph of Waltham, 2006

7. SCHOOLS AND CHILDCARE



Above: Moving the town hall to its current location on Maple Street.

Schools

Waltham has joined with several neighboring towns in the Addison Northwest Supervisory Union to provide public schooling to children. All of Waltham's children attending public school do so in Vergennes. In fact, the old school house 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. Total secondary school enrollments are now also decreasing and are expected to continue decreasing. The "echo" of the 1950s and 1960s "baby boom" has largely passed through the elementary schools and is near its end in the high schools as most of the baby-boom generation ages beyond having school-aged children. In the spring of 2015, there were 46 school age children in Waltham, a significant decrease from 81 in 2005 and close to 100 in 2000.

At the March 2009 Town Meeting, Waltham, in concert with the other municipalities in the school district, voted to dissolve its school board. Waltham estimates that it will both save money and consolidate the functions of the supervisory union if the local board dissolves in favor of a consolidated board.

Childcare

Like many other services, including schools, child care facilities for Waltham's children are largely provided in other larger communities. Waltham does have one pre-school facility, the Ark Daycare at the Victory Baptist Church which offers pre-school and kindergarten facilities and one other residential daycare facility. Otherwise, childcare outside the home occurs in regional centers, predominantly Vergennes, but also Middlebury and Bristol, closer to the parents' workplace. 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.

8. 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 roles of public waterways, bike lanes and community trails. Energy used for transportation is discussed in the Energy Section.

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 local residents (e.g., Route 66). About 70 percent of the town roads are paved (7.4 miles). The rest (3.3 miles) are gravel. State highways include short sections of U.S. Route 7 (1.6 miles) and Vermont Route 17 (0.9 miles) (See Map 6, page 46).



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.

According to the Annual Report, the Town Highway Department had a budget of \$170,825 in 2014. Currently, Waltham contracts out all of 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. On average, asphalt pavement lasts ten to 15 years before requiring replacement. Road design, construction, maintenance and use – particularly by heavy trucks – affect the rate of road surface deterioration. If road surfaces are left in poor condition (e.g., cracked, potholes), water can damage the base necessitating even more costly repairs.

Waltham has evaluated the present condition of its paved and gravel roads to determine what work should be done on various sections, when it should be done and what the costs are likely to be. The evaluation will help Waltham develop a long-term program and budget for major roadwork and avoid unnecessary road repair costs. In the survey that preceded the 2009 Plan, Waltham asked about paving certain roads in Town; primarily the remaining gravel portions of Route 66. The survey results clearly supported not paving that roadway. Accordingly, this Plan supports keeping Route 66 primarily gravel.

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

Similarly, while this Plan does not propose new roadwork, 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.

Waltham would have to resurface an average of 0.6 miles every year in order to complete all 7.4 miles of paved roads every 12 years – the average life span of asphalt surface in Vermont. Patching paved roads, resurfacing gravel roads, plowing, clearing ditches and other work adds more costs.

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 regions 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 and Pedestrians.

Currently, Waltham is not served by local, regional or state fixed-route public transportation systems. However, Addison County Transit Resources (ACTR), the regional transit provider, operates a shuttle service between Vergennes, Bristol and Middlebury, its "Tri-town service". ACTR 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. ACTR and the Chittenden County Regional Transit Authority also operate 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.

9. PUBLIC FACILITIES

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 Clerk's Office, a small parcel of land on Otter Creek, and firefighting equipment. Solid waste and recycling facilities are shared with other municipalities (See Map 6, page 49).

Town Clerk's Office

The Town Clerk's office 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 Clerk's office as a functioning building and to ensure it can efficiently and sufficiently meet the needs of the community for its clerk's office and for other town meeting functions, while exploring potential future improvements.

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. However, a significant portion of the parcel consists of Class II wetlands. Nearly all of it lies in the floodplain. Yet, 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 and 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 resource, public access or a combination of all of the above.

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure.

Like the Clerk's office noted above, 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 in the 2.5 acre zone as shown on Zoning Map #5 closest 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 the survey that informed the 2009 Plan, 65% of 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 either the Town or a developer of affordable housing seeking to work with the City of Vergennes to extend water and or sewer into the Northern Residential

Land Use Section in the 2.5 acre zone as shown on Zoning Map #5.

Telecommunications.

The telecommunications infrastructure in the Town of Waltham has improved in recent years. The Waitsfield-Fayston Telephone Company provides telephone and DSL service to the southeasterly portion of town, while Fairpoint provides telephone and DSL service to the remainder of town. Waltham is one of the 50 towns that Fairpoint identified as having 100% cellular coverage by 2010. However, while Waltham desires increased cellular coverage, it is also very sensitive to the aesthetics of the towers required to transmit that coverage. For this reason, it has adopted a relatively restrictive Telecommunications Ordinance, largely designed to keep towers off of the top of Buck Mountain. While Waltham still desires to preserve the aesthetics of the Town, particularly as they relate to Buck Mountain, this Plan also desires to promote access to several quality telecommunications links at competitive prices. Accordingly, it recommends that the Planning Commission review the existing ordinance to determine if it can create incentives for telecommunications infrastructure to serve Waltham, while still preserving its aesthetic interests.

Waste Management and Recycling

Waltham is a member of the Addison County Solid Waste District. The District 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 Towns of Addison Panton and Ferrisburgh. The facility is operated by a private contractor and provides services Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings. This Plan supports Waltham's cost-effective participation in the re-cycling center.

Police Fire and 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 Squad respectively. As of the writing of this Plan, Waltham does have a rapid response plan for emergency response within the Town dated May 2008. The Rapid Response plan provides contact information for the Selectboard, emergency manager, health officer, road foreman and others and establishes a procedural hierarchy, list of potential resources and response system in case of a disaster in Waltham.

At right: Town Hall, present day

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 fairly low in Waltham.

A capital plan, program and budget can help spread *capital expenditures* – payments for buildings, roads, bridges, equipment and other facilities – to eliminate sudden jumps in tax bills. If growth is linked to the capital plan, expenditures can be made as the facilities are needed and as the tax base increases. While managing capital costs is certainly helpful, ongoing *operating costs* – such as salaries, fuel, maintenance, supplies – make up most of Waltham's budget and will continue to do so. In Vermont, annual operating costs on the whole tend to increase as towns grow for many reasons: more services are required to meet the needs of a larger population; new residents expect more services or a higher level of service; less work is done by volunteers and more is done by paid staff. The tax impact of increasing operating costs can be controlled, to some extent, by analyzing potential town costs of servicing new development and directing and clustering growth to minimize town costs; looking for other (non-property tax) ways to fund services; and maintaining a high level of citizen participation in government.

10. NATURAL RESOURCES



Rivers and 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 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 waters 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 in order to effectively manage and protect our surface waters. Since 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 rely 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 resources 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 11, entitled “Important Resource Areas”). As the map illustrates, Waltham has relatively few Class II or presumed significant wetlands. This Plan supports the State system of protecting significant wetlands.

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 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 the 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 and 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 facilities or uses and compiled their conclusions into a State Soil Survey Database (SSSD). The SSSD was 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 7, page 50), and septic systems (See Map 9, page 53). Other analyses and maps based on the information contained in the SSSD could be produced if necessary. While useful to town planning, these maps are not accurate enough to be used for site-specific planning or design.

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 U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) classified 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. With this in mind, stripping of these soils for commercial sale or other commercial purposes is 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 these soils are 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.

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

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.*

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 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.

In addition to the large contiguous forested area of Buck Mountain, Waltham also has other important forested areas including:

1. Lower elevation Clay plain forest remnants. The Champlain Valley Clay plain is home to a unique forest type. However, as the valley has been cut, either for potash, timber and other industrial uses or for its productive farmland, most of the lower elevation clay plain forests have been destroyed. This Plan supports identifying clay plain remnants in Waltham and managing them to preserve the diversity that type of forest offers in both plants and wildlife.
2. Small pockets of forest identified in the Mountain/Forested Section. These constitute important habitats with a lot of "edge" habitat close to the large block of forest on Buck Mountain. The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has identified the need to maintain wildlife "travel corridors" in their April 2014 publication "Vermont Habitat Blocks and Habitat Connectivity". These blocks are therefore useful to many wildlife species. These forested areas also contribute significantly to the unique scenic qualities Waltham residents desire to protect. These forested areas should be maintained in a forested condition.

Wildlife

Waltham's rural setting of farms and forests offers 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. People bike Maple Street because of the gentle gradient and spectacular views of the Otter Creek, the Champlain Valley and Adirondack Mountains it offers. They 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.

11. FLOOD RESILIENCE

Following the devastation caused 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. In light of these threats, the State of Vermont and communities all throughout its borders have begun to take action. The widely-used term to describe the understanding of socially and ecologically responsible, safe, cost-effective, and sustainable management of these threats is “flood resilience.” It is essential that Vermont’s most susceptible communities identify pragmatic, long-term approaches to reducing the risks and costs of floods and erosion.

Pursuant to Vermont State Statute 24 V.S.A. § 4302, Vermont communities may adopt goals in their Town Plan that are consistent with those of the region or state. Accordingly, it is the goal of the Town of Waltham to become a flood resilient community as identified in 24 V.S.A. § 4302(c)(14).

Floodplains, Flood Hazard Areas & Fluvial Erosion

Floodplains are land areas adjacent to water bodies that are subject to periodic flooding and are identified on maps prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Floodplains perform a number of important functions, primarily relating to erosion and flood control and wildlife habitat. Floodplains can be measured by different intervals based on how much rain falls during a given storm event. A “100-year floodplain” is the flooding which results from a storm that has a 1% chance of occurring in any given year. A “500-year floodplain” is the flooding which results from a storm that has a 0.2% chance of occurring in any given year. The 100-year floodplain is also referred to as the “Flood Hazard Area” or “FHA.” NFIP maps identify the land area covered by the floodwaters of the base flood as the “Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)”. The NFIP’s floodplain management regulations must be enforced in the SFHA, where the mandatory purchase of flood insurance also applies. Nearly all of the floodplain in Waltham lies on its western border immediately adjacent to the Otter Creek. Often floodplains also provide excellent farmland because of the rich soils that floods periodically deposit on the plains after the waters depart. Certainly, in Waltham much of its best farmland lies along the Otter Creek.

Within valleys and floodplains, the areas of active stream channel movement are fluvial erosion hazard (FEH) zones. In Vermont, most flood damage is the result of fluvial erosion rather than inundation. Fluvial erosion occurs as rivers and streams modify their bank locations and can range from gradual bank erosion to catastrophic changes in river channel location and dimensions during a large flood event. As the bank erodes, sediment is transported downstream. In naturalized floodplains, fluvial erosion is moderated by woody vegetation and landforms that help detain water, debris, ice, and sediment. Natural floodplains reduce water pollution and recharge aquifers and provide downstream water resources, including larger streams, ponds, and lakes. The gradual release of floodwaters minimizes erosion, streambank scouring, and downstream flooding. However, when development encroaches or stream channels are altered, conditions in the FEH zones become more unstable, thereby exacerbating dangers to downstream occupants and structures.

Flash flooding also poses a significant threat to many Vermont towns. Flash flooding occurs not only in areas prone to inundation, but also along upland slopes and streams that contribute runoff to the valley floors. Floods rarely follow precise boundaries on a map, and flooding often occurs outside the regulatory floodplain boundaries. Thus, FEMA maps may not adequately identify areas at risk of erosion. This is especially the case in Vermont, where it is estimated that up to two-thirds of flood damage occurs outside of FEMA’s mapped SFHAs. On average, flood-related damage, particularly damage from fluvial erosion, costs Vermont taxpayers millions of dollars annually. Our recent experiences and the best climate science predicts that hazardous flood and erosion events are increasing in frequency and severity, and suggest that this trend will continue into the foreseeable future.

Flood Resilience Management

Flood resilience is measured by the ability of a community to withstand adverse events. 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. A central tenet of flood resilience management is to allow streams and rivers to regenerate a more natural floodplain with the unique landforms, rich soils, and diverse plant and

wildlife communities that combine to limit and dissipate flood energy and damage. Resilience management also works to discourage new development in known flood hazard areas. By managing land use so as to allow streams and rivers the space to move and return to a natural equilibrium, Vermont towns can reduce, and potentially avoid, the repeated cost of repairing our communities.

Flood resilience management decreases flood damage and the economic impact of recovering from floods, while encouraging land uses that keep people, property, and community assets out of harm's way. This is a pragmatic and sustainable strategy that yields multiple benefits -- financial, health and safety, environmental, ecological and aesthetic -- to the entire community at the lowest possible cost over time. Moreover, adoption of practices that are consistent with federal and state policies and guidelines for flood resilience management supports and maintains Waltham's eligibility for federal and state disaster relief funds, positions Waltham to obtain funding from grant programs for community development, and makes Waltham eligible for assistance toward costs of preparing for future flood-related disasters.

A widely recommended way to facilitate progress in management of floodplains is to adopt a "no adverse impact" land use policy for stream and river corridors, which prohibits landowners from taking actions that have the potential to adversely affect the rights of other landowners. The "No Adverse Impact" approach is cited and recommended both by FEMA and by the State of Vermont, and would be recognized by FEMA and other federal programs as the acceptable management approach for the Town of Waltham.

Existing Regulation in Waltham

NFIP Requirements

Although Waltham's current floodplain regulations satisfy Vermont minimum standards, they do not satisfy the minimum requirements to qualify for participation in the NFIP and allow property owners to obtain flood insurance. Even if they were, mere compliance with the NFIP minimum requirements would fail to address causes of flooding and risks from erosion, the effects of land use practices on flooding and erosion, and the long-term costs of repeated flood damage response, clean-up and repair. Furthermore, floodplain regulations that only meet minimum NFIP standards may pose risks to other communities within and along stream and river corridors; adherence only to the minimum NFIP standards would allow new development in and alteration of known floodways and erosion hazard areas, and thus allow land uses that induce greater flood damage downstream.

Consistency with FEMA's CRS Guidelines

The Community Rating System (CRS) under the NFIP encourages comprehensive floodplain management practices and consideration of flood-related factors extending well beyond the limits of FEMA's Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs). The state of Vermont strongly recommends the adoption of new local ordinances based on flood resilience management principles rather than mere compliance with the NFIP standards. Accordingly, Vermont's ANR, Division of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Rivers Program has published templates and strong recommendations for updated local floodplain ordinances based on sound flood resilience and no adverse impact management policies.

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 rating classification under FEMA's NFIP CRS, 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.

Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund Reimbursement Eligibility

The Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) provides State funding to match Federal Public Assistance grants (which are funneled through and administered by the State of Vermont) following federally-declared disasters. Vermont's ERAF was modified so that new qualifying criteria will apply to requests by towns for disaster relief funding, where the

baseline contribution to disaster relief funding for a town is now an additional 7.5% toward the costs. Additionally, by taking specific steps to reduce flood damage, communities can increase their Vermont ERAF reimbursement rate up to 12.5% or 17.5% of the total cost.

There are five flood mitigation steps identified for ERAF. Currently, Waltham has the lowest rating of 7.5%. Waltham can achieve a 12.5% reimbursement rate by joining the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and adopting a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) and a 17.5% reimbursement rate by taking measures to protect its river corridors. The table below contains current information about the flood preparedness of Waltham from an Expanded Community Report for Waltham posted on the Flood Ready Vermont website.

Figure 10: Waltham’s ERAF Reimbursement Status & Information

Flood Hazard Mitigation Actions for ERAF	Last Update	ERAF Status
1. 2013 Roads & Bridge Standards	Most recent update on 04/07/2014	Currently in place.
2. Local Emergency Operations Plan	Most recent update on 05/01/2015	Currently in place.
3. National Flood Insurance Program	N/A	Not currently participating.
4. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan	N/A	Not currently in place. Will need update every five years.
5. River Corridor Protection	N/A	Not in place. Complete as soon as possible.
0	Structures in the Special Flood Hazard Area	

N/A	Percentage of Structures in SFHA with
0	Number of Critical or Public Structures in
N/A	Percent of community structures in SFHA
<u>Flood Map</u>	<p>Vector—This means that Waltham has a non-official computer version of the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map available through ACRPC. The actual official flood hazard maps are available in PDF format at the FEMA Map Service Center (www.msc.fema.gov) and can also be seen on paper at Waltham Town Hall.</p> <p>The Flood Insurance Rate Map for Waltham was last revised in 1986 and officially sanctioned in 1990. FEMA does not have any plans to update the map at this time.</p>
Regular Program	NFIP Program Status
0	Flood Insurance Policies in Special Flood Hazard Area – FEMA Community Information System

Source: Flood Ready Vermont, 2015 Community Reports

12. ENERGY

Residential Energy Demand

Energy used in the home (residential energy use) represents a significant percentage of total statewide energy consumption. Residential energy goes to heating/cooling our homes, heating water, running miscellaneous appliances, lighting, refrigerating, cooking, drying and many other uses. Space heating and hot water heating can be affected by building design and construction. State energy officials estimate simple conservation measures incorporated in new housing construction can result in a 20 to 30 percent reduction in the energy that now goes for space and water heating. They believe improved energy efficiency will make homes more affordable and marketable. Accordingly, this Plan supports the State energy code for the construction of new homes and encourages all home owners to use Efficiency Vermont as a resource for rebates on electric appliances and to build their homes to a five star energy efficiency standard.

Transportation Energy Demands

Commuters, shoppers, recreationists and other “residential” users traveling in private automobiles consume almost half of the energy used in Vermont for transportation. Public transportation represents a very small portion of the energy used for residential transportation. This is particularly true in Waltham since no public transportation directly serves the town and no community trails or bike lanes provide alternatives to the automobile. Concentrating development in neighborhoods and residential clusters near major routes, increasing opportunities for pedestrian travel, promoting public transportation and creating appropriate mixes of jobs, housing, goods and services are some of the ways this Plan supports to reduce energy used for transportation.



Town Energy Policy.

State law also provides for the office of Town Energy Coordinator in each town. The Coordinator, appointed by the Selectboard, can engage in a variety of projects, ranging from the weatherization of Town owned buildings or private homes, to organizing educational events on energy issues, promoting recycling, or helping citizens to understand the various state energy efficiency programs and financial incentives available. This Plan supports actively filling this position in Waltham.

This Plan also supports locally generated electricity on a small scale by individual or a group of local property owners. In the survey that preceded the 2009 Plan, respondents overwhelmingly supported residential-scale wind projects as being allowed and encouraged in Waltham. Solar projects are similarly encouraged. Lastly, local, sustainably managed hydro-electrical generation downstream in Vergennes on Otter creek is encouraged.

Regarding development of commercial solar projects within any of Waltham’s three land use sections and corresponding zoning districts, this Plan hereby adopts the following policy:

The Town of Waltham supports responsibly sited and developed renewable energy projects within its boundaries that are in harmony with this Plan. It recognizes that to maximize profits, developers' desire projects to be located in close proximity to electric power lines capable of transmitting the load proposed to be generated and easy access from major transportation networks for construction. However, the Town desires to maintain its working landscape, adopted conservation and habitat protection measures, and scenic rural viewsheds and resources important to its tourism economy and rural cultural aesthetic. Not all commercial or community-scale solar projects proposed can meet this standard. Projects must meet the following community standards in order to be considered "orderly development" supported by this Plan and in order to not unduly impact the aesthetics of the rural countryside this Plan intends to protect:

1. Community Standards

A. *Siting.* Where a project is placed on the landscape constitutes the most critical element in the aesthetic siting of a project. Poor siting cannot be adequately mitigated. Accordingly, all renewable energy projects must evaluate and address the proposed site's aesthetic impact on the surrounding landscape, taking into account the desires of the Town expressed in this Plan's Land Use Section.

a. Good sites have one or more of the following characteristics:

- Roof-mounted systems;
- Systems located in close proximity to existing larger scale, commercial, industrial or agricultural buildings;
- Proximity to existing hedgerows or other topographical features that naturally screen the proposed array from view from at least two sides;
- Reuse of former brownfields or otherwise impacted property.

b. Poor Sites have one or more of the following characteristics:

- No natural screening;
- Topography that causes the arrays to be visible against the skyline from common vantage points like roads or neighborhoods;
- Proximity to and interfering with a significant viewshed or is otherwise out of character with its surroundings or significantly diminishes the scenic qualities of the area as defined within this Plan; significant viewsheds within the Town of Waltham include visual corridors as seen from:
 1. Route 7
 2. Green Street
 3. Maple Street
 4. Buck Mountain Viewshed;
- Requires the clearing of natural vegetation and/or the removal of productive agricultural land from agricultural use;
- Sites that require public investment in transmission and distribution infrastructure in order to function properly;

B. *Mass and Scale.* The historical working landscape that defines Waltham currently and that Waltham desires to preserve is dominated by viewsheds across open fields to wooded hillsides. Rural structures like barns fit into the landscape because their scale and mass generally do not impact large tracts of otherwise open land. All commercial-scale solar arrays shall also be so limited in mass and scale, and/or have their mass and scale broken by screening, to fit in with this working landscape. Commercial solar projects larger than 150kW are larger than any other structure within the municipality of Waltham, cannot be adequately screened or mitigated to blend into the municipality's landscape and are therefore prohibited.

Projects found to have poor siting characteristics pursuant to the community standards contained in Section 1 of this policy above, and other poor siting characteristics that a community may clearly define in their plan, violate the municipalities' standards regarding orderly development.

2. Average Person

For the purposes of this plan, either the municipal legislative body or the planning commission (depending upon which body is selected by the legislative body to represent the municipality before the Public Service Board in any Section 248 hearing), shall be deemed to represent the voice of the “average person” with respect to the “Quechee Test” when evaluating the aesthetics of a proposed solar array.

3. Mitigation Methods

In addition to properly siting a project, solar developers must take generally available and reasonable mitigating steps to improve the harmony of the project with its surroundings, which include the following actions to mitigate all project sites:

- a. Locate the structures on the site to keep them from being “skylined” above the horizon from public and private vantage points;
- b. Shorter panels may be more appropriate in certain spaces than taller panels to keep the project lower on the landscape.
- c. At a minimum, all solar arrays must observe the setback restrictions set forth by applicable State law governing solar installations. However, developers are encouraged to increase setbacks to at least those listed in the Municipal Zoning Regulations within the Zoning District in which it lies;
- d. Use the existing topography, development or vegetation on the site to screen and/or break the mass of the array;
- e. In the absence of existing natural vegetation, the commercial development must be screened by native plantings beneficial to wildlife and pollinators that will grow to a sufficient height and depth to provide effective screening within a period of 5 years. Partial screening to break the mass of the site and to protect public and private views of the project may be appropriate. Landscaping and screening requirements shall also include requirements contained in Waltham Zoning regulations that apply to commercial development.
- f. Practice a “good neighbor policy”. The siting of the array should be done in such a manner that the array creates no greater burden on neighboring property owners or public infrastructure than it does on the property on which it is sited. As an example, a landowner may not site an array on his or her property in a location calculated to diminish the visual impact of the array from his or her residence, but places the array immediately within a neighbor’s or the public’s viewshed. Locating a solar array in a manner designed to reduce impacts on neighbors or public viewsheds constitutes reasonable mitigation.
- g. Where feasible or available, or as future technological innovation may permit, use black or earthtone materials (panels, supports, fences, etc.) that blend into the landscape instead of reflective, metallic or other brighter colors.

4. Decommissioning and Restoration

All projects shall be decommissioned at the end of their useful life and the property shall be restored to its pre-project condition. Developers of all projects 100 kW and greater shall provide the municipality with appropriate assurances to guarantee funding exists to decommission the project. In keeping with Waltham’s desires to retain our agricultural land base, a solar array’s useful life shall be deemed to be at the end of the initial contract for services with the power company.

13. COMPATIBILITY WITH SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES



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

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 complimentary.

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 similar to 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 complimentary.

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 complimentary.

14. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

This Plan is intended to guide future decision-making and actions; it does not dictate actions. Attainment of the town's goals cannot be rigidly prescribed. The Plan must be clear about the goals Waltham desires to achieve, but flexible about how Waltham does so. This section of the Plan outlines the objectives of highest priority to Waltham and suggested actions to achieve those objectives. The order of the goals follow each section of the Plan. Often, goals or actions may support the text in several sections of the Plan. However, for simplicity and economy, this Plan has tried to list each goal or action in only one place. Therefore, this section of the Plan should be read broadly and in a manner that allows all goals to be reconciled with all others. This is a long-range plan. The actual actions taken will depend on the makeup of Town government, discussions with Town residents and the availability of funding.

Summary of Town Goals

Section 3. Waltham Today, Roots and Traditions

Goal A. Preserve the historic and cultural traditions, structures and values that comprise Waltham's rural character and make it a special place to live.

Action:

- Encourage citizens to preserve significant historic and pre-historic resources.
- Support and encourage citizens who own historic structures to apply to the Division for Historic Preservation to list their property on the National Registry of Historic Places.
- Support the work of the Cemetery Commission to manage and preserve the cemeteries located in the Town of Waltham. Map their locations and advocate for their preservation and upkeep. Known cemeteries include Sunset View on Maple Street, Ward Cemetery on Monroe Way and an unnamed cemetery on Route 66.

Goal B. Preserve meeting opportunities and places for rural neighbors to meet and converse.

Action:

- Maintain the Town Hall as a meeting house for Town functions and investigate options for expanding its use for additional functions in the future.
- Preserve and promote Town Meeting as a rural democratic method of government and use it as an opportunity to create community.

Section 4. Population and Housing

Goal A. Create a planning and regulatory framework through this Plan and associated zoning and subdivision regulations that supports housing density in the land use areas that reflect the current and historical settlement patterns in Waltham by providing for more housing opportunities in the Northern Residential Land Use Section in the 2.5 acre zone as shown on Zoning Map #5, close to the jobs and services within the City of Vergennes and less in the rural agricultural areas contained in each of the other Land Use Sections in Waltham. Promote housing opportunities and density in the Northern Residential Land Use Section:

Actions:

- 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 in the 2.5 acre zone as shown on Zoning Map #5.

- Provide for the phasing of new housing subdivisions in Waltham’s regulations to ensure the timing and rate of new housing construction does not exceed the community’s ability to provide adequate public facilities and services.

Section 5. Making a Living

Goal A. Nurture a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities for residents and maintains high environmental and social standards.

Actions:

- Cooperate with other municipalities, especially Vergennes, to support good jobs created to support the region’s work force.
- Participate in Act 250 reviews of major business proposals that could positively or negatively impact Waltham.

Goal B. Support the creation of job opportunities that enable people to work within Waltham.

Actions:

- Support development of home occupations, home based businesses and other local businesses in Waltham’s Zoning Regulations.
- Support the increase in the number of business uses allowed within specified zones as adopted in Waltham’s 2013 Zoning Regulations.
- Strengthen and protect the town’s agricultural economy, including farming, forestry and related activities.
- Encourage manufacturing and marketing of value-added agricultural and forest products.
- Encourage use of locally grown agricultural and forest products.

Section 6. Land Use

Goal A. Maintain the historic settlement pattern of settled neighborhoods surrounded by working farm and forest land. Promote and protect the long-term productivity and

viability of agricultural soils. Protect and encourage the maintenance of agricultural lands for the production of food and other agricultural products. Ensure that the type, location and intensity of land use will be compatible with the environmental and economic capability of the community to sustain it over the long-term. Conserve areas of undeveloped forest land, particularly Buck Mountain.

Goal B. Encourage densely settled neighborhoods in the Northern Residential Land Use Section

Actions:

- Base development densities for different areas of town on existing and desired settlement patterns, distance to and availability of town services, physical capability of the land for development, the presence of important natural resources, the size of parcels, the need for affordable housing, and consistency with goals and policies of this Plan. Encourage the Planning Commission to create and the DRB to promote and use zoning provisions encouraging PUDs that provide density bonuses in the Northern Residential Land Use Section.



- Encourage the Planning Commission to periodically review the impact of the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations dated August 5, 2013 (effective September 5, 2013) to ensure they implement the vision for housing densities contained within this Plan.

Goal C. Preserve rural residential development patterns and promote diversified agriculture and forestry as viable land uses in the Agricultural/Residential and Mountain/Forested Land Use Sections.

Actions:

- Guide development away from primary agricultural soils.
- Plan public investments to minimize development pressure on agricultural and forest land.
- Support farming and forestry activities. Include “Freedom to Farm” provisions within this Plan. Grant and uphold the farmers’ right to produce and market food and other agricultural products using generally accepted agricultural practices. Grant and uphold landowners’ rights to use best management practices for silvicultural activities. Discourage unnecessary interference from local regulation and or private litigation by promoting zoning regulations and subdivision regulations that include provisions supporting the Freedom to Farm and that provide notice to new residential uses that they are in a community that supports farming and forestry.
- Encourage the siting and designing of proposed developments on the portion of the land parcel that will be least useful for farming and forestry, and will have the least impact on the viability of farm and forestry operations.
- Support the activities of local land owners desiring to work with land trusts to preserve open land;
- Support the State of Vermont Department of Taxes Current Use Program designed to keep the working landscape open by taxing working farm and forestry parcels at a lesser rate to make them more economically competitive activities.
- Support and implement regulations that provide for lower density zones in areas designated as rural or agricultural;

- Encourage landowners desiring to develop their property to use PUDs in rural areas to cluster development and to preserve sustainable parcels of open space that are useful for diversified agriculture, forestry or for wildlife habitat or outdoor recreation.

Section 7. Schools and Childcare

Goal A. Support operating the school facilities.

Actions:

- To provide sufficient and appropriate physical space to meet current and projected educational needs.
- To support the educational mission of the schools to provide high quality educational services.
- To keep educational tax assessments affordable.

Goal B. Support the opportunity for childcare within Waltham.

Actions:

- Ensure zoning regulations support affordable housing for families with school age children.
- Encourage childcare as a home-based business or as a conditional use within certain zones.

Section 8. Transportation

Goal A. Support creation of a region wide transportation system that is safe, efficient and promotes the other goals of this Plan by supporting efficient land use patterns and economic development.

Actions:

- Maintain or improve the current level of service on all roads in town.
- Manage roads to meet community level demand and maintain a rural character, keeping roads gravel where practical.
- Prior to approving construction of major private developments, the Selectboard should require roads serving the developments to be built to appropriate public road standards and request

assurances from developers that residents of the development will pay for the full costs of future maintenance and reconstruction of the road.

- Enforce driveway standards

Goal B. Promote energy conservation, public transportation and ride sharing programs.

Actions:

- Support bike lanes on Maple and Green Streets, greenways and pedestrian paths, particularly in conjunction with new development or transportation projects or initiatives which find funding for such projects outside of the Waltham property tax.
- Plan and guide land use to cluster development to avoid the need to build new roads, physically improve existing roads or add traffic controls.
- Encourage ACTR to investigate a route to Vergennes using either Green Street or Maple Street
- Encourage CCTA/ACTR to investigate a stop in Waltham on Route 7 for the Burlington Shuttle.

Section 9. Public Facilities, Utilities, Services and Government

Goal A. Provide an environmentally sound, and energy and cost efficient system of public facilities and services to meet present and future demands.

Actions:

- Maintain the Town Hall/Office as a meeting place for Town functions and investigate options for expanding its use for additional functions in the future: upgrade toilet facility, upgrade heating and cooling facility, upgrade insulation (weatherization windows, doors, etc.), convert existing unused space such that Town officials would have a room/space to conduct private business (example: Zoning Administrator, Listers, DRB/Planning Commission, Select Board, etc.).

Goal B. Promote the reasonable use of Town-owned properties.

Actions:

- Manage the facilities owned by Waltham to keep costs low
- Locate, to the greatest extent practical, new or expanded public utilities within existing highway or utility rights-of-way.
- Investigate marking and mapping the Town-owned property on Otter Creek for potential public access; contract to have the ROW and boundary surveyed.

Goal C. Encourage waste reduction, conservation and recycling

Actions:

- Participate in the Addison County Solid Waste District and the recycling operation run in conjunction with Vergennes, Panton and Ferrisburgh.

Goal D. Ensure Waltham has the tax capacity to fund governmental and school services adequately without straining taxpayers.

Actions:

- Manage the services and facilities Waltham provides to keep the municipal portion of the tax base low.
- Support the State's Current use Value Program to allow agricultural and forest land to compete more directly with other uses.
- Analyze the fiscal impact of proposed projects on Waltham's tax rate and participate appropriately within the permitting processes for those projects.
- Measure the relationship between the tax bill on the median value house in Waltham and the median income in Vermont to determine the financial ability of residents to support local government services.
- Phase growth and manage the capital budgeting process so there are no sudden significant tax increases caused by unanticipated capital expenditures.

Goal E. Improve telecommunications services within all areas of the Town

Actions:

- Review Waltham's Telecom Ordinance to ensure that it strikes the right balance between preserving aesthetics and promoting infrastructure

development.

- Strengthen and support investment in telecommunications and other infrastructure to provide and promote access to individuals and businesses in Waltham.

Section 10. Natural Resources

Goal A. Protect the quality of surface waters within Waltham and the greater Otter Creek Basin so that the waters may benefit Waltham, its citizens and its wildlife now and into the future.

Actions:

- Promote landowner stewardship that enhances fish and wildlife habitats, feeding areas, travel corridors and the ecology of rivers and streams by sponsoring and promoting landowner educational classes like those run by Vermont Coverts or Vermont Fish and Wildlife.
- Ensure Zoning and floodplain regulations exist to site new development to minimize disruptions of recreational uses, scenery and ecological functions of the Otter Creek corridor.
- Coordinate with towns, the regional planning commission, and state and federal agencies with regulatory authority over the Otter Creek Basin to protect Otter Creek's surface water quality.
- Protect surface water quality from new development by encouraging landowners to incorporate naturally vegetated buffer strips along streams they border.
- Ensure adequate erosion control measures are taken on all new development.
- Limit or enact controls on development in areas of high erosion potential (e.g., steep slopes and thin soils).
- Use the *Vermont Backroad Erosion Control Handbook* to guide construction and major alteration of Waltham's roads
- Encourage foresters and farmers to use and respect Accepted Management Practices and Best Management Practices respectively and to take advantage of other federal programs that promote and protect stream buffers like the Conservation

Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

- Encourage all landowners to comply with all provisions of Vermont Act 64, known as "The Clean Water Bill", signed into law on June 17, 2015 and practice good stewardship over the land they own near the Town's streams and Otter Creek, the only river in Waltham.
- Encourage landowners to educate themselves regarding the adverse effects of erosion (soil loss, impaired water quality) and incorporate measures into their land management to minimize the impacts their activities create related to water quality.
- Encourage new subdivisions to be developed as PUDs and encourage the preservation of stream and buffer habitats.

Goal B. Promote safe, healthy recreational uses on Otter Creek.

Actions:

- Promote and encourage landowners to participate in educational or other activities that support fish habitat or recreational uses on Otter Creek.

Goal C. Support reasonable and sustainable use of surface water resources for hydropower and diversified agriculture.

Actions:

- Encourage the reasonable use of clean, renewable small-scale hydropower in Vergennes
- Participate in the regulatory process concerning the re-licensing of the Hydro dam on the Otter Creek in Vergennes to present the town's views on the highest and best public uses of these waters.

Goal D. Support the state's protection of significant wetlands and floodplains

Actions:

- Ensure new development is located and designed so that it will not impair the values and functions of significant wetlands.

Goal E. Maintain high quality groundwater at sufficient yields to adequately serve current and future residents of Waltham.

Actions:

- Protect groundwater recharge areas by guiding new development and land use activities to minimize impact on groundwater quality and supply.
- Encourage landowners to use non-toxic household cleaners or to recycle household cleaners with the Addison County Solid Waste District.
- Promote the mapping and protection of Waltham's most significant groundwater aquifers.

Goal F. Preserve the working landscape and the opportunities for farming and forestry that have helped create and preserve Waltham as a small, rural community, providing it with the open space that defines its rural character.

Actions:

- Promote and protect the long-term productivity and viability of agricultural soils by maintaining agricultural lands for the production of food and other agricultural products.
- Encourage new development as PUDs to conserve undeveloped land surrounding residential developments in viable blocks of significant enough size to support commercial farming, forestry or wildlife habitat.
- Support individuals' efforts to preserve open space within the town by supporting private voluntary efforts to secure conservation easements.
- Support policies and regulations that encourage or support farming and forestry, including Freedom to Farm policies and road regulations that allow for the

reasonable travel of farm and forestry products and vehicles.

- Support maintaining large blocks of land ownership by supporting the Current Use Program and other incentives to keep the working landscape open;
- Encourage soil conservation by endorsing best management practices for diversified agriculture and erosion control for other development.
- Support local landowners that voluntarily conserve areas of undeveloped forest land, particularly Buck Mountain

Goal G. Protect and enhance the natural beauty and scenic characteristics of significance to the local landscape and provide and maintain adequate levels of recreation facilities and programs to serve the residents of the town.

Actions:

- Cooperate with landowners to protect and enhance the important significant local, regional and state recreation qualities of Buck Mountain.
- Encourage new development to be located, clustered and designed to minimize adverse impacts on recreation resources and important scenic views

Section 11. Flood Resilience

Goal A. Improve Waltham’s flood resilience and maximize highest possible Vermont ERAF funding rate from the State after a federally-declared disaster by adopting revised and updated floodplain regulations.

Actions:

- Waltham should maintain updated Road and Bridge Standards in order to satisfy one of four basic elements required for ERAF.
- Waltham should maintain a current Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP), which must be updated each year after Town Meeting and before May 1. This will keep Waltham better prepared for emergencies. The LEOP is updated by the Selectboard.
- Waltham should enroll in the NFIP as soon as possible. To be eligible to participate in the NFIP, the Town will need to update its 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.
- Waltham should work with ACRPC to develop a LHMP and submit for FEMA approval.
- To qualify for the maximum 17.5% ERAF reimbursement rate, Waltham should update its bylaws to protect river corridors and help manage streams and rivers toward naturally stable, least erosive conditions. The Planning Commission and Selectboard should meet with ACRPC and/or ANR staff to begin this work.

Goal B. To protect the health, safety, and welfare of Waltham Residents by restricting use in flood hazard areas to diversified agriculture, conservation, recreation, and open space.

Actions:

- Prohibit all development in the 100-year floodplain as defined on the most recent FEMA maps. Existing structures should be flood-proofed to at least one foot above the 100-year flood elevation, and shall be flood-proofed whenever they are “substantially improved.”

- Regulate any new development in identified fluvial erosion hazard areas, flood hazard areas, or stream corridor protection areas to ensure that development does not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion, and extend these provisions to development activities that might increase the amount and/or rate of runoff and soil erosion upland areas.

- Permit diversified agriculture, conservation and open space as appropriate uses of flood hazard areas, provided no new structures are constructed and no fill is introduced.

- Actively encourage flood emergency preparedness and develop contingency plans for emergency responses to natural disasters, and appropriately integrate Waltham’s emergency response, infrastructure, and flood resilience planning.

Goal C. Promote future land use planning that facilitates sustained hazard mitigation efforts.

Actions:

- Naturalize river corridor and floodplain establishment and conservation.
- Define critical areas for upland storm water runoff limitation and management.
- Enact assessment and pre-development notification requirements to facilitate advance identification of potential problems that may arise from changes in the density of development, determination of appropriate development densities, and allow re-direction of development away from protected areas and high-hazard areas.

Goal D. Ensure that Waltham’s flood resilience management efforts continue to comply with the goals and general recommendations of FEMA’s CRS for exceeding the minimum requirements under the NFIP pursuant to maximizing insurability and reducing flood insurance premiums for town residents and businesses.

Actions:

- Consider enrollment in the “Community Rating System” as a tool to reduce flood insurance premiums.
- Identify and map known and likely flood



hazard areas, fluvial erosion hazard areas, and river corridor protection areas based on stream geomorphic assessment studies and maps provided by the Vermont ANR Rivers Program, and designate those areas for protection to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and private property.

- Adopt a “no adverse impact” land use policy for stream and river corridors, which prohibits landowners from taking actions that have the potential to adversely affect the rights of other landowners.

Section 12. Energy

Goal A. Conserve renewable and nonrenewable energy resources. Reduce reliance on nonrenewable energy sources such as gas and oil, and shift reliance to renewable energy sources such as wood, methane, solar, hydro, geothermal and wind. Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and acid rain precursors. Reduce direct and indirect

transportation energy demands.

Actions:

- Encourage citizens to create local renewable energy sources such as wood, methane, solar, hydro and wind by supporting local energy production.
- Implement actions contained in the transportation section of this Plan to save energy.
- Encourage conservation of forest land as a renewable energy resource.
- Foster energy conservation in new development by encouraging adherence to regulations of the Vermont Residential Energy Code.
- Support the efforts of the Town Energy Coordinator
- Audit and improve the Clerk’s office to make it more efficient.
- Support education regarding energy issues.

Goal B. Support local energy generation.

Actions:

- Support community solar array installations of 150 kW or less.

Section 13. Compatibility with Surrounding Communities

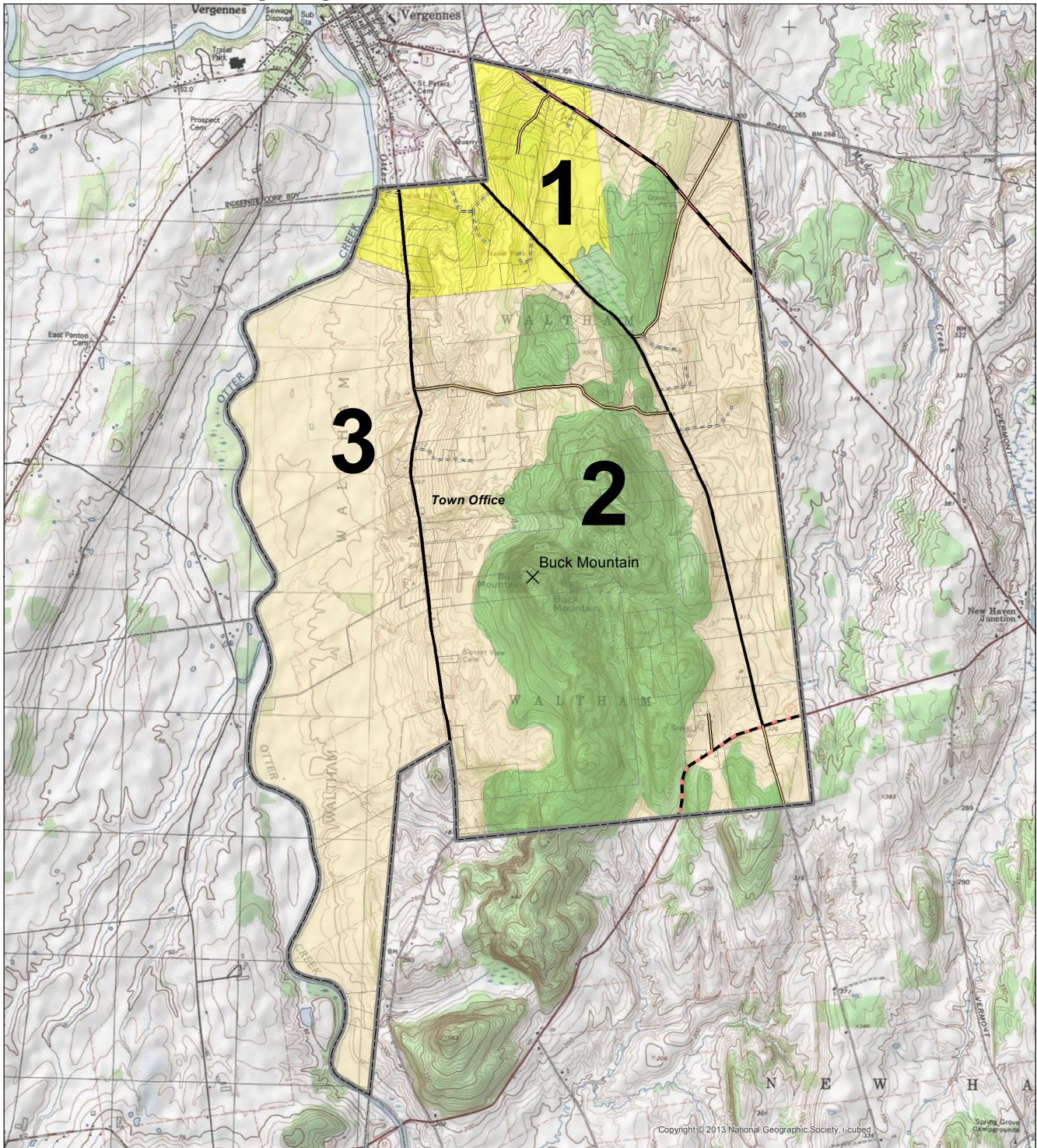
Goal A. Assure that Waltham's Town Plan and zoning regulations do not conflict with those in adjacent towns.

Actions:

- Conduct a review of adjacent town plans when making any modifications to Waltham's Town Plan or zoning regulations.
- Follow proper notification procedures when developing plans, regulations and holding DRB hearings.
- Review each adjacent town's zoning regulations when making any changes to Waltham's zoning regulations.
- Review adjacent town's zoning district regulations when responding to applications where the applicant's property abuts an adjacent town.

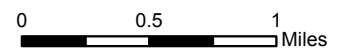
Town of Waltham Land Use Planning Regions

Map 4



Land Use Planning Regions - DRAFT

- (1) Residential Section
- (2) Mountain/Forested Section
- (3) Agriculture/Residential Section

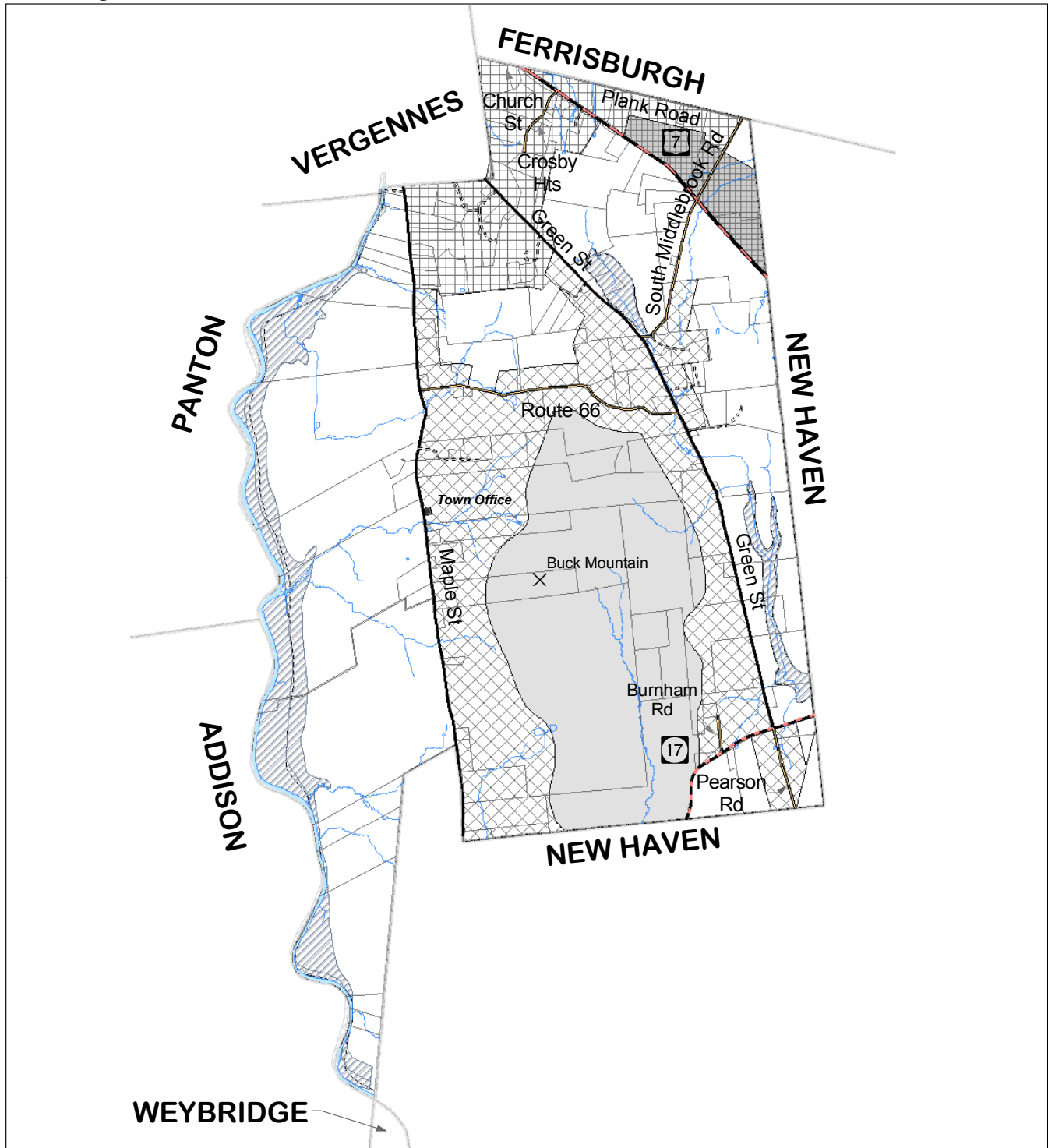


**Addison County
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

A

**Town of Waltham
Zoning Districts**

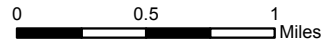
Map 5



WEYBRIDGE

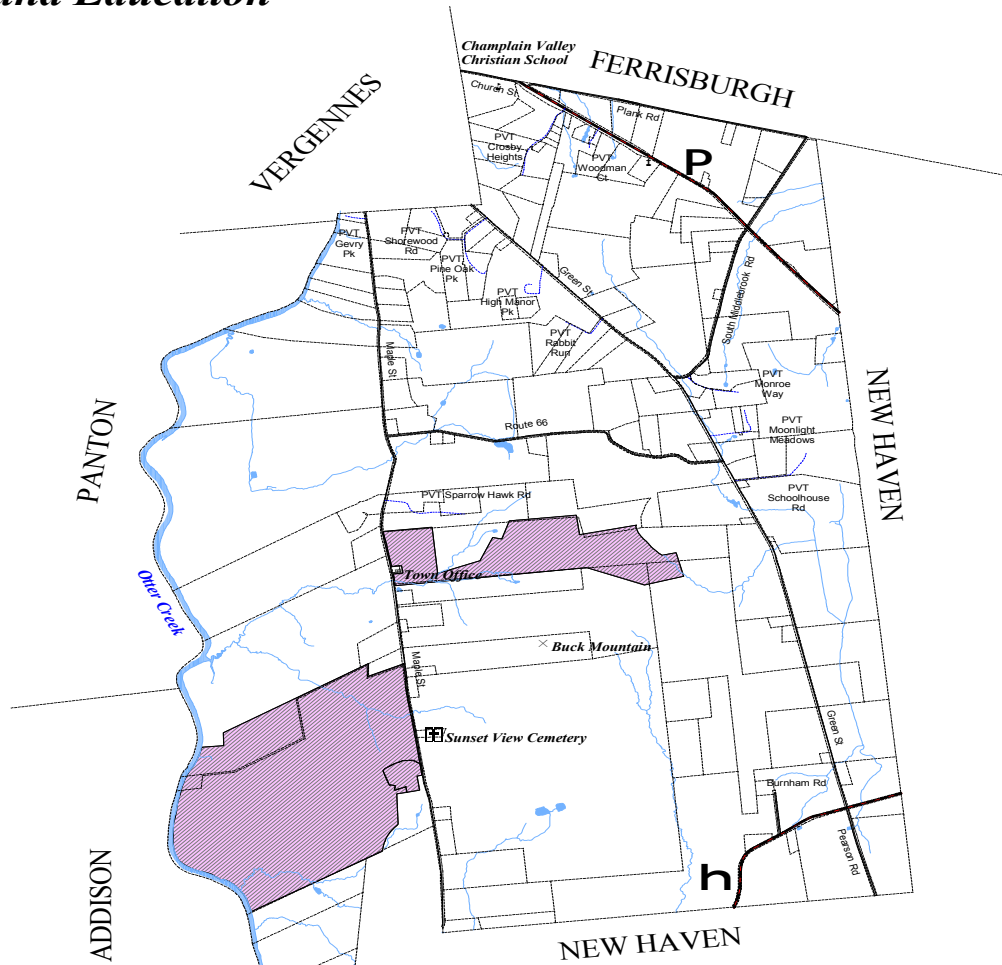
-  Municipal District
-  Highway Commercial District
-  Medium Density Residential District
-  Low Density Residential District
-  Agricultural District
-  Forest District
-  Flood Hazard Area

Adopted by the Select Board, May 1, 2007



Town of Waltham

Transportation, Facilities and Education



- Legend:**
- Town Rd Class 1 or State Rt
 - Town Rd Class 2
 - Town Rd Class 3
 - Town Rd Class 4
- Facilities**
- Government
 - Church
 - Educational
 - Fire Station
- Primary Conservation Type**
- Fee Ownership
 - Conservation Easement (general)
 - Partially Protected thru current land use
- Primary Agency**
- Federal
 - State
 - Municipal
 - Private Organization

Sources:

Tax Parcels: Current as of 1993, refer to the Town Clerk for current information. (1:5,000)

Town Boundary: Digitized from USGS 7.5 minute Quadrangles

Place names (peaks, populated places and cemeteries): USGS National Geographic Names Data Base

Conserved Lands: Vermont Conserved Lands Database (1:5,000 parcel data), UVM School of Natural Resources -Spatial Analysis Lab (2000 draft)

Road Centerlines: VT Agency of Transportation (1:5000)

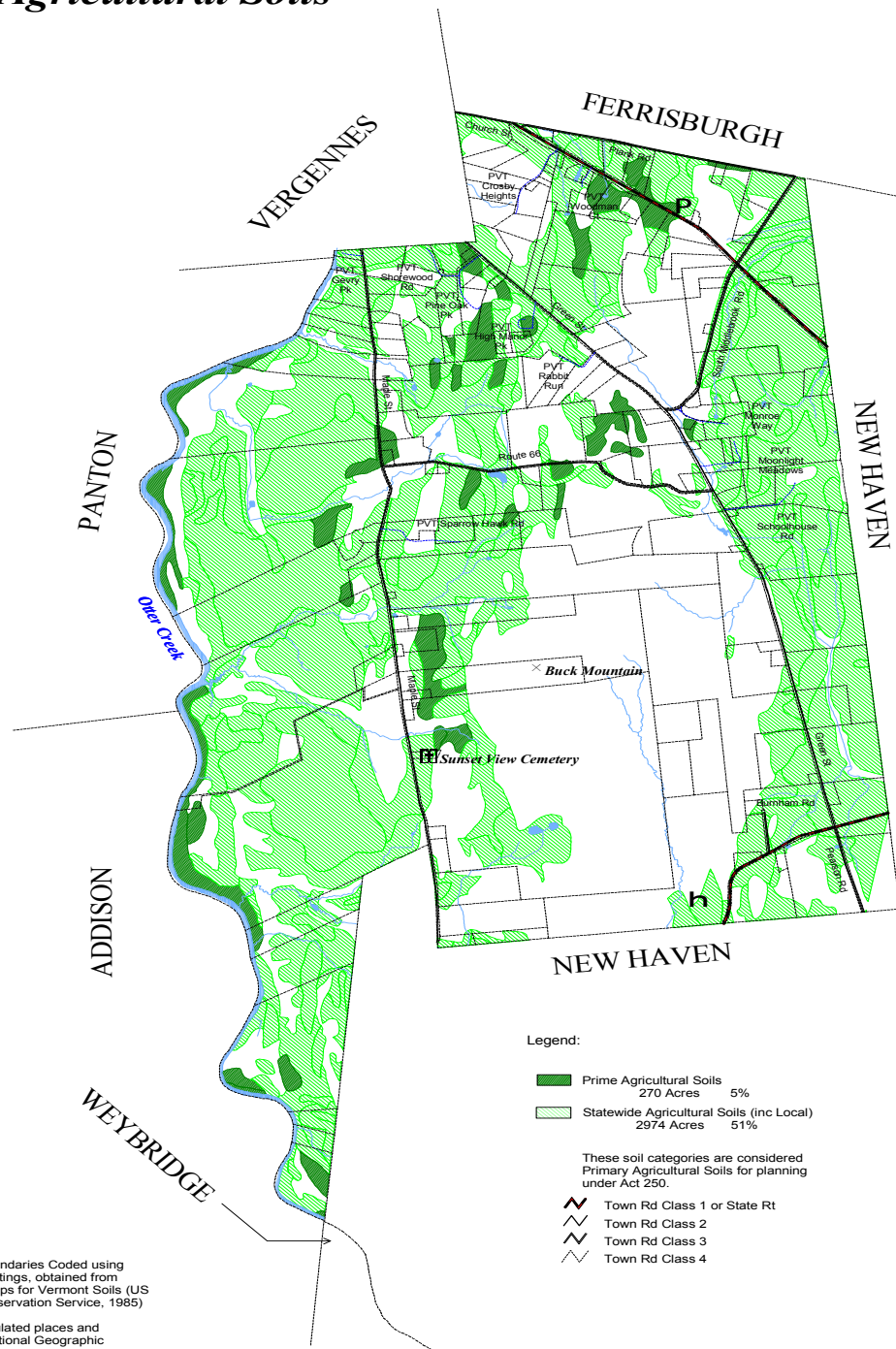
Road Names: E911 Contacts for Towns (1998)

Surface Waters: Interpreted from VT Mapping Program Orthophotos, 1:5000, 1978



Town of Waltham

Primary Agricultural Soils



Legend:

- Prime Agricultural Soils
270 Acres 5%
- Statewide Agricultural Soils (inc Local)
2974 Acres 51%

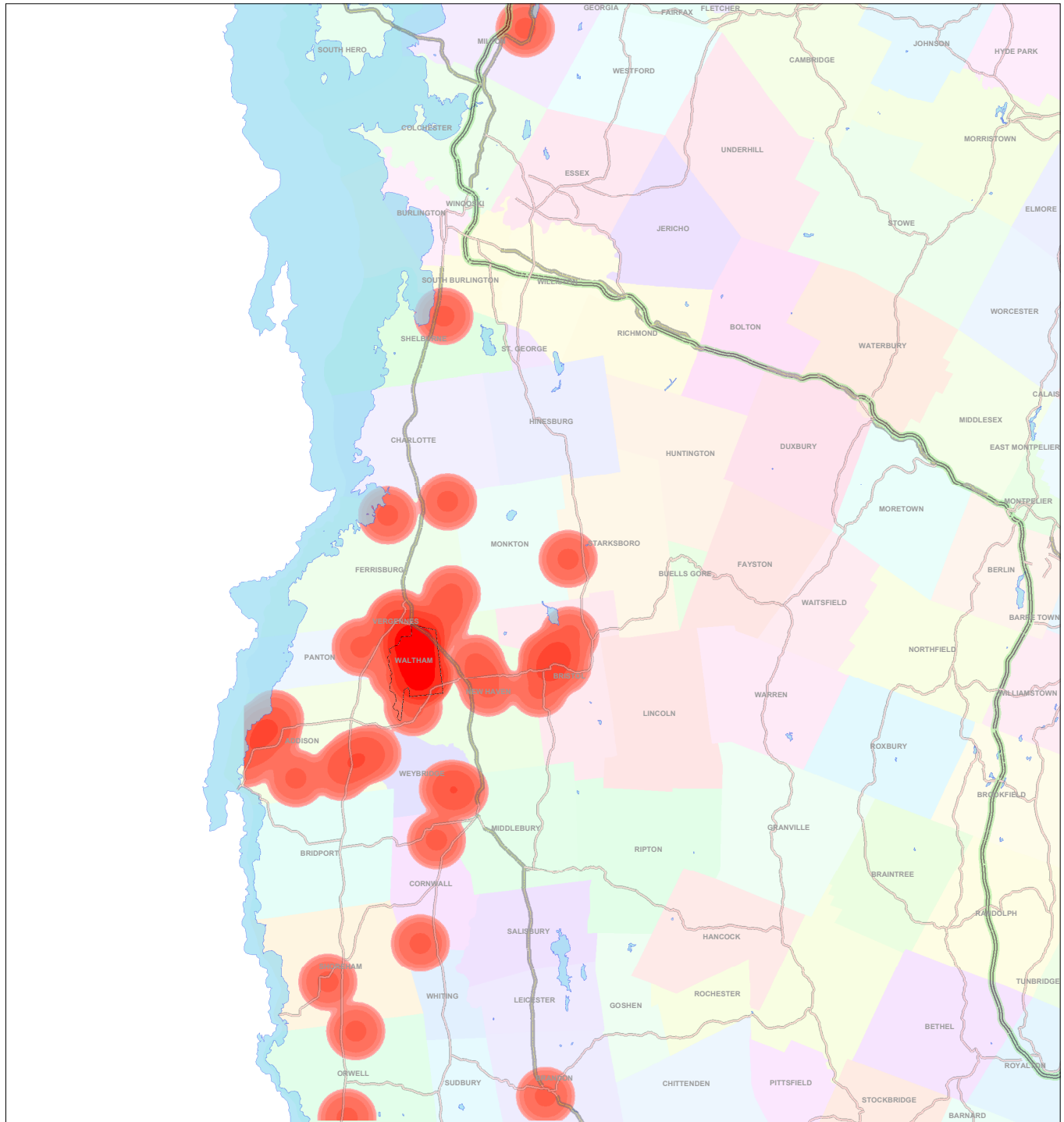
These soil categories are considered Primary Agricultural Soils for planning under Act 250.

- Town Rd Class 1 or State Rt
- Town Rd Class 2
- Town Rd Class 3
- Town Rd Class 4

Sources:

- Agricultural Soils: Soil Boundaries Coded using Important Farmland Ratings, obtained from Agricultural Value Groups for Vermont Soils (US Natural Resources Conservation Service, 1985)
- Place names (peaks, populated places and cemeteries): USGS National Geographic Names Data Base
- Road Centerlines: VT Agency of Transportation (1:5000)
- Road Names: E911 Contacts for Towns (1998)
- Surface Waters: Interpreted from VT Mapping Program Orthophotos, 1:5000, 1978
- Town Boundary: Digitized from USGS 7.5 minute Quadrangles

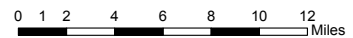




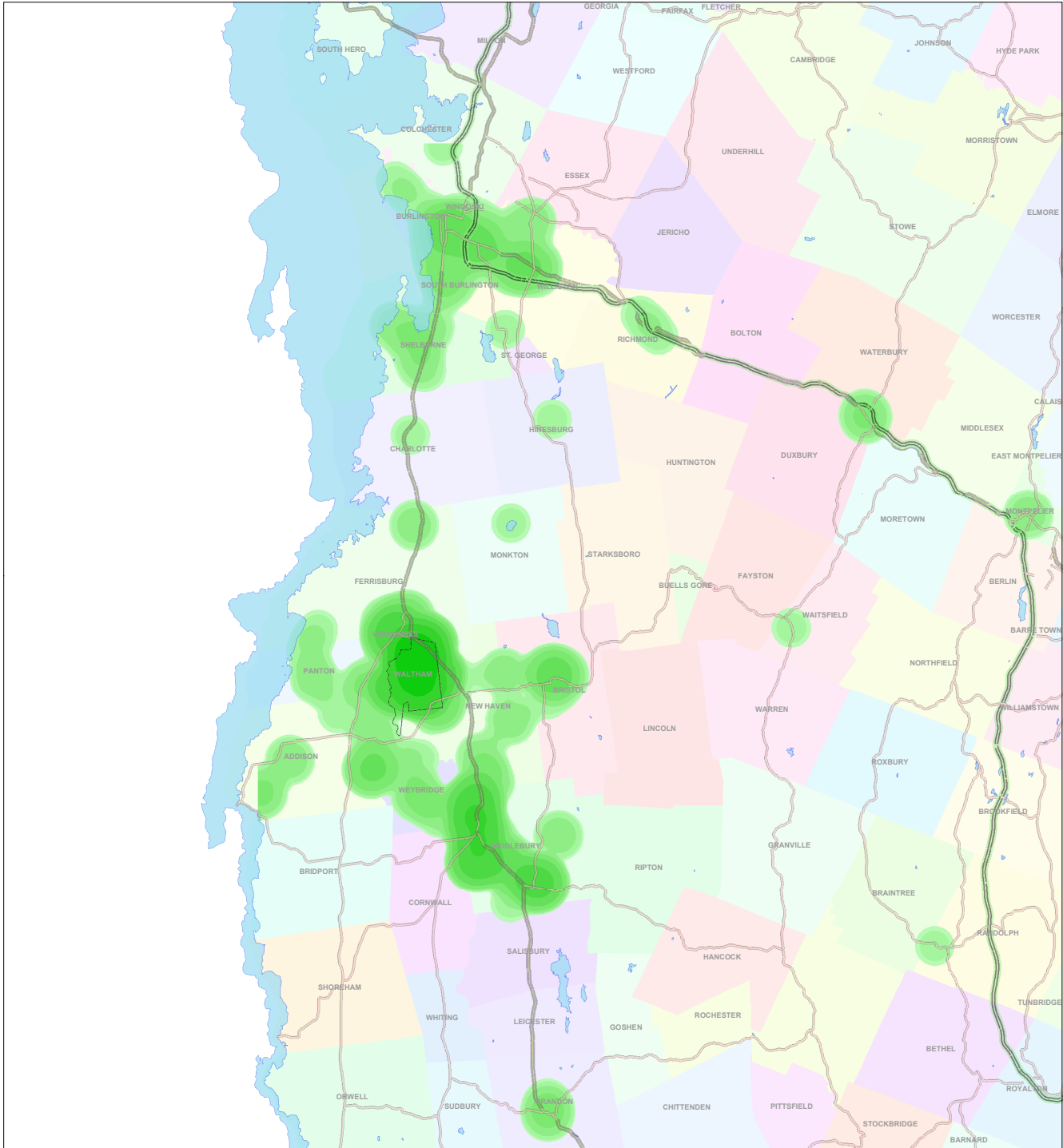
Sources:
US Census Bureau
Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD, 2006)

Residence of Waltham employees
(per sq mile)

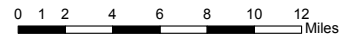
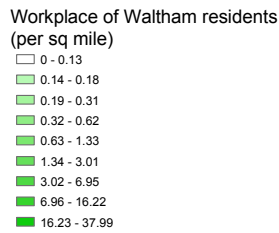
- 0 - 0.02
- 0.03 - 0.03
- 0.04 - 0.05
- 0.06 - 0.11
- 0.12 - 0.23
- 0.24 - 0.51
- 0.52 - 1.19
- 1.2 - 2.76
- 2.77 - 6.48



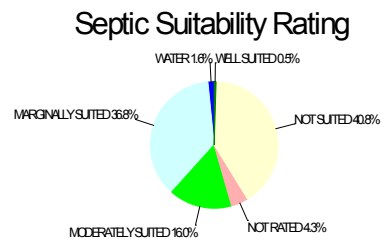
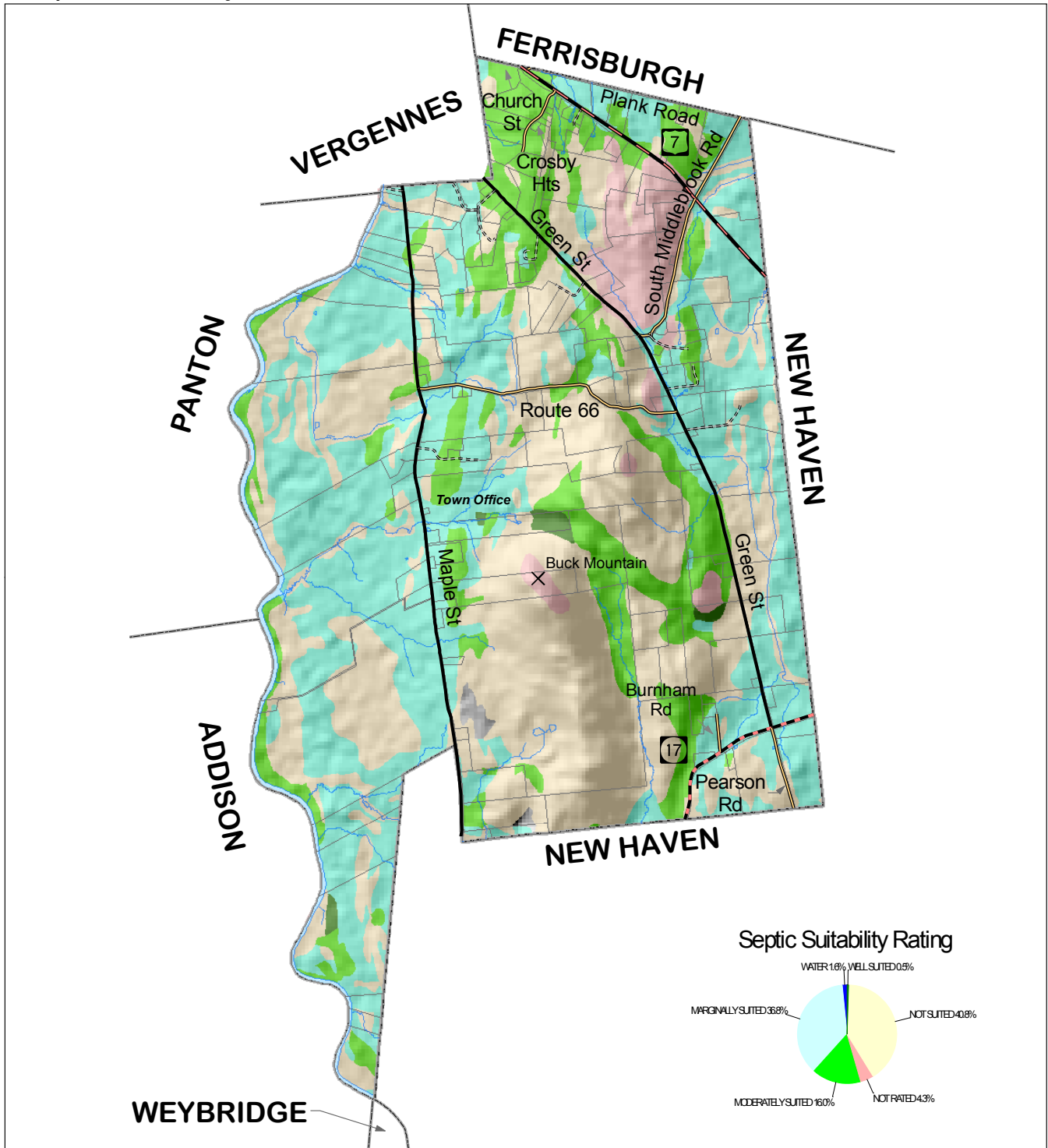
This map intended for planning purposes



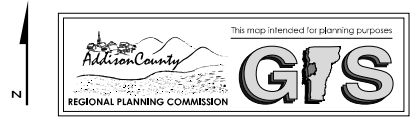
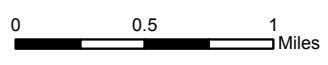
Sources:
US Census Bureau
Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD, 2006)



This map intended for planning purposes

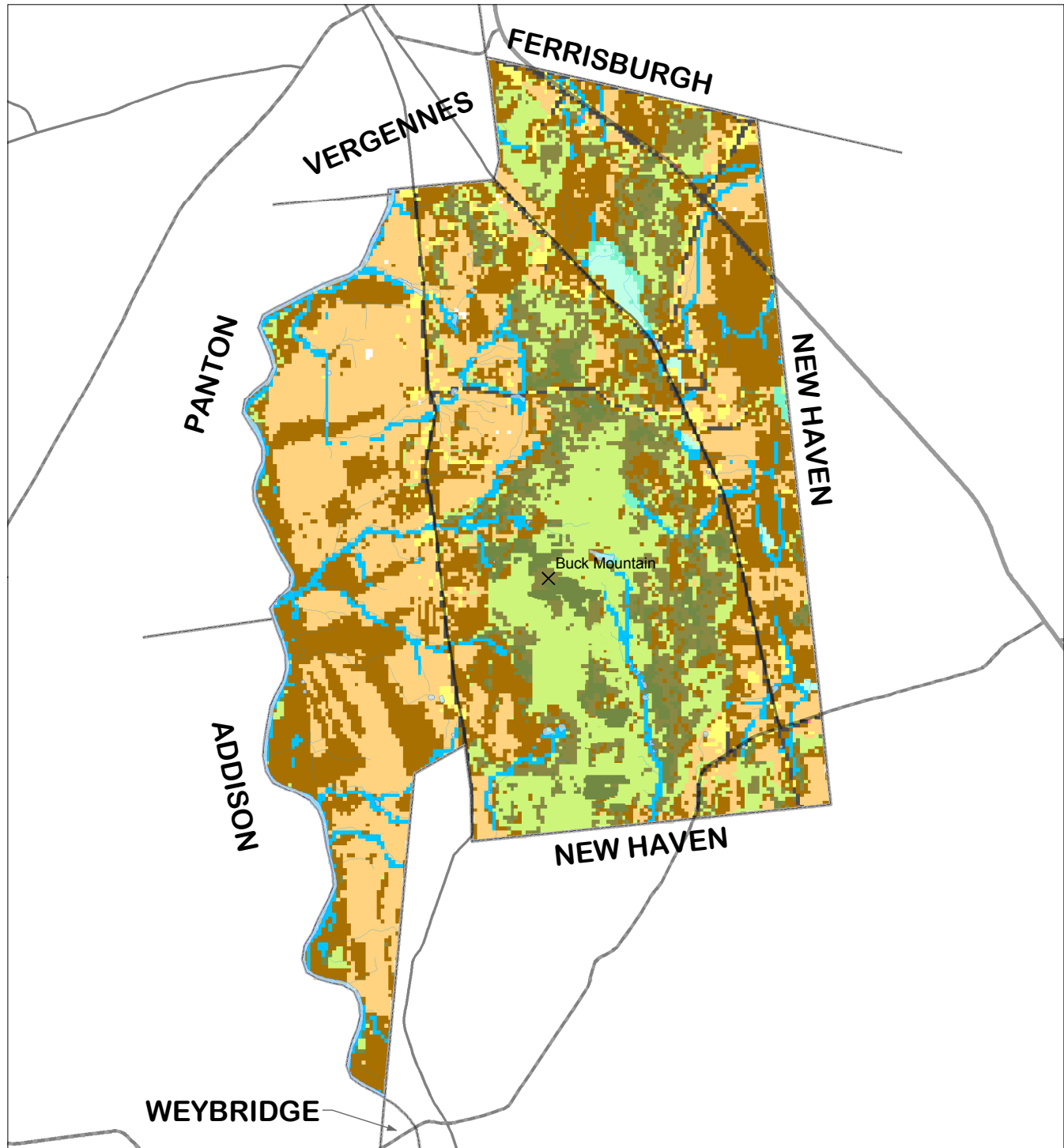


- WELL SUITED
- MODERATELY SUITED
- MARGINALLY SUITED
- NOT SUITED
- NOT RATED




Town of Waltham
Generalized Land Cover/Land Use

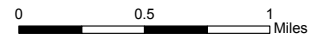
Map 10



Sources:
Land Cover, 2002
Spatial Analysis Lab, UVM

Land Cover - Waltham

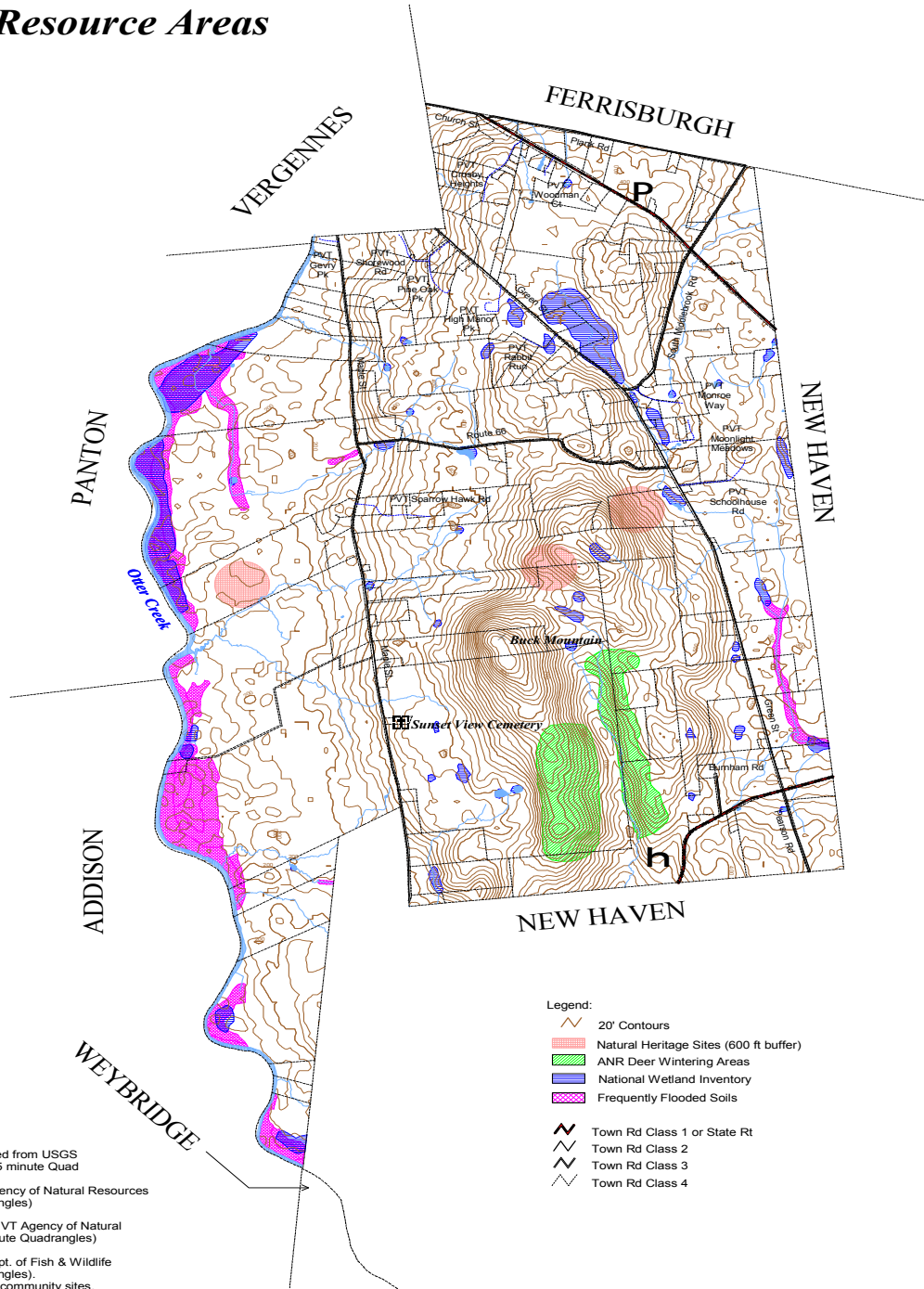
 (6%) Water	 (3%) Forest/Evergreen
 (3%) Built-up/Residential	 (10%) Forest/Mixed
 (<1%) Built-up/Commercial	 (<1%) Wetland/Forested
 (2%) Built-up/Transportation	 (1%) Wetland/Nonforested
 (16%) Forest/Deciduous	 (32%) Ag/Cropland
	 (28%) Ag/Pasture



This map intended for planning purposes

Town of Waltham

Important Resource Areas



- Legend:**
- 20' Contours
 - Natural Heritage Sites (600 ft buffer)
 - ANR Deer Wintering Areas
 - National Wetland Inventory
 - Frequently Flooded Soils
 - Town Rd Class 1 or State Rt
 - Town Rd Class 2
 - Town Rd Class 3
 - Town Rd Class 4

Sources:

Elevation Contours: Generated from USGS Digital Elevation Model, 7.5 minute Quad

Deer Wintering Areas: VT Agency of Natural Resources (USGS 7.5 minute Quadrangles)

National Wetlands Inventory: VT Agency of Natural Resources (USGS 7.5 minute Quadrangles)

Natural Heritage Sites: VT Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (USGS 7.5 minute Quadrangles). Includes plant, animal and community sites.

Frequently Flooded Soils: Derived from The Soils of Addison County, USDA-NRCS, 1971.

Place names (peaks, populated places and cemeteries): USGS National Geographic Names Data Base

Road Centerlines: VT Agency of Transportation (1:5000)

Road Names: E911 Contacts for Towns (1998)

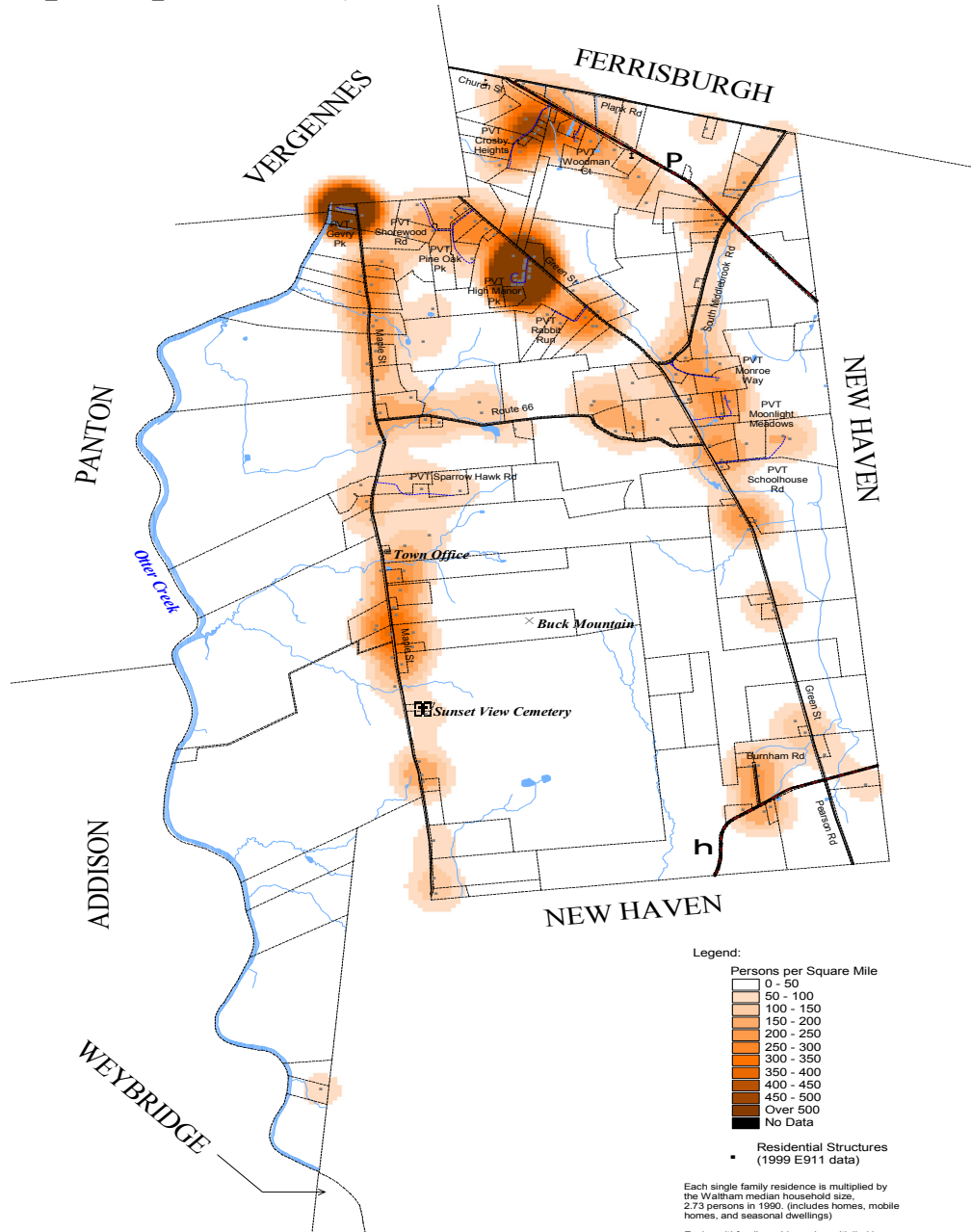
Surface Waters: Interpreted from VT Mapping Program Orthophotos, 1:5000, 1978

Town Boundary: Digitized from USGS 7.5 minute Quadrangles



Town of Waltham

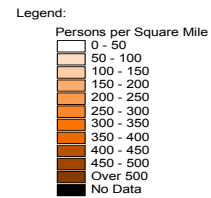
Population Density (Persons per Square Mile)



Sources:

- Population Density calculated from E911 residential structures and 1990 Census data.
- Town Boundary: Digitized from USGS 7.5 minute Quadrangles
- Place names (peaks, populated places and cemeteries): USGS National Geographic Names Data Base
- Road Centerlines: VT Agency of Transportation (1:5000)
- Bridges: Town Highway Maps from VT Agency of Transportation
- Road Names: E911 Contacts for Towns (1998)
- Surface Waters: Interpreted from VT Mapping Program Orthophotos, 1:5000, 1978

- Town Rd Class 1 or State Rt
- Town Rd Class 2
- Town Rd Class 3
- Town Rd Class 4



Residential Structures (1999 E911 data)

Each single family residence is multiplied by the Waltham median household size, 2.73 persons in 1990. (includes homes, mobile homes, and seasonal dwellings)

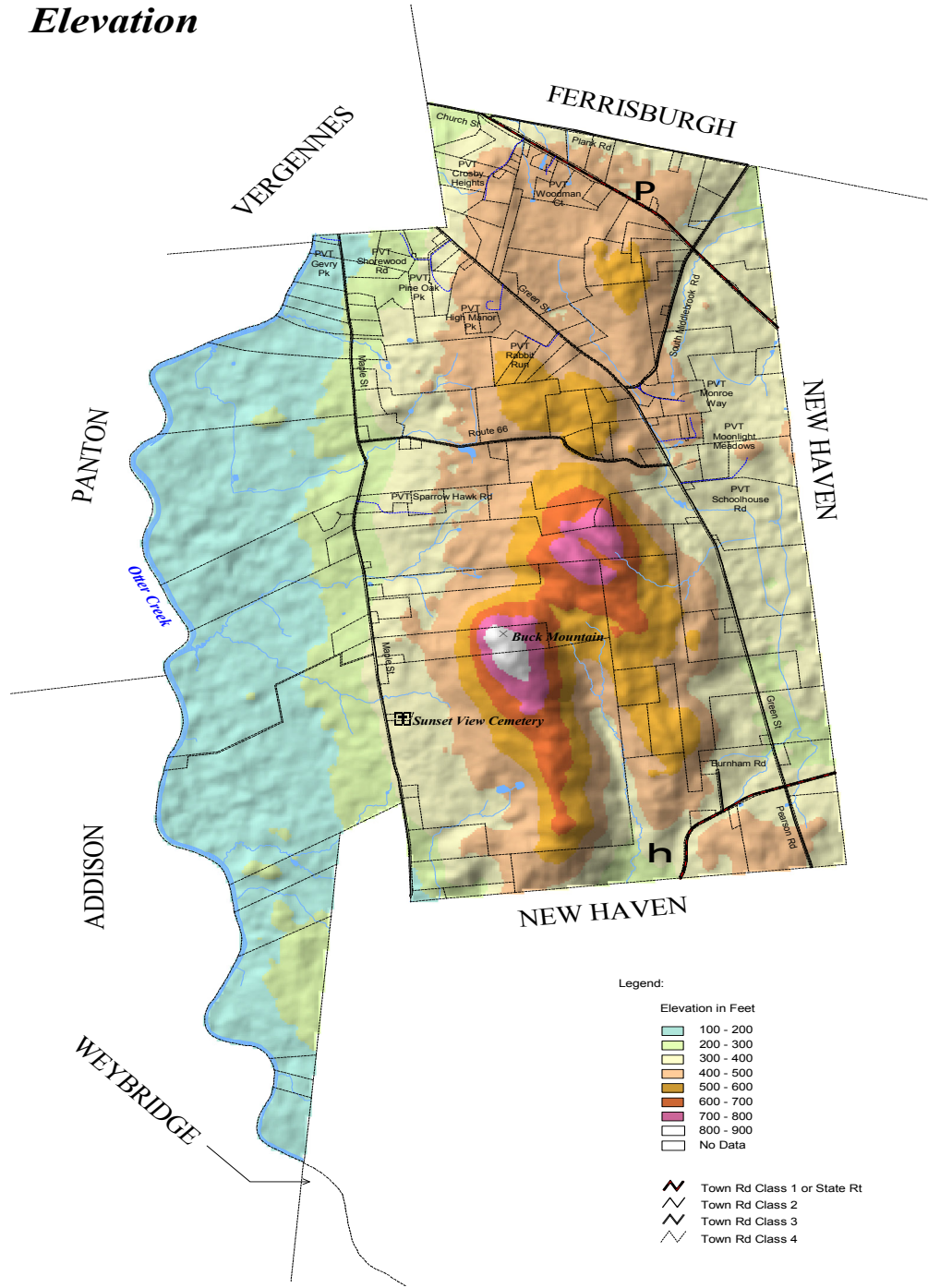
Each multi-family residence is multiplied by 2.5 times the median household size, 2.73 persons in 1990. (includes multi-family and other residential)



GRS
Addison County Regional
Planning Commission
This map intended for planning purposes

Town of Waltham

Elevation



Legend:

Elevation in Feet	
[Light Blue Box]	100 - 200
[Light Green Box]	200 - 300
[Yellow-Green Box]	300 - 400
[Yellow Box]	400 - 500
[Orange Box]	500 - 600
[Red-Orange Box]	600 - 700
[Red Box]	700 - 800
[Purple Box]	800 - 900
[White Box]	No Data

- Town Rd Class 1 or State Rt
- Town Rd Class 2
- Town Rd Class 3
- Town Rd Class 4

Sources:

Elevation Classes: Generated from USGS Digital Elevation Model, 7.5 minute Quad
 Road Centerlines: VT Agency of Transportation (1:5000)
 Road Names: E911 Contacts for Towns (1998)
 Surface Waters: Interpreted from VT Mapping Program Orthophotos, 1:5000, 1978
 Town Boundary: Digitized from USGS 7.5 minute Quadrangles

