

# Hardwick Flood Buyout Program: Myths and Facts

Hardwick has partnered with the State of Vermont and federal agencies to purchase and remove flood-damaged properties to reduce long-term public risk and protect nearby homes, roads, and essential infrastructure. The following sections address common questions and misconceptions about how the program works and what it means for taxpayers.

## **Myth 1:**

“The buyouts are raising our taxes.”

## **Fact:**

The buyouts are financed entirely through federal and state disaster-recovery programs, meaning no local tax dollars are used for acquisition, demolition, or site restoration. Hardwick does not contribute a local match, and the program’s structure ensures that the Town continues receiving municipal tax revenue for years after a property is removed from private ownership.

It is important to understand that it was the flooding itself, not the buyout program, that reduced property values in the affected neighborhoods. Flooding impacted the Grand List well before any buyout occurred.

The combined pre-flood assessed value of all 20 buyout properties is approximately 1.5 million dollars. The Grand List is projected to be around \$339 million on July 1, 2026. This means the buyout properties represent less than one-half of one percent of the total Grand List, a difference far too small to influence the tax rate in any meaningful way.

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## **Myth 2:**

“These properties should have just been rebuilt.”

## **Fact:**

All of the properties selected for buyouts had sustained repeated flood losses and were in areas where long-term structural solutions were not feasible. In several cases, the underlying land was unstable or subject to ongoing erosion, and in others, the homes sat within floodway or high-hazard zones where elevation, armoring, or similar approaches would not provide reliable protection.

The buyout process eliminates unsafe structures and converts these parcels into open space that can store floodwater and reduce downstream impacts, providing a community-wide public benefit during future storms.

**Myth 3:**

“The Town will lose revenue on this.”

**Fact:**

The State reimburses the Town of Hardwick for the municipal portion of taxes on each buyout property for a total of 10 years. This protects the Town from sudden revenue loss and allows for careful long-term financial planning.

**How the payments work:**

For any property purchased before August 31 of a given year, reimbursement begins on January 1 of the following year. For example, a property bought out prior to August 31, 2025 will begin generating reimbursement on January 1, 2026 and will continue for nine additional years. If another property is bought out before August 31, 2026, then on January 1, 2027 the Town will receive the second year of payment for the 2025 buyout and the first year of payment for the 2026 buyout. Payments accumulate in this way over time.

**Payment levels:**

For years one through five, the Town receives 100 percent of the municipal tax amount.

For years six through ten, the Town receives 50 percent of the municipal tax amount.

**What portion of taxes is reimbursed:**

Only the municipal portion is reimbursed. This does not include school taxes or local agreement rates. The Department of Taxes determines payments using the grand list value of the property for the year it was damaged or designated as flood-prone, multiplied by the municipal tax rate, including any sub-municipal rates. FY26 payments are based on 2025 municipal tax rates.

Without this reimbursement system, many of these properties would likely have become tax-delinquent or left the Town responsible for costly stabilization or cleanup. Instead, Hardwick avoids those expenses while maintaining predictable municipal revenue.

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**Myth 4:**

“This only helps the property owners who got bought out.”

**Fact:**

The benefits of the buyouts extend well beyond the individual property owners. When repeatedly flooded structures are removed and the land is restored to open space, the entire watershed functions more safely. These sites now serve as part of Hardwick’s flood and stormwater mitigation network, lowering water levels during major storms and reducing pressure on neighboring homes, roads, and utilities.

This approach strengthens public safety, protects public infrastructure, and limits long-term municipal costs.

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**Myth 5:**

“We could have just left the properties alone.”

**Fact:**

Leaving the structures in place would have prolonged existing health and safety risks and eventually shifted full responsibility for damaged or collapsing buildings onto the Town through tax delinquency or abandonment. The buyout program, by contrast, covers the complete cost of acquisition, removal, and site restoration through state and federal funding. Hardwick gains safer, more stable land with no local financial burden.

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**Summary**

Hardwick’s buyout program removes the most vulnerable properties, safeguards remaining neighborhoods, and relies entirely on outside funding. It reduces future flood damage, limits long-term financial exposure, and helps stabilize the municipal budget. The program is a strategic investment in public safety, community resilience, and fiscal responsibility, not a driver of higher local taxes.