

FORMER BUYOUT PROPERTY
PLANNING AND STEWARDSHIP FRAMEWORK

Town of Hardwick, Vermont
June 2026

PURPOSE

The Town of Hardwick is transitioning from the acquisition phase of the buyout program to the long-term stewardship and planning phase.

Over the past three years, the Town has acquired or is in the process of acquiring approximately nineteen flood-impacted properties through the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and the Flood Resilient Communities Fund (FRCF).

These acquisitions have reduced future flood losses and created opportunities to advance flood resilience, water quality, habitat restoration, recreation, economic vitality, and community goals.

This framework establishes a consistent process for evaluating, managing, planning, and seeking funding for former buyout properties while ensuring future decisions are informed by technical analysis, public engagement, neighborhood priorities, and available resources.

SELECT BOARD AGENDA ITEM

Former Buyout Property Planning and Stewardship Framework

Background

Over the past three years, the Town of Hardwick has acquired or is in the process of acquiring approximately nineteen flood-impacted properties through FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), Flood Resilient Communities Fund (FRCF), and related flood recovery initiatives.

The primary purpose of these acquisitions has been to permanently reduce future flood losses by removing structures that experienced severe flood damage or were repeatedly threatened by flooding and erosion.

While acquisition and demolition activities have been the focus of recent years, the Town is now transitioning from the acquisition phase of the buyout program to the long-term planning and stewardship phase.

As ownership transfers to the Town, these properties represent a growing portfolio of community assets. Many have already been evaluated through hydraulic modeling, engineering studies, project development efforts, site assessments, grant-funded planning initiatives, and flood recovery projects. Others will require additional assessment as acquisitions and demolitions are completed.

While some properties are already incorporated into active planning efforts, others have not yet reached the stage where a specific future use can be determined. The purpose of this framework is to ensure that all former buyout properties are evaluated through a consistent and transparent process before long-term decisions are made.

Why This Framework Is Needed

The Town's former buyout properties are located within several neighborhoods and flood systems and are at varying stages of assessment, stabilization, and planning. The properties represent a diverse portfolio of assets with varying opportunities, constraints, funding requirements, and community objectives.

Some properties are already incorporated into active projects and planning efforts. Others will require additional evaluation and public engagement before specific future uses can be identified.

Rather than making decisions on a parcel-by-parcel basis, this framework establishes a consistent process for evaluating opportunities, engaging neighborhoods, pursuing funding, and managing these properties as long-term community assets.

The framework recognizes that future uses should not be determined solely through staff analysis or grant requirements. Residents, businesses, property owners, and community stakeholders will have opportunities to participate in discussions regarding the future of former buyout properties.

Staff Recommendation for the Select Board

Acknowledge the Former Buyout Property Planning and Stewardship Framework and direct staff to continue property assessments, public engagement, stabilization efforts, neighborhood planning, and funding pursuits consistent with the framework.

Requested Action from the Select Board

Staff requests that the Select Board acknowledge the Former Buyout Property Planning and Stewardship Framework as the Town's guiding approach for evaluating, maintaining, planning, and seeking funding for former buyout properties.

This action does not commit the Town to any specific project, expenditure, or future use of any individual property. Rather, it establishes a consistent process for assessment, public engagement, stabilization, project development, and future funding pursuits while recognizing former buyout properties as long-term community assets.

Inclusion of a property within this framework does not obligate any property owner to participate in a buyout program, does not alter the voluntary nature of any pending acquisition, and does not constitute a commitment by either the property owner or the Town regarding any future acquisition.

Action completed 6-18-26

FORMER BUYOUT PROPERTY PLANNING AND STEWARDSHIP FRAMEWORK

Phase 1 – Assessment

Each property will be evaluated to identify:

- Flood mitigation opportunities
- Water quality benefits
- Stormwater management opportunities
- Habitat restoration opportunities
- Recreation and community use opportunities
- Economic development benefits
- Stabilization needs
- Regulatory requirements and deed restrictions
- Maintenance obligations
- Potential funding opportunities

Phase 2 – Public and Neighborhood Engagement

The Town will engage residents, property owners, businesses, and community stakeholders in discussions regarding future opportunities associated with former buyout properties.

Methods may include:

- Neighborhood meetings
- Public workshops
- Municipal Plan implementation activities
- Existing resilience planning initiatives
- Surveys and community feedback opportunities
- Collaboration with community organizations and partner agencies

Phase 3 – Neighborhood and Watershed Planning

Properties will be considered within the context of the neighborhoods and flood systems in which they are located.

Potential outcomes may include:

- Floodplain restoration
- Flood storage
- River corridor protection
- Habitat enhancement
- Water quality improvements
- Public open space
- Community gathering spaces
- Passive recreation
- Trail connections
- Educational opportunities
- Economic vitality initiatives

Phase 4 – Project Development and Funding

The Town will pursue planning, design, and implementation funding from federal, state, regional, nonprofit, and private sources.

Phase 5 – Implementation and Long-Term Stewardship

Projects will be implemented as funding becomes available and maintained in accordance with program requirements and community objectives. As projects are developed, the Town will evaluate long-term maintenance obligations and identify sustainable funding sources, partnerships, volunteer programs, stewardship agreements, or other mechanisms to reduce reliance on local property tax revenues.

Framework Coordination

The Town's Resilience and Adaptation Office will serve as the primary point of coordination for implementation of this framework, including property assessment, grant coordination, public engagement, project development, and stewardship planning activities. The Office will provide

periodic updates to the Town Manager and Select Board regarding assessment activities, funding opportunities, public engagement efforts, and project development.

Implementation of specific projects may involve additional municipal departments, consultants, partner agencies, community organizations, property owners, and volunteers as appropriate based on project needs, available funding, and applicable program requirements.

Guiding Principles

1. Continue to reduce flood risk.
2. Improve water quality where feasible.
3. Support natural floodplain functions.
4. Reflect neighborhood priorities whenever possible.
5. Remain compliant with deed restrictions and grant requirements.
6. Be managed as long-term community assets.
7. Support passive recreation, public access, community gathering spaces, neighborhood vitality, and economic resilience where appropriate.
8. Be informed by meaningful public engagement and neighborhood input.
9. Public engagement efforts should seek participation from a diverse range of community members, including residents directly affected by flooding, buyouts, housing displacement, and recovery activities.

ATTACHMENT A

FORMER BUYOUT PROPERTY PLANNING AREAS

The Town's former buyout properties are grouped into planning areas based on neighborhood context, flood systems, existing planning efforts, and future opportunities. While each property will be evaluated individually, many are hydrologically connected and share common planning objectives. Grouping properties by planning area will help guide assessment, public engagement, project development, and future funding pursuits.

Flood Mitigation Analysis Status

The Town's EDA-funded Alternatives Analysis evaluated a range of flood mitigation strategies and identified several former buyout properties as contributing to potential flood mitigation outcomes.

Properties identified through that analysis include:

- Inn by the River
- 41 Brush Street
- 65 Brush Street
- 42 South Main Street
- Sawmill Neighborhood parcels (6)
- 115 Route 14 South
- 161 Route 14 South

These properties have already been evaluated for potential flood mitigation benefits and may be positioned for future planning, technical assistance, design, and implementation funding.

The East Hardwick Village properties were not identified through the EDA Alternatives Analysis as providing measurable flood mitigation benefits. Future planning efforts in East Hardwick may therefore focus more heavily on open space, water quality improvements, habitat enhancement, recreation, community use, and village revitalization opportunities. These properties were included in the Town's request to the National Park Service for technical assistance related to future planning, community engagement, and long-term stewardship of former buyout properties.

Summary

Planning Area	Approximate Parcels	Flood Mitigation Benefit Identified Through EDA Analysis	Current Status
Downtown Neighborhood	4	Yes	Planning and public engagement funding secured – process initiated June 2026 (Stone Environmental)
Sawmill Neighborhood	6	Yes	Future neighborhood planning anticipated
East Hardwick Village	3	No	Technical assistance requested; future community planning opportunity
Route 14 South / Cooper Brook Corridor	3	Yes (2 parcels)	Technical assistance requested (potential funding with Clean Water)
Rural / Watershed Properties	4	To Be Determined	Site-specific evaluation; Route 14 North parcel supporting VTrans project; Haynesville Brook parcels proposed for U.S. Fish & Wildlife acquisition

Downtown Neighborhood

Properties: Inn by the River, 41 Brush Street, 65 Brush Street, 42 South Main Street

Status: Active

Planning funding secured through the CDBG-DR Downtown Corridor Study. Additional support was requested through Climate-Ready Communities.

East Hardwick Village

Properties: School Street, 40 East Church Street, 52 East Church Street

Status: Future Planning Area

National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program technical assistance request submitted to support community engagement and visioning.

Sawmill Neighborhood

Properties: Sawmill Lane parcels, including Wolcott Street

Status: Emerging

Flood mitigation benefits identified through the EDA Alternatives Analysis. Future neighborhood planning anticipated.

Route 14 South / Cooper Brook Corridor

Properties: 115 Route 14 South, 161 Route 14 South, Carey Road

Status: Future Planning Area

Technical assistance requested from the Caledonia County Natural Resources Conservation District.

Rural / Watershed Properties

Town Stewardship Properties:

- Route 14 North (Craftsbury Road) Property
- Kate Brook Road Property

Alternative Ownership:

- Haynesville Brook Properties (2)

Status: Site-Specific Evaluation

The Route 14 North (Craftsbury Road) property is currently supporting a Vermont Agency of Transportation culvert replacement project. Long-term planning will occur following project completion.

The Haynesville Brook properties are proposed for acquisition by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and may ultimately be managed through separate planning and funding processes.

ATTACHMENT B

FORMER BUYOUT PROPERTY INVENTORY AND PLANNING MATRIX

Planning Area	Property	Status	Flood Mitigation Benefit Identified	Existing Analysis / Planning	Stable ?	Recreation / Community Benefit Potential	Funding Secured	Future Funding Opportunities	Priority	Timeline
Downtown	Inn by the River	Acquired / Demo	Yes – EDA Alternatives Analysis	Downtown Corridor Study; Climate-Ready funding request; Future NPS Technical Assistance request	Partial	River access, passive recreation, gateway to the downtown opportunities	FRCF acquisition; CDBG-DR Downtown Corridor Study	FEMA, Clean Water, FRCF, Climate-Ready Communities, implementation grants	High	Active planning and public engagement 2026–2028
Downtown	41 Brush Street	Acquired / Demo	Yes – EDA Alternatives Analysis	EDA Alternatives Analysis; site assessments; NRCS EWP planning	No	River corridor open space, passive recreation, habitat enhancement	FEMA acquisition NRCS EWP	FRCF, FEMA mitigation, implementation grants	High	Assessment and stabilization 2026–2027
Downtown	65 Brush Street	Acquired / Scheduled for Demo	Yes – EDA Alternatives Analysis	EDA Alternatives Analysis; site assessments	TBD	River corridor open space, passive recreation, habitat enhancement	FEMA acquisition	FRCF, FEMA mitigation, implementation grants	High	Assessment and stabilization 2026–2027
Downtown	42 South Main Street	Pending	Yes – EDA Alternatives Analysis	EDA Alternatives Analysis;	TBD	Downtown open space, passive recreation, flood	Pending acquisition funding,	VROEC, FRCF, FEMA mitigation,	High	Following acquisition, if completed

				Future NPS Technical Assistance request		resilience	CDBG-DR to mitigate	implementation grants		
Sawmill	Sawmill Lane Parcels	Three acquired and demo; additional pending	Yes – EDA Alternatives Analysis	EDA Alternatives Analysis; acquisition reviews; Granite Street HD discussions	YES	Walking trails, neighborhood open space, gathering spaces, flood-resilient recreation areas, connections between neighborhoods	FEMA/FRCF acquisitions; CDBG-DR to mitigate	VROEC, FRCF, recreation, habitat, resilience grants, clean water	High	Assessment 2026–2027; neighborhood engagement and planning 2027
East Hardwick Village	School Street	Acquired / Demo	No flood mitigation benefit identified through EDA analysis	Acquisition review. NPS Technical Assistance request	TBD	Village open space, gathering area opportunities, passive recreation	FRCF acquisition	FRCF, village enhancement grants	Med.	Assessment 2026–2027
East Hardwick Village	40 East Church Street	Acquired / Pending Demo	No flood mitigation benefit identified through EDA analysis	Acquisition review. NPS Technical Assistance request	TBD	Village open space, passive recreation opportunities, community use opportunities	FEMA acquisition	FRCF, village enhancement grants	Med.	Assessment following demolition
East Hardwick Village	52 East Church Street	Acquired / Pending Demo	No flood mitigation benefit identified through EDA analysis	Acquisition review. NPS Technical Assistance request	TBD	Village open space, passive recreation opportunities, community use opportunities	FEMA acquisition	ERP, FRCF, village enhancement grants	Med.	Assessment following demolition
Route 14 South /	115 Route 14 South	Acquired / Demo	Yes – EDA Alternatives	EDA Alternatives	YES	Potential trail and river access	FEMA acquisition	ERP, FRCF, FEMA	Med.	Assessment 2026–2027

Cooper Brook Corridor			Analysis	Analysis; Cooper Brook evaluations		opportunities, floodplain education opportunities		mitigation, implementation grants		
Route 14 South / Cooper Brook Corridor	161 Route 14 South	Acquired / Demo	Yes – EDA Alternatives Analysis	EDA Alternatives Analysis; Cooper Brook evaluations	YES	Potential trail and river access opportunities, floodplain education opportunities	FEMA acquisition	ERP, FRCF, FEMA mitigation, implementation grants	Med.	Assessment 2026–2027
Route 14 South / Cooper Brook Corridor	Carey Road	Acquired/ Demo	To Be Determined	Acquisition review; hydrologically connected to the Route 14 South corridor; future evaluation anticipated as part of corridor-level planning efforts	YES	Educational, natural resource, and passive recreation opportunities	FRCF acquisition	ERP, habitat restoration grants, future corridor planning grants	Med.	Assessment 2026–2027
Rural / Watershed Properties	Route 14 North (Craftsbury Road) Property	Acquired/ Demo	To Be Determined	Acquisition review; being used for a 2026 VTrans culvert replacement	TBD	Low-impact recreation and educational opportunities	FRCF acquisition	ERP, habitat restoration grants	Low	Assessment following completion of VTrans project
Rural / Watershed Properties	Kate Brook Road Property	Previously Acquired/ Demo	To Be Determined	Previous acquisition review;	TBD	To be determined following assessment	Previous acquisition funding	TBD	Low	Assessment 2026–2027

				acquired through an earlier flood mitigation effort						
Rural / Watershed Properties	Haynesville Brook Properties (2)	Proposed acquisition by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	To Be Determined	Acquisition discussions underway	TBD	Habitat restoration, conservation, water quality improvements, educational opportunities	To be determined	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service programs and funding sources	External	Dependent upon acquisition

Notes

- "Yes – EDA Alternatives Analysis" indicates that the parcel was identified through the Town's EDA-funded Alternatives Analysis as contributing to one or more potential flood mitigation strategies.
- "No flood mitigation benefit identified through EDA analysis" does not mean a property lacks value. Rather, it indicates that measurable flood mitigation benefits were not identified through the alternatives analysis. These properties may still support community, recreation, habitat, water quality, open space, or economic development objectives.
- Inclusion of a property within this framework does not obligate any property owner to participate in a buyout program, does not alter the voluntary nature of any pending acquisition, and does not constitute a commitment by either the property owner or the Town regarding any future acquisition.
- Properties proposed for acquisition by entities other than the Town are included for planning awareness and coordination purposes. Future management, funding, and planning responsibilities may rest with those entities following acquisition.
- Priority reflects current planning activity and does not commit the Town to future expenditures or project implementation.

ATTACHMENT C

FORMER BUYOUT PROPERTY LOCATION MAP

Planning Areas

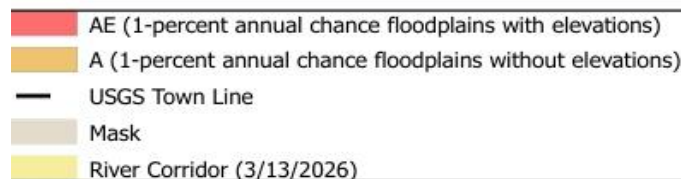
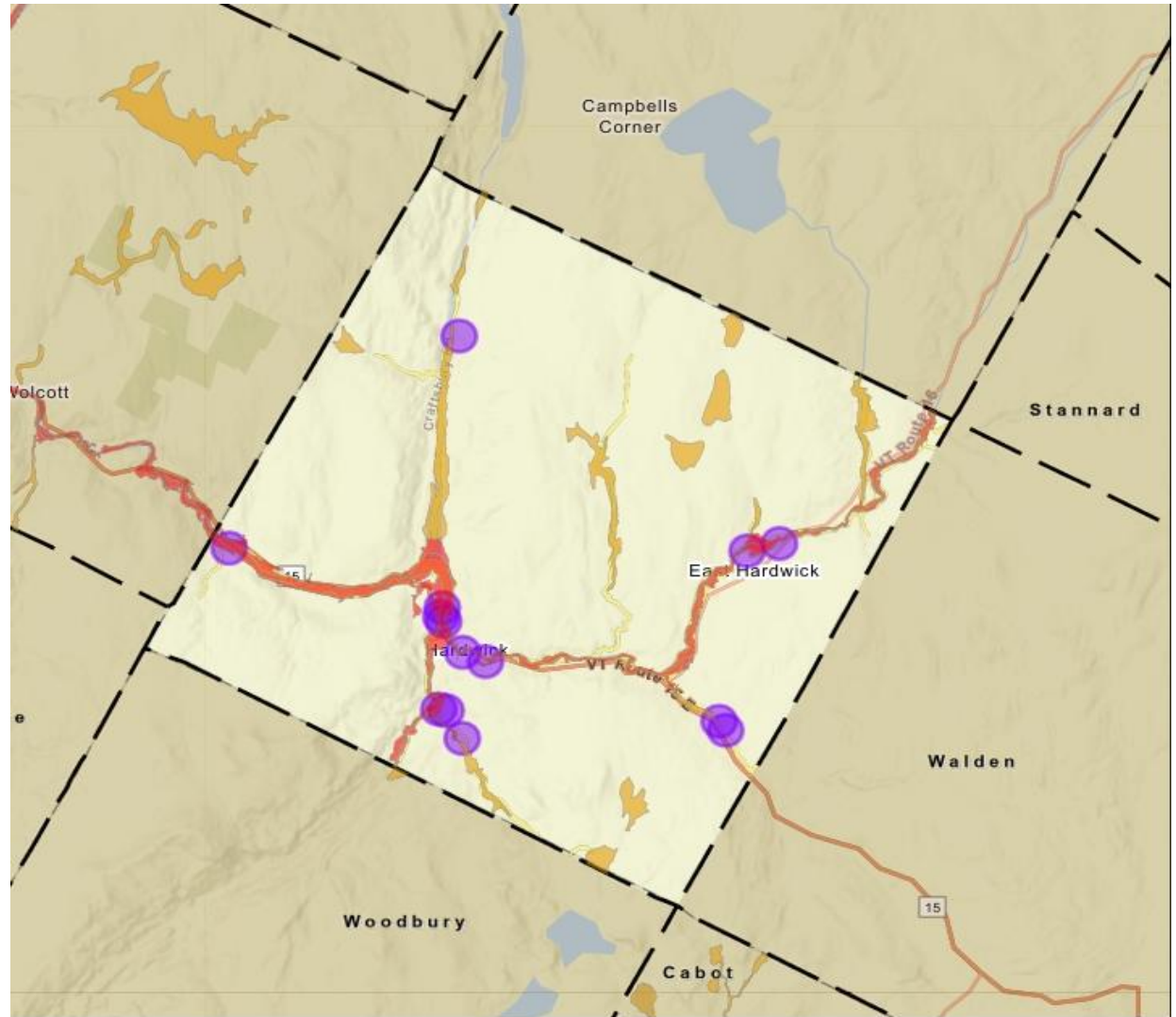
Downtown Neighborhood

East Hardwick Village

Sawmill Neighborhood

Route 14 South / Cooper Brook Corridor

Rural / Watershed Properties



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