To: Hardwick Planning Commission
From: Kristen Leahy, Zoning & Floodplain Administrator / Resilience & Adaptation Coordinator
Date: November 10, 2025

Subject: Alignment Between the Town Plan and Unified Development Bylaws – Recommended Updates for 2026–2027 Town Plan Revision

Purpose
This memo provides an overview of the key changes needed in the next Town Plan update to improve alignment with the 2024 Unified Development Bylaws and to reflect post-2023 flood realities, current priorities, and completed work. The recommendations are organized to help the Planning Commission refine goals, strengthen legal defensibility, and support future zoning improvements.

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1. Growth Areas and Development Patterns

The 2019 Town Plan identifies general goals for compact growth and village development but does not map specific growth areas or define intended densities. The updated bylaws now rely on clearer district-based density and use standards.

Recommended updates:
• Add a revised Land Use Map identifying VN, CR, CB, and HM districts as priority growth areas.
• Include density targets appropriate for serviced areas.
• Identify preferred areas for infill and redevelopment.
• Connect growth areas to existing water and sewer capacity evaluations.

Work with NVDA – Act 181 mandate

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2. Housing Policy Updates

The Town Plan emphasizes affordable and diverse housing but lacks specific implementation tools. The bylaws allow multi-family, ADUs, and mixed-use housing but do not include affordability incentives.

Recommended updates:
• Add policy support for density bonuses, parking flexibility, and other tools that could be implemented through future bylaw amendments.
• Identify preferred missing-middle housing types.
• Include measurable housing goals to guide decision-making.
• Clarify expectations for infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse.

Work with NVDA – Act 181 mandate

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3. River Corridors and Flood Resilience

The 2019 Town Plan pre-dates the 2023 and 2024 floods. The bylaws now include stronger flood hazard protections, and the Town has completed significant planning work (LEMP updates, buyouts, and the Granite Street Flood Resilience Plan).

Recommended updates:
• Add a dedicated River Corridor section to support current and proposed overlays.
• Incorporate floodplain restoration, erosion hazard mitigation, and managed retreat policies.
• Include updated hazard maps, current FEMA buyout activity, and long-term resilience priorities.
• Align the Town Plan with the Hazard Mitigation Plan and state-level river corridor rules.

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4. Scenic, Historic, and Village Character

The 2019 Plan generally recognizes scenic and historic resources, but the bylaws do not yet include corresponding design standards or overlays. This gap results in uncertainty for both applicants and the Town.

Recommended updates:
• Identify and map scenic viewsheds, historic streetscapes, and character areas.
• Add clear policy direction for village center design expectations, landscaping, and massing.
• Support the creation of future design review or character-based overlays if desired.

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5. Multimodal Transportation and Connectivity

Current bylaws remain auto-oriented because the Town Plan does not provide specific multimodal or pedestrian connectivity policies. The community has since completed sidewalk studies and walkability analyses.

Recommended updates:
• Add policies supporting sidewalk extensions, crosswalk improvements, and LVRT connections.
• Include multimodal requirements for new subdivisions and larger developments.
• Replace outdated transportation actions (such as commuter bus service) with realistic mobility solutions.

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6. Energy and Climate Policy Integration

The bylaws contain minimal energy language because the Town Plan provides no enforceable siting or building performance guidance.

Recommended updates:
• Add policies supporting EV-ready parking, solar-ready construction, and small-scale renewables.
• Identify preferred locations for solar and energy infrastructure.
• Integrate climate action guidance that can inform future bylaw revisions or municipal decisions.

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7. Economic Development Priorities

Several 2019 action items are outdated or no longer feasible. Economic conditions, flood recovery impacts, and new projects such as the Yellow Barn have reshaped local needs.

Recommended updates:
• Remove actions related to a second industrial park and commuter bus service.
• Add policies reinforcing downtown revitalization, adaptive reuse, food system development, and the Wolcott Street corridor.
• Update economic priorities to reflect current commercial trends.

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8. Implementation Table (Appendix A)

The 2019 appendix lists many actions either already completed or no longer viable. This document needs to be fully updated.

Summary

Hardwick's planning and zoning framework is stronger today than it was in 2019, but the Town Plan now needs to be updated to reflect the community's accomplishments, remove unfeasible actions, and explicitly support modern housing, resilience, and land use strategies. Updating these sections will provide clearer guidance to applicants, improve regulatory defensibility, and strengthen the link between community goals and land use regulations.