

Hardwick Unified Development Bylaws – 2025 Proposed Update

Hardwick Planning Commission Public Hearing

December 9, 2025

6:30 pm

Purpose of Tonight's Hearing

This is the first public hearing on the 2025 update.

The Hardwick Planning Commission is currently seeking:

- * 1) Questions from residents and landowners
- * 2) Public Comments on the proposed changes
- * 3) Suggestions on how to improve the proposal

Why is Hardwick updating the zoning bylaws?

- * In 2024, the Zoning Bylaw was updated. The changes brought the Town into compliance with:
 - * A) The Vermont HOME Act
 - * B) FEMA floodplain regulations
- * This is the next stage of updates which builds on the 2024 work.

What Updates are Recommended?

- * 1. Create and integrate a Village Center Zoning District for East Hardwick Village
- * 2. Establish a River Corridor Overlay District
- * 3. Remove local Act 250 references
- * 4. Update definitions and cross-references

Village Center Zoning District – East Hardwick

- * Currently the East Hardwick Village Center has two zoning districts – Central Business and Compact Residential.
- * Central Business is also located in Downtown Hardwick.
- * In 2024, when the zoning districts were being updated, the HPC realized that the changes that were proposed for Downtown Hardwick would not benefit East Hardwick. A new zoning district was needed.

Village Center District (VC)

Purpose

- * The purpose of the Village Center District is to support a central mixed use area in East Hardwick. The Village Center District is intended to provide a place of civic pride and a focal point for development in the community. The Village Center District enables a variety of housing opportunities with a mix of small-scale commercial in a pedestrian-friendly setting.

Village Center Proposed Map



How was the new East Hardwick Zoning District created?

- * Better Connections and village planning work – Recommendation for a new district.
- * Bylaw Modernization Consultant recommended the approach to better match existing lot & building dimensions.
- * HPC hosted a public conversation in December 2024 – impacted residents received an invitation to attend.
- * Resident concerns addressed.



Recommended Dimensions



- * Minimum Lot Size – 5,000 square feet.
- * Minimum Frontage – 25 feet
- * Minimum Setback/Front (starting 25 feet from the road centerline) – 0 feet
- * Minimum Setback/Side – 10 feet
- * Minimum Setback/Side with signed agreement with neighboring property owner & provision of fire-walls – 0 feet
- * Minimum Setback/Rear – 10 feet
- * Minimum Setback/Side & Rear for Accessory Structure – 5 feet
- * Maximum Height – 35 feet

Permitted Uses –

Uses which require a permit from the Zoning Office

- * Accessory Dwelling
- * Accessory Structure/Use (to a permitted use)
- * Accessory Structure less than or equal to 500 Sq ft. (to a conditional use)
- * Agriculture
- * Dwelling/Single Unit
- * Dwelling/Two Unit
- * Dwelling/Multi-Unit
- * Forestry
- * Group Home
- * Home Child Care
- * Home Occupation



Conditional Uses -

Uses that require a public Development Review Board Hearing



- * 28 Uses are listed as Conditional Uses – including:
- * Agricultural and Forest Processing
- * Bed & Breakfast
- * Community Center
- * Health Clinic
- * Hotel/Motel
- * Mixed Use
- * Office
- * Recreation
- * Restaurant
- * Retail Sales
- * School
- * Veterinary Clinic

River Corridor Overlay – What is a River Corridor?

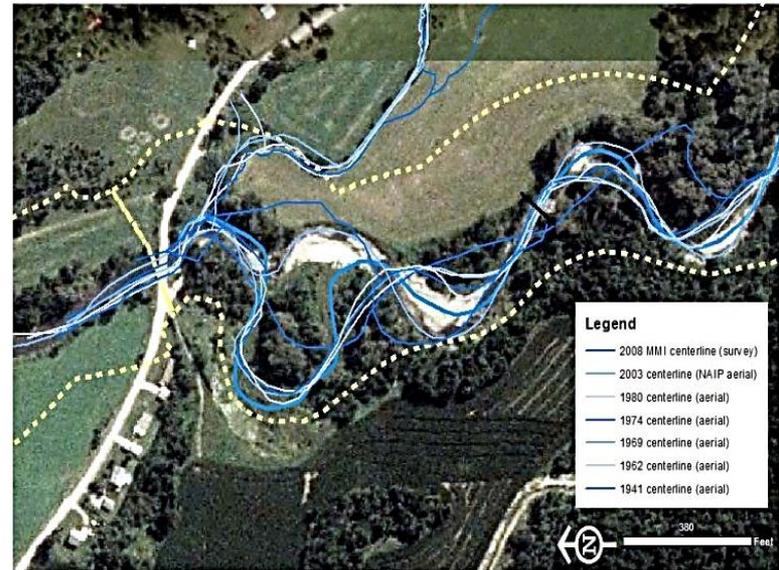
River Corridor

While floodplains and floodways show where water inundates land, the river corridor shows where the river itself may move or erode the landscape over time.

Rivers are dynamic, they **shift, meander, and carve new channels**, especially during major storms.

A river corridor **includes the river channel and the surrounding land** where this natural movement is likely to occur.

Protecting river corridors helps **reduce long-term flood risk** by giving rivers space to move and adapt.



Meandering channels in a river corridor

State Requirements & Timing



- * **The State of Vermont recently passed Act 121** – this act requires the State to regulate development within the River Corridor Overlay throughout the entire State within 3-4 years.
- * **By adopting River Corridor rules now**, Hardwick may be able to request local control over the permitting process.
- * **Early adoption** may give residents time to understand & work with proposed changes.
- * **Higher level of State Reimbursement** from the Emergency Relief & Assistance Fund after federally declared disasters (if adopted).

Purpose of the overlay

- * Reduces future flood and erosion risks.
- * Protect water quality.
- * Support the natural movement of rivers over time.
- * **Only applies to areas mapped by Vermont ANR.**
- * Per Act 121 – According to the Department of Environmental Conservation, 70-80% of all flood-related damages occur within Vermont's River Corridors.



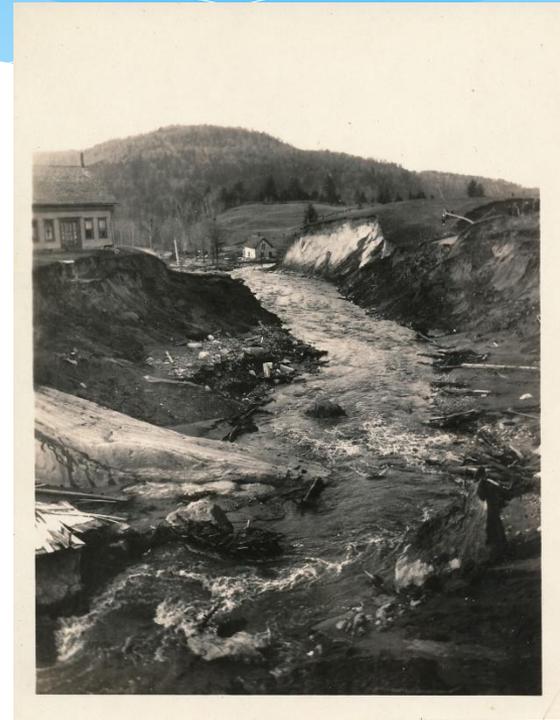
How the Overlay Works



- * Allows normal use of properties – with guardrails for safety.
- * Exempts Agriculture and Forestry uses.
- * Directs new structures away from the places the river is most likely to move.
- * Reduces erosion and channel migration damage.
- * Helps the Town unlock funding.

What is allowed? What Changes?

- * Some projects in the mapped river corridor may require review including:
 - * New buildings
 - * Additions or expansions toward the water.
 - * Significant grading or filling toward the water.
 - * Major changes to existing structures (toward the water).
- * Routine maintenance, small projects and normal agricultural uses are generally unaffected.
- * Unlike the Floodplain, no interior permits are required.



Remove local control of Act 250

- * Hardwick currently has the ability to serve as the Act 250 governing body. With the implementation of Act 181 and several changes to Act 250, this is no longer viable.

How These Changes Support Hardwick Goals

- * Housing availability near services
- * Safer, more resilient development patterns
- * Support for East Hardwick reinvestment
- * Compliance with state programs and funding
- * Alignment with long-term planning of the Town
- * Alignment with long-term planning of our Regional Planning Commission (NVDA).

Public Comment Guidance

- * How to comment tonight
- * How written comments can be submitted – zoning.administrator@hardwickvt.gov or 802-472-1686.
- * Timeline for continued input – the Planning Commission will review all comments at the next meeting – January 13, 2026 – Tuesday, 6:30 pm. Additional comments should be received prior to that date.

Next Steps in the Process

- * Planning Commission review of comments at the next meeting – 1/13/26
- * Possible revisions – If there are substantial changes, another public hearing will be held.
- * Select Board Hearing – After the Planning Commission Review.
- * Select Board Vote
- * Expected Timeline – 4-8 months. Final completion – late Spring/early Summer 2026

Thank You!

- * Planning Commission contact information – zoning.administrator@hardwickvt.gov.
- * Where to find materials online – Planning Commission page on the Hardwick Vermont Website

<https://hardwickvt.gov/government/planning-zoning-floodplain/planning-commission-hpc/>