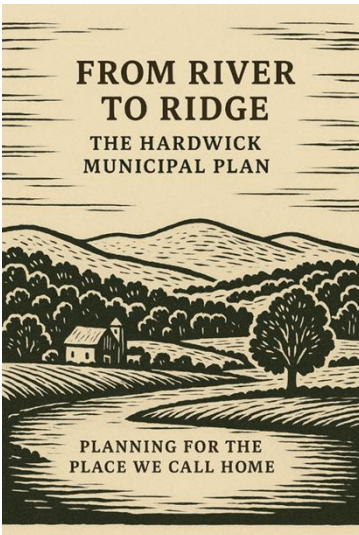


LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT



INTRODUCTION

Hardwick's land use pattern reflects both its history and its landscape. Hardwick Village and East Hardwick developed as compact centers along the Lamoille River, surrounded by rural neighborhoods, agricultural land, and large areas of forest. Roads, rivers, topography, access to municipal water and sewer, and the location of existing development have all helped shape where and how the community has grown.

That pattern continues to influence how Hardwick grows. The villages provide places for housing, businesses, public services, schools, and community life, while the surrounding rural areas support farms, forests, recreation, wildlife habitat and working lands. Providing room for new housing and economic activity while maintaining this overall settlement pattern is central to Hardwick's land use planning.

Recent flooding has added another consideration to decisions about future development. Both of Hardwick's historic village centers are closely connected to the Lamoille River and some existing developed areas face significant flood and erosion risk. Future growth must make good use of existing infrastructure and established settlement areas while recognizing flood hazards, river corridors, wetlands, steep slopes, source protection areas and other physical and environmental constraints.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE COMMUNITY

The 2026 Municipal Plan survey showed support for additional housing and development while also maintaining the rural landscape and community character residents value. Housing was a particularly strong theme: 54.6% of respondents identified affordable, diverse housing near village centers as a priority for the next ten years. When asked what types of housing Hardwick should encourage, 58.4% selected affordable homes and 38.8% selected housing near village centers, compared with 11.4% who selected housing in rural areas.

Residents also identified opportunities to make better use of land and buildings that are already developed. Responses supported filling vacant storefronts, reusing older and underused buildings, adding housing above or near downtown, and improving walking and biking connections between neighborhoods, village centers, businesses, and recreation.

At the same time, residents expressed support for protecting farmland, forestland, natural areas, and the rural character of the community. Comments also emphasized the importance of East Hardwick and Hardwick's rural neighborhoods and the need for planning decisions to consider the entire town.

Current Land Use Pattern

Hardwick's development pattern is characteristic of many northern Vermont communities. This pattern is one of traditional New England settlements with compact village centers surrounded by agricultural and forest lands. The villages of Hardwick and East Hardwick, both located along the Lamoille River, serve as important centers of community activity with public and semi-public facilities, businesses, employment, recreation, and higher density residential development. Both developed historically around mills and benefited from access to the railroad. Today, the two villages retain many older buildings and historic settlement patterns that continue to shape their development.

The Lamoille River enters Hardwick in the northeast and exits in the southwest, creating a valley that has strongly influenced the town's settlement and transportation patterns. Productive soils are found along portions of the river valley, while state highways and other major transportation routes follow the river valley and provide important connections within Hardwick and to surrounding communities.

Outside the village centers, areas including Bunker Hill, Bridgman Hill, Center Road, Hopkins Hill, Hardwick Street, and Ward Hill include agricultural lands interspersed with low-density residential development. Residential densities generally increase closer to the village centers and along established roads.

Hardwick's higher elevations and steeper slopes are predominately forested. These forestlands include working woodlots as well as important wildlife habitats, recreational lands, and large forest blocks. Together with agricultural fields, waterways, hillsides and rural roads, they form the landscape surrounding Hardwick's more developed areas.

NEED NEW ZONING MAP VISUAL.

Future Land Use

Hardwick updated its Unified Development Bylaws in 2026. The current regulations include eight zoning districts: Central Business, Village Center, Village Neighborhood, Highway Mixed Use, Compact Residential, Industrial, Rural Residential, and Forest Reserve. The bylaws also include Flood Hazard and River Corridor Overlay Districts and protections for designated Source Protection Areas.

The 2026 update included two significant changes that are particularly relevant to this plan. A new Village Center District was established for East Hardwick to better reflect its existing development pattern and its role as a distinct village center. The district supports a variety of housing opportunities along with small-scale commercial and community uses in a compact, pedestrian-friendly setting. The district grew out of the Better Connection village planning and bylaw modernization work and included direct outreach to affected residents.

The Town also established a River Corridor Overlay District. River corridors provide rivers and streams with the space necessary to maintain or reestablish floodplain access and reduce erosion hazards through natural processes. The overlay complements Hardwick's flood hazard regulations by addressing erosion risk as well as inundation.

State Land Use Designations

Hardwick's planned land use pattern is also reflected in the State and regional land use framework. The Town is working with Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) to identify areas appropriate for Tier 1B status and is evaluating whether portions of the community may qualify for Tier 1A status. These areas generally correspond with Hardwick's existing village centers, established neighborhoods, and other locations where development can make efficient use of existing infrastructure and services.

Central Business District

Purpose. The district supports a compact mix of commercial, professional, civic, and residential uses while maintaining and enhancing downtown Hardwick's historic character and economic vitality.

Present Land Uses. This area contains businesses, public and civic uses, services, restaurants, housing, and mixed-use buildings. Development is generally compact, with buildings located close to streets and sidewalks.

Future Land Uses. The Central Business District should continue to accommodate a dense mix of commercial, civic, residential, and other compatible uses. Reuse of existing buildings, upper-story and other housing opportunities, infill development, and pedestrian connections should be encouraged. Redevelopment should also account for flood risk and long-term resilience.

Village Center District

Purpose. The district supports a central mixed-use area in East Hardwick that serves as a focal point for the village. It provides opportunities for a variety of housing types together with small-scale commercial and community uses in a pedestrian-friendly setting.

Present Land Uses. East Hardwick Village includes residential, commercial, civic, agricultural and other uses within a compact historic settlement pattern. Buildings and lots are generally smaller and more closely spaced than in the surrounding rural areas.

Future Land Uses. Future development should reinforce East Hardwick as a compact village center. Housing, adaptive reuse, small-scale businesses, community uses, and compatible mixed-use development should be supported while maintaining the scale and development

pattern of the village. Development should also account for flood and erosion hazards associated with the Lamoille River.

Village Neighborhood District

Purpose. This district provides for higher-density residential development and appropriate non-residential uses in existing neighborhoods close to downtown while maintaining historic settlement patterns and streetscapes.

Present Land Uses. This district is primarily residential but also contains public, institutional, commercial and other compatible uses (including Hazen Union and Hardwick Health Center). Much of the district is served by municipal water and sewer and is within walking distance of downtown and community facilities.

Future Land Uses. The Village Neighborhood District should continue to accommodate additional housing within established neighborhoods, including a range of housing types and appropriate infill and redevelopment. New development should fit the existing neighborhood pattern and make efficient use of municipal infrastructure.

Highway Mixed-Use District

Purpose. The district accommodates automobile-oriented businesses and other compatible uses along major travel corridors while maintaining safe and efficient traffic flow.

Present Land Uses. Existing development includes commercial, light industrial, residential and service uses along the Town's principal highway corridors.

Future Land Uses. The district should continue to accommodate a broad mix of uses appropriate to major transportation corridors. Where practical, redevelopment should improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to nearby neighborhoods and village centers, make efficient use of existing developed land and infrastructure and improve the relationship between buildings, parking areas, highways, and surrounding uses.

Compact Residential District

Purpose. The district provides for moderate to high density residential development and appropriate non-residential uses in predominantly built-up areas within and surrounding the traditional village centers.

Present Land Uses. This area is currently used primarily for residential uses, but agriculture and commercial operations are also common.

Future Land Uses. The Compact Residential District should provide opportunities for additional housing. Infill, additional housing types, and appropriate reuse of existing properties should be supported where infrastructure and site conditions allow. Development should respect physical constraints, neighborhood patterns, and nearby natural resources.

Industrial District

Purpose. The district encourages industrial, manufacturing, and appropriate commercial uses in locations with municipal water and sewer and good highway access while protecting those areas from incompatible residential development.

Present Land Uses. The district contains industrial, manufacturing, processing, service, storage and related uses.

Future Land Uses. The Industrial District should remain available for industrial, manufacturing and compatible commercial uses that benefit from highway access and municipal infrastructure.

Rural Residential District

Purpose. The district supports agriculture, forestry and low to moderate density residential development in areas served by public roads but generally lacking municipal water and sewer. Clustering new development is encouraged to protect environmental resources and maintain open space.

Present Land Uses. Land uses include agriculture, forestry, residential development, home occupations, earth resource activities, small businesses, recreation, and undeveloped land. Development is generally concentrated along existing roads.

Future Land Uses. Agriculture, forestry, housing, and compatible rural uses should continue. New developments should recognize the limitations of rural infrastructure and site conditions and avoid unnecessary fragmentation of farmland, forest blocks, wildlife habitat and open land. Where multiple lots or units are proposed, development patterns that retain larger areas of open land are encouraged.

Forest Reserve District

Purpose. The district protects significant forest resources and maintains low development densities in areas with steep slopes, shallow soils, unique or fragile resources, significant wildlife habitat, and poor access to town roads and community facilities and services.

Present Land Uses. The district is predominately forested and supports forestry, wildlife habitat, recreation, seasonal camps, and limited agricultural and residential development.

Future Land Uses. The Forest Reserve District should remain predominantly forested and sparsely developed. Forestry, recreation, wildlife habitat, agriculture, open space and limited residential development should continue where appropriate.

Flood Hazard and River Corridor Overlay Districts

Hardwick's Flood Hazard and River Corridor Overlay Districts apply in addition to the underlying zoning districts and address two related but different hazards: inundation and erosion.

The Flood Hazard Area Overlay applies to federally mapped Special Flood Hazard Areas. The regulations are intended to reduce loss of life and property, protect floodplain functions, reduce public costs associated with flooding and maintain eligibility for federal flood insurance, disaster recovery, and hazard mitigation funding.

The River Corridor Overlay addresses erosion hazards associated with rivers and streams. River corridors provide space for channels to adjust over time, maintain or reestablish access to floodplains, and reduce erosion hazards through natural processes. Hardwick's regulations seek to avoid new encroachments within these areas and reduce erosion-related damage to existing development.

Future development and redevelopment within these areas should reduce exposure to flood and erosion hazards, protect river and floodplain functions and increase the long-term resilience of existing developed areas.

Source Protection Areas

Designated Source Protection Areas protect Hardwick's public and community drinking-water supplies. The Unified Development Bylaws restrict activities within these areas that could create a risk of groundwater contamination and require development to be managed in accordance with the applicable source protection plan. Three areas have been identified as regions that provide water for public wells, including Hardwick's well on Wolcott Street, East Hardwick's well on Ward Hill, and Greensboro Bend's well in the northeast corner of town.

Timing and Intensity of Growth

Hardwick anticipates that more intensive development will occur primarily within and around its village centers and in areas designated for commercial and industrial activity, particularly where existing infrastructure can support it. Lower-density development is appropriate in rural areas where municipal infrastructure is limited, while the Forest Reserve District is intended to

remain sparsely developed. The Town will periodically review its development regulations and infrastructure investments to ensure they continue to support this land use pattern.

Goals, Policies, and Recommendations

GOAL

To guide growth and development in a manner that strengthens Hardwick's village centers and established neighborhoods, provides opportunities for housing and economic activity, makes efficient use of existing infrastructure, and maintains the rural, agricultural, forested and natural lands that characterize the community.

POLICIES

- The Town encourages the clustering and/or siting of development to replicate traditional patterns of development, to protect rural and scenic character, and to maintain contiguous tracts of resources and open land.
- The Town supports agriculture, forestry, working lands, large forest blocks, wildlife habitat connections and compatible lower-density development within rural areas.
- The Town encourages higher density residential developments to be located near municipal infrastructure and transportation networks.
- The Town supports land use decisions that account for flood and erosion hazards, river corridors, wetlands, source protection areas, steep slopes, forest blocks, wildlife habitat and habitat connections and other natural and physical constraints

Actions & Recommendations for Implementation

- Review and update the Unified Development Bylaws as needed to remain consistent with this Plan, State law, and community needs.
- Evaluate whether the Town's zoning districts are effectively supporting housing and appropriate development within and near the village centers.
- Encourage reuse, infill, and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties in areas already served by infrastructure.
- Maintain and update flood hazard, river corridor, and source protection regulations as new information and best available data become available.
- Coordinate land use planning with municipal infrastructure, housing, transportation, hazard mitigation, natural resource and capital planning, and with regional and State land use mapping and Tier 1A and Tier 1B processes.

COMMUNITY THEMES

AFFORDABILITY

A range of housing types and opportunities for infill and redevelopment can help support housing choices at different price points.

RESILIENCE

Land use decisions can reduce future risk by accounting for flood and erosion hazards, river corridors, wetlands, source protection areas, and other physical constraints.

WALKABILITY & CONNECTIVITY

Compact development within and around village centers can improve connections between neighborhoods, businesses, community facilities, and recreation.

COMMUNITY WELLNESS

None?

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Hardwick's traditional settlement pattern of compact village centers surrounded by rural, agricultural, and forest lands is an important part of the community's identity.