

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

The land use pattern of any community is typically the result of several influences: physical constraints of the land, historical development patterns, transportation routes, economic influences, and personal preferences. This pattern of uses and development give a community character and serve as the foundation for future development.

Current land use pattern

The development pattern of Hardwick is typical of the communities throughout northern Vermont. This pattern is one of traditional New England settlement 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 the activity centers of the community with community services, commercial and industrial activity, and higher density residential development. Both of these areas were historically mill sites and both benefited by having direct access to the railroad. These historic centers also maintain much of their historic character with many older buildings having been renovated. This rich concentration of historic resources is reflected in the fact that five historic districts have been designated within the Town of Hardwick.

The Lamoille River enters the town in the northeast and exits in the southwest. In addition to the productive soils found in the flood plains along the bottom, the valley is also home to important transportation corridors providing access to the community via state highways.

Areas such as Bunker Hill, Bridgman Hill, Center Road, Hopkins Hill, Hardwick Street, and Ward Hill all have their own concentrations of agricultural land uses. Low density scattered residential development exists throughout these areas with densities highest closer to village centers. The community's higher elevations and steep slopes are typically forested - much of which is covered with mixed hardwoods, with stands of softwood dominating the highest ground. Most of this forestland is in medium sized blocks from 100 to 500 acres and serve as private woodlots with some commercial harvesting. In addition to wildlife, recreational and economic benefits, these forestlands provide the backdrop for the seasonal display of color that dominates the landscape every fall.

The overall character of Hardwick is that of an economically diverse community. Residents of Hardwick take pride in their heritage of traditional Vermont skills such as farming while also valuing and protecting the scenic beauty of the area hillsides and waterways, areas which most citizens utilize for their recreational activities. Hardwick is known for its "neighbor helping neighbor" philosophy and its intergenerational collaboration has created a network of knowledge sharing throughout the community. Hardwick serves as the center of education and culture for the area, as witnessed by the presence of Hazen Union High School, the Jeudevine Memorial library, and The Hardwick Town House.

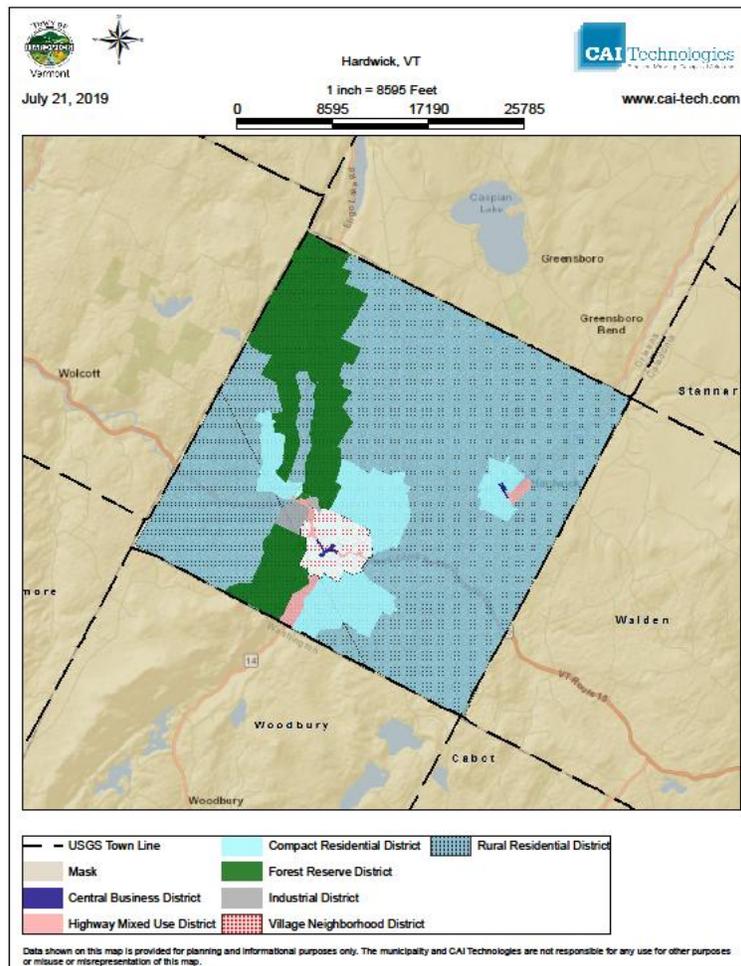
It is this pattern of land use activity, in combination with contrasting open and forested land, that provides the essential character of Hardwick and it is this pattern and character of development that the community wishes to maintain into the future.

Future land use districts

The Town of Hardwick is divided into seven districts with two overlay districts. These districts include: Central Business District, Village Neighborhood, Highway Mixed Use, Compact Residential, Industrial, Rural Residential, and Forest Reserve, as well as the two overlay districts of Flood Hazard Area and Wellhead Protection Area. The plan attempts to classify the town into various districts based on current land uses and conversations with neighbors and residents.

Central Business District

The Character of the Central Business Districts in Hardwick and East Hardwick differ greatly. East Hardwick has seen a decline in its business activity since the end of the 19th century and its Central Business District, spread along both sides of Main Street, is almost exclusively comprised of single and multi-family residences. On the other hand, Hardwick Village's Central Business District which lies along the Lamoille River and the intersections of State Highway 14 and 15 remained active throughout the 20th century and has experienced



revitalization in the 21st, thanks in part to the local foods movement. This preference for local/Vermont owned businesses has made Hardwick the area's Market Destination for both commerce and entertainment. Much of what has been achieved is due to the Hardwick's success

in attracting grant funds from outside institutions and much more remains to be done to maximize the benefits of the Central Business District's interrelationship of the Lamoille River, community space, and businesses in this walkable downtown.

Purpose. The Central Business District is intended to support a compact mix of commercial, professional, civic, and residential uses in Hardwick's traditional downtown in a manner that maintains and enhances the area's historic character and economic vitality.

Present Land Uses. This area already supports the mix of uses desired in the plan. High density residential, commercial, and civic uses are common throughout the area.

Future Land Uses. The district should continue to be used as described above. One issue with future land use in this district lies with vacancies in a couple of older buildings. Though few, these buildings are in conspicuous locations which challenge the vibrancy of the area. Continued development of new shops and restaurants will enhance the appeal of the area.

Village Neighborhood

The Character of the Village Neighborhood District is best described as residential homes that represent a significant historical architectural resource. The district is very walkable in that its streets have low traffic volumes and that it lies adjacent to the Central Business District and the surrounding wooded hillsides.

- **Purpose.** This district is intended to provide for high density residential development and appropriate non-residential uses in existing neighborhoods located close to Hardwick's traditional downtown in a manner that maintains historic settlement patterns and streetscapes.
- **Present Land Uses.** This area is currently used for residential, commercial, and public uses (including Hazen Union and Hardwick Health Center). Most of these buildings continue to have significant historic value.
- **Future Land Uses.** The district should continue to be used as described above. Any development or redevelopment in this area should respect the historic character of the neighborhood in which it is located. Improvements in pedestrian infrastructure would help connect this area to the Central Business District and Highway Mixed Use District.

Highway Mixed Use District

The Character of the Highway Mixed Use District is by its very nature varied. It serves as an important part of Hardwick's identity as a Market Destination and as a location for light industry, a well-recognized anchor to future economic growth.

Purpose. The Highway Mixed Use District is proposed to allow automobile-oriented businesses and other compatible uses along major travel corridors contiguous to the historic village centers, while maintaining a safe efficient traffic flow.

- **Present Land Uses.** This area already supports a mix of uses including commercial, light industrial and residential uses.
- **Future Land Uses.** The district should continue to be used as described above. A more balanced mix of residential and other uses would improve the vibrancy of the area. Improved pedestrian networks would help connect these areas to the Village Neighborhood areas and Central Business District.

Compact Residential

The Character of the Compact Residential District is best described as residential homes that represent a significant historical architectural resource. The districts are very walkable in that their streets have low traffic volumes and that they lie adjacent to the recreational resources of the surrounding wooded hillsides

- Purpose. The purpose of the Compact Residential District is to provide moderate to high density residential development and appropriate non-residential uses in predominantly built-up areas within and surrounding the town's 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 district should continue to be used as described above. This area is expected to accommodate much of the future residential growth in the Town of Hardwick. The issues with future land use in this district lie with the amount and scale of development. Development must respect the environmental and physical constraints that exist on the site including slopes, soils, and wildlife habitat.

Industrial

The Character of the Industrial District is one of light industry and small manufacturing. Residents of Hardwick recognize that these businesses provide the basis for future economic growth, but state a preference for local/Vermont owned businesses in the belief that they often contribute much more to the community than out-of-state corporate businesses do. Many businesses in the Industrial District were created thanks to Hardwick's success in attracting grant and investment start-up funding.

- Purpose. The Industrial District is intended to encourage a variety of industrial, manufacturing, and appropriate commercial uses while protecting such uses from incompatible residential uses in locations served by municipal water and sewer and good highway access
- Present Land Uses. This area is exclusively industrial.
- Future Land Uses. The district should continue to be used as described above.

Rural Residential

The Character of the Rural Residential District is one that balances excellent recreational resources, historic architectural resources, and the revitalized agricultural economy comprised of traditional farming and value-added agri-business.

- Purpose. The purpose of the Rural Residential District is to promote agriculture, forestry and low to moderate density residential development in areas well served by public roads but lacking municipal water and sewer. To ensure the protection of environmental resources and maintaining open space, the clustering of new development is strongly encouraged.
- Present Land Uses. Due to the size and extent of this district, many land uses exist within its borders. This area is currently used for agriculture, forestry, and earth extraction but also residential and commercial uses. Most developed lands are within a few hundred feet of the existing road network.

- Future Land Uses. The district should continue to be used as described above. The issues with future land use in this district lie with the amount and scale of development. Development must respect the environmental and physical constraints that exist on the site including slopes, soils, and wildlife habitat. Preservation of open space for continued use in forestry and agriculture is desired as well.

Forest Reserve

The Character of the Forest Reserve is self-evident. This area is important as forest blocks and habitat connectors.

- Purpose. The purpose of the Forest Reserve District is to protect significant forest resources and limit development to low 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. This area is currently used for forestry and wildlife habitat. A limited amount of agriculture and residential development also exists.
- Future Land Uses. The district should continue to be used for forestry and wildlife habitat as well as limited agriculture and residential development.

Overlay Districts

Overlay districts include the following:

- Flood Hazard District. This area was defined by FEMA in order to protect the safety and welfare of residents and to prevent public and private economic losses resulting from floods.
- Wellhead Protection District. 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

Historically, Hardwick has had a slow, steady growth rate which has enhanced the stability of the community. Future development - both residential and non-residential - should be encouraged to continue in a similar manner.

Implementing the land use plan

The two most common land use planning tools used in Vermont are zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations. Both of these are effective tools to implement many of the goals and objectives of land use plans. Hardwick has adopted both of these tools and combined them into a Unified Development Bylaw.

Hardwick's zoning was originally adopted in 1973. The bylaws have amended four times since 2002 to bring them up to date with changing state laws. Permit activity has been fairly steady over the past decade. The number of permits issued annually is generally between 40 and 50 and the number of new houses is about 5 - 7.

Goals, Policies, and Recommendations

GOAL

- Maintain Hardwick's present patterns of land use: dense residential and commercial uses concentrated in Hardwick village and East Hardwick and sparsely developed agricultural and forest land outside these village centers, with a rural and natural skyline.

POLICIES

- The clustering and/or siting of development is encouraged in order to replicate traditional patterns of development, to protect rural and scenic character, and to maintain contiguous tracts of resources and open land.
- The Flood Hazard district is intended to protect life and property within federally designated flood hazard areas. New construction should not occur within these areas and existing buildings should be flood proofed.
- Higher density residential developments should be located closer to major roadways and existing villages to improve emergency service response.
- Mixed-use developments are encouraged to allow commercial, business, and residential uses to be located near each other.
- The scale of new construction and buildings should be in keeping with the development patterns of the immediate surrounding areas.
- Development in areas that require an extension of services, such as sidewalks, electricity, or water, should be discouraged.
- Abandoned, unsafe and unsanitary lots should be remediated in order to improve public safety and facilitate adaptive reuse.
- When subdividing existing lots or building new structures, it is important to maintain the character of residential areas with regards to historic layout and green space.