RUPERT TOWN PLAN

Draft September 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This plan was prepared by the Rupert Planning Commission for the Town of Rupert, Vermont, with the assistance of Burnt Rock Inc. Associates in Community Planning. Work on the plan was funded through a Municipal Planning Grant awarded to the town by the Vermont Department of Housing & Community Affairs. The Bennington County Regional Commission also supplied maps and information used in plan preparation.

The Planning Commission would like to thank all Rupert residents who took time out of your busy schedules to complete our Community Survey, and to attend public forums, meetings and hearings held in association with the plan development. We would also like to thank our Town Clerk, Andrea Lenhardt, the Rupert Selectboard, and other community members who contributed time and information needed to complete this project.

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Note: The maps and figures included in this plan were prepared using existing coverages available from the Vermont Center for Geographic Information, and are intended for illustrative purposes only. For more detailed information, please consult maps prepared for the town by the Bennington County Regional Commission which are available at the Rupert Town Office.

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Introduction: The Municipal Plan

This municipal plan for the Town of Rupert is a comprehensive update of our previous town plan, which was initially adopted in 1987 and amended through 2003.

Vermont municipalities are not required to plan but, if they do, the plan, and the planning process, must meet basic requirements found in the Vermont Planning and Development Act (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117) – often referred to as "Chapter 117" or simply "the Act." These state statutes require that, for a local plan to remain in effect, it must be updated and readopted by the town every five years. This process ensures that the plan, and the information on which it's based, remain current, relevant and useful to the community.

This plan is organized in two volumes: Volume I provides a general overview of issues currently facing Rupert, and related community goals, policies and objectives to address these issues. Volume II includes a community profile of relevant data, maps and other supporting documentation.

Why Plan?

- Inventory town resources and assets
- Identify shared goals and objectives
- Provide the basis for:
  - Land use and development regulations
  - Land conservation programs
  - Growth management programs
  - Capital budgeting and financing
  - State development review (e.g., Act 250)

Our present, their future…

Purpose

The town plan is intended to define a shared vision for the future of our community based on:

- historical patterns of development,
- local and regional trends and, most importantly,
- input from Rupert residents and property owners on how to accommodate future growth and development, while preserving those characteristics that make our town a desirable place to live.

The town plan serves as a both a guide to the community, and a blueprint for its development over the next five years and into the foreseeable future.

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Under Chapter 117 – and other state funding and permitting programs – an updated town plan is also required to:

- adopt and amend local land use regulations,
- serve as the basis for local land conservation, housing, development and growth management programs, and to
- define municipal interests and policies in state regulatory proceedings, including Act 250 and Public Utility Commission (Section 248) hearings.

Public Process

The Rupert Planning Commission has the responsibility, under Chapter 117, of updating the town plan. Developing a plan that represents the interests of the community at large can be a daunting task for a small group of volunteers. In 2004 the Planning Commission obtained a municipal planning grant from the state to help fund work on the update – including some professional technical assistance, and efforts to involve local residents in the planning process.

The Planning Commission conducted a public survey in August 2004 that was mailed out to all Rupert households and property owners. Of the 518 surveys mailed, 106 were returned for an overall response rate of 20%. Relevant survey results are highlighted in Volume I. Complete survey results are included in Volume II.

Survey findings were presented at a well-attended public forum, held on October 28th, 2004 at the Rupert Fire Department Community Center. Forum participants generally confirmed survey results, and also identified other potential issues to be addressed in the updated plan. A summary of the public forum is also included in Volume II.

Information received from these outreach efforts was used to draft the accompanying vision statement, and to develop related plan goals, policies and objectives.

☙ Our Vision for Rupert ❧

Rupert has been and, through the foreseeable future, should remain a rural Vermont town that:

- ❧ *Cares for the health, safety, and welfare of all of our residents.*
- ❧ *Celebrates small town life.*
- ❧ *Cherishes and strives for a strong sense of community.*
- ❧ *Respects our past while planning for our future.*
- ❧ *Preserves our rural character of small hamlets surrounded by open countryside.*
- ❧ *Achieves the best possible quality of environment for present and future generations.*
- ❧ *Protects the town's important natural, cultural, and scenic resources from incompatible development.*
- ❧ *Retains a working landscape of farm and forest land.*
- ❧ *Provides for the basic needs of our residents – for housing, education, employment, recreation and access to goods and services.*
- ❧ *Promotes energy conservation and the development and sustainable use of renewable energy resources.*
- ❧ *Allows for compatible growth and development, in physically suitable locations that are consistent with traditional settlement patterns, and are served by existing or planned roads, infrastructure, utilities, facilities and services.*
- ❧ *Strives for efficient and cost effective local government.*
- ❧ *Ensures that the rate of growth and development does not exceed the town's ability to provide facilities and services, nor overly burden local taxpayers.*

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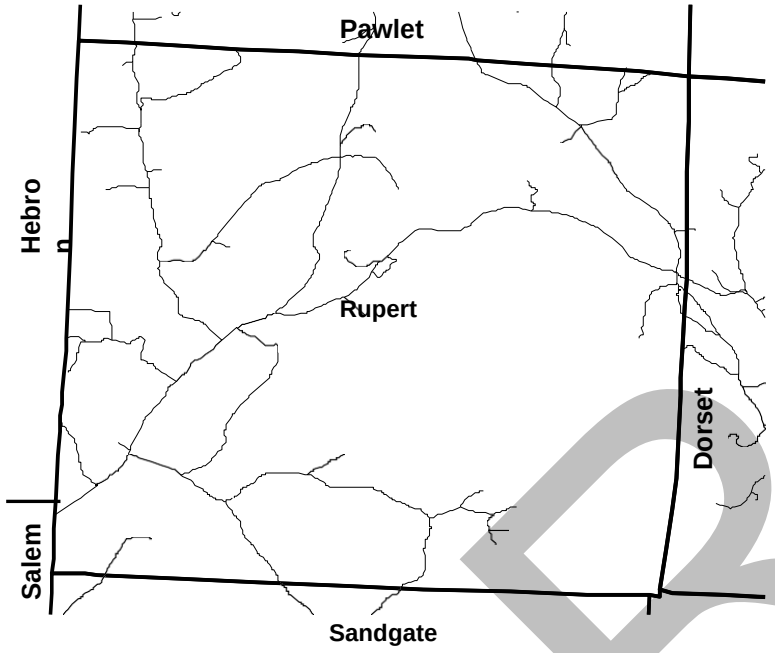
Regional Context

Rupert is located in the northwest corner of Bennington County, on the Vermont-New York line. Our town is bordered by Dorset to the west, Sandgate to the south, and Pawlet (in Rutland County) to the north. Neighbors to the west include the towns of Hebron and Salem, NY.



The Planning Commission, in preparing this plan, recognized that Rupert does not exist in isolation, but functions within a larger region that extends beyond Bennington County and across the Vermont border into New York.

While Rupert is unique, we have much in common with our neighbors. We're connected by a shared history, by family, community and economic ties, by local road and communication networks, and by development trends that are affecting the entire region.

As part of the plan update, adopted plans for neighboring communities and the Bennington County Regional Commission were reviewed, and no inconsistencies in plan goals, policies and objectives were noted. Rupert will continue to participate in coordinated local and regional planning efforts through the Bennington County Regional Commission and other regional groups as appropriate.

Planning Goals:

- ***To maintain a coordinated and comprehensive municipal planning program.***
- ***To seek the participation of local residents and property owners in an ongoing planning process, including plan implementation.***
- ***To consider the use of local resources and consequences of growth and development on the community, the region, and the state.***

Planning Policies:

1. The Rupert Planning Commission, appointed by the Selectboard, will be responsible for overseeing local planning initiatives.

2. The Planning Commission will provide opportunities for Rupert residents and property owners to participate in local planning efforts through open meetings, public forums and hearings, and an annual report to the community.

3. Rupert will actively participate in coordinated, regional planning efforts through its appointed representatives to the Bennington County Regional Commission and other regional groups.

4. All proposed development, plans, and public policies that could affect the Town of Rupert should be reviewed for conformance with the Rupert Town Plan

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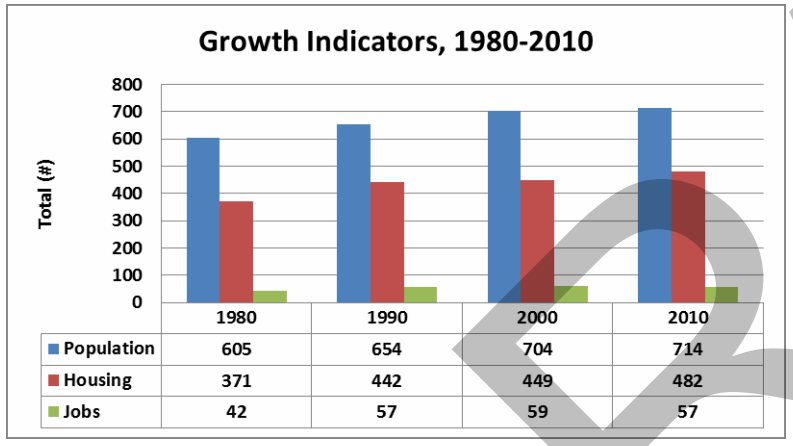
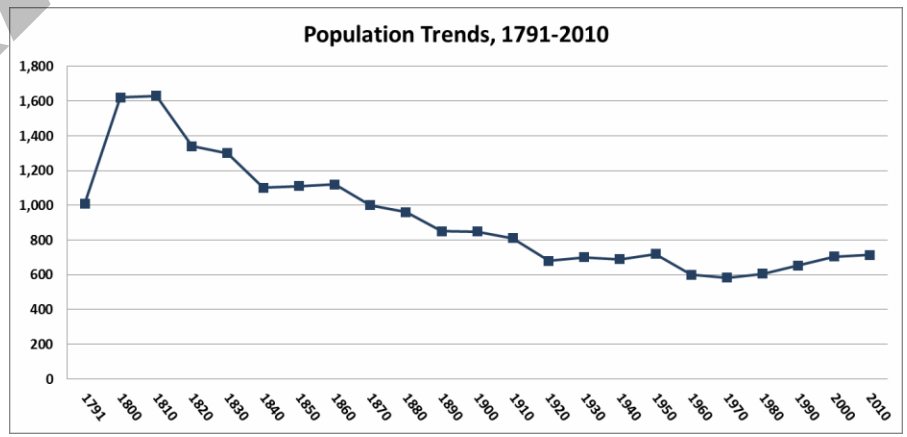
Our Community:
Population, Housing & Economy

Rupert, by most measures, is a growing community, and with this growth comes change. The current rate of growth in town is manageable, given the resources available locally to support it. There's concern, however, that, without some planning and preparation, future development could adversely affect the town. This chapter focuses on our community – our local population, housing and economy – and recent development trends that may both benefit and impact Rupert over the next decade.



Population

As noted in the last chapter on Rupert's historical development, when the U.S. Census was first taken in 1791, the town's population numbered over just 1,000 – more people than live in town today. It then jumped dramatically over the next twenty years, reaching its historic peak of 1,630 around 1810. During this period Rupert was one of Vermont's largest towns – a reflection of the region's importance as a southern gateway for early state settlement. After 1810 the local population went into a steady decline as people moved on – by 1900, Rupert had lost nearly half its residents. This decline continued through much of the 20th century, reaching a record low of 582 residents in 1970.



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Population Trends

The town's year-round population began to grow again during the 1970s, following statewide trends, as Rupert was discovered by people moving to Vermont. The town's population has continued to increase, on average by 36 persons per decade, since then. Most of this growth has been the result of in-migration – people moving to town – rather than a natural increase in the population.

As of the 2010 US Census, Rupert's year-round population numbered 714 persons – ten more than reported in the 2000 Census. During the 2000s, the number of deaths in town (51) exceeded the number of births (45), resulting in a small natural population decline (-6) (Vermont Dept. of Health, Vital Statistics). This was apparently offset, however, by 16 new residents moving into town.

Population Trends: 1990-2010

	1990	2000	2010	20-Yr Change	
				(#)	(%)
Rupert	654	704	714	60	9.2
County	35,845	36,944	37,125	1,280	3.6
% County	1.8	1.9	1.9	4.7	---

Source: U.S. Census.

During the 1990s, Rupert's year-round population grew at a faster rate (7.6%) than the county population (3.1%), but not as fast as the population of many of its neighbors or the state. During the 2000s, the town's rate of population growth fell (to 1.4%), but continued to exceed that of the county (0.5%). Recent census data indicate that:

- Local population growth has slowed significantly, reflecting both a natural decline and lower in-migration rates.
- Rupert has a relatively small year-round population – ranking 11th of 17 towns in Bennington County. Of its immediate neighbors, only Sandgate has fewer year-round residents.
- The town's population makes up around 2% of the county total.
- Rupert remains a very rural, sparsely populated – in 2010 the town's population density averaged 16.2 persons per square mile, compared with an average county density of 55.1 persons per square mile.

Seasonal Population. Rupert's seasonal population is more difficult to estimate but, based on the number of seasonal or vacation homes in town, there may be an additional 200 to 300 seasonal residents in town at any given time, not including transient visitors and guests. The town's seasonal population supports local businesses, contributes to the tax base, and does not have much impact on municipal facilities and services. A substantial increase in the seasonal population (e.g., from the conversion of year-round homes, or more vacation home development) could result in more traffic, affect the local housing market, and alter the character of the community.

Population Projections

Population projections are always suspect, especially given the town's small population base. Following a 20-year trend, Rupert's year-round population would reach 750 by 2020; however current state population projections for the town reflect a lower rate of anticipated growth over the next 10 to 20 years, given the region's aging population (VT ACCD, 2013). State projections include two possible migration scenarios – a high scenario (based on higher 1990 in-migration rates) and a low scenario (based on lower 2000 rates). Under the low migration scenario, Rupert's year-round resident population is expected to decline slightly over the next 10 to 20 years.

Population Projections: 2010–2030

	2010	2020	2030	% Change	
				2010-20	2020-30
High Migration	714	734	735	2.8	0.1
Low Migration	714	711	688	-0.4	-3.2

Source: Vermont Population Projections–2010-2030; VT ACCD (2013).

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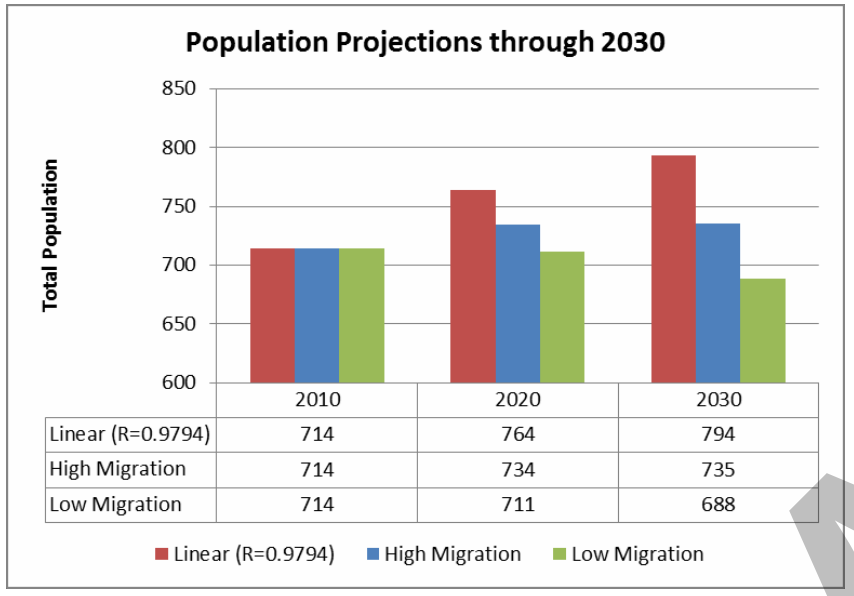

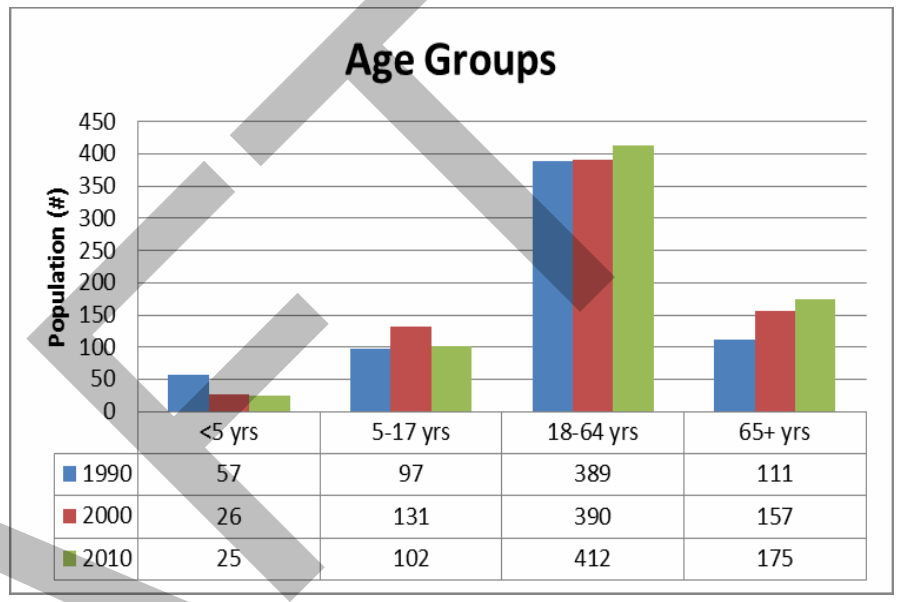

The town's estimated population in 2011 was 711 (US Census Bureau), suggesting a slight population decline.

Population Characteristics

Age Groups. Part of this anticipated decline is due to the fact that Rupert's population is aging, mirroring that of the region and state. Between 2000 and 2010:

- the number of children less than 18 years of age decreased by 22%,
- the local "working age" population, including residents 18 to 64 years old, increased by nearly 6%, and
- the number of residents 65 years of age or older – the town's "senior" or elderly population – increased by nearly 12%.

The median age of all town residents in 2010 was 48.5 years, up from 43.6 years in 2000. The town's senior population – including baby boomers now entering their retirement years – will continue to make up an increasingly larger share of the local population in the coming decade.

Gender. There has also been a gender shift in recent years. In 2000, women made up more than half (nearly 53%) of the town's population, but by 2010 their share had dropped to 48%. This has included a decrease in the number of women in their childbearing years (15-44 years).

For planning purposes, current demographic trends indicate that Rupert's year-round population is aging, and will not increase significantly in the coming decade. It may even decline unless new residents, including new families with children, move to town. Consideration should be given to the impact these trends will have on the local school system, as well as the housing and care needs of the town's growing senior population – many of whom will choose to age in place, if supporting services are available.

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The following information about the town's population– based on American Community Survey estimates for Rupert issued by the US Census Bureau (2007-11) – is the best available for local planning purposes, but should be considered with caution.[1]

Educational Attainment. Most Rupert residents over the age of 25 (an estimated 90%) are high school graduates – about the same percentage as that reported for the county (89.8%) and state (91.0%). A relatively higher percentage of local residents (38%), however, also had four-year college degrees – compared with 32% of county 34% of state residents.

Employment. As reported in 2011, an estimated **3**33 Rupert residents, representing 48% of the town's population aged 16 years or older, made up the local labor force. Of these 28 (8.4%) were unemployed – a higher rate than that reported for the state (6.3%) and county (6.7%). This is likely due to the general economic downturn associated with the "Great Recession" beginning in 2008, Rupert's rural economy, and its distance from larger, regional employment centers. A much higher percentage of local workers –nearly 27% – are reportedly self-employed, compared to 10% of state and 13% of county workers.

Both parents work in an estimated 53% of local families with school-aged children, and 15% with pre-schoolers (under six years) – suggesting an ongoing, though potentially declining need for local day care services, pre-school and after school programs.

Income Levels. Despite a higher reported unemployment rate, **l**ocal income levels – including estimated per capita, and average (mean) family and household incomes – have generally kept pace with those reported for the county and state:

Relative Income Levels, 2011			
	Rupert	**County**	**State**
Per Capita	$30,778	$27,989	$28,376
Family (mean)	$79,193	$80,030	$81,259
Family (median)	$44,038	$61,428	$66,340
Household (mean)	$68,712	$65,831	$68,098
Household (median)	$38,944	$48,083	$53,422
Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2007-11).			

Estimated median family and household incomes, however, are lower than those reported for the county and state – indicating that, though some local residents have high incomes, for a majority of Rupert families and households, incomes are much less than reported averages. In 2011, an estimated 58% of local families and 64% of local households had incomes of less than $50,000 a year. With regard to sources of income, it was estimated in 2011 (ACS 2007-11) that:

- 67% of local households had some earned income,
- 52% received social security benefits,
- 18% received retirement benefits, and
- 11% had received food stamp/SNAP benefits within the past year.

This suggests that a majority of local households are dependent on fixed retirement income, including social security, in addition to or in lieu of other sources of earned income – a reflection of the town's older population. That said, reported poverty rates are highest for local families with children, including an estimated local child poverty rate of 30% – more than twice that of the state (but with a reported margin of error of ±24%).

Estimated Poverty Rates, 2011*			
	Rupert	**County**	**State**
Individuals	11.8%	12.3%	11.3%
Seniors (65+ years	3.8%	5.3%	7.5%
Children (<18 years)	30.3%	20.7%	13.9%
Families	6.4%	9.0%	7.1%
Families w/ Children (<18 years)	19.4%	17.6%	12.3%
** Based on incomes reported for the previous twelve months.* Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2007-11).			

[1] More detailed information regarding Rupert's population is no longer collected by the US Census Bureau every ten years. This instead has been replaced by the Bureau's "American Community Survey" (ACS) which, at the town level, includes estimates that are updated each year based on sample data from the previous five years (5-year estimates). As such, these estimates cannot be directly compared to those included in the previous town plan, nor to state or regional estimates collected over shorter intervals. Because of the small sample size, local ACS estimates also generally have very high reported margins of error. Information regarding disability status included in the previous plan is no longer reported at the town level.

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Housing

Shelter is a basic necessity of life – all Rupert residents, present and future, deserve housing that's safe, adequate, and affordable. For most of us who live in town, the availability and cost of housing are not pressing issues; but for those entering the housing market, or for local residents with special or changing housing needs, finding a place to live in the area can be difficult. Finding housing that is affordable can be even more challenging.

A diverse housing stock supports a diverse community – by providing homes for families and individuals in various stages of life, including residents who work in town, support community organizations and local businesses, send children to school, and want to "age in place." Housing represents a major investment for many Rupert residents. For some, however, household incomes have not been keeping up with rising housing costs.

Housing also represents an important community investment. Well constructed and maintained homes contribute much to the local tax base, the town's historic character, and our shared sense of community. On the other hand, housing that is poorly located, constructed, and maintained can harm the local environment, overburden public services and infrastructure, reduce property values, increase household expenses, and result in unsafe housing conditions.

Given that Rupert is a very rural community without any centralized infrastructure, housing options are necessarily limited. The town is committed to expanding the housing options available locally, in keeping with its rural context and character. Identifying and addressing local housing needs requires a more careful look at changing households, existing housing conditions and regional market trends.

Households

The way in which the town's population is organized into households – which include all related or unrelated individuals living together under one roof – affects the demand for housing. The number of households in Rupert has increased over the years as the town's population has grown. There were 309 households in 2010, up from 295 in 2000 – an increase of 14 households over 10 years (compared to 32 new households established in the previous decade).

Rupert Households: 2000–2010				
	Households (#)		Change	
	2000	2010	(#)	(%)
Total Households	295	309	14	4.7
Family	206	217	11	5.3
Married w/Children	72	64	-8	-11.1
Non-family	89	92	3	3.4
Living Alone	72	78	6	8.3
65+ living alone	42	32	-10	-23.8
Avg. Household Size	2.39	2.30	-0.09	-3.8
Source: US Census.				

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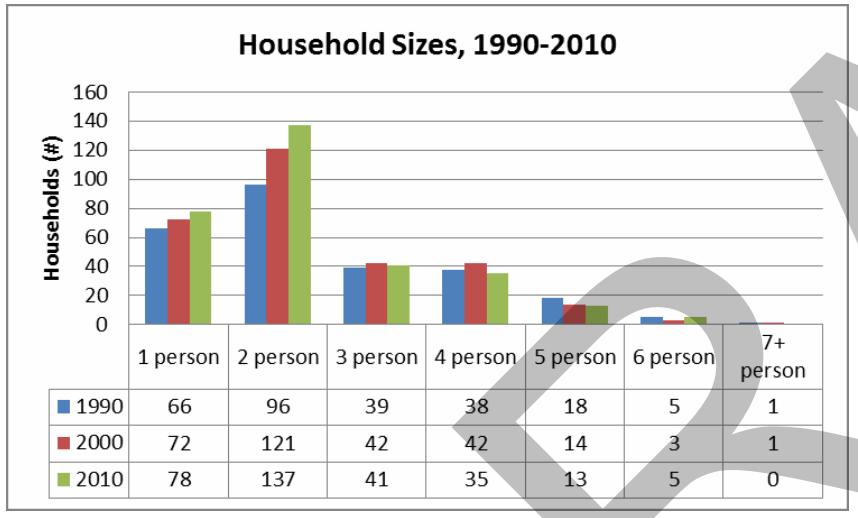
The number of households in town continues to grow at a faster rate (4.7%) than the local population (1.4%) – due in large part to changing household characteristics, including an increase in the number of smaller households. Rupert's households have continued to shrink in size, following regional and statewide trends. Between 2000 and 2010 the number of 1- and 2-person households in town increased by 11%, while the number of 3- and 4-person households decreased by 9.5%. This reflects underlying trends, including an aging population, fewer married couples with children, and an increase in the number of nonfamily households – including those living alone.



	1 person	2 person	3 person	4 person	5 person	6 person	7+ person
1990	66	96	39	38	18	5	1
2000	72	121	42	42	14	3	1
2010	78	137	41	35	13	5	0

In 2010, 70% of Rupert households were family households whose members were related by blood, marriage or adoption. However "traditional" family households – married couples with children – made up only 21% of the total, while nonfamily households comprised 30%. Most nonfamily households in Rupert (85%) were single persons living alone – of these, 41% were seniors (65 years and over).

Rupert's average household size in 2010 (2.3 persons) matched that of the county, but was slightly smaller than the state average (2.34) due to a higher percentage of older households, and relatively fewer households with children. Homeowner households in Rupert were, on average, a little larger (2.33) than renter households (2.13).

It's anticipated that households will continue to get smaller over the next decade as the local population gets older, resulting in more single and two-person "empty nester" and senior households. Changing household needs may, in turn, increase local and regional demand for smaller homes or apartments that require less maintenance – including accessory dwellings or "mother-in-law" apartments – as well as more retirement and assisted living housing. Regionally, there will also be increased demand for rental housing and starter homes – currently in short supply locally – as younger "millennials" enter the housing market.

As Rupert's population ages, it's also anticipated that many local residents will want to age in place – to remain in their homes and community – especially since there are currently few other housing options for seniors who would like to remain in town. This may increase the demand for local emergency and in-home care services, but it may also provide opportunities for home-sharing arrangements with those in need of affordable, rental housing.

Housing Trends

According to US Census data, by 2010 there were 482 housing units in Rupert, representing 3.1% of the county total. The number of dwellings in Rupert has increased steadily since the 1960s, though the rate of residential development has slowed in recent decades. The period of most rapid housing development occurred during the 1960s when, on average, 10 new units per year were added to the town's housing stock. Local housing development stalled during the 1990s, but picked again at the beginning of the last decade – before the 2008 financial collapse that made mortgage financing difficult, affecting both national and local housing markets. The town's housing stock increased by 33 units (7.3%) between 2000 and 2010 – most of this growth occurring in the beginning of the decade, as documented in the previous plan.

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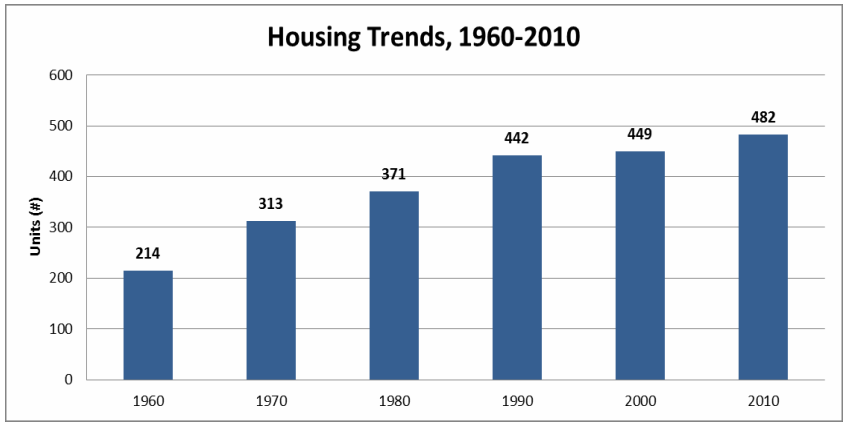

Housing growth continues to exceed local population and household growth, suggesting that second home development is driving the local housing market.

The current rate of local housing development – now averaging around three units per year – is enough to accommodate anticipated household growth through 2020; but given changing demographics– including smaller household sizes– without some community involvement, this may not result in the type of housing needed by local residents, nor housing that is attractive and affordable for first-time homebuyers, including new families. Local housing options for both seniors and young adults are limited.

Housing Characteristics

Type. The town's housing stock in 2010, compared with that of the county and state, included a smaller percentage of renter-occupied units (17.5%), but a much larger percentage of seasonal or vacation units (31%). ***Seasonal homes accounted for over half (52%) of the increase in local housing units during the 2000s***.

Rupert's housing stock is made up almost entirely of single family dwellings. According to 2011 American Community Survey estimates (2007-11), 99% of local units are single family dwellings (including mobile homes, which comprise around 5% of all units). The remaining 1% includes a few duplexes and small (3-4 unit) multifamily dwellings.

For purposes of E-911 coverage, 453 residential structures have been identified in town (BCRC, 2011), including:

- 356 single family dwellings,
- 71 seasonal single family dwellings,
- 21 mobile homes, and
- 5 other residential structures, including small a small number of duplexes and multifamily units.

Vacancy Rates. The local vacancy rate for owner-occupied housing increased slightly during the past 10 years – from 1.2% in 2000 to 1.9% in 2010. This low rate indicates favors a "seller's market" that will likely contribute to rising sale prices as the region and state recover from the recent economic downturn, and financing becomes more readily available. The 2010 vacancy rate for rental units was 1.8%, down appreciably from 8.3% in 2000. This suggests that there is now more demand for local rental housing and, as a result, less availability. At the time the 2010 Census was taken, there were five units for sale and only one for rent in town – providing for little turnover. Rupert's share of housing available for sale or rent represented less than 1% of the county total.

Condition. There is little information regarding the current condition of local housing. The last town-wide housing inventory, a windshield survey, was conducted by the Bennington County Regional Commission in 1996 in association with the preparation of a regional housing needs analysis. This has not since been updated. At the time the survey was conducted, around 14% of local homes showed some degree of structural deterioration; for around 10%, the degree of deterioration was significant.

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The condition of local housing reflects in part the age of the housing stock. Rupert is fortunate to have many fine, historic homes – an estimated 58% of local houses were built prior to 1960 and, as such, potentially qualify for historic designation (ACS 2007-11). Larger, older homes, however, can be difficult and costly to maintain. Maintenance may be deferred as other housing costs – mortgage, insurance, property tax, and heating costs – increase. Older homes may also have structural or other inherent problems, such as health hazards resulting from the presence of lead based paint (banned in 1978). In its 1996 assessment, the Bennington County Regional Commission estimated that, based on the age of the housing stock, lead paint could be present in up to 43% of the town's occupied units.

Census indicators suggest that local housing conditions have improved over the years. As of 2011, it was estimated that only 1.3% of the town's occupied housing units lacked complete plumbing and kitchen facilities, and there was no reported overcrowding (more than one occupant per room) (ACS 2007-11). The few "substandard" units in town are likely seasonal camps that are not designed or intended for year-round use.

Special Needs Housing. There are no elderly or publicly subsidized housing units in town, or other forms of group housing such as retirement, assisted living or residential care homes, to meet the housing needs of elderly, disabled, low income, or homeless residents. As a result local residents with special or changing needs must relocate to other communities. There also are no mobile home parks in town to provide another form of affordable homeownership.

Housing Affordability

Two factors determine housing affordability: the costs of housing, and the ability of a household to cover those costs. Housing is generally considered "affordable" if annual housing costs do not exceed 30% of gross annual household income. Annual housing costs for home-owners typically include mortgage, insurance, property taxes and, where applicable, condominium association fees. For renters, housing costs generally include rent and utilities, but may also include condo-minimum fees. For planning purposes, the relative affordability of housing is also determined in relation to median household income:

Housing Affordability			
	Rupert	County	Vermont
Median Household Income	$38,944	$48,083	$53,422
Median Value Owner-Occupied Units	$269,200	$204,800	$213,000
Median Monthly Mortgage	$1,188	$1,415	$1,516
Owner Cost Burden => 30% (% households)	35.8	33.8	33.1
Median Monthly Gross Rent	$1,051	$760	$843
Renter Cost Burden => 30% (% households)	63.0	52.2	51.9
Source: American Community Survey (2007-11) estimates, as reported each year for the previous year.			

Under applicable state definitions (24 V.S.A. § 4303), for planning and zoning purposes "affordable housing" is defined as housing that is affordable to households earning up to 80% of the county median income, as determined by the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and whose housing costs do not exceed 30% of household income.

As reported in 2011, Rupert's estimated household income ($38,944) was 19% lower than the county median, while reported housing values were 31% higher – however, only 51% of local homeowners carried a mortgage. For those with a mortgage, median monthly housing costs ($1,188) were less than that reported for the county ($1,415) or state ($1,516). Nevertheless, housing costs exceeded 30% of household income for nearly 36% of local homeowners (ACS, 2007-11).[2]

Rents in Rupert are generally higher than elsewhere in the county – reflecting limited rental availability, and the fact that most rental units in town are single family homes, rather than smaller apartments. As a result, in 2011 an estimated 63% of local renters were paying more than 30% of their household income in rent and related costs (ACS, 2007-11).

[2] It's important to note that resident-reported survey values represent personal estimates which do not necessarily reflect the current assessed or fair market value of dwellings.

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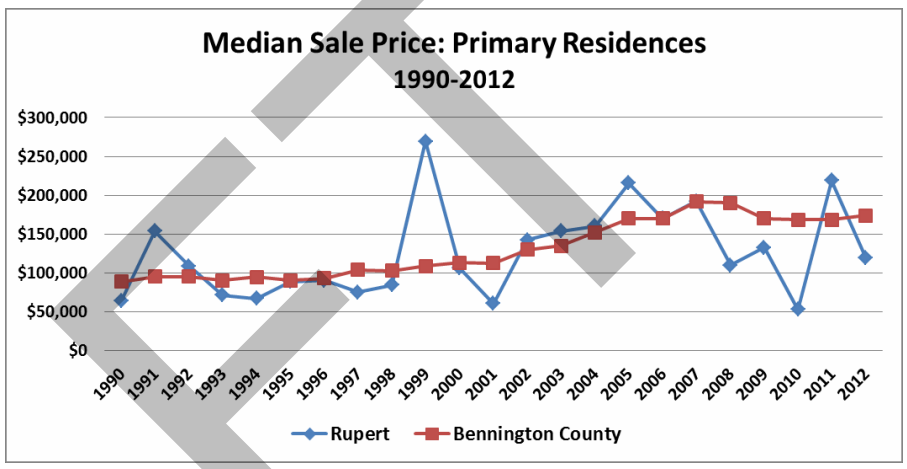
These estimates suggest that, in recent years, housing has become relatively more affordable for long-term homeowners, as mortgages are paid off, but less affordable for local renters and new homebuyers.

New definitions of housing affordability (e.g., the "H+T Affordability Index" and the federal "Location Affordability Index[3]), also add in a location factor – in these definitions estimated transportation costs associated with local commutes to work. Under new affordability definitions, housing and commuting costs combined should represent no more than 45% of total household income. By this measure, local housing is generally less affordable than housing located in the area's more urban employment centers. Under HUD's affordability index, housing and transportation costs in the Rupert area typically comprise around 63% of a house-hold's income – but may exceed 179% of household income for a single, low income worker. Relatively high commuting costs may also help explain the relatively large percentage of employed town residents (12%) who work at home (ACS, 2007-11).

The median sale price of primary residences in the Bennington region (including single family, mobile homes and condos) increased steadily through the 1990s, and continued to climb until the 2008 market crash. Bennington is one of five counties in the state that has since reported declines in the median sale price of year-round homes – though it appears from recent sales that the regional housing market is now recovering.

Local sale prices, though much more varied due to the limited number of sales (averaging around six per year since 2000), have tracked regional trends – also showing an overall decline since 2008. This suggests that Rupert's housing market continues to be tied to and affected by the regional (and national) housing market. The 2011 median sale price for a single family home in town, based on nine sales,



sales was $219,000 – only 1.6% higher than the median value reported in 2005, but 30% higher than the county median ($169,000).[4]

The 2011 median county household income, as estimated by HUD for a family of four, was $52,600 – enough to afford a home valued at around $209,000. More than half the houses recently sold in Rupert would be unaffordable at this income level. The "affordability gap" – the difference between the cost of an affordable home based on income, and the cost of local housing – is even larger for most Rupert households,

Homeownership: Affordability Gap (2011)

Income Measure	Income*	Can Afford (Max. Sale Price)	Affordability Gap**
Median Household Income (ACS 2007-11)	$38,944	$131,500	– $87,500
Median Family Income (HUD 2011/ County)	$61,700	$209,000	– $10,000
Median Adjusted Gross Income (VDT 2011)	$48,120	$163,500	– $55,500
Average Annual Wage (VDL 2011)	$34,740	$116,000	– $103,000

*As reported for Rupert; **Based on 2011 median sale price of $219,000 for a primary residence.
Source: Vermont Housing Data (www.housingdata.org)

[3] H+T Affordability Index (http://htaindex.cnt.org/); HUD Location Affordability Index (http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/sustainable_housing_communities/location_affordability).

[4] The average listed value of an R1 property (primary residence on 6 acres or less) in 2011 was $227,190, but this was 7% higher than the average fair market (equalized) value, as calculated by the state ($210,947). The average listed value of an R2 property (on more than six acres) was much higher – $479,985 (19% above the calculated fair market value) reflecting the added value of larger residential lots.

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based on median household incomes. And local homeownership is clearly out of reach for single-earner households receiving an average local wage.

Recent information regarding local rental rates is not available; however the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) develops annual estimates of fair market rent for the county, based on the size of a dwelling unit, which are used to administer a variety of affordable housing programs. In 2011, the estimated fair market rent in Bennington County was $904 for a two-bedroom unit, and $1,178 for a three-bedroom unit (e.g., a typical single family dwelling). The estimated median gross rent for Rupert rental units in 2011 was slightly lower, at $1,051 (ACS, 2007-11).

The "housing wage" necessary to afford a three-bedroom rental unit in Bennington County in 2011 was $22.65 an hour, or $47,112 per year (and $36,150 for a 2-bedroom unit). The average wage paid by Rupert employers in 2011 was $34,740. This suggests that it may be difficult for people employed locally to find affordable rental housing within reasonable commuting distance. For households on fixed incomes or households with only one wage earner, local market rate rental housing – if available – is not generally affordable.

It is clear that housing in Rupert is becoming less affordable for many local wage earners, renters and first-time homebuyers. This may limit the number of young adults and new families that can afford rent or buy a house in town, and the ability of current residents – especially those on fixed incomes – to find affordable housing alternative as their needs change.

Addressing Local Housing Needs

There has been concern locally, as raised in past public forums, that Rupert could experience the type of development pressure that has overtaken neighboring communities in the past – characterized by the construction of expensive homes on large lots in more remote upland areas. State rules governing on-site septic systems also allow for this type of development, which could further affect both the affordability of local housing, and the town's rural character. Current trends suggest that this may be happening to a very limited extent with regard to second home development.

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Housing options within a rural community such as Rupert are necessarily limited, but the town is committed to addressing local housing needs to the extent that available resources allow, and in keeping with its rural character.

The Bennington County Regional Commission, in its 2007 Regional Plan, identified several indicators or "targets" to guide communities in addressing their housing needs (based on the 1996 Housing Needs Assessment). These have not yet been updated, and should be re-evaluated at the regional level, but for Rupert included:

- 44 units of affordable housing to address existing household "income gaps" in the community,
- 115 units in need of structural improvements,
- 42 units in need of exterior rehabilitation, and
- 182 units in which lead based paint may be present.

2004 Rupert Survey: Housing

Of those responding to the 2004 Rupert Community Survey:

- 56% agreed that the town should promote more affordable housing, and
- 55% agreed that the town should promote elderly housing, but only
- 19% agreed that the town should promote multi-family housing.

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Target categories are not mutually exclusive – there may be significant overlap between them.[5] The BCRC has recommended that emphasis be placed on 1) upgrading existing housing to alleviate unsafe and unhealthy housing conditions, and 2) providing new housing to meet special housing needs, commensurate with the needs and scale of the community. While the BCRC encourages a regional approach to addressing housing needs through the formation of a "regional compact," it also acknowledges that each community is different and, as such, must adopt housing strategies that are appropriate to local conditions.

According to Rupert community survey results, a majority of those responding support the development of affordable and elderly housing in town – in appropriate locations near existing services and facilities – in or adjacent to the town's village centers. There is less support for the development of multifamily housing, which exists only on a very limited basis in Rupert, and for the development of housing in the town's more remote upland, agricultural and environmentally sensitive areas.

Under recent statutory changes that went into effect in 2004 for the "equal treatment of housing, local zoning regulations cannot have the effect of excluding from the municipality:

- accessory dwellings as permitted uses to single family dwellings,
- mobile homes (except as other types of housing are excluded),
- mobile home parks,
- group homes that serve up to eight residents, and
- multifamily dwellings.

The town's current zoning bylaw allows for the development of mobile home parks, residential care facilities, and the conversion of single to multi-family dwellings within designated zoning districts. The regulations were also updated, as adopted in 2011, to allow for accessory dwellings to single family dwellings, and for farm housing on operating farms. The regulations were also updated to include density bonuses of up to 50% for senior and affordable housing development within planned developments in village zoning districts.

The town should also seek the assistance of area nonprofit housing providers, such as Shires Housing (formerly the Regional Affordable Housing Corporation) serving the county, and Housing Vermont, to develop affordable housing locally – including affordable rental and elderly housing. This type of housing can and should be designed to reflect existing housing types in the community – e.g., to make use of or be constructed to resemble larger single family homes. Local support is typically needed to obtain financing for such projects, for example through the state's Community Development Block Grant Program, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund, and other granting or lending organizations.

Housing Goal:

To promote safe and affordable housing for all current and future Rupert residents.

1. Housing should be encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of local social and income groups – and especially for Rupert residents of low to moderate income.

2. Rupert will participate in regional efforts through the Bennington County Regional Commission to address affordable housing needs, and will plan to accommodate its share of regional housing growth. The rate of residential development, however, should not exceed that which can be supported by existing and planned municipal facilities and services.

3. New year-round housing should be safe, sanitary and located conveniently to employment and commercial centers that are served by existing and planned infrastructure. Adequate potable water and

[5] Targets also have not been updated based on more recent federal and state data.

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wastewater systems, pedestrian and vehicular access, and on-site parking shall be provided in accordance with applicable municipal and state regulations.

4. Weatherization of existing homes reduces living costs and improves energy efficiency and is supported by the town.

5. Sites for manufactured and two-family dwellings should be readily available in locations similar to those generally used for conventional single family dwellings. Manufactured housing will be excluded from zoning districts only upon the same terms and conditions that conventional housing is excluded.

6. Higher density residential development should be:
   - located within or adjacent to Rupert's existing hamlets,
   - be of a type and scale that is compatible with the historic character of these areas, and
   - be supported by adequate infrastructure.

7. Multifamily units also may be developed through the conversion of existing structures – including the adaptive reuse of historic structures in a manner that preserves their historic integrity and character.

8. Accessory dwellings to existing single family dwellings should be promoted to provide more affordable rental housing in town.

9. Residential uses should be incorporated within "mixed use" development – for example to allow a second story apartment over a commercial storefront.

10. New residential development and associated infrastructure should not be located where it will adversely affect Rupert's natural, cultural and scenic resources as defined in this plan (see Our Environment), including:
    - surface waters, wetlands, and associated setback and buffer areas,
    - flood and fluvial erosion hazard areas,
    - areas of steep slope (>20%),
    - primary agricultural soils and other productive farmland
    - remote upland areas, including prominent ridgelines and elevations above 2,500 feet,
    - critical wildlife habitat areas.

11. Clustered residential development should be allowed, subject to review as a planned residential development, in appropriate locations where adequate septic system capacity exists, in order to preserve open space, protect natural and scenic resources identified on or within the vicinity of the development site, and/or to reduce development costs to promote affordable housing development.

Housing Tasks:

1. **Review and update current zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure that they continue to meet state requirements for the equal treatment of housing**, and to remove any unnecessary regulatory barriers for the provision of affordable housing in appropriate locations in town [Planning Commission, Selectboard]. This should include:

   - Reviewing district uses, density and dimensional requirements as they pertain to residential development – e.g., allow for ¼ acre lots in village districts that share off–site septic systems.

   - Adding provisions for "mixed use" development that includes a residential component (e.g., to allow for an apartment above a store).

   - Adding provisions for the adaptive reuse of historic structures, to allow for the conversion of historic structures to residential uses, in a manner that maintains their historic integrity and character.

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- Allowing for the development of new multi-family units within designated zoning districts, with limits on the scale of development (e.g., the maximum number of units allowed per building or lot).

- Amending existing group home provisions to allow for up to eight residents per home as an allowed use of a single family dwelling.

- Providing incentives for affordable housing development, e.g. in the form of waivers or additional density bonuses.

- Keep provisions for the clustering of development through planned unit development.

- Streamlining development review procedures (under subdivision, site plan and/or conditional use review as applicable) to avoid lengthy, duplicative or unnecessary review processes.

- Review development proposals for how they may make use of renewable energy, such as through rooftop solar, geothermal heating, or wind energy facilities.

2. **Update state and national register listings for Rupert's historic homes** so that homeowners are eligible for any related tax credits that support maintenance and rehabilitation [Historical Society, Planning Commission].

3. **Participate in coordinated, regional, efforts to monitor and address housing needs** within the Bennington region through municipal representation on the Bennington County Regional Commission. Consider joining a regional housing compact once the commission's housing needs assessment, and associated community targets, are updated [Selectboard].

4. **Contact affordable housing providers regarding options and constraints for developing small affordable housing projects**, including an elderly housing project, within the community [Planning Commission, Selectboard].

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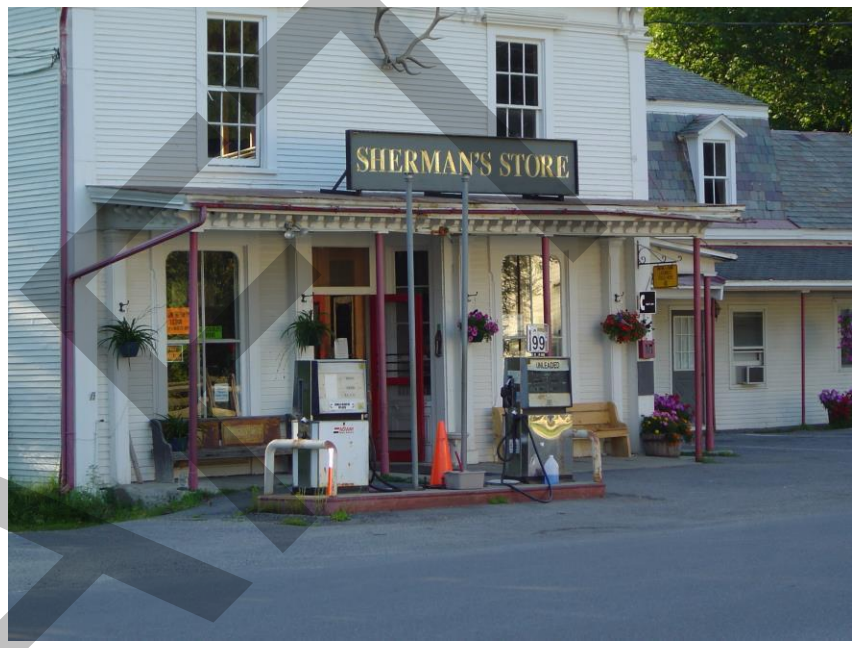
Local Economy

Rupert once supported a thriving, land-based economy that was tied to regional markets and supported the development of its four hamlets as small commercial centers. According to historical accounts, in the 1860s over 90% of local residents were farmers, but the town also hosted a tavern, four stores, three sawmills, a grist mill, three blacksmith shops, a wagon shop, a boot and shoe factory and a milliner's shop. In 1868 the J.H. Guild Company – a local enterprise of long standing – was established to produce salves, ointments, asthmatic compounds and cigarettes.

Over the next few years several cheese and butter plants opened to process local milk for shipment by rail to regional markets. While the railroad provided local producers access to larger markets, it also transported town residents westward in search of more lucrative opportunities. Rupert's population – and the local market – was by this time already in decline.

Today, Rupert is largely a bedroom community for people who live in town and work elsewhere. Local economic activities still include some traditional land-based production – farming, forestry, and slate quarrying – as well as a number of home-based businesses and a few small-scale industries such as Authentic Designs. With the closing of the Sheldon General Store in the early 1980s, only one general store remains – Sherman's Store in West Rupert – which has been in continuous operation since 1850.

Given the town's rugged terrain, lack of infrastructure, limited access to major transportation corridors, and small population, large-scale industrial or commercial development is not likely to occur here in the foreseeable future. The town is interested in accommodating and supporting local businesses that contribute to our tax base, provide goods and services for local residents, and are in keeping with the town's rural character and traditional pattern and scale of development.



Economic Trends

Resident Workforce. Rupert's resident labor force – including all local residents aged 16 and over who were working or actively seeking employment – numbered 352 in 2000 (US Census). More recent American Community Survey estimates suggest that, over the past decade, the number of working residents in town may have declined by up to 5% (given an estimate of 333, ±80) – and especially women in the workforce, which in 2011 were estimated to make up 38% of working residents (ACS 2007-2011). While not a clearly established trend, this is to be expected as more local residents reach retirement age.

According to state employment estimates, Rupert currently has a slightly larger, but declining resident workforce – numbering around 350 in 2012, down from 360 in 2000 (-3%).

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Unemployment. The town's average annual unemployment rate over the past decade peaked at 6.0% in 2010, in part due to the recession. It has since dropped to 3.4%, as reported at the end of 2012 – compared to a county rate of 5.9%. This has been due mainly to the decline in the local workforce, rather than an increase in the number of employed residents. The number of employed town residents, estimated at 340, has not changed since 2010 (Vermont Department of Labor).

Unemployment Rates		
	Rupert	County
2000	2.0%	2.8%
2010	6.0%	7.2%
2012	3.4%	5.9%
Source: VT Dept. Labor.		

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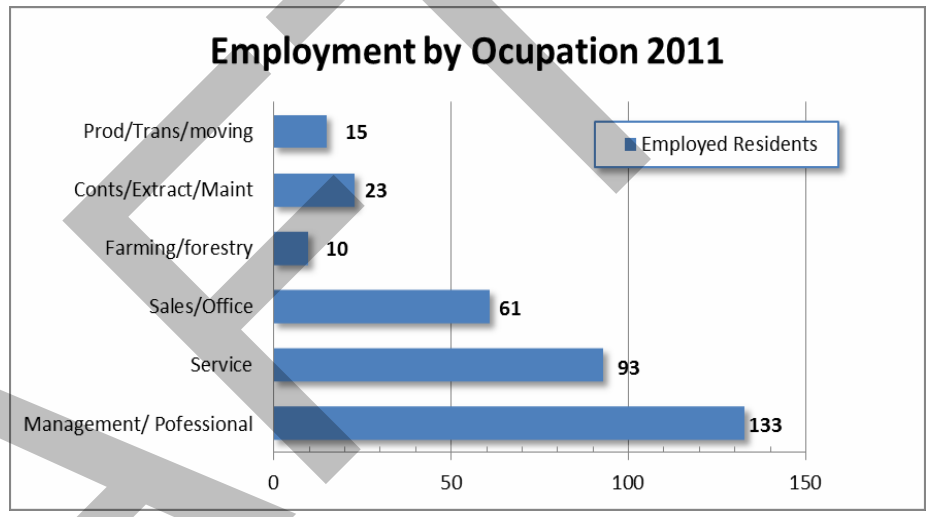
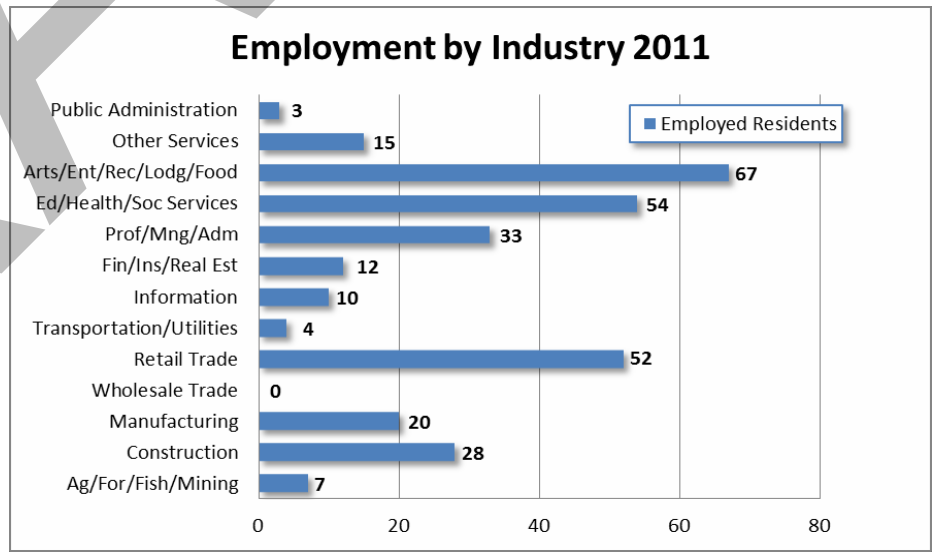
Employment. As reported in 2011, an estimated 64% of the town's employed residents worked in the private sector, around 10% worked for government, and a relatively high percentage – nearly 27% – were self-employed. The percentage of those self-employed was well above that of the county (13%) and state (10%). Likewise, Rupert had a much higher percentage of local residents who worked at home (12%) than the county (8%) or state (7%). The majority of Rupert residents (88%) worked in traditional "white collar" occupations – including management, professional, service, sales and office jobs. Only around 2% of the local workforce was employed in farming and forestry (ACS, 2007-11).

Most Rupert residents, as reported in 2011, were employed in the service sector – mainly in retail (17%), arts, entertainment, recreation, lodging and food services (22%), and health, educational and social services (18%). Compared to the county and state, relatively more town residents were employed in construction (9%); and relatively fewer (7%) in manufacturing.

Commuting Trends. It was estimated in 2011 that 30% of local residents worked in town, including 12% who worked at home; and another 44% worked out of town, within Bennington County. Only 5% traveled out of state to work (ACS 2007-11). Employment destinations for local residents include Rutland City, Manchester Center, Middlebury, Bennington, South Burlington and Manchester Village, and nearby communities in Vermont and New York. A few town

Rupert's Resident Workforce





Source: American Community Survey, 2007-11.

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residents commuted long distances to jobs in other states, including New Hampshire (US Census Bureau, LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2011). The number of nonresidents who commute to jobs in Rupert is limited, reflecting the small number of jobs available locally. According to available 2011 estimates, around 50 workers traveled from other communities to work in Rupert – mostly from nearby towns in Vermont and New York (US Census Bureau, LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2011).

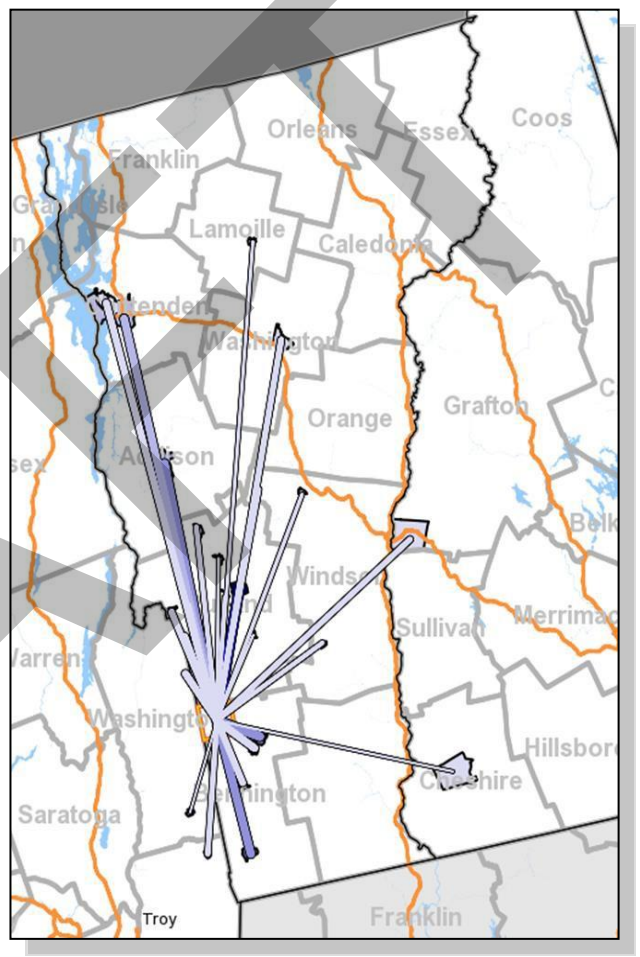
Jobs. Employment data collected by the state identify employers and jobs located in town, regardless of where employees may live. This information, however, includes only jobs that are covered by unemployment insurance – small business owners and other self-employed residents are not included. It also gives no indication of whether reported jobs are full-time, part-time or seasonal. As a result total local employment is often understated, but the information is helpful in tracking general trends. According to available state data, between 2000 and 2010 (Vermont Dept. of Labor):

- The number of employers in town increased from 14 to 19 (36%), due mainly to an increase in the number of private employers (from 12 to 16). The number of government employers increased by one with the addition of a federal posting in town. Town government is the only local government employer.

- The number of jobs in town, however, decreased slightly – from 59 to 57 (-3.4%), including a loss of five jobs in the private sector.

In 2012, there were reportedly 20 establishments in town, providing 54 jobs – down again slightly from 2010. Eight-five percent of local employers and 81% of local jobs were in the private sector.

Local Wages. While there was no job growth in town over the past decade, the average wage paid to local workers saw a real increase, even when adjusted for inflation. By 2010, local wages, on average, were much closer to the county average. As of 2012, the average annual wage paid by Rupert employers was $39,793 –more than $2,000 (or 7%) higher than the reported county average of $37,307.



Where Rupert residents worked in 2011
(Source: US Census Bureau's "On the Map"

Though the number of local employers has increased slightly in recent years, job growth in town has leveled out. As expected, Rupert is not a significant job center for the surrounding region – in 2012, the jobs available in town made up around 0.3% of the county total.

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There is growing concern statewide, however, that many full-time workers are unable to earn an income sufficient to meet their families' basic needs – what is often referred to as a "**livable wage**." The Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office determined that, in 2012, the livable wage averaged $12.48 per hour ($25,958 per year), assuming the availability of employer-assisted health insurance. The livable wage calculated for rural parts of the state also varied based on number of wage earners and family size:

Average Annual Wages: 2000-2010			
	2000*	2010	Change
Rupert	$26,024	$34,854	33.9%
Bennington Co.	$32,331	$36,573	13.2%
% County	80.5%	95.3%	
*Adjusted for inflation to $2010. Source: VT Department of Labor			

- $26,021 ($12.51/hr) per wage earner for two adults with no children,
- $32,739 ($15.74/hr) for a single person,
- $38,937 ($18.72/hr) per wage earner for a family of four with two wage earners,
- $48,693 ($23.41/hr) for a single parent with one child, and
- $62,650 ($30.12/hr) for a family of four with one wage earner.

Local wages, on average, appear to meet the basic income needs of single employees, but not their dependents. Most families need higher wages, or two incomes, to make ends meet.

Recent Development

It is clear from local employment data – and a drive around town – that economic activity in Rupert consists mainly of small, often home-based, businesses. The town does not have a designated industrial or commercial district other than its village centers. Historically, these have accommodated a mix of predominantly residential and limited commercial and civic uses.

Local businesses provide goods, services, jobs and wages, and contribute to the local and regional economy. According to state tax data, in 2012 Rupert businesses, in total, generated over $1.9 million in gross sales and use tax receipts. Existing businesses are also generally of a type and scale that are compatible with the community's traditional character.

Resource-based Businesses. The rural landscape still reflects the presence of resource-based activities, including farming, forestry and quarrying, but there is little information available regarding the extent of these activities. As is the case throughout Vermont, the number of commercial farms in town has declined dramatically over the years. Today there are only a handful of commercial dairy operations remaining. The Merck Foundation, in association with its educational and research programs, operates a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm. Other types of farming also exist locally but, to date, no information has been collected on these operations.

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Agriculture nevertheless remains important to the community – it contributes much to the local economy and tax base, and also to the town's rural character and scenic beauty. According to town grand list data, 3,465 acres of land, in 15 parcels, are still classified as farmland.

Much of Rupert's upland areas are covered by forests that support active logging operations, though information regarding the extent of commercial forestry in town is also limited. Over 4,475 acres, in 21 parcels, are identified as "woodland" on the grand list.

The Merck Forest and Farmland Foundation has actively managed its extensive forest holdings since 1950. Other forest lands, including woodlands on larger residential parcels, are also managed for firewood, timber production, and wildlife habitat, according to landowner objectives.

During the 1990s, two Act 250 permits were issued in town for logging operations over 2,500 feet – one to the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, and another for a private operation on Bear Mountain. There are no longer any sawmills in town to process timber that is harvested locally, but there are small, custom woodworking businesses.

Rupert's one slate quarry – the Rupert Quarry located west of Route153 – is still in operation. It is owned by the Sheldon Slate Company, dating from 1917, based in Middle Granville, NY. The quarry yields a unique variegated purple slate that is fabricated into blocks, tiles and pavers at the New York mill for use in flooring and countertops. There are three gravel pits in town, but none are in commercial operation. These sites may be good candidates for commercial-scale solar energy or other renewable energy facilities and are considered preferred sites for large-scale renewables development.

Commercial Businesses. There has been little commercial development in recent years. One of the town's largest employers – Authentic Designs – has been in operation since 1993. This company, which manufactures handcrafted reproductions of historic period light fixtures, operates out of a restored mill adjacent to Mill Brook.

Three businesses – two offices and one retail enterprise – were issued zoning permits between 1999 and 2003. Seven commercial properties are identified on the town's 2012 grand list – the same as in 2000. Commercial properties (which do not include home-based businesses) in 2012 comprised less than 1% of the total listed value. No industrial properties have been listed since the early 1990s.

The town has only one retail store – Sherman's Store – located in West Rupert. This general store, as noted, has been in continuous operation for over 150 years, and is an important community asset beyond its historical value. It offers limited groceries and household goods locally, and also strengthens the village as a community center and place for social interaction. Until recently, many Rupert residents did their grocery shopping in Salem, but the store there has since closed. Local residents must now travel several miles out of town – to Manchester, Bennington, Rutland, and even Greenwich and Granville, NY – for goods and services. It's not known how many residents now shop on-line, but this is becoming increasingly common in rural communities with adequate Internet access.

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Despite the town's proximity to touristy Manchester, there are few visitor amenities available locally (e.g., restaurants or bed and breakfasts), that could provide jobs and also serve local residents. The town's historic inn – the Jenks Tavern – was converted to a private residence several decades ago. The Merck Forest offers camping and backcountry cabin rentals to visitors.

Home-based Business. Home-based businesses, including farming, appear to be the dominant economic activity in Rupert, though a complete business inventory is not available. Such businesses because of their nature are not readily apparent, but they are important to a rural community – often providing services that are needed locally. People who work in town and don't have a long daily commute are also more likely to patronize other local businesses and volunteer their time. Opportunities to work from home are expanding with development of communications and information technologies that provide local access to remote job sites and global markets. Home businesses, however, can also adversely affect neighboring properties, particularly in more densely settled parts of town. Small home-based businesses are allowed under local zoning regulations and, to date, there have been few neighbor conflicts.

Development Opportunities

Given the town's rugged terrain, lack of infrastructure, limited access to major transportation corridors, and small population, large-scale industrial or commercial development is not likely to occur here in the foreseeable future.

The town is interested in accommodating and supporting local businesses that:

- contribute to the tax base,[6]
- provide employment, goods and services for local residents, and
- are in keeping with the town's rural character, and traditional pattern and scale of development

2004 Survey: Business

Should more businesses be encouraged in town?	
Yes	53%
No	28%
Not Sure	29%

Should a separate business zoning district be created?	
Yes	34%
No	39%
Not Sure	27%

Type?

- Small, clean businesses
- Light industry
- Home-based business
- Tourist businesses
- Barber shop
- Café/coffee shop
- Antique/craft shops
- Service-oriented
- Auto repair
- Grocery store

According to 2004 community survey results, there was little support among those who responded for large scale commercial or industrial development, or the creation of a separate commercial or industrial zone in the community. A majority of survey respondents agreed that the town should continue to support local farming (90%), forestry (83%), home-based businesses (78%) tourism (56%), and small retail and service businesses (52%). There was less support for light industry (40%), but small, environmentally-friendly enterprises such as Authentic Designs would be welcome – as would a coffee shop and grocery store.

[6] It should be noted that the relationship between non-residential property values and local property tax rates is not always clear, and that commercial development may not result in reduced tax burdens. This is especially true under Act 60 and Act 68.

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The Merck Forest and Farmland Center operates a local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program and farm stand, and sells its produce at farmers' markets in Manchester, Salem and Dorset.

Local economic development initiatives will come from individuals who are living in or attracted to the community. The town, however, can help support desired types of development by:

- allowing for business startups and expansions in appropriate locations under zoning,
- allowing, under local regulations, for the renovation and conversion (or "adaptive reuse") of historic structures – such as old barns and mill buildings – for new uses, including small businesses (e.g., offices, antique shops, workshops) that may not otherwise be allowed in the zoning district in which they're located,
- providing information on available tax incentive and small business programs,
- buying goods and services from local businesses, and
- in association with a local development committee or business group, inventorying and advertising local businesses – e.g., through the creation of a local business directory or a "buy local" campaign.

In some cases, the town also may be able to help qualified businesses to obtain needed financing under state community and economic development grant and loan programs – for example through historic district or village designations that provide tax breaks to property owners, and community development block grants that can help fund facility and infrastructure improvements.

Economic Goal:

To accommodate and support business development that:

- ***offers well paying jobs and needed goods and services for local residents, and***
- ***is compatible with and enhances the town's rural and small town character.***

This includes farming, forestry and value-added production, home-based businesses, and small commercial enterprises located within or adjacent to Rupert's traditional hamlets.

Economic Policies:

1. The town should accommodate and, where warranted, support the expansion of existing businesses and the establishment of new businesses that pay a livable wage, serve local residents, and reinforce the community's historic settlement pattern and rural character.

2. Home offices and small home-based businesses that are compatible with residential uses and do not adversely affect adjoining properties should be allowed in all districts in which dwellings are allowed.

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3. Expanded home-based businesses, including small cottage industries that may employ nonresidents, should be allowed in rural zoning districts in which single family dwellings are allowed, subject to municipal review to ensure that they do not adversely affect town roads, other facilities and services, natural, scenic or cultural resources, or neighboring properties.

4. Reinvestment and revitalization of properties within the town's historic hamlets is encouraged to enhance their economic vitality and function as the community's civic, commercial and cultural centers.

5. Strategies to improve the economic viability of local agriculture and forestry should continue to be supported. These include maintaining an adequate land base (e.g., through land conservation and land use regulations), maintaining and expanding economic incentives (e.g., taxation at use value), and allowing for value-added production locally.

6. The provision and upgrade of telecommunications technology and infrastructure should be supported, provided that new facilities do not diminish the town's natural, cultural or scenic resources. The aesthetic impacts of telecommunications towers should be mitigated through careful siting, placement and camouflaging.

7. The extraction of earth resources, including gravel, slate and stone, should be allowed in appropriate locations in a manner that minimizes adverse impacts to the local environment and properties in the vicinity. Commercial-scale renewable energy development constitutes good reuse of these sites.

8. Light industry should be allowed in appropriate locations, provided that it is of a scale that is consistent with the community's rural character and does not result in undue adverse impacts to the local environment or nearby properties.

9. The town and local schools should promote local businesses, and buy locally – purchasing competitively priced goods and services from local producers and vendors where feasible.

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Economic Tasks:

1. **Review and update current zoning and subdivision regulations** [Planning Commission]. Updated regulations should ensure that

   - Provisions are made for resource-based industries in appropriate locations – to include an adequate land base for farming and forestry, needed support services and value-added production, and standards for the operation of gravel pits and quarries to limit the adverse impacts of these operations and require site reclamation.

   - Local requirements for small home-based businesses (e.g., offices, bed and breakfasts) are not overly restrictive, and that larger home-based businesses (e.g., cottage industries) are allowed in suitable rural locations, subject to standards that minimize adverse impacts to adjoining properties and facilities.

   - A mix of uses is allowed within the town's traditional hamlets (village districts) including small commercial businesses, mixed uses, and manufacturing enterprises that are in keeping with the scale and character of these districts.

   - Provisions allow for the adaptive reuse of historic structures, to include compatible commercial uses that may not otherwise be allowed in the district in which they are located (e.g., storage facilities, antique shops, galleries, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, wood shops, farm and garden stores, light manufacturing).

2. **Develop a local web site** to promote local businesses, with links to individual business web sites. (Select Board).

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Our Environment:
Natural, Cultural & Scenic Resources

Rupert residents value highly the place where we live. For many of us, the town's rural character and scenic beauty – its forested uplands, cultivated valleys and historic hamlets, and the natural, cultural, and scenic amenities these afford – are what we find most appealing about life in Rupert, and would most like to preserve while accommodating compatible growth and development.

This chapter of the plan describes the town's natural setting and physical limitations, its historical development, and associated natural, cultural and scenic resources that are important to the community.

What do you appreciate most about life in Rupert?

- Rural Character (82%)
- Scenic Beauty (73%)
- Privacy, Peace and Quiet (70%)
- Small Population (53%)
- Sense of Community (44%)

(per survey results)

Natural Setting

Topography & Drainage. Rupert's mountainous topography reflects its underlying geology – our town lies in northern half of the Taconic Mountain Range, which extends from the Green Mountains and the Vermont Valley (Route 7) to the Hudson-Champlain lowlands to the north and east. The Taconic Mountains are around the same age as the Green Mountains, but the bedrock here is much different, consisting mostly of slate, shale and limestone – the Taconics are the slate-producing center of Vermont. Rupert is at the southern end of the "Slate Valley" which extends 24 miles north into Fair Haven and adjoining areas of New York. Rupert's one slate quarry, the Rupert Quarry located east of Route 153, is still in operation.

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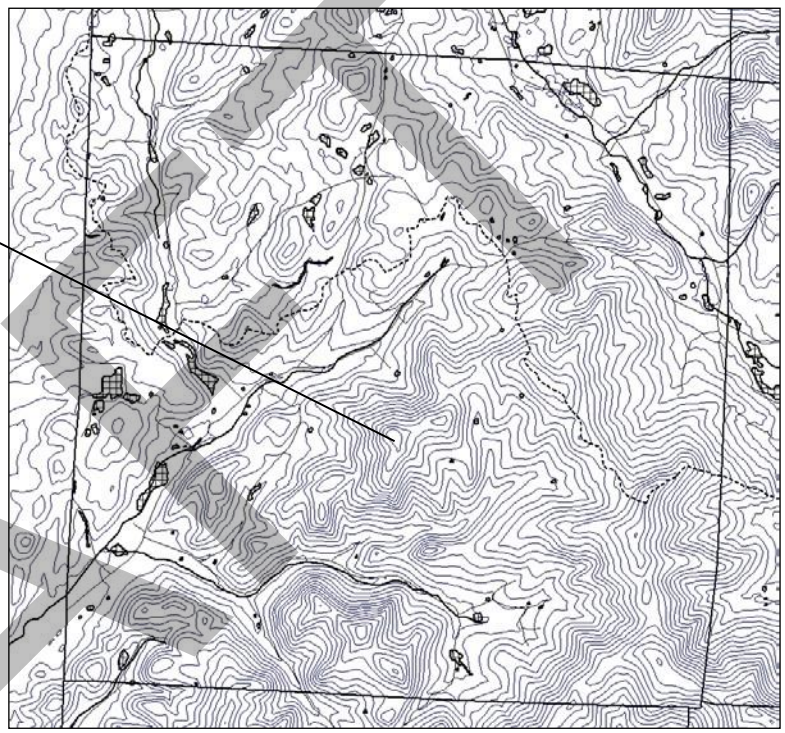
There are at least thirteen prominent hills, mountains and ridgelines in town as identified from US Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps. These range in elevation from around 1,120 feet on Meeting House Hill to 3,010 feet at the summit of Bear Mountain.

Mt. Antone, at 2,600+ feet, was a "place of great resort" for local residents in the 1800s. Described then as a "high cone-shaped mountain… that towered high above its fellows," it was accessible by footpath and, from its cleared summit, offered commanding views of the surrounding region.
- *VT Historical Gazetteer*, Vol. I (1868)



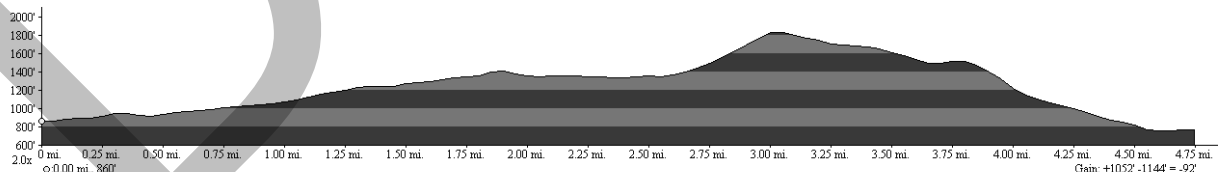
Rupert's topography also defines a major drainage divide – much of the northern half of town is included in the Poultney-Mettawee River watershed that drains into Lake Champlain and the St. Lawrence River, while most of the southern half drains westward, via Mill Brook and White Creek, to the Hudson River.

The Mettawee River (once known as the Pawlet River), rises in Dorset and Rupert, and flows northward from East Rupert through North Rupert to the Pawlet town line, eventually emptying into Lake Champlain at Whitehall, NY. The northwest part of town drains into the Indian River, which forms near the hamlet of Rupert and flows north, joining the Mettawee in Pawlet. The southwest part of town includes the headwaters of Mill Brook and White Creek which drain south, through the Rupert Valley, to the Hudson River.

The town's steep, rugged terrain historically served to confine development to the valleys and lowlands along these major drainages– generally between 600 and 900 feet in elevation – though some hill farms were established up in the hollows, at elevations above 1,000 feet.

A series of mountain ridges, ranging from the southeast corner north to Rupert Mountain at the Pawlet line, divide the town into eastern and western settlements. Very early on these areas, for purposes of worship, were referred to as Rupert's "East and West Societies." Route 315 – the town's only east-west route – traverses this ridge, reaching 1,700 feet.

Elevation Profile: Rupert to North Rupert (SW to NE)



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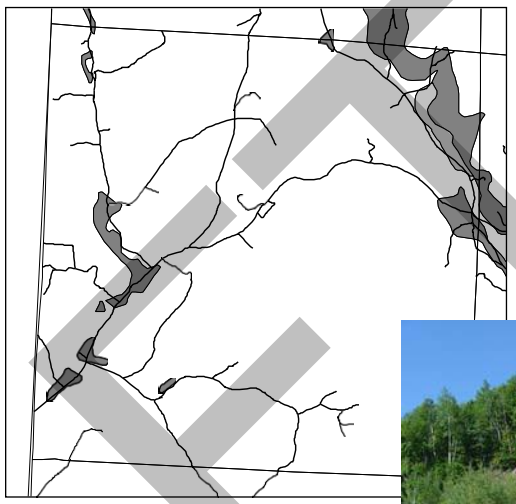
Given local topography, Rupert's valleys and lowland areas are generally best suited for development – though drainage, soils, wetlands, and flood hazards limit the potential for development in some of these areas.

Remote upland areas – characterized by very steep slopes (>20%), ledges and rock outcrops, shallow and poorly drained soils, intermittent surface drainage, and more harsh and variable weather conditions – are generally poorly suited for development. Upland areas over 2,500 feet in elevation are especially fragile, and are given special consideration in state Act 250 permit proceedings.

According to mapped information provided by the Bennington County Regional Commission, of Rupert's total land area (28,608 acres), more than 50% has severe limitations for development, including:

- 500 acres (1.7%) that are above 2,500 feet in elevation, and
- 14,228 acres (49.7%) with slopes greater than 20%.



General locations of major sand and gravel deposits

Gravel pit off Herrick Brook Road

Natural Resources

Rupert's rural character is defined in part by its natural environment, including those natural features that are identified below, and depicted on accompanying maps, for protection from fragmentation and inappropriate development.

Earth Resources. Local slate deposits remain commercially viable, though current quarry operations are limited. The Rupert Quarry, owned by the Sheldon Slate Company, produces a variegated purple slate, quarried from a bedrock formation that extends north to Poultney (Poultney Slate). The quarrying process involves the removal of soil and rock overburden to expose the slate deposit, and drilling and blasting to break off large slabs. These are transported off-site to mills in Middle Granville, NY for further processing and fabrication. Established slate quarries often remain in operation, on an intermittent basis as dictated by demand, for a very long time.

There are also three gravel pits in town, though none are currently in commercial operation. These are located in glacial outwash deposits bordering river valleys. Such deposits are important, but finite, sources of sand and gravel for use in construction and road maintenance. Because of their general suitability for on-site septic systems, they are also attractive areas for development. Identifying and securing a local, long-term source of sand and gravel may be in the best interest of the town, given increasingly limited supplies.

New or expanded extraction and quarrying operations should be carefully reviewed, however, to avoid or minimize potential impacts to the local environment, neighboring properties, and municipal roads and infrastructure, and to ensure adequate site restoration. Common concerns include drainage alterations, accelerated soil erosion and sedimentation, surface and groundwater pollution, noise and dust, and traffic and road impacts associated with the transport of materials.

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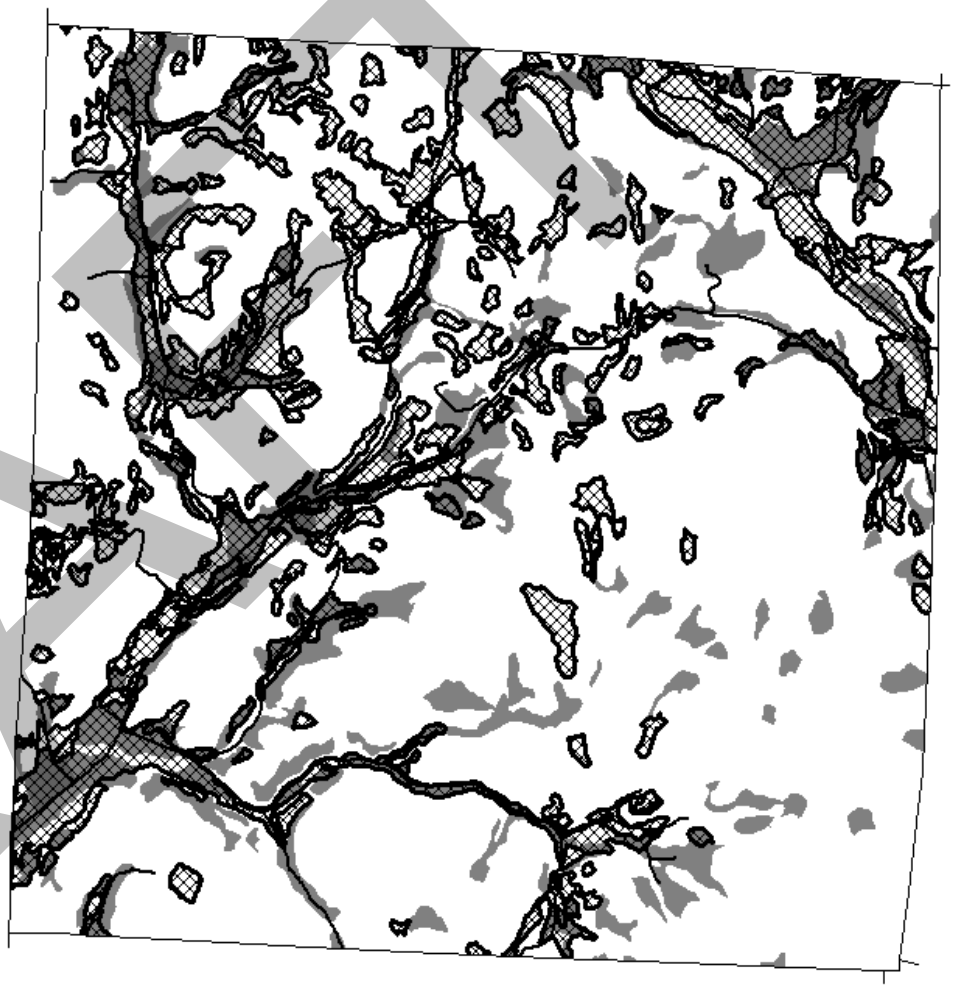
Soils. Most of Rupert's soils formed over thousands of years from till and outwash deposits that were left behind as glacial ice sheets melted. A few soils in river valleys and wetland areas are derived from more recent river (alluvial) and muck deposits. Local soils are described in more detail in the Bennington County Soil Survey, prepared by the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), and are shown on accompanying soil survey maps.

NRCS has evaluated soils statewide for their suitability for forestry, agriculture, construction sites and for the installation of on-site septic systems. Soil classes are shown on accompanying maps in Volume II.

The soils found in Rupert's upland areas are generally very shallow and, because of the steepness of these areas, particularly susceptible to erosion. They can support timber production, but are generally not suitable for agriculture and most types of development. Recent changes in state standards regulating on-site septic systems, however – which now allow for systems on slopes of up to 20% – have opened more upland areas to development.

Primary agricultural soils – including "prime" soils of national importance and soils of "statewide" significance – are concentrated along the town's river valleys and drainages. These soils are especially suited for raising a variety of crops, and are important for local agriculture. Once developed, they cannot be replaced.

Many of the town's primary agricultural soils are also well-suited for on-site septic systems (Class I soils). As a result, there will likely be ongoing pressure to subdivide and develop some of the town's best farmland for residential or other uses. The town has long supported farmland protection through its land use regulations and private conservation easements.



Potential Areas of Land Use Conflict

Many of Rupert's most developable soils (shaded) are also primary agricultural soils (hatched).

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Groundwater. Groundwater is the source of most water supplies in Rupert. There has been no extensive mapping of groundwater resources in Vermont, but fractured bedrock in the town's upland areas, and permeable sand and gravel deposits in the lowlands, are known to be important recharge areas for local water supplies.

A preliminary "Groundwater Favorability Map" created by the state in 1966, in association with the US Geological Service, identified areas of low groundwater potential in the vicinity of West Rupert and along the Mettawee River valley north of East Rupert, but much more favorable potential south of East Rupert to Dorset. Potential bedrock and sand and gravel recharge areas also have been identified by NRCS from related soil associations.

Since 1966, 211 wells have been dug in Rupert to serve private and public water supplies. Available well log data indicate that:

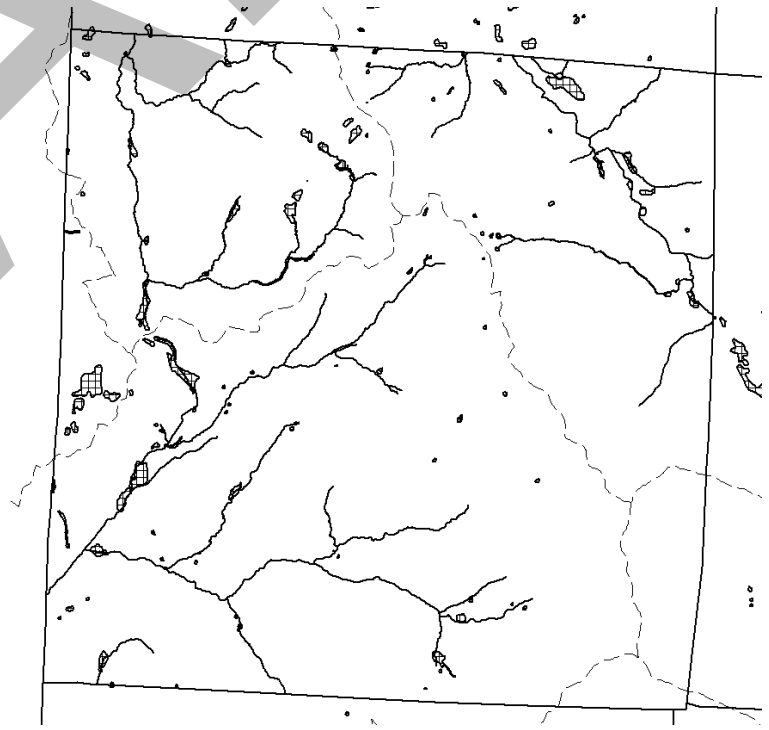
- most wells in Rupert are drilled bedrock wells
- wells range in depth from 44 to 900 feet
- the average depth is 285 feet
- well yields range from 0 to 100 gallons per minute
- the average yield is 7 gallons per minute – sufficient for most domestic uses (a minimum of 2 GPM is recommended).

To date there is only one state-designated "Source Protection Area (SPA)" in Rupert, located on the eastern slopes of Spruce Peak. This SPA is for a public water supply in Dorset, but extends over the town line into Rupert. Source protection areas are designated to protect public water supplies from potential sources of contamination, in accordance with a state-approved source protection plan. This can include local protection through the purchase of easements, or zoning regulations that restrict allowed uses within these areas.

Shallow wells are especially susceptible to drought and contamination. Common sources of contamination include septic systems, waste disposal sites, junkyards, leaking underground fuel storage tanks, road salt, agricultural pesticides, and alpha radiation from naturally occurring sources (e.g., radioactive bedrock or radon gas).

To date only one local source of contamination has been documented – a leaking underground tank – which has since been cleaned up. New state rules governing potable water supplies require that water systems be tested for contaminants prior to the sale of a property.

Surface Waters & Wetlands. Surface waters in Rupert are shown in some detail on maps included in Volume II. Major waterways include the Mettawee River, Indian River, Mill Brook, Sandgate Brook, White Creek, other named brooks and their tributaries. There are also a number of headwater streams that drain the town's upland areas. There are no large ponds in town, but small naturally occurring and constructed ponds are scattered throughout.



Rupert's major watersheds, surface waters and wetlands

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The town's surface waters were important to its early development – providing routes for settlement, fisheries, drinking water, and a power supply for local mills. Much of Rupert's early settlement was concentrated along its waterways. Today, local waters continue to support a variety of public uses – for potable water, fishing, swimming and recreation.

Mettawee River

Water quality management goals have been established for all surface waters of the state. Most of Rupert's waters are "Class B" – to be managed for their high aesthetic, recreational, potable water supply (with disinfection and filtration) and habitat values. All surface waters above 2,500 feet are designated "Class A" waters – to be managed to retain their natural, pristine condition.

There are also a number of wetland areas, as shown on State Wetland Inventory (SWI) maps for the town. Most wetlands are found in poorly drained, low-lying areas within the river valleys, but there are also scattered upland (palustrine) wetlands found at higher elevations. Wetlands serve a number of important functions – including groundwater recharge and filtration, floodwater retention, and habitat for a variety of plants and animals. Any work within 100 feet of a state-designated Class I, or 50 feet of a Class II wetland requires a permit (conditional use determination) from the state. Federal wetlands permits also may be required. Most of Rupert's wetlands are Class II areas – there are no designated Class I wetlands in town.

Surface waters and wetlands can be easily contaminated by development within the watershed. Common sources of contamination in rural areas include accelerated stormwater runoff, soil erosion and sedimentation from construction sites and poorly managed farming and logging operations, road gravel and salt, bridge and culvert work, parking lot runoff, and on-site septic systems.

The quality of local surface waters and wetlands can be protected through a number of measures, including:

- locally designated setbacks and vegetated buffer zones to limit disturbance, and to provide filtration (e.g., under zoning),
- local prohibitions on filling and dredging in wetland areas, including those which may not be covered under state regulations,
- adherence to state-accepted management practices – for stormwater runoff and erosion control, agricultural and logging operations, stream crossings, and road construction and maintenance,
- good local road maintenance policies and practices, and
- land owner education, technical and financial assistance (e.g., for farmland conservation and stream bank restoration projects).

Flood Hazard Areas. There are historical accounts of a number of floods that devastated sections of town – including an 1810 storm event in Kent and Clark Hollows that flooded White Creek and inundated downtown Salem, another flood on White Creek in 1832, the 1927 flood that affected the entire state, and a storm in 1949 that flooded all of West Rupert.

Rupert currently regulates development within federally-designated 100-year flood hazard areas. These include all areas identified by on 1985 Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) that have the potential to flood at least once in any 100-year period. Local regulation of development within flood hazard areas is required for municipal participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) – which allows affected property owners to obtain flood insurance. It's also important for protecting the health and safety of local residents, private property, and public facilities and infrastructure. There is no guarantee that land outside of these designated areas will be free from flooding**.** More detailed mapping of potential hazard areas – including wet (hydric) soils and upland drainage areas susceptible to flash flooding – is needed.

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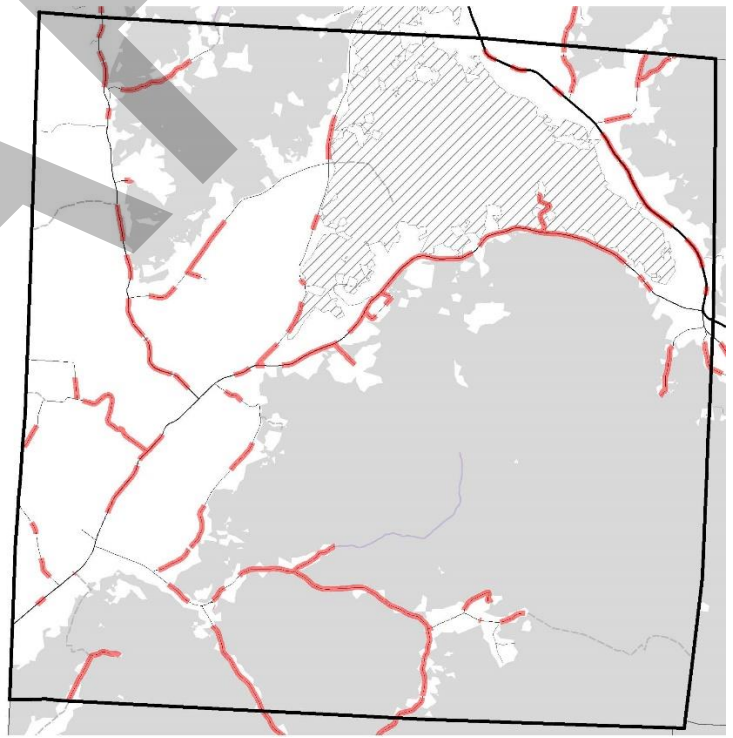
Forests. More than 78% of Rupert – including its rugged and steep upland areas – is forested. Local forests are important for sustainable logging operations, but also contribute to air and water quality and the town's scenic beauty, provide critical wildlife habitat, and opportunities for outdoor recreation. Most of the town's forestlands are in private ownership – including the 3,100 acre Merck Forest. Publicly-owned forests include the Green Mountain National Forest (168 acres), the Rupert State Forest (332 acres), and the Rupert Town Forest (89 acres). Forest management plans are required for federal and state owned lands, and private lands enrolled in the state's current use tax abatement program. There currently is no management plan for the town forest.

Wildlife Habitat. Rupert's relatively undeveloped, varied landscape provides a mix of habitat types that support diverse animal and plant populations. To date, no extensive inventory of local habitat, plant or animal communities has been conducted – as a result there are no known occurrences of endangered, rare, or threatened species. The state has conducted general mapping of forest blocks that provide contiguous habitat areas critical to the long-term survival of these species. Important habitat areas in town include:

- large, contiguous tracts of forested upland that support large animals and woodland species (e.g., bear, moose, deer, bobcat, migratory song birds) and wildlife road crossings,
- surface waters and wetlands, including vernal pools (e.g., for aquatic and amphibian species), and
- riparian areas (which may also serve as travel corridors).

Wildlife management plans are often a component of forest management, and may be required for development subject to state review. Habitat areas critical to the survival of local wildlife can also be protected through:

- additional inventory, mapping and documentation of core habitat areas and connecting travel corridors (e.g., through voluntary programs such as Keeping Track),
- limiting the fragmentation and development of these areas through local land use regulations,
- managing municipal and other public lands for wildlife, and
- making information available to local landowners about available technical and financial assistance for wildlife management.



The following areas should be protected from forest fragmentation:

Highest Priority Wildlife Road Crossings

Highest Priority Interior Forest Blocks

Highest Priority Connectivity Forest Blocks

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Historical Development

Prior to European settlement, Rupert was traversed and likely inhabited by Native American populations, including Mahicans that used the upper reaches of the Hudson drainage as seasonal hunting grounds. The Mahicans were an Algonquian tribe, established along the Hudson River, who were pushed eastward into Massachusetts by the Iroquois. According to historical accounts, they may also have had settlements in Bennington and Pownal, and their hunting territory extended northward, to Lake St. Catherine and Lake Bomoseen. To date there is no reported evidence of their presence locally – but no archaeological surveys have been done. It is known that early settlers followed Indian trails along local drainages to arrive in Rupert.

Early Settlement. The town was chartered under a grant issued by New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth to 64 proprietors on August 20, 1761. The original charter called for land to be set aside for a school, a parsonage, the Church of England, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (active in England at the time). It also required that each grantee plant and cultivate five acres, over a period of five years, for every fifty acres within their share. Competing land claims were issued by New York, resulting in ongoing land disputes that were not finally settled until 1790.

Most of Rupert's earliest settlers hailed from Connecticut and western Massachusetts. The first division of land, along the Mettawee (Pawlet) River, was laid out in 1765 in the vicinity of East Rupert, and settled around 1767. A second division of 60 acres was laid out the next year in the western part of town at "White Creek Meadows," (near West Rupert) and settled around the same time. In 1771, Tories or "Yorkers" also tried to exercise their land claims in this area, but were driven back to New York.

The few settlers in town prior to the Revolutionary War lived in log cabins along the Mettawee River and White Creek, on the town's eastern and western borders. During this period, land was cleared for Farming, and grist mills were constructed on Hagar Brook (then Mill Brook) and White Creek. With the advance of General Burgoyne into western Vermont in 1777, the Tories became more active and burned out many of the settlers along White Creek and the Indian River.

Settlement recommenced around 1780 following the close of the war – around the same time that Vermont petitioned to join the Union – but border disputes were not settled until Vermont was finally admitted as a state. Most of the town's earliest records dating from this period (1781-89) – including the original plats – are missing. They were reportedly carried away by the first town clerk who, according to historical accounts, was a "noted Tory."

Rupert holds an important place in Vermont's early history. The Harmon Mint was established in town in 1785, along Hagar Brook, to coin copper money for the independent Republic of Vermont. Rupert's first church – the Congregational Church – was organized in 1786. By

Town Boundaries

Rupert's western boundary with New York was originally established by Governor Benning Wentworth in 1740, in a long disputed claim that extended the New Hampshire border to a line some twenty miles east of the Hudson River, referred to as the "Twenty-Mile Line." This boundary was not finally settled until 1790, after New York accepted Vermont's petition to join the Union, and was surveyed in 1814.

The Twenty-Mile Line served as Rupert's western boundary when chartered in 1761. The town was laid out on paper as a square, six miles to a side, with no consideration given to local topography. The other borders were generally established over time, through recorded deeds, but never formally surveyed. As a result, the actual locations of these boundaries on the ground–for example in the northeast corner of town–are still in question. This is not unusual in rural Vermont. Petitions to the state legislature to settle town boundary questions are common – particularly where land ownership, property taxation, property values, land use, or school enrollments are affected.

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1791, when the first US Census was conducted, Rupert's population numbered 1,034 – more people than live in town today!

Nineteenth Century. Rupert's current landscape – its road network, farms, fields, hamlets and numerous historic buildings – very much reflect a settlement pattern established during 19th century. Stone walls, erected in first half of the 1800s when sheep were more numerous than dairy cows, still mark old property and field boundaries. Land was cleared for pasture and crops, and wheat and rye were raised for shipment by ox cart to market in Troy, NY.

By the mid-1800s, Rupert's hamlets were well-established commercial and civic centers, and many of the town's most prominent buildings had been constructed. According to a description from Abby Hemenway's *Vermont Historical Gazetteer* (Vol. I), as of 1869 Rupert had:

- nine school districts (down from 11), and as many school houses,
- four hamlets (Rupert, West Rupert, East Rupert, North Rupert),
- three post offices (Rupert, West Rupert, East Rupert)
- two train stations (Rupert, West Rupert)
- three churches
- one tavern
- four stores
- three saw mills
- one grist mill
- three blacksmith shops
- one wagon shop
- one boot and shoe manufactory, and
- one milliner's shop.

More than 90% of local residents at the time were farmers, but hill farms were already being abandoned as farming shifted from sheep to commercial dairy production. This was precipitated by the coming of the railroad in 1852, which opened up regional markets for cheese and butter – and resulted in the establishment of two railroad stations and several cheese factories in town. The chief shipments at the time were cheese, butter, maple sugar, and potatoes. People were also leaving. The local population reached its historic peak of 1,630 around 1810, and then entered a long period of decline, spanning the next 150 years.

200 Years in Rupert's Development

1761	Town chartered by NH Governor Benning Wentworth
1767	First settlement in East Rupert along Pawlet (Mettawee) River
1768	First settlement at White Creek Meadows in West Rupert
1777	Settlers on White Creek and Indian River burned out
1785	Harmon Mint established under the Republic of Vermont
1786	Congregational Church organized – likely oldest in Vermont
1789	First town meeting for which there are records
1791	Vermont becomes a state, boundary disputes finally settled
	Town purchases land for North Rupert Cemetery
1806	Rupert Turnpike completed from Pawlet to Salem, NY
1815	Jenks Tavern constructed in East Rupert
1816	Rupert Post Office established – possibly first in the US
1837	West Rupert Post Office established
1841	Old Brick Church constructed in West Rupert
1849	West Rupert School House constructed (Town Office)
1850	Sherman Store constructed
1851	District #8 School House constructed
1852	Rutland & Washington Railroad begins operation in Rupert
	West Rupert station established for passenger, freight service
1859	Congregational Church remodeled to include public meeting space, used for town meetings
1863	Western Union Telegraph Company extends line into Rupert
1866	Western Union office opens
1867	First cheese factory established in town, West Rupert
1868	J.J. Guild Company established
1869	Rupert Dairy Association Cheese Factory established
1871	Delaware & Hudson takes over rail line
	Denio Cheese Factory established
	Rupert a "dry" town – Jenks Tavern becomes the Jenks Hotel
1672	Rupert Village School built, served as town meeting hall
1873	Kinne Cheese Factory established
1876	Hurd-Hadaway Cheese Factory established in Kent Hollow
1884	Methodist Church constructed
1890	Mt. Anthony Grange established (Sheldon Store building)
1893	Town takes over all school buildings
1897	Rupert Telegraph Company organized
1919	Electric power introduced to Rupert and East Rupert
1925	Lewis Brothers Mill established in West Rupert
1927	Flood, causing extensive damage
1934	Passenger trains quit running
	Bus service for local students to high school in Granville, NY
1949	Flood, Rupert Village
1950	Guild House, local landmark, burns
	Rupert Volunteer Fire Company established, truck purchased
1961	Rupert Bicentennial celebrated – start of Old Home Day

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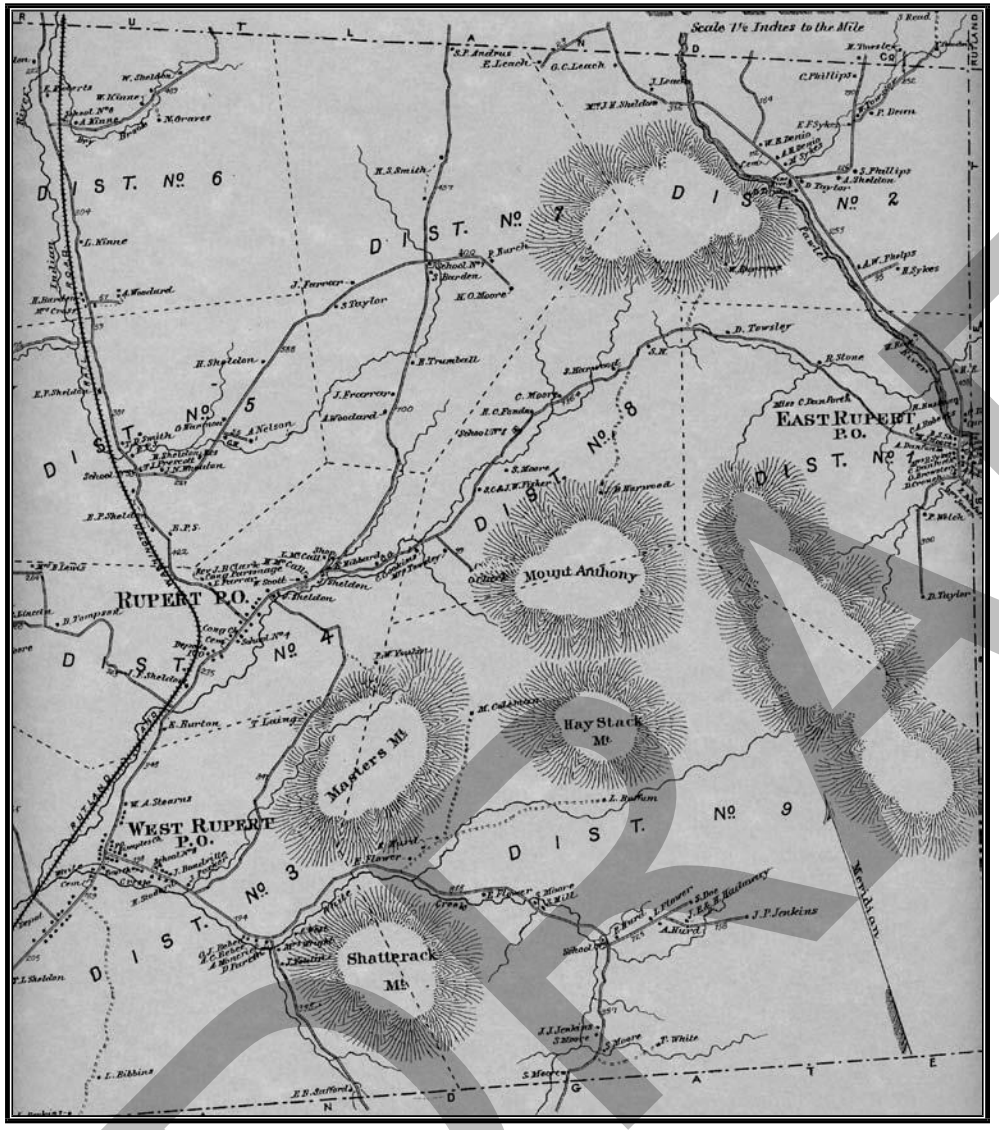
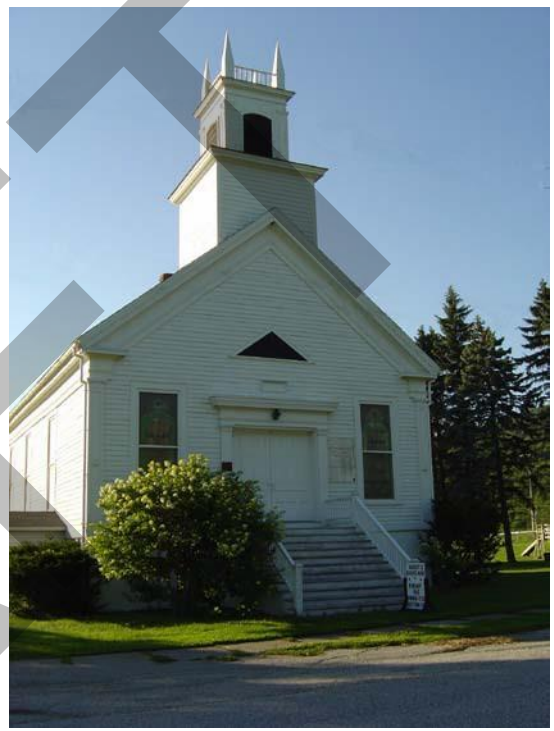


1869 Beers Map



Rupert Congregational Church c.1825

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19th Century Rupert

Cultural Resources

Rupert's history is written on the land – the town's traditional character is also defined by a cultural landscape that has evolved over the nearly 250 years since its founding. Our town is home to a wealth of cultural resources, including many undocumented historic sites and structures. These potentially include:

- buried archaeological sites – including prehistoric Native American sites, and old mill and house sites – especially along the town's major drainages;
- Rupert's five cemeteries, the earliest dating from 1789;
- stone walls, hedgerows and tree lines that mark historical property and field boundaries and old road rights-of-way;
- three historic districts – East Rupert, Rupert, West Rupert
- most of Rupert's public buildings, which date from the 1800s, and
- any structure that is more than 50 years old and retains its historical integrity – including many local houses, barns and other outbuildings.

To date, however, there has been no extensive survey of the town's historic sites and structures and, as a result, very few have received formal recognition. The Vermont Division of Historic Preservation develops and maintains a list of sites and structures by town – currently there are only six structures on the state register. The Leach (Hagar Brook) Farm was also recognized by the state as a "Bicentennial Farm" that was in continuous operation under the same family from 1767 until recently. One property – the Jenks Tavern – is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Listings afford recognition – but no specific protection– for historic properties, except as they may be affected by state or federally-funded building projects. Tax credits for the restoration of listed properties also may be available.

According to Division staff, state funding for historical survey work dried up before the Rupert survey could be completed. Some volunteer training to complete the survey may be available.

The Harmon Mint site is one of town's many historic features – but one of the few that has been formally recognized by the state. To date, no complete inventory of historic sites and structures has been conducted in town.

VT Historic Sites & Structures Survey: Rupert			
Structure	**Listed**	**Constructed**	**Remarks**
Rupert Methodist Church RT 153/RT 315	1974	c. 1884	Excellent condition; described in 1898 as the most beautiful and costly building in town
Sherman Store RT 153, West Rupert	1974	c. 1850	Good condition; in operation since 1850, good example of a 19th century general store
Jenks Tavern RT 30/RT 315 East Rupert	1974	c. 1815	Condition not noted; historically served as an inn, tavern and meeting place, now in residential use; National Register
Congregational Church RT 153, Rupert	1974	c. 1825	Excellent condition; Greek Revival, addition 1831, basement 1859; social hub of the community until 1871
Rupert School– Meeting House Rt 153, Rupert	1974	c. 1872	Condition not noted; school and town meeting hall; now home to library, Rupert Historical Society
West Rupert School House East Street, West Rupert	2003	c. 1849	Good condition; formerly District #3 School; now Rupert Town Office

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Rupert is fortunate to have an active historical society. The **Rupert Historical Society**, founded in 1990, is now housed in the 1872 Rupert Village School, sharing quarters with the Rosalind K. Kittay Public Library. Items related to local history are displayed in the entry hall and the upstairs classroom. The Historical Society collects and archives artifacts, papers and photographs, operates a small museum that includes both permanent and special exhibits, and sponsors a variety of public programs on local history, in cooperation with the Vermont Council on the Humanities. In 2003 the Society also began an ongoing video project to document the oral histories of local residents.

The **Rupert School House Restoration Committee** was established by the Selectboard in 2003 to help raise funds to physically restore the Rupert Village School, and also the West Rupert School which now houses the Rupert Town Office. As of 2003, over $33,500 had been raised through private donations, bake and tee-shirt sales and grants.

Scenic Resources

It's clear from a drive around town that Rupert's natural and cultural landscape is very beautiful. A detailed inventory of the town's scenic resources has not been completed, but generally they include a combination of the following, which should be protected from development that would adversely affect their scenic character:

- prominent, undeveloped, forested ridgelines and hilltops, many of which are highly visible from public vantage points,
- natural features, including surface waters and wetlands,
- the rural countryside, including farms and working farmland,
- historical hamlets and homesteads, and
- scenic roads, including town roads and Routes 30, 315 and 153, (which, to date, have not received formal scenic designation).

The town, as time and resources permit, should conduct more detailed inventories of its scenic resources. GIS mapping, supplemented by windshield surveys, is especially useful for this type of work.

Town Plan: Resource Protection Policies & Recommendations?

[Protect the following -- % Strongly Agree/Agree]

- Farmland (93%)
- Forestland (90%)
- Wildlife Habitat (90%)
- Steep Slopes & Ridgelines (90%)
- Ground Water (89%)
- Surface Water (88%)
- Historic Sites & Structures (88%)
- Scenic Roads (87%)
- Wetlands (78%)
- Floodplains (73%)

Resource Protection

Based on the 2004 Community Survey results, there appears to be strong support among local residents for the protection of Rupert's most significant natural, cultural and scenic resources – including those resources that contribute to the town's natural environment, cultural heritage, rural character, and scenic beauty. Some level of protection may be afforded through public ownership, or through local, state or federal regulations. In many cases, however, local resource protection will depend on the efforts of interested property owners who could benefit from available technical or financial assistance programs. For example, these could include:

- technical assistance for inventories and the preparation of natural or cultural resource management plans,
- the purchase of development rights (e.g., through the Vermont Land Trust),
- tax abatement (current use appraisal) programs, and
- tax credits, grants or other forms of financial assistance for specific conservation or historic restoration projects.

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Resource Goals:

- ***To foster greater understanding and appreciation of Rupert's natural and cultural heritage.***
- ***To preserve the town's rural character and working landscape.***
- ***To maintain and enhance the quality of the natural environment, through sound stewardship, for the benefit of present and future generations.***
- ***To protect the town's most significant natural, cultural and scenic resources and features from the adverse effects of development.***

Resource Policies:

1. Natural, cultural, and scenic resources of significance to the town should be protected from incompatible development. Resources may be identified for protection from available maps, inventories, and through site investigation as needed. Significant resources include:

    - Surface waters and wetlands (all headwaters above 2,500 feet, permanent rivers and streams, naturally occurring ponds, and Class I and Class II wetlands)
    - Designated Source Protection Areas (SPAs)
    - Designated flood plains
    - Primary agricultural and forestry soils
    - Critical wildlife habitat (deeryards, bear habitat, rare, threatened or endangered communities, wildlife travel corridors and road crossings, forest blocks)
    - Historic sites and structures
    - Prominent ridgelines and hilltops (visible from public roads, vantage points), and
    - Designated scenic road corridors.

2. Development should be sited and designed to avoid the fragmentation of, and undue adverse impacts to, the town's significant natural, cultural and scenic features (e.g., through the use of designated "building envelopes" and/or clustering). Environmental, cultural or visual impact assessments should be required for the review of development that could adversely affect these resources.

3. Rugged, forested, and poorly accessible upland areas should remain free from development, to be reserved for forestry, wildlife habitat, and recreational uses that are appropriate to their wilderness character. Telecommunications and wind towers that do not have an undue adverse effect on the environmental or scenic qualities of these areas may be allowed.

4. No new structures intended for human occupancy should be located within designated flood hazard areas. Development that does occur in these areas should be sited and designed to avoid impeding the flow of floodwater or endangering the health, safety and welfare of the public. Preferred uses within these areas include agriculture, outdoor recreation, resource conservation (e.g., buffer zones) and open space.

5. Sufficient setback distances from surfaces waters and isolation distances from ground waters (seasonal high water tables) should be maintained for structures, on-site septic systems, and other potential sources of contamination. The type and density of development allowed within designated Source Protection Areas should be regulated as needed to avoid potential sources of water supply contamination.

6. Vegetated buffers of sufficient width to protect water quality and riparian habitat should be established and/or maintained along surface waters and wetlands. Clearing, dredging or filling within these areas should be the minimum required to allow for visual and/or limited physical access (e.g., for streambank management, fishing access, pedestrian paths, or road and utility crossings).

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7. Stormwater management and erosion control that incorporates natural drainage patterns, and management practices accepted by the state, should be required for any development that involves more than one acre of site disturbance, is located on steep slopes (15+%), or could otherwise adversely affect water quality. No development should be permitted on very steep slopes (20+%).

8. The protection of historic sites, and the renovation and adaptive reuse of historic structures, in a manner that maintains their historic integrity, is strongly encouraged. In the event that a historic site must be disturbed, or a historic structure must be demolished, its historical significance should be adequately documented and recorded prior to disturbance or demolition.

9. Designated scenic town roads should be protected through local ordinances and road management practices that may limit the following, as appropriate, without affecting public safety:

   - road upgrades, including realignment, widening or paving,
   - the cutting or removal of trees (e.g., canopy trees) within the road corridor,
   - the disturbance or removal of stone walls,
   - the location of paths or sidewalks, utilities (e.g., lines and poles) within the corridor, and/or
   - the size and placement of signs visible from road rights-of-way.

10. The public or nonprofit acquisition of land, development rights, or conservation easements should be supported where appropriate and feasible to ensure long-term protection of the town's significant natural, cultural, or scenic resources, including its working landscape – and in particular as needed to provide long-term public access, use or other public benefit.

Resource Tasks:

1. **Conduct ongoing inventories, with the assistance of the Bennington County Regional Commission and state officials**, to further document the town's natural, cultural and scenic resources, as time and resources permit, including:
   - Unsurveyed town boundaries [Selectboard],
   - Natural features, including critical wildlife habitat areas and travel corridors [Planning or Conservation Commission],
   - Historic districts, sites and structures [Planning Commission, Rupert Historical Society],
   - Scenic resources, including scenic roads [Planning Commission].

2. **Continue to support the efforts of the Rupert Historical Society and the Rupert School House Restoration Committee** to conserve town history, to increase public awareness of Rupert's cultural heritage, and to renovate the Rupert Village School and Town Office [Selectboard, Planning Commission].

3. **Consider the creation and appointment of a Conservation Commission** to help inventory the town's natural resources, work with landowners interested in conservation and resource management, and develop resource management plans for town-owned land, including the Rupert Town Forest [Selectboard].

4. **Review and update zoning and subdivision regulations as needed** to incorporate resource protection standards, and to allow for the designation of building envelopes (the area on a parcel where structures may be sited) and the clustering of development to protect resources and preserve open space [Planning Commission].

5. **Consider adopting a scenic road ordinance** once inventory work is completed [Selectboard].

6. **Participate in Act 250 and Section 248 reviews as needed to represent town interests** [Planning Commission, Selectboard].

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Our Support System: Community Facilities & Services

All of us rely on a publicly- funded support system, including infrastructure, facilities and services that benefit the entire community. Given the rural character of our community, locally supported facilities and services are necessarily limited – those available reflect local needs and priorities, and our capacity to pay for them. Most of our local support system – including town government and services – are paid for through property taxes – the primary source of revenue for Vermont towns.

2004 Community Survey
Most important issues facing Rupert over the next ten years:

1. Property Taxes (80.2%)
2. Development Pressure (68.9%)
3. Loss of Farms (54.7%)

Rising property taxes – tied in part to the costs of new development – were identified as the most important issue facing Rupert over the next ten years. Identifying needed improvements to be funded locally, and budgeting for them over the long-term, can support anticipated growth while at the same time avoiding dramatic tax increases. The intent of this chapter is to identify the status of existing facilities and services, and improvements needed to support anticipated types and rates of growth. Improving municipal energy efficiency will be a key strategy to keeping municipal costs low.

Town Government

On Town Meeting Day (the first Tuesday in March), Rupert voters decide the major business of the town – including annual elections, budgets, and other warned articles – by Australian ballot. Though the town no longer conducts its business "from the floor," a warned informational meeting for all town voters is held prior to any regularly or specially warned town vote.

The Rupert Town Office (formerly the Rupert Elementary School)

Rupert is governed by an elected, five-member selectboard (the "legislative body") and is administered on a daily basis by a number of local officials – including an elected town clerk and treasurer, and several other elected or appointed officials and boards. The town employs a limited number of paid staff to conduct its daily business but, in the Vermont tradition, also relies heavily on the services of many dedicated, civic-minded volunteers.

Town Facilities

Rupert Town Office. The Rupert Town Office has been located in the former West Rupert School House since 1999, following the opening of the Mettawee Community School. Originally constructed in 1849, the building is listed on the State Register of Historic Sites and Structures, and represents an effective "adaptive reuse" of an historical building that retains its importance to the community. It also, however, is in need of repair. An initial assessment was done in 1999, with the help of the Vermont Preservation Trust. Work was recently completed on the roof and the brick façade. Additional interior and window repairs are needed.

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Municipal Facilities & Land		
Property	**Established**	**Comments**
Town Office Building West Rupert	1999	Historic structure (formerly the West Rupert School, constructed in 1849)
Rupert Village School Rupert	1999	Historic structure (formerly the Rupert Village School built c.1872) ; houses the own library, Rupert Historical Society
Town Barn (Garage) VT315	c. 1930	In need of replacement; part of the structure is on Rupert Fire Department land; the site also includes the town's transfer station
Rupert Town Forest VT153	1960s	89-acre parcel donated to town, reached by a legal trail; parking for five vehicles; used for hunting, trapping, logging
"2 Acre" Parcel	2000	Town parcel next to fire department land
Mettawee Valley Community Center (Recreation Field) North Rupert	1980s	A three-town, 13.5-acre recreation field and facility under the management of a recreation board representing Pawlet, Rupert and Dorset; softball field, paddle tennis court, picnic facilities, parking

The Rupert Selectboard, as noted previously, established the **Rupert School House Restoration Project** in 2003 to help raise funds to restore both the Town Office, and Rupert's other publicly-owned school – the Rupert Village School. The original estimate of needed repair work was revised in 2003. Adjusted for inflation, the total cost of repairs and improvements was estimated at $101,437. The Restoration Project has successfully applied for a number of grants, matched through local fundraising events and private donations.

Rupert Village School. The Rupert Village School, originally constructed in 1872, has housed the Rosalind Keshin Kittay Public Library and the Rupert Historical Society since 1999. This building is also listed on the state register, and retains its historic significance to the community. New doors were installed in 2004. Several matching grants were received in 2003 and 2004 – totaling over $48,000 – which will be used to install an elevator (platform lift), ramp, and restroom modifications to improve accessibility and meet federal disabilities standards. Other needed improvements include roof, window and foundation repairs and replacement of the bell tower.

Town Barn. The town barn (garage) was originally constructed in 1930 and is no longer adequate to meet the highway department's space needs, or new state mandates for salt and sand storage. There is local concern, however, over the potential cost of a new facility –in 2005, town voters defeated related proposals to authorize $30,000 for the purchase of land on the Hebron road for a new town barn, and to the sell the Rupert Town Forest, the proceeds of which were to support the construction of the new facility. The proposed site remains under consideration. The current property also houses the **Rupert Transfer Station**.

The department's capital inventory – including vehicles, equipment, and tools, in 2004 was valued at $211,000, and includes a 2000 payloader, a 1999 dump truck, a new ditchbank mower, purchased in 2004, and a new grader, leased in 2004. It also includes vehicles and equipment that have been in use since the 1970s and 1980s. The department expects to replace its 1989 International truck in 2005.

The Rupert Village School – home to the town library and historical society.

Municipal Land. Municipal land includes the **Rupert Town Forest**, an 89-acre parcel located off of VT 153 that can be accessed by a legal trail. Parking is available for up to five vehicles. Current uses include logging, hunting and trapping. Other outdoor recreation is also allowed, but no management plan, or formal trail network – that could link to the D&H Rail Trail – has been developed.

Rupert also owns a "2-acre" parcel, purchased in 2000, that is located next to fire and highway department land.

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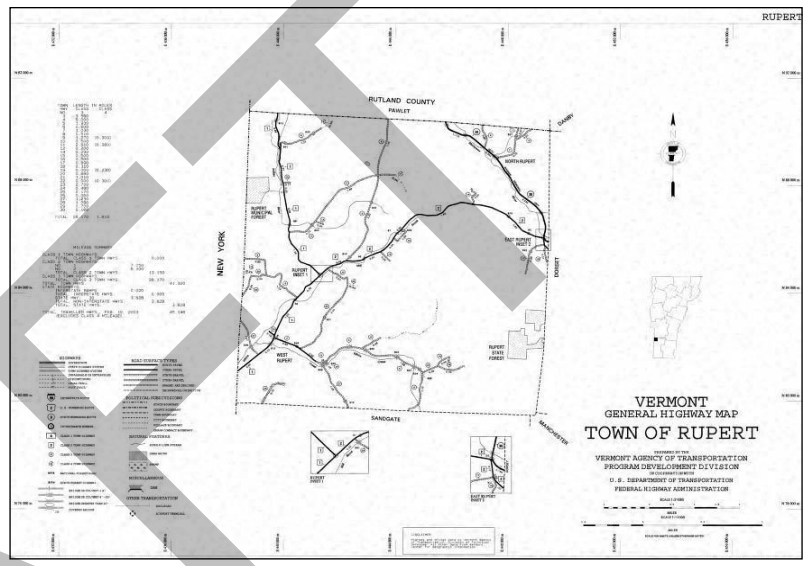
Transportation

Rupert's transportation network has evolved over the centuries, from footpaths and carriage roads through the woods, to the height of transportation network development in the 19th century – that included an expanded road network and local train service – to the much improved roads of today, designed mainly for vehicular safety and speed. Historically, roads were one of the first public investments to be paid for through local taxes. Roads were so important to early settlement that in 1806 the locally financed "Rupert Turnpike" – a 12 mile, 4-rod (66-foot wide) road – was completed from Pawlet, VT to Salem, NY, at a cost of $7,000.



Roads. Today, there are 47 miles of road in Rupert, including nearly four miles of state highway (VT 30), over 41 miles of regularly maintained town highways (Class II and III), and 1.8 miles of town highway that are not regularly maintained (Class IV). There are also, as shown on town highway maps, public rights-of-way that provide limited access to adjoining properties – including a designated legal trail that accesses the Rupert Town Forest, and a discontinued town right-of-way off of TH 24 (Hidden Valley Road) that provides access to the Merck Forest (see Map B). The town highway system also includes 39 bridges and culverts over six feet in length.

Road Class	Description/ Functional Class	Mileage	Surface Type(s)
State Route	State highway, maintained by the state [VT 30]; Minor arterial – carries mostly through traffic, some local traffic	3.83	Paved
I	Town highway, designated by the state as a state highway route – carries through and local traffic	0.00	NA
II	State numbered town highway connecting towns [VT 315, VT 153]; major and minor collectors – carry through traffic	13.15	Paved
III	Town highway, maintained year-round – local road intended to carry local traffic and provide access to collector roads.	28.17	Paved Gravel Graded Dirt
IV	Town highway; not maintained for year-round use [sections of TH 9 and TH 11, TH 19, TH 22] – local road, may provide access to adjoining properties for seasonal or recreational use	1.81	Dirt

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Traffic. Traffic on roads through town has increased in recent years, as determined by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) from actual and estimated traffic counts. During the 1990s, the average annual daily traffic (AADT) increased by:

- 29% on VT 30, from the Dorset line to VT 315 – reaching an average of 4,100 vehicle trips per day by 2002,
- 18% on VT 30, from VT 315 to the Pawlet line – reaching an average of 3,000 trips per day by 2002,
- 11% on VT 315 (TH2) – reaching 910 trips per day by 2003, and
- 31% on VT 153 (TH1), from VT 315 to the Pawlet line – reaching 510 trips per day by 2003.

In 2003, truck traffic accounted for nearly 7% of the daily traffic on VT 30, 5% of the daily traffic on VT 315, and 15% of the daily traffic on VT 153 through Rupert.

Access Management

As traffic increases, access management along roadways becomes more important to prevent hazardous conditions, avoid traffic conflicts, and preserve the main function of the road. Arterials and major collectors are designed to move traffic safely and efficiently through town, but may also provide limited access to adjoining properties. Local town roads are intended mainly to carry local traffic and provide access to adjoining properties Regulating access points (curb cuts) along a road – for example, by allowing only one access per parcel or requiring access from a secondary, less traveled road where feasible – is a common form of access management. Zoning also can be used to manage and limit development along road corridors.

VTrans has jurisdiction over any access onto a state highway. The Rupert Selectboard has the responsibility to approve access onto town roads, in accordance with locally adopted road policies and ordinances. Both state and local access approvals must conform to the town's land use regulations, which may also regulate access associated with the subdivision, development or redevelopment of a parcel. Given overlapping jurisdictions, it's important that state and local access management standards are consistent, and are also consistently applied.

Road Improvements. A bridge repair on VT 315 was completed in 2004. No other major road improvements are scheduled in town over the next five years, however the Bennington County Regional Commission, in their 2002 Regional Transportation Plan, identified the following needed improvements along the VT 30 and VT 153/VT 315 corridors:

VT 30 (Mettawee Valley Corridor)
Sufficiency Rating: Good
Pavement Rating: Good (last paved in 2004)
Designated bike route; proposed scenic corridor

- Shoulder improvements, including bicycle route improvements
- Improved fishing access areas
- Improved cattle and agricultural crossings
- Footpath and hiking connections to the Merck Forest, and completion of the Southern Vermont Trail.

VT153/VT315
Sufficiency Rating: Fair
Pavement Rating: Fair
Proposed scenic corridor

- Shoulder improvements
- Improved trail head signs and snow mobile access
- Potential connections linking rail trail to other routes
- Improved signs and amenities for the Merck Forest recreation area.

Rupert does not have an adopted road management plan. For the past several years, however, the town has voted to allocate $10,000 per year to pave gravel roads and reduce ongoing maintenance costs. Though the expenditure of funds for this purpose has continued to receive voter approval, concerns were noted during the 2004 Community Forum that paving the town's gravel roads could increase traffic and speeding, and alter their scenic, rural character. The town has not yet conducted a scenic road inventory – such an inventory could help determine which roads should remain graveled, and which could benefit from resurfacing and related improvements.

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To Pave or Not to Pave…

The decision to pave a gravel road is a matter of tradeoffs. When a town decides to pave a road, it's usually with a view toward reducing maintenance costs and providing a smooth riding surface. But paving can be expensive, generate higher traffic volumes and speeds and unsafe road conditions, and require more technical skills and equipment to repair and maintain. The town should consider paving a road when:

1. It's committed to an effective, long-term (10-20 year) road management program.
2. It has developed a road surface management plan or system (RSMS) that identifies paving as part of a town-wide road improvement program.
3. Traffic demands it – for example when average daily traffic volumes reach 400 to 500 vehicles per day, or heavy vehicle loads (e.g., trucks) require it.
4. Local standards for road design, construction and maintenance have been adopted.
5. Road design and safety have been considered – especially for right-of-way and road improvements that are necessary to accommodate increased traffic speeds.
6. The road base and drainage have been adequately improved.
7. The costs of road preparation have been determined, which may vary greatly based on topography, soil type, the availability of gravel, traffic demands and other factors.
8. A full cost comparison – including relative of paving costs, pavement life, and long-term maintenance costs – has been completed.
9. User (vehicle operation) costs have been considered, which are generally higher on gravel roads.

Source: Adapted from "When to Pave a Gravel Road," a fact sheet published by the Vermont Local Roads Program.

The town currently imports gravel for road maintenance, and could benefit from identifying and securing a local, long-term supply of this increasingly limited resource.

Pedestrian Facilities. There are recreational paths and trails in town for use by pedestrians – including an extensive trail network at Merck Forest – but only Rupert and West Rupert have sidewalks that are in various states of repair. The town currently does not have sidewalk or "streetscape" plans for its three main hamlets

Public Transportation. In 2000, according to US Census data, sixteen Rupert households did not have access to a vehicle. The Green Mountain Chapter of the American Red Cross (GMCARC) provides public transit services on demand for the town's senior, disabled and "transportation disadvantaged" residents. These services are supported in part through an annual contribution from the town. There is currently no fixed route bus service through Rupert. The Green Mountain Express, operated by the GMCARC, runs four trips daily between Manchester and Bennington. Marble Valley Regional Transit connects Manchester and Rutland, with a stop in East Dorset. Vermont Transit offers limited intercity bus service, with stops in Rutland, Manchester, Arlington and Bennington, and provides a link to the Albany Airport.

Park & Rides. Few Rupert residents carpool – in 2000, only 17 local residents reported sharing a ride to work, down from 62 in 1990. There is no park and ride lot in Rupert, but there is an informal lot on Route 30, just over the town line in Dorset. In 2004, VTrans established a grant program for towns to develop small, municipal park–and-ride facilities to encourage ride-sharing. The region's ride sharing program is coordinated through the Red Cross.

Rail & Air Service. Rupert once relied heavily on rail service for connection to the outside world but, with the abandonment of the Delaware and Hudson line in the 1980s, such service has not been available locally for many years. Amtrak currently provides passenger service on the Ethan Allen Line, running from Rutland to Rensselaer, NY. It's the region's position to reroute this service, and to enhance existing freight service, through Bennington County. The nearest airport open to small aircraft is in Granville, NY. Rupert lies halfway between the Rutland State Airport and the William H. Morse Airport in Bennington. Charter freight service is available at both airports; Rutland also offers limited passenger service. Regularly scheduled passenger service is available at the Albany International Airport (NY), the Manchester Airport (NH), and the Burlington International Airport (VT).

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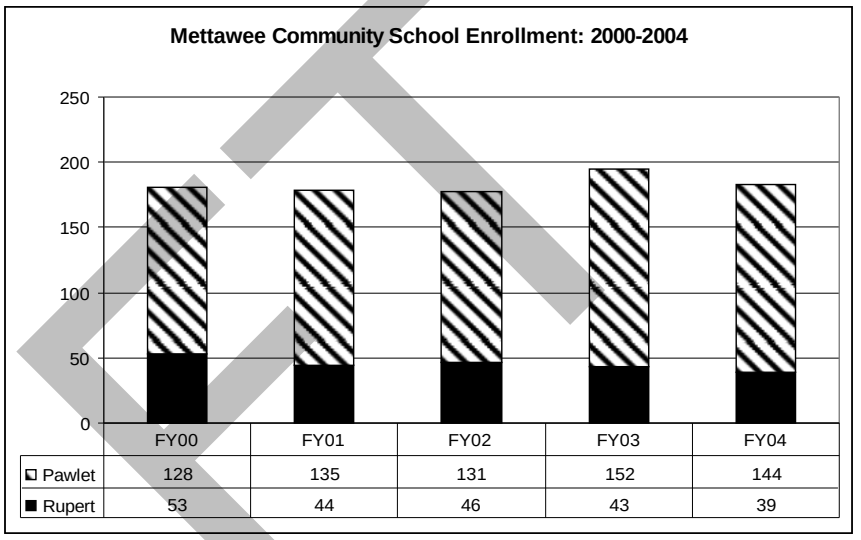

Education

Elementary Education. The Town of Rupert joined with the Town of Pawlet in 1995 to form Union School District #47 for the education of our elementary students. Rupert is represented on the union district board by two elected school directors.

The formation of USD #47 resulted in the construction of the **Mettawee Community School**, located on RT 153 in West Pawlet, which opened in 1998 to serve both communities. The Mettawee Community School is a one story, wood framed facility that houses fourteen classrooms for grades kindergarten through six. It also includes a gymnasium/ auditorium that seats 600 people, a music room, a library and computer center, an art room and modern kitchen facilities. The school has Internet access (a 56K line) and phones in each room. Because the school is relatively new, annual expenditures on operation and maintenance are consistently less than the state average. A building fund is maintained for facility repairs; no major facility improvements are anticipated over the next five years.

Total elementary school enrollment has grown since the school opened in 1998, but has remained fairly constant since 2000 – averaging around 183 students per year in grades K-6. As anticipated from 2000 US Census data, Rupert's enrollments, and its relative share of total enrollments, has declined – from 29% in 2000 to 21% in the 2004 school year. Local enrollment in the school's early education (pre-K) program has averaged around five students per year. A few local students are also home schooled. In 2004 there were 16.7 full-time equivalent classroom teachers at the school. The student teacher ratio (9.3 to 1 in 2004) has been consistently lower than the state average.

Secondary Education. Most Rupert secondary students attend Salem Central School in Salem, NY on a tuition basis. This is Rupert's designated high school, but more than 25% of local students attend other schools.

The town's total secondary enrollment has remained relatively constant since 2000 – averaging 54 students per year but, based on demographics alone, may be expected to decline over the next few years. In 2004, Rupert students made up 8.6% of Salem's total enrollment of 443 students. There were 40 full-time teachers, for a student-teacher ratio

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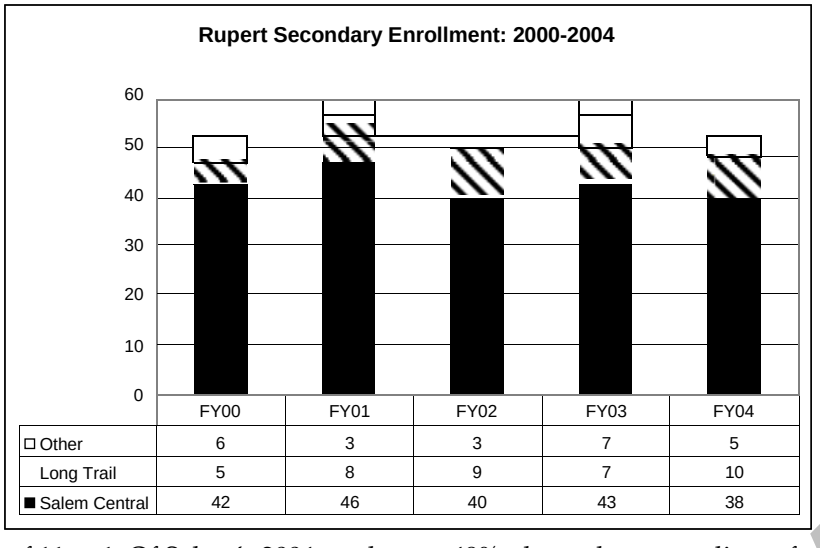


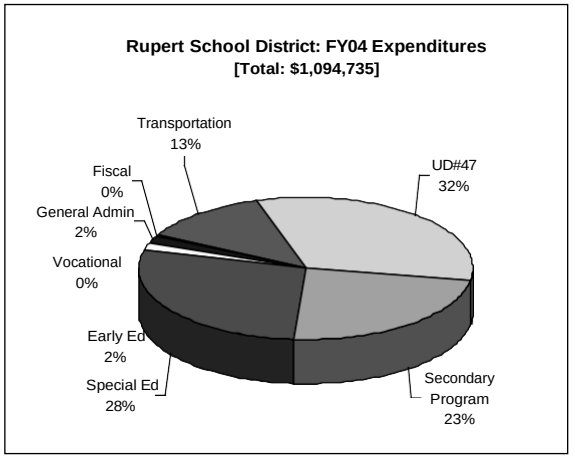
of 11 to 1. Of Salem's 2004 graduates, 49% planned on attending a four-year college, and 29% were headed for a two-year program.

Adult & Continuing Education. There are several colleges and advanced degree programs within a 25-mile radius of Rupert, including Green Mountain College in Poultney, Bennington College in North Bennington, the Southern Vermont College in Bennington, and Castleton State College in Castleton. The Community College of Vermont (CCV) offers classes in Bennington and Rutland, and on-line, and has an open admission policy and program that caters to adult students. CCV offers associate degrees and career-related certificate programs.

Education Financing. Attempts to make the system of financing education by state and local governments more equitable (with the enactment of Act 60 and more recently Act 68) have also made the system more complex. The state now pays for local education in large part through a statewide property tax calculated from the municipal grand list, which is adjusted each year to estimate fair market value. Nonresidential (commercial and seasonal) properties are taxed at a different rate than homesteads.[1] Revenues collected are dispersed locally at a set rate per student (base education payment), based on total equalized enrollments. If the adopted school budget exceeds the state's base rate per pupil, the rest must be raised through a municipal school tax assessment on homesteads – the intent is to link the local tax rate directly to local education spending. The state sharing (or shark) pool was eliminated in 2003 with the passage of Act 68, but there is now a penalty (an increase in the homestead rate) for spending 125% or more above the statewide average. There is also an income sensitivity adjustment for low income households.

In Rupert, school taxes account for around 73% of the total property taxes levied on a homeowner, and 77% of those levied on a nonresidential property. There's understandable concern over the effect rising school costs could have on local tax rates. Rupert School District expenditures (not including any repayments to the state), on average, have increased by 2.1% per year since FY01. The largest increases have been in secondary, special education and early education program costs. The district's total school expenditures, including the UD#47 assessment which is voted on separately, first exceeded $1 million in FY03.

In recent years, tax increases have been offset to a certain extent through a locally established "tax relief account," and an educational reserve account, both of which will be exhausted following the FY06 year.



[1] The homestead and nonresidential tax rates are reviewed and set annually by the legislature. The base education payment, $6,800 when adopted in 2003, is adjusted annually for inflation

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Public Safety

New national and state emphases on public safety and emergency preparedness have benefited local governments in recent years, including Rupert – by allocating resources for additional technical assistance, training, and equipment. New initiatives also require the preparation of community response and hazardous mitigation plans, the development of which is being coordinated through the Bennington County Regional Commission, and the region's Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). Rupert has an adopted Rapid Response Plan in effect, and participates in the state's Enhanced-911 system. System address information is updated on a regular basis.

Rupert Call & Incident Reports: 2000-04					
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Rupert Fire Dept.	42	39	29	22	36
Rupert Constable	19	14	14	19	17
Granville Rescue	9	7	13	12	15
Salem Rescue	37	12	28	30	18
E-911	NA	NA	19	70	86
Sources: Town Reports, State E-911 Reports.					

Fire Department. The Rupert Volunteer Fire Company was established in 1950 following a major fire in town. The department's current building – the **Rupert Fire Department Community Center** –was erected in 1976 with the assistance of community donations, for use as a fire station and as a community center. A building addition was completed in 2004, with volunteer help, to include additional kitchen and storage space, handicapped bathroom facilities, and a new heating system.

The fire department's response area includes the entire town and, through mutual aid agreements, surrounding communities. The department currently has seven volunteers who are "Firefighter I" certified (requiring 130 hours of training); and responds, on average, to around 34 calls per year. More than 50% of these are in town. The department currently has two fire trucks and an enclosed trailer that was purchased in 2004. Two of its older fire trucks were sold recently, following the purchase of a new truck in 2000.

The town continues to support the work of its fire department through annual appropriations that are subject to voter approval. The fire department also holds fundraisers, including an annual carnival, auction, and dinner, and has successfully competed for a number of grants to fund the installation of dry hydrants and new equipment purchases.

Law Enforcement. Rupert's crime rate is low, even for a rural community – according to state crime statistics, 15 crimes were reported in town in 2003, 11(74%) of which were misdemeanors. The town's two elected constables provide local law enforcement – responding to an average of 17 calls per year over the last five years. These have included traffic accidents and incidents, domestic calls, dog problems, disorderly conduct, and fish and game assists. The town constable also works the annual fireman's carnival. Back-up service is provided by the Vermont State Police, headquartered in Shaftsbury.

Emergency Medical Services. The town does not have its own medical rescue squad, but supports the Granville and Salem rescue squads through annual appropriations. Emergency services are also available

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from neighboring towns, including Manchester. The number of local calls that Granville has responded to has increased by 66% over the last five years (from 9 to 15), but Rupert calls make up only 1% of their annual total. Salem has typically responded to more calls in town, but the response rate has gone down in recent years.

Water & Wastewater

All local residences and businesses in town currently rely on private water and wastewater systems that are installed and maintained by the property owner. The town has an adopted on-site wastewater system ordinance that will remain in effect at least through 2007 (when state rules will supercede locally adopted ordinances).

In most parts of town the use of on-site systems is feasible given the low density of development – though there is very real concern that many of Rupert's soils are not generally suited for on-site septic systems, even under new state standards that will open more upland areas to development. System failures are more of a concern in the town's hamlets, where systems are old and structures are on small lots, making it difficult to replace failed water or wastewater systems. At minimum the use of shared, off-site systems should be allowed in these areas under local regulations, in order to allow for system replacements and higher densities of development.

As noted in previous town plans, at some point there may be the need for the town to invest in a municipal water system that would eliminate the need for private wells, and the danger of contamination from on-site septic systems.

Solid Waste

Rupert's town dump was closed in 1986. Since then, the town has operated a transfer station at the town garage, manned by a solid waste attendant, for the collection of solid wastes and recyclables. In 2003 Rupert joined the "Integrated Solid Waste Applications Program", coordinated through the Bennington County Regional Commission, which also serves the towns of Arlington, Dorset, Manchester, and Sandgate. The ISWAP's solid waste management plan, as required by the state, was updated and readopted in 2004. ISWAP also runs annual household hazardous waste collection programs, and compost bin sales.

Recreation

The Rupert Fire Department Community Center is Rupert's primary indoor community facility; though community programs are also offered through the local library. Outdoor recreational opportunities abound in town, and are highly valued by local residents for traditional pursuits, such as hunting and fishing, as well as hiking, cross country skiing, and snowmobiling. Much of this access to the outdoors depends upon the good will of private landowners. There are also, however, public lands and facilities that are open to the general public.

Mettawee Valley Community Center. The Mettawee Valley Community Center is a 13.5 acre, multi-purpose outdoor recreation facility developed to serve the communities of Rupert, Pawlet, and Dorset. The MVCV is located in Rupert on VT 30, just south of the Pawlet town line, and is managed by a private board with representation from each of the three towns.

Developed during the 1980s, the construction of the MVCC represented a significant volunteer effort that included many donations of equipment and time – including the services of the Vermont National Guard.

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At present the MVCC includes baseball and soccer fields, a volley ball court, a paddle tennis court, and playground, picnic and parking facilities. There are future plans for the installation of fire pits, full, tennis courts, a multipurpose building, and potentially a swimming pond, and camp sites for use by local youth organizations.

D& H Rail Trail. The Delaware and Hudson Rail Trail is a 19.8 mile long converted rail bed which was originally part of the rail system connecting Rutland, VT with Albany, NY. The southern section of the trail follows VT 153 through the west side of Rupert.

Following the cessation of active rail service on the Delaware & Hudson line, the Vermont Agency of Transportation purchased Vermont sections of the rail bed, first with the intent of operating it as railroad, and then for recreational use. In 1986, the Vermont sections were leased to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to be developed and managed as a rail trail, with assistance from the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST). An advisory council was formed in 1996 to help preserve the right-of-way for its present recreational use, and potential rail use. The council promotes responsible trail use and recommends actions for trail management. The trail is open for hiking, jogging, horseback riding and biking and, when snow conditions allow, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling.

Rupert Town Forest. As noted, the Rupert Town Forest is a town-owned 89-acre parcel, also located off of VT 153, which is accessible to the public, and available for outdoor recreation. Parking is available, but no formal trail network has been developed. The Rupert Town Forest could be improved on a limited basis as a recreational or picnic area linked to the D & H Trail.

Rupert State Forest. The Rupert State Forest includes 332 acres in two parcels, located on the Rupert/Dorset town line. Limited access, via an old jeep trail, is available from Dorset. The state forest is available for outdoor recreation, including hunting, trapping and hiking, but, because of its relative inaccessibility, gets little active recreational use. A timber sale on 126 acres is scheduled for 2005 to improve the timber resource and wildlife habitat, as part of the state's long-term management plan.

Merck Forest. The Merck Foundation's Forest and Farmland Center, which includes over 3,200 acres off of VT 315**,** is privately owned, but open to the public for recreational use. The Center has an extensive, 28-mile trail network for walking, hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Motorized vehicles and mountain bikes are not allowed. The Center also offers camping, by permit, and cabin rentals.

Green Mountain National Forest. The Green Mountain National Forest in Rupert currently includes two parcels totaling 168 acres which, like state forest lands, are open to the public for recreational use, but are relatively inaccessible.

Mettawee Fishing Access. The Mettawee River Access Area, owned and maintained by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, provides public access to the river in North Rupert. It is accessed from VT 30. Limited parking, but no rest area or picnicking facilities, are provided.

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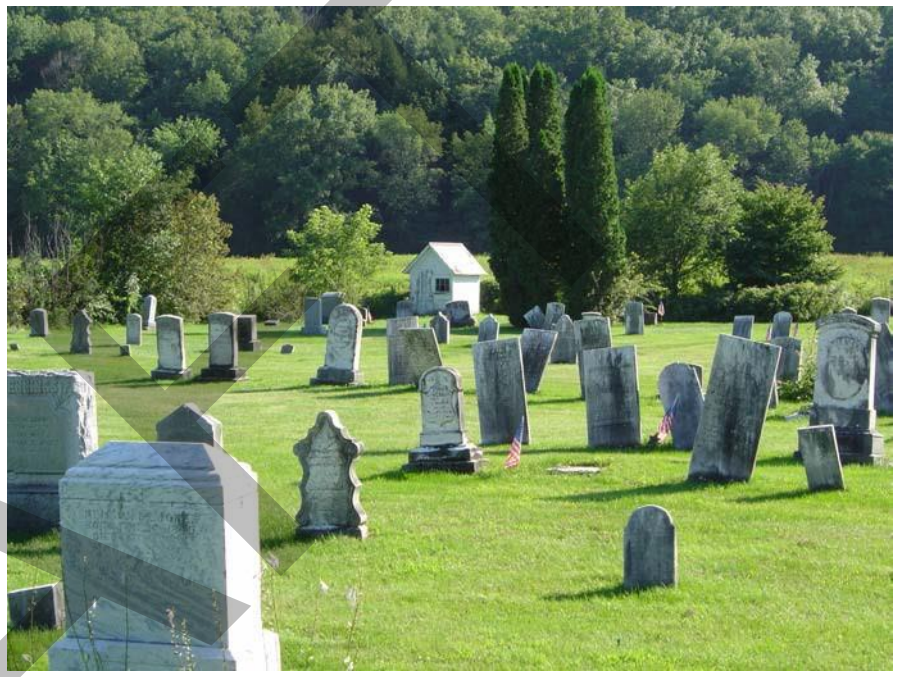
Cemeteries

The first cemetery in Rupert – the North Rupert Cemetery – was established by the town for the burial of its dead thirty years after its founding, in 1791. There are eight known cemeteries and private burial grounds in town in various stages of use or abandonment Two of them – the North Rupert Cemetery and the Rupert Street Cemetery – are actively operated and maintained by private cemetery associations. The "New Cemetery," established in 1889 on the Pawlet Road, is also still used occasionally, but wet soils limit its use. The town, in the past, has provided mowing services, and has a small cemetery maintenance fund. No additional space needs have been identified.

The town's cemeteries, in addition to providing for the needs of the recently departed, represent important cultural and historical resources. Efforts have been made to record both the town's cemeteries, and individual grave sites, for historical and genealogical purposes. Other unmarked graves may also exist – in Vermont private burials are still allowed on private land, if registered with the Town Clerk.



North Rupert Cemetery, established by the town in 1791.

Rupert's Cemeteries

Cemetery	Established	Last Burial	In Use	Graves	Remarks
Graves Family Ayers Rd	1825	1831	No	5+	Abandoned, some field stones
North Rupert RT 30	1789		Yes	500+	Very good condition
Cemetery on the Hill Pawlet Road	1889	1983	Seldom	50+	Poor condition – stones down, brush, scattered over large area
Rupert St. Cemetery RT 153, Rupert	1790		Yes	700+	Very good – some stones broken, leaning
West Rupert RT 153, West Rupert	1786	1908	No	75	Very good condition
Kent Hollow Kent Hollow Road	1799	1916	No	25	Poor condition – many stones down

Source: Burial Grounds of Vermont, Vermont Old Cemetery Association, 1991.

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Energy

Much of our daily existence depends upon the availability of affordable electricity and fuel for lighting, heating, cooking and operating our cars, trucks and equipment. Many fuel sources are finite and in increasingly short supply in relation to growing worldwide demand. Energy conservation and the use of renewable energy sources is expected to become more important in the near future, and especially over the long term. There is little that local residents can do to affect national energy policy, but there is much that can be done locally, and personally, to help conserve energy.

Act 174 and Enhanced Energy Planning

The Vermont Legislature approved Act 174 in 2016 to enhance regional and municipal energy planning and to establish a way for local communities to have more input on the siting of electric generation facilities. The Act established standards that, if met by a regional or municipal plan, assure that greater weight ("substantial deference") be given to those plans in Section 248 proceedings regarding the siting of electric generation facilities. The standards require that plans address specific requirements organized into three broad categories:

1. Analysis and Targets: assessment of current energy use and targets for future consumption;
2. Pathways: identification of implementation actions and strategies to achieve future targets;
3. Mapping: renewable energy resource maps and siting guidelines for renewable electric generation facilities.

This energy chapter is consistent with the Act 174 planning standards, statewide policies and goals outlined in the 2016 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP). Attaining Vermont's energy goals (summarized to the right) requires action at the state, regional, and local levels. A Regional Energy Plan adopted in 2017 by the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) is also consistent with the state goals and targets for efficiency, alternative energy use, and renewable energy development.

VT Energy Goals – Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP) 2016

- Obtain 90% of energy for all uses from renewable sources by 2050;
- Reduce statewide energy consumption by 30% by 2050;
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 50% below 1990 levels by 2025 and 75% by 2050;
- Rely on in-state renewable energy sources to supply 25% of energy use by 2025;
- Improve the energy efficiency of 25% of homes by 2025;
- Meet the Vermont Renewable Energy Standard through renewable generation and energy transformation.

Energy Use in Vermont and the Bennington Region

The Vermont CEP and related reports such as the Vermont Total Energy Study establish benchmarks to help guide progress toward a sustainable future. A central goal of the plan is to attain 90% of all energy used in Vermont from renewable sources by 2050. Reaching this goal will require a significant reduction in total energy consumption over time, achieved through various conservation and efficiency measures, use of alternative fuels, development of renewable energy resources in the region, and increased imports of renewably generated electricity.

The BCRC worked with the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC) to model levels of future energy use required to support attainment of state and regional goals. In the Bennington County region (see chart below). A leading finding of this analysis is that total energy consumption will have to fall by nearly 50 percent by 2050. Energy conservation efforts combined with improved energy efficiency through technology upgrades and building weatherization will enable Vermont towns to reduce energy consumption to sustainable levels into the future.

A key aspect of improved efficiency will be a greater reliance on electricity to meet energy demands, especially in thermal and transportation sectors. By 2050, nearly half of all energy used in the region will be supplied through electricity, much of that from local generation (see pie charts below).

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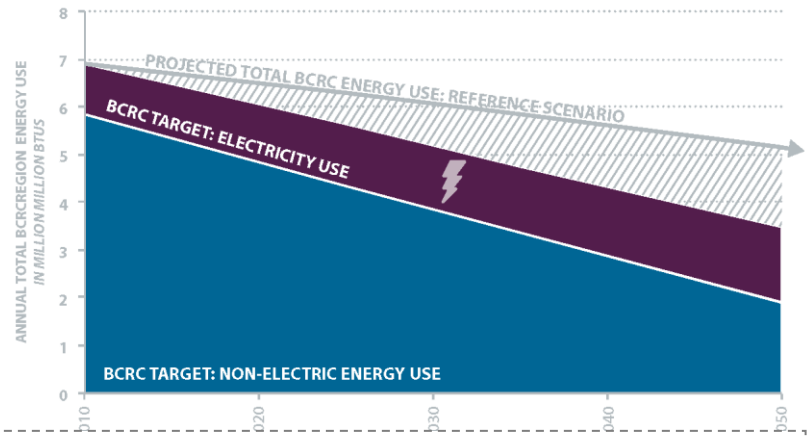


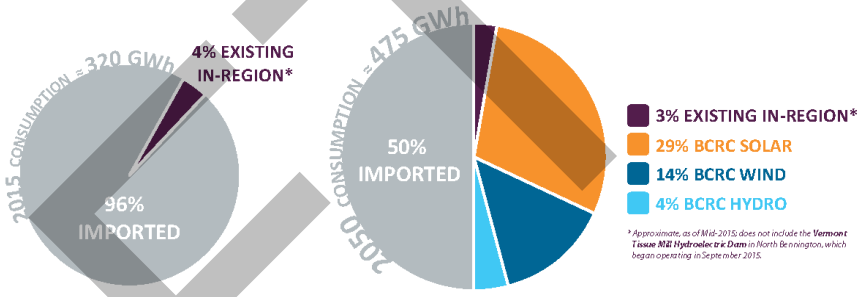
BCRC Region Energy Cost Estimates, 2014

According to LEAP estimates (see below for more details), to achieve the 90X50 energy goal, the BCRC region will need to dramatically reduce energy use by increasing efficiency and relying on electricity for many more purposes. The 'Reference Scenario' above represents a business-as-usual scenario.

Electricity not only provides great efficiency gains over fossil fuel combustion, but also can be generated from renewable resources such as solar, wind, and hydro facilities. New electricity-driven technologies such as air and ground source heat pumps and electric vehicles will provide the efficiency needed to lower overall energy consumption while maintaining economic progress and supporting a high quality of life for residents.

Though this major shift in energy use is considerable, there are opportunities to lower costs and bolster the local economy through a transformation of the energy sector, in which over $150 million per year currently is spent in the county on electricity and heating and transportation fuels. Nearly all this money currently flows out the region and the state through the purchase and transport of imported fossil fuels and electricity; reducing spending on energy and investing in local energy businesses and jobs will better retain wealth in local communities.

Rupert's future energy use will generally reflect regional trends. For more in-depth information about regional energy planning, see the Bennington County Regional Energy Plan (adopted March 2017). The remainder of this energy element will focus on energy use, policies, and recommendations specific to Rupert.



Sources of Bennington Region Electricity, 2015 v. 2050

Electricity use will increase significantly by 2050, with in-region renewable generation equivalent to about half the expanded 2050 electricity supply.

Current and Projected Future Energy Use

It is important to understand the current amount of energy used for various purposes in Rupert, the sources of that energy, and how demand for energy sources may change over time as the town moves toward its short and long term energy goals. This section of the plan will analyze energy use across the electric, thermal, and transportation energy sectors and, using data from the Regional Energy Plan's Long Range Energy Alternatives Planning (LEAP) model, identify future targets for reduced energy consumption and fuel-switching for transportation, residential heating, industrial, and commercial applications. The LEAP modeling was completed by the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC) using policies and assumptions contained in Vermont's Total Energy Study. Data and projections for Rupert are based on population, employment, and building stock data.

Rupert is a remote community that is home to a mix of residential and rural commercial uses as well as extensive forested and agricultural open space. The town's 714 year-round residents occupy about 309 housing units, approximately 92 percent of which are single family homes. The town also includes about 151 housing units occupied seasonally – about a third of the

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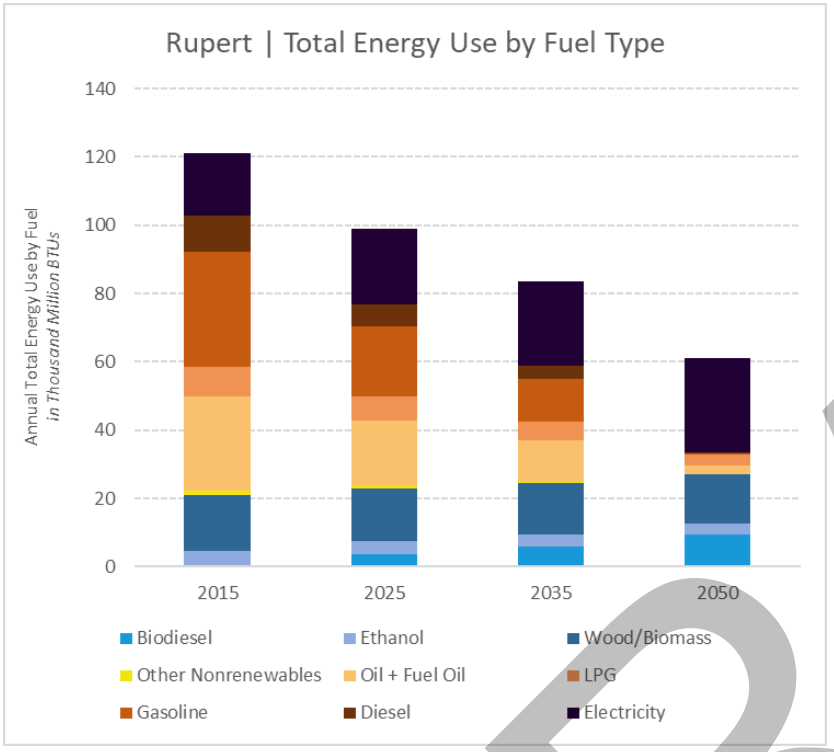
total housing stock in the town (data from 2010 Census and 2017 ACS estimates).



The town's economy is supported by over 20 private businesses. These residential and commercial land uses and associated transportation systems generate considerable energy expenditures. According to the LEAP modeling data, Rupert will need to steadily reduce overall energy consumption to meet energy goals, with total energy demand falling to approximately 50 percent of current levels by 2050 (see chart on total energy use to the left).

The most significant trends reflected in this transition, in addition to the steady reduction in total energy consumption, are the dramatic decreases in reliance on all fossil fuels, a significant growth in the use of renewable biodiesel fuel (primarily for heating and heavy vehicles and equipment), and an almost 50 percent increase in electricity consumption. While the use of woody biomass as a space heating fuel is not expected to increase significantly in absolute terms, the lower total energy consumption combined with improved building efficiency and the use of modern wood heating systems means that a much larger percentage of total energy demand will be met using this renewable fuel. The increased reliance on electricity, primarily for space heating and transportation, allows attainment of the much lower total energy demand through efficiency improvements. An assumption built into this model is that nearly all of the new electricity generation by 2050 will be derived from renewable sources.

Residential Energy Use

Energy use can be grouped into 3 major sectors: transportation, thermal (heating and cooling), and electricity. Rupert's more than 600 residents consume large amounts of energy for transportation, to heat space and water, and to power lights and appliances with electricity.

Transportation. In Rupert, and across all of Vermont, transportation consumes the most energy of any one sector. Due to Rupert's rural location, people and goods travel long distances to and from the community. Light duty vehicles ("LDVs," generally cars, pickup trucks, and SUVs) that make this mobility possible rely on vast amounts of non-renewable fuels to function. Given the dependence most households have developed on fossil fuel vehicles, transportation represents one of the greatest challenges to reducing overall energy use.

Fortunately, electric vehicle (EV) technologies have advanced significantly in recent years and these systems are positioned to replace internal combustion engines at an increasing rate in coming decades (see chart below). By steadily transitioning the town's light duty vehicle fleet, Rupert residents can improve transportation efficiency while keeping money in the local economy to support renewable electricity generation.

According to the LEAP analysis, Rupert can reduce the amount of energy used for transportation to 20 percent of current levels by 2050 while maintaining the number of miles driven by residents at a constant level. Electrification of the LDV fleet will account for much of this reduction in energy use through improved efficiency. By 2050, EVs are expected to comprise close to 90 percent of the LDVs in Rupert, with biodiesel and

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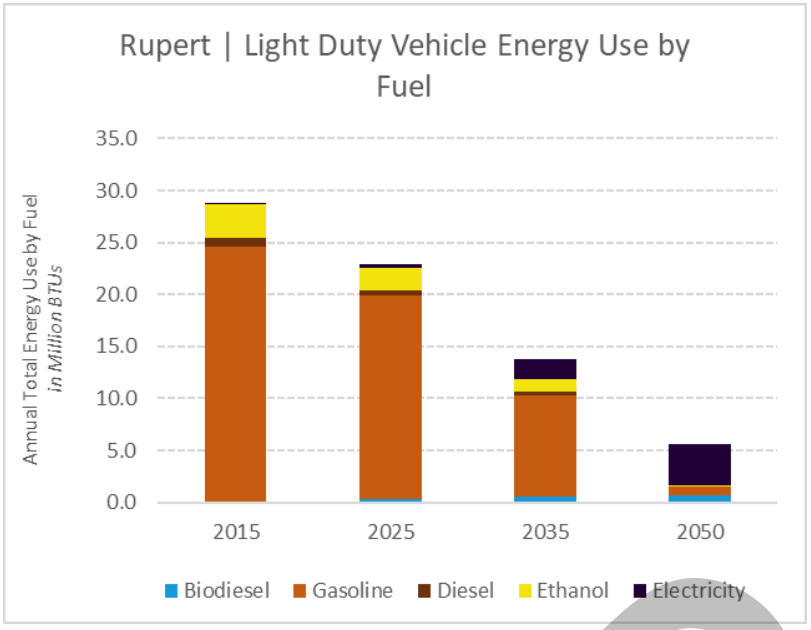
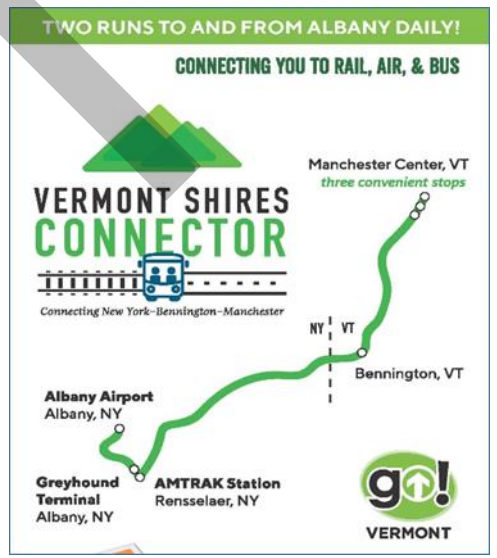
ethanol fueling most of the rest of the LDVs. **Rupert EV targets: 34 by 2025, 232 by 2035, and 478 by 2050.**



There are three main kinds of EVs: full electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid (petroleum and electric) vehicles that can be plugged in to charge, and hybrid vehicles (batteries provide an assist to the internal combustion energy and are charged while driving). Full EVs have larger batteries and do not rely at all on petroleum diesel; with increasing efficiency and driving range, it is expected that most vehicles will be full-electric by 2050. Electric vehicles of any type have a fuel efficiency significantly greater than that of internal combustion engine vehicles, leading to the significant efficiency gains projected over time.

Although EVs certainly will play a major role in reducing energy use while allowing Rupert residents to continue to rely on personal vehicle travel, efficiency gains from EVs alone will not account for all the energy reduction needed to meet future transportation energy targets. Conservation through behavior changes such as increased reliance on carpooling, transit use, and walking and biking will be critical to reaching 2050 energy targets. Policies and programs that encourage compact mixed use development and implementation of bicycle and pedestrian friendly ("complete street") road way design are necessary to shift the predominant transportation model to focus more on people and less on vehicles. Expansion of local and intercity bus systems, exemplified by the recent VtTranslines shuttle between Manchester, Bennington, and major transportation hubs in the Albany, NY metro area is another example of the type of change that will be needed to allow residents to reduce reliance on personal vehicles while retaining the ability to conveniently access local, regional, and national destinations.



This new intercity transit service is an example of the type of travel option that should be made increasingly available to residents in the future.

Thermal and Electric. Rupert's households consume energy for space and water heating ("thermal" applications), for electric lighting, appliances, and equipment, as well as for transportation. According to US Census (American Community Survey) data from 2015, almost half of the households in Rupert are heated with petroleum oil and another one-fifth are heated using LP gas. Relatively few, therefore, are heated using some type of renewable fuel such as cord wood, pellets, or electric heat pumps (with some portion of the electricity derived from renewable generation sources). Even using more generalized regional LEAP modeling data, a significant majority of Rupert's current residential thermal energy demand is met using fossil fuels. Profound changes in total energy demand and in the fuel mix will be required to meet 2050 energy goals (see chart below).

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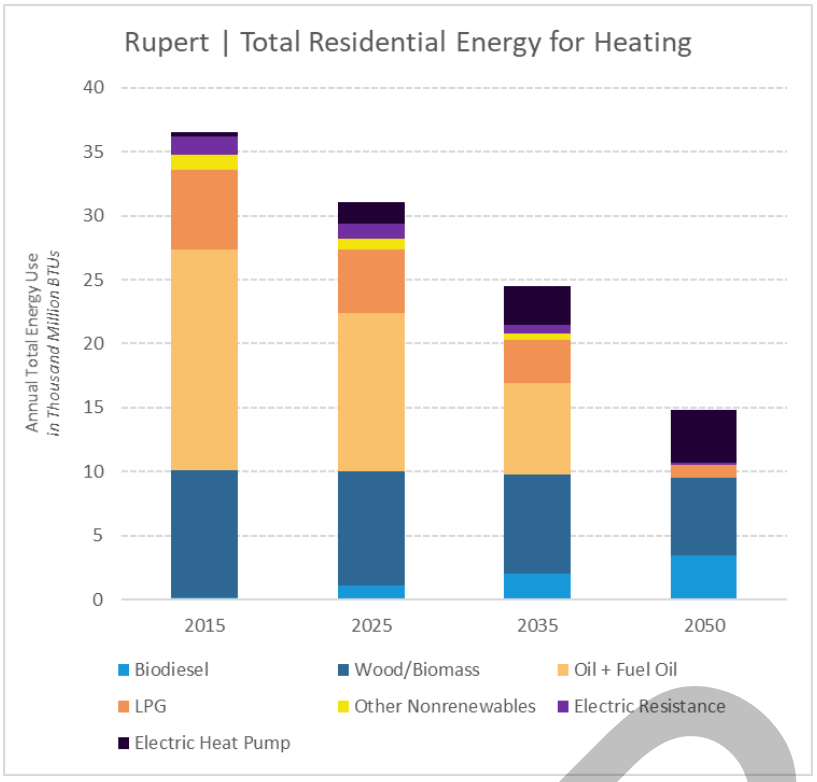
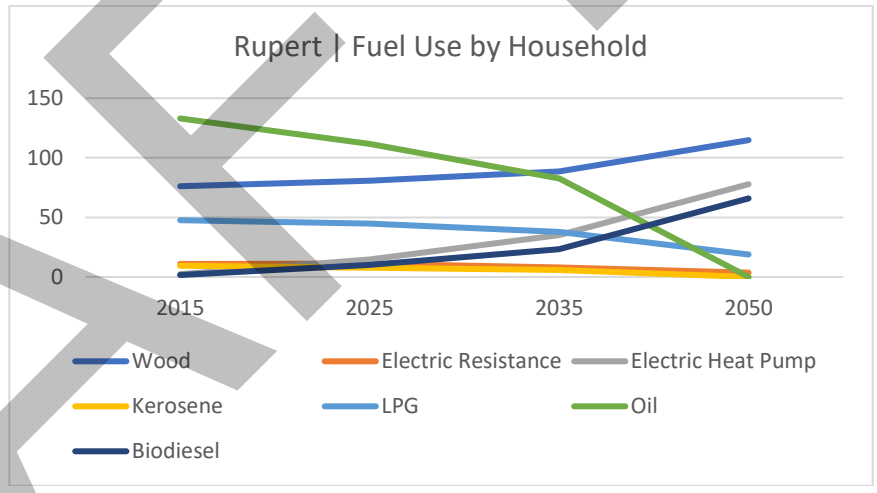


Forecasts for energy demand in the residential thermal sector all include significant efficiency gains, resulting in an overall decline in total energy consumption. As a result, the number of homes heating with cord wood, for example, remains about the same even though the amount of that fuel used drops significantly over time. Weatherization of existing homes will need to be a priority in Rupert, where more than one in four of all residential structures in town are at least 50 years old and likely are not well air-sealed or insulated. According to Efficiency Vermont data, about 24 homes in Rupert have completed registered thermal shell improvement projects in the past three years. **Rupert home weatherization targets: 22 by 2025, 69 by 2035, and 149 by 2050.**

The LEAP model also is premised on an assumption that liquid biofuels will become genuinely renewable (i.e., their net energy yield will improve dramatically over time as technology advances) and will be used to replace petroleum diesel as a primary fuel for some home heating systems. If that assumption is not borne out by real developments over time, it is likely that, for the town to stay on target toward meeting goals, many of those homes will have to switch to either electric heat pumps, wood pellets, or cord wood for their primary source of heat. **Rupert targets for heat pumps as primary heat source for homes: 15 homes by 2025, 35 homes by 2035, and 78 homes by 2050.**



Electricity demand projections in the residential sector are complicated by the anticipated widespread adoption of heat pumps (an electricity-driven technology for space and water heating that is much more efficient than older electric resistance heating systems) and electric vehicles (with considerable charging of batteries expected to occur at home-based EV charging ports). Average annual electricity consumption for a household in Rupert is approximately 8,613 kWh (just over 700 kWh per month), an amount that has fallen by about 200 kWh over the past several years as a result of energy efficiency initiatives such as the lighting and appliance incentive programs offered through Efficiency Vermont and with support from local volunteers. Those efficiency improvements will need to be continued into the future, and will be especially important as townwide electricity demand in the residential thermal sector is expected to more than double to over 1 million kWh annually by 2050 and electricity usage for residential vehicles is projected to grow from its current negligible amount to over 1 million kWh over that same timeframe. It is important to

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remember that even though electricity consumption will increase dramatically, total energy use (all sources) will decline more dramatically due to a variety of conservation and efficiency measures, including the far greater efficiency of electric-drive heat pumps and vehicle motors.

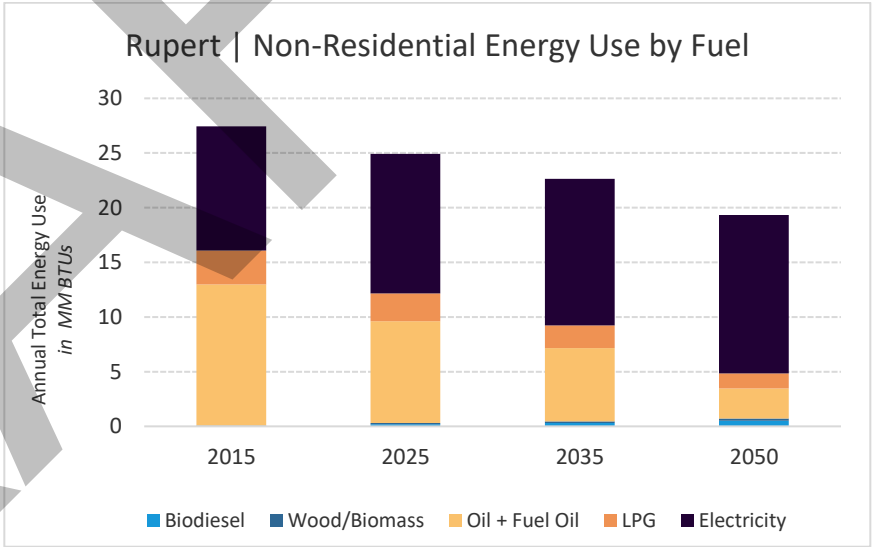
Commercial and Industrial (Non-Residential) Energy Use

Rupert is largely a rural residential community, though it is also home to 22 businesses employing about 54 people (VT Dept of Labor). Total energy use in the commercial and industrial sectors is estimated to be just about a quarter of total energy use in Rupert (based on LEAP estimates), and according to actual use data from Efficiency Vermont, commercial and industrial enterprises consume 10.8% of total electricity in the town.

Though commercial and industrial uses represent a relatively small share of total energy use in Rupert, these businesses use a significant amount of energy for space heating and cooling, operations, and transportation (for products, workers, and customers). Projected decrease in energy use in these sectors is not expected to be as great as in the residential sector (see charts below). Reliance on electricity in these sectors is expected to grow due to use of heat pumps and electrification of other business functions. Reductions in fossil fuel use will occur in both sectors, although a significant amount of propane use will remain for certain commercial applications and residual fuel oil for some industrial applications.

The use of wood (biomass) in commercial and industrial uses is expected to grow substantially by 2050. An important opportunity for converting to wood chip and wood pellet-based heating systems exists for commercial and industrial structures of sufficient size. Large-scale wood energy-based district heating systems may offer the ability to generate electricity in certain cases, especially where energy demand is relatively consistent year-round. The energy and environmental benefits of such systems are complemented by the economic benefits of reducing the amount of money spent on imported energy while supporting opportunities in regional wood fuel businesses.

Transportation is an essential component of the region's commercial and industrial enterprises. Commercial businesses require shipments of materials from suppliers for local sales, and industrial businesses receive raw materials and ship finished products to markets. A greater reliance on rail and public transit is anticipated, if not in the near future then in coming decades, and alternative fuels—electricity for light vehicles and biodiesel for heavy vehicles— will be used to power the private and commercial vehicle fleet. Tourism is a component of the local economy and it will be necessary to ensure that visitors have a way to reach the region and have sufficient mobility once here. Because electric vehicles are expected to play a large role in personal transportation, it will be important to ensure that sufficient charging stations are available at locations convenient for visitors and local residents.



Commercial and industrial (non-residential) energy demand is expected to decline slightly over the next several decades, with increases in efficient electrical systems and biomass and electric heating replacing oil and propane systems.

In the commercial and industrial sector, biodiesel also may become an important fuel in the regional economy, and the ability to produce biodiesel fuels locally from oil seed crops offers significant opportunities for economic development through sustainable energy production. It will be important, however, to ensure the area's best agricultural soils are available

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for the production of food to meet an increasing demand for locally sourced foods.

Energy Planning and Use - Municipal Government

The Town of Rupert relies on energy to provide services to the community. The town operates buildings, vehicles and equipment, and is responsible for services such as the community library, historical society, and street lighting. The town already has taken steps to reduce energy use by replacing streetlights with LED fixtures and by exploring other initiatives through Efficiency Vermont and similar resources. The Town Office presents particular challenges as an older building with several structural inefficiencies – such as large, paned windows and raised heating ducts – that make for costly improvements. The Town of Rupert is committed to taking all possible efficiency measures as integral parts of future Town Office repairs and improvement projects.

In 2018, Rupert spent over $50,000 on municipal energy costs. More than half (48%) of this total energy budget went to diesel purchases for heavy equipment and vehicles. Other major costs are heating oil for the Town Barn and street lighting. See table summarizing municipal energy use:

The library building (with library facilities on the first floor and the historical society space on the second floor) used $1,227 in electricity and $2,750 in heating in 2018. Uses for electricity are lighting (first floor CFLs,); one old window air conditioning unit on the first floor; plug load (computers and the occasional coffee pot); furnace controls and blower; and a very rarely used elevator. The building lacks hot water. An old electric water heater is inactive and likely decades old. For heat, the building uses a forced hot air system through ceiling level ducts. The oil furnace is likely decades old. The service book for the unit has a page for combustion efficiency tests results, but none has ever been recorded. The furnace is a "Thermo Pride" Model OL20-151 with input rating 185,000 Btu/hr. The building was built 1872 and used as a school until 1998. The first floor is 1500 sq. ft. of conditioned space, and the second is about 1200 sq. ft. No one is aware of any insulation that has been added to the building. Some windows have old combo storm/screen windows on top of leaky single-panes, and second story windows are opened on hot days to ventilate the building. There is no cellar or basement. Half the building is on a concrete sill (probably a replacement for stones at some point in the last century) and the other half is on a stone sill that is caving in at points, allowing access for air currents.

Rupert Municipal Energy Use, 2018

Town Office	Heating Oil	$1,487.33
	Electric	$871.11
Library/Hist. Society	Heating Oil	$2,750.06
	Electric	$1,227.20
Fire Dept/Comm Center	Heating Oil	$3,863.93
	Electric	$3,351.72
Town Garage/Barn	Heating Oil	$4,533.60
	Electric	$1,854.20
	Diesel	$24,545.07
Street Lights	Electric	$6,148.98
	Total:	**$50,633.20**

The Town Office is also an historic building (originally a one-room schoolhouse built in 1849) that has been expanded over time to its current footprint of 2,016 sq. ft. It is a brick building with a stone foundation and slate tile roof. For heating, the building has forced air heat with ducting and heat registers on the ceiling and a small electric water heater that serves a bathroom sink. Though the building has a single heating zone, the western and eastern portions of the building are typically at distinct temperatures due to differences in insulation and sealing. Large, aging windows on each side of the building are no longer air-tight and allow for heat and cooling losses year-round. The placement of heating system ducts along the roof is inefficient, but there is no space to locate them under the building. Two heat pumps would better heat and cool the building by placing one unit on each wing of the building. Existing single pane windows should be replaced with new, high-efficiency windows. The entire building should be insulated as well. To offset the increased use of electricity for heating and cooling, the offices could invest in solar panels or a mid-scale wind turbine. Efficiency Vermont has information on special financing for municipalities.

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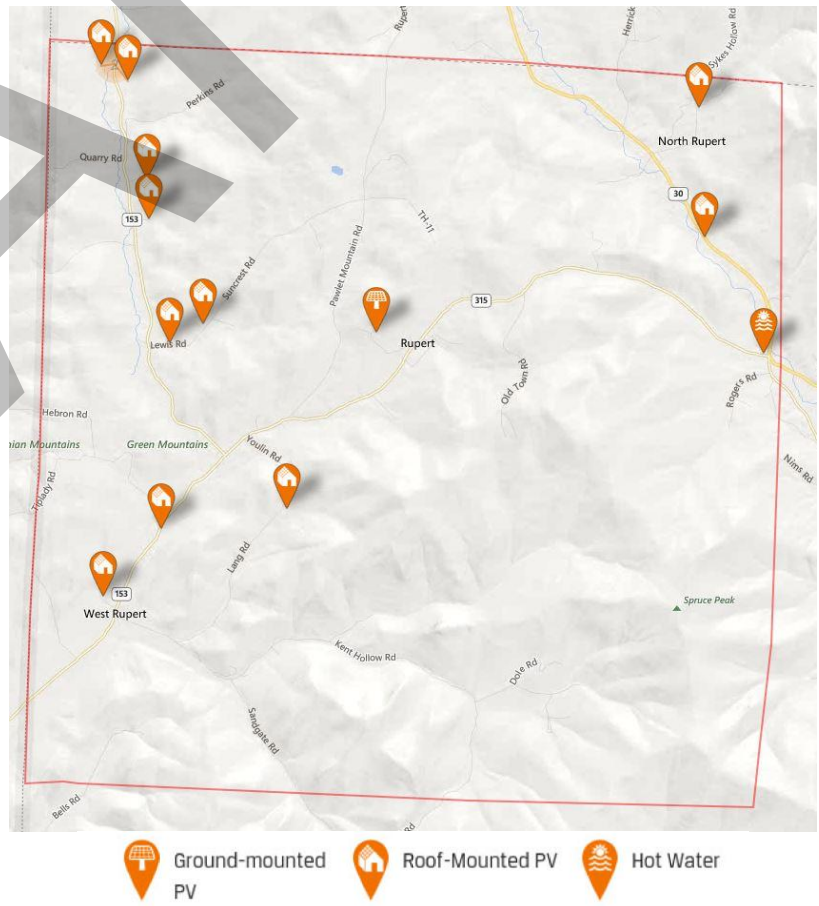
The Town Garage, also known as the Town Barn, houses the municipal vehicle fleet and associated equipment. It also has an office space and kitchen, and the town's food pantry is located there. The Garage has four bays totaling over 7,000 square feet of space and a 14 ft tall ceiling. A comprehensive energy audit should be pursued to see what measures will be most appropriate to lower total energy use at the building.
Another area in which the town can have significant impact is in its vehicle fleet. The town operates a fleet of vehicles and heavy equipment that use gasoline and diesel fuel. The Highway Department, with its dump trucks, pickup trucks, and array of heavy equipment is the largest user of energy in the local government. Consequently, its costs will rise more rapidly than any other department as gasoline and diesel fuel costs increase with resource scarcity over time.

The town is interested in improving transportation energy efficiency in the community by enhancing safety of bicyclists and pedestrians traveling on town roads. In some areas, bicycle lanes, multi-use pathways, and sidewalks are appropriate to connect the village centers, the town hall, and community facilities such as the D&H Rail Trail, the fire department community center, and the library/historical society building. Though Rupert does not have any schools in town, residents send their children to schools in neighboring towns by three buses, one that goes to Salem, NY, one that goes to Pawlet, VT, and one that serves students attending the Long Trail school in Dorset, VT. Long Trail students pay $50 per month to ride the bus. Increasing bus ridership is a great way to realize energy savings, as is carpooling.

The town recently took advantage of a program of Efficiency Vermont to replace all of its old (mostly 150W high pressure sodium) streetlights with new energy efficient LED streetlights. The new LED streetlights are much more energy efficient. The light from the LED units also is more "natural" and is distributed evenly, with very little wasted light or areas of overlapping illumination between adjacent lights. Green Mountain Power also benefits from such efficiency upgrades by realizing comparable savings on the amount of electricity it must purchase.

Renewable Energy Generation
Historically, Rupert residents relied solely on renewable energy resources – including animal and human power, hydro, solar and wind power, and wood– to meet their daily energy needs. These sources are still available, if not much used, locally. The vast majority of energy used in Rupert today is imported from outside the town (and generally from outside the state and nation) in the form of gasoline, oil, propane, and electricity. Some of the imported electricity is generated from renewable sources, primarily electricity obtained from hydroelectric generating facilities in Quebec and Labrador via utility contracts with Hydro Quebec.

Existing Renewable Energy Installations, April 2019.
Source: Community Energy Dashboard Data for Rupert.
https://www.vtenergydashboard.org/



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Even imported renewable energy has environmental impacts, however, including damage to river and forest ecosystems from hydroelectric projects in Canada. On the other hand, the impacts of local energy sources can be regulated more directly and such energy sources are more secure over the long-term. Therefore, assessment of the potential for renewable energy development in Rupert is a critical component of this energy plan.

Some electricity generation currently occurs in Rupert, all of which is generated from solar photovoltaic systems. Up-to-date information about net-metered, locally-generated energy from renewable sources can be accessed online from the Vermont Community Energy Dashboard's Energy Atlas. Data from the atlas currently show 13 solar installations in Rupert totaling about 125 kW installed capacity (see map above). Rupert's solar capacity target for the year 2050, as established in the BCRC Regional Energy Plan (2015), is 2.2 additional MW to meet local energy demand through locally-sourced electricity.

This plan includes geographic information system-generated analyses and maps that show modeled solar and wind energy potential (See Rupert Solar Resources Map and two Rupert Wind Resources Maps at the end of this section). Town policies on renewable energy development are found under the section on *Town Energy and Land Use Policy – Renewable Energy Development*.

Act 174 Renewable Energy Mapping and Constraints

There are many more areas in the municipality where specific scales of solar and non-utility wind development are appropriate. The following map analyses, which comply with Act 174 standards for renewable resource mapping (for more details, see Bennington County Regional Energy Plan, pages 80-83), provide information about renewable resource availability in the town. Maps were generated using GIS (geographic information systems) data layers developed by VCGI (the VT Center for Geographic Information). Renewable resource layers were mapped, and Act 174 'Known Constraints' were removed entirely from available resource areas. Act 174 'Possible Constraints' were overlapped with renewable resources to highlight where there are potential complications for developing generation facilities. See note below outlining the data layers that compose Known and Possible Constraints. Remaining resource areas that do not overlap with any environmental constraints are considered 'Prime' resource areas, and resource areas that overlap with Possible Constraints are called 'Secondary' resource areas.

Act 174 - Environmental Constraints

Known Environmental Constraints:

Vernal pools
River corridors
Floodways
State significant natural communities
Rare, threatened, and endangered species
Natural wilderness areas
Class 1 and 2 wetlands

Possible Environmental Constraints:

VT agriculturally important soils
Special flood hazard areas
Protected and conserved lands
Deer wintering areas
Conservation design highest priority forest blocks
Hydric soils

Solar

Solar radiation refers to the electromagnetic energy that emanates from the sun. We can harness that energy to produce heat or electricity via several different solar technologies. These technologies vary in their costs and appropriateness for different locations and applications. Passive solar approaches use site design and building material choices to maximize the capture of heat and light from the sun. Active solar technologies use equipment to convert solar radiation into electricity or equipment that uses the solar radiation to heat water. These active systems vary in scale from very small panels to very large solar farms covering several square miles with over 500 MW capacity.

Net metering is the arrangement that utilities use to credit solar energy system owners for the electricity produced by their solar panels. With net metering, the owner of the solar panels only pays for the electricity used beyond what the solar panels generate. **Community solar projects** are group net metered solar energy installations between 15kW and 150kW in size, with shares in the facility sold to the site owner, neighbors, community members, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses. Energy users buy shares in proportion to their annual electrical usage. When construction is completed, power is fed directly into the grid, and a group net metering document is filed with the utility showing the allocation of shares among the various members. The utility then splits the output of the solar farm among the members in proportion to their share size, crediting their utility accounts. Community solar projects are of

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particular interest to the town since they offer an opportunity to people who otherwise lack access to the benefits of solar energy production, such as renters or homeowners with financial or logistical barriers to installing a privately-owned system, to participate in a clean energy project. It is possible to go off the grid with a solar energy system that includes battery storage, but it will cost significantly more and is unnecessary for most residential applications with easy access to the power grid.

For policy purposes of this plan, solar energy facilities are grouped into two categories: **Small-Scale Solar**, here defined as systems with generating capacities of 150kW or less (AC) or 1.5 acres or less, whichever is greater; and **Utility-Scale Solar**, here defined as systems with a generating capacity over 150kW (AC) or over 1.5 acres, whichever is greater. It should be noted that advances in solar technology are constantly altering the generating capacity and physical forms of solar panels. Policies of this plan shall be regularly updated to be consistent with changes in technology.

The Town of Rupert establishes the following general policies concerning solar energy development:

- *Small-scale (generally 150 kW capacity or less) electricity generation from solar energy throughout the town is encouraged.*
- *The town supports the development of net metered solar projects and community solar projects in particular.*
- *The town supports larger scale solar development (generally greater than 150 kW capacity) on **preferred sites** as defined in state statute or as described in this plan.*
- *Rooftop solar energy development, of any scale, is encouraged.*
- *Passive solar principles should be implemented in the course of all new development.*

New solar facilities shall be restricted to areas that do not adversely impact the community's traditional and planned patterns of growth, of a compact downtown surrounded by a rural countryside, including working farms and forest land. **Preferred sites** shall include rooftops; gravel pits, quarries, or other earth extraction sites; brownfields as defined by the state or federal government; abandoned impervious cover; and as canopies for functional parking areas. Community solar projects are automatically considered preferred sites. Locations that would significantly diminish the economic viability of the town's working landscape, should be excluded from consideration for solar development. Therefore, the impact on soils of prime and statewide agricultural significance must be minimized during project planning and design. Similarly, the use of perimeter fencing around solar installations should be limited to avoid adversely impacting both aesthetics and wildlife. Alternative perimeter treatments, including natural vegetative screening, should be considered and used whenever possible.

Solar facilities shall only be sited in locations where screening will suffice to mitigate the visual impact of the facility on the following scenic attributes: views wherein fields form an important foreground; prominent ridgelines or hillsides that can be seen from many public vantage points and thus form a natural backdrop for many landscapes; historic buildings and gateways to village areas; and scenes that include important contrasting elements such as water.

Wind

Wind is the result of the movement of air from an area of high pressure to an area of low pressure within the earth's atmosphere. Wind can be harvested by wind turbine technologies. Turbines convert the kinetic energy of wind to mechanical power. That mechanical power can be directly used to grind grain or pump water as has been accomplished for centuries. Alternatively, that mechanical power can be converted into electricity. The siting of wind turbines must take into account average daily wind speeds of a given area. Wind harvesting technologies, furthermore, must account for changing wind flow patterns in the immediate area of the wind turbine.

Because relatively small areas are needed for turbine foundation and infrastructure, wind turbine installations are largely compatible with

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various other land uses such as agriculture. However, noise from turbines can have adverse effects on ecosystems, agriculture, and humans. Consequently, for utility-scale wind turbine potential, a residential buffer of one kilometer is used in the GIS modeling to map areas for potential development in Rupert (See Map 1).

For policy purposes of this plan, wind energy facilities are grouped into two categories: **Small-Scale Wind**, here defined as systems with generating capacities of 100kW or less (AC); and **Utility-Scale Wind**, here defined as systems with a generating capacity per turbine over 100kW (AC). However, it should be noted that with advances in technology, turbine sizes and capacities are constantly in flux. Policies of this plan shall be regularly updated according to these changes.

Many modern small-scale wind turbines are relatively quiet, emitting sound that is barely discernable from ambient noise. Smaller-scale projects, including residential-scale turbines (10 kW or less) and turbines installed at farms, municipal properties, institutions, and business sites (100 kW or less) are encouraged in Rupert. See images for reference. Individual sites should be assessed for appropriate specific turbine technologies, and siting should occur to mitigate any adverse effects in terms of noise generation, wildlife, or ecosystem services.
Star Wind Turbines, a company headquartered in East Dorset, is developing small-scale turbines suitable for Vermont wind resources. These turbines with multi-blade design and low rotation speeds produce less noise and are therefore acceptable in residential areas and safer for birds and bats. These high efficiency, low maintenance, and less obtrusive turbine systems of between 5 kW and 45 kW capacity could be well suited to sites throughout Rupert.

As revealed by the mapping exercise illustrated in Map 1, Rupert has limited potential for utility-scale (greater than 100 kW) wind energy development. Areas with sufficient access to consistent high winds are restricted primarily to higher elevations and ridgelines where there is a residential buffer for utility-scale turbines, a restriction on development above 2,500 ft elevation, public recreational lands, an absence of existing electric and road infrastructure, and overall environmental constraints limiting development due to high slopes and forest connectivity (Map 1). Because these constraints cover Rupert's high-level wind resource areas so completely, the town has determined that no utility-scale (100 kW capacity or greater) wind energy facilities should be located in the town.

Hydroelectric

Although hydroelectric generation is the most efficient renewable source of electricity, the impacts to aquatic ecosystems are so problematic that it is highly unlikely that new dam construction will be undertaken in Vermont. Consequently, retrofitting existing dams with new turbine technologies or installation of new inline turbines are the only hydroelectric projects that are feasible in the state. Hydroelectric generation is restricted in Rupert due to the limited number and suitability of existing dam sites. The town supports efforts to develop environmentally responsible hydroelectric energy in the future if improved technologies are better able to address environmental concerns.

Biomass and Liquid Biofuels

In addition to solar, wind, and hydroelectric development, Rupert should support efforts to develop appropriate cost-effective biomass (wood heat) energy resources and help promote combined heat and power biomass projects. Advanced wood heating offers an affordable, local, and renewable source of fuel with lower carbon emissions than fossil fuels. Although older wood heating systems were inefficient and had adverse air quality impacts, advanced wood heating systems are far more efficient and produce relatively little particulate matter. Advanced wood systems include cord

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wood, wood chip, and wood pellet systems. Kiln dried cord wood offers increased efficiency over air dried cordwood, and pellet stoves and boilers offer increased automation and convenience in addition to increased efficiency. In addition to helping reduce dependence on fossil fuels, promotion of locally derived and responsibly harvested wood biomass can lend to development of a more robust local forest economy that helps perpetuate healthy local forest ecosystems.

The LEAP future energy projections model places significant emphasis on the development of oil seed crops and liquid biofuels to operate vehicles, equipment and machinery on local farms. It is believed that such biofuels could potentially supply other businesses and the town with renewable fuels. However, the Town of Rupert prefers to reserve its agricultural areas for the production of edible food crops. Indeed, as already discussed, local food systems development is an important element of reduced energy consumption throughout the Rupert community.

Energy Strategies and Policies

A diverse array of targeted policies and actions will be required to effectively advance the town toward its conservation, efficiency, and renewable energy development goals and to support attainment of Vermont's goal of obtaining 90 percent of all energy used in the state from renewable sources by 2050.

More detail on many of the approaches listed and discussed here can be found in the 2017 *Bennington County Regional Energy Plan* (*Bennington County Regional Commission, March 2017*) and in *Guidance for Municipal Enhanced Energy Planning Standards* (*Vermont Department of Public Service, March 2017).* Additional information about the town's land use and transportation policies and recommended actions can be found in the land use and transportation sections of the *Rupert Town Plan, 2015*. Strategies for distinct energy sectors and institutional actors are discussed individually in the following pages.

Energy Goals:

- *Reduce consumption of fossil fuels and imported energy sources.*
- *Improve energy conservation and efficiency in residential, commercial, and industrial buildings and operations.*
- *Reduce total energy use and costs.*
- *Minimize the environmental impacts of energy use.*
- *Expand the use of renewable energy sources.*

Energy Policies:

Town Energy and Land Use Policy

1. Support a Municipal Energy Committee charged with promoting local residential and commercial efficiency and conservation improvements through coordination of information and technical assistance and advocating for appropriate renewable energy generation throughout the town.
2. Promote dense development. There are two dense villages in the town, and these areas are where future development should be concentrated to reinforce them as walkable, multi-use hubs. To encourage development of these dense hubs of activity, EV charging stations should be installed in conjunction with new development and improvement projects. Participation in the state village center designation program should be maintained as a catalyst for this development.
3. At the town offices, an EV charging station shall be installed and the viability of installing solar panels on the building's roof shall be assessed. Professional energy audits shall be pursued to identify cost-effective energy saving strategies. The town should develop a capital budget program that considers weatherization improvements and upgrading existing thermal and transportation systems to high efficiency electric technologies.
4. New development in Rupert shall adhere to the state mandated Residential Building Energy Standards, be planned to take advantage of a site's solar resource potential, and be made to

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accommodate multiple transportation modes when possible through the Site Plan and Subdivision Review processes.

Conservation and Efficiency Use of Energy

5. Residential - The Rupert Municipal Energy Committee shall work with BCRC to coordinate presentations and local conversations that promote residential energy efficiency and conservation through the following programs: the "Energy Star" building performance rating system; educational programming and appliance upgrade rebates available through Efficiency Vermont; and weatherization assistance provided by the Bennington Rutland Opportunity Council (BROC) and NeighborWorks of Western Vermont (NWWVT). The Town shall provide information on programs that assist low-income residents and owners of rental units in pursuing weatherization and thermal systems upgrades.
6. Commercial and Industrial - Energy efficiency and conservation may be promoted at these sites in the following ways: by requiring all new commercial and industrial buildings meet the state mandated Commercial Building Energy Standards; by encouraging existing business to explore efficiency and conservation strategies and rebate programs provided by Efficiency Vermont, which include promoting carpooling and alternative commuting modes among employees, completing energy audits, installing EV charging infrastructure, and upgrading thermal, transportation and other systems to higher efficiency and electric technologies when possible.

Transportation Sector Energy Conservation and Efficiency

7. Pursue opportunities to host informational presentations for Rupert residents and business owners on the advantages of electric vehicle (EV) technologies as well as state and federal rebate opportunities that may be coordinated with the assistance of Efficiency Vermont.
8. Assess the viability of new public transit routes. Installation and maintenance of high quality and ADA accessible amenities at public transit stops such as shelters, benches, bike racks, posted signage and schedules, and park-and-rides should be pursued when possible.
9. The Municipal Energy Committee, in partnership with BCRC and other groups, shall share information with local businesses and institutions about alternatives to single passenger vehicle commuting. This can include promoting rideshare, vanpool, and car-sharing, or strategies to support seasonal bike commuting, or using telecommuting to reduce energy expended for work travel. School bus ridership should be maximized to create community savings.
10. Assess existing roads for compliance with 'Complete Streets' design. Areas for improvement should be prioritized and funding sought to align these areas with Complete Streets guidelines.

Local Food Systems

11. The Municipal Energy Committee shall help facilitate dialogue between local/regional food producers and local/regional institutions such as schools, hospitals, and meal delivery or provision programs to enhance the interconnectedness of the regional food system.

Renewable Energy Development

12. The town should offset ongoing fossil fuel consumption by developing renewable energy facilities on appropriate town-owned parcels. The town should support interested residents in developing renewable energy facilities on their properties. The town should consider trialing use of blended biofuel in diesel-powered municipal trucks and equipment.
13. For specific policies related to the siting of renewable energy facilities, see previous subsections on Solar, Wind, Hydroelectric, and Biomass energy under the section ***Renewable Energy Generation***.

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Cooperation with Utilities

14. Support integration of advanced energy storage in the area.
15. Support full integration of "smart grid" technology throughout the town and region and use of "smart rate" pricing plans.
16. Cooperate with Green Mountain Power (electricity generation) and VELCO (electricity transmission) to ensure that areas planned for renewable energy generation are consistent with the capacity of the grid infrastructure and to ensure that any upgrades needed are implemented.

Energy Tasks:

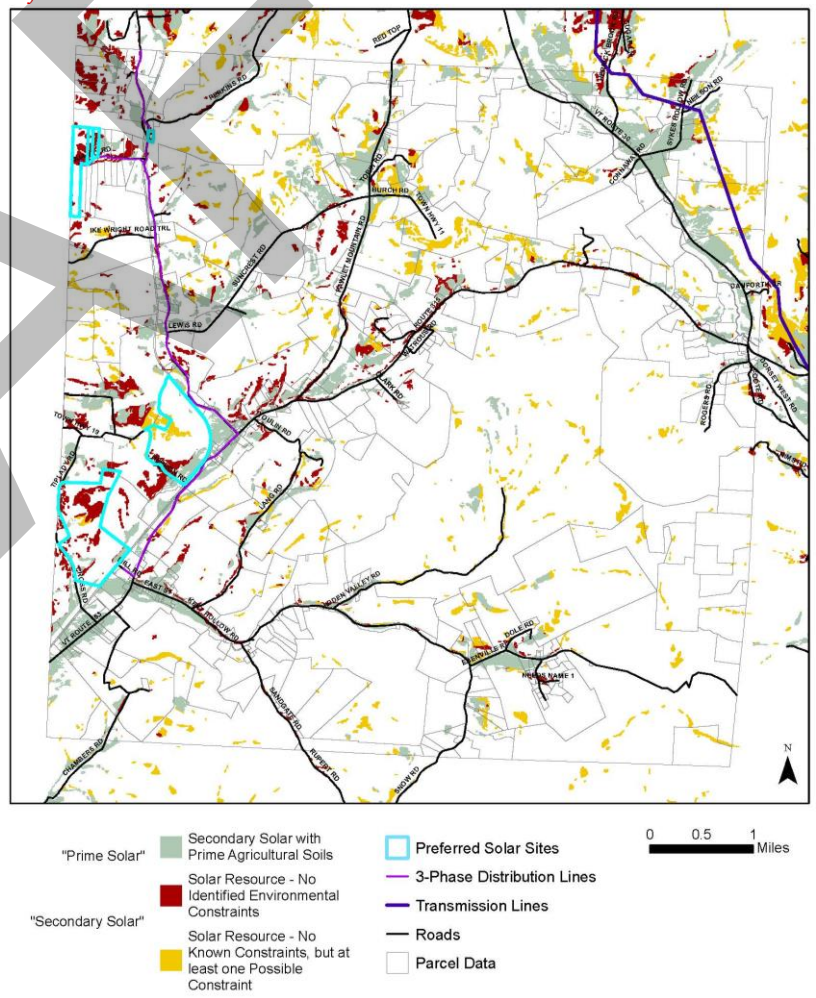
Town Energy and Land Use Policy

1. **Form a Municipal Energy Committee** to implement this plan and track progress on the policies and actions stated herein.
2. **Update the zoning and subdivision regulations** as needed to promote compact, historical development patterns that conserve energy.
3. **Conduct professional energy audits for all municipal infrastructure** to identify opportunities for efficiency improvements and renewable energy generation and use.

Transportation Sector Energy Conservation and Efficiency

4. **Install an electric vehicle (EV) charging station** at the town offices and/or another central location in each of the villages.
5. **Evaluate existing roads** for their ability to accommodate safe and convenient walking and biking.
6. **Assess the impact that tree planting along roads** in the villages could have on pedestrian comfort and traffic calming.

Rupert Solar Energy Resource Potential Map. Large-scale solar energy facilities (greater than 150 kW capacity or 2 acres, whichever is greater) shall be restricted to building rooftops, preferred sites, and other locations specifically identified in this chapter as preferred areas for solar energy development. Other sites are considered unsuitable for large-scale solar facilities. Siting of large-scale solar facilities is subject to the Siting Criteria set forth in this section of the plan. Small- and Mid-scale solar is permitted throughout remaining areas of the town. *GIS Data from VCGI and preferred sites from Town.*



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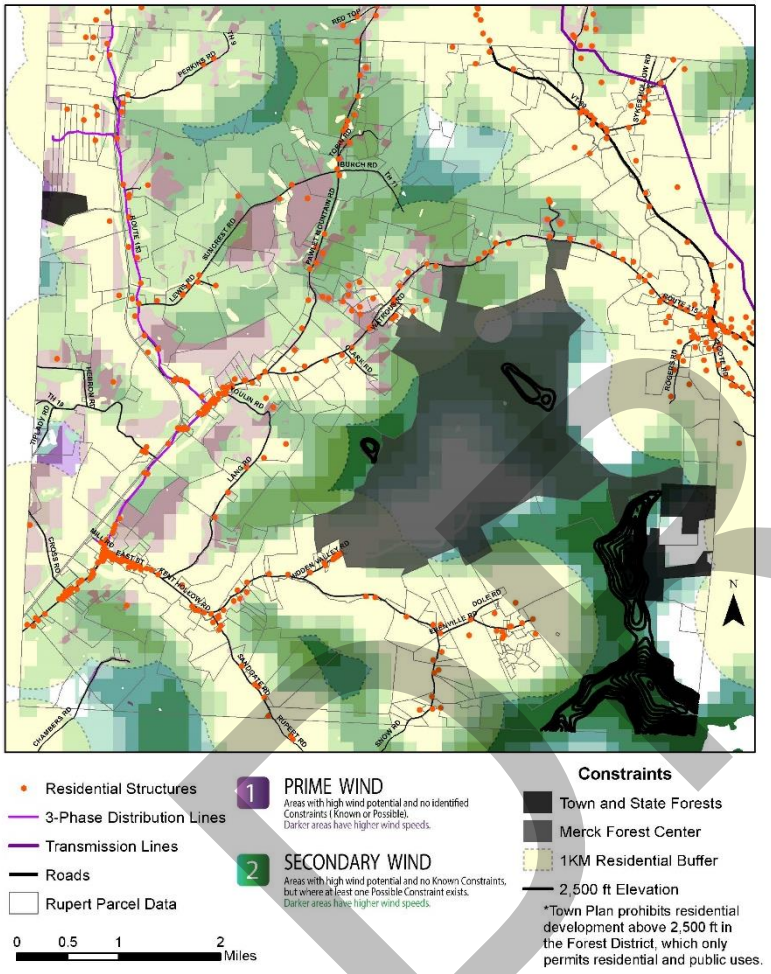
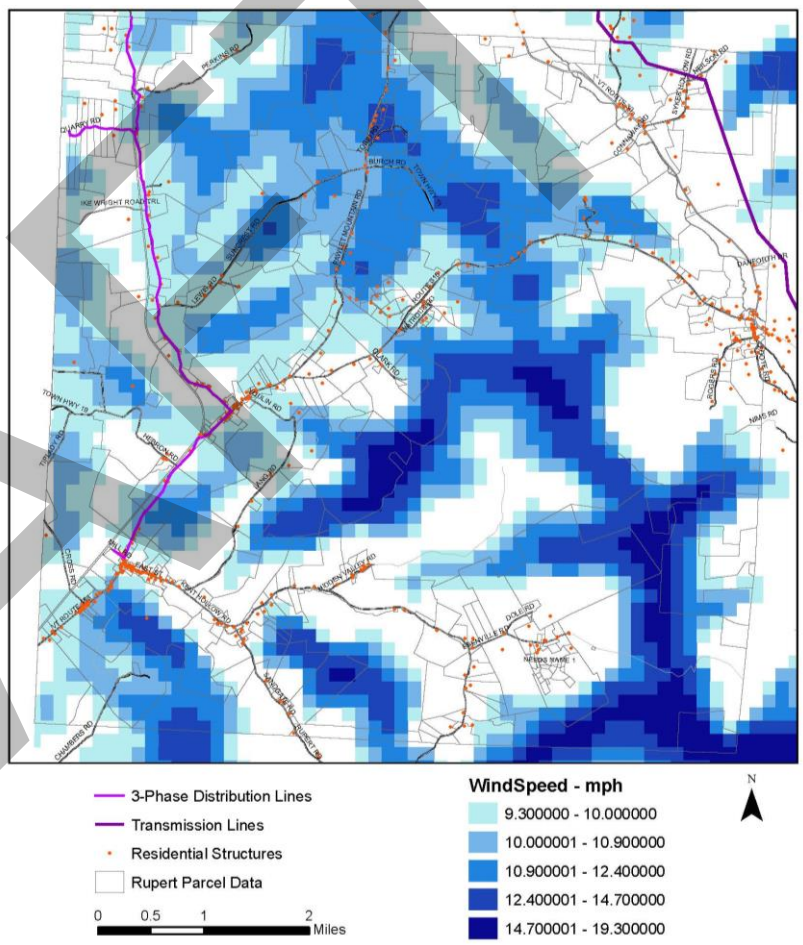
Rupert Wind Resource Map Showing No Availability for Utility-Scale Wind. Town and State Forests, the Merck Forest Center, and areas above 2,500 ft elevation in the Forest Conservation land use district are applied as known local constraints prohibiting development of utility-scale wind facilities in those areas. The regional constraint 1KM (*see BCRC Regional Energy Plan, 2017*) residential buffer is also applied as a known constraint. Together, these constraints place prohibitive limitations on large-scale wind development in the town. *GIS Data from VCGI.*



Rupert Wind Resource Map for Small- and Mid-Scale Wind. *GIS Data from VCGI.*



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Communications

Local communications networks, in addition to letting people know what's going on around town, are critical for building and maintaining community ties.
Beyond the local grapevine, these traditionally have included:

- the postal system – Rupert is still fortunate to have two local post offices (Rupert and West Rupert), though not all Rupert residents have a local zip code;
- newspapers – including regional daily and weekly newspapers;
- "posting" notices of meetings and events on town and community bulletin boards;
- annual town meetings and reports, and
- the larger community network of social clubs and service organizations.

Improvements in technology continue to change the way Rupert residents communicate and interact with each other and the rest of the world. Before phones were available, Rupert had its own telegraph office. Telephone, radio, and television service – once considered modern luxuries – are now commonplace. New communications technologies – including satellite radio and television, cell phones and broadband Internet access – are now, at some personal and public expense, making inroads into rural areas such as Rupert.

There are no cable systems serving Rupert – local residents rely on public airwaves for radio and television reception, or invest in private satellite systems. The town is currently divided between two telephone exchange areas – Verizon Vermont and Vermont Telephone – which provide a variety of fee-based phone services. All Rupert residents and businesses can access the Internet, for additional fees, through existing phone lines and a number of Internet service providers (ISPs). Public Internet access is now also available through the local library. Faster broadband service is much slower in coming – though it is a policy of the state to develop statewide broadband access by 2010.

A local sign of changing times and technology…

There is also some concern over the "digital divide" between those who can afford, and know how to operate, increasingly expensive, complex technology; and those who can't afford and/or don't know how to use it. This divide is partly generational, but is also tied to household income. Basic levels of service need to be affordable to all, and are therefore regulated through the Vermont Public Service Board.

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Cell phone coverage is also available locally, though the extent of current coverage is not complete, given local topography. There currently are no cell towers in Rupert. According to the state's telecommunications facility database, there are at least three privately-owned antennas in town – one FM broadcasting antenna, one mobile station for business use, and one of an unknown type. The siting of towers and antennas can be regulated by the town, within limits set by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) under the 1996 Telecommunications Act. Under the federal act, municipalities cannot completely exclude or prohibit cell towers or limit competition, and have little ability to regulate associated emissions or interference that are subject to federal jurisdiction.

There is growing pressure to adapt to changing technology or be left behind. An increasing number of local residents and businesses are relying on expanded telecommunications networks and technologies to conduct their affairs – to access information, telecommute, shop online, or market their goods and services to the world. Emergency service providers also need access to reliable communications networks in order to provide timely and coordinated response.

Several local businesses have web sites. An increasing number of towns – including rural towns the size of Rupert – are also going online, establishing municipal web sites that have updated information about the community, board meetings and hearings, and upcoming events.

Community, Health & Social Services

Towns were once responsible for overseeing local health and social services, including care of the poor. Today, most of these responsibilities are borne by the state, and a regional network of service providers that include many nonprofit organizations. Each year Rupert voters actively support the work of organizations that provide much needed services to local residents through annual appropriations. In 2005 these local and regional organizations, and their associated appropriations, included the following. More information about individual organizations is available in the town's annual report.

VT Center for Independent Living	$120
Southwestern Vermont Council on the Aging	$400
Salem Rescue Squad	$1,000
Granville Rescue Squad	$400
Dorset Nursing Association	$2,500
Rupert Volunteer Fire Company	$12,500
Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council	$400
Rosalind Keshin Kittay Public Library	$600
American Red Cross/Northshire Transportation Program	$500
Bennington County Conservation District	$300
Poultney-Mettowee Watershed Partnership	$500
Bennington County Tutorial Center	$250
Rupert Youth Activity Club	$300
Center for Restorative Justice (Court Diversion)	$200
Bennington Coalition for the Homeless	$500
Project Against Violent Encounters (PAVE)	$100

Many health and social services – including medical services – are not available locally, but can be found in neighboring communities. As noted, transportation assistance is available for qualified low income, disabled, and "transportation disadvantaged" residents through the Green Mountain Chapter of the American Red Cross. There are also no child care services available in town.

Town Library. The **Rosalin Kittay Public Library**, located in the Rupert Village School since 1999, is administered by an elected board of trustees. The library recently underwent facility and program expansions–

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including the hiring of part-time staff – to better accommodate its children's reading programs. The library also offers adult programs, and is working to actively expand its collections and offerings through grants, membership fees, fundraisers, donations and the support of local volunteers. The library provides public Internet access, and subscribes to the Vermont On-Line Library, which allows borrowers to access library holdings statewide.

Adequacy of Service

2004 community survey results indicate that, of those residents responding, most were satisfied with the types and levels of services available locally – and are wary of any new or enhanced services that would increase local property taxes.

Community Services

[Average Rating: 5-Excellent, 4-Good, 3-Adequate, 2-Poor, 1-Bad]

- Winter Road Maintenance (4.5)
- Fire Protection (4.3)
- State Roads (4.1)
- Local Roads (4.1)
- Mettawee School (4.0)
- Town Admin (3.8)
- Community Events (3.6)
- Emergency Medical (3.5)
- Trash/Recycling (3.5)
- Outdoor Recreation (3.4)
- Phone Service (3.4)
- Senior Services (3.3)
- Police Protection (3.0)
- Child Care (3.0)
- Internet (2.9)
- Indoor Recreation (2.4)

(per survey results)

Road maintenance and emergency services got the highest marks. Child care, Internet service, and indoor recreation got the lowest. It was noted in related comments that telecommunications services – including broadband access – needed to be improved.

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Community Facilities & Services Goal:

To plan for and coordinate, finance, provide and/or maintain needed community facilities, services and infrastructure in relation to anticipated need, in a manner which:

- ***maximizes efficiency and cost effectiveness,***
- ***minimizes burdens to local taxpayers and adverse impacts to the local environment – including natural, cultural and scenic features that are important to the town, and which***
- ***is consistent with, and reinforces Rupert's rural character and traditional settlement pattern.***

Community Facilities & Services Policies:

Growth

1. The rate of growth shall not exceed the ability of the town and related organizations to provide, finance, and/ or maintain necessary community facilities, infrastructure and services.

Public Facilities & Services

2. Town government and related functions will be efficiently and effectively managed and administered in accordance with state law, and in a manner that does not exceed the town's administrative capacity. Administrative fees may be charged as appropriate, as allowed by statute.

3. The town, to the extent feasible, will continue to support organizations that provide services to local residents and businesses through annual appropriations, and by helping to coordinate and advertise local fundraising events.

4. The town should identify and schedule needed capital improvements (e.g., road, facility, and infrastructure improvements) in association with available financing; and establish or maintain capital reserve funds as needed to minimize large fluctuations or increases in the local tax rate.

5. In the review of proposed development, consideration, at minimum, should be given to the potential impact of the proposal on town services, public property, educational facilities and services, traffic and roads, pedestrian facilities, recreational facilities and services, public safety and emergency services, existing and proposed water and wastewater disposal systems, and solid waste disposal. On- or off-site mitigation measures, and bonding or another form or surety to ensure the completion of required improvements, may be required by the town as appropriate. Local officials should be consulted as needed to determine available capacities and appropriate mitigation measures.

6. Project phasing also may be required based on an adopted capital budget and program to control the rate of development in relation to scheduled capital improvements.

7. The town will continue to provide information to local residents as a matter of public record, and as needed to support informed decisions. The town will consider ways to expand local informational resources – for example through the annual town report, the publication of a quarterly newsletter, or web site development – to better inform local residents of town matters and events, as available funding and volunteer services may permit.

8. Public facilities which serve as focal points of the community and are intended for public access and use should be located within Rupert's designated hamlets (village districts) to reinforce the town's traditional settlement pattern, and to avoid adverse impacts to resource and conservation lands and significant natural, cultural and

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scenic features located outside of these areas. Such facilities include, but may not be limited to: the town office, post offices, town meeting hall, the library, schools and day care centers (excluding registered or licensed home child care) and places of worship.

Transportation

9. Town roads should be upgraded or improved in accordance with an adopted management plan and road ordinance. The Selectboard should consider downgrading existing town roads that do not serve year-round residents to Class IV roads or legal trails, to reduce maintenance costs but retain rights-of-way for public use and access.

10. Proposed development should not reduce the functional capacity of a road or intersection below a Level of Service (LOS) "C" unless otherwise approved by the town as necessary to avoid adverse impacts to significant natural, cultural or scenic features, including historic properties. The developer may be required to pay for the costs of road or traffic control improvements as needed to address traffic impacts associated with a particular development.

11. Private roads, driveways, and accesses to public roads shall be designed, constructed, and upgraded in accordance with the town's adopted road policies and standards and land use regulations.

12. Public sidewalks or paths should be maintained within Rupert's designated hamlets (Village Districts).

Recreation

13. Public recreational areas, facilities and programs for the health and enjoyment of Rupert residents will be provided in convenient, suitable locations to the extent available funding and resources permit. The maintenance and improvement of existing facilities should be given priority.

14. Rupert's outdoor recreational resources, including publicly owned land, waters and rights-of-way, should be managed to avoid adverse impacts to natural, cultural and scenic resources, and to ensure adequate public access and sustainable, long-term public use. Forests should be managed for multiple uses, including water quality, wildlife habitat, wood production, and recreation.

Infrastructure & Utilities

15. The town will continue to explore ways to increase energy efficiency and to reduce municipal energy consumption and associated costs.

16. The town will continue to ensure that new development is served by adequate water and wastewater disposal systems, consistent with state requirements, though local on-site ordinances and land use regulations.

17. Shared and/or off-site water and wastewater systems may be allowed as needed to promote compact, clustered development, to encourage higher densities of development in designated Village Districts, to promote the development of affordable housing (e.g., multi-family units) and to conserve resource or open space land.

18. The siting and upgrade of infrastructure, utilities, and related accesses should avoid or, through mitigation, minimize adverse impacts to designated resource, conservation and open space land, and to significant natural, scenic and cultural features identified in the plan, and through site investigation.

19. The extension of utility lines (water, power, sewer, cable and phone) and related easements or rights-of-way should, to the extent feasible, follow natural contours, existing roads, utility corridors, fence or tree lines to minimize visual impacts and to avoid the fragmentation of resource and conservation lands. High elevation areas, prominent ridgelines, steep slopes, and stream and wetland crossings should also be avoided.

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20. Wind generation and telecommunications towers should be sited to avoid or, through the use of mitigation, to minimize adverse impacts to adjoining properties, community facilities, and significant natural, cultural and scenic features, including prominent ridgelines and hilltops that are visible from public vantage points. The town may require, or ask that the state require under state regulatory proceedings as appropriate, co-location of such facilities where feasible, an independent environmental or visual impact assessment as necessary to evaluate potential impacts and proposed mitigation measures, and the removal of facilities that are no longer in use.

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Community Facilities & Services Tasks:

1. **Prepare a capital budget and improvement program** to identify and schedule needed capital improvements, to be updated annually [Planning Commission, Selectboard].

2. **Develop a road improvement plan and equipment replacement schedule** to identify needed improvements or upgrades for inclusion in the town's capital improvement program [Highway Department, Selectboard].

3. **Develop management plans for town-owned land, recreation and pedestrian facilities**, including village sidewalks [Planning or Conservation Commission].

4. **Obtain grants** to investigate the feasibility and cost of developing municipal or community water systems to serve one or more of Rupert's designated hamlets (Village Districts). At minimum identify a potential water supply source [Planning Commission].

5. **Update local zoning and subdivision regulations as needed** to:
   a. Reference or incorporate updated road and access management standards, and other related town policies and ordinances.
   b. Ensure that the potential impacts of development on community facilities and services are adequately addressed in review
   c. Ensure that proposed development will be adequately served by existing or planned infrastructure and utilities. [Planning Commission].

6. **Conduct energy audits of municipal facilities**, with assistance from Efficiency Vermont and/or BROC Community Action [Selectboard]

7. **Develop and maintain a town web site** as local resources permit [Town Clerk, Library].

8. **Participate in Act 250 and Section 248 reviews as needed to represent town interests** [Planning Commission, Selectboard].

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Our Land

Rupert's present landscape reflects the many decisions made over generations by both private and public property owners. A respect for traditional land uses – and for local property rights – is part of our common heritage that we hope to pass on to the next generation of Rupert residents. Property owners must be allowed reasonable use of their land yet, to the extent that this use of land may affect public health, safety and welfare, and clearly defined public interests, it becomes a matter of public policy. This chapter of the plan evaluates current land uses in town in relation to recent development trends, and recommends ways to manage development in a manner that respects the rights of local landowners, while protecting the interests of the community.

Forested uplands and valley farms continue to define much of Rupert's working landscape, open space and rural character.

Land Cover & Use

The town was mostly forested at the time of its initial settlement. During the 19th century, all but the most remote upland areas and steepest slopes were cleared for farming. Reforestation then followed the abandonment of many of the town's hill farms – so that now only the town's best farm land, concentrated in the bottomlands, remains open.

Historic photo showing the extent of land clearing around West Rupert c. 1890

Forest Land. Of Rupert's 28,608 acres, approximately 22,300 acres (78%) is inaccessible, mountainous, forested land that is not suited for most types of development. These areas include Rupert State Forest and Green Mountain National Forest holdings, but most of the land remains in large, privately-owned tracts. Public lands, and many private holdings, are maintained under long-term management plans that support their ecological values, timber production, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation. To date, there has been relatively little development in the town's forested areas – according to US Natural Resource and Conservation Serve inventory data, from 1970-1990 only around 45 acres of forest land were cleared, and less than one acre of forest land was converted to developed land. There are concerns, however, that forested upland areas are becoming more attractive for development, and that further land subdivision could prevent effective management of these areas as a forest resource.

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Agricultural Land. Rupert's productive farmland – which coincides with its most productive agricultural soils – is concentrated in the Mettawee Valley to the east, the Rupert Valley to the west, and along local drainages. The town's farmland includes several large holdings that, until recently, supported a number of dairy operations.

A "Land Evaluation and Site Assessment" (LESA) rating system for agricultural land, as recommended in previous town plans, was prepared for the town in 1991 with the assistance of the US Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service). As part of the project, 24 farms in town were surveyed. These farms included 6,388 acres of land – roughly 33% in timber, 17% in pasture, 14% in hay, 10% in scrub, 8% in sugarbush and 7% in corn. Dairy was the predominant use reported. Maple syrup and/or timber were combined with dairy on all but two dairy farms. There were also a small number of Christmas tree growers, sheep operations, and one horse farm.

At the time, eight of the farms leased land, and four were looking for more land to lease. Only one was looking for additional land to purchase. Most of those responding hoped to remain in agriculture for the next 10 years – only five were considering selling some land. The majority, however, were not enrolled in the state's tax stabilization (use value appraisal or "current use") program. The cost of land and the lack of farm labor were noted as difficulties. All but two indicated that farming should continue in Rupert as both a business, and a way of life. Related recommendations to support local agriculture included:

- Continuation of the state Use Value Appraisal Program to reduce property taxes.
- Promoting the donation/sale of development rights.
- Providing adequate funding for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund (for the purchase of development rights).
- Adoption and enforcement of carefully crafted zoning regulations.
- Mapping of, and giving more recognition to, important farmland.
- Supporting good land management practices.

The Rupert Agricultural LESA Rating System is intended to:

1. Be a guide for the implementation of the Rupert Town Plan
2. Identify and evaluate important agricultural lands and wildlife habitat.
3. Minimize the conversion of actively used agricultural lands to nonagricultural uses.
4. Preserve lands that are particularly well suited for food and fiber production for future agricultural uses.
5. Encourage agricultural activities, and increased opportunities for farmers
6. Maintain the rural, agricultural character, aesthetics and scenic values of Rupert.
7. Strengthen the farmland and open space protection sections of the Rupert Town Plan.
8. Provide an objective evaluation of the town's best agricultural lands for use by residents, town officials, the Bennington County Regional Commission, the District #8 Environmental Commission, and state agencies.
9. Guide development to suitable nonagricultural areas.
10. Encourage developers to use the LESA rating system to help design a proposed development in a way which avoids or minimizes impacts on LESA-identified agricultural lands.
11. Support efforts of private, agricultural land conservation organizations, such as the Mettawee Valley Conservation Project, by identifying and prioritizing those farmlands that are valuable to the community for funding allocations, the transfer of development rights or other conservation actions
12. Contribute to the preservation of wildlife and wildlife habitat.

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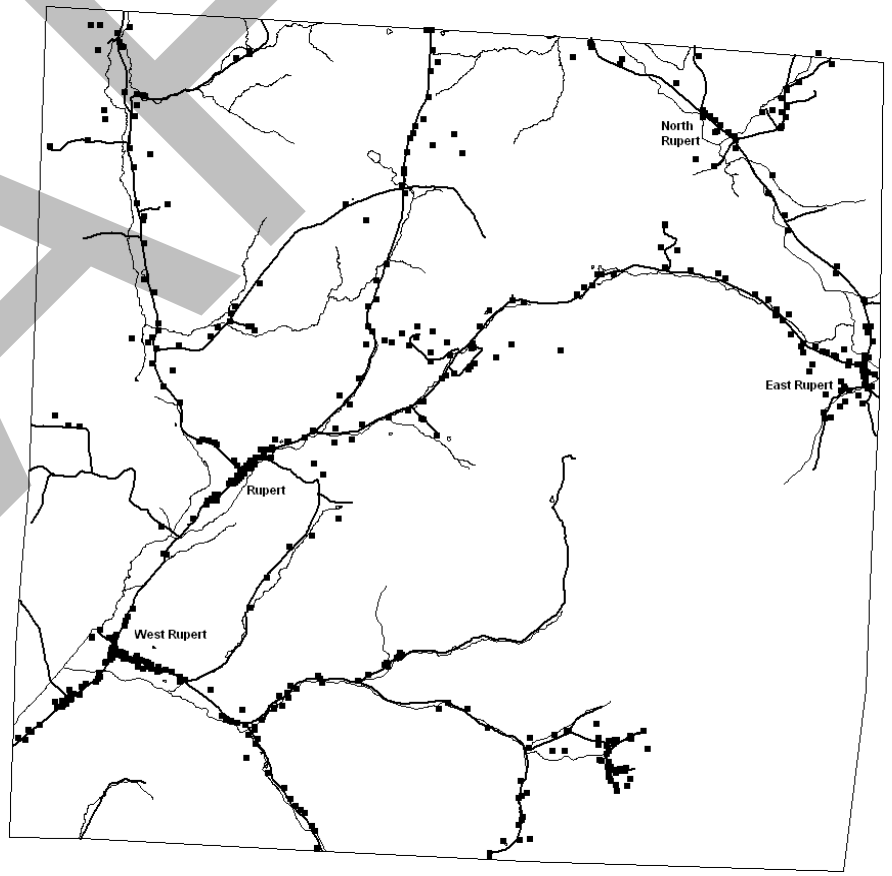
Current information at this level of detail is not available, but farming in Rupert, as in other Vermont communities, is in transition. The number of farms has declined, and those remaining have generally grown larger through the consolidation of land holdings by purchase or lease. Today there are only six active dairy operations remaining in town, but the land continues to support these farms and dairy operations in neighboring communities. Agricultural diversification – including the establishment of horse and vegetable farms (e.g., the Merck CSA) – is helping to make up for the loss of local dairy farms, and keeping land in production.

The conversion of farmland to other uses, including residential development, is an ongoing concern locally. The "estating" of family farms – a process in which local farms, including conserved farms, are sold as private estates that may or may not retain their agricultural use – is also a growing concern within the Bennington region, and elsewhere in Vermont.

The hamlet of West Rupert

Developed Land. Most of Rupert's developed land is in residential use, but also includes a few governmental, civic and commercial parcels. Older homes, civic buildings and businesses are concentrated in the town's four historic hamlets – North Rupert, East Rupert, Rupert and West Rupert. More recent development has occurred at relatively low densities along available road frontage. A number of seasonal camps are clustered in the Ebenville area, at the base of Bear Mountain. The distribution of structures around town is shown in the accompanying figure:



Distribution of structures (from E-911 coverage)

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Conserved Lands

Rupert currently has approximately 6,700 acres of publicly and privately conserved land, representing 23.4% of its total land area. These include:

- 2,840 acres of land conserved by the Vermont Land Trust through private easements,
- 168 acres in two Green Mountain National Forest parcels,
- 332 acres in two Rupert State Forest parcels,
- 3,221 acres in the Merck Forest and Farmland Foundation, and
- 89 acres in the Rupert Town Forest.

Conserved land also includes the state's small fishing access area on the Mettawee River, and the Mettawee Valley Community Center, both located off of VT30 in North Rupert.

Much of this land – including land in federal and state ownership, and that under private conservation easements – is expected to be conserved in perpetuity. Public ownership may be no guarantee of long-term conservation or public access – as noted, there has been some discussion of selling the Rupert Town Forest, but a related proposal was defeated by local voters in 2005.

Development Trends

Development trends are evident from the town's grand list and local permit data. In 2004 the town allocated funds for the preparation of a town-wide parcel map, which is still underway. Once available, this information will be especially helpful in determining the pattern of subdivision and land ownership in town.

Grand List Trends, 1995-2004

Type	Parcels (#)			Change 1995-2004
	1995	2000	2004	
Residential 1 (<6 ac)	155	159	151	-4
Residential 2 (6+ ac)	75	85	88	13
Mobile Home	12	9	8	-4
Mobile Home/ land	15	13	12	-3
Vacation I (<6 ac)	79	81	82	3
Vacation 2 (6+ ac)	60	68	69	9
Commercial	6	7	6	0
Industrial	0	0	0	0
Utilities/Electric	1	1	1	0
Utilities/Telephone	1	1	1	0
Farm	17	13	16	-1
Woodland	19	21	21	2
Miscellaneous	133	121	107	-26
Total	573	579	561	-12

Source: Rupert Grand List (Form 411)

Grand list data indicate that there has been relatively little development in Rupert over the past ten years. The number of listed parcels actually declined, suggesting that some consolidation of land holdings occurred during this period – especially in the last five years. In 2004:

- Year-round, single family parcels made up 42.6% of total parcels – up slightly from 40.1% in 1995.
- Vacation (second home) parcels, including camps, made up 26.9% of the total – up from 24.2% in 1995;
- Farm and woodland parcels made up 6.6% – up from 6.3% in 1995, and
- Commercial properties made up 4.0% of the total – about the same as in 1995.

There was little change in the number of commercial, farm and woodland parcels, but the number of larger residential parcels (6+ acres) increased by 22 (16.3%).

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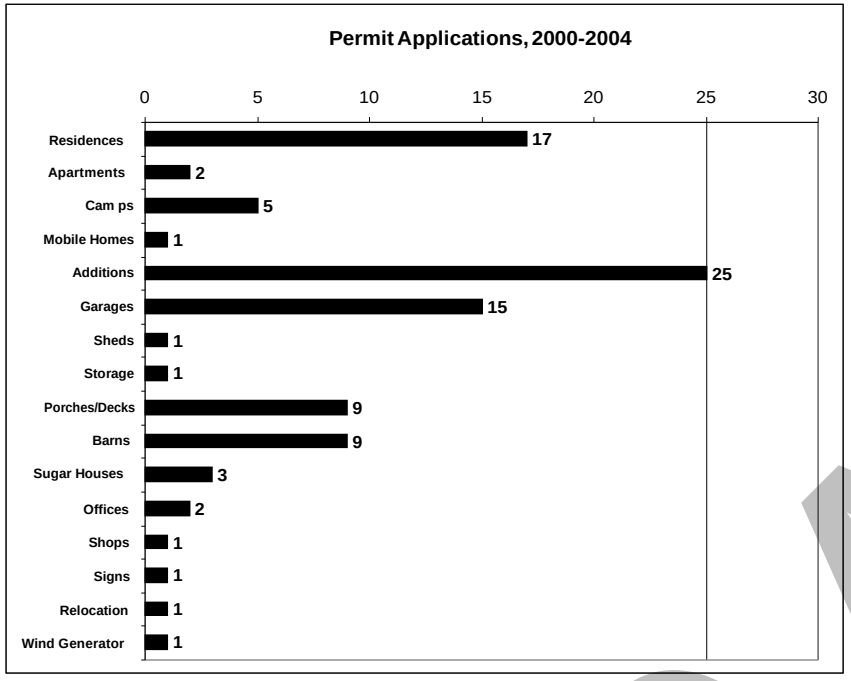

Local permit data provide more information on the type of development occurring in town. Most has been residential development – of the 75 zoning permits issued since 2000, 18 (or 24%) were for new single family homes, including one mobile home, two were for apartments, and five were for new camps. The majority (68%) were for improvements to existing properties – including the construction of additions, garages, porches, decks, and other accessory structures. Approvals for commercial development included two offices and a shop.

There have been five subdivision permits issued in town since 2004 – all involving less than three lots.

Though development in town was limited through the 1990s, it appears from more recent permit data that the pressure for residential development is growing. There is concern locally that this will result in the type of scatted, low density development that is taking place in neighboring towns – including the creation of mini-estates consisting of large, expensive homes on what is now open and forested land.

Land Use Regulation

Most development in Rupert has not met the thresholds required for Act 250 review – as such most projects in town are subject only to local review under our adopted regulations. Local regulations are specifically intended to implement, and must conform to, the municipal plan. They also must meet state statutes governing local land use regulations (24 VSA Chapter 117), which were extensively revised in 2004.

Rupert has had both zoning and subdivision regulations for many years. The town's first zoning bylaw was adopted on an interim basis in 1969, and permanently went into effect in 1972. It has since been amended on a fairly regular basis, most recently in 2000. Interim subdivision regulations were first adopted in 1987 and have been in effect on a permanent basis since 1990. Neither the zoning nor the subdivision regulations have been amended to meet new state requirements, which go into effect in September of 2005. The town also has a local on-site sewage ordinance that will remain in effect until 2007, when state wastewater regulations are scheduled to supercede local review.

Zoning Bylaw. Under local zoning, the town is divided into the following land use or zoning districts, as shown on accompanying maps:

- Village Residential 40 (VR40)
- Village Residential 80 (VR80)
- Rural Residential 120 (VR120)
- Rural Residential 200 (RR200)
- Forest (FOR)
- Agriculture (AGR)

A summary of district dimensional requirements is shown in the following table.

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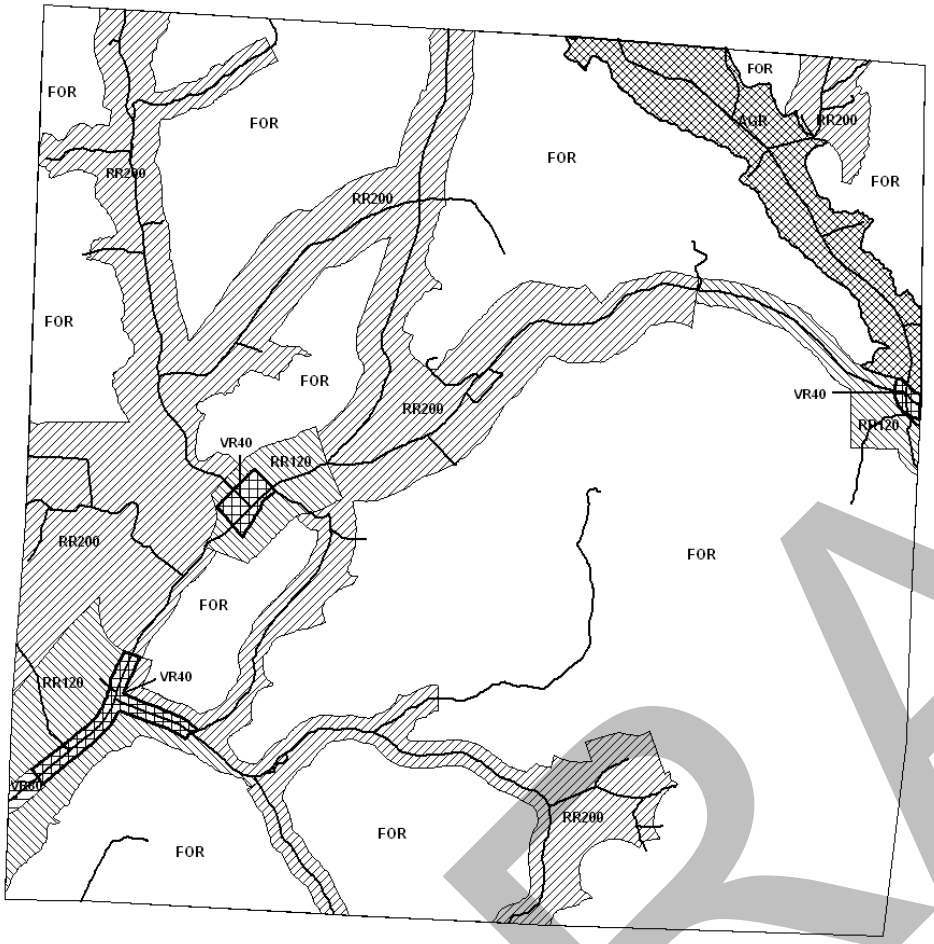

The town also regulates designated flood hazard areas, in accordance with state and federal requirements, for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program.

Village Residential Districts coincide with three of Rupert's four historic hamlets – Rupert, East Rupert, and West Rupert. Rural Residential districts are limited to existing road frontage along town highways outside of these areas. The Agricultural District incorporates most of town's remaining farmland along VT 30, much of which has also been conserved through the Vermont Land Trust. The Forest District is by far the most extensive district in town, incorporating most of the town's forested upland areas.

Current district dimensional standards do not necessarily reflect historic patterns of development. For example, required minimum lots sizes in village districts are probably larger than many existing lots, but reflect the need to accommodate on-site water and wastewater systems. In some districts, such as the Forest and Agricultural Districts, required minimums vary by the types of uses allowed. The regulations also include provisions for "Cluster Subdivisions," a form of planned development that allows the Planning Commission to reduce or waive district standards to allow for the tighter clustering of development to preserve open space for recreation, conservation, agriculture or natural resource protection.

Zoning Districts: Dimensional Requirements

	VR40	VR80	RR120	RR200	FOR	AGR
Min. Lot Area[1]	1 acre	2 acres	3 acres	5 acres	10-25 acres	25 acres
Min. Area/Dwelling Unit[1]	40,000 sf	80,000 sf	120,000 sf	200,000 sf	NA	1,000,000 sf
Min. Lot Width	150 ft	150 ft	300 ft	300 ft	NA	300 ft
Min. Front Yard	40 ft	40 ft	50 ft	50 ft	50 ft	50 ft
Min. Side Yard	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	50 ft	15 ft
Min. Rear Yard	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	50 ft	Not Specified
Max. Building Height	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	NA	30 ft
Max. Building Coverage	15%	10%	10%	10%	Not Specified	10%

[1]Note: Minimum lot sizes, measured in acres, do not completely correspond with minimum density (area/dwelling unit) requirements as measured in square feet.

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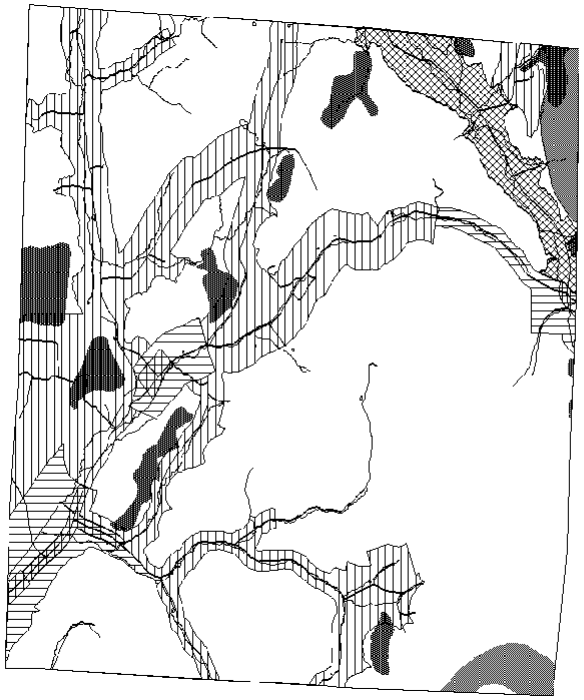

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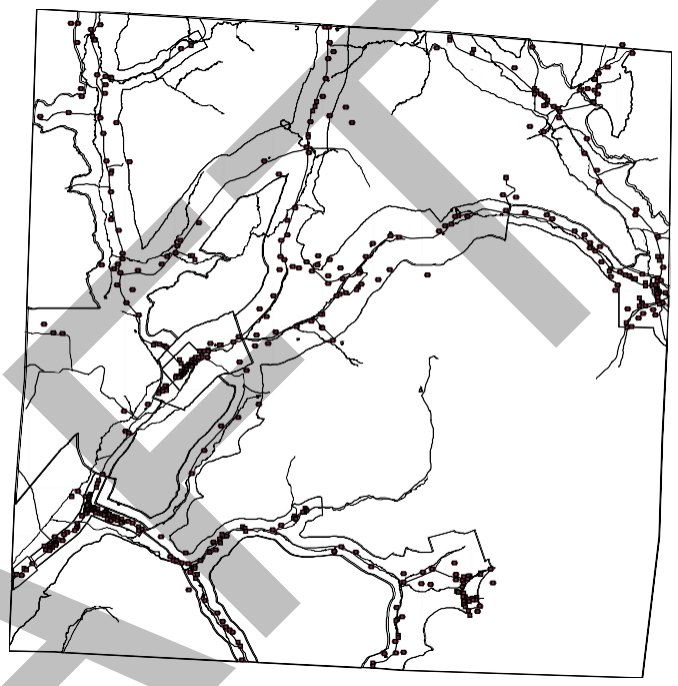

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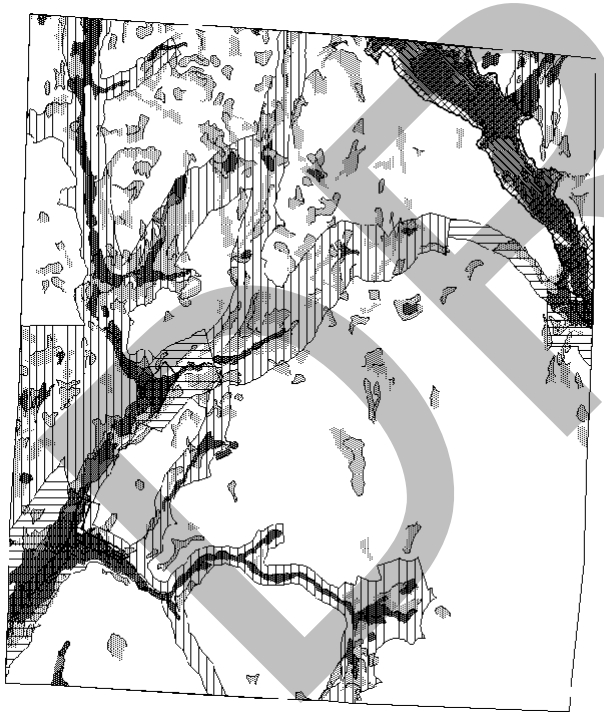

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Current zoning districts in relation to:

A – Wildlife Habitat (Deer Yards, Bear Habitat)

B – Primary Agricultural Soils

C – Structures (E-911 Sites)

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Allowed uses do not vary substantially by zoning district, except within the Agriculture and Forest Districts. A mix of residential and commercial uses is allowed in all village and rural residential districts. Uses are much more limited in the other resource districts – no residential development is allowed in the Forest District above 2,500 feet. Several uses are also subject to specific zoning requirements – e.g., extraction and quarrying, home-based businesses, telecommunications towers, conversions of single- to multi-family dwellings, and mobile home parks – that are intended to address the potential impacts of these types of development.

The zoning bylaw, in additional to floodplain regulations, also includes some basic resource protection standards for surface waters and wetlands (setback requirements) and, under cluster subdivision provisions, for prime agricultural land, designated aquifer and wellhead protection areas, deeryards, areas of steep slope (>15%), and rare, threatened and endangered species habitat.

Subdivision Regulations. Local subdivision regulations apply to all subdivisions of land, but differentiate between "minor" subdivisions (four or fewer lots), and "major" subdivisions (all other subdivisions) that require more extensive review. The current regulations include basic standards for lot layout, access, streets, sewage disposal. They do not include any settlement pattern (e.g., by zoning district), resource or open space protection standards, except as may be applied under zoning (e.g., in association with cluster subdivisions).

Proposed Land Use

As determined from the 2004 Community Survey, there is support locally for development in town that provides needed jobs and services, and is compatible with the town's rural character and historic settlement patterns. There was strong support for farm land, forest land natural resource protection, and for new development to be sited to avoid impacts to these resources, in areas served by existing infrastructure – including areas within or adjacent to the town's existing hamlets.

Town Plan: Resource Protection Policies & Recommendations?

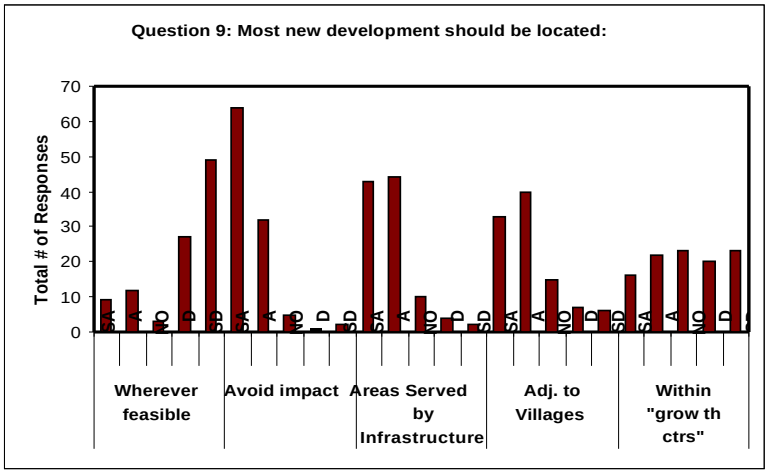
[Protect the following -- % Strongly Agree/Agree]

- Farmland (93%)
- Forestland (90%)
- Wildlife Habitat (90%)
- Steep Slopes & Ridgelines (90%)
- Ground Water (89%)
- Surface Water (88%)
- Historic Sites & Structures (88%)
- Scenic Roads (87%)
- Wetlands (78%)
- Floodplains (73%)

Town Plan: Development Policies/ Recommendations?

[Promote the following -- % Strongly Agree/Agree]

- Farming (90%)
- Forestry (83%)
- Home Business (78%)
- Outdoor Recreation (70%)
- Affordable Housing (56%)
- Tourism (56%)
- Day Care (55%)
- Elderly Housing (55%)
- Retail/Service (52%)
- Wind Generation (47%)
- Indoor Recreation (43%)
- Light Industry (40%)
- Telecom Facilities (40%)
- All types (29%)
- Multifamily Housing (19%)



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On the other hand, there was very mixed support for locating development within designated "growth centers" – possibly because this concept was not defined in the survey – and for the establishment of a separate business or industrial park district in town.

Survey respondents clearly supported the continuation of traditional uses in town – including farming and forestry operations, outdoor recreational uses and home-based businesses, but were less supportive of development that could potentially alter or adversely affect the character of the town or of particular neighborhoods – including light industry, telecommunications towers, and multi-family housing. Forum participants further identified some uses that may require more scrutiny under local land use regulations and ordinances, such as game farms, firing ranges, dirt tracks, and ATV use.

There was strong support for additional land conservation in town – but mixed support for expanding the holdings of the Green Mountain National Forest. The entire town lies within the GMNF's "proclamation boundary" and is therefore eligible for consideration, but local approval must be sought prior to the purchase of additional land. Forum participants identified tax impacts to the community, restrictions on the use of land, and a general distrust of federal land management as potential areas of concern. It's clear that local public outreach will be needed prior to any future acquisitions.

Land Conservation

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Should additional land conservation be supported?	67%	15%	18%
Should the USDA/Forest Service continue to acquire more land in town?	41%	25%	34%

Forum participants also expressed the need for stronger local regulations to support land conservation and open space – including Rupert's upland areas – but also recognized the need to balance land conservation efforts with the needs of local landowners.

Regulatory Considerations

Village Districts. Focusing development in areas served by existing infrastructure, including town roads, has long been an adopted town policy – both to conserve important resource lands, and to more adequately serve existing and new development. Clustering has also been promoted as a means to protect important resource lands. A complementary strategy is to focus most new development – including civic, commercial and higher density residential uses (e.g., small multi-family structures), within or immediately adjacent to the town's historic hamlets. This is especially important to avoid strip development – and related access management issues – along town and state highways.

As noted, these areas, except for North Rupert, are already zoned as village districts that are intended to accommodate a variety of development. District boundaries, standards and uses should be re-evaluated once parcel maps are available – in relation to historic densities and available services – in order to accommodate new development within these traditionally compact settlements and thereby preserve their historic character. Density bonuses (e.g., under new planned development provisions) should also be considered in these districts to help promote affordable housing in the community.

Village Center Designation?

Another option available to help the town and local property owners fund renovations and infrastructure improvements in these areas is to seek "Village Center Designation" from the state for one or more of its village districts. The benefits of designation include:

- **A 5% Vermont income tax credit for the substantial rehabilitation of certified historic structures.**
- **A 50% Vermont income tax credit for code improvements to commercial buildings.**
- **Priority consideration for state municipal planning grant and community development block grant funding.**
- **Priority consideration by the state when leasing or constructing state buildings.**
- **The creation of special assessment districts that may use funds for operating as well as capital expenses.**

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Finally, subdivision standards should be updated to include some basic lot layout and design standards to ensure that new subdivisions are compatible and integrated into the existing settlement pattern.

Rural Residential Districts. Most of the uses currently allowed within these districts, which extend along town roads outside of village districts, are the same as those allowed within the village districts – there is little difference between the types of development allowed in each. Uses now allowed create the potential for rural strip development – including commercial strip development – that could someday adversely affect the character of these areas, and compete with development in the town's hamlets. If development occurs at allowed densities, it could also adversely affect wildlife habitat areas and travel corridors that extend into these areas.

It is recommended that the extent of these districts – and the number and type of uses allowed within them – be re-evaluated to avoid or limit undesired patterns of development, potential impacts to wildlife, and to reinforce the town's historic centers. Home–based businesses that are typical of rural residential areas, should be allowed to continue within these districts, with some oversight to avoid adverse impacts to neighboring properties.

Cluster subdivisions, should continue to be allowed in this district, in association with subdivision review and approval, to help conserve resources and open space, to support affordable housing development, and to promote energy efficiency and conservation.

Resource Districts. Another agricultural district, and related standards, could be created for remaining farmland on the west side of town – at minimum to include land that has already been conserved.

Given growing concern over the potential for subdivision and development within forested upland areas, it is recommended that the boundaries of the Forest District be re-evaluated, possibly to include the creation of a separate "Conservation District" that further limits subdivision and residential development below 2,500 feet in elevation in these areas. Ridgeline zoning (e.g., through an overlay district) should also be considered to protect the town's most prominent, scenic ridgelines and mountain tops from the adverse impacts of poorly sited development.

It's also recommended that the town's subdivision regulations be updated as they apply to these areas, to include additional resource protection standards. At minimum these should require the designation of building envelopes (areas to be developed) on the subdivision plat, to make sure that structures and parking areas will be located to avoid and minimize adverse impacts to significant resource lands and natural features. The clustering of development, where appropriate, is also recommended to help conserve resource lands and open space.

Statutory Requirements. Under state and federal law, some types of development that serve a larger public interest are afforded special protection or consideration under local land use regulations. The following uses cannot be excluded from the municipality, though most can be regulated, in a manner that is not exclusionary, under zoning:

- Public Facilities – including governmental, institutional, municipal, educational, religious, medical and solid and hazardous waste management facilities
- Accessory Dwellings – to existing, single family dwellings
- Mobile Homes – which may be excluded only to the extent that other single family dwellings are excluded (e.g., from a particular district)
- Multi-family Housing – including three or more units
- Group Homes – serving eight or fewer residents
- Mobile Home Parks – defined as three or more homes on a lot
- Home Occupations – that occupy a minor portion of a dwelling
- Home Child Care Facilities – serving 10 or fewer children
- Telecommunications Facilities – including telecom towers.

A few other uses are specifically exempted from local regulation:

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- Power generation and transmission facilities that are regulated by the Vermont Public Service Board – including wind generators and solar collectors that are "net-metered," (tied into the electric grid).
- Accepted agricultural practices as defined by the state – including the construction of farm structures, though local setback requirements generally apply, and
- Accepted management practices for silviculture (forestry) as defined by the state.

There are also new state requirements governing the local development review process – including new notice, hearing and decision requirements – which go into effect in September of 2005. These will override any conflicting provisions in the town's existing regulations.

Proposed Zoning Districts (Map D)

NOTE: ***No zoning map changes are currently proposed, however it is the intent of the Rupert Planning Commission to re-evaluate zoning district boundaries, dimensional requirements, and allowed uses once parcel mapping for the town is completed. This process should take into consideration plan recommendations for each district and additional public input. The updated zoning map will be incorporated in a plan amendment, or the next scheduled update of the town plan.***

Village Districts: The purpose of these districts is to allow for compact, higher density, mixed use development within and immediately adjacent to Rupert's historic hamlets, which is compatible in siting, building orientation and scale with the traditional settlement pattern and character of these areas. These districts are intended to accommodate a variety of civic, commercial and residential uses, including but not limited to traditional mixed uses (e.g., an apartment over a storefront), retail uses, senior and multi-family housing, government offices and meeting space, and formal open space (e.g., a park or green). Though on-site systems may be necessary, it is the intent within these districts to allow for shared systems where feasible, to create a more compact pattern of development, and to require higher standards of street improvement, pedestrian paths and sidewalks, and street lighting where such improvements may be efficiently and economically installed and maintained.

Rural Residential Districts: The purpose of these districts is to 1) ensure the preservation of the natural and scenic character of these areas, which are predominantly agricultural, through appropriate subdivision and site design (e.g., clustering), while also 2) allowing for low to moderate densities of compatible, residential development in areas served by existing public roads, where soils and slopes are suitable for on-site wastewater systems. This district is also intended to accommodate traditional rural uses, including but not limited to home-based businesses and cottage industries, farm suppliers, services, markets and road side stands, and outdoor recreation. Other use should be allowed as appropriate within historic structures (e.g., barns) that maintain their historic integrity and their economic viability.

Resource (Open Space) Districts. These districts include the **Agricultural and Forest Districts**, which are intended to support 1) the continuation of agriculture and forestry in town, 2) conservation of the town's important natural and scenic resources, including but limited to our most productive agricultural land and our forested uplands, and 3) related, low density development that is compatible with these objectives. Allowed uses should include well-managed, agriculture, forestry, and extraction and quarrying operations and related processing and management activities, outdoor recreation, telecommunications towers, and very low overall densities of residential development and use – though clustering may be appropriate on certain sites to retain large, un-subdivided tracts of productive forest, farmland or wildlife habitat. All new development, including structures and associated infrastructure such as driveway and utility corridors, should be sited to avoid adverse impacts to the town's natural and scenic resources, as defined in the municipal plan and identified from available maps and site investigation. Residential development is not allowed in areas over 2,500 feet in elevation.

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Overlay Districts. Rupert has an adopted a **Flood Hazard Overlay District** that incorporates flood hazard areas designated by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The purpose of this district is to minimize and prevent the loss of life and property, the disruption of commerce, the impairment of the tax base, and the extraordinary public expenditures and demands on public services that result from flooding, and related hazards. These regulations do not currently limit uses allowed within the underlying district, but incorporate construction and design standards as needed to ensure that the town retains its membership in the federal program so that property owners can obtain flood insurance.

The Planning Commission should also consider developing a **"Conservation Overlay"** district, to further protect forested upland and natural resource areas below 2,500 feet and/or a **"Ridgeline Overlay"** District, as needed to protect the town's most prominent and scenic ridgelines, mountain and hill tops.

Non-regulatory Considerations

In many cases non-regulatory options for conserving land and historic properties may be more effective than regulations. These include, but may not be limited to:

- Providing information and technical assistance to property owners regarding accepted land management practices and property restoration and rehabilitation (e.g., through a Conservation or Historic Preservation Commission).
- Supporting private efforts to conserve land in areas that conform to the Town Plan.
- Supporting state and federal acquisition of additional lands for public management and use, in a manner than does not unduly restrict public access or adversely affect the town's tax base.
- Adopting local "right-to-farm policies" that inform new residents of the town's support for local farming operations.
- Encouraging participation in the state's current use (use value appraisal) program for forest and farm land.
- Providing local tax stabilization agreements for farm and forest land, and local economic development projects.
- Providing financing incentives and funding assistance to property owners for restoration, rehabilitation or redevelopment – e.g., through Village Center Designation, available grant programs, and letters of support – for example as is now being done through the Rupert School House Restoration Project.

Both regulatory and non-regulatory programs for managing growth and development in town need to be designed in relation to the town's overall fiscal and administrative capacities to sustain such programs.

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Land Use Goals:

- ***To maintain the town's historic settlement pattern of compact villages (hamlets) separated by rural countryside.***
- ***To promote the long-term viability and sustained management of the town's agricultural and forest lands and earth resources.***
- ***To conserve the town's important natural and historic features, and environmentally sensitive areas, from the adverse impacts of development.***
- ***To maintain and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities for local residents and visitors.***
- ***To provide for a variety of housing, including affordable housing, in appropriate locations served by available infrastructure.***

Land Use Policies:

1. Intensive residential and commercial development should be allowed within designated Village Districts to reinforce and revitalize these areas as the town's traditional centers. Strip development should be avoided outside of designated Village Districts. Public investments, including the construction or expansion of infrastructure, should also reinforce the traditional character and densities of development within these areas.

2. New residential development should be located primarily in areas served by existing roads and infrastructure, including designated Village and Rural Residential Districts. Higher density multi-family and senior housing, consisting of three or more units per structure, should be located within the Village District, or allowed as an adaptive reuse of a historic structure in any district.

3. Public facilities that are intended for regular public access – including but not limited to town offices, meeting halls, community centers and post offices, should be located within designated Village Districts.

4. Within the Agriculture District, primary agricultural soils – and in particular prime agricultural soils – should be retained for farming and related uses in order to maintain their maximum productivity. The construction or extension of roads, other infrastructure and utilities shall be permitted only where agricultural activities will not be negatively impacted. Agricultural lands should be managed in accordance with accepted agricultural practices.

5. Within the Forest District, productive forest land should be maintained and managed in accordance with accepted management practices for sustainable timber production, outdoor, recreation, wildlife habitat, and aquifer recharge and headwater protection. The subdivision and fragmentation of forest lands should be avoided to allow for viable long-term management of the timber resource. Any allowed development within this district should be sited and designed to avoid adverse impacts to the resource base, including productive forest soils, and to environmentally sensitive areas. Environmental limitations shall be addressed in all proposals for development through site design and long-term management plans.

6. The clustering of development (e.g., through Planned Unit Development) is allowed in all districts. Clustering may be required for larger subdivisions within Rural Residential Districts, or for any development within the Agriculture and Forest Districts, as needed to conserve resource lands and open space, and to avoid environmentally sensitive areas.

7. Uses allowed within the Flood Hazard Overlay District should be limited to agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation, and other open space uses, and improvements to existing structures. All new development within this district should be designed and constructed to minimize flood hazards, in accordance with state and federal requirements for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program.

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8. Identified earth resources of potential public or commercial value– including known sand, gravel and slate deposits – should be protected from development that would interfere with future extraction. Resource extraction operations shall be designed and managed to limit surface runoff, soil erosion and sedimentation, and adverse impacts to groundwater, environmentally sensitive areas, neighboring properties, and public roads. Extraction sites shall be reclaimed, to the extent feasible, to allow a subsequent use. Erosion control and reclamation plans, and bonding or another form of surety may be required.

9. Small- and mid-scale renewable energy development is appropriate, when well-sited, in areas throughout the town. Large-scale renewable energy facilities are only appropriate in preferred areas.

10. Buffer areas and/or management plans may be required as appropriate to separate incompatible land uses, and to protect environmentally sensitive areas, including surface waters, wetlands, wellheads, source protection and wildlife habitat areas.

11. All proposed development, plans, and public policies that could affect the Town of Rupert should be reviewed for conformance with the Rupert Town Plan

Land Use Tasks:

1. **Consider adopting a comprehensive set of "unified" development regulations**, that incorporates zoning, subdivision, site plan, and flood hazard review, in part to make the review process easier. [Planning Commission, Selectboard]

2. **Update the town's zoning map and district standards when parcel maps become available** [Planning Commission, Selectboard], to:

   - Include a re-evaluation of district dimensional and density requirements, and allowed uses, in accordance with plan recommendations, and to
   - **Consider a Conservation Overlay and/or a Ridgeline Overlay District** to further protect important natural resource areas below 2,500 feet.

3. **Update the town's zoning regulations,** giving consideration to:

   - New statutory (Chapter 117) requirements that go into effect in September 2005 – including updated provisions for development review (notice, hearing and decision requirements), and for accessory dwellings, group homes, mobile home parks, multi-family units, and nonconforming lots, uses and structures.
   - More clearly differentiating allowed uses within Village and Rural Residential Districts – particularly as needed to avoid the potential for commercial strip development in Rural Residential Districts.
   - Updating and expanding clustering (Planned Unit Development) provisions as intended to protect open space and resource lands – particularly in Rural Residential and Resource Districts – and to support the efficient use of land and allow for increased densities as needed for affordable housing development. Consider allowing density bonuses within Village and Rural Residential Districts as an incentive for affordable housing development.
   - Requiring the designation of building envelopes, and related resource protection standards, for all development subject to conditional use review within the Agriculture and Forest Districts to ensure that structures and parking areas in these areas are sited to avoid adverse impacts to significant natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas.

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- Incorporating additional use standards as appropriate – e.g., for the adaptive reuse of historic structures, mixed use development, and for firing ranges, dirt tracks, and other outdoor recreation facilities that may be of concern locally.

- Incorporating basic performance standards as appropriate – e.g., for noise and outdoor lighting, to minimize potential impacts to neighboring properties.

4. **Update the town's subdivision regulations** [Planning Commission, Selectboard] giving consideration to:

   - Incorporating basic settlement pattern (e.g., lot configuration) standards for each zoning district – and particularly for subdivisions within designated Village Districts, to ensure that lot size and configurations reflect traditional settlement patterns in these areas and that new roads, sidewalks and other infrastructure will be connected to and integrated with existing facilities.

   - Incorporating subdivision standards (e.g., for lot line configurations, clustering) that minimize the fragmentation of important agricultural, forest wildlife habitat areas – at minimum to be applied within the Agriculture and Forest Districts.

   - Require, in Agriculture and Forest Districts, and as appropriate within Rural Residential Districts, the designation of building envelopes on proposed subdivision plats, along with maximum area and siting requirements, to ensure that new structures and parking areas will be located to avoid adverse impacts to important natural and scenic resources and environmentally sensitive areas.

5. **Update the "Town of Rupert Agricultural LESA Rating System" to re-evaluate priority parcels for land conservation**. Consider developing a similar forest land rating system (FLESA). [Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, or a separately appointed Resource Lands Task Force].

6. **Consider other non-regulatory land conservation options** as appropriate, including the establishment of a local conservation fund. [Planning Commission or Conservation Commission, Selectboard].

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Work Program

Often town plans, once completed, sit on the shelf to gather dust. It's the Planning Commission's hope that the town will actively pursue tasks recommended in this plan over the next five years – as available time and resources allow – to achieve, or to make progress toward meeting related plan goals and objectives. Proposed work tasks are summarized in the accompanying table.

In addition to these specific tasks – which include the update of the town's land use regulations – there are other ways to make use of the town plan in local, regional and state affairs. The plan should provide guidance to:

- Town officials with regard to municipal policies, expenditures and the financing and siting of new facilities.
- Regional commissioners, staff and adjoining towns, in developing compatible local and regional plans.
- State legislators and officials, in developing or reviewing proposed legislation, plans, policies, and programs that may directly affect the community.
- The District Environmental Commission and the Public Service Board, in state regulatory proceedings, as needed to determine a proposed project's conformance with the municipal plan.

Some of these implementation measures – and the town's ability to apply for municipal grants to help fund its planning work – require that the town plan be approved by the Bennington Regional Planning Commission, either prior or subsequent to its adoption by the town.

The plan will also be updated as needed – by 2010 at the latest – to remain current, in effect, and relevant to the community.

Plan Section(s)	Task	Responsibility	Time Frame
All	Update current zoning and subdivision regulations, with consideration given to: ▪ The adoption of a comprehensive set of "unified" development regulations, incorporating zoning, subdivision, site plan, and flood hazard review. ▪ New state (Chapter 117) requirements that go into effect as of September 2005, including new requirements for the equal treatment of housing (accessory dwellings, mobile home parks, etc.) ▪ Additional resource protection standards and provisions that allow for or require the designation of building envelopes (the area on a parcel where structures may be sited) and the clustering of development to protect resources and preserve open space ▪ The incorporation of updated road and access management standards, and other related town policies and ordinances. ▪ Specific provisions to ensure that proposed development will be adequately served by existing or planned infrastructure and utilities, and that the potential impacts of development on community facilities and services are adequately addressed in review. ▪ The incorporation of basic performance standards (e.g., for noise and outdoor lighting) to minimize potential impacts of development on neighboring properties.	Planning Commission Selectboard	Years 1-2

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Plan Section(s)	Task	Responsibility	Time Frame
All	Update current zoning and subdivision regulations, with consideration given to (cont.): ▪ More clearly differentiating between uses allowed within Village and Rural Residential Districts, especially to avoid the potential for commercial strip development outside of Village Districts ▪ Incorporating additional use standards as appropriate – e.g., for the adaptive reuse of historic structures, mixed use development, and for firing ranges, dirt tracks, and other outdoor recreation facilities that may be of concern locally. ▪ Updating and expanding clustering (Planned Unit Development) provisions as intended to protect open space and resource lands – particularly in Rural Residential, Agricultural and Forest Districts – and to support the efficient use of land and allow for increased densities as needed for affordable housing development in the Village and Rural Residential Districts. ▪ Allowing density bonuses within Village and Rural Residential Districts as an incentive for affordable housing development. ▪ Incorporating basic settlement pattern (e.g., lot configuration) standards for each zoning district – and particularly for subdivisions within designated Village Districts, to ensure that lot size and configurations reflect traditional settlement patterns in these areas and that new roads, sidewalks and other infrastructure will be connected to and integrated with existing facilities. ▪ Incorporating subdivision standards (e.g., for lot line configurations, clustering) that minimize the fragmentation of important agricultural, forest wildlife habitat areas – at minimum to be applied within the Agriculture and Forest Districts.	Planning Commission Selectboard	Years 1-2
Community/ Environment/ Land	Update the town's zoning map and zoning district standards when parcel maps become available, with consideration given to: ▪ A re-evaluation of district boundaries, dimensional and density requirements, and allowed uses, in accordance with plan recommendations. ▪ The creation of a conservation or conservation overlay and/or a ridgeline overlay district to further protect important natural resource areas below 2,500 feet.	Planning Commission Selectboard	Years 1-2
Community/ Environment	Conduct inventories, as time and resources permit, with the assistance of the Bennington County Regional Commission, state officials and nonprofits, to further document the town's natural, cultural and scenic resources, including: ▪ Unsurveyed town boundaries ▪ Hazard areas ▪ Natural features, including critical wildlife habitat areas and travel corridors ▪ Historic districts, sites and structures ▪ Scenic resources, including scenic roads	Planning Commission and/or Conservation Commission Historical Society	Ongoing
Environment Land	Consider the creation and appointment of a Conservation Commission that could inventory the town's natural resources, work with landowners interested in conservation and resource management, and develop resource management plans for town-owned land, including the Rupert Town Forest.	Selectboard	Year 1
Community/	Continue to support the efforts of the Rupert Historical Society and the Rupert School house (cont.)	Planning	Ongoing

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Plan Section(s)	Task	Responsibility	Time Frame
Environment	Restoration Committee to conserve town history, to increase public awareness of Rupert's cultural heritage, and to renovate the Rupert Village School and Town Office.	Commission, Selectboard	
Community	Participate in regional efforts to monitor and address housing needs within the Bennington region	Planning Commission	Ongoing
Community	Contact affordable housing providers regarding options and constraints for developing small affordable housing projects, including an elderly housing project, within the community	Planning Commission	Years 3-4
Community	Appoint a Rupert Development Committee to include representatives from local businesses that could: ▪ Conduct an inventory and survey of local farms and businesses ▪ Prepare and maintain a business directory for the promotion of local businesses. ▪ Initiate a "Buy Local" campaign within the community, with assistance from the region and state. ▪ Establish a local outdoor market to be held regularly during summer months, to support local farmers, artists and craftsmen. ▪ Help develop a local web site to promote local businesses, with links to business web sites. ▪ Establish a cooperatively run coffee house to serve the local community.	Selectboard	Year 1
Support System	Develop and maintain a town web site	Library, Town Clerk	Ongoing
Support System	Conduct energy audits of municipal facilities; identify needed energy efficiency improvements	Selectboard Highway Dept.	Years 1-2
Support System	Develop a road improvement plan and equipment replacement schedule	Highway Dept., Selectboard	Years 1-2
Support System	Prepare a capital budget and improvement program that identifies and schedules needed capital improvements and proposed funding sources	Planning Commission, Selectboard	Years 3-4
Community/ Land	Obtain a municipal planning grant to determine development capacity within and adjacent to the town's existing hamlets (e.g., Village Districts) – e.g., through a build-out/on-site wastewater capacity analysis.	Planning Commission, Selectboard	Years 3-4
Support System/ Land	Obtain grants to investigate the feasibility and cost of developing municipal or community water system to serve one or more of Rupert's hamlets (e.g., Village Districts)	Planning Commission, Selectboard	Years 4-5
Environment Land	Update the "Town of Rupert Agricultural LESA Rating System" to re-evaluate priority parcels for land conservation. Consider developing a similar forest land rating system (FLESA).	Planning Commission	Years 3-4
Environment Land	Consider other non-regulatory land conservation options as appropriate, including the establishment of a local conservation fund.	Planning Commission, Selectboard	Ongoing
All	Participate in state regulatory proceedings (Act 250, Section 248) as needed to represent town interests.	Planning Commission, Selectboard	As needed
All	Prepare updates and amendments to the town plan	Planning Commission	Years 4-5 or as needed

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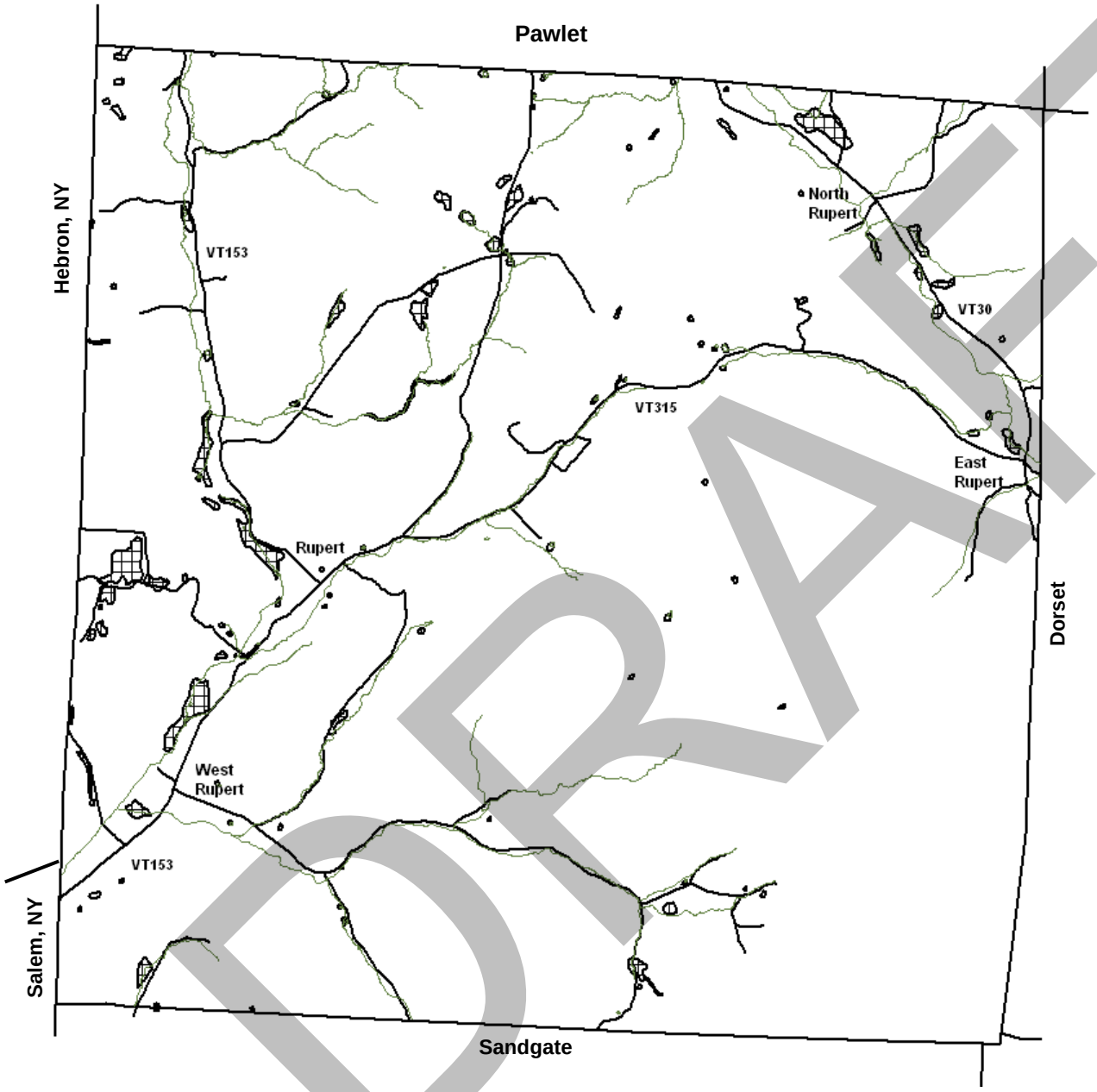

Map A: Base Map

Rupert, VT
May 2005

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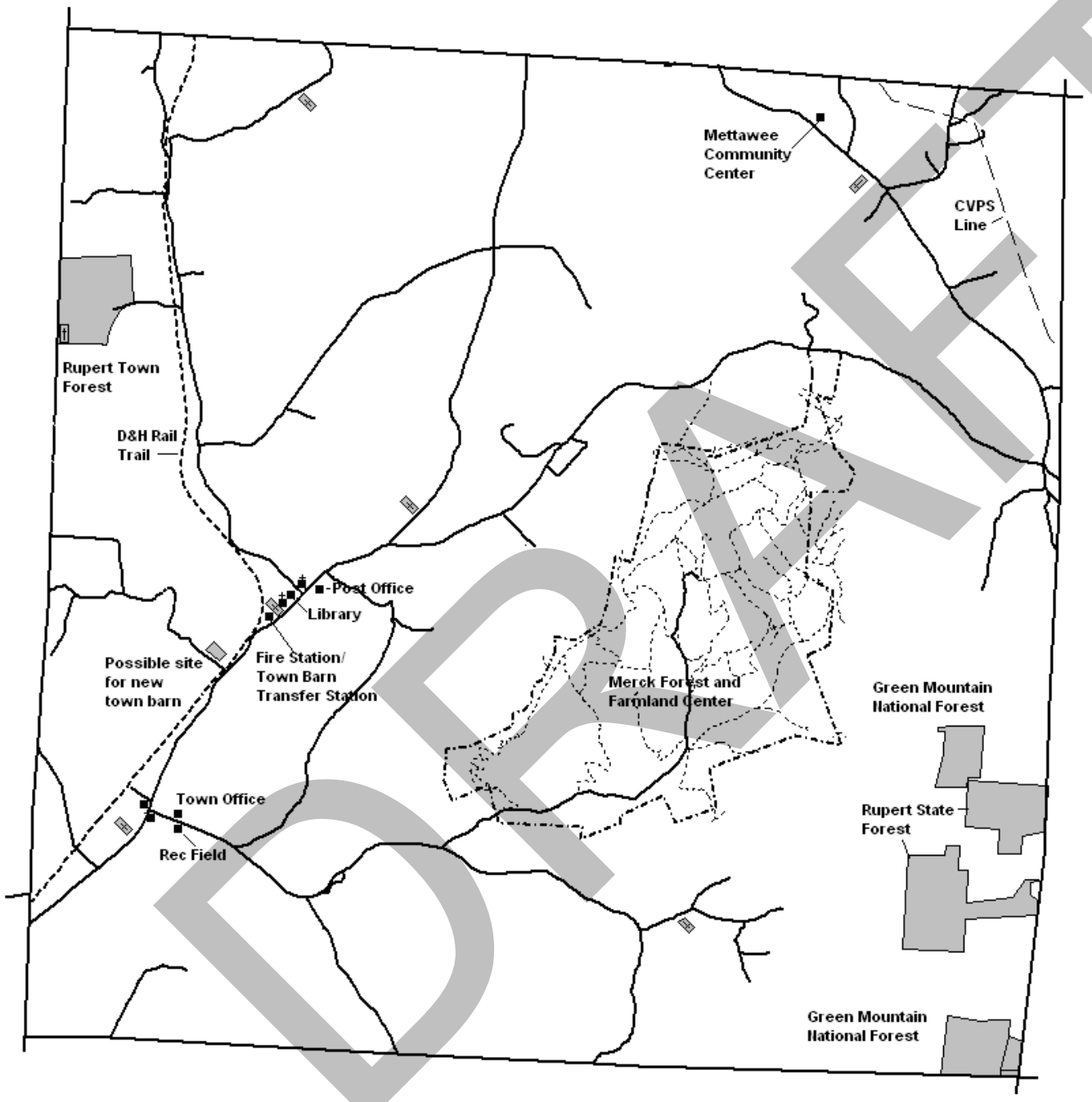

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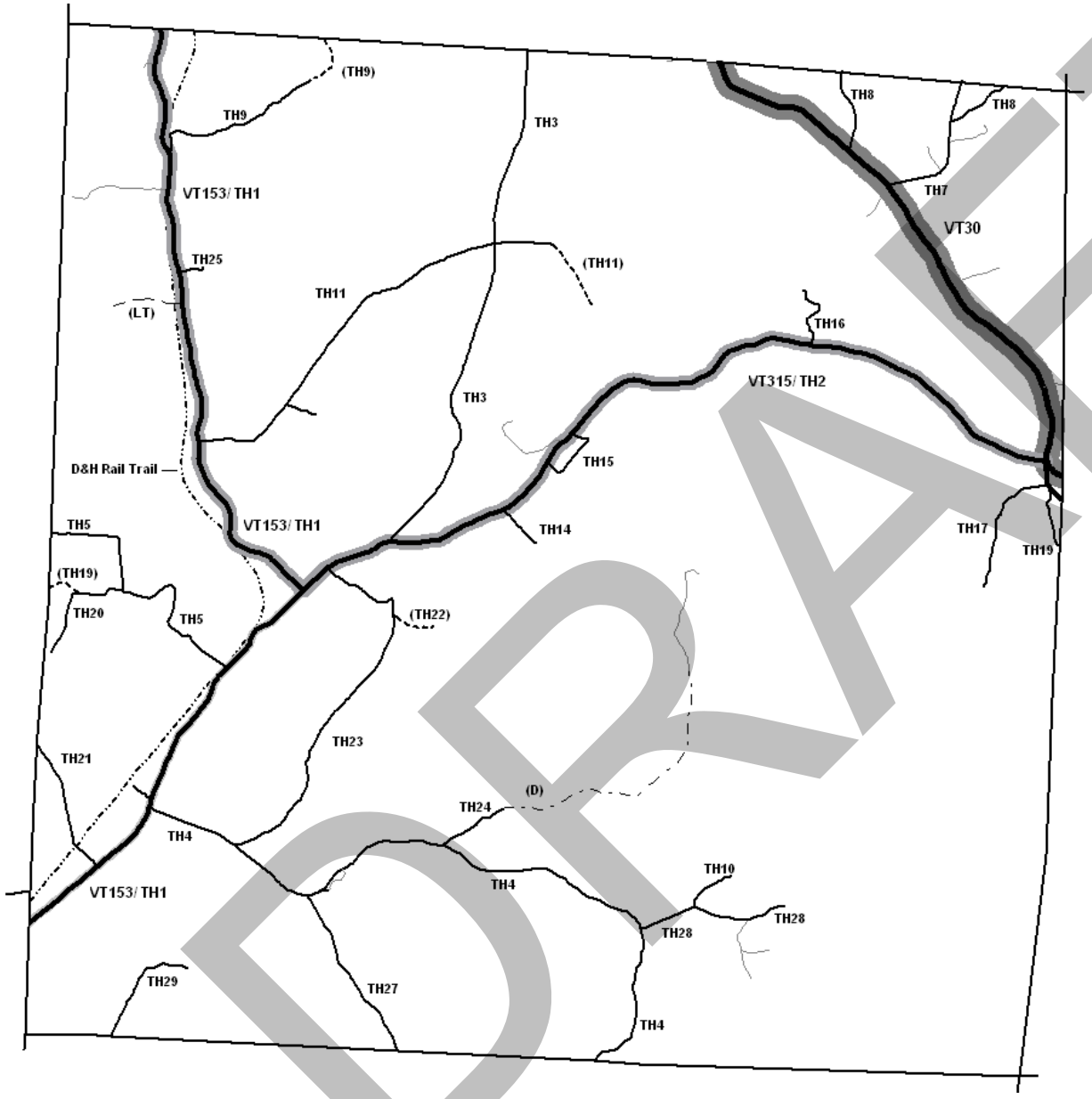
Map B: Public Lands & Facilities

Includes:

Town Facilities
State Facilities
Federal Facilities
Regulated Utilities
Town Land
State Land
Federal Land
Private Land Open to Public (Merck)

Note: The Mettawee Community School, located on VT153 in West Pawlet, is not shown.

Rupert, VT
May 2005



Map C: Transportation

Legal Class

- State Highway – VT30
- Class 2 Town Highway–TH1,TH2
- Class 3 Town Highway–TH
- Class 4 Town Highway – (TH)
- Legal Trail– (LT)
- Discontinued – (D)
- D&H Rail Trail

Functional Class

- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Other
- Local

Rupert, VT
May 2005

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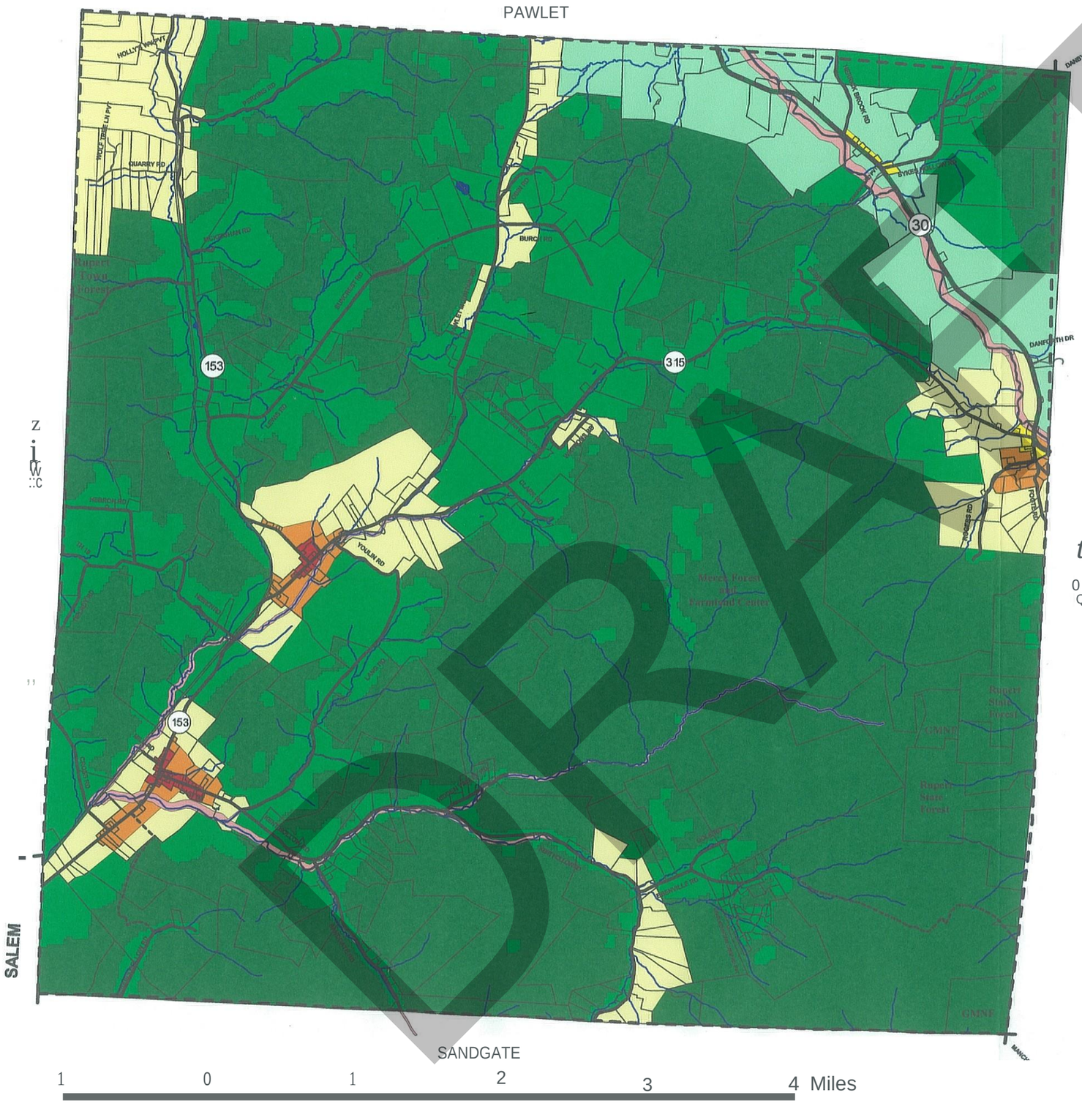


Town of Rupert, Vermont
Zoning Map

D Parcels

/\I.Town Road
Private Road
&state Highway
/\/ Town Trails
jV Streams

Ponds
D Fluvial Erosion Hazard Overlay Zone

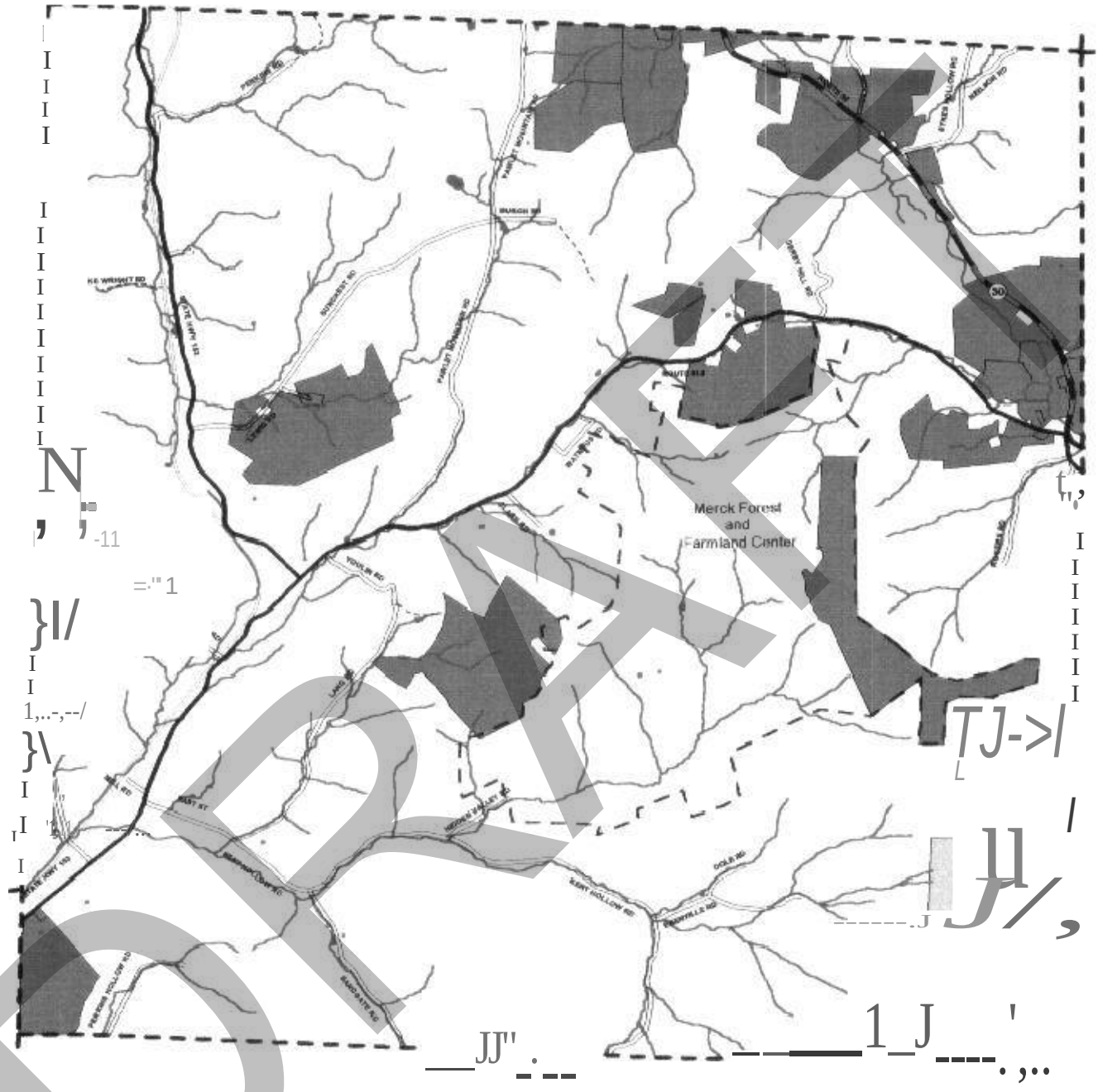
Zoning Districts
- Vliiage Center -10,000 Square Feet
D Vliiage Residential • 1 Acre
D Village Neighborhood - 20,000 Square Feet
D Rural Residential • 5 Acres *
D Agriculture • 25 Acres *
- Resource Management - 20 Acres *
- Forest Conservation - Residential Conditional Use

* Density Zoning Applicable

Base map data was downloaded from the Vermont Center for GIS. The Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zones were mapped by the Vermont River Management Program, BCRC and their consultants. The zoning districts were adopted by the Rupert Select Board August 23, 2011 and are effective September 13, 2011. The Rupert parcel data is maintained by Cartographic Associates and is current to April 1, 2011.

Map produced November 7, 2011 by
Bennington County Regional Commission
111 South Street, Suite 203
Bennington, VT 05201

Town of Rupert, VT
Conserved Lands



0 0.5 1 1.5 **Miles**

Class 2 Town Highways
Class 3 Town Highways
state Highway
Trails
Rail to Trail (mult use path)
Merck Forest and Farmland Center
Rivers and Streams
Ponds
Conserved Lands
Public Lands

BCRC GIS

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Map produced September 29, 2005 by BCRC.

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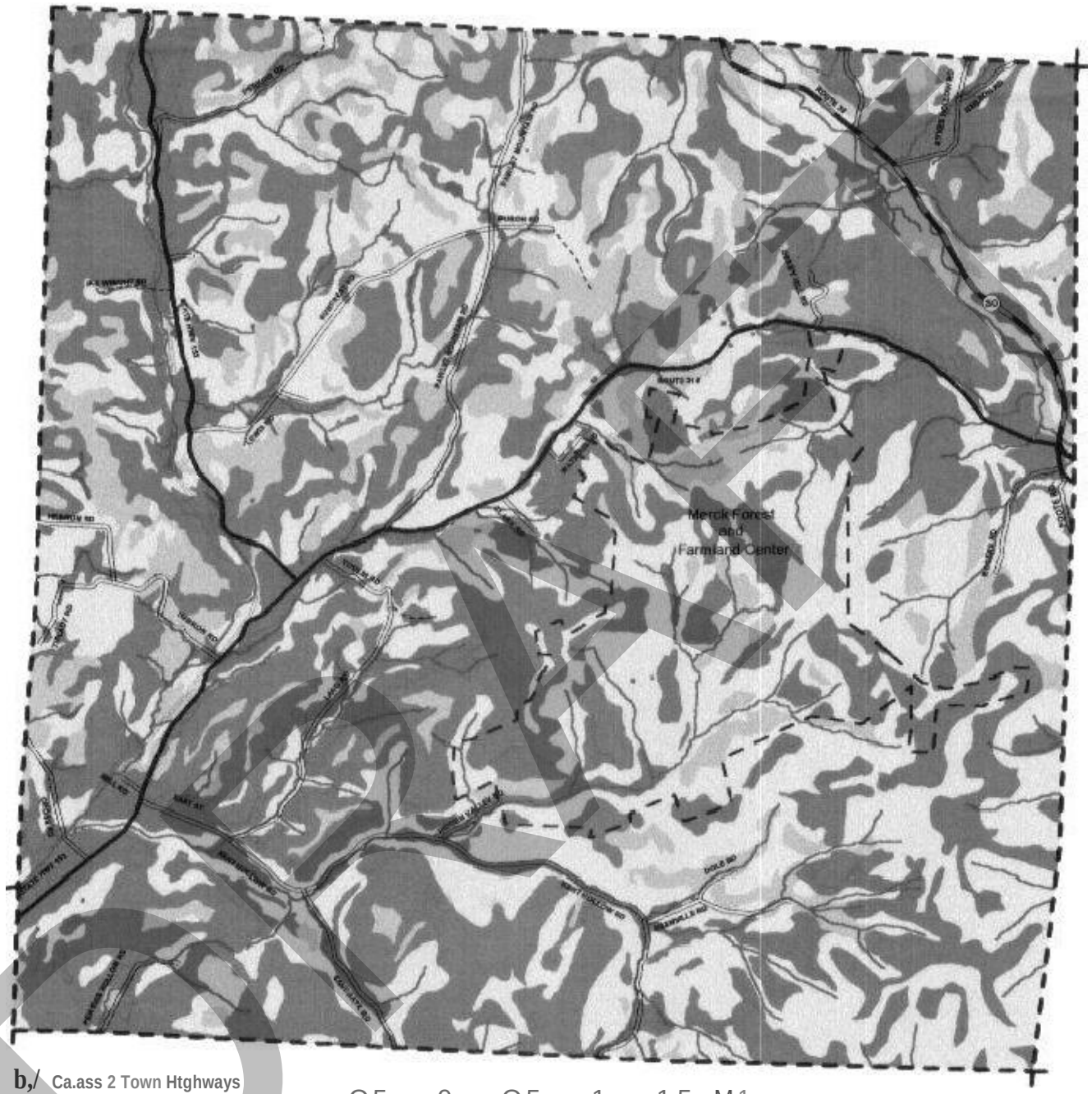
Town of Rupert, VT
On-site Wastewater Suitability



b,/ Ca.ass 2 Town Htghways
, . V. lass3Town Highways
State Hlg,way
; .. , Traits
; v Railto Trail {mu1ti•U5e path)
/ \ / Merck Forest and FarmlandCenter
1\./ River$and Streams
• • Ponds
On-s.it* wasr..water SU1tabtity
- Well Surted
Moderately Su ed
Marginalfy Suited
-NotSufted

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