

WILMINGTON DRAFT TOWN PLAN UPDATE

APRIL 28, 2026

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The Wilmington Town Plan builds on past planning efforts. It is a snap shot in time but also provides a look into the future. It represents hours of discussion, thoughtful deliberation, and interaction between citizens, Selectboard members, the Planning Commission, town staff and local organizations. Municipalities are required to review, update as necessary, and adopt their Town Plans every eight years. The Wilmington Planning Commission applied for and received a Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development to undergo thorough study and community involvement to assist in the rewriting of the plan. Planning support and technical assistance was provided throughout by the Windham Regional Commission.

1.2 Purpose of the Town Plan

The Wilmington Town Plan is a comprehensive document that provides the community with a framework for achieving its goals. Adoption of the Plan represents a community decision about the future of the Town and priorities for land use, community growth, and conservation of natural resources. The purpose of the Plan is to help the Town achieve its shared vision and values through the development of goals, policies, and priorities. The Plan also directs state agencies to take only those actions in Wilmington that are compatible with the goals and policies of the Town Plan.

The Plan also serves to address future development in Wilmington by:

- The plan is a commitment by appointed and elected officials to try and resolve issues according to the direction that has been established in the Town Plan by the people of Wilmington.
- Providing a basis for the development and interpretation of Town bylaws, regulations, and ordinances. Future decisions and local laws should be consistent with the direction set forth in the Town Plan.
- Establishing policies that will be considered in regional and state planning efforts, and for the issuance of permits under Vermont's Land Use and Development Act (Act 250) and Certificates of Public Good (Section 248) from the Public Utility Commission.
- Directing the Planning Commission to develop work programs that address the issues, tasks and studies suggested in the Town Plan.
- Serving as a source of information for the Planning Commission, Selectboard, Development Review Board, citizens, and businesses.

1.3 Statewide Goals

The Wilmington Town Plan is consistent with the 14 statewide planning goals listed in 24 V.S.A. §4302. The goals, policies and actions identified in the Plan refine these statewide goals to reflect Wilmington’s priorities and allow the Town to make progress on furthering the goals, as outlined in the table below.

Statewide Planning Goal	Relevant Wilmington Town Plan Goals, Policies, or Actions
<p>1. To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.</p>	
<p>2. To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.</p>	
<p>3. To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.</p>	
<p>4. To provide for safe, convenient, economic, and energy efficient transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.</p>	
<p>5. To identify, protect, and preserve important natural and historic features of the Vermont landscape, including: significant natural and fragile areas; outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands, and wetlands; significant scenic roads, waterways, and views; important historic structures, sites, or districts, archeological sites, and archeologically sensitive areas.</p>	
<p>6. To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, and land resources.</p>	
<p>7. To make efficient use of energy, provide for the development of renewable energy resources, and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.</p>	

8. To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors.	
9. To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries.	
10. To provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.	

1.4 Town Planning Process

State Authority for Planning

The Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act (Chapter 117, 24 VSA, as amended by Act 200), enables municipalities to undertake planning for the appropriate development of land in order to "promote the public health and safety against fire, floods, explosions and other dangers; to promote prosperity, comfort, access to adequate light, air, convenience, efficiency, economy, and general welfare; to enable mitigation of the burden of property taxes on agricultural, forest, and other open lands; to encourage appropriate architectural design; to encourage the development of renewable resources; to protect residential, agricultural and other areas from undue concentrations of population and overcrowding of land and buildings, from traffic congestion, from inadequate parking, and the invasion of traffic, and the loss of peace, quiet, and privacy; to facilitate the growth of villages, towns, and cities and of their communities and neighborhoods so as to create an optimum environment, with good civic design; to encourage development of a rich cultural environment and to foster the arts; and to provide means and methods for the municipalities of this state to plan for the prevention, minimization and future elimination of such land use development problems as may presently exist or which may be foreseen and to implement those plans when and where appropriate." In accordance with statutory regulations, a town plan must be reviewed and revised or readopted every eight (8) years.

Public Planning Process

A variety of outreach efforts were used to gather public input that helped the Planning Commission update the plan. The Planning Commission developed a community survey that was available online and at the Town Office September through November 2025. The survey included questions on housing and commercial needs and development, public services and facilities, community goals, and asked about general impressions on what is working well in Wilmington and areas where improvements are needed. A total of 107 survey responses were received from both year-round (over 70%) and part-time residents. An analysis of full survey results are included in the Appendices.....

The Planning Commission hosted a Community Meeting on November 1st at the Old School Community Center. The meeting drew in a wide array of participants on a Saturday morning, including town residents and employees, boards and committees (Select Board, Planning Commission, Economic Development, Development Review Board, and Wilmington Works) to identify town needs and actions. The meeting began with a kick off presentation which included a summary of the survey and up dated demographic information. Subject area tables were set up around topics addressed in the Town Plan and participants move between tables. Facilitators led table discussions and recorded participants concerns and ideas. UMASS students staffed a table addressing flood resiliency. A summary of the meeting is included as Appendix... .

Other public meetings – midway review.....

The Planning Commission also met regularly from the fall 2025 through the spring of 2026 to review and make updates to each chapter of the plan. All meetings were open to the public and the Planning Commission welcomed input during this process. We are grateful to the community for their participation, vision, and guidance and have used the information collected during the development of this Town Plan.

In addition, the town drew on a variety of studies addressing specific concerns in Wilmington and completed in the past eight years, including:

- Deerfield Valley Rise, Resilience in Shifting Environments, 2025 – UMASS Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning Graduate Student Studio
- Evolving Together: Dover, Readsboro, Whitingham, & Wilmington, 2025 – UMASS Center for Resilient Metro Regions and Communities by Design/American Institute of Architecture
- Bi-Town Housing Rental Subcommittee Report, 2023
- Housing and Market Analysis, Wilmington and Dover, 2019 – Camoin Associates

1.5 How Used & Interpretation

How the Town Plan is used

The plan is to be used by town boards, commissions, staff, residents, and businesses in the following ways:

- To provide a framework for planning the future growth of the Town of Wilmington;
- To guide decision making in site development plans and Conditional Use permits;
- To serve as a guide in responding to Act 250 permit application requests;
- To provide a framework for updating Zoning Bylaws;
- To provide a guide for the preparation of subdivision regulations;
- To recommend future planning studies;
- To assist in the development of a capital budget and program;
- To serve as a source of information and guidance to individuals and businesses making decisions regarding their development plans.
- To determine the use of natural resources.

The Town Plan also serves to guide the Windham Regional Commission and state agencies in their planning efforts, assists the District Environmental Commission in judging applications submitted under Act 250, and other state proceedings, such as Section 248. Act 250 requires that development projects are in conformance with the Town Plan. The Town Plan is also used in the Section 248 process, in which the Public Services Board determines if a public utility project is in the public good. The Section 248 process was established via 30 V.S.A. §248 and incorporates most of the review Act 250 criteria.

In addition to any other regulatory provisions or enforceable standards shall be considered applicable to any construction within the Town of Wilmington. Such enforceable standards are to be interpreted broadly and without exception to protect the mountain and valley vistas, wooded hillsides and undeveloped ridgelines in the Town of Wilmington including, Haystack Mountain and ridgelines in the west, Medburyville and Mt. Olga. No mitigation measures or interpretations shall be accepted by any regulatory body to overcome prohibitions in such standards.

Interpretation of the Town Plan

Interpretation of this Town Plan shall be the responsibility of the Planning Commission, the Development Review Board, and the Selectboard, with advice from town counsel if deemed appropriate. Except where specifically defined below in this plan, all words used in the Town Plan carry customary meanings. “Should” or “may” means is encouraged but not mandatory. “Shall,” “will,” and “must,” is a mandatory requirement. If any portion of this Town Plan is found to be invalid, any such invalidity shall not affect the remaining portions of this Plan.

CHAPTER 2

COMMUNITY PROFILE

2.1 History

The Town’s first charter was granted in 1751 by Benning Wentworth, then Governor of New Hampshire (under King George II), and the town was named Wilmington after Spence Compton, the first Earl of Wilmington, a friend of Benning Wentworth. The grant consisted of six (6) square miles and was given to Phineas Lyman and fifty-seven (57) others. In 1763 (under King George III) a second charter was granted for the same six (6) square mile parcel of land. The proprietors were different people, and the town was named Draper.

This double granting created strife among town residents as disputes arose over ownership of land and, of even greater significance, the issue of whether or not the area encompassing the town was a part of the present State of New York or the State of New Hampshire. Issues of ownership between New York and New Hampshire under the original New Hampshire land grants were thought to be resolved in 1777 by Vermont’s Declaration of Independence. However, lingering questions over the issues of New York - New Hampshire land claims under the New Hampshire

land grants precluded Vermont from entering the Union as the 14th state until 1791. The last remnants of this land conflict were finally resolved by the Supreme Court in 1931.

In 1771 there were fourteen pioneering families living on what is now known as Lisle Hill. This hilltop village settlement contained a store, a meeting house, a tavern, a church, and a number of dwellings, with individual farms scattered about the town. In the early years of the Town, the farmers produced beef, sheep and wool, butter, maple products, eggs, poultry and wood to sell.

During this pioneer period the forest cutting and sheep farming led to soil erosion, and a resulting decline in agricultural production. George Perkins Marsh, a Vermont farmer and leader, wrote in 1864 about the damage sheep were doing to the soil, and about the problems related to the loss of forest. When the farmers could no longer compete with farms in more fertile regions, the exodus from Vermont began. The end of poorly managed sheep farming in the 1850's and the abandonment of the farms allowed the regeneration of the forest. (Marsh, G.P. 1864)

Moving the Town Center

The construction of the Brattleboro- Bennington Turnpike (the current Route 9) in 1828 would signal a change in the economic future of the Town. The crossroads created by this private highway and the local town roads near the junction of Beaver Brook and the Deerfield River would establish a commercial center for the town. 1833 was known as “the year the Village moved to Mill Hollow.” All of the Town Hill structures but the meeting house came down to the new town center. By the time of its incorporation in 1855, the Village contained four churches, a school house, 80 dwellings, a town house, a clothing store, a market, a marble works, a carriage shop, a harness shop, two blacksmiths, three lawyers’ offices, a savings bank, and daily mail deliveries. (Deerfield Valley Times Reunion Edition, 1900.)

Commerce

After a period of decreasing population, changes began to occur that brought more prosperity to the Town. The number of farms in Wilmington increased and it became known as a cattle center. In 1885 the Deerfield Valley Creamery Association was formed, growing to over 100 farm members, and producing in 1923, its best year, 129,571 pounds of butter. Refrigerated cars brought competition from the west. The building of the Harriman Dam in 1923 flooded many farms, and the remaining farmers turned to fluid milk production.

Maple produce has always been important to the Wilmington farmers, first for home use, and then as marketable products. Many of the wooden tools needed in the process were manufactured in town by Adams and Haynes, who made patent liquid holders, watering troughs, and gathering tubs.

The river system surrounding Wilmington provided for the establishment of many kinds of mills, helping the town become a manufacturing center. There were mills for the manufacture of padded clothing and reclining chairs, lumber, and flour. Harnesses, wagons, sleighs, carriages, cabinets, and tin ware were also produced. Wilmington experienced a resurgence of prosperity that had waned as its residents had moved to the cities, the gold fields, and the more fertile farm land of the Midwest. (Deerfield Valley Times Reunion Edition, 1900)

The Railroad

The Hoosac Tunnel and Wilmington Railroad, the more familiar “Hoot, Toot and Whistle,” would also change the direction of Wilmington’s economy. During the spring thaws, from the middle of March to the middle of May, the Deerfield River was jammed with logs from Searsburg, Somerset, Glastenbury, and West Dover heading for Mountain Mills, where about 100 men were kept employed at the saw mills. The railroad provided a ready means to export these logs and timber products to other areas.

Inevitably, the seemingly endless supply of timber would run out and the principal function of the railroad would shift to local freight and passenger service, including tourist excursion trains. The New England Power Company saw the potential of the river as a source of electric power and quietly began to buy up property rights in the valley where a series of water storage dams could be built. The first of these was in 1912, when the Somerset Reservoir was constructed. Then, in 1924, Harriman Dam flooded the valley of Mountain Mills, inundating all the farms and the little village. At the time it was the world’s largest earthen dam and the second largest lake wholly within Vermont’s borders.

Further lumber production was in the form of veneer, furniture, boxes, and wooden wares. While the railroad came primarily for the lumber and paper pulp generated by the mills at the Mountain Mills Development, its arrival in 1891 signaled the emergence of a new industry in town, tourism.

Tourism

Wilmington’s location, lakes, and serene beauty were a natural lure for summertime visitors. Easy access via the railroad that was extended to the village in 1891, nurtured this flourishing business. Farms still in operation began to take in summer guests, while vacant farm houses became attractive summer homes for well-to-do families from the cities, many drawn to take “the cure” at the waters of Whitingham. Perhaps most noticeable of the time was the fifty-room hotel constructed on Lake Raponda in 1889, burned in 1896 and re-built in 1900 which for eight years was a successful destination of considerable elegance.

The tradition of elegance was continued with the construction in the center of town, of the Child’s Tavern in 1900, now known as the Crafts Inn, a destination resort for vacationing guests. Summer tourism served to supplement the area’s faltering economy and became a vital part of Wilmington’s growth.

Wilmington’s winter tourism began with the birth of the ski industry in 1953 at Mt. Snow, formally known as Mt. Pisgah, in Dover. Although Hogback, Dutch Hill, Prospect, and Bromley bounded Wilmington on the east, the southwest, west, and the north respectively, and pre-dated Mt. Snow, they had contributed little to Wilmington’s economic base.

There were few inns or lodges in the Valley during the early years. Many people opened their homes to guests, providing seasonal lodges. As the industry grew, more lodges were built and new retail businesses and restaurants appeared. The Village Center was revitalized by this new industry; craft, gift and antique shops were added. The style of guest housing changed, moving from lodges to

planned residential developments of single homes to condominiums, and then to the concept of the destination resort with all housing and recreation interrelated.

2.2 Geography

The Deerfield Valley is located in south central Vermont in the southern Green Mountain National Forest. Nestled between Searsburg Mountain and Mount Olga, the Deerfield Valley is twenty-one miles west of Brattleboro and twenty miles east of Bennington, over mountain roads.

It is a mountainous region with a town center in the base of the river valley, Wilmington is a catch basin for the North Branch Deerfield River and is fed by the Beaver, Meadow, Rose, Haystack, Hall, Ellis, Negus and Wilder Brooks.

This rural area has substantial tourism causing the population to swell from 1,600 to over 10,000 or more on busy weekends. Mount Snow and Haystack Mountains bring skiers and seasonal workers in winter. The mountains, lakes (8 mile long Harriman Reservoir and 1 mile long Lake Raponda) and village bring visitors in summer. A spectacular array of colors from the vibrantly colored sugar maples brings visitors in fall.

Adjoining Towns

Wilmington borders the towns of Whitingham, Marlboro, Dover and Searsburg, as well as a shared border with Readsboro in the Green Mountain National Forest west of Lake Harriman. There is a single point of corner contact to Somerset to the north-west and a short contact of a few short miles to Halifax to the southeast. In many ways we share a common history with these towns. Our livelihood has shifted from a primarily agricultural and lumbering base to a tourism base leveraging the natural scenic beauty of the area and the historic structures remaining from that past.

Wilmington has developed harmoniously with surrounding towns, sharing symbiotic relationships with the core tourism towns of Wilmington and Dover and its outlying neighbors of Whitingham, Readsboro, Searsburg and Marlboro. While Marlboro remains balanced in its influences between Wilmington and Brattleboro, the remaining neighboring towns operate functionally in conjunction with Wilmington and Dover. While each maintains its personal identity and government, they share both jobs and social support from the Wilmington/West Dover valley.

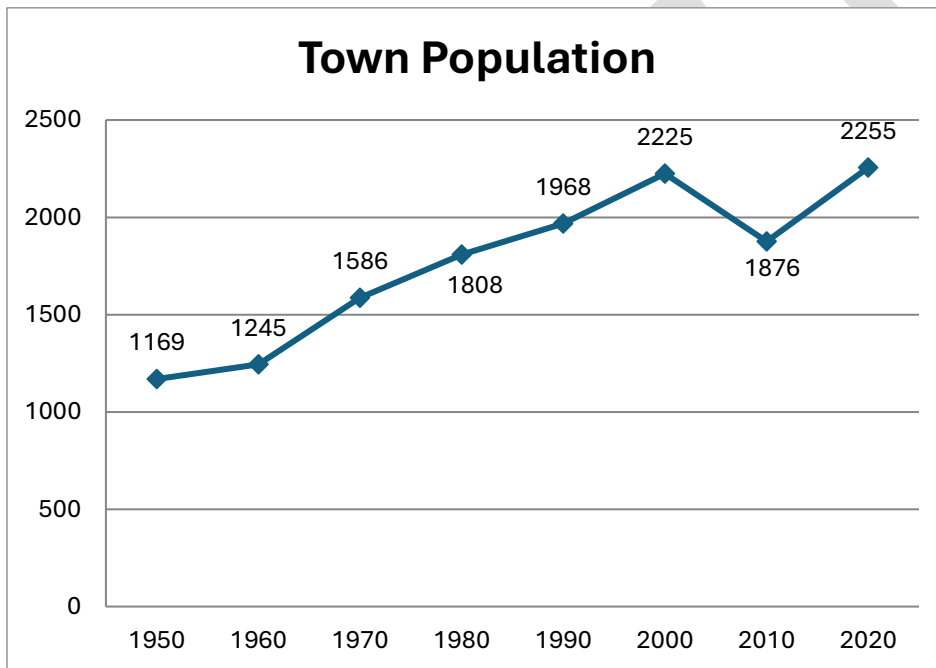
2.3 Demographics

The following section provides information on past and current demographic data. Additional data on housing characteristics can be found in the Housing chapter and data on economic conditions can be found in the Economic Development chapter. During the planning process, data trends were analyzed to help inform current condition assessments and recommendations.

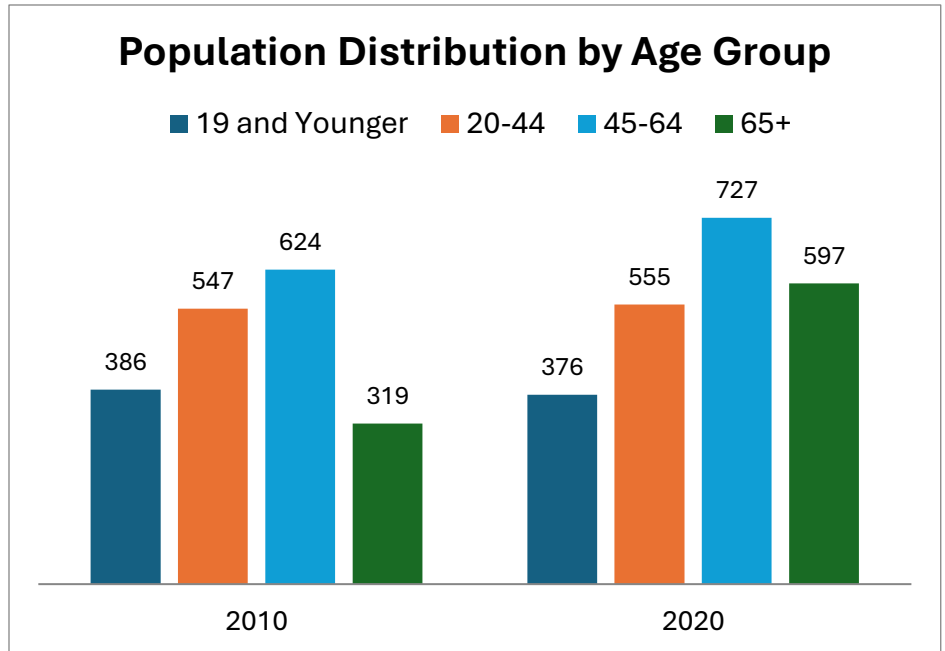
Most of the data included in the plan was obtained from the U.S. Census and the American Community Survey. The Census is conducted once every ten years and collects “point-in-time” data. The American Community Survey is conducted year-round to gather “period” data that are five-year rolling average estimates and do not reflect actual counts like population. These estimates are useful when analyzing trends in and telling a general story, but should be used cautiously given the high margin of error.

Population

According to the US Census Bureau, Wilmington’s population in 2020 increased to 2,255, which is up from the 2010 population of 1,876. This is more in line with the population in 2000, which was 2,225. Out-migration occurred for a multitude of reasons, not the least of which are the absence of well-paying jobs and the presence of mostly seasonal jobs in a weather dependent industry. These challenges were further exacerbated by the flood of 2011 that wiped out the downtown. Then in 2020, the COVID pandemic brought more people back to region, permanently or temporarily, who were escaping higher density areas and seeking the relative safety of rural communities. According to the American Community Survey (US Census Bureau 5-year estimates), Wilmington’s population in 2024 was back down to 1,747. It is important to remember that census numbers for small rural communities have a large margin of error. However, these numbers give the community a sense of populations trends which are affected by many different factors. See also, Figure--- below.

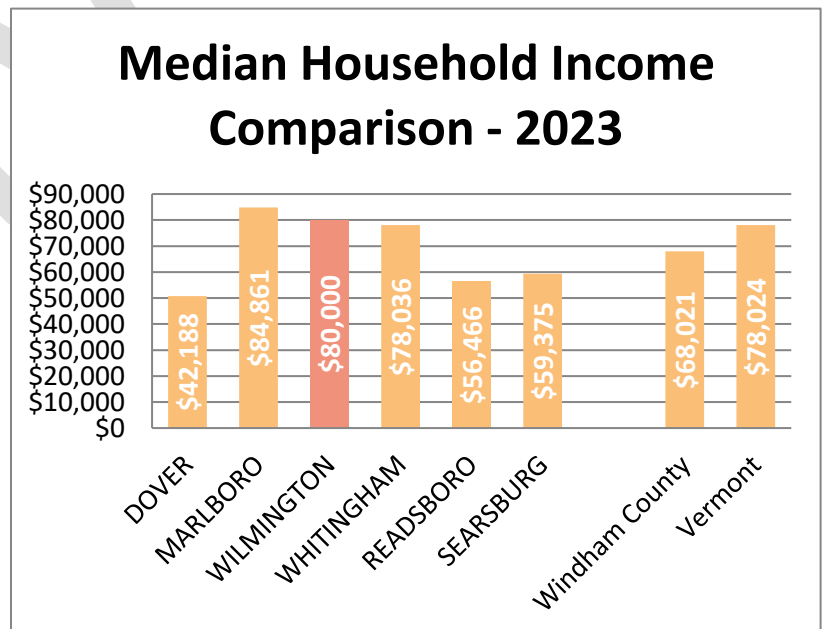
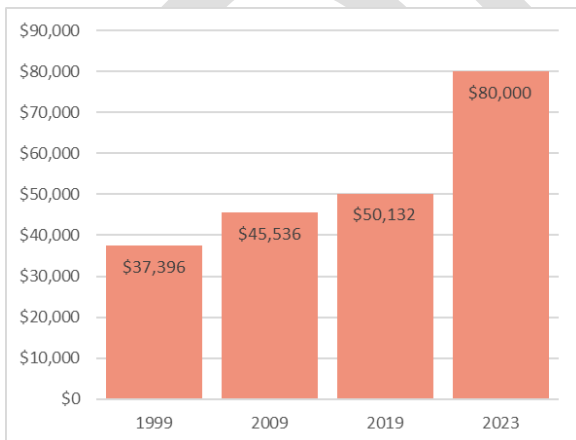


As shown in the figure to the right, Wilmington’s population is aging as is the state of Vermont and much of the country. The largest increase in age cohorts between 2010 and 2020 was residents aged 64+ followed by 45-64. This trend is occurring statewide and has significant implications in terms of providing services and housing that meet the needs of aging residents. At the same time there was a decline in school-aged children.



Household Income

The median income for a household in the town was \$80,000 in 2023, which is up significantly since 2019 when it was \$50,00. This may be for a variety of reasons, including the impacts of the COVID pandemic and new people moving to town or seasonal residents settling here. This income level is in line with the neighboring towns of Marlboro and Whitingham, but significantly higher than Dover and Readsboro. It is also slightly higher than Windham County overall.



CHAPTER 3

COMMUNITY FACILITIES, SERVICES AND RESOURCES

3.1 Community Services

Waste Water Disposal

The Wilmington Wastewater system consists of seven pumping stations and a treatment facility. The original facility was constructed in 1964 as a primary treatment process and served the immediate downtown area. A sewer line extension was completed in 1980 to include the western part of the Town to the area of Haystack Road. In 1988, an upgrade was completed which improved the treatment process to Secondary Treatment. Another sewer line extension was completed in 1989-90 north to the Elementary School, East to the White House, and to the top of the hills of Ray Hill, Lisle Hill and Castle Hill Roads. The last major project was in 2016 when the Treatment Plant Facility was refurbished to include new buildings, a new primary treatment process and upgrades to the electrical, instrumentation, heating and ventilation systems.

The treatment facility is permitted to treat and discharge an annual average of 135,000 gallons per day. The current 5-year average (2021-2025) daily flow is 81,600 gallons per day.

The Town of Wilmington is planning to extend the sewer line along Route 9 East in 2026-2027, 0.3 miles outside the Village on Routes 9E & 100S, named “The Route 9 Infrastructure Expansion Project.” Its overall goal is to retain and create business development, affordable housing, and to provide jobs. This \$5.2M project will be funded by a variety of sources including a grant from the Northern Borders Regional Commission, a Community Recovery and Revitalization grant from the state, as well as a townwide voter approved bond.

If additional wastewater needs arise in the future the town may want to consider other funding source including Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or the state’s new CHIP (Community and Housing Infrastructure Program) program. These programs are designed to finance infrastructure development (wastewater, water, sidewalks, streetscapes, etc.) with future increases in tax revenue resulting from property value increases from new development. CHIP is essentially a project based TIF (instead of district) that is designed primarily to support new housing development. For more information about CHIP see, <https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/vepc/chip> .

The Cold Brook Fire District serves the northwestern corner of the Town, including the Haystack development. Areas not served by the treatment facilities utilize individual, on-site septic systems as the principal means of wastewater disposal. The State of Vermont requires permits for on-site septic systems, as well as potable water supplies. These permits are issued by Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.

Water Districts

The Wilmington Water Department is a public water system providing water to approximately 265 homes and businesses in and around Downtown Wilmington. The water for the system comes from springs on Haystack Mountain and other wells in the northeastern section of Town, some of them

on private property. A new covered storage system was built in 1992 and the distribution system has been upgraded by the previous owner (Wilmington Water District), a separate municipality at the time. Water flow to each building in the system is metered. While under the supervision of the Wilmington Water District, the commissioners allowed for additional users within the district but did not plan for any expansion of the district.

The Wilmington Water District merged with the Town of Wilmington on July 1, 2021, thereby creating the Town of Wilmington Water Department. The Water System Asset Management Plan was prepared in October 2024 to evaluate existing facilities, document existing conditions, identify deficiencies, and outline needed improvements with a schedule that the town can use as guidance moving forward. The Town of Wilmington is planning to extend the water line along Route 9 East in 2026-2027, 0.3 miles outside the Village on Routes 9E & 100S, named “The Route 9 Infrastructure Expansion Project.” Its overall goal is to retain and create business development, affordable housing, and to provide jobs.

Chimney Hill water system is a privately owned public water system providing water to the Chimney Hill Development.

The Cold Brook Fire District is a privately owned public water system. Their water main extension policy was designed to meet the future expansion plans of the Haystack Development.

Solid Waste Disposal

Wilmington is a member of the Windham Solid Waste Management District. Wilmington's landfill was closed in the 1990s and the site was converted to a transfer station. The Town operates the transfer station on Miller Road for all Wilmington residents and property owners. The transfer station also has a recycling center and information on what can be recycled is found on the Wilmington website.

Public Safety Services

The Town of Wilmington has one fire station, staffed by a full time Fire Chief and volunteer members. The volunteer base of the fire department has been undermined by an aging and retiring force, with insufficient success in drawing a new volunteer force. The town is developing outreach efforts, including working with Hermitage Corporation, to strengthen the volunteer force. With surrounding towns experiencing similar volunteer shortages, the long term viability of an all-volunteer force and independent divided fire departments seems questionable.

The firehouse is located on Beaver Street in Wilmington, close to the former High School building. The Wilmington Fire Department is a member of the Keene Mutual Aid System and approved by the Vermont Fire Underwriters. It houses three fire pumpers, a heavy duty rescue truck, a forestry/brush truck, boat, snowmobile, and ATV with recovery sled. The fire department handles fire and emergency medical rescue support for Wilmington and Searsburg.

With a growth in solar installations on residential houses, fire-fighting safety on electrically charged roofs and how to keep occupants safe will be a training focus for the Wilmington fire- fighters.

Police protection is provided by the Wilmington Police Department. Additional police protection is provided by Vermont State Police.

Health and Emergency Services

Most of the health and medical needs of the Town can be met through the Southwestern Vermont Medical Center, Deerfield Valley Campus (formerly known as Deerfield Valley Health Center) which is located in Wilmington and serves towns in western Windham County. More extensive medical services are provided by facilities in Brattleboro, Bennington, Greenfield and North Adams. Residents may travel to Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, Southwestern Vermont Medical Center in Bennington, and Grace Cottage in Townsend. Brattleboro Retreat is available for mental health and substance use recovery. There are a number of other health services, including dentistry and psychiatric and physical therapy services, available in Wilmington to residents and visitors.

Deerfield Valley Rescue, a volunteer non-profit organization, provides 24-hour pre-hospital emergency medical care and transport for Wilmington residents and visitors. New volunteer members are frequently needed.

Education Services

Elementary Education

Elementary education in Wilmington (pre-K through grade 5) is provided at the Twin Valley Elementary School. This school was formed for the school year 2013-2014 with the merging of Whitingham and Wilmington elementary students in a renovated former Deerfield Valley Elementary School. The Twin Valley Elementary School also hosts the Center Base Program, an initiative to service students with multiple disabilities residing in any of the six towns surrounding Wilmington. The Windham Southwest Supervisory Union provides administrative, curriculum, and personnel support for a number of school districts, including Wilmington.

Comparisons of student numbers are difficult with the combination of schools and increase in functionality, but elementary school enrollment has experienced a steady decline since the peak of 173 students in the 2004-2005 school year. The 2014-2015 school year reflects the combined Twin Valley Elementary enrollment (Wilmington and Whitingham). Student enrollment since that time has decreased again and most recent numbers, 2025-2026 are below numbers prior to the merger.

The Twin Valley Elementary School enrollment K – 5 for the past four years is as follows:

	2008-2009*	2014-2015	2015-2016	2017-2018	2025-2026
Total Enrollment	164	189	183	174	148

Source: Vermont Department of Education School Report and Vermont Education Dashboard, <https://education.vermont.gov/data-and-reporting/vermont-education-dashboard>

*Wilmington only

The Twin Valley Elementary School is rated as Excellent, according to the Vermont State Report Card for the school year 2024-2025.

Middle and High School Education

In the spring of 2004, the towns of Wilmington and Whitingham made an agreement to merge their middle and high school. The Twin Valley Middle School, serving students in grades 6 – 8 was located in the same building as the Whitingham Elementary School. The Twin Valley High School, serving students in grades 9 – 12, was located in Wilmington. The education of both was overseen by the Twin Valley School Board, consisting of five school directors, three of which are representatives from Wilmington. Because of declining enrollment since the merger in 2004 and because of the numerous structural limitations of the Wilmington high school building, the school district recommended further consolidation of the schools which was approved by both towns and resulted in the closure of the Wilmington high school facility.

Overall school consolidation has been deemed a success by students and teachers alike. The new Twin Valley Middle/High School is located in the newly renovated former Whitingham Elementary Middle School facility. However, school enrollment numbers continue to decrease.

Enrollment	2008-2009	2014-2015	2015-2016	2017-2018	2025-2026
Middle School	122	104	94	83	82
High School	188	154	139	126	108

Source: Vermont Department of Education School Report and Vermont Education Dashboard, <https://education.vermont.gov/data-and-reporting/vermont-education-dashboard>

The Twin Valley Middle and High School is rated as Approaching (standards) and listed as declining (change in rating from prior years), according to the Vermont State Report Card for the school year 2024-2025. This puts the school at a Priority Level 2 in terms of need for comprehensive support.

Career Education and Lifelong Learning

Career education opportunities are available to Wilmington’s high school students and adults at the Windham Regional Career Center in Brattleboro. The Community College of Vermont, at its learning centers in Brattleboro and Bennington, offers associate degrees, career-related certificates, and credit and non-credit training programs.

Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) also offers a wide variety of education and training programs for high school students and adults. BDCC recently partnered with HatchSpace (a woodworking maker space in Brattleboro) to offer a seven-week training program designed to help adults explore careers in the construction and building trades. BDCC’s Workforce Center of Excellence offers training and career coaching for people of all ages, including a Digital Skills for the Office and Workplace training series.

BDCC’s Pipelines and Pathways Program (P3) provides career readiness programming embedded within every high school in the Windham Region. P3 offers a variety of programs from semester-long job readiness courses, to summer bootcamps, financial literacy and life skill “Reality Fairs” to career and college “Fearless Futures” events.

3.2 Child Care

Child care and early childhood education are important components of the Wilmington community and its future. Ensuring accessible, affordable, quality child care is vital. Availability of child care

services can have a direct effect on the vitality of the Town by encouraging young families to locate and remain in Wilmington.

A recent statewide study by First Children’s Finance found that, 40% of infants that are “likely to need care” (LTNC), 70% of LTNC toddlers, and 69% of LTNC preschoolers have access to full-day, full-year child care. By comparison in Windham County, the number of slots available to infants LTNC is closer to 30-35%; LTNC toddlers is closer to 65%; and preschoolers is just over 50%.

Beaver Brook Children’s School, located in the Old School Enrichment Center in Wilmington is a great asset for the town. Beaver Brook has programs for infants and toddlers, prekindergarten for 3-5-year-olds, as well as a fully outdoor kindergarten program. The Hermitage Club, also in Wilmington, has a child program for its members only. In nearby Dover, Kids in the Country provides childcare services.

There are other registered home daycare providers and licensed early education programs in Wilmington as well. Additional information on these child care facilities, as well as information on services for families, providers, employers, and people interested in opening a new facility, can be found through the Child Development Division of the Vermont Department for Children and Families (Agency of Human Services) and the Winston Prouty Center for Child and Family Development in Brattleboro.

3.3 Telecommunications

With new opportunities for remote work and an increase in basic services being accessed online, improving internet access in Wilmington is increasingly important. There are currently about 140 underserved households in Wilmington, which are defined as not having access to service with a capacity of 100Mb/20Mb – up/down. Local internet providers include Fidium Fiber, Consolidated Communications, and Duncan Cable.

Deerfield Valley Fiber (DVFiber), a regional nonprofit fiber service provider, currently does not serve customers in Wilmington. However, DVFiber recently received preliminary approval for grant funding through the BEAD program (Broadband Equity Access and Deployment) to address the remaining underserved areas of Wilmington and Searsburg. Construction will take place within 4 years of grant agreement signing.

The Pettee Memorial Library has high speed free Wi-Fi available in the downtown area, and many of the local businesses offer free wireless access to their customers.

Cellular phone services are somewhat limited in the Deerfield Valley, but have improved over recent years. Cell service providers in Wilmington include Verizon, AT&T and T-Mobile.

3.4 Library

The Pettee Memorial Library is in an historic building located on South Main Street in the Village district of Wilmington. Patrons come not only from Wilmington, but from nearby towns such as Dover, Whitingham, Jacksonville, Searsburg, and Marlboro. The library also provides temporary memberships to visiting students and tourists. In 2025, over 17,000 people visited the library and

over 9,000 books and other materials, such as museum passes, telescopes, sports equipment, and puzzles and games, were checked out.

Pettee provides 24-hour access to free public wi-fi, and there are 3 desktops and 3 laptops available for patron use during library hours. Our librarians aid patrons with thousands of technical requests per year in addition to our regular duties – which include administrative tasks such as budget management, circulation, collection curation, developing and providing ongoing as well as event-based programming for all age levels, and answering myriad reference questions. We have made forging community connections with different local organizations and collaborating on projects with them a priority.

A renovation in 2023 created a beautiful space in the adult library (that could easily be converted into a larger meeting space), and a welcoming area designated for young adults. Hopefully updating the children’s section is not far behind. The librarians take advantage of using the outdoors when needed but have been able to provide programs on a regular basis using the spaces most appropriate for them within the building. The staff is grateful for patron suggestions and enjoys, most of all, being able to provide an enriching, safe, and friendly environment.

3.5 Town Facilities

Wilmington’s town owned buildings provide space for municipal services and host community groups offering programs to residents. Town Hall remains in the floodplain and may require relocation to ensure safety, accessibility, and continuity of services. Many buildings also need upgrades to meet current accessibility standards, building codes, energy efficiency expectations, as well as façade improvements and interior work.

A community center was identified as a priority by residents and realized through the locally developed Old School Enrichment Center (OSEC), now a non-profit providing programs and services to the community.

Municipal buildings include:

- Wilmington Town Hall (2 East Main Street) - Administrative offices including the Town Clerk, Town Manager, Assessor, Zoning, and Finance. The Meeting Room is home to various boards, committees and commissions including the Selectboard, Development Review Board, Planning Commission, Board of Civil Authority, Trail Committee, and others.
- Public Safety Facility (40 Beaver Street) - Police and Fire Departments
- Town Garage (21 Haystack Road) - Highway Department
- Old Firehouse (18 Beaver Street) - Municipal storage, free meeting space for non-profits, and one bay rented to a local business.
- Memorial Hall (14 West Main Street, c. 1902) - available for public and private events.

Cemeteries, managed by the Cemetery Commission, include Riverview (Stowe Hill Road), Intervale/Cuttings (Smith and Davis Roads), Averill (Route 9), and Restland (Beaver Street, behind St. Mary’s In-the-Mountains Episcopal Church), where a stone retaining wall is in need of repair or

replacement and requires an engineering study. Several smaller private cemeteries are also located throughout the area.

3.6 Community Resources

Recreation Resources

Wilmington prides itself on the numerous opportunities that the community has to offer locals and visitors in the way of public recreation.

Recreational facilities include:

- Town Common on Lisle Hill Road
- Buzzy Towne Park on South Main Street
- River Bank Park on South Main Street
- Green Mountain Beach on Lake Raponda Road
- Charles Trebbe, Jr. Tennis Courts (and Pickleball), adjacent to OSEC athletic fields.

The Trail Committee maintains extensive hiking and biking trails throughout town, including the popular Hoot, Toot & Whistle Trail, which recently received upgrades. The Wilmington Trails committee works on building, maintaining, and adding signage to many hiking and biking trails throughout Wilmington. The committee and dedicate volunteers gained permits, repaired, improved surfaces and built bridges to complete a number of trails and loops.

Wilmington has a wealth and variety of private and public recreation trail networks. There are also hiking trails in the Green Mountain National Forest (to Haystack Peak) and in the Molly Stark State Forest (to Mount Olga) and snowmobile trails which exist on mostly private land. Other popular seasonal destinations include:

- Lake Whitingham (Harriman Reservoir) which has several access points
- Wards Cove has swimming and a picnic area
- Oxbow has a boat launch and picnic area
- Maynard's Cove has swimming and canoe/kayak access
- Mountain Mills boat launch
- Fairview Avenue has swimming, a picnic area and boat launch
- Medburyville picnic area

Scenic Resources

The outstanding scenic quality of the Wilmington area is one of its greatest assets. The work of the Scenic Road Committee, the planning survey, and the ad hoc planning committees show that the protection of the scenic qualities of the Town is an aesthetic concern, as well as an economic one.

These scenic qualities separate Wilmington from other towns that are less pleasing visually, and provide an advantage for the Town as it competes with other New England towns in attracting visitors and customers to shops and restaurants. There are four major types of scenic resources in the Town. They are:

- Views from Primary Roads: What is seen on the roadsides as well as views of distant landforms influences the visual quality of the Town.

- Intermediate View Sheds: These are visually significant areas adjacent to primary roads, serving as foreground for views of ridges, hills, and valleys.
- Back Roads: The back roads of Wilmington are the connecting links to all parts of Town. These roads provide such important visual features as leaf tunnel effects, hedgerows, stone walls, fences, orchards, cemeteries, wetlands, ponds, brooks, and lakes.
- Major Land Forms: Haystack Mountain is the major landform in Wilmington. It can be viewed from all the major highways leading into the Town and is a significant scenic resource. Lake Whitingham is also a significant scenic resource.

Many of these resources are highly sensitive and because they may be adversely affected by careless development, must be carefully managed.

Historic Resources

Wilmington has a unique heritage and a number of sites which are important to its history. There are approximately 90 historic buildings and sites in Wilmington, over 60 of which have been listed on the state and federal Registers of Historic Places. The Wilmington Village Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This listing recognizes the historic importance of the district and assures protective review of federally funded projects that might adversely affect its character.

Because the Village itself was not established at its present site until 1840, much of the architecture is nineteenth century with most buildings clapboarded. There are some buildings that are especially significant such as the several Greek revival structures and the Crafts Inn, in the shingle style. Among the historic sites is the Old Town Common off Lisle Hill Road. There are several small cemeteries and other markers throughout the Town.

In October 2009 the Selectboard repealed the previously adopted Design Control District Ordinance and adopted a Historic Review District Ordinance for the Village of Wilmington. The Zoning Amendment states the following purpose of the district:

The natural beauty and the visual and historic character of the Village of Wilmington represent an important asset to the community by providing a source of pleasure for both residents and visitors, and also by contributing substantially to the economic base of the community and to its tax base. In order to protect these characteristics, it is necessary to ensure that buildings are properly related to their surroundings, that proper attention is given to the exterior appearances of buildings so as to provide a means by which property values can be stabilized or improved, and to protect and foster the economic well-being of the community.

3.7 Goals, Policies and Actions – Community Facilities, Services and Resources

GOAL 1: Ensure implementation of the Community Facilities and Services Action Plan outlined in this Town Plan.

Policy 1.1: Provide a local Government that is accountable, well managed, financially sound, and open to all residents.

Action 1.1.1: Public information meetings for all major town development initiatives are conducted through regular and special Selectboard meetings.

Action 1.1.2: Promote effective communication among all town boards. Utilize virtual meeting technology, such as Zoom, to simplify access.

Action 1.1.3: Town meetings are held in public to conduct official business, with opportunities for residents to provide input that officials consider to improve decision-making.

Action 1.1.4: Review employee compensation and benefits to ensure they are competitive, fair, and reasonable.

Action 1.1.5: Conduct an annual audit of Town finances under Selectboard oversight to ensure compliance with applicable accounting standards and to support strong financial management and internal controls.

Action 1.1.6: Identify major capital project needs and funding options, and annually present a capital plan and budget proposal to the public in advance of Town Meeting, with voter approval of bonding conducted by Australian Ballot when required.

Actions 1.1.7: Use electronic communication tools, such as the town website, Wilmington Weekly Newsletter and Southern Vermont Deerfield Valley Chamber to improve public awareness, accessibility, and participation in town events, meetings, and surveys.

Action 1.1.8: Identify philanthropic funding opportunities for community projects and education.

GOAL 2: Provide accessible and reliable Public Facilities and Services.

Policy 2.1: Town services and facilities shall remain operational at all times, with continuous preparedness to respond effectively to emergencies.

Action 2.1.1: Conduct ongoing assessments of fire and police services, and coordinate with the private EMS provider to monitor emergency response capabilities. Implement improvements based on identified needs to ensure effective and continuous emergency services for the community.

Action 2.1.2: Designate and maintain an emergency shelter, currently identified as the Old School Enrichment Center (OSEC) on Beaver Street, with Twin Valley Elementary School identified as a secondary shelter location. Ensure that all designated shelters meet ADA accessibility requirements and are equipped to serve residents during emergency events.

Action 2.1.3: Encourage the local library to expand services and programs to meet evolving community needs, possibly including increased hours of operation and expanded program offerings.

Action 2.1.4: Support expanded and diverse programming at Memorial Hall, consistent with available resources, to continue its use as a central community venue for meetings, performances, commemorative events, and cultural activities.

Action 2.1.5: Explore options and consider relocation of town offices outside of the flood hazard areas and river corridors. *(On hold for review discussion at Public Meeting).*

GOAL 3: Promote social cohesion and a strong sense of place by strengthening Wilmington’s community identity and culture, consistent with the Town’s Declaration of Inclusion and a shared commitment to mutual support and kindness.

Policy 3.1: Support inclusive community activities and gathering spaces that foster connection, belonging, and a shared sense of place. *(PC will working on updating this section)*

Action 3.1.1: Engage the community in shaping a vision for Downtown’s future, including development outside flood hazard areas, design that respects the historic district, coordination with the Old School Enrichment Center (OSEC) for community programs, and the transformation of the green space in front of the Public Safety Facility into a Veterans Park and stormwater treatment area. This central space will connect key assets such as Buzzy Towne Park, OSEC, the Library, the Public Safety Facility, and nearby sporting areas, while additional green spaces provide recreation, sitting areas, nature walks, and vista walks to strengthen community connection.

Action 3.1.2: Support Downtown activities that promote community engagement and attract visitors, such as festivals, strolls, dances, concerts, fairs, speakers, workshops, and skills expos, by collaborating with Wilmington Works, the Chamber of Commerce, and other local organizations. Foster a visibly active and vibrant Downtown that serves both residents and visitors.

Policy 3.2: Promote Wilmington’s public image as a forward-thinking, change-embracing small town with a strong sense of identity by highlighting its unique character through marketing, supporting vibrant Downtown businesses and activities.

Action 3.2.1: Use social media and other communications platforms to highlight Wilmington’s strengths, community events, and quality of life, showcasing why it is a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

Policy 3.3: Build volunteerism as an expectation and a positive experience encouraged for all residents. Engage every resident to invest in the future of the town.

Action 3.3.1: Encourage a culture of volunteerism and community investment among all residents.

Action 3.3.2: Publicly recognize and celebrate the contributions of residents who support town programs and initiatives.

Action 3.3.3: Develop accessible information, such as a webpage, downloadable materials, or brochures, explaining how volunteerism works in town and other community programs, including those hosted in town facilities to connect residents with opportunities to get involved.

GOAL 4: Foster a strong educational system in Wilmington by exploring opportunities to collaborate with the School Board and the Town of Whitingham.

Policy 4.1: Encourage opportunities to work with the School Board to support high-quality educational and career development opportunities for students of all abilities.

Action 4.1.1: Explore ways to collaborate with the School Board and partners, such as BDCC, to expand local access to youth and adult career and technical programs, and adult education programs.

Action 4.1.2: Encourage and support extracurricular after-school programs, including sports, arts, and career/technical activities, that promote skill development, recreation, and student engagement.

Action 4.1.3: Foster initiatives with the School Board to promote healthy choices within schools, including healthy eating, non-smoking policies, and substance misuse prevention.

GOAL 5: Support and enhance local community health by fostering access to services and encouraging collaboration with local and regional providers

Policy 5.1: Ensure the availability of local health, mental health and substance misuse prevention, treatment and recovery services, and make residents aware of them. Support supplemental programs that improve service availability and access, including partnerships with nonprofit and community organizations.

Action 5.1.1: Encourage mental health and substance use providers to offer services locally, including use of Town facilities such as the Old Fire House for accessible community meetings and programs.

Action 5.1.2: Support availability of services for elderly and disabled residents, including transportation, meal delivery, and health care assistance.

Action 5.1.3: Promote use of '211' and other centralized resources to connect residents with existing services, including DV Community Cares, DV Community Partnership, SASH, Food Pantry, Families First, Habitat for Humanity, Windham/Windsor Housing Trust, churches,

medical facilities, mental health providers, substance use programs such as AA, and emergency services.

GOAL 6: Offer a wide range of local community recreation services to meet the needs of all age groups, ability levels, and interests.

Policy 6.1: Ensure the availability of activities and services for aging residents and those with disabilities.

Action 6.1.1: Arrange for additional adult programs for the aging and disabled, including music, art, crafts, and exercise opportunities.

Action 6.1.2: Encourage a volunteer network to engage older adults through reading, games, transportation, handyman support, and other activities.

Policy 6.2: Provide families, youth and young adults with activities free of alcohol and drugs.

Action 6.2.1: Arrange dances, concerts, outdoor activities, cooking programs, nightlife alternatives, and civic group participation.

Action 6.2.2: Develop community outreach programs with police, fire, and town officials to foster positive relationships between town services and residents, businesses, and schools.

Policy 6.3: Preserve and enhance National, State and Town, utility lands and waterways for recreation and aesthetic value, benefiting residents and visitors. *(Working with Town Trail Committee to update this section)*

Action 6.3.1: Expand recreational opportunities that utilize the area's natural resources and local expertise.

Action 6.3.3: Provide clear signage, parking and access information for recreational resources.

Action 6.3.4: Support commercial recreational development that compliments the natural terrain and aesthetic character of the town.

CHAPTER 4

HOUSING

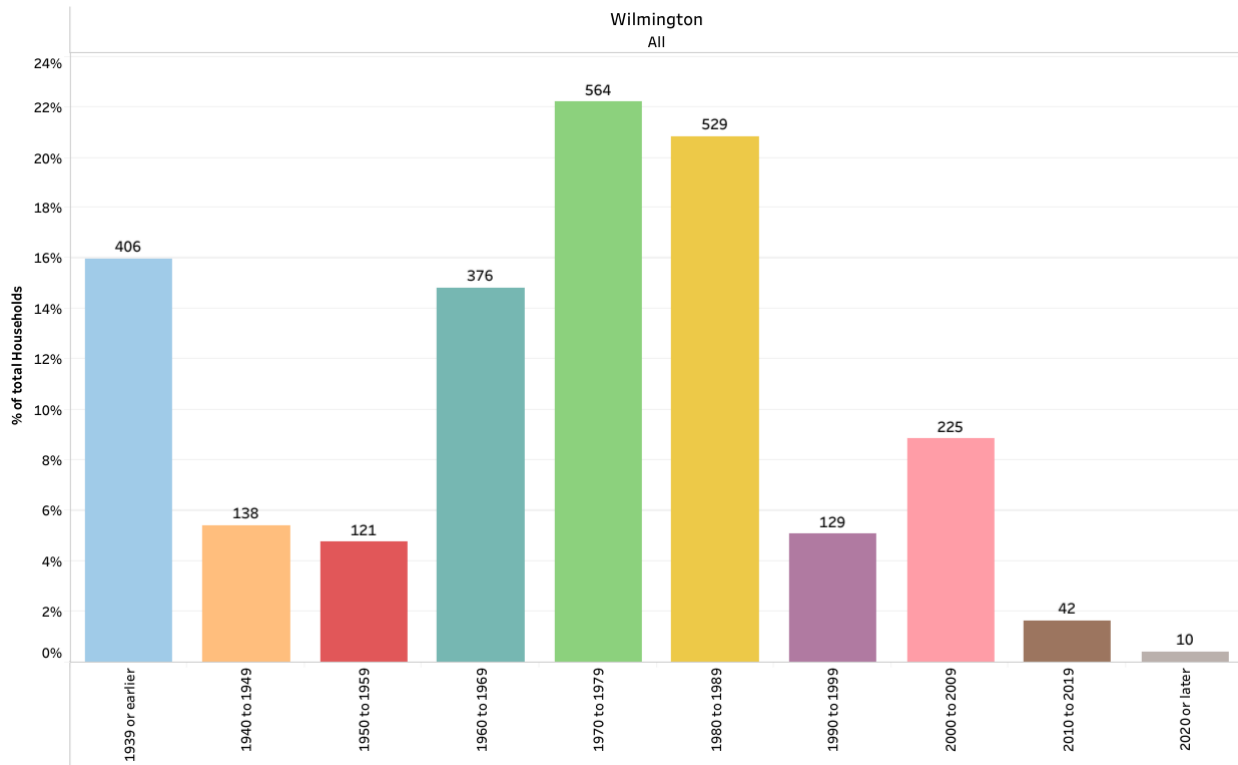
4.1 Existing Housing Conditions

Existing Housing Stock Age and Type

As of 2023, there were a total of 2,540 housing units in Wilmington (2023 American Community Survey/ACS). 16% of these homes were built prior to 1939, compared to 27% for the Windham Region. The vast majority of homes, 58%, were built between 1960 and 1989. This residential development corresponds with the development of local ski resorts, including Haystack Mountain,

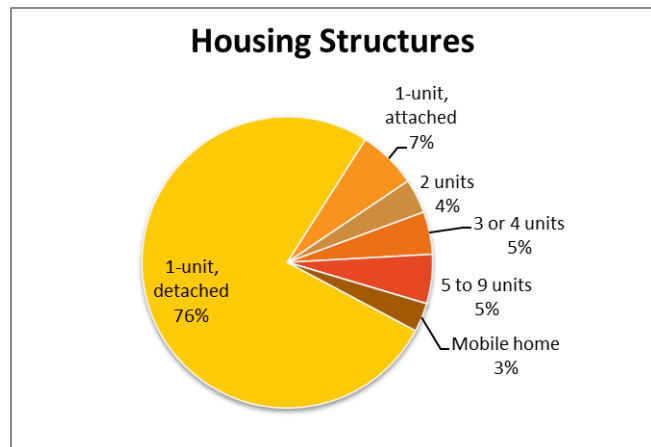
now the Hermitage Club, in Wilmington and Mt. Snow in nearby Dover. Residential development has dropped off significantly since 2010, with 42 homes built between 2010 and 2020 and only 10 new homes built since 2020.

Year Residential Structure Built



US Census Bureau: American Community Survey, 2023 (housingdata.org – check on all references)

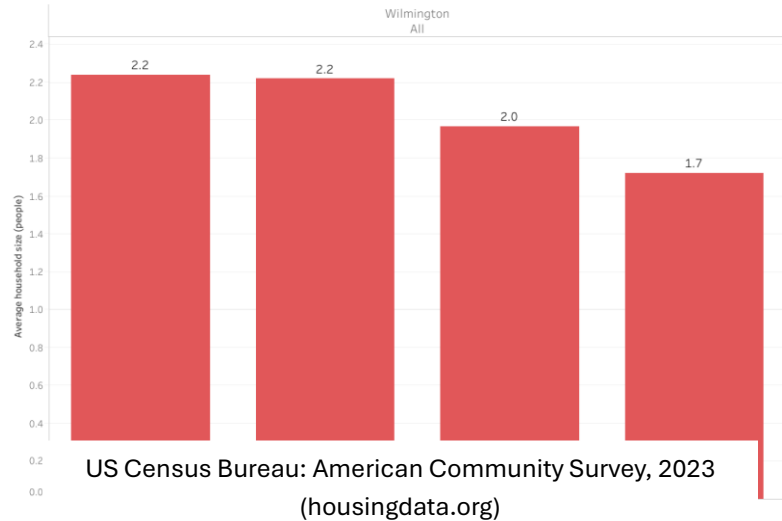
The majority of residential units in Wilmington, 76%, are single-family detached residential units, which is similar to the state. 7% of residential units are single-family attached units (townhomes), 9% are small multifamily units (2-4 units/building), 5% are mid-sized (5-9 units/building) and 3% are mobile homes (ACS 2024).



Household Characteristics

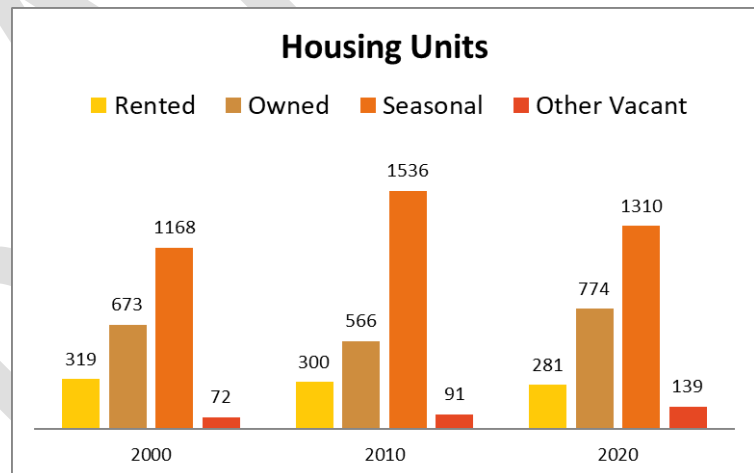
Average household size continues to decrease in Wilmington. In 2024 the average household size was 1.7 persons/household, which is down from 2010 at 2.2 and 2.0 in 2020. This decrease is even more significant than what has occurred in Windham County with an average household size of 2.2 and the state of Vermont of 2.3.

Smaller households need smaller homes. Since the majority of homes in Wilmington are single family detached units, there may now be a mismatch between the types of homes that people need and the types of homes that are available.



Seasonal Housing and Short-Term Rentals

There are a significant number seasonal or second homes in Wilmington. This is in large part due to the proximity of ski resorts. In 2020, 52% homes were identified as seasonal use. This is down from 2010 when 62% of homes were identified as seasonal. This may be because some seasonal residents moved to Wilmington permanently during COVID. It is interesting to note that Windham County has the highest percentage of seasonal homes statewide at 29%.



In 2025, 309 housing units were identified as Short Term Rentals (STRs). This is 12% of the total number of units and compares to Dover’s 20%. This is also down from 2023 when 339 units were identified as STRs and up from 2019 with 229 STRs. (AirDNA, housing data.org and 2019 Housing Analysis).

STRs can put pressure on the housing stock in a community and affect housing costs, especially in resort areas where there are a large number of STRs. However, they can also present benefits such as attracting visitors by offering more and different types of accommodations, providing additional revenue to the town through meal and lodging taxes, and allowing residents to afford homes by providing a supplemental income source. There are concerns, however, around the occupancy

levels of STRs and whether buildings meet current health and safety codes. STRs can also generate additional noise, vehicles and garbage, especially when associated with higher occupancy units and can have an impact on existing residential neighborhoods. Finally, there is the question of whether these housing units could otherwise provide long-term housing for rent or ownership.

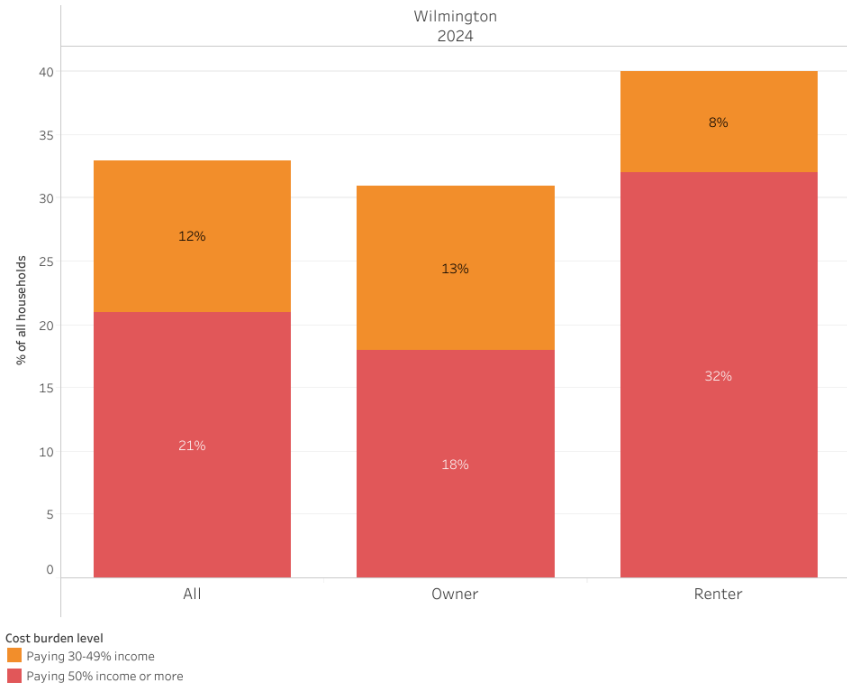
Wilmington and Dover partnered in 2023 and developed a Bi-Town Housing Rental Subcommittee which considered concerns around short term and long term rentals in the Deerfield Valley. The subcommittee developed recommendations for both towns to consider. In Wilmington, STRs are currently regulated through zoning. The town may also want to consider adopting a separate STR Ordinance that could be designed to more comprehensively address STRs, as well as a town STR Registry.

The Vermont Department of Taxes, Department of Health, and Department of Public Safety's Division of Fire Safety also play a role in oversight of STRs. Operators are required to complete a Safety, Health, and Financial Obligation Self-Certification form. The checklist includes fire, life, and health safety measures, such as having smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, inspection of heating systems by a certified technician, rope guards and railings for decks and stairs, and adequate refuse containers and collection. The form includes contact information for the individual responsible for the unit. The form does not need to be filed with the State, but needs to be retained on site.

Housing Affordability

In 2025, the median household price in Wilmington was \$480,250, which is up 27% from the previous year. This is up significantly from 2019 when the median price was \$185,000 (Property Transfer Tax, housing data.org and 2019 Housing Analysis). The median monthly rent in 2024 was \$1,106 per unit, which is up significantly from 2020 when it was \$876 (ACS). The good news is that, as noted in the Community Profile Section, household incomes increased significantly to \$80,000 in 2023, up from \$50,000 in 2019.

Still, 33% of all households in Wilmington are considered cost burdened, which means that they pay more than 30% of their income on housing. Renters are even more cost burdened than homeowners. 40% of renters are cost burdened, with 32% considered extremely cost burdened, paying over 50% of their income on housing (ACS).



4.2 Housing Needs

It is important to assure that existing and future town residents and the workforce are served by a range of housing opportunities. With a trend over the past few years toward more costly homes, additional second homeowners and smaller household size, the town should play an active role in ensuring that Wilmington maintains a diversity of housing options and social support services for its moderate and lower income residents its aging population.

In 2019, the Town of Wilmington partnered with Dover and hired Camoin Associates to complete a Housing Analysis and Master Plan for the two communities. The study highlighted the same trends discussed above and identified a specific need for additional year-round rental properties, increasing the quality of the current housing stock, and providing more senior housing.

Total Housing Demand for Dover & Wilmington

	Demand for Home Purchase	Demand for Home Rentals
In-Commuters	44 – 110 units	77 – 193 units
Under-Housed Workforce	3 – 6 units	10 – 21 units
Seniors Living Alone or with Significant Other	-	57 – 143 units
Total Demand	47 – 116 units	144 – 357 units

Source: *Housing Analysis & Master Plan, Towns of Dover and Wilmington, VT, Camoin Associates (2019)*

Wilmington and Dover have continued to meet as the BiTown Housing Committee since that time to do what they can to implement the Housing Plan. The towns developed a new website, Deerfield Valley Housing, <https://www.deerfieldvalleyhousing.com/> to share information about housing and housing needs.

The Windham Regional Commission developed housing targets for all communities in the region in 2026. The targets were the result of regionwide targets developed by the Vermont Housing Finance Agency and as required by Act 181. These targets are designed as a guide and to serve as a quantifiable goal for communities with the understanding that there is only so much towns can do to promote new housing. Towns can set the stage for housing and provide housing incentives but the state recognizes that towns are not developers.

Upper and lower limit targets have been identified for each town for 2030 and 2050. Wilmington's targets for 2030 range from 182 to 264 new units and 2050 targets range from 566 to 1,107 new units. While these numbers may seem large at first glance, when looking out to 2050 at the lower end, that is only about 22 new housing units/year.

4.3 Housing Strategies

The town did update their Zoning Bylaws in 2022 with a Bylaw Modernization Grant from the state. The focus of this grant was to make it easier to build housing in and near the Village Center where sewer and water infrastructure is in place. The town may now want to consider ways to make it easier to build housing in areas where it makes sense outside of the village.

The 2019 Housing Analysis and Master Plan developed by Camoin Associates included a series of Goals and Policies that have been incorporated into the goals of this plan.

In 2025, a the UMASS Center for Resilient Metro Regions, Communities By Design (a program of the American Institute of Architecture and a UMASS design studio developed a study looking at resilience and flood adaptation in a four town region, including Wilmington, Dover, Readsboro and Whitingham. A component of this study looked a housing needs and made recommendations for each town, including:

- Identify priority sites for housing or mixed-use outside flood zones.
- Identify priority zoning and permitting changes to ease pathway to building housing.
- Streamline Accessory Dwelling Units
- Incentives for Flood Resilient Designs
- Tax Incentives for Workforce Housing
- Consider tax relief for owners who make improvements to their property.
- Leverage 1% sales tax for downpayment assistance program in addition to home repair program.

This study also had specific suggestions for Wilmington, some of which the town may have previously considered when they updated their Zoning Bylaws in 2022. The recommendations are:

- More measurable site plan standards.

- Increase predictability and consistency (e.g., height limitations) and replacing some discretionary approvals.
- Focus on the kind and size of buildings in the Village District, not on the uses.
- Remove or reduce frontage requirements in the Village
- Eliminate density limits for affordable housing in the Village District.
- Allow affordable housing with only site plan approval and otherwise allow as-of-right.

The Community Engagement component of this Town Plan update included a survey, as well as a public meeting in the fall of 2025. Public input has been incorporated into this plan. The survey asked a couple specific questions about residential development, including:

- The rate of residential development – 43% said this has been just about right and 40% feel it’s been too slow.
- Where should new residential development occur – 65% said existing residential neighborhoods and 58% said downtown
- What should the town do to encourage new housing – 66% said the town should encourage a variety of housing types and 55% said the town should evaluate town owned properties for potential residential use.

The town should also explore new statewide programs designed to promote housing development and infrastructure programs that support development. An example is the state’s new CHIP program or Community and Housing Infrastructure Program. For more information see, <https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/vepc/chip>

4.4 Regional Housing Programs

Windham Windsor Housing Trust (WWHT) based in Brattleboro creates and manages affordable housing through a variety of programs that serve low and moderate income residents. WWHT can also provide income eligible homebuyers with a grant towards the purchase of a qualifying home. In addition, WWHT offers the following programs to eligible residents and property owners to support the continued availability of safe and affordable housing:

- *Green Mountain Home Repair*: this program provides low cost loans for home owners to complete health and safety improvements and increase energy efficiency if income eligibility criteria are met.
- *Vermont Housing Improvement Program*: this program offers grants from the State of Vermont for up to \$30,000 (efficiency to 2-bedroom units) or \$50,000 (3+ bedroom units) to property owners to complete repairs to vacant rental units to bring them into compliance with the Vermont Rental Housing Health Code guidelines. Units are required to be rented out at Fair Market Rents.

Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) provides housing stability services to assist tenants with back rent payment, security deposit assistance, referrals to area shelters, and landlord- tenant mediation. SEVCA also operates weatherization and fuel assistance programs for income- eligible homeowners and renters.

4.5 Goals, Policies and Action - Housing

GOAL 7: Ensure the Availability of Housing for all Residents of Wilmington.

Policy 7.1: Support efforts to provide and improve housing at varied prices, sizes and locations to meet the needs of all residents including low to moderate income and elderly.

Action 7.1.1: Encourage efforts designed to increase the availability of rentals for year-round workers and seniors.

Action 7.1.2: Support activities designed to meet the housing demand created by seasonal workers and improve housing conditions.

Action 7.1.3: Consider the development of a Short Term Rental registration program and/or ordinance.

Action 7.1.4: Create a local home improvement program for existing homeowners.

Action 7.1.5: Establish a landlord and tenant education program.

Action 7.1.6: Create a Senior Housing Taskforce to investigate future developments.

Action 7.1.7: Identify sites for development, including town owned parcels.

Action 7.1.8: Maintain partnerships with housing development organizations to facilitate the creation of additional housing.

Action 7.1.9: Explore ways to work with neighboring towns to address housing needs.

Action 7.1.10: Support infrastructure expansion where appropriate to provide increased housing opportunities.

CHAPTER 5

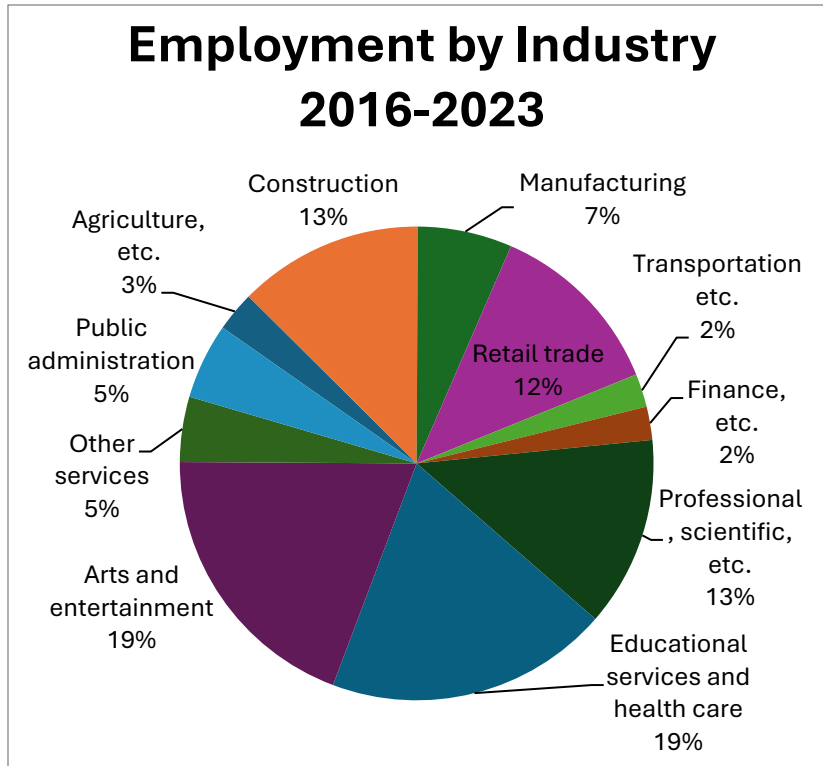
ECONOMICS

5.1 Employment and Workforce

Wilmington's largest sources of employment in 2023 are Education Services and Health Care (19%), and Arts and Entertainment (19%). These are followed by Professional and Scientific (13%), Construction (13%), and Retail (13%). (ACS 2023) See also Figure ---, below.

This breakdown has implications from the types of new business that might move here, to the types of people who might be attracted to Wilmington and the income of residents. For example, retail and arts sectors probably do not generate as much income as professional/scientific or even

construction, although those sectors may attract people to town. This will be considered in more detail in the Economic Development section.



ACS 2023

The number of Wilmington residents who are employed in fluctuates significantly in part due to the seasonal nature of employment in the region. The number of residents employed in March 2024, 1,071, is back up to the employment numbers from 2018. Of course, this follows a significant drop during COVID. (VT Dept. of Labor, housingdata.org)

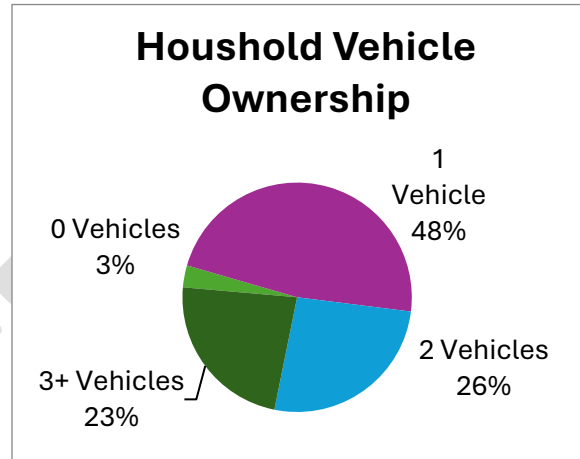
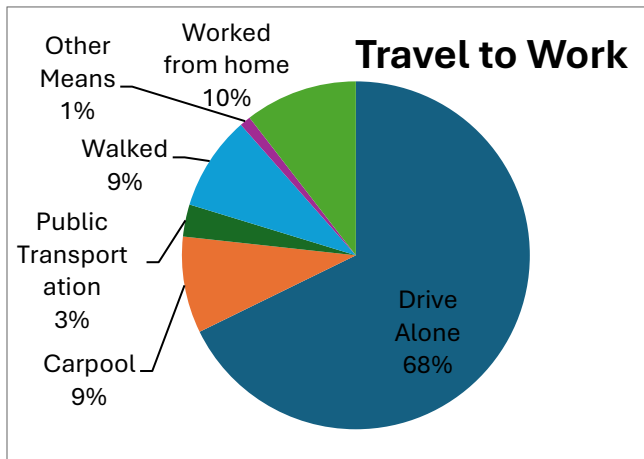
Number of Employed Workers in Wilmington

The unemployment rate in Wilmington in 2025 was very low at 2.2%. (US Bureau of Labor Statistics)

In 2024, there 1,262 jobs in Wilmington and the average wage for jobs in \$44,470. This is compares to the average household income of \$80,000. (VT Dept of Labor)



It's also worth considering how Wilmington residents get to work in terms of energy costs and affordability. As in many rural places, most people drive to work alone, 68%. A growing number of people, however, are now working at home, 10% and similar numbers are carpooling and walking to work (ACS 2023). The majority of households in Wilmington, 48% own one vehicle, while 26% own two vehicles.



5.2 Economic Development

The town's most recent Economic Development Report, December 2025, noted that:

Wilmington's economy is in a period of transition shaped by broader regional and national trends that disproportionately affect tourism-based communities. While meals and room sales declined compared to 2024 and ongoing workforce and housing shortages continue to constrain growth, Wilmington has also shown signs of resilience. A new generation of entrepreneurs is opening businesses and acquiring long-standing local establishments, and efforts are underway to diversify the local economy through targeted manufacturing recruitment and the redevelopment of vacant commercial properties. Supported by its scenic setting, recreational assets, walkable village, and strong sense of place, Wilmington's long-term economic outlook will depend on how effectively the community responds to these challenges while building on its existing assets. (Gretchen Havreluk, Economic Development Consultant)

This report highlights priority projects underway including wastewater and water infrastructure expansion on Route 9, highspeed fiber, and village sidewalk construction. These projects are key to improving conditions for employers, workers and residents of Wilmington. The town's Economic Development Consultant also collaborates with regional partners, including Wilmington Works, the Southern Vermont Chamber of Commerce, the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC), and the Windham Regional Commission (WRC).

Economic development efforts in Wilmington are supported by BDCC, the Regional Development Corporation that serves the Windham Region. In partnership with the Bennington County Regional Commission, BDCC recently completed the 2024 Southern Vermont Comprehensive Development Strategy (CEDs). The CEDs document makes recommendations for strategies to promote economic growth in the region and is required to be in place for projects to be eligible for certain

grants from the U.S. Economic Development Administration. The Town should continue to work with BDCC on its economic development goals and identify projects that are consistent with the 2024 CEDS recommendations. The CEDS primary objectives are:

- Address Critical Population Needs for the Future
- Empower Businesses to Thrive Long-Term
- Foster Resilient, Adaptable Communities
- Promote Greater Regional Economic Development Alignment

Wilmington and the adjacent town of Dover have created a Bi-Town Economic Development Committee that assists the two towns with the implementation of economic development goals and strategies. In 2020, the Bi-Town Economic Development Committee hired the Charrette Agency to complete a 5-year strategic marketing plan for the Deerfield Valley Chamber of Commerce, using funds from the towns' 1% local option tax. The plan includes a vision statement and guiding principles, with the goal of increasing tourism in the Deerfield Valley, especially in the summer and shoulder seasons. Recommended action steps, which the towns have been implementing, include:

- Building a compelling and authentic brand for the Deerfield Valley
- Capturing high-quality photography and videography of the area for advertising purposes
- Completing a redesign of the Deerfield Valley Chamber of Commerce website
- Increase presence on social media, including Facebook and Instagram
- Building relationships with travel writers, digital travel bloggers, and local broadcast journalists to increase media coverage and interest in the region.

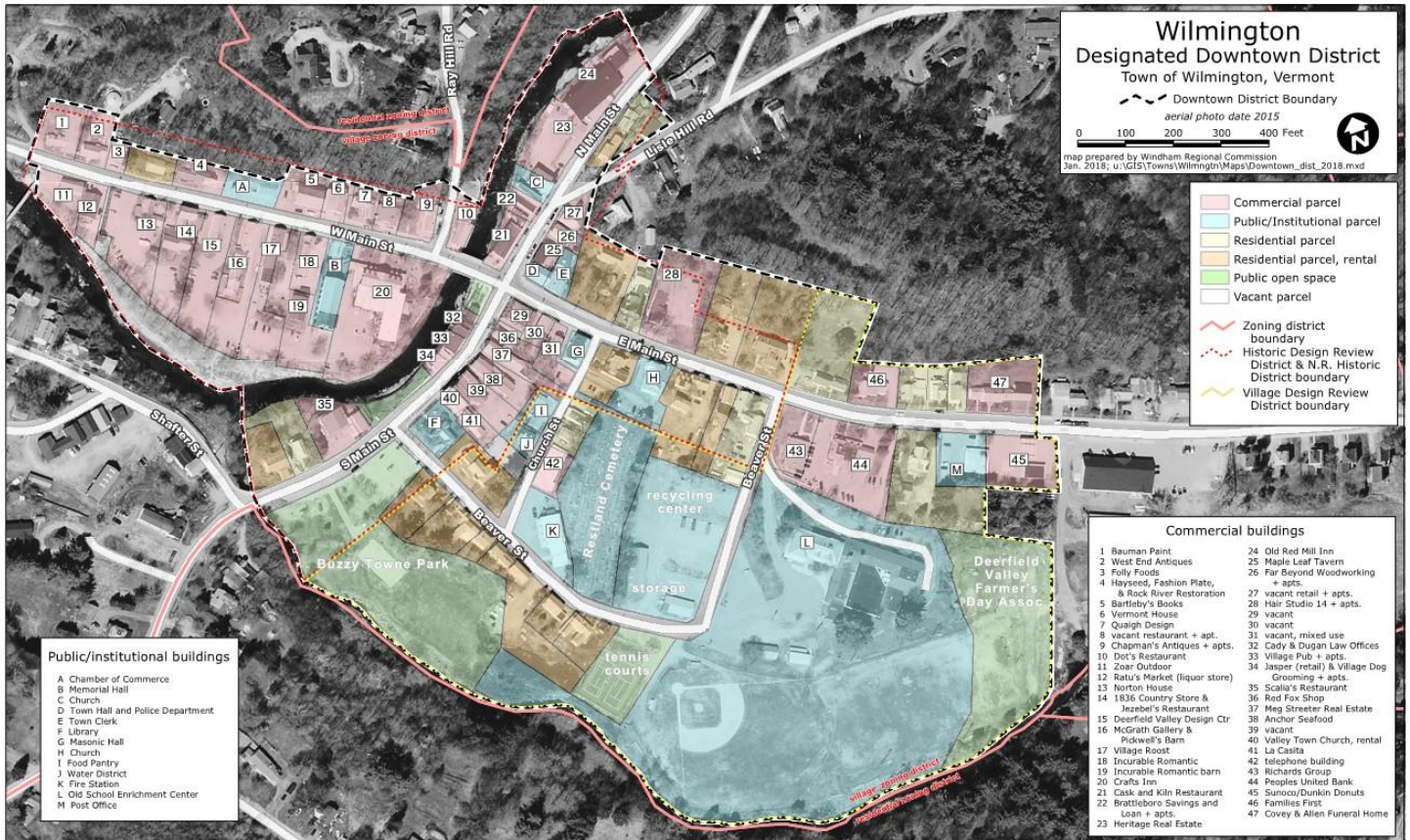
5.3 Wilmington Works and Downtown

Wilmington's Downtown is the commercial and residential center for the town and the heart of the community. It has a lively and eclectic mix of uses, including residential, retail, office, governmental, and municipal parking. It is fully serviced by public water and sewer and is a hub for public transportation. The downtown itself is a tourist draw and contributes to the unique cultural, historic and recreational characteristics that make Vermont a special place.

The broad land use pattern in Downtown is fairly well established, but there are opportunities for redevelopment. To support Downtown's viability and livability, the Town participates in Vermont's Downtown Program. This enables the Town to receive grants for improvements within the designated area, gives priority consideration for some state-funded grants, and allows owners of income-producing buildings to be eligible to receive tax credits for building improvements (historic, façade, code, and technology). Downtown Designation was first received by Wilmington in 2012 as an extension of the post-tropical storm Irene recovery planning process.

The boundaries of the designated downtown are shown on the map that follows.

Wilmington Designated Downtown Boundaries



Downtown designation achieves the following goals:

- Furthering the intent of the Land Use Chapter – Downtown is an important mixed-use district. The Town Plan identifies the need to make public and private physical improvements in this area. Continued designation will focus additional resources to help this area thrive, including priority consideration for several grant programs.
- Preserving significant historic, architectural, and cultural heritage – The access to historic tax credits and code improvement tax credits will support redevelopment of older and historic properties, preserving the historic character of the Designated Downtown district.
- Create safer streets and a more inviting environment for all users - The Town has benefited from improvements in the Downtown and will continue to seek improvements as necessary.

Wilmington Works is the official designated downtown organization for the Town of Wilmington, Vermont. The organization’s mission is as follows: “To build, improve, and support a vital downtown that benefits the entire Wilmington, VT community.”

As one of twenty-five designated downtowns in Vermont, Wilmington Works is able to provide access to tax credits, grant opportunities, and technical assistance to help preserve and revitalize downtown Wilmington. Wilmington Works utilizes the National Main Street Program Four Point Approach to downtown revitalization. These four points mirror the standing committees that accomplish much of the work in Wilmington's downtown: Design, Promotions, Organization and Economic Development. The focus of Wilmington Work's effort is at the intersections of Routes 9 and 100, using the footprint of the Historic District to describe the downtown district boundary.

Wilmington Works has approximately thirty volunteers that serve on the Board, as part of four major committees, or work on specific projects and events. The organization receives operational and program funds from The Town of Wilmington, and numerous individual donors and partners with various public and private organizations to raise funds for community and economic development. In 2013, the VT Downtown Program chose Wilmington as one of eight communities to receive a grant through the Economic Development Administration to assist towns affected by Tropical Storm Irene.

Since inception, Wilmington Works has focused on improving the organization and its governance structure, expanding capacity by hiring a full time Executive Director, social media and website management, developing a communications strategy and database development. Other efforts include: event planning and execution (including block parties, village strolls, and shop local programs); and capital improvements to the downtown center (including trash cans, banners, sidewalk and streetscape enhancements, crosswalks, façade improvement projects and signage). Wilmington Works supports economic development projects, such as assisting businesses with historic tax credit applications, executing a facade improvement grant for Wilmington buildings, successfully running two business plan competitions (and in the planning stages for a third), conducting shopping and parking surveys, and offering business training in conjunction with regional development partners. Wilmington Works also worked with the Historical Society to create a popular historic village walking tour map. 2017 saw the completion of a major streetscape and sidewalk improvement on West Main Street.

Future projects spanning the timeframe of the current town plan include, but are not limited to: coordinate with the Town on the completion of major streetscape and sidewalk improvements, complete a scoping study for Beaver Street to create a safer connectivity which includes the expanded downtown, assist the Town with expanded use of Memorial Hall by various community groups, execute the third business plan competition titled "Make it on Main Street", and supporting downtown businesses during the bridge 31 construction. Also to be undertaken are reassessment and further development of promotional events and marketing, performing and following up on parking studies, vacant building development, and working to recruit businesses in sectors where market leakage has been identified. For more information see, wilmingtonworksvt.com

5.4 Goals, Policies and Actions – Economic Development

GOAL 8: Provide the necessary infrastructure to support future economic development

Policy 8.1: Provide the necessary water/sewer infrastructure to support economic development, including housing that supports economic development.

Action 8.1.1: Continue to update the water/sewer systems and expand capacity and availability, as needed.

Policy 8.2: Encourage state-of-the-art data services to allow development of remote business access.

Action 8.2.1: Review broadband and cell service needs. Work with DVFiber to address gaps in fiber capacity, as needed.

Policy 8.3: Provide safe, effective, and attractive infrastructure in the Downtown District.

Action 8.3.1: Continue to upgrade sidewalks and lighting throughout the downtown, including North and East Main Street, for safe, attractive, ADA compliant pedestrian transportation. Expand sidewalks along Beaver Street.

Action 8.3.2: Keep sidewalks and roadways plowed, sanded and salted as needed to maintain continuous safe travel lanes for pedestrians and motorized vehicles.

Action 8.3.3: Keep roadways free of hazards such as potholes, bicycle/motorcycle skidding hazards, oil, and water.

Action 8.3.4: Support town enforcement of the anti-bligh/vacant building ordinance. Develop program to support vacant building owners.

Policy 8.4: Attract and retain younger population for an expanded workforce pool of employable residents.

Action 8.4.1: Coordinate with BDCC and other programs like GROW that are helping attract and support families and individuals who are interested in moving to Vermont.

Action 8.4.2: Encourage the development of additional accessible and affordable child care programs for working parents.

Policy 8.5: Explore the availability of programs for new and existing business development.

Action 8.5.1: Promote existing tax incentive and RLF programs for new business development and existing business retention.

Action 8.5.2: Work with regional partners, including SEVCA and BDCC, to diversify business incubator/start-up program.

Action 8.5.3: Diversify the local economy by recruiting mini manufacturing and technology companies and develop incentives to drive these types of businesses.

Action 8.5.4: Create a Co-Working space to support remote work and small businesses.

GOAL 9: Pursue development of a Marketing Plan to guide the town’s economic development.

Policy 9.1: Partner with Dover on Marketing Plan development efforts for increased clarity of target market and implementation plans for expanded economic development.

Action 9.1.1: Work with the Chamber of Commerce and Bi-Town Committee to address a development plan focused on Recreational, Resort and Entrepreneurial growth.

Action 9.1.2: Recruit businesses that are needed in Wilmington and identified as important through the consumer survey.

Action 9.1.3: Promote traditional and forward thinking agriculture such as organics and hydroponics through the State of Vermont’s expert resource network to assist in agricultural business development and business planning.

Action 9.1.4: Work with Wilmington Works to create media buzz on why to open a business in Wilmington.

GOAL 10: Continue supporting businesses in Wilmington.

Policy 10.1: Continue assisting new and existing businesses in navigating local, state, federal complexities of doing business.

Action 10.1.1: Develop a Town Website section for new, existing, and potential business owners covering what resources are available in town. Connect with Wilmington Works website, <https://www.wilmingtonworksvt.com/start-your-business>.

Policy 10.2: Promote business development opportunities in Wilmington.

Action 10.2.1: Support new businesses and retention of existing businesses in conjunction with Wilmington Works.

Action 10.2.2: Support the continued operation of agricultural industries to protect the agricultural heritage of the town and the availability of local foods.

Policy 10.3: Support existing businesses during construction periods, such as the upcoming downtown bridge replacement project.

CHAPTER 6

NATURAL RESOURCES

6.1 Topography and Geology

Topography and Slope

The Town of Wilmington is located on the eastern flank of the Green Mountains. The highest and most visible feature of the landscape is the distinctive peak of Haystack Mountain, elevation 3,420 feet above sea level. Conversely, the lowest area is the surface of Lake Whitingham (aka Harriman Reservoir) whose variable level is at about 1,500 feet in elevation. Thus, the local vertical relief is about 1,900 feet, much of which is quite steep with slopes greater than 15%. As slopes increase, the suitability of the land for development decreases. While the development constraints of building on steep slopes can be overcome, the environmental risks remain. In areas of steep slopes, the velocity of runoff and, therefore, the erosion potential, increases. The ability of the soil to filter septic system leachate is decreased.¹

The Town is laced with many streams, each with its own set of lesser tributaries, which divide the Town into a branching group of hills and ridges of considerable relief and separated by narrow, intervening valleys. The Village itself is situated at the confluence of the Beaver Brook valley from the East and the Deerfield River valley from the North. It is the dominance of the Deerfield River, with its adjacent fertile flood plain, that allows the whole region to be known as "The Valley."

Soils

Soils are one of the most important environmental factors that govern the use of land in rural areas. A soil's depth to water table, susceptibility to flooding, depth to bedrock, stone cover, and permeability present potential constraints on the construction of roads, buildings, and septic systems. There are areas in Wilmington which have severe sewage disposal leaching limitations. Careful evaluation of any proposed site is necessary to prevent attempted usage of these soils beyond their capacity.

The soils on the mountains and hills of Wilmington are as varied as the landscape. On steep mountain slopes scraped by the glaciers, soils tend to be shallow to bedrock, while on some of the hills, the glaciers have deposited material. Nearly all of the soils in Wilmington have a glacial origin, whether they are the finely ground silts (rock dust) or the less common gravel deposits which resulted from outwash streams.

¹ According to the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, slopes of less than 8 percent are generally the most suitable for building. The erosion potential of such slightly sloping land is low, their ability to absorb runoff is high, and soils are usually of adequate depth and composition for septic systems. Exceptions are extremely flat areas, some of which may be classified as wetlands, where drainage is poor. In addition to the potential for sedimentation and erosion, development on steep slopes is likely to be more visible from a greater number of locations throughout town.

Minerals

Commercially useful sands and gravels, suitable for road maintenance and construction, have been extracted in years past and are now nearly depleted from any sizeable deposits except stream beds and the Lake Whitingham flood area. The Town must rely on outside sources for a supply to handle municipal needs.

6.2 Water Resources

Surface Waters: Rivers, Streams, Lakes, and Ponds

Wilmington is blessed with rivers, streams, lakes and ponds that provide recreational opportunities that include fishing, swimming, boating, and various winter sports (see also Community Resources section). Maintaining their high water quality is critical for human use (both recreation and drinking) and for fish and wildlife habitat.

Almost all the streams drain into the North Branch of the Deerfield River, which rises not many miles to the north in the Town of Dover. Except for a few small brooks in the very southeastern corner of the Town, all the drainage converges in Lake Whitingham. Most streams have steep gradients and variable flows and their waters are soft and slightly acidic. The North Branch of the Deerfield River's principal tributaries are Bill Brook from the northeastern portion of the town, Cold Brook from the northwestern part, and Beaver Brook from the eastern part. Rose and Binney Brooks drain the Haystack area, and flow into the upper reaches of Lake Whitingham.

Major surface waters in Wilmington include:

Lake Whitingham (aka Harriman Reservoir)

The second largest body of water wholly within the State of Vermont, with roughly half of its 2,185 acres of water surface lying within the Town of Wilmington, is currently owned and operated by a utility company (Great River Hydro).² Although the lake serves as an integral component of a utility company's hydroelectric enterprise, it is now a vital part of Wilmington's economy and landscape. The power company has been, and continues to be, attentive to and supportive of collateral use of the lake.

The shores of the lake remain undeveloped and are forested to the water's edge, except when the reservoir has been drawn down in the late fall to prepare to receive the spring's snow melt. Nevertheless, the lake is a scenic gem with wildlife sightings including the American Bald Eagle and Common Loon, while being increasingly impacted as a recreational resource.

Lake Raconda

In the eastern part of the town lies the 116-acre Lake Raconda. It lies at the head of a drainage basin, with a dam at the northern end before leading into Bill Brook. Lake Raconda is regularly monitored for water quality. Parking is limited as is the capacity of the beach area, so use of the

² In 1924 a dam was constructed within the narrows of the Deerfield River valley in Whitingham, and the flooding of the lower portion of the valley signaled a change in the physical, social, and economic status of Wilmington.

beach is limited to use by town residents and their guests. There is also a Vermont Fish and Wildlife access area at the northern end of the lake.

Haystack Pond

Just below the peak of Haystack Mountain, at an elevation of 2,984 feet, lies 36-acre Haystack Pond. Surrounded by wetlands, this pristine pond is accessible only by a hiking trail. Its mountainside location makes it a scenic treasure, whether viewed from the summit or the shore. Nearby is three-acre Crystal Pond, now enclosed by woods and also surrounded by wetlands.

Private Lakes

Mirror Lake lies at the base of Haystack Mountain Ski Area and was constructed as a source of water for snowmaking and fire protection. Spruce Lake, a private twenty-acre pond, is the focus of a small development that was created in the 70's by damming a tributary of Beaver Brook.

Priority Rivers and Streams for Restoration - Impaired

Section 305(b) of the Federal Clean Water Act requires states to monitor the quality of surface waters and to publish the results periodically. Vermont issues a Priority Waters List biannually. Impaired waters in (or partially in) Wilmington listed by the state in 2024³ include:

SURFACE WATERS IN NEED OF TMDL				
<i>Name</i>	<i>Pollutant</i>	<i>Problem</i>	<i>Impaired Use</i>	<i>TMDL*</i>
Upper Deerfield River, Below Searsburg Dam	pH, LOW	Atmospheric deposition: critically acidified; chronic acidification	ALS	Needed
Upper Deerfield River, Below Searsburg Dam	MERCURY IN FISH TISSUE	Elevated levels of mercury in all fish	FC***	Completed
Ellis Brook, Mouth to RM 0.5	TEMPERATURE, NUTRIENTS	Possible impacts from Nbfd WWTF**, agricultural runoff and channel alterations, lack of riparian buffer; high algal cover	ALS***	Needed
No. Branch, Deerfield River, Vicinity of West Dover	E. coli BACTERIA	High E. coli levels; cause(s) & source(s) unknown; needs assessment	CR***	Completed

*A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is a regulatory, science-based "pollution budget" that defines the maximum amount of a specific pollutant a waterbody can receive daily while still meeting water quality standards.

**Nbfd WWTF – North Branch Fire District Wastewater Treatment Facility

***ALS – Aquatic Life Support, FC – Fish Consumption, CR – Contact Recreation

³ Vermont, Agency of Natural Resources, Deerfield River & Lower Connecticut River Tactical Basin Plan, 2024

Priority Lakes for Restoration - Impaired

COMPLETED TMDL - Lakes		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Pollutant</i>	<i>Problem</i>
Haystack Pond	pH	Atmospheric deposition: critically acidified; chronic acidification
Harriman Reservoir	MERCURY IN FISH TISSUE	Elevated level of mercury in all fish except brown bullhead

Shore Lands and Riparian Areas

Shore lands are lands adjacent to surface waters which are important for maintaining water quality and providing wildlife habitat; valuable in reducing soil erosion and excessive siltation; and tend to be highly vulnerable to excessive and poorly planned development. The resource value of watercourses and shorelines can be diminished or destroyed by improper development activity.

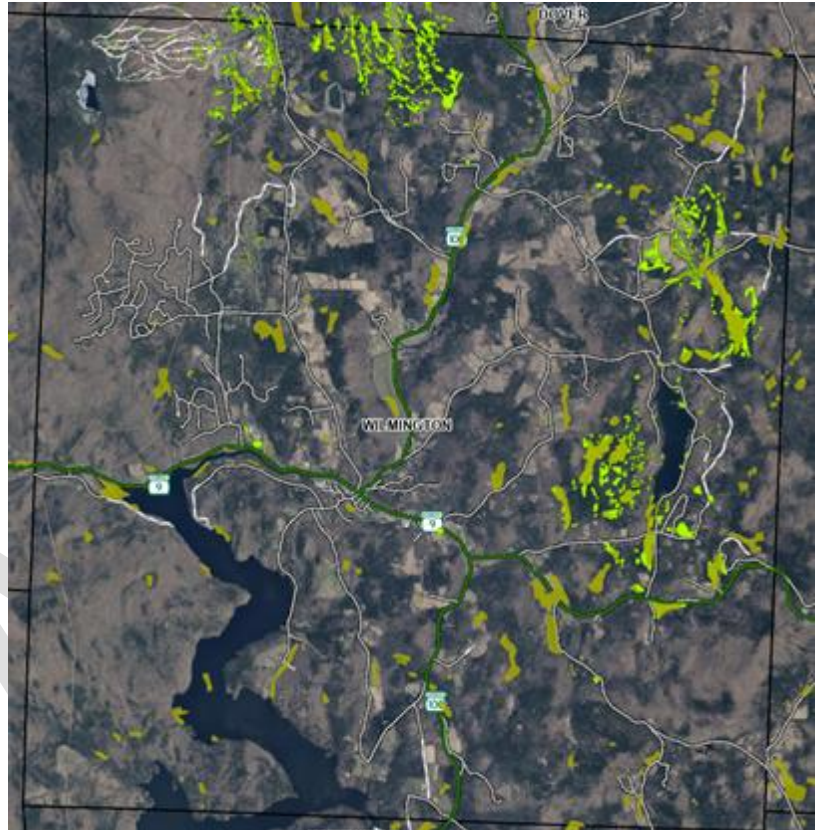
Maintaining undisturbed naturally vegetated buffer strips along streams provides many functions, including: stabilizing streambanks (by reducing erosion), providing food and shelter for fish and wildlife, filtering and absorbing pollutants (such as silt, fertilizers and livestock wastes) prior to reaching surface waters, maintaining cool water temperatures required to support fisheries, reduce flood and ice damage to streambanks and adjacent structures, as well as preserving the natural character of the water.

Wetlands

Wetlands are seasonally or permanently wet areas which have saturated soils at least part of the year, support wetland plants and contain aquatic life. Marshes, swamps, bogs, and seasonally flooded fields are examples. Wetland values include fish and wildlife habitat, flood and erosion protection, nutrient and pollution filtration, ground water recharge, and sites for educational activities and recreational and scenic enjoyment.

Wetlands are regulated under the Vermont DEC Wetlands Program and they are required to review development projects for work that is proposed to be done in a wetland or buffer area. Most wetlands are also under the jurisdiction of the US Army Corps of Engineers, and are regulated under Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act. A permit is required to develop property on or near a wetland. Vermont wetland maps are continually being updated and are not comprehensive, therefore it is best to contact the VT DEC Wetlands program or use the wetlands screening tool if there are any questions about wetlands being present on a property being proposed for development.

- Wetland - VSWI
- Class 1 Wetland
- Class 2 Wetland
- Wetland Buffer
- Wetlands Advisory Layer



Source: Vermont ANR Natural Resource Atlas (updated map?)

A significant wetland in the Town is the Lake Raponda balsam swamp, some twenty acres located to the south of the lake. It consists of plants of unusual diversity and productivity. This area is a dense spruce- balsam swamp with boreal plant species and a luxuriant ground cover of mosses and lichens. A wetland of less than ten acres on Meadow Brook provides excellent food and cover, and nesting potential, for waterfowl. Aside from the aforementioned sub-alpine wetlands on Haystack, there are several beaver pond areas of five acres or less scattered about the Town. The shorelines of Lake Whitingham are atypical, and consequently, the plant communities there are now characterized by a reduced habitat as a result of seasonal fluctuations in the water level due to power company operations.

Groundwater

Groundwater occurs in rock openings. In Wilmington, with its high percentage of metamorphic rock, most of these gaps were derived from secondary joints and fractures created after the rock was formed.

Wilmington gneiss, the most weathered metamorphic rock, has the greatest number of fractures. Deep sands and gravel found near recharge sources such as streams, ponds, and bogs are sources of groundwater as well.

Well Head Protection Areas

Public water supplies derived from a groundwater source should be secure. The State of Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has established and mapped Source Protection Areas. Within the Town of Wilmington seventeen springs, seven bedrock wells, and two gravel wells which supply water for the Wilmington Water District, Chimney Hill Owners Association and Coldbrook Fire District have been identified.

- Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection
- SurfaceWaterSPA
 - ACTIVE
 - INACTIVE
- Ground Water SPA
 - Active/Shared
 - Proposed
 - Inactive



Source: Vermont ANR Natural Resource Atlas

The springs that supply the Wilmington Water District are located higher upon the slopes of Haystack Mountain. The Coldbrook Fire District wells are all located within the District boundaries, mostly throughout the Haystack Development in the Golf Course Tract, Ski Area Tract and East Tract. Some other wells are located on private property not part of the Haystack Development, but still within the District boundaries. Any developments near these wells must consider the potential effect they could have upon these sources (within the Well Head Protection Areas) and account for it in the permitting process.

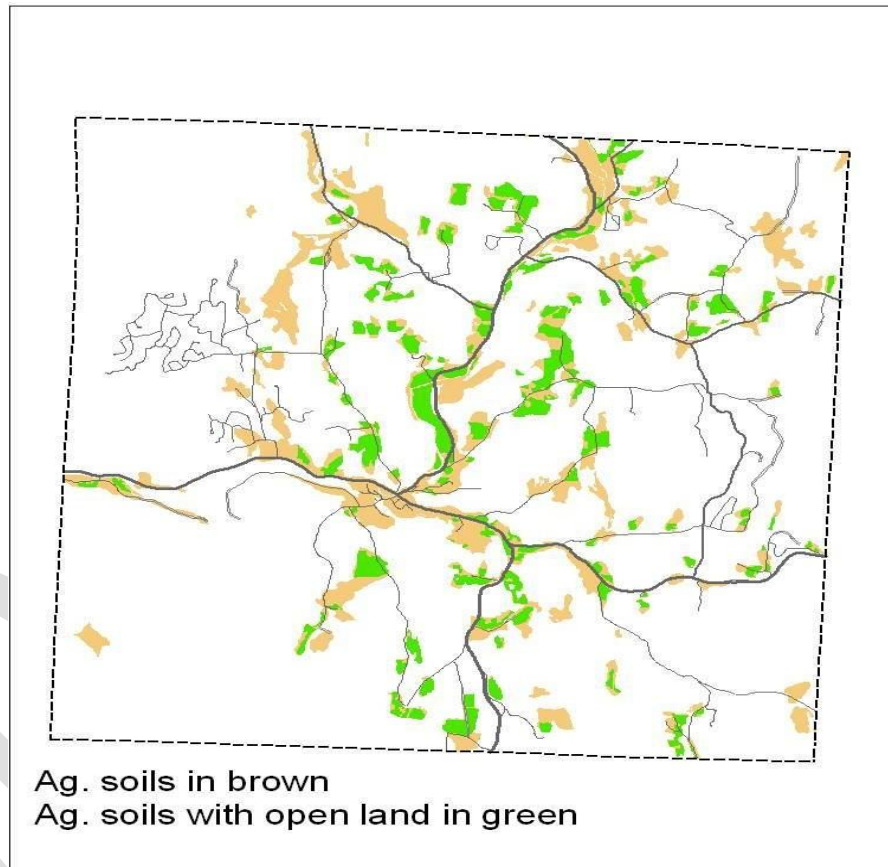
6.3 Agricultural Resources

The US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service has identified soil types that are best suited for crop production based on soil quality, growing season and moisture supply. Important Farmland inventories identify soil map units that are Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Additional Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Additional Farmland of Local Importance. The prime agricultural soils are likely to produce the highest crop yields using the least amount of

economic resources and causing the least environmental impact. Soils with an Important Farmland rating of 'prime' or 'statewide' have the potential to be Primary Agricultural Soils under Act 250.

Wilmington has scattered pockets of agricultural soils that could be classified as either prime (390 acres or 1.5 % of town) or of statewide importance (3,185 acres or 12.6 % of town). The majority of the prime agricultural soils are found along the Deerfield River or Beaver Brook. Currently, the Primary Agricultural (prime and statewide) found in Wilmington consists of 31% open land (not forested or residential).

Although agriculture is not extensive in Wilmington, the agricultural lands are an important resource that serves many functions including: providing local seasonal produce and planting materials; serving as an educational resource; and contributing to the rural character of the Town. According to the Town of Wilmington records, in 2015 Wilmington had a total of 475.3 acres (*update*) classified as Agricultural land



enrolled in the Use Value Appraisal Program (also known as Current Use). For Agricultural land to be eligible, participating owners must have a minimum of 25 contiguous acres (not counting the 2 acres surrounding any dwelling) to enroll in the program; the land must be land actively used for farming.

6.4 Forest and Wildlife Resources

The total acreage of forest land in Wilmington is estimated at 21,200 acres (nearly 78% of the town) (*update*). This includes woodland associated with existing residential uses. The forestland of Wilmington serves many functions including timber production, wildlife habitat, and recreation.

Woodlands of the town are comprised of both the northern hardwood and boreal forests. The hardwood forest is comprised of American beech, yellow birch, and sugar maple, in association with eastern hemlock, white birch, red maple, and white ash. Pioneer species after cutting or fire include aspen, birch, spruce, white pine or fir, depending upon site conditions. The spruce-fir forest

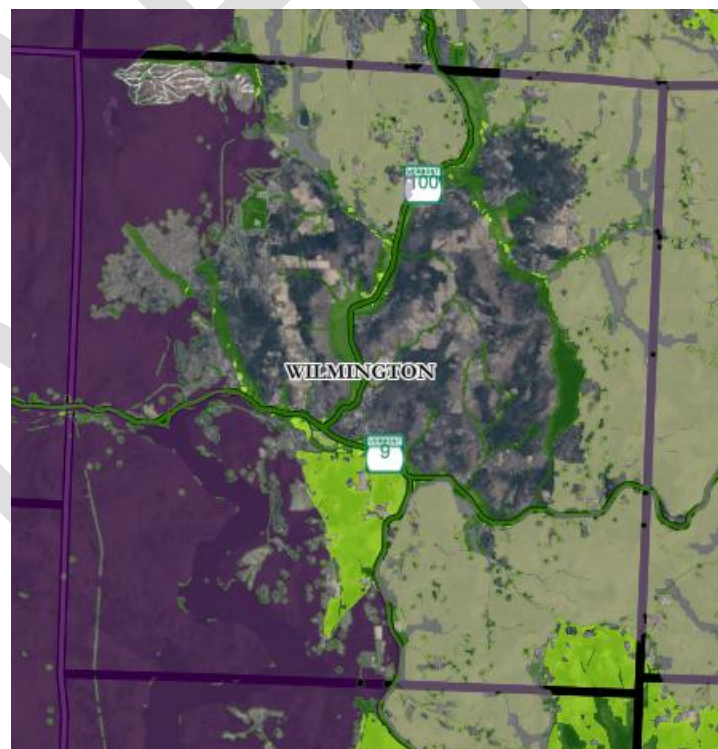
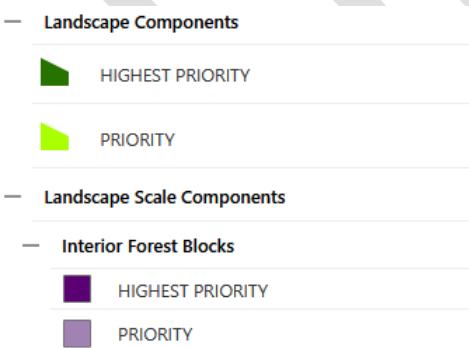
is comprised of red, white, and black spruces, and balsam fir. Pioneer associations after fire or cutting may include those same species or hardwoods, depending upon site conditions.

The climate and soils have supported forests that have played a major role in our economy, so that our woodlands are now third and fourth growth forests. The timber industry plays a lesser but still important part of our economy. The trees and wooded hills, which dominate the landscape and provide contrast with open fields and pasture land, serve as an important visual resource for the Town. The spruce-fir forest west of Lake Raponda is a special natural area.

According to the Town of Wilmington’s records, in 2015 Wilmington had a total of 3,655 acres classified as productive forest land (*update*) enrolled in the Use Value Appraisal Program. For forest land to be eligible, participating owners must have a minimum of 25 contiguous acres to enroll in the program (not counting the 2 acres surrounding any dwelling) and must manage the forest land according to the provisions of a 10-year forest management plan approved by the County Forester.

Forest Blocks, Wildlife Habitat and Endangered Species

Large tracts of forest land have habitat potential for large mammals (bear, moose, deer, bobcat, fisher, and coyote) and many songbirds. Deer wintering areas have been identified by state (See Natural Resources map). These large habitat areas are further enhanced when interconnected by wooded stream corridors. Wilmington has large tracts of forest that support these and other wildlife species, especially on the western side of the town. The map to the below, from Vermont ANR’s BioFinder Tool, shows “highest priority” forest blocks in dark purple and “priority” forest blocks in light purple.





Source: Vermont ANR Natural Resource Atlas

Sustaining these forested tracts in healthy forest cover is important for wildlife, as well as numerous other values such as water quality/quantity. Poorly planned development could, however, unnecessarily dissect these habitats, diminishing their wildlife value.

Priority Forest Blocks and Wildlife Connectors

Vermont Conservation Design (VCD) is a science-based framework that identifies the most ecologically significant lands and waters necessary to maintain a functional, connected, and biodiverse landscape. Results of VCD can be found in the Vermont Natural Resource Agency's BioFinder Tool.

- **Connectivity Blocks**
-  HIGHEST PRIORITY
-  PRIORITY



Source: Vermont ANR Natural Resource Atlas

Within VCD, Connectivity Forest Blocks are areas of land and water identified to maintain ecological integrity and functional habitat connectivity across the state. These blocks (covering forests, wetlands, and water) are critical for biodiversity, climate resilience, and wildlife movement. The map above, from VT Biofinder, shows the “highest priority” forest blocks in orange and “priority” forest blocks in tan. The forested portions of western Wilmington are particularly important as a forested corridor between the Berkshire Mountains in Massachusetts and the Green Mountains in Vermont.




The lands that provide connections that link larger patches of forest blocks within a landscape, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants in a larger region, are also important. New uses that are proposed within town should respect the sensitive nature of forest blocks and connecting links and should be designed to preserve, or enhance, the values of these areas.

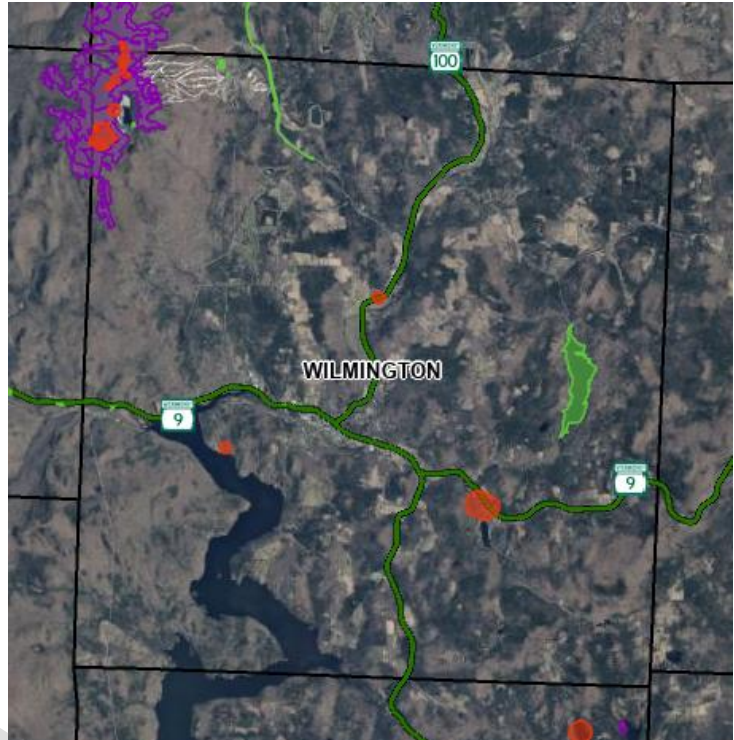
Natural Communities & Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species

Several locations in Wilmington have been identified in Vermont's Natural Heritage Inventory, maintained by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. The Inventory is a database of rare, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species, and significant natural communities.

The Inventory identifies a large area of significant natural communities in the very northwestern corner of Wilmington. Much of this area is above 2,500 feet in elevation. Note that occurrences of common and very common natural communities can be considered significant because they are excellent examples of such communities.

The Vermont Natural Resource Atlas also shows areas in Wilmington where rare, threatened or endangered (RTE) have been found. Some of these areas coincide with the significant natural communities noted above and others are located in the vicinity of water courses and lakes. RTE animal species are noted in areas marked red and RTE plant species are noted in green.

- VT Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species
 -  RTE Animal
 -  RTE Plant
- VT Significant Natural Communities
 -  Significant Natural Communities



Source: Vermont ANR Natural Resource Atlas

While the Natural Resources Inventory documents where rare, threatened, and endangered species and significant natural communities have been found, no comprehensive survey, except for state lands, has been conducted to find such occurrences. The absence of a record in the Inventory at a specific location area does not mean there are no occurrences of species or communities at that location.

6.5 Invasive Species

Invasive Plants

Invasive plants pose a risk to Wilmington’s natural resources because these species can out-compete native species and result in diminished habitat quality for wildlife. Invasive plants tend to be most common in disturbed areas and along heavily travelled highway corridors, like Routes 9 and 100. As the climate changes and warms, invasive plants are expected to increase in prevalence as well. According to Wilmington’s Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (2020), the following terrestrial invasive plants pose the highest risk to native species: wild parsnip, giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed and purple loosestrife.

Aquatic invasive species are spread by overland transport of watercraft, trailers, and fishing and recreational equipment. Wilmington has particular concern about aquatic invasive species in Lake Raponda and Lake Harriman. Both of these spots are popular tourist and recreational destinations for boating, swimming and water sports. The most effective way to prevent spread is through education and equipment inspections designed to catch invasive species "hitching a ride" from one waterbody to another. Preventing the spread aquatic invasive species is far more effective and

economically sensible than eradicating invasive species once they are established. The most common invasive found by the state’s greeter program is Eurasian milfoil, which is also a top aquatic invasive concern in Wilmington.

Invasive Insects

The biggest threat associated with invasive insects is their impact on native tree species, leading to reduced and diminished habitats for wildlife. Non-native invasive species can cause irreversible impacts on tree health, forest composition, and biodiversity. Three non-native insects which currently threaten Vermont are the emerald ash borer (EAB), Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) and hemlock wooly adelgid (HWA).

The Hemlock wooly adelgid, currently present throughout the state, feeds on Hemlock Trees and can weaken trees so they are more vulnerable to secondary stresses. The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), which feeds on and kills Ash Trees, is also of concern. The biggest challenge of EAB for towns is managing dying or dead ash trees in public right of ways. As ash trees decline, they become very brittle and are difficult to take down. Wilmington should consider inventorying and monitoring Ash Trees in the right of ways so that the trees don’t become hazards. The Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) is another invasive insect that feeds on certain species of hardwood trees, eventually killing them.

6.6 Goals, Policies and Actions – Natural Resources

GOAL 11: Preserve natural resources and features important to the town.

Policy 11.1: Ensure adequate protection of important natural resources and features.

Action 11.1.1: Continue to identify and update inventories of important resources and features including:

Vistas/viewsheds	Lands over 2500 feet
Ridgelines	Large tracts of forest or agricultural land
Scenic Areas	Wildlife/waterfowl habitats & migration corridors
Deer wintering & bear scratch areas	Endangered plants & animals
Areas of recreational value	Significant natural communities; plants, animals
Unstable, steep slope areas	Areas of educational, research, or science value
Erosion or slide risks - earthquake risks	Productive forests
Groundwater/aquifer recharge areas	Wetlands, streams, rivers, lakes, ponds, open waters
Dark night sky	Agricultural lands
Sand, gravel & mineral deposits	

* Wilmington has no areas defined by the ANR to be state protected “Natural” or “Fragile” areas.

Action 11.1.2: Develop standards to be applied to land development to preserve and conserve important natural resources and features including:

- Conservation of productive forests and agricultural lands
- Prevention of fragmentation of tracts of forest, agricultural or other natural resource lands
- Retention of wetlands, swamps, bogs, fens, marshes & open water in their natural state
- Recommend buffer strips on all riparian areas and river and stream corridors
- Preservation of valuable natural resources

Action 11.1.3: Prevent or reduce negative impacts on air quality.

Action 11.1.4: Protect groundwater sources and aquifer recharge sources, i.e. wells, ponds, lakes, streams.

Action 11.1.5: Regulate land alteration that interferes with natural water flow and absorption or creates erosion. Prohibit development that will compromise water quality.

Action 11.1.6: Conserve valuable agricultural lands.

Action 11.1.7: Identify opportunities for long term resource protection through purchase of land and conservation easements by nonprofits or conservation and community land trusts, including land protection for flood resiliency.

Action 11.1.8: Encourage landowner participation to protect and conserve important natural resources (e.g., restrictive covenants, conservation groups and land trusts).

Action 11.1.9: Identify, protect and enhance recreational opportunities for town residents and visitors utilizing the town's natural resources.

Action 11.1.10: Provide land owners with information on the benefits of forest management and agricultural management plans.

Action 11.1.11: Provide information about the state's Current Use Program (tax credits) to protect forested, agricultural and open lands.

GOAL 12: Manage rivers, streams and waters in conformity with state and federal guidelines.

Policy 12.1: Promote state and federal guidelines designed to protect rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands.

Action 12.1.1: Maintain the natural course, condition, or function of watercourses and shore lands except for necessary crossings for adequate bridges or culverts.

Action 12.1.2: Maintain or establish buffers of native vegetation along streambanks and shorelands.

Action 12.1.3: Maintain and utilize land use and development controls to ensure that development along stream banks and shorelines is controlled to prevent point and non-point pollution, minimize adverse aesthetic impacts, and to protect riparian habitats.

Action 12.1.4: Explore the adoption of River Corridor Regulations.

Action 12.1.5: Conform to the Vermont Shoreland Protection Act as it relates to Lake Raponda.

Action 12.1.5: Foster the protection and restoration of river corridors, floodplains, wetlands, and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.

CHAPTER 7

FLOOD RESILIENCE

Wilmington has land, homes, businesses, public infrastructure, and municipal services that are susceptible to impacts from flooding. Flooding, or water inundation, occurs during high water on extensive acreage along the Deerfield River. Both river erosion (when river or stream jumps its bank and rips through an area) and flooding are potential along the upper Deerfield River, the North Branch of the Deerfield River, and Beaver Brook, as well as along the streams that drain watersheds extending to the town's borders, particularly those with Dover and Marlboro.

In 2013 Vermont enacted Act 16, An act relating to municipal and regional planning and flood resilience, which requires that all municipal and regional plans effective after July 1, 2014 include a "flood resilience element" pursuant to the purpose and goals of 24 V.S.A. §4302 - Purpose; Goals - subsection (c)(14):

To encourage flood resilient communities.

(A) New development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas should be avoided. If new development is to be built in such areas, it should not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.

(B) The protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion should be encouraged.

(C) Flood emergency preparedness and response planning should be encouraged.

Act 16 also amended 24 V.S.A. § 4382 - The plan for a municipality - adding a twelfth element to the requirements for a municipal plan, specifically to include a flood resilience plan.

(a) A plan for a municipality . . . shall include the following....:

(12) (A) A flood resilience plan that:

(i) identifies flood hazard and fluvial erosion hazard areas, based on river corridor maps provided by the Secretary of Natural Resources pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 1428(a) or maps recommended by the Secretary, and designates those areas to be protected, including floodplains, river corridors, land adjacent to streams,

wetlands, and upland forests, to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and improved property; and

- (ii) recommends policies and strategies to protect the areas identified and designated under subdivision (12) (A) (i) of this subsection and to mitigate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and municipal investments.

(12) (B) A flood resilience plan may reference an existing local hazard mitigation plan approved under 44 C.F.R. § 201.6.

7.1 Fluvial Erosion

By statutory definition, “fluvial erosion” means the erosion or scouring of riverbeds and banks during high flow conditions of a river. Most of the flooding damage experienced in Vermont is from the power of moving water and the sudden destruction of under-sized culverts and erosion of stream banks supporting roads and buildings. Providing a river the room it needs to slow the flow, over time can allow it to function as a responsive system and avoid repeated losses to public infrastructure and investments.

Erosion (and deposition) along a stream or river is natural. Sometimes, efforts to stop this process in one place can make it worse in others. Rivers, streams, and their channels are changing constantly in response to the inputs of water, energy, sediment, and debris that pass along them. Every few years a stream fills to bankfull and the shape of the channel responds to this force by cutting deeper into some streambanks and also by depositing sediments in the quiet inside bends. This process is visible as an “S” shaped form that changes position over time.

If the stream cannot spill out of its banks, the power of the trapped water increases and the channel either digs down or cuts out further to the sides. Where the roads and buildings are nearby these adjustments to the channel’s shape can become dramatic and costly.

A river is in geomorphic equilibrium when it is in balance with its water, energy, sediment, and debris. In this condition a river is neither building up sediment in the channel nor losing sediment from its bed.

Importantly, a river in equilibrium has not become overly deep and can continue to overflow onto its floodplains. The water that spills onto the floodplain slows down, and the velocity of the water still in the channel does not become excessively powerful.

To protect roads and buildings the river should be able to function as well as possible upstream and downstream. Functional streams and rivers need room to adjust (River Corridors) and intact floodplains (Special Flood Hazard Areas) to moderate the impact of high-water events.

7.2 River Corridors and Floodplains

River Corridors and Special Flood Hazard Areas or “floodplains” are unique but closely related. The River Corridor is the flood hazard area that provides the space that the river needs to express its energy and meander without causing it to dig down. In statute River Corridor is defined as: “... the land area adjacent to a river that is required to accommodate the dimensions, slope, planform, and buffer of the naturally stable channel and that is necessary for the natural maintenance or natural

restoration of a dynamic equilibrium condition and for minimization of fluvial erosion hazards, as delineated by the Agency of Natural Resources in accordance with river corridor protection procedures.”

A floodplain is the area where rising flood waters can spread out along or around a waterbody to both infiltrate and slow down.

7.3 Regulatory Flood Hazard Areas

There are two types of regulatory flood hazard areas and two sets of official maps that identify and designate those flood hazard areas in Vermont: inundation hazard areas are designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) and fluvial erosion hazard areas, or River Corridors, are designated by the VT Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and shown on the Natural Resources Atlas online mapping.

Special Flood Hazard Areas

Towns participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) must regulate development in the inundation areas designated on the FIRMs. This area of inundation is called the Special Flood Hazard Area or SFHA. FIRMs may also show expected base flood elevations (BFEs) and floodways (SFHA areas that carry current). The Town of Wilmington has mapped SFHA. Property owners holding a mortgage on a building in the SFHA are required to purchase and carry flood insurance.

Fluvial Erosion Hazard Areas

A significant portion of flood damage in Vermont occurs due to the erosive power of rivers and streams. Since FEMA FIRMS only map inundation areas, Vermont ANR developed and mapped River Corridors in 2015 to show and allow regulation of areas at risk of fluvial erosion. Flash flooding in these areas can be extremely erosive, causing damage to involved infrastructure, development and topographic features including stream beds and the sides of hills and mountains, in some cases leading to landslides. There is no insurance requirement for properties or development in the River Corridor but it is encouraged for self-protection.

Vermont ANR’s river corridor maps show the area needed to address the fluvial erosion hazards, which may lie in FEMA-mapped areas, but also can extend outside of those areas. Elevation or flood proofing alone may not be protective of structures in these areas, as erosion can undermine such measures. The Town of Wilmington has areas of River Corridor mapped by ANR, but does not currently have regulations in place to regulate development in River Corridors. Beginning in 2028, the state will mandate regulation of the mapped river corridor. Towns will not be mandated to regulate small stream setbacks (streams with a watershed size between .5 and 2 square miles) but that regulation is encouraged.

Flood Hazard Area Regulation

Inundation

To enable property owners to be eligible to purchase flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), a municipality must adopt and administer flood hazard area regulations that meet the standards set by both FEMA and the state. These standards can be within local

zoning regulations or adopted as a free-standing bylaw. A community’s flood hazard regulations apply to the Special Flood Hazard Area. They regulate new development and place restrictions on some types of activities, such as fill within the floodplain. Among other things, they specify requirements to be adhered to when development is allowed within the SFHA.

Erosion

To protect citizens, infrastructure, and the environment, as well as to qualify for maximum Emergency Relief Assistance Fund match from the state in the event of a declared disaster, a town must adopt and administer protection of River Corridors in its flood hazard area regulations. These can be within local zoning regulations or adopted as a free-standing bylaw.

7.4 Addressing Flood Resilience

This plan identifies as flood hazard areas the Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) shown on the FIRMs and identifies fluvial erosion hazard areas as those shown on the Agency of Natural Resources River Corridor mapping on the ANR Atlas. Further, this plan designates both those identified areas as areas to be protected, including floodplains, river corridors, and land adjacent to streams, wetlands, and upland forests, to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and improved property. In addition, this plan incorporates by reference the town’s Local Hazard Mitigation Plan approved under 44 C.F.R. § 201.6. Finally, this plan recommends the policies and strategies to protect the designated areas to mitigate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and municipal investments.

Maps referenced in this section are..... Some named maps have not yet been provided to the town by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. Additional information is available at <http://floodready.vermont.gov/> .

7.5 Goals, Policies and Actions – Flood Resilience

Goal 13: Make Wilmington a flood resilient community.
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Policy 13.1: Protect river corridors, floodplains, wetlands, and upland forested areas to moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.

Action 13.1.1: Update the Flood Hazard regulations to include River Corridor regulations and enhance standards within the Flood Hazard regulations. This will better protect development from future flood damage and align with state goals to ensure maximum funding availability in the event of a flood.

Action 13.1.2: Work with the Agency of Natural Resources and Army Corp of Engineers on stream and river management.

Policy 13.2: Support strong flood emergency preparedness and response planning.

Action 13.2.1: Annually update the Local Emergency Management Plan and encourage engagement with stakeholders and the public.

Action 13.2.2: Maintain an Updated Local Hazard Mitigation Plan to comply with FEMA requirements needed for seeking mitigation grants.

Action 13.2.3: Advertise and engage with the public about resources available following hazard events so that residents have an accurate expectation of what the town can provide and where to get it.

Policy 13.3: Protect town infrastructure from flood damage to ensure uninterrupted commerce during a flood.

Action 13.3.1: Continue replacing, installing and upsizing all infrastructure (culverts, bridges, etc.) to meet current state standards.

Action 13.3.2: Support moving municipal offices and services out of flood hazard and river corridor areas.

Action 13.3.3: Assess opportunities for reducing flood obstructions at the West Main Street Bridge.

Action 13.3.4: Continue working with Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) to refine River Corridor mapping.

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