

Wilmington Planning Commission Report on the Town Plan Update

August 24, 2026

This report is in accordance with 24 VSA § 4384(c), which states: *“When considering an amendment to a plan, the Planning Commission shall prepare a written report on the proposal. The report shall address the extent to which the plan, as amended, is consistent with the goals established in § 4302 of this title.”*

The last revision of the Wilmington Town Plan was completed in 2018. The proposed 2026 Wilmington Town Plan is an update and reorganization of this prior plan. The Planning Commission has reviewed all aspects of the plan and made updates to reflect the changes in the community. The Planning Commission believes this update makes the plan more compatible with all of the Vermont planning goals listed in 24 VSA § 4302, as described in more detail below:

Goal 1. To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.

The Land Use Chapter encourages higher density types of development within the Wilmington Village area and adjoining areas served by sewer and water infrastructure. The plan includes three rural land use districts (Residential, Rural Residential and Conservation) which support a range of uses from more moderate residential in the Residential and Rural Residential Districts to very minimal development in the Conservation District. The Commercial/Residential District supports a mix of uses primarily in nodes while limiting sprawling strip development. The final two districts, Resort – Residential and Resort – Commercial/Residential, are directly related to ski resorts located in the northwestern corner of Wilmington and in Dover. The Future Land Use Plan and the policies in the Land Use Chapter support a development pattern that will maintain Wilmington’s historic settlement areas and preserve the surrounding rural countryside.

Goal 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.

The plan encourages business growth and development that is consistent with the community, the historic Village Center, and its tourism base. The plan includes strong policies to support existing and new businesses including expanding sewer and water infrastructure, downtown district improvements such as sidewalks, and a town webpage to support businesses. The Plan also supports Wilmington Works, the Downtown District organization who provides business support, and the Bi-Town Economic Development Committee in conjunction with Dover.

Goal 3. To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.

Wilmington children attend the Twin Valley Elementary School in Wilmington and Twin Valley Middle and Highschool in Whitingham. The plan supports School Board members in developing and maintaining the highest quality education opportunities for the community. The plan also identifies adult educational opportunities available in the larger region, including partnerships with the Brattleboro Development Credit Corp., and encourages residents to take advantage of these programs.

Goal 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.

The Wilmington Town Plan promotes a safe and well maintained road network that respects the natural environment. The Plan supports including accommodations for bicycles and pedestrians when feasible for major road reconstruction projects. The Town maintains an inventory of municipal road infrastructure, a Town Highway Capital Improvement Plan, Pavement Management Plan and a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Town Plan also supports enhancing the existing trail network, improving trail accessibility and opening up some trails for mountain biking.

Goal 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, archaeological sites and archaeologically sensitive areas.

The Wilmington Town Plan includes an extensive review of natural areas and water, forest, and agricultural resources, and recognizes the importance of protecting these resources. A thorough inventory of these areas is included in the Natural Resources Chapter and shown on the Natural Resources (including scenic resources), Special Resources and Water Resources maps. The Plan supports maintaining historic resources, primarily through adherence to the Historic Review Zoning Districts. The Future Land Use Plan in the Land Use Chapter creates land use districts that encourage moderate and higher density development in areas that are suitable for growth, especially the Village, and minimizes development in areas with water, wildlife, and forest resources.

Goal 6. To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, forests, and other land resources.

This goal has been addressed under the response to State Goal #5 above.

Goal 7. To make efficient use of energy, provide for the development of renewable energy resources, and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

This Town Plan includes the town's first Enhanced Energy Plan (EEP) which encourages new development designed to maximize efficiency, and supports conservation measures. The EEP provides opportunities for residential and commercial solar development, wind power development and hydropower while minimizing impacts on the landscape, agricultural lands and forests. The Plan encourages the reduction of energy consumption by supporting downtown infill development, sidewalks, park-and-ride and electric vehicle charging stations, and Southeast VT Transit. The Plan also encourages the Town to implement a tracking system to assess energy use in municipal structures.

Goal 8. To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors.

Recreational opportunities in Wilmington include more structured recreation for adults and children such as pickleball and tennis, as well as less formal, low impact, outdoor activities, such as water sports, hiking and skiing. The Town Plan includes a policy to ensure recreational opportunities are available for all residents. The Plan encourages existing large tracts of contiguous open space lands be preserved to allow for recreational uses. The plan also recommends improving and expanding the existing trail network for a variety of recreational uses, as well as transportation, and working with partners who are managing conservation lands and trails.

Goal 9. To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries.

Wilmington has significant forest resources and a smaller amount of agricultural land. Prime agricultural soils are generally located along the Deerfield River or Beaver Brook. The highest priority forest blocks are found primarily in the western part of the town. Currently approximately 20% of the total land area of the town is enrolled in the state's Current Use Program (forest and agriculture). However, there are also large areas owned by federal and state partners or under conservation easements. The Plan also includes an Action that supports the continued operation of forest and agricultural industries.

Goal 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.

The Town Plan provides for wise and efficient use of natural resources in its policies and actions. However, the Plan also notes that most commercially useful sand and gravel has been depleted over the years and the Town must now rely on outside sources.

Goal 11. To ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters.

The Housing Chapter includes information on existing housing characteristics and needs in Wilmington, including state housing targets. The Plan supports a diversity of housing options that meet the various needs of household types and income groups in Wilmington, especially year-round workers and seniors. The Town recently updated its Zoning Bylaws to make it easier to build housing in the Village area. The Plan supports expanding infrastructure to support new housing development where appropriate. As a resort community the Town has struggled with the best way to manage Short Term Rentals and this Plan includes an action to support the development of the Short Term Rental Registry, as well as capping the number of STR units in residential areas.

Goal 12. To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.

The Community Facilities, Services and Resources Chapter includes a thorough discussion of existing public facilities and services and the Town's plan for addressing future needs. This chapter covers water and wastewater services, police and fire protection, emergency planning and services, education, solid waste disposal, town government and services, and telecommunications. The Plan encourages the Town to regularly review current services and facilities and to make improvements to meet the needs of residents.

Goal 13. To ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and to integrate child care issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers and child care work force development.

The Town Plan encourages the provision of quality childcare services and facilities to meet the needs of town residents, workforce, and employers. The Town supports local and regional efforts to increase the availability and affordability of child care.

Goal 14. To encourage flood resilient communities.

The Flood Resilience Chapter discusses the impacts of inundation flooding and fluvial erosion in Wilmington and includes strategies for how the Town can prepare for and respond to flood events. The Town recently moved the public safety facility out of the floodplain and this Plan supports moving the Town Hall out of flood hazard areas. The Transportation Chapter includes detailed information on planning for a more flood resilient road network as well. The Plan incorporates the 2020 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and its recommendations by reference.

Goal 15. To equitably distribute environmental benefits and burdens as described in 3 V.S.A. Chapter 72.

The Town Plan addresses and provides for environmental benefits equitably across the community. Wilmington is a rural resort community with minimal environmental burdens currently. No population or geographical area would share a disproportional impact of environmental burdens based on the policies in the Plan.

If the proposal would alter the designation of any land area, the report should cover the following points:

This update of the Town Plan includes a minor change on the Future Land Use Map. A small area that is currently designated as Residential will be changed to Resort-Commercial/Residential. The area is located on Cold Brook Rd. in the northwestern corner of the town. It is directly across the street from an existing Resort-Commercial/Residential area (approximately 475 acres, the Hermitage Club,), just south of a Resort-Residential area and north of a Residential area. To the east is a Conservation Area. Because this is a small area, approximately 25 acres, the change will not have a significant impact on the community or the surrounding area.

If the area is developed for commercial use, the traffic patterns and timing may change some but the impact on the area will not be significant since there is already traffic in the area related to the resort. There will not be a significant change to the municipal tax base, although it could increase some depending on the type of development. There will not be a need for additional public facilities.

There is some residential development within the 25-acre area but there is vacant land along Cold Brook Rd. This vacant land is where commercial development is likely to occur, in support of the resort. Additional Resort-Commercial/Residential lands will support the Hermitage Club, which is now a well-established private ski club. Alternative locations were not explored because this is the only logical location for additional commercial and residential uses in the immediate vicinity of the resort.

Dated this twenty-fourth day of August, 2026:

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