

Fairfield Center and East Fairfield Character Assessment

Introduction

Every village has a unique sense of place created by the whole of its features, from building types and land uses to density and pedestrian amenities. It is necessary to understand the existing sense of place and character that make Fairfield Center and East Fairfield the places that they are today. From this understanding, the community can start to assess what aspects of the character should be preserved and conversely what should evolve to something different – whether that be invoked from history or something new.

The 1842 Gazetteer described Fairfield as having three stores, four gristmills, eight sawmills, two fulling mills, one carding machine, and two tanneries and a peak population of 2,591 residents in 1950. The economy of the region remains the same as it has been for a hundred years, an agricultural town based around the dairy industry. Many historic structures remain including homes, barns, public buildings, and covered bridges.

For the purposes of this assessment, we are using the village zoning district boundaries that are identified in the 2012 Fairfield Town Bylaws. It should be noted that the village boundaries in the bylaws are larger than those in the Town 2015 Plan and the Designated Village Center boundaries; see maps associated with each village. It should also be noted that setbacks for this analysis were measured from the edge of digital parcel boundaries as opposed to the closest public or private right-of-way as stated in definitions of bylaws.

An excerpt of the dimensional standards of the 2012 Fairfield Subdivision and Zoning Regulations that pertain to the village centers are provided in Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

Fairfield Center Village

Location: The intersection of Route 36 with North and South Road has been one of Fairfield's historic community centers since the first mill set up in 1791 on the Fairfield River. The Vermont Designated Village Center extends west from the Chester Arthur Apartments to the School and associated fields and from the St. Patrick Catholic Church south to the library and Tetreault Bed and Breakfast.

What are the Focal Points?

The focal point of the Village Center is around the cross roads of Route 36 with North and South Street, including the Brick Store circa XXXX (now a private business) on the southeast side and the municipal offices on the northeast side. Other focal points in the village include the civic buildings such as the library and the school.

What Creates the Village's Identity?

- Overall: Civic buildings, the cross roads and rural setting.
- Anchor businesses: Chester's Bakery, Menards Market, Tetreault Bed and Breakfast
- Historic landmarks: Common School, Brick Store building, Former Grange and Episcopal Church (currently private residence), and Soule House (circa 1830, current Sugartree Bed and Breakfast).

Development Pattern: The overall development pattern reflects a concentration of agricultural, residential, public and commercial uses around the Route 36 and North/South Street crossroads. The average parcel size in the Fairfield Center Zoning District is just over 16 acres and the median parcel size is 2.1 acres. The smallest parcel size with road frontage is 0.03 acres; the white house (physical address 4484) adjacent to the Brick Store. The parcel size in this district varies widely from the dense core near the crossroads to the surrounding working lands where average parcel size increases significantly.

The median parcel size within the designated village center is 0.93 acre per lot (excluding the 3 farms that have a portion of their property inside the designation boundary). Development within this boundary is denser and there is a greater mix of land uses. There are additional smaller lot sizes extending outside the designated area along South Road and just outside the eastern boundary of Route 36 across the Fairfield River.





Land Use: The Fairfield Center Village consists of approximately 53% residential, 5% commercial, 9% public use and 38% undeveloped (largely characterized by commercial working lands). Commercial businesses located in the village include: the Menard’s Market (gas, grocery, hardware), Chester’s Bakery, and a handful of small businesses. Public uses include the Town Office, the Post Office, the Fire Department, the Highway Garage, St. Patrick Catholic Church, the School and the Bent Northrop Memorial Library. Outside the district, commercial and public land uses are significantly less common.



This village contains a significant amount of undeveloped working lands that are conserved. It will be important to review the type of conservation easement that exists on these properties to understand how this can impact the development of this center.



Building Types:

Architectural Style: The Village Center consists of a variety of architectural styles including many historic colonial homes along with residential buildings classified as farmhouse or cape style buildings.

Ground Floor Frontage: A variety of building frontages exist in the Village. Many buildings have full frontage covered porches at ground level. Other common frontages include covered and uncovered stoops. Most main entrances are oriented to the street. The exceptions are public and commercial buildings with parking in front of the entrance.



Size Based on the Building Footprint

- The median residential building footprint size is 1,965 square feet. The largest residential building is 4,356 square feet; 19% of the residential structures in this center are greater than 2,500 square feet.
- There are 8 structures in the village that have a building footprint greater than 5,000 square feet. The largest building footprints include the farm structure across from the intersection with Gilbert Hill Road and the new School building; both cover more than 32,000 square feet. Other large structures include the Fire Department, Town Garage, St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, and Menard’s Market.
- The smallest building footprint is the old town office building, now occupied by a private business at 1,019 square feet.

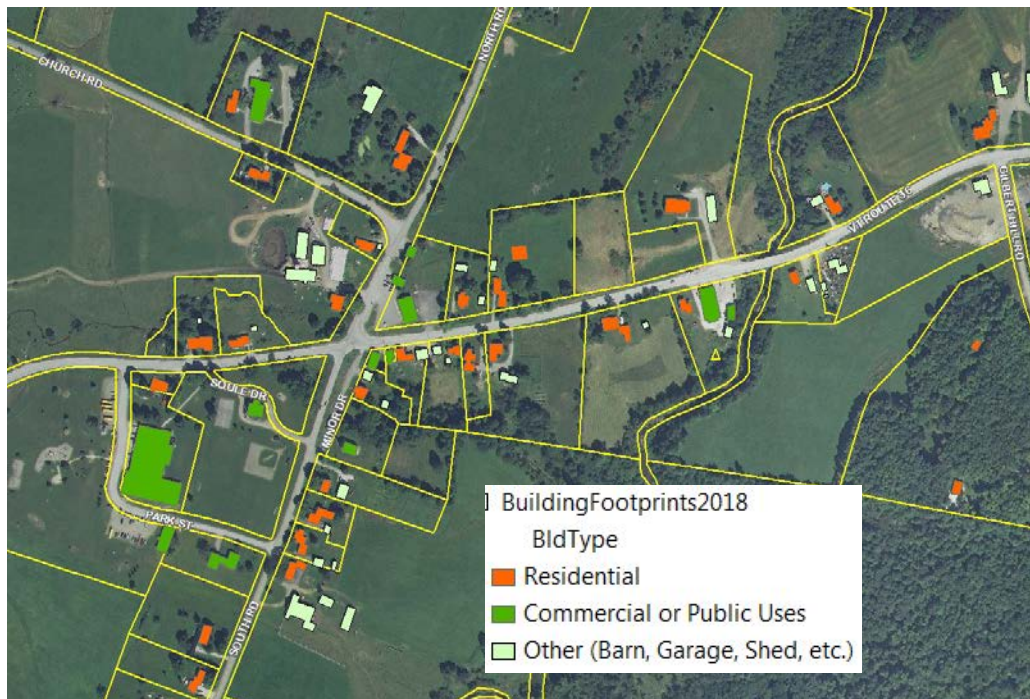
Size Based on the Finished Interior: The median residential finished size is 1,926 square feet.

Stories: The majority of the 45 residential buildings in the Village District have 1½ to 2 stories. There are several residences (24%) with only a single story.

Front Setback: The average front setback for residential buildings in the District is just over 85 feet with a median front setback of 38 feet. If we just consider the residential structures within the designated village center, the front setback average is 32.5 feet and the median is 28 feet.

For commercial and “public” buildings in the designated village center, the average front setback is 34 feet and median is 13 feet.

NOTE: Setbacks were measures from the edge of the digital parcel lines (yellow lines in image below) to the edge of the building footprint. This method of measurement differs from setbacks measured in the 2012 regulations.



Location of Parking: In general parking at commercial properties and public buildings is present either to the side or in front of the building. The library is an example of parking located to the side and pedestrian access provided to the entrance. There are some properties with wide access points such as the entrance to the Menard’s Market and USPS building and along North Street towards Church Road. A small amount of on-street parking is present in front of the Brick Stone and adjacent buildings along Rte 36 and in front of the municipal building. There is public parking available at the Municipal Park and Ride lot located behind the town office.



Screening: Throughout the center there is limited screening or landscaping around commercial properties.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Amenities:

Pluses (+)

- + Wide Shoulders;
- + The Town currently has funding to construct sidewalks along Route 36 from the crossroads out to the Chester A, Arthur Apartments on the north side of the roadway as well as a section of sidewalk along South Street on the west side from Soule Drive to the library.
- + Pavement markings will be added along the shoulder from the crossroads to Church Road along North Street.
- + Lower speed limits near village center – on the eastern end the speed is reduced to 35mph right after you pass the Chester Arthur Apartments coming into the center and on the western end the speed limit reduces to 35 mph well before the school property.
- + Many buildings are oriented to the public ROW.

Minuses (-)

- Currently no facilities exist for pedestrians or bicycles (sidewalks, share the road signage, designated lanes, or crosswalks).
- Historically there was a stretch of sidewalk present in the village but it was not maintained and has become overgrown.
- There is no crosswalk on Route 36 or South Road for accessing the school or library.
- There are no street trees, pedestrian scale lighting, or other traffic calming measures.
- Several properties have wide access drives that create safety conflicts between cars and pedestrians or bikes.

Water & Wastewater Infrastructure: Fairfield Fire District #2 provides public water to the majority of residents in Fairfield Center; there is capacity in the system to connect the remaining residents in the center to this public water source. The 2012 Wastewater Evaluation Study noted that most properties are connected to the public water supply to allow for more land for a wastewater system as there are few well isolation zones.

All wastewater disposal is private. Soil suitability for on-site wastewater management is known to be limited (poor soil, seasonal high-water table). The 2012 Wastewater Evaluation Study noted the following restrictions and concerns for study area around Fairfield Center (pg 1-2):

- Area restricted lots and steep slopes along Route 36 from North/South Street east to the Fairfield River bridge crossing limit space for complying replacement systems.
- Soils are poorly drained silt loam and silty clay with slow percolation rates requiring large mound systems.
- Soils, depth to groundwater and depth to bedrock do not support future development or change in use using on-site systems.

FAIRFIELD CENTER Village Character Assessment



Northwest Vermont Planning Commission
 Vermont Geographic Information System
 Transverse Mercator NAD 83
 For planning purposes only.
 Prepared by:
 NSPC
 75 Fairfield Street
 St. Albans, VT 05478
 802-249-3338
 www.nvpc.com
 June 2016

1,400 700 0 1,400 Feet



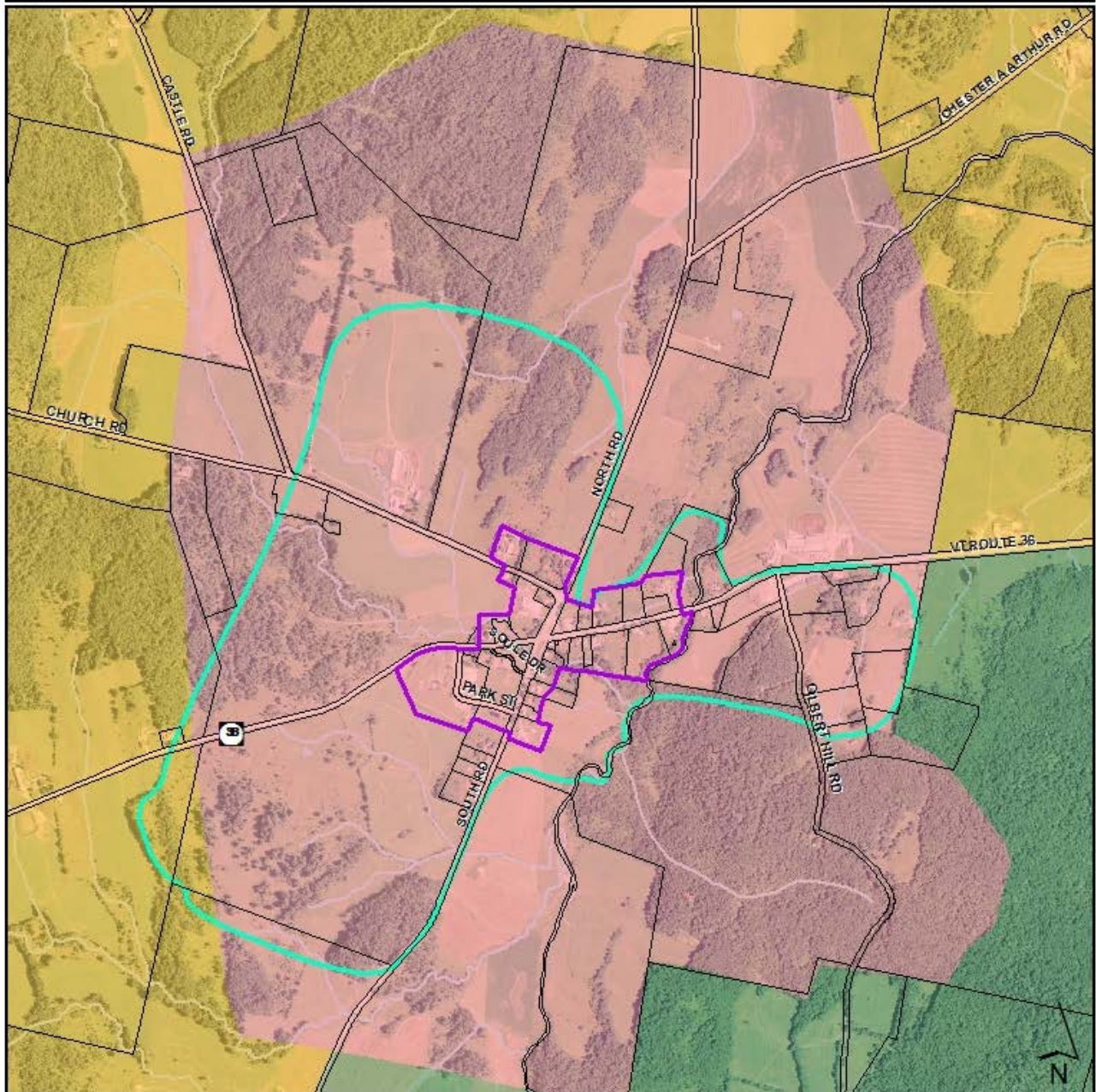
[https://gis.projects/county/Franklin/Fairfield/village/villagecharacterassessment](https://gis.projects.county.vt.gov/projects/county/Franklin/Fairfield/village/villagecharacterassessment)

Legend

- Parcels
- Village Designation Boundary
- Town Plan - Village Planning Area

Zoning District

- Agricultural/Rural Residential District
- East Fairfield District
- Fairfield Center District
- Uplands District



East Fairfield

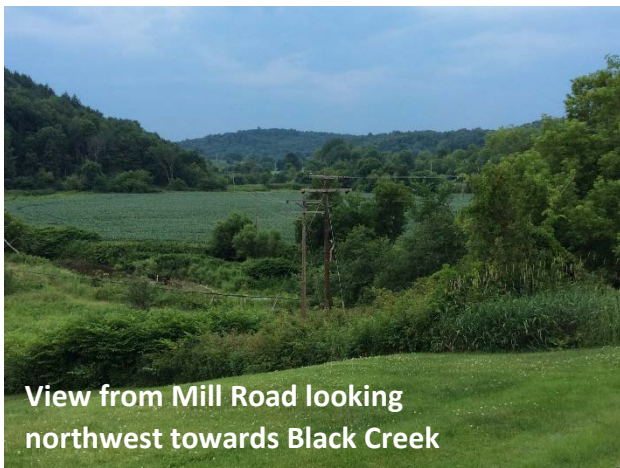
Location: The East Fairfield Village is a settlement located along Route 36 adjacent to the town line with Bakersfield. The state village center designation boundary in East Fairfield begin along Route 36 at the intersection with Mill Street and extends along the state route just past the intersection with New Street; the boundary also extends up the first leg of New Street until the sharp turn in the road.

What are the Focal Points? The focal point of East Fairfield is the village green and community center. Other focal points over the years have included past commercial properties such as the general store in the prior Soule property.

What Creates Village's Identity

- Overall: Village green, Community Center, rural setting
- Anchor businesses: Stone's Shell and USPS
- Historic landmarks: Fairfield Community Center (originally the East Fairfield Union Meeting House) and Will Soule's Store (circa 1900), covered bridge, small dams from old sawmills,

Development Pattern: The overall development pattern in this village reflects a concentration of residential and commercial properties centered around the village green and the stretch of Rte 36 from Mill Street to New Street. The average parcel size in the East Fairfield Village Zoning District is 4 acres and the median parcel size is 0.67 acres. The smallest parcel size with road frontage is 0.10 acres located along Mill Street and is currently undeveloped. The smallest parcels with structures present and road frontage are 0.11 acres. The parcels less than ½ acre are concentrated in the core village area along Rte 36 and the southern side of New Street. The median parcel size within the designated village center is 0.37 acre per lot.



View from Mill Road looking northwest towards Black Creek



Land Use: The East Fairfield Village District contains predominantly residential land uses; approximately 72% of the parcels are categorized as residential. However, some of these parcels sit on large lots; 8 residential properties are larger than 9 acres, contain working lands, and account for 45% of the total district land area. Commercial properties comprise 4% of the land (USPS, Stone’s Shell station, and the Soule building) and public land uses (Church, Fire Dept, Community Center, and village green) account for 6%. Nineteen percent of the village is undeveloped; with 5 of these properties located in the core village area.



Building Types:

Architectural Style: The most common residential building types within the East Fairfield Village District can be classified as colonial and cape styles. There are also several farmhouse and ranch building types. Fifty-eight percent of the structures in the village district were built in prior to 1930.

Ground Floor Frontage: A variety of frontages exist in East Fairfield, including full frontage porches, covered and uncovered stoops and no porch or stoop.

Along Rte 36 the majority of residential buildings have entrances oriented to the street however many of them do not appear to be an active entrance. There is a break in the pedestrian-oriented environment between Stone’s Shell and the FairPoint utility building; these buildings are located further from the road, have undefined entrances, and wide access points.



Size Based on the Building Footprint:

- The median residential building footprint is 1,558 square feet. The largest residential building is 5,762 square feet; 14% of the residential structures in this center are greater than 2,500 square feet.
- There are 8 structures in the village that have a building footprint greater than 5,000 square feet. These structures include three barns, Stone’s Shell building, the apartment complex on Rte 36, and the Community Center.
- There are 5 residential buildings with building footprints less than 1,000 square feet; a small residence off of Mill Street has the smallest building footprint with a size of 805 square feet.

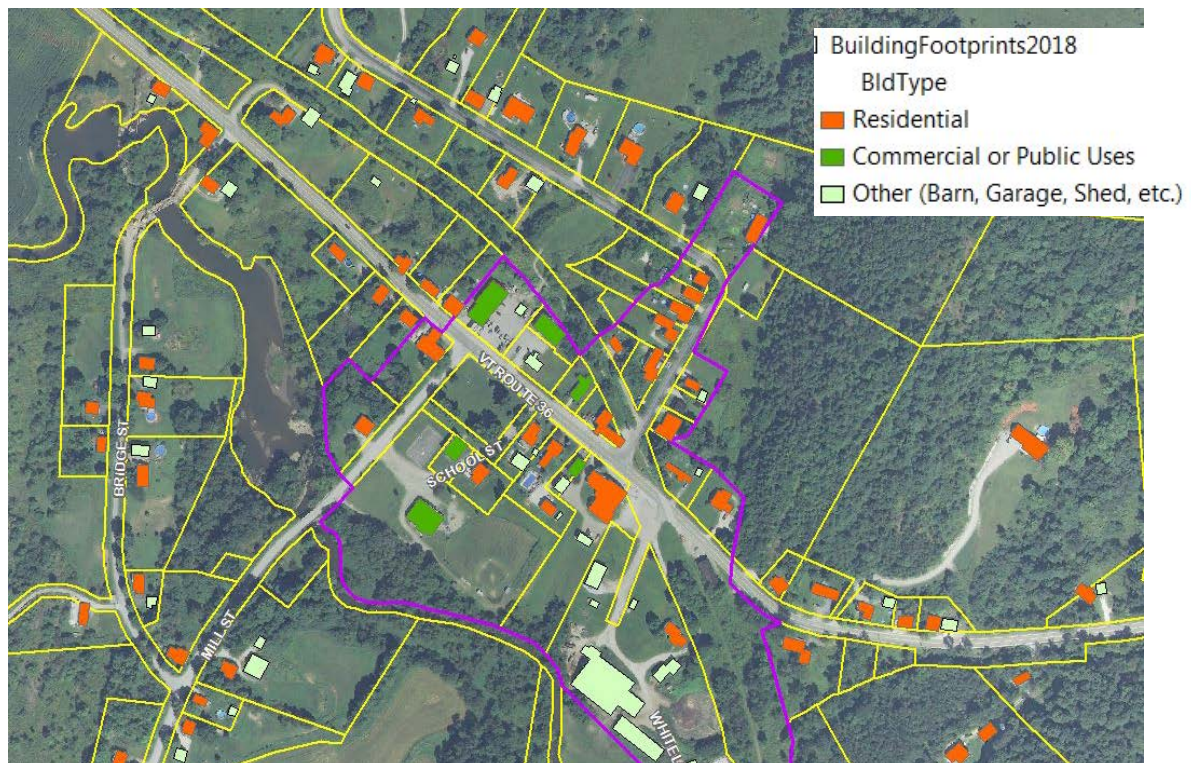
Size Based on the Finished Interior: The median residential finished size is 1,594 square feet.

Stories: The majority of the 76 residential buildings in the Village District have 1 ½ to 2 stories. There are two 3 story buildings that are mixed use and/or apartments near the intersection with New St.

Front Setback: The average front setback for residential buildings in the District is 46.8 feet with a median of 19 feet. The setbacks are lower for residential structures within the designated village center boundary with an average of 31 feet and a median of 9 feet. There are 19 residences in the district whose structure is located on the parcel line equating to a setback of zero.

For commercial and “public” buildings in the designated village center, the average front setback is 40 feet and a median of 27 feet.

NOTE: Setbacks were measures from the edge of the digital parcel lines (yellow lines in image below) to the edge of the building footprint. This method of measurement differs from setbacks measured in the 2012 regulations.





Setbacks cont.: In general, structures are closer to the road for residential and commercial buildings along Rte 36, Bridget Street and Mill Street compared to New Street. Along New Street, the majority of the structures built prior to 1930s are set closer to the road than the structures built from 1940-1994; all structures along this road are oriented towards the road.

Location of Parking: Parking is fairly unstructured and exists in the front and side of commercial or public properties and along the right-of-way. Commercial parking lots do not incorporate landscaping.



Pedestrian and Bicycle Amenities:

Pluses (+)

- + Relatively wide road shoulders.
- + Many buildings are oriented to the public ROW.
- + There is potential for pedestrian connectivity to the village center with the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail that runs behind the businesses along Rte 36 and residential along New St as well as the old town highway trail that connects New St to Bridge St.



Minuses (-)

- The wide shoulder on Rte 36 is also used for parking and numerous areas have open access driveways creating safety concerns between cars and pedestrians or bikes.
- There is only one stretch of sidewalk in front of St. Anthony-St. George Catholic Church.
- There are no crosswalks on Route 36.
- There are no designated bike lanes.
- There are no street trees or pedestrian scale lighting.

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure:

Fairfield Fire District #1 provides public water to the majority of residents in East Fairfield; there is capacity in the system to connect the remaining residents in the center to this public water source. The 2012 Wastewater Evaluation Study noted that most properties are connected to the public water supply to allow for more land for a wastewater system as there are few well isolation zones.

All wastewater disposal is private. Soil suitability for on-site wastewater management is known to be limited (poor soil, seasonal high water table). The 2012 Wastewater Evaluation Study noted the following restrictions and concerns for study area around East Fairfield (pg 1-3 to 1-4):

- The northwestern area along Rte. 36 and Bridge Street has dense development along the Black Creek. Most wastewater systems in this area do not meet the required 50-foot set-back to the river.
- Many area restricted lots throughout the village area limit space for complying with replacement systems.
- The soils are poorly drained silt loam and silty clay with slow percolation rates requiring large mound systems. Areas of sandy soils in the center of the village area also have a high water table with requires mound systems.
- Shallow depth to groundwater requires expensive site testing and large mound systems or treatment system.
- Soil conditions do not support current zoning of ½ acre lots due to large mound systems required.
- Several replacement systems are “best fix” non-complying. There are future use and flow restrictions placed on these systems. One best fix system does not meet the separation distance to the Black Creek. The cost of individual on-site wastewater system improvements/replacements varies greatly between \$1,500-\$40,000 per system depending on the property.

EAST FAIRFIELD Village Character Assessment

Vertical Coordinate System
Township: 14N02 E02
Range: 10W01
Revised by:
NDDC
75 Fairfield Street
Burlington, VT 05401
802-244-5522
www.nvd.com
June 2016

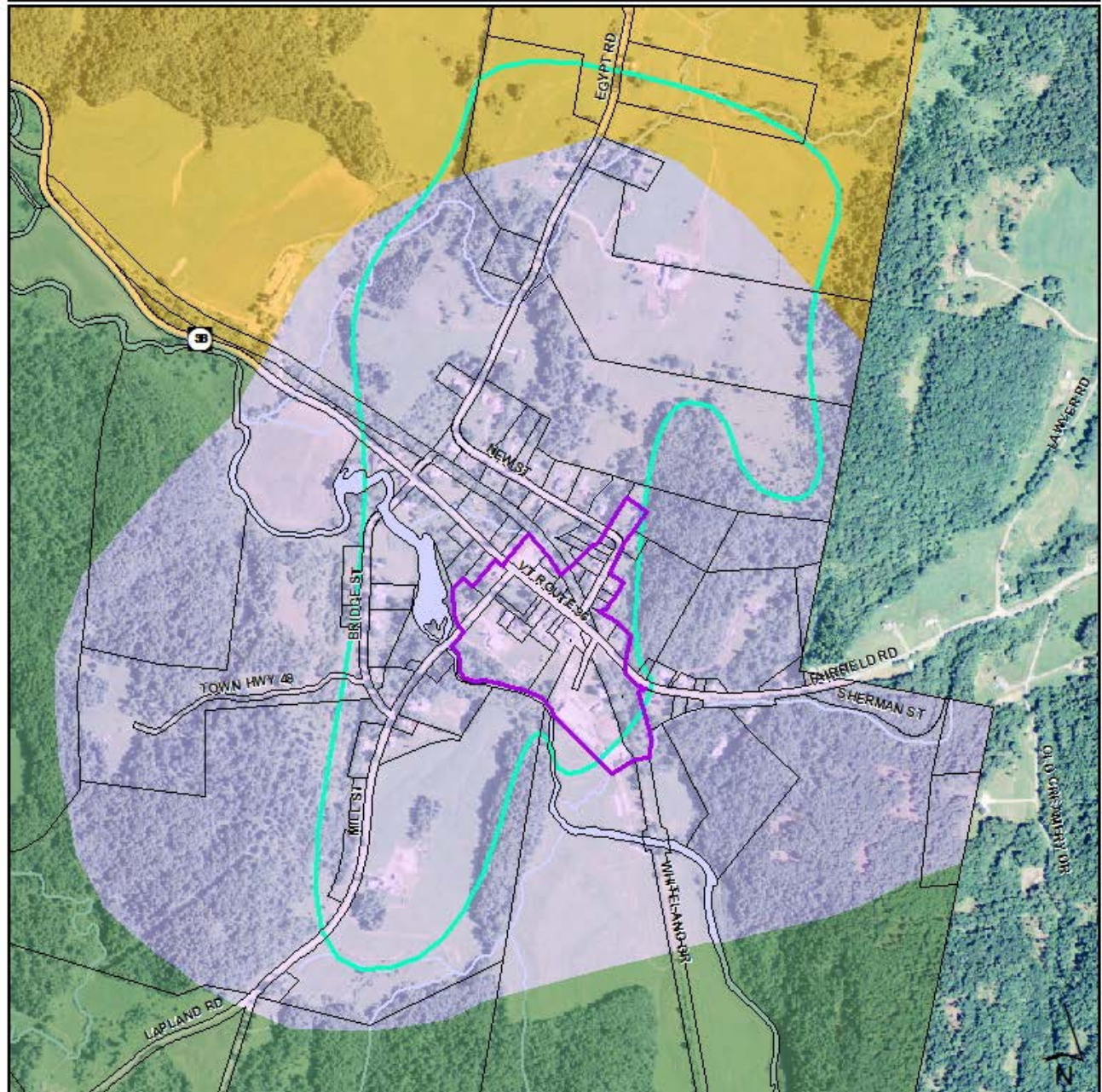
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Legend

-  Village Designation Boundary
-  Parcels
-  Town Plan - Village Planning Area
- Zoning District**
-  Agricultural/Rural Residential District
-  East Fairfield District
-  Fairfield Center District
-  Uplands District



Appendix 1. Excerpt of dimensional requirements from 2012 Subdivision and Zoning Regulations

Definitions:

Setback: The nearest distance between a public or private road right-of-way and a structure (including all features of the structure).

B) Districts, Allowable Uses & Specific Requirements

Village Residential Districts

The purpose of this district is to support the role of the villages of Fairfield and East Fairfield in social and economic activities in the community and to provide for residential, commercial and other compatible development that serves the needs of the Town. Such development should occur with densities and uses which will maintain the traditional, social and physical character of the villages including their historic and scenic resources, and which will not exceed the capability of the lands, waters, services, and the facilities to absorb such densities.

- 1) *East Fairfield Village.* From the Bakersfield Town Line to west of Saxby's Bridge. Three-fourths of a mile south of East Fairfield to the fork of the road. North to the dwelling owned by Francis Andrews.
- 2) *Fairfield Village.* From the Northerly edge of David and Gail Williams', Elizabeth Soule's and David and Jean Burnor's farms. South, along the Easterly edge of David and Jean Burnor's farm. Westerly along the Southern edge of Albert and Jackie Tetrault's and John Soule's and Eulie Saurwein's farms. North, along the Western edge of John Soule and Eulie Saurwein's farm and Theresa and Michael Menard's farm. **Also described by the boundaries of the fire district, as of January 1st, 1992.**

VILLAGE RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS		
Minimum Lot Size	Off Site Sewage Disposal	¼ acre
	On Site Sewage Disposal	½ acre
Frontage		100 feet
Front/Road Setback		45 feet
Side/Rear Setback		10 feet

DISTRICT DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS				
Use	Minimum Lot Size	Frontage	Uplands District	Agriculture District
			Front/Road Setback	
Year Round and Seasonal Dwellings	1 acre	200 feet	x	70 feet (unless reduced under PUD)
Camps	35 acres [10 acre lots in existence prior to 1/1/1996 are exempt]	500 feet	100 feet	100 feet

C) Specific Lot & Use Dimensional Requirements

- 1) **Every structure shall be set back at least 25 feet from property lines, year-round streams and ponds, and at least 70 feet from the center of the common and public rights-of-way, unless reduced by P.R.D. or district requirements.**
 - a) Exception: Where a structure pre-dates zoning requirements regarding set-backs and protrudes into a set-back area it may be extended and enlarged in one direction only along the line of the existing structure, provided that it does not extend into the right-of-way.
- 2) No lot shall be so reduced in size that the area, setback or other dimensions are smaller than those prescribed in this by-law.
- 3) The following minimum dimensional requirements for specific uses shall apply, except in cases where the specific district requirements are larger:

SPECIFIC USE DIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS				
Use	Lot size	Setback from center of road right-of-way	Setback Yard	Frontage
Lodging establishments	1 acre	60 feet	25 feet	100 feet
Restaurant	1 acre	60 feet	25 feet	100 feet
Auto Service Station	1 acre	60 feet	25 feet	100 feet
Retail Store	1 acre	60 feet	25 feet	100 feet
Agribusiness	1 acre	60 feet	25 feet	100 feet
Motor Vehicles & Equip Sales and Service	1.5 acres	60 feet	25 feet	100 feet
Commercial Indoor & Outdoor Recreation Facilities	3 acres	60 ft	25 feet	100 feet
Business & Soc. Service	Same as district	50 feet	25 feet	100 feet
Industrial Uses	4 acres	60 feet	50 feet	200 feet
Agricultural Uses*	-- according to AAP recommendations --			

*Applied to farm structures and uses other than dwellings.