



September 2, 2020

Richard Amore  
Vermont Village Center Designation Program  
Division for Community Planning and Revitalization  
One National Life Drive, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Montpelier, VT 05620

**Re: Application for a new Village Center Designation**

Dear Mr. Amore,

On behalf of the Town of Grafton, I would like to submit the following Village Center Designation (VCD) application packet for the village of Grafton in a single-PDF format as specified in 24 V.S.A. § 2793a.

**Reasons for Seeking the Village Center Designation**

- **Historic Preservation** - Grafton Village's historic streetscapes are among the most iconic in New England. We hope that the combination of benefits associated with the VCD will help our community to evolve with the ever-changing times while continuing to preserve this historic beauty. Our highest priority at this time is our Town Hall, which will require significant work over the next several years.
- **Community** - Grafton's village is also the heart of the community, with two churches, the Town Hall, several museums, the elementary school, and multiple small businesses, including a famous historic inn, within its boundaries. These places are gathering places for our community and their continued success is paramount to the continuity of the community.
- **Economy** – Having long-term, stable businesses in the village has been and will continue to be a priority of the Town. The tax credits associated with the VCD would help entice new business to consider Grafton and to help existing businesses to stay financially viable.

**Previous and Current Revitalization Activities**

Grafton has a long tradition of partnering public, private and non-profit resources for the betterment of our village. These partnerships have benefited the village and community beyond in multiple ways over the years and include:

- Infrastructure Projects
  - Overhead utility lines in the village have been eliminated by burying them underground adding to the overall scenic beauty of the village.
  - Traditional overhead streetlights have been replaced with historic style street lights.
  - The village has fire hydrant system with 13 plugs throughout the village.
- Buildings
  - The historic Brick Meeting House is in the process of an intensive restoration.
  - The Grafton Nature Museum's has partnered with the Grafton Grange in the revitalization of the Grange building.
  - Modernization of The Town Hall has begun but much more needs to be done.

- There are two accessible tennis courts within the village.

**Primary Contact:**

Dave Culver, Grafton Planning Commission Chair  
Grafton Town Hall  
117 Main Street  
Grafton, VT 05146  
[vermontculver@gmail.com](mailto:vermontculver@gmail.com)  
(802) 289-4788

**Documents Included in the VCD Application**

As outlined in the “Application Guidelines for Village Center Designation”, you will find the following documents included in this PDF file.

1. Cover letter
2. Authorization from the Town (A signed resolution from Grafton’s Selectboard)
3. Notification to the regional planning commission (Windham Regional Commission)
4. Notification to the regional development corporation (Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation)
5. A confirmed planning process (A confirmation letter from the Windham Regional Commission)
6. Village Center Designation Proposed Boundary Map
7. Eighteen photographs of the village, corresponding with the map
8. An explanation of how the VCD integrates with Grafton’s Municipal Plan (Town Plan)
9. Other Information
  - Municipal Infrastructure: Grafton’s Water and Wastewater Status
    - Well and Septic Map
    - Village Pumping District Map
    - Village Fire Hydrant System Map
  - Zoning in Grafton
  - Historic District Map

Sincerely,



Dave Culver, Grafton Planning Commission Chair  
Grafton Town Hall  
117 Main Street  
Grafton, VT 05146  
[vermontculver@gmail.com](mailto:vermontculver@gmail.com)

# Resolution for Village Center Designation Application

Town of Grafton, VT

- **Whereas**, the Town of Grafton Selectboard recognizes the importance of the 'Grafton Village' as an historic center and;
- **Whereas**, the Grafton Village is a mixed-use area that serves the surrounding population with goods and services, civic and religious functions, jobs and residences and;
- **Whereas**, the continued social and economic viability of Grafton Village is critical to the Town of Grafton's future growth and prosperity and;
- **Whereas**, the State of Vermont, through its Agency of Commerce & Community Development, recognizes the importance of the continued health of historic centers by establishing the Village Center Designation Program and;
- **Whereas**, the Town of Grafton is applying for the Village Center Designation for the Grafton Village;

## Therefore, Be It Resolved

That the Grafton Selectboard agrees to and supports the application for Village Center Designation for Grafton Village.

Passed this 17<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2020

## Town of Grafton Selectboard

Joe Pollio

Al Sands

Cathy Siano-Goodwin

John Gregory

Stan Mack

The image shows four handwritten signatures, each on a horizontal line. From top to bottom, the signatures are: a large, stylized signature (likely Joe Pollio), a signature that appears to read 'Al Sands', a signature that appears to read 'Cathy Siano-Goodwin', and a signature that appears to read 'John Gregory'. Below these, there is a signature that appears to read 'Stan Mack'.

August 10, 2020

Chris Company, Executive Director  
Windham Regional Commission  
139 Main Street, Suite 505  
Brattleboro, VT 05301

**Re: Village Center Designation for Grafton, VT**

Dear Mr. Company,

I am writing to formally notify the Windham Regional Commission (WRC) that the Town of Grafton, VT plans to submit an application for Vermont's Village Center Designation (VCD) for Grafton Village by late this summer or early fall to Vermont's Division of Community Planning and Revitalization as per 24 V.S.A. § 2793a.

We started this process several years ago but did not have an adopted Town Plan until this past January. Richard Amore has been working with us throughout the application development process and we feel confident that, once complete, our application will be approved. Jeff Nugent has also been working with us and is almost finished with the boundary map, as is most of the other documentation required in the application. Again, we hope to complete the application and submit it by late summer or early fall.

I will be glad to share a copy of the single-PDF application with the WRC once completed. I want to thank you and the WRC for your continued support of Grafton and the Grafton Planning Commission.

Sincerely,



Dave Culver, Grafton Planning Commission Chair  
Grafton Town Hall  
117 Main Street  
Grafton, VT 05146

August 10, 2010

Adam Grinold, Executive Director  
Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation  
76 Cotton Mill Hill  
Brattleboro, Vermont 05301

**Re: Village Center Designation for Grafton, VT**

Dear Mr. Grinold,

I am writing to formally notify the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) that the Town of Grafton, VT plans to submit an application for Vermont's Village Center Designation (VCD) for Grafton Village by late this summer or early fall to Vermont's Division of Community Planning and Revitalization as per 24 V.S.A. § 2793a.

We started this process several years ago but did not have an adopted Town Plan until this past January. We have been collaborating with both the Department of Housing and Community Development and The Windham Regional Commission throughout the application development process and we feel confident that, once complete, our application will be approved.

I will be glad to share a copy of the single-PDF application with the WRC once completed. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Dave Culver, Grafton Planning Commission Chair  
Grafton Town Hall  
117 Main Street  
Grafton, VT 05146



June 24, 2020

Joe Pollio, Chair  
Grafton Selectboard  
P.O. Box 180  
Grafton, VT 05146

Dear Joe:

Congratulations to you, the Planning Commission, and the Town of Grafton on the approval of the Grafton Town Plan at the March 10, 2020 meeting of the Windham Regional Commission (WRC) Executive Board. At the same meeting, the WRC Executive Board confirmed Grafton's municipal planning process and issued a determination of energy compliance for the enhanced energy element and the Plan overall. The successful completion of the Plan represents a lot of effort and dedication from those who worked on it. You and the Planning Commission are to be commended for an excellent job.

Please make sure that a copy of the approved Plan is emailed to the Commissioner of the Department of Housing and Community Development, following the instructions for sending Plans found at: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/town-future/plans-bylaws>.

Again, congratulations on a job well done. We look forward to working with you as you implement your Plan and as it continues to progress in future editions.

Sincerely,

John Bennett  
Associate Director

cc: Dave Culver, Planning Commission Chair  
Eric Stevens, WRC Commissioner  
Bill Kearns, Town Administrator

Encl.: Plan Review and Planning Process Findings, Recommendations, and Comments  
Determination of Energy Planning Compliance pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4352



Grafton  
Village Center  
Town of Grafton, Vermont

Village Center Designation

100 0 100 200 300 400 Feet

map prepared by Windham Regional Commission  
September 2020; u:\GIS\Towns\Grafton\Maps\Villctr2020.mxd



Parcel use:

- Public/Institutional
- Commercial
- Residential
- Vacant, Utility, other

- Public/Institutional building
- Commercial building
- Residential building
- Utility or accessory building

3 Photo location

Key to buildings:

- 1 Brick Meeting House
- 2 Community Church chapel
- 3 Grafton Community Church
- 4 The Grafton Inn
- 5 Post Office
- 6 Town Office
- 7 Historical Society Museum
- 8 MKT-Grafton Village Store
- 9 Library
- 10 Garage/Gas Station
- 11 Vt. Museum of Mining & Minerals
- 12 Dover House and Mercantile
- 13 Grafton Forge
- 14 Elementary School
- 15 The Nature Museum
- 16 Windham Foundation office
- 17 Windham Foundatoin maintenance



#1 – Looking towards the center of the village from the proposed VCD boundary on Hinkley Brook Road.



#2 – Looking towards the center of the village from the proposed VCD boundary on Middletown Road.





#3 – Looking towards the center of the village from the proposed VCD boundary on Houghtonville Road (Route 121).



#4 – Looking down Main Street from in front of the White Church.



#5 – Looking down Townshend Road from Town Hall on Main Street.



#6 – Looking down Main Street from in front of the Town Hall.





#7 – Looking down Pleasant Street from Townshend Road.



#8 – Looking down Townshend Road from the end of Pleasant Street.



#9 – Looking down School Street from Townshend Road.



#10 – Looking down Townshend Road from the end of School Street.





#11 – Looking towards the center of the village from the proposed boundary on Townshend Road.



#12 - Looking at the school from the playground.



#13 – Looking up School Street towards Townshend Road from in front of the school.



#14 - Looking down School Street from Pleasant Street.





#15 – Looking up Pleasant Street towards Townshend Road from Kidder Hill Road.



#16 – Looking up Kidder Hill Road towards Main Street from Pleasant Street.



#17 – Looking up Main Street from the end of Kidder Hill Road.



#18 – Looking up Main Street from the proposed VCD boundary on the east side of the village.





## Municipal Plan Integration

### 1. Is there evidence that the municipal plan includes the intention to apply for Village Center Designation?

The Grafton's Town Plan (the Plan) can be found at [https://graftonvt.org/?attachment\\_id=5110](https://graftonvt.org/?attachment_id=5110)

The Plan was adopted by voters in January, 2020 and approved by the Windham Regional Commission in March. Grafton's intention to apply for the Village Center Designation is clearly stated in the Plan's Land Use Chapter, on page 10 (*direct quotes are in blue; emphasis has been added for this application*):

In order to support a healthy future of its historic village center, **Grafton intends to apply for a Village Center Designation, in conformance with 24 VSA Chapter 117 4302(c) (1).** The Village Center Designation will support the efforts to revitalize the existing historic village center of Grafton and link with the statewide goals of "...planning development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside."

The intent is further emphasized as the second "Recommendation for Action" at the end of the Land Use Chapter (page 12).

**2. Submit an application for a Village Center Designation in conformance with 24 VSA Chapter 117 4302(c) (1) and Act 59.** The Village Center Designation will support the efforts to revitalize the existing historic village center of Grafton and link with the statewide goals of "...planning development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside."

### 2. How will earning the Village Center Designation contribute to Grafton's Town Plan?

Grafton's Town Plan has five land-use designations, including 'Village Area' identified on the Proposed Land Use Map.

(Page 10) - The Grafton Village is the only area designated as a Village Area in the Town. The Village is the most densely settled part of the Town. The current mix of retail uses, public facilities and institutions, and residential uses should be continued and supported as much as possible. A major portion of Grafton's economic development should occur in the Village, as it is centrally located, and historically has been the Town's economic center.

Grafton Proposed Land Use Map



The village is not only the heart of the town, but is also at the center of the town.

(Page 10) “There are four access corridors into the Grafton Village; Route 121 from Bellows Falls and points east, Townshend Road from the south, Chester Road from the north, and Route 121 from Windham and points west.”

The Plan is organized by chapter with specific goals listed at the end of each. The Village Center Designation would help the town achieve the following goals.

#### **Chapter 1 - LAND USE**

1. Maintain Grafton’s land use patterns including the central historic Village surrounded by a sparsely populated countryside.
2. Incentivize business growth that utilizes the land in ways that support and complement Grafton’s quality of life, targeting specific sectors including, but not limited to tourism, agricultural and forest products, telecommuting, small scale manufacturing and the service industries.

#### **Chapter 2 - HISTORIC, CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

1. Identify, protect and preserve important historic sites and landscape features including structures, bridges, stonewalls, foundations, mill sites and ruins.
2. Continue to have a vibrant cultural community including visual and performing arts.

#### **Chapter 3 - THE ECONOMY**

1. To develop a stable economy in the Town of Grafton in order to provide a range of employment opportunities and an adequate tax base.

#### **Chapter 5 - ENERGY**

2. The Town of Grafton will increase its overall energy conservation and efficiency annually in line with the 2050 LEAP goals through a variety of means including, but not limited to: weatherization, installation of fuel efficient heaters, including heat pumps, and wood and pellet stoves.

#### **Chapter 7 - HOUSING**

1. Continue to ensure the availability of safe and adequate housing.

#### **Chapter 9 - TOWN GOVERNMENT AND SERVICES**

1. Continue to provide necessary public services and adequate facilities at a reasonable and stable tax rate to the residents of Grafton.

### **3. How will earning the Village Center Designation contribute to the State’s Goals?**

- **Vermont Planning Goal # 1** – To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.  
The Village Center Designation will help ensure the continued viability of Grafton’s historic village through the potential tax incentives and grant incentives associated with the VCD.
- **Vermont Planning Goal # 2** – To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities, that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.



VCD's tax incentives will increase the viability of private businesses moving to and succeeding in Grafton.

- **Vermont Planning Goal # 7** – To encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources.

The combination of technical assistance, potential tax credits, and priority consideration for grants can be used for energy efficiency initiatives.

- **Vermont Planning Goal # 8** – To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors.

Grafton's village has been known as a tourist destination for decades. The VCD will help this to continue in the future.

- **Vermont Planning Goal # 12** – To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.

Many of Grafton's public buildings are located in the proposed VCD. Specific needs include the Town Hall.

- **Vermont Planning Goal # 14** – To encourage flood resilient communities.

The village of Grafton sits at the confluence of two rivers that are prone to flooding. Any technical assistance, along with priority consideration for grants could have a significant positive impact on the village.

## **Water and Wastewater in Grafton's Village**

Each property in the village has their own well and septic system; there has been a Septic Pumping Ordinance since 1999. There is a village-wide fire hydrant system, fed by a fire pond above the village. There are two concerns with the present stand-alone systems.

1. Flooding is a continuous concern in the village. Two branches of the Saxtons River merge in the village, which is located in a narrow valley.
2. Properties in the village are very small. The present locations of wells and septic systems, along with the two Saxtons River branches, limit options for future expansion or failed systems.

Grafton's Selectboard established the Water/Wastewater Study Commission in February 2019. Five commissioners were appointed to assess the possible development of a water/wastewater infrastructure based on the community's assessment of its need and desire for such a solution. The Town of Grafton has conducted numbers of studies, most recently in 2001 (Tighe and Bond, 2001, proposed wastewater solution) and 2007 (Otter Creek, 2007, proposed community water system). Neither of these proposals was implemented. The Commission aims to leverage these studies, while developing a data-driven understanding of the Town's current use, future needs and new technology.

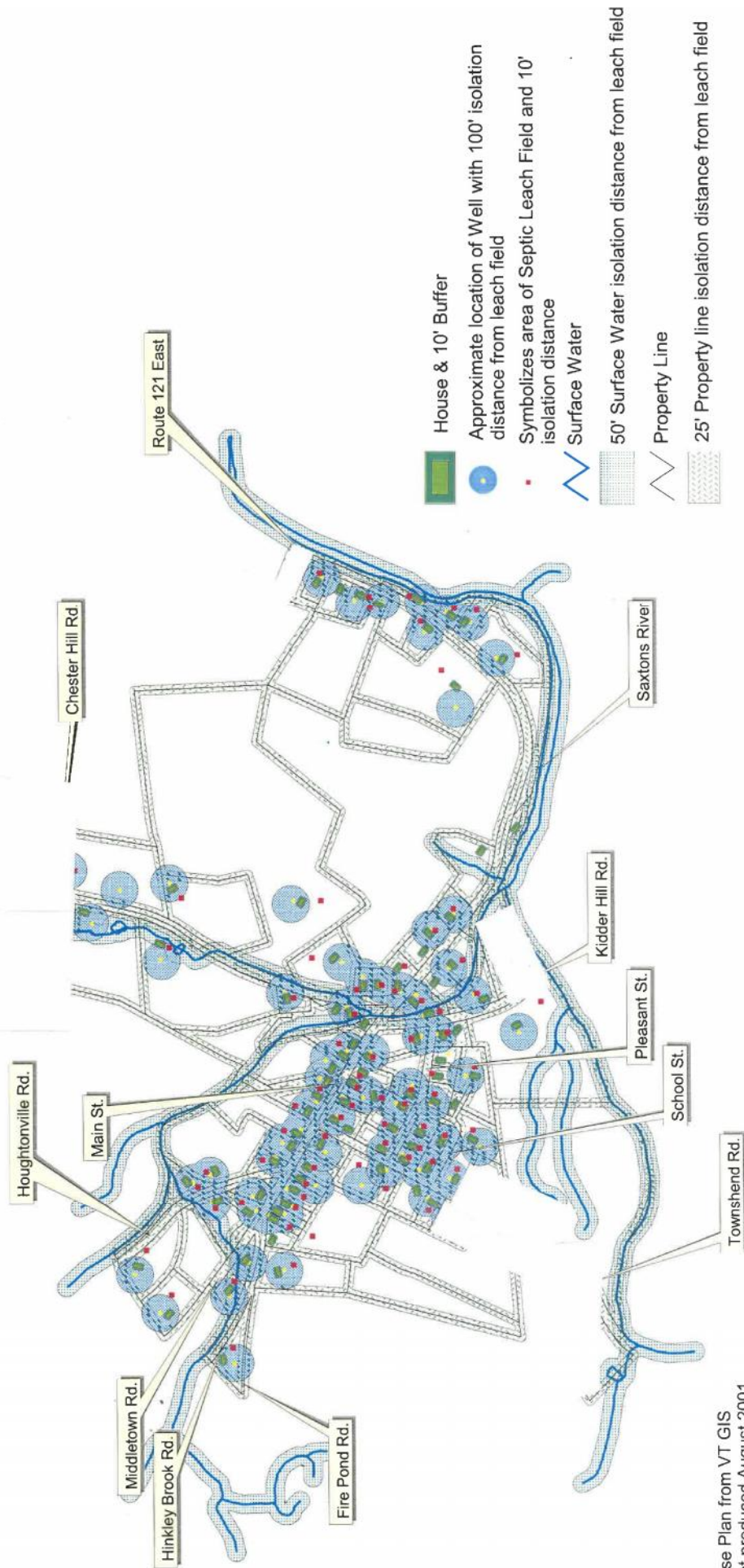
In August 2019, the Commission partnered with RCAP and VT DoH and conducted a voluntary, residential, drinking water-quality test in 60 of 83 sites the Village Septic Pumping District. The survey's conclusion: nothing in the water quality results indicates there is widespread issue with failing septic systems impacting drinking water quality. The presence of a septic pumping ordinance may play a role in this.

While the Town's collective hand is not being forced by evidence of drinking water contamination, the Commission continues to evaluate risks associated with aging septic systems, overlapping leach fields in the Village, and the desire for water/wastewater processing capacity to support economic development. To that end, the Commission is launching a similar survey of septic systems in the fall of 2020 and exploring new technology for decentralized, cost-effective solutions.

The Commission also plans to develop a "Feasibility Study" that identifies cost/benefits of various solutions and continue to educate themselves and the community on the issue. The Town will proceed to a Preliminary Engineering Study only if the Town indicates its support to do so by a positive Town Meeting vote.

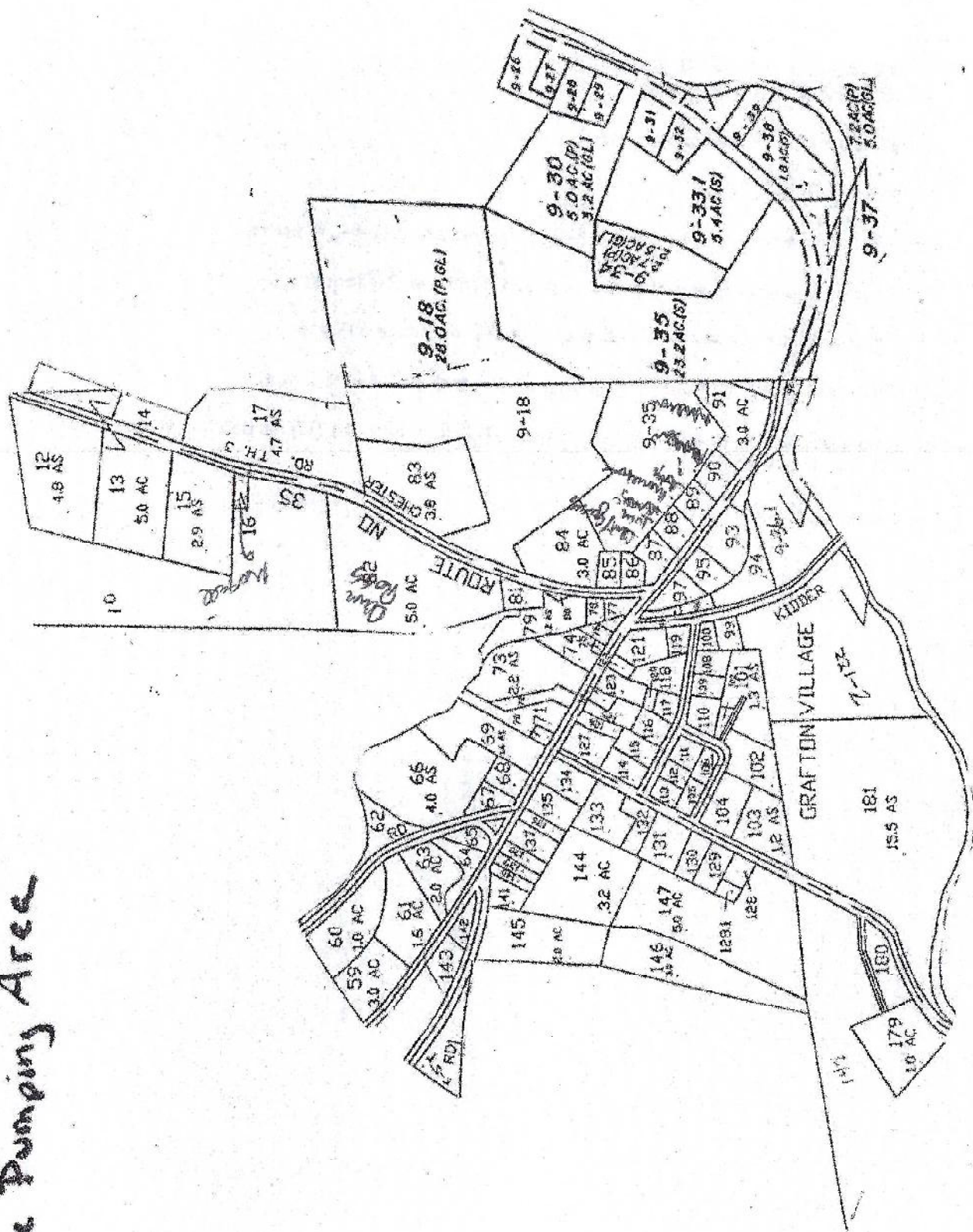


# Grafton Village Sewer Feasibility Study Well & Septic System Map Figure 3



Base Plan from VT GIS  
Plot produced August 2001

# Exhibit I Septic Pumping Area

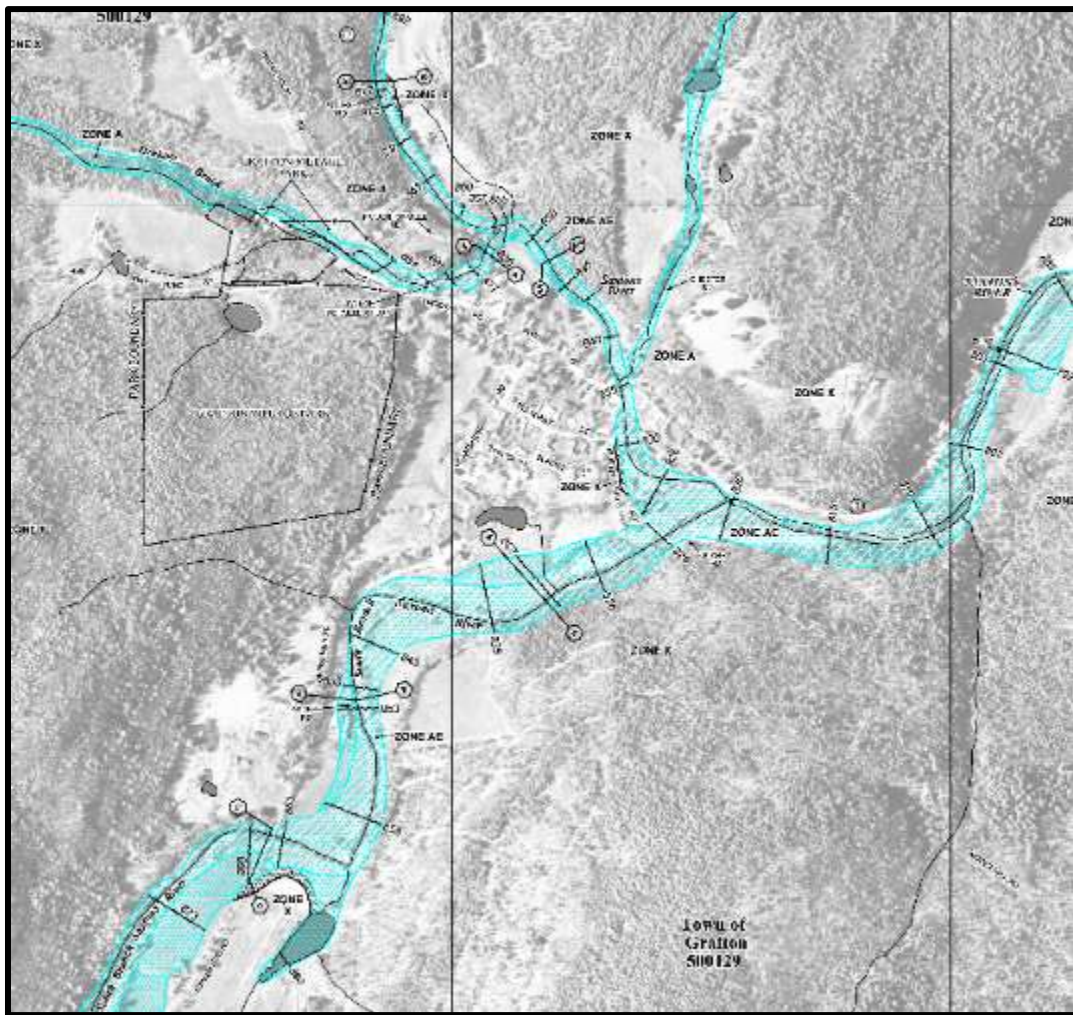






# Zoning in Grafton

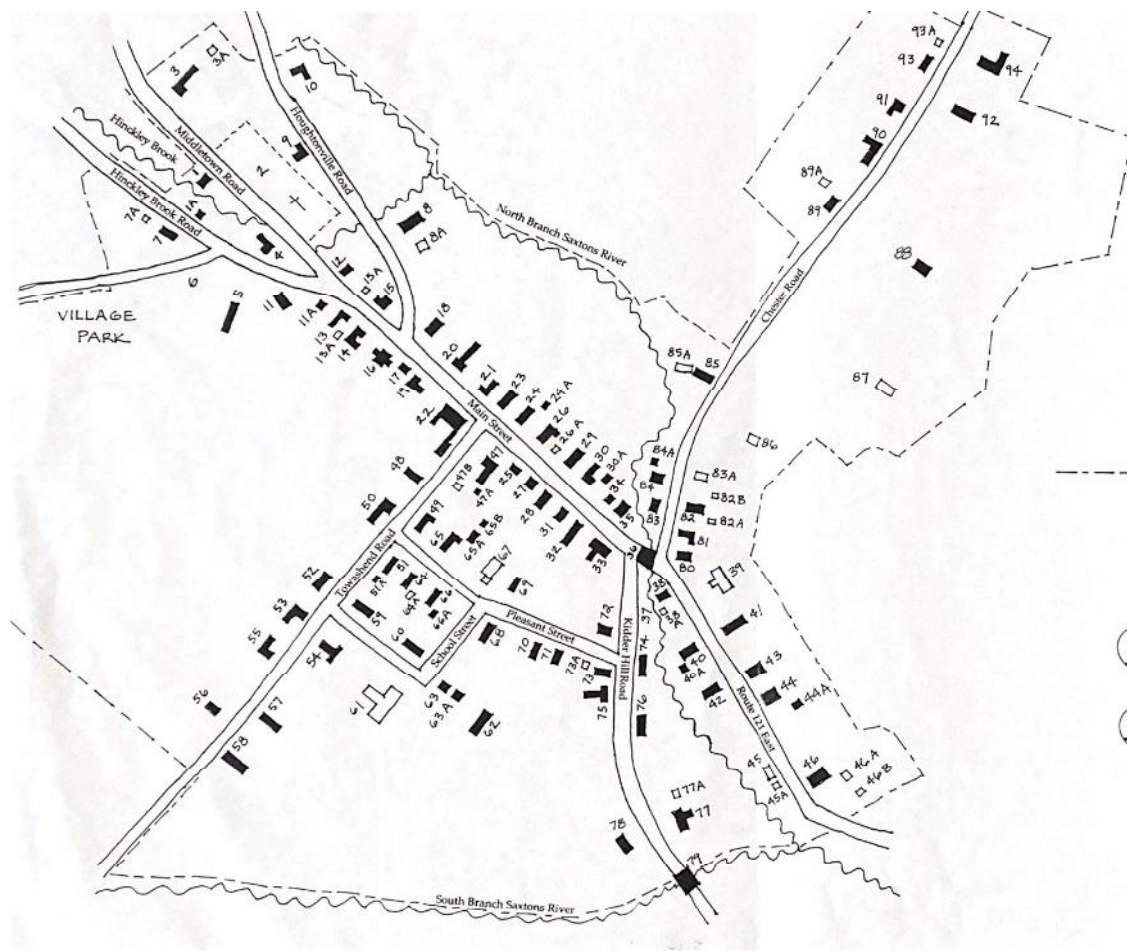
There is no zoning in the Town of Grafton but the Town does have regulations for Special Flood Hazard Areas (i.e. the 100-year floodplain). The regulations apply to areas identified on flood insurance studies and maps published by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), as provided by the Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 753.



FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area

<https://msc.fema.gov/portal/search?AddressQuery=Grafton%2C%20VT#searchresultsanchor>





# Grafton Village Historic District Grafton, Windham County, Vermont

- Historic District Boundary
- Contributing Resource
- Non-Contributing Resource

Scale: 1" = 320'



Due North



Project North