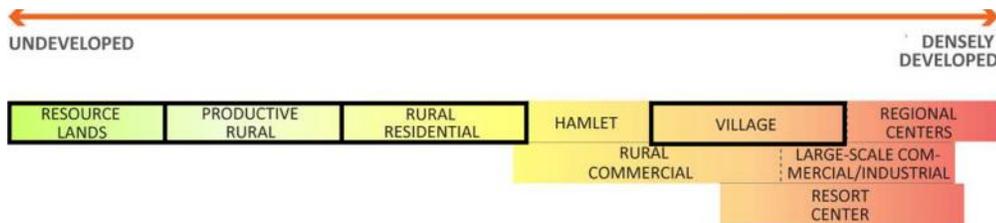


Land Use Classifications

The land classification system set forth in this Plan reflects Town Plan policies.

The proposed land use categories described below align with Windham Regional Commission's Regional Plan definitions and represent a vision for the use and future development of the lands in Grafton. The Proposed Land Use Map² graphically depicts the land use categories described. The map was developed through the review of a wide variety of maps supplied by the Windham Regional Commission and VT's Agency of Natural Resources' Biofinder Maps,³ as well as community input.



Windham Regional Commission's Representation of Land Use Categories

The Windham Regional Commission (WRC) ~~originally~~ identified nine land use categories, as shown in the graphic above. ~~They have since considered adding a tenth category, to the left of Resource Lands, called Critical Resource Lands.~~ Grafton's Proposed Land Use Map⁴ will use the following ~~five-four~~ of the ~~ten-nine~~ categories.⁵

- **Villages** are less densely populated and smaller than Regional Centers, but offer many of the same residential, civic, commercial and light industrial uses.
- ~~**Critical Resource Areas** are key sites that are particularly sensitive and should be given maximum consideration for protection. Although there are no specific zoning regulations or ordinances prohibiting development on private land, it is the expressed desire of the Town that NO development occurs in Critical Resource Areas.~~
- **Resource Lands** are dominated by lands requiring special protection or consideration due to their uniqueness, irreplaceable or fragile nature, or important ecological function. Resource Lands can be actively worked and used, ~~but future development should be weighed against the desire to preserve the area.~~
- **Rural Residential** is characterized by low and very low density housing, includes areas that are already committed to residential development or are in proximity to already developed lands.
- **Productive Rural Lands** include forestlands, active agricultural lands, sand/gravel/mineral deposits, and high-value forest and agricultural soils that, when in productive use, contribute to the working landscape and have significant economic value.

² See Appendix V - Maps

³ <http://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/BioFinder2016/>

⁴ See Appendix V - Maps

⁵ For more complete definitions go to Windham Regional Commission's Regional Plan, page 70 at: http://www.windhamregional.org/images/docs/regional-plan/2014_Windham%20Regional%20Plan_complete.pdf;

For reference, the WRC's remaining land use definitions are:

- **Large-Scale Commercial/Industrial Centers** consist of areas where existing and future commercial and industrial activities are encouraged, including new development, redevelopment, and conversion of previously non-industrial uses.
- **Regional Centers** are the region's core downtowns, plus their surrounding mixed-use neighborhoods, which accommodate high density commercial, institutional, and housing services. Windham County's two identified Regional Centers are Bellows Falls and Brattleboro.
- **Rural Commercial Areas** are concentrated along US 5, VT 9, VT 30, and VT 100 and include areas of mixed-use development built in a spread out pattern. Typically dominated by commercial service industries, the intent of this land use category is to transform these areas into higher density, compact, mixed-use settlements through infill and redevelopment.
- **Resort Centers** are developments that are associated with large-scale recreational facilities, which in this region are concentrated around ski area facilities.
- **Hamlets** are smaller than villages and are typically concentrated residential settlements in rural areas that may or may not provide minor commercial and civic services.

Desired Future Land Uses

A map of the following ~~five~~four land use areas can be found on the Proposed Land Uses Map in Appendix VI – Maps.

Grafton's Village Area

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. Appropriate reuse of vacant or underused existing structures or infill development is the preferred means by which new growth should be accommodated. Infill development should respect the historic character and function of the area. Efforts to enhance the pedestrian-friendly character are encouraged. The existing density should be maintained or even increased in order to support its function as the heart of the Town.

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."

Grafton's Critical Resource Areas

~~Grafton has several areas specifically identified as Critical Resource Areas:~~

- ~~The Turner Wildlife Management Area is identified as a Critical Resource Area for its historic, ecological and cultural significance.~~
- ~~Publicly owned lands include three state forests, (Mollie Beattie, Putnam and Dorand), the Grafton Town Forest and the Village Park.~~



- ~~• There are six locations where rare, threatened, or endangered species occur.~~
- ~~• The headwaters of the many tributaries to the Saxtons River are fragile ecosystems and development could have negative impacts including flooding and pollution downstream.~~

Grafton's Resource Lands

A large portion of Grafton, including most of the southern and western areas, has been identified as Resource Lands for several reasons. All of the Resource Lands are identified as “Highest Priority Connectivity Block” and most of the area is also identified as “Highest Priority Interior Forest Block”.⁶ This area has also been identified as prime bear habitat and wintering areas for deer. Finally, much of the terrain in this area has slopes of over 25%, which makes development problematic.

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~~The flood plains of Grafton are also designated as Resource Lands. Development in the flood plains should be avoided whenever possible. If development is to occur, steps should be taken to ensure that the development will not negatively affect the flood plain and water flow.~~

Grafton's Rural Residential Land

There are three areas designated as Rural Residential Land in Grafton. These are all less densely populated than the Village, but more densely populated than the rest of the town. No services are presently available in any of the three areas. These three areas are Houghtonville, Cambridgeport and the northern section of Eastman Road.

Grafton's Productive Rural Land

The remainder of Grafton is considered Productive Rural Land. This includes the corridors into and out of the village, ~~excluding the flood plains~~, the area between Hinkley Brook, Cabell and Houghtonville Roads, and the northeast quadrants of the Town.

~~Although the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) is not a separate Land-Use Designation, it is regulated by Grafton's Flood Damage Prevention Regulations and defined by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), as provided by the Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 753. The majority of the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) lies within Productive Rural Lands.~~

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Invasive Species

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~~Invasive species are plants, insects, and other organisms that have either accidentally or intentionally been introduced from other places and cause harm to our environment. The spread of invasive species is second only to habitat loss as the largest threat to biodiversity in the region.~~

~~Invasive insects such as the Asian long horned beetle, emerald ash borer, and hemlock woolly adelgid have already killed millions of trees in the U.S and Canada and caused huge ecological, recreational, and commercial costs. They alter the availability of habitat, shade, and shelter for wildlife and disrupt the food web, water cycle, and carbon cycle in forest ecosystems.~~

~~Invasive plants displace native plant species and disrupt the food chain. They negatively impact forest regeneration, forest structure, ecosystem function, recreation and wildlife habitat, and can be~~

⁶ See Appendix V – Maps; Forest Blocks and Habitat Connectors Map

harmful to human health. Vermont has a Noxious Weed Quarantine⁷, and an unofficial watch list of plants known to be invasive.

⁷ <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/public-health-agricultural-resource-management-division/plant-health-and-pest-management/plant/plant>

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Goals, Policies & Recommendations

Goals

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.
3. Maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, forest and other land resources, including preserving Grafton's large forest blocks and habitat connectors.

Policies

1. Water supply, sewage disposal, and traffic and pedestrian flow must be taken into consideration when any new structure within the Village is planned.
2. Grafton's existing pattern of development, the location of public services, utilities, commercial facilities, and the existing road network must be taken into consideration when new development is proposed.
3. Lands adjacent to public or quasi-public facilities, services or properties will be planned and used in a manner that will safeguard public investment that will not jeopardize or interfere with the public use, enjoyment of or access to the facility, services or property, including highways, Town owned buildings, and recreational facilities.
4. Support the creation and growth of appropriate small-scale businesses throughout the Town.
5. New development must be planned carefully so as to avoid strip development, unreasonable burdens on town roads and services and other undue adverse impacts, such as, but not limited to, aesthetics and community character.
6. Use conservation methods and river easements consistent with Act 171 guidance for the protection of habitat for wildlife and to promote flood resiliency.
7. Grafton's forestlands should be managed so as to maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors.
8. Landowners, foresters and loggers shall utilize the sound practices specified in the Vermont Water Quality, Acceptable Management Practices, Manual for Logging Professionals, VT – 2019 and as amended, and Grafton shall adopt a policy requiring compliance with those practices.

Recommendations for Action

1. Designate areas within town boundaries, which are appropriate for significant growth and those areas to be preserved.
- ~~2. Submit an application for a Village Center Designation in conformance with 24 V.S.A Chapter 117-4302(e) (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.”~~

~~3.2~~ Investigate solutions and create a plan to solve the potential water supply/wastewater issues within the Village, seeking Town’s approval for any additional financial burden on the Town. With the Town’s approval, investigate installing a Grafton Village wastewater treatment center to enable the growth of small businesses and to ensure the health and safety of Village residents.

~~4.3~~ Conduct workshops to promote land owner education that encourages land stewardship practices to preserve wildlife habitat and forestry blocks. Work with land owners to inform them of opportunities in land stewardship and conservation easements.

~~5.4~~ Examine lands adjacent to waterways and river corridors. Update the Town’s maps to include the most recent accurate data on flood zones. Identify priority areas to promote conservation of natural resources and use of conservation easements..

~~6.5~~ Encourage use of lands adjacent to town boundaries that will be compatible with neighboring town plans.

~~7.6~~ Promote the use of locally-grown agricultural and forest products.

~~8.7~~ Encourage voluntary action to ensure Plan implementation, including:

- a. privately-agreed restrictive covenants binding on purchasers of land,
- b. use of existing non-profit land trusts to acquire or hold conservation easements on resource lands,
- c. participation in Act 250 review process by abutting landowners, and
- d. participation in the town planning process by residents and property owners.

8. Educate the community about the dangers of invasive species, how to identify them, and best-practices (chemical/biological/mechanical) in reducing them on their property.

9. Collaborate with landowners, other towns, state agencies, and private organizations, in the management of invasive species.

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