

Pomfret Town Plan

**Pomfret Planning
Commission Hearing
Draft**

The Pomfret Town Plan was prepared by the Pomfret Planning Commission with assistance from the Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission; funded, in part, by a Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Preserving the scenic beauty and rural character of Pomfret’s valleys, hillsides, and ridgelines remains the primary goal of this Plan. Mindful of this goal, the landowners have kept large parcels of land intact and kept development to a minimum. Pomfret’s long-term planning efforts have been extremely effective, due in large measure to the foresight of Pomfret’s Planning Commissions, its Selectboard, and its concerned citizens. They have devoted a great deal of time and energy endeavoring to carry out the wishes expressed by the community.

Preservation of Pomfret’s natural resources is the main interest of Pomfret residents. Residents and landowners also favor managing growth in Pomfret through planning and zoning. Town Plans in Vermont must be reviewed and rewritten or re-adopted every eight years (Title 24, Chapter 117, Vermont Statutes Annotated). The residents of Pomfret are urged to review this plan thoughtfully, as the Planning Commission believes that the proposed goals, policies, objectives, and recommended actions all contribute to protecting and preserving Pomfret’s open space and natural resources. This plan is essential to maintaining a gradual and diversified growth pattern.

Pomfret residents and landowners should all be aware that without a comprehensive Town Plan, effective zoning and subdivision regulations, uncontrolled development may overwhelm the town. In 1971, the Quechee Lakes Corporation (QLC) applied for “Conceptual Approval” of its planned development of 550 acres of land in the Bunker Hill section of Pomfret and 5,000 acres in Hartford to create 2,500 home sites. It was the Pomfret Selectboard’s objection to the planned development that it would “permanently alter the Town’s social and economic cohesion.” This led to the Environmental Commission’s decision to eliminate from its approval all land owned by QLC in Pomfret.

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The Pomfret Town Plan is divided into chapters according to major planning elements required by state law. Within each chapter, long-range goals are listed, followed by objectives and policies that are intended to guide measures to accomplish the goals.

Recommendations are made for actions that can be taken by various groups within Town to achieve specific planning objectives. These lists are not intended to be definitive. Additions and revisions will be necessary from time to time. These goals, policies, objectives, and recommended actions, establish a direction ensuring that Pomfret remains a place where harmony between development and natural environments is demonstrated through appropriate land use.

Planning is by its very nature a continuous activity. The Planning Commission encourages all those residents who value the extraordinary beauty of Pomfret, and who would like to assure future generations the opportunity of living in such a community, to participate in planning activities. As such, the Pomfret Planning Commission sponsored an informational kiosk at the Abbot Library to share the work over the last year and solicit feedback from the citizens of

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- 1 Pomfret. Only through the efforts of volunteers can the Town guide growth as effectively as
- 2 those who began this worthy activity over the years.

Chapter 2: POMFRET'S HISTORY

Prior to the European “discovery” of Vermont by Samuel de Champlain in July of 1609, Native Americans lived, hunted, and fished in the forests, rivers and lakes of our “Green Mountain State”. The nomadic and place-based Western Abenaki people had established trading routes. These routes crossed the wilderness connecting lakes and rivers where villages were located. Historians estimate that in the early 1600’s, 10,000 Abenaki inhabited Vermont, known then as N’dakinna. The presence of the Abenaki people in Vermont has been estimated to be over 12,000 years. However, due to the arrival of European settlers, disease caused major death loss among the natives. After many years of coexistence with the French and English traders and settlers, trading furs for metal tools and cloth, the remaining natives moved on to safer locations deeper in the wilderness. Other Native American tribes such as the Algonquin, Huron, Montagnais, and Mohawk traversed the area now known as Vermont, but were not settled as were the Abenaki.

The town of Pomfret was first laid out by New Hampshire Governor, Benning Wentworth, in a grant dated July 8, 1761. Wentworth began selling Town grants to land speculators for land west of the Connecticut River in 1749. During the summer of 1761 he sold many grants in Pomfret and its neighboring towns: Hartford, Woodstock, Barnard, and Sharon. Most of the Pomfret grant’s sixty-seven purchasers, known as “proprietors” (land speculators), came from the Woodstock, Connecticut area. Isaac Dana, one of ten proprietors named Dana, came from Pomfret, Connecticut, and may have been influential in naming the new town. Pomfret, Connecticut, in turn, named for Pomfret, England. The name Pomfret is believed to be a connotation of the Latin *ponte fractus* or broken bridge.

Wentworth’s grants were all designed to be six miles square; borders measuring six miles per side. The grants were sold without benefit of proper surveys, and each cited boundaries of previous grants. Towns granted along the Connecticut River had readily defined and accurate eastern boundaries along the river, but as grants extended westward, the potential for error increased. Pomfret’s continuing boundary disputes with Woodstock and Barnard were resolved for the most part in the late 1800’s, though some remain unsettled still. The recently reconstructed Taftsville covered bridge now stands where the towns of Hartford, Hartland, Pomfret and Woodstock once met, and the four towns jointly owned the bridge (Pomfret’s share was 8/40ths.) To establish responsibility for the bridge’s care and upkeep, Pomfret’s share was given to Woodstock by the Vermont General Assembly in 1851. Pomfret’s final dimensions remain approximately six by six miles (more accurately 5.6 x 6.8 miles).

Shortly after Wentworth’s flurry of grant activity, the colonial governor of New York, seeing a good opportunity to enrich his own and his colony’s coffers, challenged Wentworth’s right to grant lands west of the Connecticut River. To protect themselves against questionable grants, proprietors in several towns applied to New York for second grants for holdings already granted by New Hampshire. Woodstock succeeded, but Pomfret never received a second grant, although the town applied.

1 The land “proprietors” that had purchased the grants met and organized in Pomfret, Connecticut
2 in 1761. To ensure that their Pomfret, Vermont lands could be settled or sold, the owners of the
3 grants planned for surveys and the development of roads. In addition, they created land lots in
4 the first division of the Town. The “proprietors” literally drew lots and thus became owners of
5 these individual parcels of land that could then be sold to other potential settlers. Money to pay
6 for the development of roads and other needs came from assessing each owner. Fifteen of the
7 original sixty-seven proprietors who did not pay this assessment in a timely fashion lost their
8 rights.

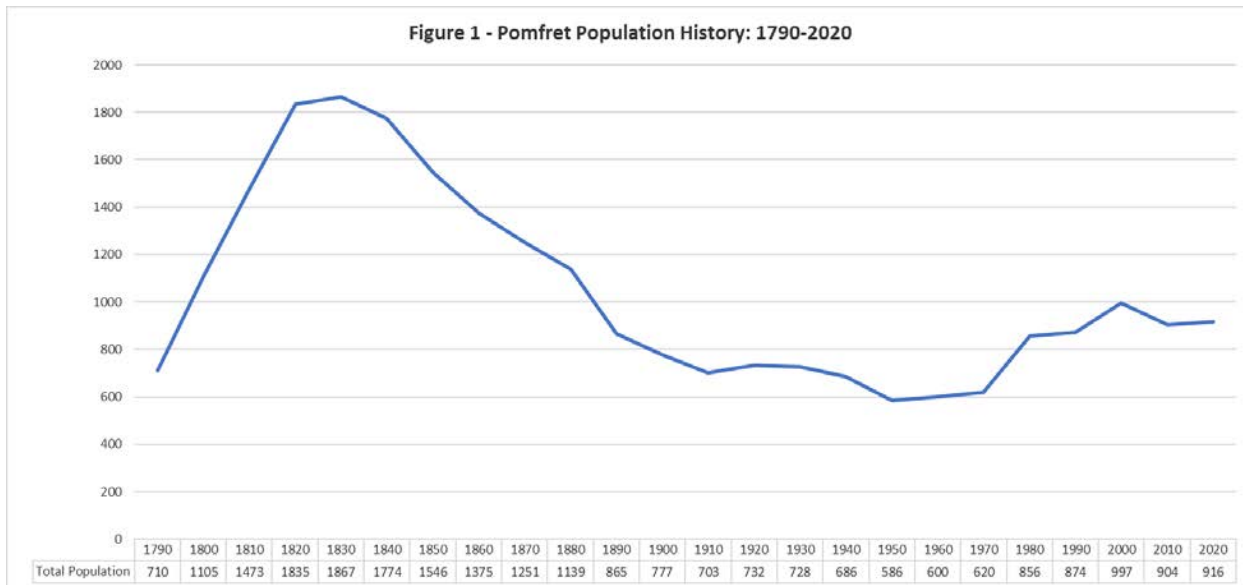
9
10 This early action all took place in Connecticut. Pomfret, Vermont remained unsettled for a
11 decade. Although a few had visited the area the summer before, the first settlers did not make
12 their pitches until the early 1760s. The usual custom would be for a father, accompanied by a son
13 or neighbor, to travel from southern New England in late winter or early spring. Pomfret’s early
14 settlers discovered a hilly land, covered by a dense growth of trees, with few open vistas. The
15 men would spend the summer staking and clearing the new acres, some raising a grain crop to
16 store until the following spring when the entire family would arrive. Most early Pomfret settlers
17 followed this custom.

18
19 The first Pomfret Town Meeting was held in March of 1773, only three years after permanent
20 settlement had begun in the new territory. Proprietors’ meetings continued to be held to dispose
21 of land in several divisions. After the success of the American Revolution, England lost interest
22 in the grants fight. The war also distracted the contending colonies of New York and New
23 Hampshire. Settlers paid New York State \$30,000 to release the claim, and when the New
24 Hampshire grants resolved, they were finally able to form their own state government in 1777.
25 Vermont became the thirteenth State of the United States in 1791.

26
27 Many new Pomfret settlers fought in the Revolution. Pomfret’s closest engagement came when a
28 party of Canadian Indians burned Royalton in 1780. Men from Pomfret responded but could not
29 prevent the town from burning.

30
31 Pomfret’s population soared from 710 in 1791 to a high of 1,867 in 1830 (see Figure 1). The era
32 of high population coincided with the rise of the almost self-sufficient farm, with its labor-
33 intensive operations. Large families were customary, and many sons worked on the family farm
34 or acquired their own land nearby. The days of the hill farm were numbered. The industrial
35 revolution brought new farm equipment requiring new and larger farms with higher productivity.
36 The hill farms were gradually abandoned for easier-to-work and flatter lands, often in the mid or
37 far west. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1830 hastened this westward migration. The Vermont
38 sheep boom began in 1810 with the importation of the first Merino sheep from Spain and peaked
39 by 1840. Many Vermont sheep farmers then saw their income from sheep drop rapidly.

1 **Figure 1 - Pomfret Population History: 1790-2020**
2



3
4
5
6 *Source:* Vermont Historical Society & Vermont Department of Health
7

8 The Erie Canal also allowed the Industrial Revolution to affect the Midwest and opened up many
9 economic opportunities in that region. The girls of the farm families were, by the 1840s, leaving
10 home to work in the woolen mills and factories of New Hampshire and southern New England.
11 Others left as the economic activity in the Pomfret area declined.
12

13 The Civil War was widely supported in Pomfret. More than 130 men from this town served, and
14 24 Pomfret enlistees died in that war. Others, having had a taste of adventure and the world
15 outside Vermont, sought their fortunes elsewhere following the conflict.
16

17 The remaining population became more mobile during the mid-nineteenth century. Stations in
18 nearby Woodstock and White River Junction made it possible for Pomfret residents to travel
19 freely by train for business and pleasure. Pomfret youth who chose careers in dentistry, medicine
20 or law sought their fortunes in larger towns, in state or out. Many kept an interest in their old
21 hometown. According to Henry Hobart Vail's *History of Pomfret*, approximately 4,000 people
22 came home to Pomfret to celebrate the 1870 centennial of the Town's first settlement.
23

24 Just as the Industrial Revolution helped to lower the Town's population a hundred years earlier,
25 mid-twentieth century changes in regional transportation caused significant economic growth in
26 the 1970s and 1980s in the Upper Valley area. The development of the Interstate Highway
27 System, Air Service and Communications Networks have dramatically changed the economic
28 mix from that which existed one hundred years ago. Electronic media make it possible for many
29 workers to remain at home while conducting business all over the world. Several such
30 "electronic commuters" already live and work in town. The current population in Pomfret is just
31 over 900 people.

1 **Housing**

2
3 The first shelters most likely made lean-tos only suitable for temporary shelter. Men brought
4 their families to these structures, or sometimes to a log cabin. Both would have had dirt floors
5 and few amenities. Once established, the settler would build a more substantial house, usually of
6 wood and clapboard, but sometimes of brick or stone. Pomfret's second framed house was not
7 built until 1784.

8
9 These first settlements are shown on Robert Perkins' 1915 map inserted in Vail's *History of*
10 *Pomfret*. Besides noting the names of those first to settle on a given plot, Perkins listed occupants
11 in 1915 when many of the early sites had been abandoned. According to the Pomfret Grand List
12 of 1824, there were at that time 5,389 acres of improved land, 230 houses, grist mills, 6
13 blacksmith shops, 6 cider mills, 7 sawmills, 5 cider houses, 3 shops, 1 casting machine, 2
14 clothing shops and 1 tannery. This was before Pomfret's 1830 population high of 1,867. The
15 Town's population was spread out more in the early 1800's, as individual houses sheltered larger
16 families than at present. In 1911, Walter A. Perkins noted that many abandoned hill farms were
17 reverting to forest. A trend of reforestation continues to this day, albeit from conservation efforts
18 rather than abandoned farms.

19 **Schools**

20
21 The first schools were naturally crude. Cash was not plentiful on the frontier, and early teachers
22 were paid in grain that often served as currency, each type having a different value. A 1786
23 teacher contract showed payment promised in grain. One Pomfret resident frequently ran classes
24 to train teachers. By the nineteenth century school was held year-round. Girls generally attended
25 in the summer when the boys were working on family farms. Boys attended in winter when there
26 was less farm work and walking was deemed too hard for girls and younger students.

27
28 The number of school districts in Town rose rapidly until this 36-square-mile town had sixteen
29 schools of its own and two shared districts that served children from Pomfret and neighboring
30 towns. The schools, despite being relatively small, often served as area meeting places for civic
31 and entertainment programs of all sorts. Often area citizens were buried after services held in the
32 former school in South Pomfret located on the Max Boynton property in the Village.

33
34 The number of Pomfret school districts gradually decreased in the twentieth century. The State
35 passed increasingly stringent rules regarding facilities and training requirements for teachers.
36 Taxpayers found it difficult to finance the maintenance of so many buildings. New teachers
37 began to complain that they were not prepared to teach eight grades at once as was the custom in
38 one-room schoolhouses. Pomfret then chose to allocate students by grade so that teachers usually
39 taught no more than two grade levels in each school building. This continued until 1989 when
40 the Town decided to build the K-6 school in South Pomfret that opened for the 1991-92 school
41 year. The same modern transportation that delivered children to different schools by grade now
42 made it practical to bus children to a single site that met state standards.

43
44 The Town never formally had its own high school, though at least one teacher advertised that he
45 conducted a high school in Pomfret in the mid-nineteenth century. Some Pomfret students
46 attended the Green Mountain Liberal Institute in South Woodstock after 1848 and Woodstock

1 High School after 1854. Some in the northern part of town attended Royalton High School. Until
2 transportation improved, girls and boys boarded near their schools during the week and returned
3 to Pomfret on weekends. Pomfret has been a member of the Woodstock Union High School
4 District since the Union was formed in 1954.

5 **Transportation**

6
7 The earliest settlers came up the Connecticut River on flatboats, or in winter dragging belongings
8 on a sled. Often everyone walked; sometimes the wife and youngest children rode a horse. Upon
9 leaving the river they followed marked trails into the Town. The proprietors and then the settlers
10 themselves raised taxes to build roads. The early-stage route to Barnard and Royalton crossed
11 Pomfret. Teamsters drove Vermont farm products to Boston and returned with goods to be sold
12 in local shops. The advent of the railroad to nearby Hartford (1849) made Boston markets more
13 accessible to Pomfret farmers, who shipped via the railhead at West Hartford. The Woodstock
14 Railway, which began operation in 1875, provided those in the southern end of town access to
15 passenger and commodity transportation. By the time it ceased operating in 1933, most families
16 in Pomfret had their own automobiles and farmers were shipping by truck.

17 **Institutions**

18
19 Most of the earliest settlers were Congregationalists. The area's first settled minister, shared with
20 Woodstock, lived and farmed where the Prosper Valley School now stands. The first Pomfret
21 minister was granted a lot near Pomfret Center. Later, townspeople raised a handsome church
22 building near the center that burned in 1843 and was not rebuilt. The present North Pomfret
23 Congregational Church was built in 1844 and is still used for worship. The Ladies Circle
24 celebrated its hundredth anniversary in 1992. The present Town Hall was erected in 1845 by the
25 Universalists who donated it to the Town in 1872.

26
27 The Abbott Memorial Library in South Pomfret was the gift of native son, Ira Abbott. It was
28 erected in 1905, and for many years served the children of the town through their schools, which
29 were designated as branch libraries. From the beginning, the library was the focal point of many
30 public events in the southern part of town and today provides programs for area children. It is
31 administered by a board elected at the Town Meeting and supported by Town funds and private
32 gifts.

33
34 The Grange movement in America began soon after the Civil War. Pomfret had two Granges that
35 flourished in the last century, providing farm families with social and educational programs. As
36 the Town's agricultural base eroded, so too has the Grange base. Neither organization exists
37 today and the Teago Grange Hall in South Pomfret was incorporated into the Artistree
38 Community Arts Center and converted into a theater. Artistree provides arts programs,
39 performances, gallery exhibits, and events throughout the year.

40
41 The Vail Grange utilized the Pomfret Town Hall for its meetings and is also no longer in
42 existence.

43

1 **Industries**

2
3 Early Pomfret industries were similar to those of neighboring towns. One of the first commercial
4 products was potash made from the trees that were felled to clear the new farms. Used in the
5 production of soap, Potash brought premium prices in England until 1793. The first U.S. patent
6 was issued to a Vermonter for an improved method of making potash. Lumber mills and general
7 farming were also important. During the 1830s South Pomfret was called the “Slab City”
8 because of its three lumber mills. Farming predominated throughout the nineteenth century. In
9 the 1850 census, the majority of men were farmers and some one hundred others — men and
10 women — were listed as farm help. In 2014 the Pomfret Listers counted seven properties as
11 operating farms (properties that include farm buildings), however a 2007 census by the U.S.
12 Department of Agriculture, using a more inclusive definition of farming, showed 10 farms
13 operating in town. Once devoted to raising dairy cattle, farms are now more diversified. The
14 largest farm in town raises beef cattle as do several others. There are also nurseries, greenhouses,
15 apple orchards, an organic produce farm and similar agricultural enterprises. Many professional
16 people, who commute to jobs in other towns, maintain flocks of sheep, small herds of beef cattle,
17 or pursue other agrarian activities such as sugaring. Further, there are many informal
18 arrangements made between landowners in town and farmers to cut fields so they can remain
19 open. Farming operations of all types are important to maintaining this town’s rural character.
20

21 The agricultural nature of Pomfret has changed in recent years. In 2023, the last dairy farm
22 shipping milk closed. One small dairy farm exists that sells raw milk locally. Value-added
23 products, services, and diversification have become required for many farms to stay in
24 operations. Some examples of these changes include agritourism, such as Sugarbush farm, the
25 on-farm restaurant at Cloudland Farm, and the book publisher Trafalgar Square.
26

27 Saskaadena Six (formerly known as Suicide Six), South Pomfret’s ski area, opened in 1935. Now
28 owned and managed by the Woodstock Inn and Resort, it does substantial business during the ski
29 season and occasionally rents out the base lodge at other times of the year for events such as the
30 Vermont Symphony Orchestra and other musical venues and weddings.
31

32 Pomfret is also home of the world-renowned organ manufacturer and refurbisher, A. David
33 Moore, Inc. This factory produces some of the country’s finest handcrafted tracker pipe organs.
34 The majority of the raw materials for the organs are sourced from Pomfret’s forests and fields.
35 The keys are made from the bones of the Black Angus cows from his sister’s farm.

36 **Political Subdivisions**

37
38 Pomfret has been a town in the Republic of Vermont since 1777, which makes it older than the
39 State. Until 1965, Pomfret elected its own representative to the Vermont General Assembly.
40 Since then, it has belonged to a joint district sharing representation with neighboring towns. The
41 towns that make up the district may change every ten years due to population shifts determined
42 by the Federal Census. Pomfret is one of the twenty-four towns in Windsor County that share
43 three elected State Senators, some of whom have been Pomfret residents. Woodstock is the Shire
44 Town of Windsor County. The Windsor County Probate Court and the Sheriff’s office are
45 located there.

Chapter 3: POMFRET COMMUNITY PROFILE

This chapter provides the reader with a "profile" of Pomfret through a series of charts. Recent trends can be determined from this information. This overview of the major characteristics that make up Pomfret is divided into the following headings: Population, Economy, and Government. The graphs and charts and most of the material in the accompanying text under each of these headings come from the most recent data available from the U.S. Census, the Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont, and the Vermont State Department of Taxes.

The population of Pomfret has not returned to its peak of 1,867 residents in 1830. As shown in Figure 1 (in the previous chapter), in 2020, Pomfret's population stood at 916, representing a 1.33% increase since 2010. Data has proven that Pomfret and other towns in the region are steadily gaining population.

Economy

Pomfret is a residential community, interspersed with light industry throughout the town that fits the rural character.

In the 2018-2022 American Community Survey Estimates, Pomfret's resident workforce occupied the following professions:

Table 1 – Occupation of Pomfret Workers

Occupation	Pomfret	Percent	Statewide
Management, Professional	222	52.86%	45.26%
Sales, Office Positions	61	14.52%	18.10%
Service	101	24.05%	15.92%
Production, Transportation	14	3.33%	10.74%
Natural Resources, Construction, Maintenance	22	5.24%	9.98%
<i>Total</i>	420	100.00%	100.00%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

1 **Government**

2 **Table 2 - Pomfret FY 2024 Town Budget**

	Budget Category	FY2024 Amount
Town	Outside Appropriations	\$70,829
Town	County/Local Assessments	\$30,325
Town	Contract Services (incl. Sheriff, Ambulance)	\$97,661
Town	Emergency Services Operating/Capital	\$140,373
Town	Municipal Expenses	\$241,012
		\$580,200

3 Note: Excludes Highway

4 *Source: Pomfret Town Report 2023*

5
6 For additional detail, read the town budget located on the town website – <https://pomfretvt.us/>

7
8 The following table shows the breakdown of the FY 2024 Highway Budget:

9
10 **Table 3 - Pomfret FY 2024 Highway Budget**

	Budget Category	FY 2024 Amount
Highway	Contract Services	\$32,240
Highway	Reserves	\$364,000
Highway	Special Projects	\$0
Highway	Labor & Benefits	\$407,675
Highway	Materials	\$299,500
Highway	Equipment	\$84,100
Highway	All Other	\$69,558
		\$1,257,073

11 Note: Excludes Town Expenses

12
13 *Source: Pomfret Town Report 2023*

14
15
16 Property taxes in Vermont are paid at two tax rates, depending on whether the property is
17 homestead or not. Homesteads are principal dwellings that you live in, including the surrounding
18 lands. The Homestead exemption rate includes the house and two acres of the surrounding land.
19 All education tax rates are “equalized” in Vermont into an *effective* tax rate to account for towns
20 that have grand lists that do not accurately reflect their current market value. Overall, the grand
21 list is determined to be over or under fair market value, resulting in a number called the

1 “common level of appraisal” or CLA. If the CLA is below 1, then properties are undervalued. It
2 does not matter that one house may be assessed very accurately and another under-assessed in
3 the same town; both of their taxes will be adjusted by the CLA the same.

4

5

Chapter 4: LAND USE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Introduction

This section of the town plan is designed to guide land use decisions in a manner that balances existing and future uses. Striking a balance means establishing a framework that harmonizes the historic pastoral use of Pomfret lands with uses that will occur in the future such that these uses do not get in the way of or overshadow each other. While guiding and regulating land use decisions are important goals alone, it must not be lost that the overarching point of this effort is to support and enrich the sense of community that already exists in Pomfret.

The Setting

The town of Pomfret is located in Windsor County, Vermont. Situated in the East-Central portion of the State, part of the southern piedmont, or foothills, of the Green Mountains, Pomfret comprises about 39.4 square miles. Bordered by Royalton and Sharon in the north, West Hartford and Quechee to the east, Woodstock and Bridgewater to the south, and Barnard to the west. Pomfret's landscape is characterized by narrow valleys with expanses of open hay fields flanked by occasionally very steep wooded hillsides. The center of Pomfret straddles two watersheds; the north side of Pomfret drains into the White River while the south side empties into the Ottauquechee River. Both the White and Ottauquechee Rivers flow east into the Connecticut River. Pomfret is among the special areas of Vermont that remain unspoiled by high density or large-scale development.

Elevation & Slopes

The highest points in Pomfret are:

- Seaver Hill on the top of the ridge on the south side of the Appalachian Trail, between Granite Ledge and Pomfret Farms Dr.
- Top of the ridge between Windy Ln. and Hidden Ridge Rd.
- Top of the ridge is just south of Webster Hill Rd. and east of Wild Apple Rd.
- Top of ridge between Allen Hill Rd. and Blackmer Rd.
- Top of ridge between Wild Apple Rd. and Bartlett Brook Rd

About 3,459 acres (or just 14%) of Pomfret's 25,280 acres have slopes of 10% or less. These areas represent the most suitable terrain for development. The vast majority of development has occurred in these areas. Another 3,055 acres of Pomfret's land is situated on slopes of 10-15%. This land is also developable, but only for less intensive uses at a greater cost. Additionally, there are 5,984 acres with slopes of 15-20% and another 12,573 acres with slopes of greater than 20%, neither category offers much opportunity for development, except for the occasional ridgeline project. Combined, these last two categories comprise about 75% of Pomfret's land area.

1 **Flood Hazards**

2
3 Approximately 521 acres of Pomfret are in the floodplain (see flood hazard areas visible on the
4 Future Land Use Map, in Appendix D). Floodplains and Fluvial Erosion Hazard Areas are
5 generally unsuitable for development because of the high potential for loss of life and property,
6 as well as the limited ability of septic systems to perform adequately during periods of high
7 water. (See Chapter 13: Flood Resilience for more information.)
8

9 **Current Land Use**

10
11 *Patterns of Development*

12
13 The Pomfret history in Chapter 2 describes the rapid rise in population from the first settlers in
14 the early 1770s. The population peaked at a high of 1,867 in 1830 followed by a dramatic drop to
15 777 by 1900. By 1950 the population stood at 586. By the turn of the 20th Century, farmers
16 moved west to land more suitable for farming than the hills of Vermont. Until the 1950s, the
17 prevailing land uses in Pomfret were agriculture and forestry. Beginning slowly in the 1940s, and
18 then continuing more rapidly into the 60s, 70s, and 80's, Pomfret experienced growth in non-
19 farm residences, both primary and second homes.
20

21 According to census figures, the largest jump in housing units occurred between 1970 and 1990
22 with an increase of 189 units in that 20-year period. Seasonal homes account for 93% of the
23 growth between 1980 and 1990 (80 of 86 units). This growth resulted from the rise of the post-
24 war generation. Increases in wealth, the affordability of automobiles and the construction of the
25 interstate highway system all helped to bring new growth to Vermont, including the newly
26 labeled "Upper Valley." As in most rural Vermont towns, land has been sold for residential
27 development at higher cash value than land kept in farming. Despite the demise of the
28 traditional working dairy farm, recent years have seen a trend of increased agricultural activity,
29 including expanded direct "farm to market" sales to individuals and restaurants, and forest
30 products.
31

32 The primary land use is rural residential housing. The 2023 Pomfret Grand List includes 494
33 residential parcels of which 150 are second homes. However, the true number of residential units
34 is higher because there are several parcels with multiple units, such as hamlet areas throughout
35 the town. Most houses are along and close to either the paved roads or the better class 3 gravel
36 roads which provide access to less steep land. Many of these houses are grouped in
37 neighborhoods including:
38

- 39 ● South Pomfret Village Area
- 40 ● Bartlett Brook Road
- 41 ● Hewitt Hill Road including a portion of the Pomfret Road east past Howe Hill Road
- 42 ● North Pomfret including Bunker Hill Road, Caper Street, Starbuck Road and the
- 43 connecting portions of the Pomfret Road

1
2 **See Appendix C –Map of Current Settlement Patterns**
3

4 Factoring Pomfret’s two-acre minimum lot size, there are 12,640 potential residential
5 development sites. However, the true number of easily developable sites is much smaller
6 because of the soils and slopes mentioned earlier. Potential development is stymied by
7 topographical and geological conditions, including conservation easements. Deed restrictions
8 and conservations easements keep the number of developable land units limited. Portions of
9 many of the larger residential lots are also used for agricultural activities, including use as
10 pastureland and maple sugaring, as are many of the 104 miscellaneous lots that do not have farm
11 buildings.
12

13 **Agriculture and Forestry**
14

15 There is very little prime agricultural soil in Pomfret. However, the land in Pomfret used in
16 agriculture is still important not only because of the classification of agricultural value, but also
17 because of the location and current use of the land as hayfields, pasture and the growing of
18 timber for a variety of uses. Open lands lend the town much of its scenic appeal
19

20 **See Appendix C – Map of Pomfret Agricultural Soils**
21

22 **Natural Resources**

23 Pomfret's natural and historic resources, rural character, and scenic beauty should be protected
24 and preserved for the health, safety, and enjoyment of current and future generations. Many of
25 these resources are irreplaceable, and if not preserved, will be gone forever. There are many
26 cases in the world where the benefits of natural resources have not been understood until after a
27 resource is gone. Habitat loss and resultant species loss is probably the most vivid example of
28 this trend. This can still be prevented from happening in Pomfret.
29

30 **See Appendix C – Map of Pomfret’s Natural Resources**
31

32 **Wildlife Habitat**

33 Wildlife habitat protection is critical to the conservation of plants and animals and hence to the
34 general quality of life in Pomfret. "Natural areas" not only encourage and protect species
35 diversity, but they also enhance aesthetic enjoyment, recreation, and education. Wildlife habitat
36 should be given consideration in each decision to build in or change the natural environment.
37

38 In addition to deer yards, Pomfret has some unique and fragile habitats, possibly including those
39 of rare and endangered species. Through the years some habitat areas have been placed under
40 permanent protection. Although there has never been a comprehensive town wide study of
41 significant habitats, an inventory limited to the Appalachian Trail Corridor found several wetland
42 areas supporting rare ferns and some vernal pools that may be breeding grounds for rare
43 salamanders. To protect additional habitats, it is necessary to continue updating inventories,
44 reviewing development plans that may affect these habitats, and encouraging landowners to
45 arrange for permanent protection of important habitats. The cumulative effect of scattered
46 development on larger contiguous wildlife habitats is important. It is possible to separate deer,

1 bears, and other animals from their wintering areas by scattered development, which, for this
2 reason, should be avoided. Due to the topography and the wishes of the landowners, scattered
3 development is unavoidable. The following is a list of the important habitat areas that are
4 protected in Pomfret:

- 5 ● Sharon-Pomfret Seep (Nature Conservancy)
- 6 ● Amity Pond (State of Vermont)
- 7 ● Wetlands on the National Wetlands Inventory (Federal and State)

8 In addition, there are other conserved lands in town that contain important habitat areas,
9 including the Appalachian Trail Corridor and other parcels of land. As of 2024, a total of 6,400
10 acres of land are conserved of which 1,817 acres are public, and 4,583 acres are private land. In
11 total, 54% of Pomfret’s land is conserved and this number does not include other privately
12 conserved land through deed restriction. As of the 2024 tax year, there are also 18,664 acres
13 (74%) of land enrolled in Vermont’s Current Use Program.

14 **Wetlands**

16 The importance of wetlands to the whole ecosystem and to the health, safety, and welfare of the
17 general public, has been recognized in both Federal and Vermont legislation in recent years. The
18 Natural Resources Board estimates that Vermont has already lost more than 35 percent of its
19 original wetlands’ resources and that the remaining wetlands comprise less than 4 percent of the
20 state's surface area.

21
22 In addition to providing important support for fisheries and wildlife habitats, wetlands protect
23 drinking water supplies by filtering out excess toxins and nutrients and by helping to recharge
24 aquifers. Wetlands also play an important role in minimizing flood damage by storing flood
25 water.

26
27 There are 215 acres of wetlands in Pomfret that are on the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI)
28 and are protected by the 1990 Vermont Wetlands Rules. The NWI was completed in 1978 but
29 was never field checked. Field observations by the Vermont Wetlands Office staff indicate that
30 this is an underestimation. A more accurate up-to-date inventory would be useful for identifying
31 important wetlands that must be protected in Pomfret. Landowners should be made aware of
32 significant wetlands on their property.

33 **Surface Waters**

35 Pomfret's brooks, streams, and fisheries contribute to wetlands and recharge ground water
36 supply. Undisturbed natural vegetation on and along the banks of streams, called a riparian
37 buffer, provides erosion control and protection from the sun which enhances habitat value and
38 water quality. Maintenance of a riparian buffer by private landowners is essential to minimizing
39 flash flood damage on their property and land further downstream.

40
41 Two of the more common local sources of stream pollution and siltation are farming and
42 highway drainage maintenance. While farming is not as significant of a contributor to this
43 problem as it is in other towns, awareness is none the less important to stream protection. Both of

1 these activities are vital to the Town but could be managed in such a way as to have little or no
2 negative effect on streams. Local farming activities and highway maintenance should be
3 reviewed to determine if there is unnecessary stream damage from chemicals, road salt, and
4 drainage ditches.

5
6 New private ponds are created every year in Pomfret. Many ponds originally used for farming
7 are now used for recreation and aesthetic purposes. The Town Zoning Ordinance requires a
8 permit issued before a pond can be constructed. Currently pond construction plans are reviewed
9 to ensure the safety of downstream roads or property. Pond construction also needs to be
10 reviewed for any adverse effects on streams, wildlife habitat, or wetlands. Ponds are a major
11 source of water for fighting fires. Inventories of ponds and regulation of pond construction
12 should take fire protection into consideration. Additionally, no development other than
13 agriculture and forestry should be allowed in flood plain areas without an appropriate municipal
14 review showing that specific engineering and construction standards have been satisfied.

15 16 **Water Supply**

17 All Pomfret households depend on ground water for domestic use. This water flows in
18 underground streams on uncharted pathways. It is tapped from underground storage areas called
19 aquifers or from underground streams and springs. Ground water is the least understood of all
20 natural resources, yet it is essential to the preservation and quality of life and to economic
21 stability. As a result, the protection of ground water quality and quantity deserves the highest
22 priority when formulating plans for the future of Pomfret.

23
24 There appears to be no immediate threat to Pomfret's water supply. A local well driller reports
25 that Pomfret has plentiful water supplies and that existing wells very seldom need to be drilled
26 deeper. Pomfret is not as subject to major hazardous material spills as many other communities
27 due to its distance from major highways, railroads, and waste sites. Still, a safe water supply was
28 a top priority of respondents to the Conservation Commission survey in 1990, and water quality
29 should be monitored. The long-term effect of any form of development on the quality of the
30 water supply is a major factor in the review of development plans.

31 32 **Air Quality**

33 Air quality problems in Vermont are mostly created elsewhere and must be solved at a state,
34 national, or international level. Local wood stoves, backyard burning of trash and excessive
35 brush burning contribute to air pollution. Clean air is a natural resource that cannot be taken for
36 granted, even in rural states like Vermont. Enforcement of existing State and Federal air
37 pollution regulations is important. However, we are all responsible for maintaining a healthy
38 living environment and for being kind to our neighbors. Pomfret residents are generally
39 conscientious people, and the Town should continue to encourage responsible behavior through
40 its zoning laws.

41

42

1 **Gravel and Other Mineral Extraction**

2 The use of local sand and gravel significantly reduces the cost of road maintenance within the
3 Town and helps to support the local economy. When proper erosion control and reclamation
4 techniques are used, extraction of gravel and other minerals can have a minimal impact on the
5 environment. The land can later be returned to other productive uses. Currently there are no
6 operating gravel pits in Pomfret. The extraction of minerals is to be limited to operations that do
7 not conflict with the other goals, policies, or objectives of this plan.

8
9 **Agricultural and Forest Lands**

10 Agricultural and forest lands are critical natural resources to Pomfret. Agriculture and forest
11 management activities form the anchor of all other activities in Pomfret and the Town should
12 strive to preserve the resources that underpin these activities.

13
14 **Rural Character and Scenic Beauty**

15
16 The visual elements of rural character in Pomfret are the traditional working landscape and land
17 use patterns relating to Pomfret’s agricultural and forestry heritage, the undeveloped ridgelines
18 and hillsides, and the scenic roads lined with mature trees and old stone walls. Historic resources
19 related to the Town’s agricultural and forestry heritage, such as old barns and farmhouses, are
20 other elements of rural character that need to be preserved. Pomfret is made up of citizens who
21 volunteer for the local government as well as the Pomfret-Teago Fire Department and Pomfret
22 Fast Squad.

23
24 Virtually every chapter of this Plan examines a different aspect of rural character. Preserving and
25 encouraging agricultural and forestry activity is a major goal expressed in the Land Use chapter.

26
27 The Town Services and Education chapters emphasize the importance of community
28 involvement and volunteer support in governing the Town and in educating Pomfret’s children.

29
30 In 1989, the Town adopted a Ridgeline and Hillside Conservation Area section to the Zoning
31 Ordinance, reacting to concern that one of Pomfret’s most significant scenic resources could be
32 destroyed by insensitive development. The ordinance was updated in 2008.

33
34 High priority should be given to preventing adverse effects on scenic view sheds roads and their
35 rights of way that may be bordered by stone walls and mature trees. Roads should be protected
36 from efforts to widen and improve them. Cutting of trees, widening, utility pole relocation, or
37 any other activity which may change the character of the road should
38 be subject to review.

39
40 Property owners should be mindful that Scenic View sheds are areas of scenic beauty as viewed
41 from Town roads should be protected.

42
43
44
45

1 **Special Features**

2
3 All of Pomfret is special, and there are a number of places and natural features that warrant
4 special mention. In no particular order, just to name a few:

- 5 • Cloudland Farm, the original center of Pomfret, and the surrounding hillsides
- 6 • Galaxy Hill (formerly one of Pomfret’s poor farms)
- 7 • Sherburne Farm in North Pomfret
- 8 • Pomfret’s town and family cemeteries
- 9 • The views of pastureland and hayfields around Hewittville
- 10 • The hillsides and open areas along Blackmer Road
- 11 • The Dana-St. John farm and surrounding hillsides
- 12 • Thistle Hill Farm in North Pomfret
- 13 • Sugarbush Farm in South Pomfret
- 14 • Town Hall (formerly the Unitarian Church)
- 15 • The Congregational Church in North Pomfret
- 16 • The views and hillsides along Wild Apple Road
- 17 • The view from Webster Hill Rd. looking south along Pomfret Road
- 18 • The view from Allen Hill Rd. near the Leavitt Farm
- 19 • Teago General Store in South Pomfret
- 20 • The Saskadena Six Ski Area in South Pomfret (Formerly Suicide Six)
- 21 • The Appalachian Trail corridor
- 22 • Amity Pond Natural Area
- 23 • The Abbott Library in South Pomfret

24
25
26 **Future Land Use**

27
28 *Drivers of Future Growth*

29
30 The overwhelming demand for housing will continue to put pressure on land currently used for
31 agriculture and forestry. Additional factors include the growth in nearby healthcare employment
32 opportunities, the opportunity of working remotely, a growing U.S. population, and the
33 attractiveness of Vermont amid a changing climate.

1 The “back to the land” movement is also expected to bring a steady demand for land. This
2 movement includes small-scale farming, the maple sugaring industry, an influx of artisans and
3 small-scale farmers, and a corresponding growth in services supporting those activities.
4 The definition of what constitutes farming is undergoing change, but in general Pomfret favors
5 continued productive use of the land.

6 Even without these demands for new housing, Pomfret should prepare for the possibility of
7 increased development pressure in the future. Newer technology permits the use of septic
8 systems in areas where they were not feasible in the past. Other factors that could create more
9 future development and demands for housing are listed in the Housing chapter of this plan.

10 While some of this growth will continue to be for second homes, the expectation is that the bulk
11 of growth will be for housing demands resulting from increased economic opportunities, both job
12 opportunities in nearby cities and towns, as well as increases in local small-scale agricultural and
13 forestry activities. Even by 2030 at the highest estimate, the intensity of development is not
14 expected to be more than 39% of Pomfret’s most developable land (up from 31% in 2010).
15 Thus, Pomfret should be able to retain its rural character while making room for new residents,
16 but only if this development is done in a way that adheres to past patterns.

17 18 **Ridgelines and Hillsides**

19
20 Among Pomfret's most valuable resources are the exceptional scenic qualities of many of its
21 ridgelines and hilltops. These physical formations have influenced the location of village
22 settlements and the pattern of agriculture and forestry and comprise the scenic values in the
23 ridgeline and hilltop areas.

24
25 The scenic value of the hillsides and ridgelines benefit more than just the people of Pomfret.
26 These areas, coupled with the other elements of the pastoral landscape, combine to attract a large
27 tourist population which accounts for the majority of the local economy.

28
29 Historically, the typically rugged character of these areas has limited development opportunities.
30 However, the location of development in future years in Pomfret cannot be assumed to be
31 confined to those areas traditionally considered suitable or desirable for development. With
32 quality engineering and innovative technologies for wastewater system design and operation,
33 land, including ridgelines and hillsides, may be developed in accordance with appropriate zoning
34 regulations.

35 36 **South Pomfret Village Area**

37
38 The Pomfret Planning Commission has collected input from members of the community and has
39 used this guidance to create a framework through which the citizens’ vision can be implemented.
40 This vision includes changes to land use areas that support the goals of the community while
41 remaining consistent with state law. The **South Pomfret Village Area** has been established to
42 implement this vision.

43 The South Pomfret Village area is the one area that has developed into a small community center
44 with mixed land uses at higher densities as compared to the more rural areas of Pomfret. South
45 Pomfret has the most densely clustered mixed-use pattern of development in Pomfret and is

1 home to a general store with a Post Office, the Abbott Memorial Library, a fire station, The
2 Artistree Arts Center and Saskadena Six (formerly Suicide Six) ski area, a small historic
3 privately owned ski area. Adjacent to The South Pomfret Village Area is the Prosper Valley
4 School. Having this Village Area is consistent with historical settlement patterns.

5
6 The South Pomfret Village Area may support housing types at densities that are higher than the
7 surrounding areas. However, because South Pomfret has neither public water nor sewer, all
8 development should be at a density that can be supported by the ability of the soils to support on-
9 site wastewater systems. A significant portion of the land in the Village Area is in the flood plain
10 restricting development.

11 **Figure 2 - Satellite Image of the Delineated South Pomfret Village Area**



12
13
14

1 **Figure 3 - Aerial Image of the South Pomfret Village Area**



2
3

4 **Figure 4 - Aerial Image of the South Pomfret Village Area & Saskadena Six (formerly Suicide Six)**



5
6
7

1 **Figure 5 - Teago General Store, circa 1970**



2

3

4 In time, the South Pomfret Village Area may be suitable for retail stores and services, tourist
5 businesses, lodging, public facilities and other business enterprises at a small scale with
6 appropriate site plan design characteristics fitting the context of their surroundings. Growth in
7 the South Pomfret Village Area may depend on eventually developing a means to deliver public
8 water and sewer. However, the area has a limited ability for development which would not make
9 a public water and septic system feasible.

10

11 South Pomfret Village Settlement area is limited in size, is surrounded by lands in the flood
12 plain, steep slopes, and roads and the right of way and therefore has potential for any further
13 development.

14

15 **Rural Areas**

16

17 Rural Areas in Pomfret consist primarily of residential, forestry, and agricultural land uses, with
18 some home business, outdoor recreational and natural resource uses. Home businesses are
19 appropriate land uses within Rural Areas and are valuable to both the quality of life and the
20 economic character of the region. Historically some home businesses in Pomfret have extended
21 outside of the residential buildings with products and equipment in accessory structures or in the
22 open. To maintain the character of the area, larger home businesses extending beyond the
23 residential and accessory structures should be subject to site plan review ensuring compatibility
24 with the residential uses.

25

26 Non-residential uses including small service businesses, small professional offices and inns may
27 be acceptable land uses for Rural Areas provided that such uses are planned as relatively small in

1 size or scale, do not unduly conflict with existing or planned residential, forestry or agricultural
2 uses, and do not unduly affect rural character. Larger retail establishments serving a regional
3 market are not appropriate for Rural Areas, but appropriately scaled businesses with a secondary
4 retail component may be allowed. In circumstances where land is proposed for residential or
5 non-residential uses, development should be sited to minimize or avoid adverse impacts on
6 agricultural and forest land, wetlands, and rivers and streams.

7
8 The future character of the town will be affected by the location and density of future
9 development of new lots. Landowners are encouraged to site houses on the edge of pastures and
10 productive agricultural land, protecting the working landscape, and scenic and natural resources.

11 **General Land Use Goals**

- 12
13
14 1. Preserve the rural character and natural beauty of Pomfret.

15 **General Land Use Policies**

- 16
17
18 1. Pomfret supports land uses that foster the preservation of the Town's character. It is
19 characterized by a working rural landscape with pockets of small and concentrated residential
20 settlements. Pomfret generally discourages intensive land use. One factor in determining
21 intensity is the amount of area a new development project would consume relative to the
22 amount of open space remaining.

23 Pomfret does not generally have the physical infrastructure to support high-intensity land
24 uses (for example, commercial-scale utility projects, large warehouses, or primary retail).

- 25 2. Except for Planned Unit Development (PUD's), the Town will continue with two-acre
26 minimum lot size zoning.

- 27 3. Projects that will result in new construction of affordable housing and conversion of
28 existing structures to affordable housing as part of PUD's are encouraged.

- 29 4. Above and beyond meeting state-regulations, new development should:

- 30 ▪ Minimize development of existing farmland or land with a high potential for
31 future agricultural or forestry use.
- 32 ▪ Avoid undue adverse effects on significant natural resources including stream
33 corridors, wetlands, and habitat areas; Discourage the introduction and spread of
34 invasive plant species.
- 35 ▪ Avoid undue adverse visual effects on open meadows and forest lands as viewed
36 from public rights-of-way.
- 37 ▪ Maintain scenic vistas of the working landscape, hillsides and ridgelines.

- 38 5. Density of new development will be limited to the physical restrictions of the land and
39 without degradation of the environment.

1 6. The rate of development shall not exceed the ability of existing and planned town
2 services and facilities to support it. Currently, the rate of subdivision should not exceed three
3 new parcels within any consecutive twenty-four-month period.

4 7. Promote traditional agricultural and forestry activities and encourage innovative new
5 ones. These agricultural and forestry activities should include the use of tillable land,
6 pastureland, and all kinds of forestland and help provide primary and secondary sources of
7 income that foster local economic opportunities.

8 8. Home-based businesses are encouraged in all areas of the Town. To maintain the
9 character of the area, larger home businesses extending beyond the residential and accessory
10 structures should be subject to conditional use approval, ensuring compatibility with the
11 residential uses.

12 9. Manage future growth in Pomfret so that economic development does not create distinct
13 commercial and industrial districts.

14 10. Placement of telecommunications towers, energy generation facilities, or other
15 infrastructure should be sited to preserve the scenic beauty of the landscape and not cause
16 any undue adverse effect. Commercial-scale solar and wind development projects should be
17 located to minimize visual impacts.

18 11. Discourage the spread of invasive plants that change the traditional landscape and
19 compromise wildlife habitats by crowding out native species.

20 12. Wildlife habitat should be given consideration in each decision to build in or change the
21 natural environment.

22 13. Continue updating inventories, reviewing development plans that may affect these
23 habitats, and encouraging landowners to arrange for permanent protection of important
24 habitats to protect additional habitats.

25 **General Land Use Recommended Actions**

26 1. Inventory and recommend measures against invasive plant species on roadsides and
27 stream banks and in forests and fields (Invasive Plant Committee)

28 **Specific Land Use Policies: South Pomfret Village Area**

29
30 1. The South Pomfret Village Area is designed for mixed uses (within the same structures or
31 adjacent structures). The Town will generally accept medium-intensity non-residential uses
32 into the South Pomfret Village Area where the proximity of land uses is closer together, and
33 the need for open space is lower. The South Pomfret Village Area still reflects Pomfret's
34 rural character, and any new development must be consistent with the existing character of
35 that Area (for example, a project that converted a barn into a community arts center).

36 2. Light commercial and industrial activities, and primary retail establishments, may be
37 located in the Village Area, subject to conditional use approval. All new activities will be
38 reviewed to ensure that the scale is commensurate with the Town's ability to support those
39 activities.

1 3. Development in the South Pomfret Village Area should reflect existing settlement
2 patterns, land capacity, and the availability of utilities and infrastructure for expansion.

3 4. Conversion of structures and older buildings of historic merit is encouraged to increase
4 longevity and enable new, more economical, and energy efficient uses of property and to
5 avoid obsolescence.

6 5. Where new development is planned, efforts should be made to ensure that it is
7 complementary and compatible with the architecture and configuration of existing buildings
8 and streetscape, and respects the traditional size and scale, proportions, and shape of the
9 neighborhood.

10 6. Single and multiple family housing at medium to high densities is encouraged in the
11 village area.

12 7. New businesses should be limited to uses that do not adversely affect the quality of life,
13 the unique character and historic atmosphere of the village, or the rural residential nature of
14 the Town.

15 8. Protect and preserve Pomfret's natural and historic resources, rural character, and scenic
16 beauty for the health, safety, and enjoyment of current and future generations.

17 **Specific Land Use Recommended Actions: *South Pomfret Village Area***

18
19 1. To encourage the continued use of Saskadena Six as a ski area and recreation center for
20 its benefit to the community.

21 2. To maintain the integrity of the village as a center for recreation, education, and cultural
22 development.

23 3. To encourage residents to preserve historic buildings when possible or rebuild them with
24 similar aesthetics.

25 **Specific Land Use Goals: *Rural Areas***

26
27 1. The town's rural living environment should be maintained.
28

29 **Specific Land Use Policies: *Rural Areas***

30
31 1. Residential, agricultural, and forestry uses are to be the primary and dominant land uses
32 in the Rural Residential Area. Commercial or light industrial (other than home-based
33 businesses) activities may be permitted pending a *conditional use permit* relative to our
34 zoning laws. All new activities will be reviewed to ensure that the scale is commensurate
35 with the Town's ability to support those activities.

36 2. Residents are encouraged to conduct home-based businesses and home-based
37 occupations, provided that the nature of the occupation is customary or appropriate in rural
38 residential areas. New businesses should be reviewed by the current zoning administrator to
39 determine that they do not detract from the rural character of the area, and that it does not

1 cause an undue burden on the ability of the town to provide services such as highways and
2 fire protection.

3 3. New developments, including driveways, should be planned and sited to promote the
4 continued use of the land for agriculture purposes for now and in the future. This can be
5 accomplished by citing residential and other non-agricultural uses at the edges of woodlands
6 and fields.

7 4. Where possible, conversion of existing buildings into new residential structures is
8 encouraged.

9 5. Continue the Town's subdivision policies and regulations that discourage rapid
10 development of land in a way that outpaces the current Town's ability to provide for
11 infrastructure.

12 **Specific Land Use Recommendations: *Ridgeline Areas***

13
14 1. The Town should protect the ridgelines through continued application of the Ridgeline
15 Overlay and enforcement of Ridgeline zoning.

16 **Specific Land Use Policies: *Flood Hazard Areas***

17
18 1. The Town should protect the flood hazard areas through continued application of the
19 Flood Overlay and enforcement of Flood zoning.

20 2. The Town shall ensure that the selection, design, creation, and use of development in
21 hazard areas is safe and accomplished in a manner that is consistent with public well-being,
22 does not impair stream equilibrium, flood plain services, or the stream corridor.

23 3. The Town shall manage all flood hazard areas designated pursuant to 10 V.S.A. Chapter
24 32 § 753, the municipal hazard mitigation plan; and make the Town of Pomfret, its citizens,
25 and businesses eligible for federal flood insurance, federal disaster recovery funds, and
26 hazard mitigation funds as may be available.

27 4. The Town will endeavor to protect the environmental and recreational value of Pomfret's
28 rivers and streams.

29 **Specific Land Use Policies: *Agriculture and Forestry***

30
31 1. Pomfret supports agriculture and forestry because these activities help to retain the rural
32 character of the town and provide primary and secondary sources of income that foster local
33 economic opportunities.

34 2. The community understands the importance of agriculture and forestry to the Town and
35 recognizes that agricultural and forestry practices may create conditions, including noise and
36 odors that may create conflicts with residential use. Purchasers of homes should understand
37 that the town cannot retain its rural character without reasonably exposing homeowners to
38 the sights, sounds and smells of a working landscape. Neighbors will try to resolve any
39 problems among themselves; however, it is understood that reasonable agricultural practices,

1 which are defined by State policy, benefit farming operations and contribute to a working
2 landscape, harmony with neighbors and community pride.

3 3. The Town supports the use of “Required Agricultural and Forest Management Practices”
4 and encourages the use of “Best Agricultural Practices.”

5 4. Encourage sound agricultural practices such as crop rotation, organic farming, and
6 sustainable woodlot management practices that do not deplete natural resources.

7 5. Where residential subdivisions and PUDs are proposed adjacent to farm operations,
8 reasonable setbacks may be required from the lot lines next to cropland for wells and
9 residences under the subdivision regulations. Reasonable buffers between residences and
10 cropland, including roads and pastureland, may be required. This requirement is designed to
11 minimize conflicts between farm operations and residential uses, however mechanisms other
12 than buffers may be permitted to achieve such goals.

13 6. Promoting sustainable, economically viable farming and forestry alternatives is important
14 to the future of farming and forestry in Pomfret. Diverse agricultural enterprises, including
15 dairying, hay production, livestock production, produce-stands, and specialty farms such as
16 wildflowers, nurseries, berries, orchards, produce, and value-added products in general will
17 be encouraged. Included here are growing activities related to Vermont’s “farm to plate”
18 movement. Pomfret encourages local production and consumption.

19 7. Land in active agricultural or forest use should continue to be taxed at a rate that allows
20 the land to stay in active use. The Town should consider measures of its own in the event
21 state tax incentives are abolished.

22 **Specific Land Use Policies:** *Natural Resources*

23
24 1. Avoid land use decisions that will result in habitat fragmentation.

25
26 2. The town encourages and should support landowners to become more educated on the
27 impact that development has on habitat and other natural resources.

28
29 3. Agricultural practices and Town road maintenance should not degrade the water quality
30 of Pomfret’s streams and brooks. Ensure that the town road maintenance practices minimize
31 the spread of invasive or detrimental plants and encourage landowners to adopt agriculture
32 and land management practices to minimize the spread of invasive and detrimental plants.

33 4. Any existing Town rights-of-way that can provide access to natural resources, historic
34 and scenic vista sites shall be preserved.

35 5. The installation or relocation of utility poles, other utility equipment, and towers should
36 be done in a manner that has little or no impact on scenic roads and vistas.

37 6. For air quality and safety purposes, excessive brush burning in Pomfret which adversely
38 affects surrounding landowners should be limited.

39 7. Encourage best practices that reduce the Town’s collective carbon footprint.

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Specific Land Use Recommendation Actions: *Natural Resources*

1. Review development projects to limit the impact on:
 - Elements that significantly contribute to the rural character and scenic beauty of Pomfret.
 - Natural resources should be preserved and protected.

1 Chapter 5: ENERGY

2 Introduction

3
4 Earth's limited supply of natural resources for energy production is a global problem, steps taken
5 at a local level can have a significant impact if taken by all towns. As such, Vermont's planning
6 law requires an energy program for each community.
7

8 Energy Use and Sources

9
10 Of the occupied homes in Pomfret, approximately 48% heat with oil, 21% heat with gas, and
11 28% heat with wood. Use of heating oil has increased slightly, and use of gas has dropped by 4%
12 while the use of wood has increased substantially from 18%, and a very small percentage heat
13 with electricity, as of 2022.

14
15 *Source:* Housingdata.org
16
17

18 Fossil Fuels

19
20 According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration's "Vermont State Energy Profile"
21 (2013), 60% of all energy consumed in Vermont is petroleum based. Pomfret, like most other
22 towns, depends on fossil fuels primarily for residential home heating and transportation needs.
23 Pomfret residents are almost entirely reliant on driving for commuting purposes and personal
24 needs.
25

26 Propane Fuel (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) is a by-product of natural gas processing and crude oil
27 refining. Propane is designated by the U.S. Department of Energy as a clean-burning, high-
28 energy alternative fuel and accounts for 21.3% of home heating in Pomfret and when combined
29 with wood, Pomfret's reliance on fossil fuels is more even when it comes to home heating (43%
30 non-petroleum versus 55% fossil fuel). In comparison to overall fossil fuel consumption across
31 the state, Pomfret is about on par with the rest of Vermont in terms of relying on fossil fuels for
32 home heating needs.
33

1 Renewable Resources

2
3 For the Town, individuals or small groups of homeowners, the keys to becoming a more
4 sustainable community are increasing measures to become more energy efficient, including
5 conservation, as well as developing renewable energy. The term “renewable energy” refers to the
6 production of electricity and fuels from energy sources that are naturally and continually
7 replenished, such as wind, solar, geothermal (using the earth’s heat to create power),
8 hydropower, and various forms of biomass (trees, crops, manure, etc.). Alternative fuels
9 produced from renewable sources are attractive options for displacing petroleum-based fuels.

10
11 Although initial set-up costs for renewable energy generation systems can be high, these systems
12 can save money over the long-term. Renewable energy also creates a more distributed energy
13 system, thereby relying less on centralized plants.

14
15 **Wood:** Wood is considered a renewable resource and heating with wood saves non-renewable
16 energy sources, eliminates the use of fuel to transport sources long distances, and supports the
17 local economy. The Department of Public Service has estimated that the average wood burning
18 household uses between 3 and 4 cords of wood each year during the heating season. Although
19 burning wood can increase air pollution, particularly in the valleys, clean burning furnaces and
20 stoves can mitigate this problem which will help reduce the purchase of energy from utilities.

21
22 **Solar Energy:** Solar has potential for providing clean, reliable, and safe energy. The cost of
23 photovoltaic panels has come down dramatically in recent years. Most areas in Vermont have the
24 potential for some solar energy production though Vermont generally ranks toward the bottom
25 nationally in terms of the number of clear days (49th) and number of hours of sunlight (43rd). In
26 general, Vermont has about 2,295 hours of sunlight per year (26% of total annual hours, as
27 compared to Arizona which has about 3,806 hours of sunlight per year, or 43% of total annual
28 hours). Still, “going solar” can be cost-effective for the individual homeowner. The potential for
29 solar power depends on whether the site (whether roof mounted, or pole mounted) faces south
30 and whether there are any obstructions that would impede solar absorption.

31
32 Water Heating – Solar water heating is the most common form of residential-scale solar
33 use in Vermont. Solar systems are not regulated at the state level and are subject to local
34 regulations. According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, it has been shown
35 that water heating by solar is not generally cost effective due to high up-front costs and in
36 colder climates due to the increased energy demand and “solar fraction” (see, e.g., report
37 entitled “*Break-even Cost for Residential Solar Water Heating in the United States: Key*
38 *Drivers and Sensitivities*”). More recent studies have shown that a solar PV option or
39 combination solar PV and heat pump is more cost-effective than a solar thermal system
40 (see, e.g., Green Building Advisor, cost analysis, December 26, 2014).

41
42 Net Metering – Decreasing costs of equipment have made solar electric generation
43 systems more prevalent. Solar systems are no longer utilized exclusively by “off-grid”
44 buildings. The advent of net-metering allows buildings to be connected to the grid while
45 utilizing renewable energy.

1 Preferred Siting – Pomfret generally encourages development solar. Pomfret does not
2 have Town-owned land that would be suitable for the siting of larger solar projects,
3 including community-scale projects. However, if land became available for acquisition
4 or if a private landowner was willing to host a community scale solar project, then a
5 larger scale community project would be allowed. Currently, the majority of Pomfret
6 does not have the electrical infrastructure to support a large-scale solar complex and
7 would need to be upgraded by the power utility. Ideal sites preserve existing or future
8 agricultural land while also minimizing the visual impact from roads and maximize solar
9 exposure.

10
11 **Community/Commercial-scale solar:** Pomfret prefers solar development of a small
12 scale and is generally not suitable for larger projects. The reasons are as follows (see the
13 Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission website, Regional Energy Plan,
14 TRORC Region Potential Solar Sites as a reference):

- 15 ● The only three-phase power in Pomfret is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the Pomfret
16 Road, at the Woodstock Property Line, to the Saskadena Six ski area.
- 17 ● Steep slopes, wetlands, and meadows that are used for agriculture, scenic vistas,
18 as well as limitations in the South Pomfret village area.
- 19 ● Much of the most viable land for community or commercial-scale solar is on or
20 near prime, productive agricultural soil and productive forest land.
- 21 ● Some land suitable for community or commercial-scale solar abuts endangered
22 species habitat.
- 23 ● The Town does not have land that would be suitable for community or
24 commercial-scale solar (e.g., gravel pits or Brownfields).
- 25 ● The Prosper Valley School has land, but any available land is currently used for
26 parking, sports rec. field, and hillside used as for Agriculture, Biology, and
27 Forestry education and recreation activities for the students.
- 28 ● Pomfret’s topography limits large-scale solar development. Additionally, South
29 facing land and other land in the rural area are limited by the following factors:
 - 30 ▪ Extremely steep slopes of greater than 20% grade make up 12,573 acres
31 (49%) of Pomfret’s total acres.
 - 32 ▪ Steep slopes of 15% to 20% grade make up 5,904 Acres (23%) of
33 Pomfret’s, 25,280 total acres.
 - 34 ▪ Clearing forested areas on steep slopes for any kind of large-scale
35 development increases erosion and disrupts wildlife habitat.
 - 36 ▪ South facing sites have some of the most desirable open meadows and
37 pastures currently being farmed and managed forested land. These areas
38 have scenic vistas and command some of the highest property values.
 - 39 ▪ As of 2023, 6,420 acres of conserved land were not subject to
40 development.
 - 41 ▪ As of 2023, 18,664 acres were enrolled in the Current Use program.

1
2 A comprehensive overview of Pomfret’s energy use and targets is located in the appended
3 energy packet.
4

5 **Community Standards**
6

7 The following community standards will be considered in undertaking solar development
8 projects, in updating Pomfret’s land use regulations to address solar facilities subject to
9 local regulation, and in the review of new or upgraded solar facilities by the Town of
10 Pomfret and the Public Service Board (Section 248 review).
11

12 **Plan Conformance:** New solar facilities and proposed system upgrades should be
13 consistent with the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, the Vermont Long-Range
14 Transmission Plan, and utilities Integrated Resource Planning (IRP).
15

16 **Benefits:** A financial cost/benefit analysis, to include a detailed landscape maintenance
17 plan underneath the array, demonstrating public need that outweighs adverse impacts to
18 local residents and resources must be documented for municipal support of new solar
19 facilities located within or which may otherwise affect Pomfret. Facility development
20 must benefit Town of Pomfret’s residents, businesses, and property owners in proportion
21 to the impacts of the proposed development. Development must also benefit the State of
22 Vermont insofar as the retirement of Renewable Energy Credits (RECs). Pomfret favors
23 renewable energy development where Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) are retired
24 against the State’s renewable energy targets. While developers and property owners are
25 free to sell the RECs as they wish, the Town strongly encourages developers and property
26 owners to retain the RECs and retire them against the State’s goals. For large-scale
27 development projects, the developer must inform the Town whether the RECs will be
28 sold out of state or retired.
29

30 **Impacts:** Ground and pole mounted shall avoid undue adverse impacts to significant
31 cultural, natural and scenic resources.
32

33 **Decommissioning:** All facilities shall specify conditions for system abandonment and
34 decommissioning, including required sureties (bonds) for facility removal and site
35 restoration to a safe, useful, and environmentally stable condition. All hazardous
36 materials and structures, including foundations, pads and accessory structures, must be
37 removed from the site.
38

39 The decommissioning plan for the a solar development project will provide details and a
40 cost estimate for removal of the solar facility and rehabilitation of the project property
41 back to its pre-project condition At the end of the life, the project will be evaluated
42 whether (1) it is financially viable to continue to operate the project as is; or (2) A
43 Section 248 amendment should be filed to repower the project with new solar modules
44 and equipment at that time; or (3) the project should be decommissioned. The
45 decommission plan also will address decommissioning in the event of project
46 abandonment. A detailed cost estimate will be included in the decommissioning plan.

1 The petitioner will establish a decommissioning fund in the cost estimate amount, prior to
2 project construction and name the Public Service Board as beneficiary. The
3 decommissioning fund would initially be funded by an irrevocable standby letter of credit
4 that includes an auto-extension provision provide for inflation using the CPI for the
5 length of the contract and would be issued by an A-rated financial institution solely for
6 the benefit of the Board, or security deposit to held in a federally insured bank in the
7 United States.
8

- 9
- 10 ● **Solar facility citing requirements:** New solar facilities shall be sited in locations
11 that do not adversely impact Pomfret, and the rural residential areas including
12 working farm and forest land. Solar facilities shall, therefore, not be sited in
13 locations that adversely impact scenic views, roads, and views across open fields,
14 hillsides, or ridgelines. All solar development must not use reflective colors; only
earth-tone colors acceptable.

15

16 **Prohibited Areas:** Solar facilities are prohibited in the following locations:

- 17
- 18 ● Floodways.
 - 19 ● Fluvial erosion hazard areas.
 - 20 ● Surface waters and riparian buffer areas (except stream crossings).
 - 21 ● Classified wetlands.
 - 22 ● Areas that will result in fragmentation of Pomfret’s working landscape, including
23 underdeveloped forestland and open meadows and pastures. Any development
24 must minimize the clearing of natural vegetation. These areas provide ongoing
employment and income for landowners.
 - 25 ● Rare, threatened, or endangered species habitat or communities as mapped or
26 identified through site investigation, and core habitat areas, migratory routes and
27 travel corridors.

28

29 **Wind Energy:** Power generated from wind is done through a wind turbine installed on top of a
30 tall tower, where it collects and converts wind into electricity. Towers for home use are generally
31 80-100 feet in height and are far less obtrusive than larger, commercial “wind farms” that have
32 become a subject of great debate throughout Vermont.
33

34 Similar to solar, wind energy is an intermittent resource, and its generation fluctuates in response
35 to environmental conditions. The amount of energy produced by a specific wind tower can
36 depend greatly on location, height of the tower and proximity to other obstructions.
37

38 There are multiple levels of potential wind energy generation, ranging from Class 1 (10-11 mph)
39 to Class 7 (19-25 mph). Commercial wind farms generally are sited in Class 3 or higher areas.
40 With this in mind, and as illustrated in Table 5, Pomfret has potential for 81 acres of large
41 commercial-scale wind energy. However, much of these lands are conserved.

1

Table 4 - Potential Wind Development Areas (Acres)

	Class 1 (10-11 mph)	Class 2 (12-13 mph)	Class 3 (13-14 mph)	Class 4 (15-16 mph)	Class 5 (16-17 mph)	Class 6 (17-18 mph)	Class 7 (19-25 mph)
Residential (30-meter)	8,852	453	0	0	0	0	0
Small Commercial (50-meter)	0	1,138	427	0	0	0	0
Large Commercial (70-meter)	0	0	5	76	0	0	0

Source: Vermont Energy Atlas

2

3

Agriculture:

4

5

Cow-power: Cow power is the conversion of manure to usable energy. While cow power is successful in certain areas of Vermont, Pomfret does not have large scale dairy farms that would allow for the quantities of manure needed for viable cow power.

8

9

Biomass: Biomass energy has the potential to supply a significant portion of energy needs, while improving rural economies, increasing energy independence, and reducing pollution. Biomass energy comes in many forms; virtually all plants and organic waste can be used to produce heat, power, or fuel.

10

11

12

13

A commercial biomass power plant would require a great deal of space to accommodate the various stages of collection and conversion of the mass into fuel before burning it to produce electricity. Therefore, commercial biomass energy generation facilities should be located close to available biofuels to reduce transportation impacts and costs. Water can also pose a problem as large commercial biomass facilities require large quantities to handle the recycling process of waste materials. Materials would have to be transported to and from the facility, so truck traffic should be considered in selecting a site.

21

22

There are currently no biomass energy generation facilities in Pomfret. Before a biomass energy generation facility is located in Pomfret, developers should prove that their proposed project will not negatively impact the rural character of the community or the local road system.

25

26

Hydropower: According to the Vermont Energy Atlas in 2013 three potential hydro sites were identified in Pomfret: Freeman and McCord, both located on Mill Brook Stream and Martin located on Cloudland Brook Stream. Martin-Cloudland Brook is considered “in-service,” meaning while it is not actively producing power, it has the basic infrastructure to do so.

27

28

29

Retrofitting the “in-service” existing sites presents the most effective means of adding potential hydropower while keeping environmental impacts low.

30

31

1
2 While these sites have been identified as “having potential,” a wide range of environmental,
3 economic, and permitting challenges exist.
4

5 **Section 248 Considerations**

6
7 To the extent possible, placement of energy generation systems should meet the purpose and
8 intent of “Ridgeline and Hillside Conservation Areas” (Part 15) of the Pomfret Zoning
9 Ordinance.

10
11 Placement of infrastructure systems of any type in Pomfret should ultimately and directly benefit
12 Pomfret residents in some measurable way.
13

14 **Residential Energy Efficiency**

15
16 There are a number of ways that the town of Pomfret can meet its local energy demand, first by
17 lowering that demand, and then by working to meet the remaining need with local, untapped
18 energy resources.
19

20 *Decreasing Energy Use by Changing Behavior:* Decreasing energy use by changing behavior
21 and by decreasing energy use by implementing energy efficiencies are key. Please refer to the
22 Vermont Residential Building Code handbook for compliance with residential building energy
23 and standards (RBES) available at http://publicservice.vermont.gov/energy_efficiency/rbes.
24

25 **Municipal Role in Energy Efficiency**

26
27 Although communities are unlikely to have an impact on energy consumption at the global level,
28 they do have an impact at the local level given their demand for and use of energy. The
29 relationship between a municipality and its energy use creates opportunities to have an impact on
30 local energy use reduction.
31

32 **Energy Committee:** Pomfret does not have an Energy Committee (EC), which acts as an
33 advisory board to the Selectboard and Planning Commission (PC) on all things energy related.
34 The EC is a volunteer group that has been appointed by the Selectboard for the purpose of
35 establishing and implementing the town’s energy goals. EC’s activities can include conducting
36 energy audits on municipal buildings, tracking energy use for these buildings, and working with
37 the PC on the Energy Plan.
38

39 **Auditing Municipally Owned Buildings:** Many towns in Vermont own buildings that are old
40 and inefficient in many respects. For instance, older buildings often have insufficient insulation,
41 wasteful heating and cooling systems, and out-of-date lighting. These kinds of infrastructure
42 problems result in higher energy use with the resulting cost passed onto taxpayers.
43

44 **Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE):** Vermont enacted legislation in May 2009 (Act 45)
45 that authorizes local governments to create Clean Energy Assessment districts. Once created,
46 municipalities can offer financing to property owners for renewable energy and energy-

1 efficiency projects. Eligible projects include the installation of solar water and space heating,
2 photovoltaic panels (PV), and biomass heating, small wind, and micro-hydroelectric systems.
3 Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing effectively allows property owners to borrow
4 money to pay for energy improvements. The amount borrowed is typically repaid via a special
5 assessment on the property over a period of up to 20 years; if the property owner wishes to sell
6 the parcel before fully repaying the obligation, then the obligation is transferred to the new
7 property owner at the time of sale.

9 **Energy, Land Use, and Transportation**

10 Vermont promotes development policies that maintain and enhance the “historic development
11 pattern of compact centers surrounded by rural landscape.” Pomfret by its very history and
12 nature is that “surrounding rural landscape.” Currently there is no compact center. Efforts to
13 direct future development to existing hamlets or village areas as proposed in the Land Use
14 chapter of this plan could reduce energy expended for transportation within the town.

15
16 Pomfret has no public transportation (beyond demand for the elderly) and is unlikely to have any
17 in the near future. However, because transportation is such a substantial portion of local energy
18 use, Pomfret supports the continued development of conveniently located Park-n-Ride facilities.
19 The closest Park-n-Rides to Pomfret are in Sharon and the Woodstock Park-n-Ride, which
20 includes two metered electric car charging stations.
21

23 **Energy Scarcities and Costs**

24
25 There are no scarcities of energy foreseen in the 8-year life of this plan. Our electrical providers
26 have plenty of power supply resources either under contract or available to purchase at this time.
27 Total energy demand is likely to shrink modestly in the near term as population is not expected
28 to grow much and efficiency is constantly improving. There should be ample amounts of heating
29 and transportation fuels for the life of this plan, but we must encourage a shift away from fossil
30 fuels to meet our goals. Wood is a plentiful local source of heating fuel, and many more cords
31 could be sustainably harvested than are being cut now. Plenty of sun and wind are available if we
32 decide to use them.
33

34 That is not to say that plentiful energy will be cheap. Fossil fuels have varied widely in price
35 over the last several years, and the overall trend is for dwindling supplies. Also, whether it is
36 carbon pricing or other methods, fossil fuels will have to increase in cost to disincentivize their
37 use. The cost of energy is not an issue for some families, but is still an issue for many, and will
38 be less of an issue for all if targets for better insulated buildings, switching to EVs, and using
39 heat pumps and advanced wood heat systems are met. An EV has much less maintenance costs,
40 as they have no engine or exhaust system, and the cost of electricity to power a car comes out to
41 the equivalent of about \$1.50 per gallon (in today’s value), much less than current gasoline
42 prices.
43

44 For many, the cost barriers are not the daily or monthly energy costs, but the implementation of
45 these changes to existing buildings and vehicles. There are rebates and programs available that
46 are income-based, and even for those that have too much income to qualify over time these

1 investments will pay off, but they still require obtaining financing or having considerable savings
2 on hand.

3
4 **Goals**

- 5
6 1. Higher energy efficiency in existing buildings, new buildings, and transportation.
7
8 2. The long-term availability of safe, reliable, renewable, and affordable energy supplies.
9

10 **Policies**

- 11
12 1. Pomfret supports the development and use of private renewable energy resources. Solar
13 projects should ideally be of a scale that promotes individual use, or group net-metering.
14
15 2. Pomfret encourages new significant public investments (including public recreational
16 areas and municipal facilities) to be located in close proximity to existing infrastructure
17 that utilizes existing roads whenever possible.
18
19 3. The use of electric vehicles and the installation of charging stations is encouraged.
20
21 4. The Town encourages residents to operate wood burning furnaces and stoves that meet
22 the EPA's efficiency ratings, available on the EPA website at:
23 <https://www.epa.gov/compliance/list-epa-certified-wood-stoves>.
24

25 **Recommendations**

- 26
27 1. Pomfret officials will participate in the Public Service Board's Certificate of Public Good
28 review of new or expanded generation and transmission facilities to ensure that local
29 energy, resource conservation and development objectives are identified and considered
30 in future utility development. (Selectboard, Planning Commission)
31
32 2. Pomfret officials will work in cooperation with state, regional and local agencies,
33 emergency service providers, regional suppliers and municipalities to develop local
34 emergency contingency plans that ensure access to critical energy supplies and measures
35 to reduce nonessential energy consumption in the event of an abrupt energy shortage.
36 (Selectboard)
37
38 3. Increase awareness and use of energy conservation practices, energy-efficient products,
39 and efficiency/weatherization programs through educational outreach to the public with
40 the assistance of Efficiency Vermont and local utilities. (Town Clerk)
41
42 4. Pomfret officials or volunteers are encouraged to track municipal energy use and costs
43 (for example: through the EPA's free Energy Star® Portfolio Manager Program) and
44 develop an overall energy budget to manage Pomfret's energy consumption, which may
45 also include the development of local generating capacity. (Energy Committee)
46

-
- 1 5. Implementation of energy efficiency measures are encouraged for existing and future
2 facilities as opportunities arise (e.g., facility retrofits, renovations, and equipment
3 upgrades). (Energy Committee)
4
- 5 6. Town officials are encouraged to develop municipal procurement and purchasing policies
6 that incorporate life-cycle costs (purchase, energy, operation, maintenance and disposal
7 costs) for future purchases that emphasize products that are energy efficient (e.g., Energy
8 Star® rated). Durable, recyclable, non-toxic, and manufactured products with post-
9 consumer recycled material should be available locally. (Energy Committee)
10
- 11 7. Facility maintenance and operation policies that maximize energy efficiency while
12 maintaining comfort levels for employees and visitors are encouraged. Examples include
13 installation of day-lighting tubes, programmable thermostats, occupancy light sensors,
14 smart strips and energy star appliances. (Energy Committee)
15
- 16 8. Consideration of the benefits of using regionally available alternative fuels, such as
17 biodiesel, in municipal vehicles is encouraged. (Energy Committee)
18
19

Chapter 6: TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

Transportation in Pomfret relies primarily on a network of paved and gravel town highways. It is not Pomfret's intention to build new roads, significantly improve old roads or to pave existing Class 3 roads. Because more roads lead to more energy use, the Town will continue to provide economical ways of moving goods, services, and people at a safe speed within and through Pomfret via an existing network of roads.

Town Highways

Pomfret's 2022 map of roads, including legal trails, is in the town office and available [here](#):

The State uses four classifications of roads to distribute financial aid to towns for road repair. State aid to a town decreases on a per mile basis from Class 1 to Class 3. The town does not receive any state aid for Class 4 roads and trails. The roads and their respective classifications in Pomfret are:

State Highways: Pomfret's only state highway is the 1.4-mile section of Route 12 in the southwest corner of the Town.

Class 1: Pomfret has no Class 1 Town highways.

Class 2: Town highways serve through traffic from one community to another and are paved. The Town of Pomfret maintains 14.7 miles of Class 2 highways. These are:

- Woodstock Town Line to West Hartford Town Line - Pomfret Road: 10.15 Mi.
- South Pomfret to Barnard Town Line - Stage Road: 2.81 Mi.
- Hewitt's Corners to Sharon Town Line - Howe Hill Road: 1.77 Mi.

Pomfret Rd. and Howe Hill are part of the Federal Aid System and classed by the state as principal arterials.

Class 3: Town highways are all the other Town roads that are maintained year-round. In Pomfret, there are 47.25 miles of Class 3 roads that are all gravel.

Class 4: Town highways are not maintained by the Town except for bridge and culvert repairs, and occasional grading. Pomfret has 6.6 miles of Class 4 roads. These roads often have considerable recreational use.

All town highways have a 3-rod or 49.5-foot right-of-way by state statute, unless surveyed or otherwise deeded.

1 **Legal Trails** are Town rights-of-way, usually former Class 4 roads. They are no longer
2 maintained and may be restricted to non-motorized use.

3
4 **Discontinued highways** were previously town roads, but their rights-of-way have been
5 transferred to adjoining landowners. Neither the public nor the Town has any residual rights in
6 discontinued highways.

7 **Road Maintenance**

8 The cost of maintaining the Town highways is second only to the cost of education in the Town
9 budget. Pomfret's public highway system is by far the largest asset in Pomfret. With this fact in
10 mind, maintenance practices should be directed to preserve the life of this asset over the long
11 term for the benefit of the greatest number of users.

12
13 Summer maintenance is a matter of trying to repair and prevent the deterioration of the roads,
14 both gravel and paved. A regular reclaiming and repaving program has continued for several
15 years, retreatment should be done as needed. Some years several miles have been repaved, some
16 of which will barely last a year because of poor underlying road structure. In other years short
17 sections of highway have been completely rebuilt including the underlying base, whose repairs
18 should last for many years. Pomfret will continue to perform routine maintenance on ditches and
19 culverts.

20 **Safety**

21 **Highway Department**

22 The Highway Department has a Road Foreman, appointed by the Selectboard, and full-time
23 employees. See the Pomfret Annual Report for a current listing of Town Highway Equipment.
24 Major equipment replacement is based on a ten-year Capital Equipment Replacement plan with
25 annual allocations to the Highway Equipment Reserve Account. Both the Replacement Plan and
26 the Reserve Account are included in the annual Town Reports and updated each year based on
27 projected costs and the anticipated service life of the equipment. This plan allows for equipment
28 to be replaced before the maintenance costs become excessive and provides for level funding
29 from year to year.

30
31 With the current population and its relatively stagnant rate of increase, the operation of the
32 highway department and its inventory of equipment seem to be adequate.

33 **Ordinances**

34 There are Town Highway Ordinances relating to speeding, road improvement, and driveway
35 access. A map of Town roads (Map #3) is included in Appendix C and in the link provided at the
36 top of this section.

37 **Private Roads**

38
39 The Town should be concerned about private roads or driveways for three reasons:

-
- 1 ● The intersection of private roads with town roads must be safe and not cause damage to town
2 roads. The sight lines must allow for the speed limit on the road. Ideally, the intersection
3 angle should be as close to 90° as possible, and the elevation and grade of the private road,
4 relative to the town road, should be designed to prevent gravel washing into the road. All
5 new or modified driveways require an Access Permit issued by the Selectboard after they
6 review the proposed plans and determine that they meet the specifications of the Town
7 driveway access ordinance. The access permit only regulates the access point, not the entire
8 drive or road.

 - 9 ● How private roads and driveways are constructed determines if emergency vehicles are able
10 to reach residences and businesses year-round. Pomfret currently does not review or approve
11 plans for private roads/drives except where they intersect with the town road, unless they are
12 part of a major subdivision or are in the Ridgeline Zone. Many towns have regulations setting
13 minimum standards for construction of private roads, particularly the maximum grade and
14 minimum width.

 - 15 ● Private roads and drives can have a negative impact on the natural resources and scenic
16 beauty of the Town. Poorly constructed roads can cause soil erosion during and after
17 construction. Improper installation of driveway culverts can exacerbate siltation and drainage
18 problems. Poorly sited roads can disturb wetlands or wildlife habitats. Roads built in open
19 fields and on ridgelines can intrude on agricultural land and viewsheds.

20 **Bicycle/Pedestrian Transportation**

21
22 Pomfret does not have any sidewalks or bicycle facilities (such as racks) anywhere in town.
23 However, bicyclists within town and across the region travel Pomfret's roads to enjoy the scenic
24 and rural landscapes. Paved roads in town generally lack any shoulder and are therefore difficult
25 to safely bike or walk along. Pomfret Road is a popular bike route.

26 **Public Transportation**

27 The common view is that rural communities like Pomfret do not have the population to support a
28 public transportation system. The exception is the school bus system where a portion of the
29 community goes to the same places (Woodstock Elementary School, the Prosper Valley School,
30 and Woodstock Union High School) at the same time each school day morning. The van picking
31 up senior citizens at their homes and transporting them to the Thompson Senior Center in
32 Woodstock is also a public transportation system. Although not as efficient as the school bus
33 system, it is an important service to many of Pomfret's older residents.

34
35 Tri-Valley Transit, a non-profit organization based locally in Randolph, Vermont, is the local
36 transit provider in this region. Essentially, they respond to individual needs for transportation to
37 medical centers or elsewhere by acting as a coordination center for a list of volunteer drivers.
38 The service, available to Pomfret residents, is supported by minimal fees in addition to federal
39 and state funding. The Thompson Senior Center also has a van for the same purpose.

40
41 Short of more formal transit, carpooling, either by private arrangements or through Vermont
42 Rideshare, would have the benefit of minimizing dependence on private autos. Locating a Park

1 and Ride facility in Pomfret would facilitate carpooling. These have been established in other
2 small Vermont towns. The closest Park and Ride facility to Pomfret is located in Woodstock,
3 Vermont.

4
5 The Vermonter is an Amtrak passenger train line running between Washington, D.C., and St.
6 Albans, Vermont. It stops locally in Randolph and White River Junction. The closest regional
7 airport is in Lebanon, New Hampshire.

8 **Regional Transportation**

9 Regional transportation planning in Vermont is now the joint responsibility of the Regional
10 Planning Commissions and the state highway engineers in Montpelier. The Two Rivers-
11 Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission has a Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)
12 made up of representatives from all towns in the region. The TAC is charged with creating a
13 regional transportation plan that is coordinated with land use planning and is responsive to local
14 needs and concerns.

15
16 Of special concern to Pomfret is traffic generated in other towns and flowing through Pomfret to
17 other towns such as Hartford or Woodstock, or to Interstate 89. Further, the Town will not
18 support so-called transportation system improvements that would effectively divert traffic from
19 neighboring communities with state highways to or through rural towns such as Pomfret.

20 **Long-Range Goals**

- 21
22 1. To maintain Pomfret's roads in a manner that promotes public safety, is consistent with
23 land use goals, does not degrade the environment, and efficiently moves people, goods,
24 and services.
25
26 2. To encourage biking, walking, public transit, electric vehicles, and other means of
27 transportation that use less energy or fossil fuels.

28 **Policies**

- 29
30 1. Continue to perform maintenance on roads as needed.
31
32 2. Set appropriate speed limits which will improve safety.
33
34 3. Promote the efficient movement of traffic, while setting appropriate speed limits and
35 taking into consideration pedestrian use, built-up areas, and schools.
36
37 4. The Town will not build new roads, pave existing Class 3 roads, or accept ownership of
38 private roads to accommodate development unless such actions provide long term
39 benefits outweighing costs to the Town as a whole.
40
41 5. Any proposed new private road or driveway that serves two or more residences shall
42 meet minimum standards of construction, grade, and width to permit access by
43 emergency vehicles.

-
- 1
2 6. Road improvements that would reduce bicycle safety or discourage cycling will not be
3 supported in any sense.

4 **Recommended Actions**

- 5 1. The Selectboard should develop a long-range plan and budget to reconstruct and
6 resurface a percentage of the paved town roads every year to reduce deferred
7 maintenance.
8
9 2. The Selectboard should work with legislative representatives to change state regulations
10 governing speed limits on gravel roads by granting more local control.
11
12 3. The Road Foreman should make recommendations to the Selectboard about road
13 maintenance and improvements.
14
15 4. The Selectboard shall continue use of the maximum amounts of federal and state aid
16 available for highways.
17
18 5. The County Sheriff and State Police may provide for enforcement of the Town Traffic
19 Ordinance to reduce the high number of vehicles that travel at excessive speeds and
20 damage paved roads.

1 **Chapter 7: TOWN SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

2 **Introduction**

3 Pomfret's Town government provides services and facilities funded by property taxes. The most
4 expensive of these are education (75 percent of the Town budget) and highway maintenance (20
5 percent), both of which are discussed in separate chapters. The subject of this chapter is the
6 remaining 5 percent of the Town budget: the cost of Town government, fire and police
7 protection, disposal of solid waste, planning and zoning, and recreation. As towns grow and
8 residents raise their expectations of services their town should provide, the overall cost of these
9 services has the potential to grow at a disproportionately faster rate than the tax base.

10 **Town Government**

11 Pomfret is governed by an elected five-member Selectboard. The Selectboard also has a part-
12 time administrative assistant.

13
14 The Pomfret Town Clerk and Treasurer are also elected at Town Meeting and are part-time,
15 salaried positions. The Town Clerk and Treasurer each have assistants. In addition to performing
16 official duties, the Town Clerk serves as the liaison between other Town officials and the public.
17 An increase in land sales and the rate of development could increase the administrative workload
18 of the Town Clerk.

19
20 The three elected Listers are paid by the hour to perform a highly technical job of evaluating
21 Town property. The Town's core employees and officers – the Listers, Town Clerk, Treasurer,
22 and anyone else working on Town business – share space in the Town Office in the recently
23 updated historic Center School across the road from the Town Hall. The Selectboard meets there
24 regularly, and most of the Town's records are protected there in a fireproof vault.

25 **Emergency Services**

26 **FAST Squad and Ambulance**

27 The Pomfret FAST Squad is a group of volunteers with either First Responder or Emergency
28 Medical Training who respond to medical emergencies in the Town. They are dispatched at the
29 same time an ambulance is called but arrive sooner and administer first aid and stabilize the
30 patient until the ambulance arrives. Their equipment is purchased with donated funds.

31
32 Ambulance service in Pomfret is provided by the Town of Woodstock which has two
33 ambulances and full-time dispatch service. The Town pays an annual assessment to have this
34 service available, and the patients are charged for actual usage. Unpaid bills are charged to the
35 Town.

36 **Fire Protection**

37 In November of 2012, Pomfret's two independent fire departments merged into the Pomfret-
38 Teago Volunteer Fire Department and now benefit from a coordinated department with improved

1 training, a single efficient leadership team, and streamlined administrative, budgetary, and long-
2 range planning.

3 Pomfret’s fire protection is enhanced through mutual aid agreements with neighboring towns.
4 Fire protection is supported by annual municipal funds, donations, and grants.

5
6 Fire protection in Pomfret can be addressed from other perspectives. The best fire protection is
7 prevention, which is the responsibility of the entire community, not just the fire department.
8 Community financial support and able volunteers are essential to fire protection in Pomfret. It is
9 important that all new development be accessible to standard fire equipment in all seasons.
10 Where possible, water should be available in all areas of the Town through hydrants on new and
11 existing ponds. Anyone planning to build a new pond or to upgrade an old pond should consider
12 consulting one of the fire departments about the installation of a dry hydrant. An inventory of all
13 dry hydrants is on the Town’s GIS system and easily available to firefighters. Existing burning
14 regulations must be strictly enforced. Houses and other inhabited buildings should be permitted
15 if they are designed to specifications allowing evacuation by existing municipal fire equipment.
16 Houses and access roads should be designed for access by fire and emergency vehicles at all
17 times of the year. Houses with steep access roads, those that are very large, or those without a
18 nearby water source should consider installation of a sprinkler system.

19
20 Community volunteers can assist the departments in such non-firefighting jobs as fundraising,
21 collecting important information, informing homeowners of the state law requiring smoke and
22 carbon monoxide detectors, and recommending fire extinguishers in appropriate locations. They
23 can also assist the Pomfret Fire Department in sales of this equipment.

24 **911 and Emergency Dispatch**

25 Emergency dispatch services for fire and ambulance emergencies are handled by the Town of
26 Woodstock. Since updated road numbering is complete in Pomfret, all residents can now call
27 “911” to reach this emergency dispatch center.

28 **Police Protection**

29 Pomfret residents depend on contracted service from the Windsor County Sheriff’s Department
30 and Troop D of the Vermont State Police located at the Royalton Barracks in Royalton for speed
31 control, safety and police protection.

32
33 The Selectboard can appoint First and Second Town Constables. The Town Constable handles
34 violations of the dog ordinance and assists in other emergencies. If the citizens want a higher
35 level of protection, options include hiring a sheriff to be available at certain hours, having the
36 Town Constable trained, certified and officially on call for emergencies, or sharing an "outpost"
37 trooper with a neighboring town.

38 **Emergency Planning**

39 *Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan*

40

1 The Pomfret Selectboard adopted a Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Plan in January 2005 that
2 lays out local hazards and actions to reduce damage from future disasters. When combined with
3 the Regional Pre-Disaster Mitigation plan, the local PDM Plan is the mitigation plan for the
4 town. The Plan includes a critical facilities map that cites flood zones and frequently flooded
5 areas.

6 *Local Emergency Planning Committee*

7

8 Pomfret had four representatives on the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) #12,
9 which covers 27 member towns in east-central Vermont. The LEPC has now been replaced by
10 REMC.

11 **Solid Waste**

12 Pomfret is a member of the Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste Management District
13 (GUVSWMD) created by 12 member towns to cooperatively manage regional solid waste in an
14 environmentally sound manner. The District is responsible for locating sites and acquiring
15 permits for the replacement of landfills. The district has obtained permits for access to a new
16 landfill in Hartland and is currently contracted with the City of Lebanon to use their landfill. The
17 GUVSWMD also contracts for recycling and hazardous household waste disposal with a facility
18 in Hartford. For any single town, regional cooperation is more cost effective than applying for
19 permits, building and operating its own transfer station and recycling center facilities.

20 **Child Care**

21 Pomfret supports the private development of additional facilities to meet the childcare needs of
22 its residents and may assist with seeking funding to develop these facilities in the future.

23 **Planning and Zoning**

24 The administration of planning and zoning in Pomfret is the responsibility of the Planning
25 Commission, the Zoning Administrator, and the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

26

27 The Planning Commission prepares the Town Plan for adoption by the Selectboard and prepares
28 zoning and subdivision regulations for approval by the Selectboard and by the Town. The
29 Planning Commission also sits as a quasi-judicial board to hear and review applications for
30 major subdivisions and all development within the Ridgeline Zone.

31

32 The Zoning Administrator issues building and use permits and is responsible for enforcement of
33 the regulations.

34

35 The Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) is a quasi-judicial board that hears and reviews
36 applications for conditional use permits, requests for variances, and appeals of decisions of the
37 Zoning Administrator.

38

39 Planning and zoning activities have cost the taxpayers very little in Pomfret. The Zoning
40 Administrator is a paid position, and the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board of

1 Adjustment are volunteer boards without paid staff. Fees are charged for building permits and for
2 applications requiring a hearing. State planning funds awarded to the Town as grants have
3 substantially contributed to covering the cost of rewriting planning and zoning documents in
4 Pomfret. The Town is a member of the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission
5 (TRORC), and pays a yearly assessment from Town funds, allowing access to technical
6 assistance on planning and other land use issues.

7
8 As long as volunteers continue to be available and the process is kept simple, the present system
9 seems to work. However, if the regulations are changed to require a more extensive review of
10 projects, the result will be more work for these boards and for the Administrator. Should
11 administrative help become necessary, permit fees comparable to those of other towns in the area
12 would cover that expense without using tax money. Any changes in Town zoning regulations
13 should take into consideration the cost of administration and the source of those funds.

14
15 The Town Garage, which houses all the highway equipment, is in marginal condition and needs
16 a major overhaul with a small addition. It is important that all the equipment used in the winter
17 be stored in a heated building with adequate space for regular maintenance and repair work.
18 Improvements to the Town Garage are long overdue: it is not in compliance with waste handling
19 best practices and safety issues. Energy efficiency issues need to be addressed. The town will
20 need to study and decide as to whether a major renovation will be more cost effective than short-
21 term fixes.

22 **Long Range Planning and Capital Budgeting**

23
24 In March 2016, Town residents voted, and the Pomfret Selectboard appointed a Long Range
25 Planning and Capital Budgeting Committee with the purpose of developing long-range plans and
26 cost estimates relating to the capital needs for Town equipment and facilities. A Capital
27 Equipment Replacement Plan was established and annually updated for Highway equipment, but
28 no long-range plan has been established and maintained for town buildings and the Fire
29 Department. In 2009, the town offices were moved from the old town clerk building next door to
30 the newly renovated Center School building.

31
32 The Town Hall and the Highway Garage are both in need of major renovations. Although a new
33 roof has been put on the Town Hall, as well as other repairs, the building needs substantial
34 structural repairs, energy efficiency improvements, modifications to meet ADA accessibility
35 standards, and life safety code compliance upgrades. The Highway Garage has many functional
36 deficiencies. A Town Building Reserve Fund was established in December of 2013 but a long-
37 range plan for upgrading and maintaining town buildings has not been created.

38
39 We have an ongoing capital budget plan to cover these expected expenses as referenced in
40 Pomfret's Capital Improvement n.

41 42 **Geographic Data**

43
44 Pomfret has access to VCGI (Vermont Center for Geographic Information) data and maps of the
45 Town's roads, structures, land cover, surface waters, ridgelines, and wetlands. New data are
46 added to the system regularly, the last major update occurring in 2012 from statewide digital

1 orthophotography. Geographic data is an important tool in reviewing proposed development as it
2 pinpoints issues to be addressed early in the process.

3
4 The Geographic Information System (GIS) is useful for long-term planning. Information on
5 soils, roads, topography, natural resources, etc. can be combined to determine areas of Town
6 appropriate for future development or areas where development should be limited. The fire
7 departments and FAST Squad already use maps produced by the GIS for emergency response.

8 **Recreation**

9 Pomfret's organized recreation facilities consist of a baseball field, a soccer field, and a
10 playground, all at the school grounds in South Pomfret. The school's multi-purpose room is also
11 used for basketball and volleyball. Pomfret sports activities are organized by volunteers and the
12 Woodstock Recreation Department. Baseball and soccer teams receive heavy participation from
13 girls and boys in elementary school. All students in the Town and several surrounding
14 communities are served by Ski Runners, a non-profit ski club, which offers alpine skiing at
15 Saskadena Six (formerly Suicide Six) and cross-country ski programs at the Woodstock Touring
16 Center, both at a very low fee. Ice skating and hockey are available at Union Arena in
17 Woodstock.

18
19 Opportunities for organized recreation at the adult level are available through the Woodstock
20 Recreation Department using Woodstock's facilities. Pomfret residents pay a non-resident fee to
21 participate in the Woodstock programs that include many sports in all seasons, arts and crafts,
22 dance, yoga, and theater. In addition, rock climbing is available at The Wall in Taftsville.

23
24 Organized sports and other recreational activities are limited in Pomfret by the lack of facilities
25 and the small population. Extensive recreational facilities would be expensive to build and
26 maintain, and it is more cost effective to utilize the facilities of larger towns. Pomfret has land
27 available at the Prosper Valley School for more facilities. If facilities could be built with
28 donated, State and/or Federal funds (with their inherent restrictions), a real benefit to the
29 residents, particularly young residents, could be realized. It is hoped such facilities could be
30 maintained with minimal local tax money. The community is fortunate in having a high quality
31 family ski area, Saskadena Six (formerly Suicide Six), which offers a variety of skiing terrain.

32
33 Informal recreation such as hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, bicycling, hunting, and
34 fishing contributes significantly to Pomfret's quality of life. Protected areas such as the
35 Appalachian Trail Corridor and the Amity Pond area will always be available. However, as more
36 land is divided and developed, less land will be available for recreation. Existing rights-of-way
37 on Class 4 roads and legal trails should continue to be held by the Town. Whenever possible,
38 easements should be secured from cooperating landowners for future trails.

39 **Cemeteries**

40 There are currently three Pomfret cemeteries: Burns, Hewittville, and Bunker Hill. Space in them
41 is extremely limited, and the Town must plan to use existing space efficiently and acquire more
42 cemetery space. Interest from the perpetual care accounts currently pays for all Town cemetery
43 maintenance.

1 **Abbott Memorial Library**

2 Thanks to supportive community funding through town appropriations and private donations, the
3 library has met state accreditation standards continually since 1999.

4 **Town Owned Buildings and Land**

- 5 ● Town Hall with land
- 6 ● Town Offices, Brick Building, and town shed with land
- 7 ● Town Garage with land
- 8 ● The Prosper Valley School with 38 acres of land, more or less
- 9 ● Burns Cemetery
- 10 ● Bunker Hill Cemetery
- 11 ● Land, 35 acres, more or less off Joe Ranger Road
- 12 ● Land, 100 acres, more or less off Joe Ranger Road (former “Lease Land”)
- 13 ● Land, small parcel, at Kenyon Hill Bridge
- 14 ● North Pomfret picnic area (near firehouse)

15 **Building Improvements**

- 16 ● Town Hall
 - 17 ○ Electrical
 - 18 ○ Generator
 - 19 ○ Stove
 - 20 ○ Water Heater
 - 21 ○ Propane Furnace
- 22 ● Town Office
 - 23 ○ Drainage
 - 24 ○ Bricks
 - 25 ○ Supports

26

27 **Long-Range Goal**

28

29 Provide Town services and facilities that meet the needs of residents in a cost-effective manner.

30 **Policies**

31

- 32 1. Support the availability of high-speed internet access throughout the town to
33 facilitate economic development, education, and delivery of healthcare services to all
34 homes and businesses in town.

35

-
- 1 2. Continue the Town government as a volunteer effort to the greatest extent
2 possible but utilize technical and administrative assistance when necessary and cost
3 effective.
 - 4
 - 5 3. Supplement future fire protection facilities and equipment with community-based
6 fire prevention programs and support for the volunteer fire department.
 - 7
 - 8 4. Design roads and driveways in Pomfret to be accessible to emergency vehicles
9 year-round.
 - 10
 - 11 5. Where feasible, install approved hydrants in new and existing ponds. Such water
12 sources should be accessible to fire trucks in all parts of the Town.
 - 13
 - 14 6. Augment the limited police protection in Pomfret by community awareness and a
15 willingness to look out for the welfare of one’s neighbor.
 - 16
 - 17 7. Analyze the cost and complexity of implementing and enforcing the regulations
18 when creating new zoning, subdivision, and other land development regulations.
 - 19
 - 20 8. Consider the costs and benefits of expanding regional cooperation in solid waste
21 disposal, emergency services, and recreation facilities as the most effective way to
22 provide quality services.
 - 23
 - 24 9. Retain Town rights-of-way as recreational trails. New rights-of-way should be
25 accepted by the Town, when offered, for permanent recreational trails.
 - 26
 - 27 10. Acquire enough cemetery land for the future needs of the Town.
 - 28
 - 29 11. Continue to develop the Abbott Memorial Library as a resource and gathering
30 place for residents of the Town.
 - 31
 - 32 12. Support private sector efforts to seek funding to assist with the development of
33 childcare infrastructure.
 - 34
 - 35 13. Ensure that no barriers to increasing childcare capacity are created by future
36 changes in zoning regulations.
 - 37
 - 38 14. Encourage anyone planning to build a new pond or to upgrade an old pond to
39 consider consulting the fire department about installation of a dry hydrant.
 - 40

41 **Recommended Actions**

- 42
- 43
- 44 1. Study the short- and long-term needs of Town for government operations
45 including facilities, administrative help, and technology, and develop a capital budget
46 based on conservative estimates. (Selectboard)

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2. The volunteer fire departments should continue to enlist the help of non-firefighter volunteers to assist in community fire prevention and preparedness through education, inspections, updating dry hydrant and fire pond inventories, location of new fire ponds, etc. (Emergency Services Committee)

3. Encourage other methods of internment other than land-intensive cemeteries. (Selectboard)

4. Advise the Selectboard on appropriate permit fees for land development regulations to cover the cost of administering the regulations. (Planning Commission)

5. Routinely evaluate the use of town owned parcels of land to ensure they are being used according to agreements or deed restrictions (Planning Commission)

6. Annually fund building reserve account through tax dollars or private contributions. (Selectboard)

Chapter 8: HOUSING

Introduction

The cost of land, taxes, new construction, and existing limits the ability of many of the Town's residents and ex-residents who might want to live permanently in Pomfret to build, buy, and maintain homes in the Town. A housing plan should allow a diverse group of people from a range of ages and income levels to live and own homes in Pomfret. The high costs of land and housing have been major factors contributing to emigration from Pomfret, and this has altered the cultural and socio-economic mix of the Town's residents.

In previous town plans, data has been pulled from the census and other federal or state organizations that are estimates but not exact. This plan references specific data from the Town Listers to give insights into the housing dynamics in our town. Additional information on housing can be found at <https://www.housingdata.org/>.

Current Housing Information

As the Town has evolved from a primarily agriculture-based community to one that is predominately residential and a bedroom town for regional employment centers, there has been a marked change in the ownership of housing.

Based on the Town Listers' data, in 2023 there were 494 housing units in Pomfret, which is roughly the same as the previous 10-year period. Of those, 150 homes were classified as non-residents and 344 were residents.

The average rate of increase of housing stock in Windsor County during the 2000's was more than Pomfret's, increasing by about 7.9%.

Additionally, the median price of a single-family home sold in Pomfret has been consistently higher than those of Windsor County and Vermont, as a whole, over the last decade.

These data points underscore the general consensus that Pomfret's housing supply is limited, is not growing very quickly, and the cost to own is higher than in surrounding communities.

Land Availability

As of 2023, 18,664 acres of Pomfret's 25,280 total acres was enrolled in the Use Value Appraisal Program ("Current Use" Program). This number represents 73.8% of Pomfret's total acreage which is slightly more since the last town plan. The availability of land for housing is limited by the low turnover rate in general for properties in Pomfret. Steep slopes present a challenge to locating house sites and driveways, 74% of the land in Pomfret is on a slope of 15% or greater.

1 **Town Population**

2
3 From the 1980s through 2000, Pomfret experienced a steady uptick in population growth at
4 14.1% (from 856 to 997). However, according to 2014 Vermont Department of Health records,
5 Pomfret's population dropped to 894, a decrease of 10.3% from 2000 and an increase of only
6 4.3% since the 1980s. In the 2020 census, the town population was 916, representing a small
7 increase since 2014, but roughly stable over the last decade.

8
9 Regardless of population increase or decrease, all indications are that, like the rest of Vermont,
10 housing in Pomfret will continue to serve an aging population and people seeking to establish
11 second homes.

12 **Future Housing**

13
14
15 When trying to establish Pomfret's housing goals, one must recognize that any housing plan is
16 subject to regional economic pressures. The location of major employers across the Connecticut
17 River in New Hampshire has a profound effect on employment in East Central Vermont. These
18 dynamics are explained by the presence of large employers in the education (Dartmouth College,
19 employing 4,400) and health care fields (Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center) in nearby
20 Hanover and Lebanon, NH.¹ Locally, however, Vermont employers have left the region or have
21 cut back their work forces, though, according to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-
22 Year Estimates, the unemployment rate for workers in Pomfret is 1.6%.

23
24 While more than half of Pomfret's workforce is employed in high quality management and sales
25 jobs, (and the majority of the Town's working residents commute out of Pomfret to work);
26 looking at the trend in wages in the region, real wages (per worker) are an average of 10% lower
27 than real wages at the state level. This trend began in 1980 – nearly 30 years ago – and has
28 grown steadily since. This is significant since Vermont in general is not a high wage state, as are
29 states like Connecticut and Maryland.²

30
31 Vermont currently has a shortage of affordable rental units, according to Vermont Housing
32 Finance Agency (VHFA) calculations, and more owner-occupied affordable housing units will
33 be needed statewide going forward. All of the above data indicates an insufficient amount of
34 affordable rental stock in Pomfret.

35
36 National housing experts suggest that communities must provide affordable homes for essential
37 workers, such as teachers, nurses, and law enforcement officials, in order to compete effectively
38 for dedicated workers for these positions. Employers cannot stay in communities that cannot
39 provide an adequate supply of homes affordable to their workers. Local governments can expand
40 the supply of sites for new development through changes in zoning rules such as:

- 41
- 42 ● Making new areas available for development (for example, publicly owned land);
- 43 ● Expanding the number of homes that can be built in existing residential areas; and

¹ “2011 East Central Vermont CEDS Plan.” East Central Vermont CEDS Strategy Committee. (2011).

² “2011 East Central Vermont CEDS Plan.” East Central Vermont CEDS Strategy Committee. (2011).

-
- Zoning for a wider variety of housing types, like multi-family homes.

A diversity of housing types and sizes which meet the needs of residents of all ages and financial situations requires flexibility. Housing types may include single-family homes, duplexes, multi-unit buildings, accessory apartments, accessory or guest houses, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), manufactured/mobile homes, and Planned Unit Developments with higher-density housing. Smaller homes, such as bungalows and cottages, built in clusters can provide moderate-priced housing. Open space and resource protection incorporated into the site plan designs for multi-unit developments will balance the need for higher-density housing while maintaining rural character. All these should be thoughtfully considered and planned based upon the Town's needs and its ability to provide services in a fiscally sound manner.

Long-Range Goal

The growth of housing stock for all income levels at a rate consistent with the Town's ability to provide services in a fiscally sound manner and consistent with other goals and policies in this Town Plan.

Policies and Objectives

1. Encourage housing in areas capable of sustaining development based upon soil types, topography, accessibility, and where appropriate, serviced by common septic, common driveways and water supplies, while preserving the open meadows and pastureland.
2. Where appropriate, new Planned Unit Developments should set aside a reasonable percentage of the new homes or units for families with lower and moderate incomes.
3. Encourage landowners to find a suitable location for Pomfret residents to have access to quality affordable housing (sometimes referred to as "workforce" housing, not necessarily "affordable" from the perspective of subsidized housing).
4. Ensure construction of new housing meets the natural population growth and does not exceed the community's ability to provide adequate public facilities and resources (e.g. schools, municipal services, internet).
5. Encourage innovative planning, design and construction of new housing, or renovation of existing housing and historic structures, that minimizes costs, energy consumption, and visual and environmental impacts.
6. Encourage the creation of accessory dwelling units.
7. Encourage the existing housing stock to be available as long-term rentals for the local workforce.

1 **Recommended Actions**

- 2
- 3 1. Review planned unit development projects for compatibility with the planned rate of
- 4 growth of Town facilities and services, as well as all present conditions listed in our town
- 5 zoning. (Zoning Board/Planning Commission)
- 6
- 7 2. Consider the use of non-profit housing or land trusts for development of perpetually
- 8 affordable housing. (Planning Commission)
- 9
- 10 3. Encourage housing that involves restoration of existing structures into single or multi-
- 11 family rental units, using tax credits where appropriate. (Planning Commission)
- 12
- 13 4. Assess the current proliferation of short-term rentals in Pomfret and monitor to determine
- 14 if regulatory action is needed to encourage year-round rental properties for the local
- 15 workforce. (Selectboard)

16

1 Chapter 9: EDUCATION

2 Introduction and History

3
4 Education has always been important to Pomfret residents. Until 1991, Pomfret operated five
5 one-room schoolhouses, each with its own teacher. In 1991, The Pomfret School was built, and
6 all K-6 students began attending school in the new facility, which has plenty of outdoor space for
7 recreation and hands-on education in the fields, forest, and brook, as well as in the sugarhouse
8 and astronomical observatory that are part of the school property. Facing declining enrollment
9 and rising costs for education and building maintenance, Pomfret voted to merge with
10 Bridgewater in 2015. The Pomfret School campus was renamed The Prosper Valley School and
11 welcomed students from Bridgewater and Pomfret and tuitioned students from other towns.
12 Further consolidation occurred in 2018 when Pomfret students were integrated into classrooms
13 with other local students from the other six towns in the district.
14

15 Pomfret strongly encourages our youth to seek education beyond high school, whether through
16 community colleges, technical or trade schools, liberal arts colleges or universities, or hands-on
17 internships/apprenticeships. Our world is increasingly technology-based, and we encourage our
18 students to learn and utilize these types of skills to establish their own small businesses or
19 successful careers, which will make them self-supporting and contributing citizens in today's
20 society.
21

22 The State of Pomfret's Education

23
24 Given the low population of school-aged children in Pomfret and the district, Pomfret students
25 continue to receive their education with students from the other six towns in the Mountain Views
26 School district. Pre-K through grade 4 students are bussed to Woodstock Elementary School,
27 while grades 5 and 6 receive their education at The Prosper Valley School in South Pomfret.
28 Pomfret's grade 7 through 12 students are bussed to the Woodstock Union High School and
29 Middle School, part of the Mountain Views Supervisory Union (MVSU). Pomfret's high
30 schoolers in grades 10 to 12 may also take advantage of hands-on trade-based education as part
31 of their high school curriculum by taking afternoon classes at the Hartford Area Career and
32 Technology Center in Hartford, Vermont. Many Pomfret students take advantage of this
33 opportunity.
34

35 In addition to services provided to our students through the public education system, Pomfret has
36 other valuable resources for children and adults that provide further enrichment and educational
37 opportunities. Our historic Abbott Memorial Library provides book lending services, interlibrary
38 loans, e-book and video access, and an assortment of in-person programs and events.
39 Fortunately, we have the Artistree Community Arts Center and Grange Theater in South
40 Pomfret. This non-profit community center offers classes in visual and performing arts, culinary
41 arts, summer camps for children, concerts, and theater performances, greatly enriching our
42 community.
43

1 The Woodstock Ski Runners program offers school-aged children free opportunities to learn
2 alpine skiing at Saskadena Six ski area in South Pomfret or Nordic skiing at the Woodstock
3 Nordic Center.

4
5
6 **Long-Range Goal**

- 7
8 1. An educational environment that enables every student to strive toward their creative and
9 intellectual potential.
10
11 2. The town government, the local schools, the school district, and the community fruitfully
12 collaborate.
13
14 3. Continuing broad-based participation by all Pomfret residents in the process of
15 developing long-range plans should be encouraged.
16

17 **Policies and Objectives**

- 18
19 1. Provide a physical environment that facilitates learning.
20
21 2. Establish academic programs that teach practical skills, challenge each student
22 intellectually, and foster creativity, including those students with special needs and
23 talents.
24
25 3. Provide education for Pomfret children in a cost-effective manner that minimizes
26 property tax increases.

27 **Recommended Actions**

- 28
29 1. Continue to schedule school budget information meetings in Pomfret prior to voting on
30 the school budgets. (School Board)
31
32 2. Encourage parent involvement in school board decisions. (School Board).
33
34 3. Continue to encourage and promote community use of the school facility. (School
35 Board)
36
37 4. Monitor the effectiveness of the Prosper Valley School (Pomfret and Bridgewater School
38 merger) and evaluate whether additional merger(s) are necessary. (School Board,
39 Selectboard, Planning Commission)
40
41 5. Provide high school students with comprehensive vocational training so they can become
42 more employable in today's economy. (School Board)
43

-
- 1 6. Where possible, supplement classroom teaching with creative activities funded by grants
2 and foundations, such as the artist-in-residence program of the Pentangle Council on the
3 Arts. (School Board)
4
5 7. Provide community-based workshops and vocational programs for the community and
6 potential start-up businesses. Long-range planning and consideration of outside sources
7 of funding should continue to be included in this process. (School Board)

1 Chapter 10: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2 Introduction

3 Unplanned economic growth creates adverse conditions that have materially affected many
4 communities in a negative way. Therefore, Pomfret should plan for economic growth and
5 expansion in a manner that creates a range of employment opportunities, encourages rising
6 incomes, and raises citizens' living standards while considering the impact of such growth on the
7 Town. The following economic development plan provides for economic growth consistent with
8 the goals and policies of the Town of Pomfret as set forth in other sections of the Town Plan.

9 Past and Current Economic Activity

10 Historically, most of the economic activity in Pomfret was related to agriculture and forestry,
11 providing jobs for many Pomfret dwellers. However, Pomfret's business base has shifted to
12 service industries, retail, distribution, and professional occupations. According to the 2016-2021
13 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, a majority of employed people work in
14 management, business, science, and the arts, as well as educational, service, sales, and office
15 occupations. However, these margins of error are quite large due to Pomfret's small population
16 size.

17
18 The 2021 5-year ACS data shows that nearly 70% of those living in Pomfret work locally in
19 Windsor County. This shows the strength of the town's economy and local employers.

20
21 Pomfret's workforce benefits from economic development in the Upper Valley, and many
22 Pomfret residents find employment opportunities outside Town limits. Seventy-six percent of
23 Pomfret's workforce commutes to jobs elsewhere.

24
25 Future developments in the Upper Valley's overall economy and its economic expansion will
26 continue to affect Pomfret significantly in several ways. Expansion in regional commercial,
27 industrial, and governmental sectors will provide more employment opportunities for Pomfret
28 residents. Such expansion may also increase pressure on the Town's housing needs. Any
29 significant economic slowdown in the Upper Valley could force some Pomfret residents to move
30 away from the Town in search of employment elsewhere.

31
32 Though the overall economic climate in the Upper Valley has a large influence on Pomfret's
33 economy, the Town's own influence on economic development in the Upper Valley is extremely
34 limited. The Town of Pomfret only has the power to manage economic change within Pomfret
35 itself.

36
37 With this in mind, the Town's long-term goal will be to continue to encourage resourcefulness in
38 the development of small businesses, professional services, and agriculture-related activities that
39 will be consistent with the goals and policies in other sections of this Town Plan.

40
41 In developing criteria for the evaluation of economic development in Pomfret, consideration
42 should be given to how businesses affect neighbors and the community as a whole. The primary

1 criteria for judging such impact will be performance standards detailed in Town Ordinances,
2 with special consideration given to such aspects as public safety, potential danger to community
3 health, pollution, adverse impact on natural resources, drainage and water run-off problems,
4 increases in traffic volume and traffic hazards, noxious fumes, obtrusive lights, and noise
5 pollution.

6
7 Equally important criteria will cover the impact of a business on Town facilities and services,
8 and on its tax structure, and the potential for adverse effect on Pomfret’s scenic beauty and rural
9 character.

10
11 It is acknowledged that initial economic development through rising tax revenues may more than
12 cover the costs of increased demand for town facilities and services (including roads, schools,
13 fire and police protection). Studies have shown, however, that a secondary effect of significant
14 commercial development is likely to be increased taxes for everyone.

15 **Long-Range Goal**

16
17 Encourage the development of small businesses, professional services, agriculture-related and
18 forestry-related activity in a manner that conforms to overall goals of keeping Pomfret rural and
19 residential and which will not require Town expenditures on infrastructure.

20 **Policies and Objectives**

- 21
22 1. Encourage and foster the extension of high-speed internet services to all residents.
23
24 2. Support economic development activities that create significant job opportunities for
25 Pomfret residents without compromising Pomfret’s natural resources and rural character.
26
27 3. Pomfret should ensure that the municipal costs to accommodate economic growth, such
28 as road construction, road maintenance, and fire protection, do not exceed the tax
29 revenues generated by economic growth.
30
31 4. Principal (primary) retail is prohibited outside of South Pomfret Village. The definition
32 of principal retail can be found on page 291 of the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional
33 Commission’s Regional Plan, [linked here](https://www.trorc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/definitions.pdf) or available here: [https://www.trorc.org/wp-](https://www.trorc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/definitions.pdf)
34 [content/uploads/2020/09/definitions.pdf](https://www.trorc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/definitions.pdf)
35
36 5. The manufacture and marketing of value-added agriculture is encouraged.
37
38 6. The development of childcare services is encouraged.

39 **Recommended Actions**

- 40
41 1. Create performance standards to evaluate proposed economic development projects for
42 the effects on air, noise, water, and visual impacts. (Planning Commission)
43

-
- 1 2. Review and modify zoning regulations and performance standards to ensure that they do
2 not inhibit activities that provide supplemental income for Pomfret residents by making
3 use of Pomfret’s working landscape (Planning Commission)
4
5 3. Review and modify zoning regulations and performance standards to ensure that non-
6 residential and non-working landscape uses will be sited on a lot large enough and
7 screened such that there is no significant odor or visual or audible effect of the project at
8 the property boundary, and that the uses comply with state pollution laws. (Planning
9 Commission)
10
11 4. Review and update town landscaping guidelines and ordinances to ensure that applicable
12 structures are appropriately landscaped. (Planning Commission)
13

Chapter 11: REGIONAL PLANNING

Relationship to Municipal Plans

This plan focuses primarily on development and policy within Pomfret’s boundaries; however, it is important to recognize that how a community grows, and changes can be directly impacted by development that takes place outside of the community.

Pomfret shares boundaries with Sharon, Royalton, Barnard, Bridgewater, Woodstock, and Hartford. Without exception, the goals expressed in the town plans of Pomfret’s neighbors address the need to maintain the existing pattern of compact villages and hamlets surrounded by rural countryside while allowing for appropriate growth and development in ways that protect natural resources.

As Pomfret’s Plan has done, those of some of Pomfret’s neighbors specifically include objectives and policies that encourage diversified farming activity. This presents an opportunity for a regional approach to preserve prime agricultural and forest land and to diminish and control the effects of development on open space.

There are regional variations in the approach to development. Pomfret’s primary concern is to discourage development on land with agricultural and highly productive forestry potential, and to limit development in open space. Open space should remain available for agriculture, preserve natural resources, and maintain the rural character and scenic beauty of the Town.

Pomfret shares most of its western border with Barnard. The purpose of the Barnard Town Plan is to maintain and to enhance the existing pattern of settlement. The Town wishes to continue moderate development that favors expansion in the villages and discourages inappropriately sited development in open areas. Barnard has adopted Zoning Regulations.

Woodstock is located along the majority of Pomfret’s southern border. The plan emphasizes encouraging a rational and convenient pattern of development by balancing natural resources and agricultural land protection with residential, recreational, commercial, and light industrial uses. It also encourages affordable housing, public safety, economic growth, and protection of the historic settlement pattern. Both the town of Woodstock and Woodstock Village have Zoning Regulations.

Sharon is along the majority of Pomfret’s northern border and adopted a town plan that sets out several major land use goals including preservation of the community’s history, remaining adaptable to vital changes, and allowing access to the natural environment while protecting it from degradation. The plan defines six separate geographical areas in town, defines a purpose and several policies in each to help determine compatible types of development, intensity of use, and the conservation of natural resources. The Town has flood hazard area by laws and subdivision regulations.

There is a limited amount of land area between Bridgewater and Pomfret and that portion of land in Bridgewater where the town borders meet, is designated as low rural density on their future

1 land use map. Although the town has no zoning regulations, land use in town is guided by the
2 plan's goal to maintain established compact village and hamlet areas with medium density
3 growth areas adjacent to them.

4
5 Commercial and light industrial development is planned for existing Village and hamlet areas
6 only with no planned pattern of "strip development" along roadsides outside these Village and
7 hamlet areas. Rural, low-density development is located outside conservation areas or critical
8 areas, while avoiding existing agricultural lands.

9
10 There is a limited amount of land area between Royalton and Pomfret and that portion of land in
11 Royalton where the town borders meet is designated as conserved and agricultural/residential
12 lands. Royalton has Flood Hazard Area Regulation, but no zoning regulations. The Royalton
13 Town Plan has a land use goal of maintaining its rural village character, preserving scenic
14 beauty, natural resources and the cultural assets of the Town, while allowing for an acceptable
15 rate of growth.

16
17 Pomfret shares its full eastern border with Hartford. Hartford, in many respects, is the most
18 developed town in the region and hosts the largest population. Hartford's land use
19 recommendations encourage appropriate use of the town's manmade and natural resources.
20 Given the steady growth the town has experienced, the plan presents the community's vision to
21 increase density in already developed areas with infrastructure, manage density of future
22 development, protect scenic areas, open space and wildlife corridors, and preserve the historic
23 settlement pattern of compact villages surrounded by rural countryside, while supporting
24 agriculture, forestry and recreation. Hartford has Flood Regulations, Subdivision Regulations
25 and Zoning Ordinances.

26
27 None of these variations is so drastic that mutual concern for protection of this regional rural and
28 residential environment is threatened.

29 **Relationship to the Regional Plan**

30
31 Regional consideration of other topics in addition to land use would serve common interests.
32 These include regional solutions to transportation plans covering not only road networks, but
33 also public transportation; fire and police protection; economic development; recreational paths
34 and trails and special wildlife habitats that cross town lines; and prevention of contamination of
35 the water table that recognizes no surface boundaries.

36
37 Study in the area of transportation is proceeding under the direction of the Two Rivers-
38 Ottauquechee Regional Commission. The Vermont Agency of Transportation has made major
39 changes in how Vermont's future transportation planning will be done. This effectively places
40 much of the responsibility for transportation planning and decision-making at the regional
41 level. Current transportation activities for the Town of Pomfret include:

42
43 Three following examples illustrate the benefits of regional cooperation to Pomfret.

44
45 The Upper Valley Mutual Aid Association, a mutual aid system for fire protection, has existed in
46 this area for many years, rendering considerable benefits to its member communities. These

1 benefits include coordination of skilled labor and access to millions of dollars of equipment for
2 emergency services. Under this umbrella, fire departments train together regularly and assist at
3 fire sites when necessary.

4
5 The Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste Management District provides facilities for the recycling
6 and disposal of many types of solid waste for ten towns in the Ottauquechee, White, and
7 Connecticut River valleys. This cooperative effort offers efficiency of planning, extensive
8 marketing of recyclables, management of household hazardous waste, waste reduction and
9 disposal services for farms and small businesses, and concentrated use of disposal sites that
10 greatly reduces the possibility of widespread contamination of the environment. Towns in the
11 District financed the construction of a bridge across Interstate 91 to provide access to GUV's
12 proposed landfill site in North Hartland. GUV's statutory responsibility is to provide a long-term
13 solution for the disposal of its member communities' municipal solid waste. This landfill has
14 been designed to provide at least 50 years of disposal capacity. No town alone could manage and
15 fund such services.

16
17 The District Board is facing several major issues including:
18 Significant reductions in the amount of solid waste being generated in the District and state-
19 wide.

20
21 Major changes in Vermont recycling regulations require additional services.

22 The future economic viability of the landfill site with these changes.

23 Pomfret has four representatives on the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) #12. This
24 group of 27 towns is responsible for planning and implementing a regional program for coping
25 with emergencies that involve hazardous material and natural disasters. In conjunction with this
26 effort a comprehensive emergency response plan has been developed for Pomfret.

27
28 These three entities and TRORC have successfully demonstrated the value of addressing issues
29 of vital interest to us all on a regional basis. Extending the range of these common concerns and
30 seeking regional solutions to them is the most sensible direction in which to proceed.

31 **Taxation on the Preservation of Open Space**

32
33 There appears to be common concern about the effect of increasing property taxes on the
34 preservation of open space—a higher property tax diminishes the incentive for property owners
35 to hold land as open space and instead drives property owners to shift the land to more profitable
36 uses, typically development projects. Property owners have both public and private means
37 available to reduce their respective tax burdens and to assist the town in preserving its rural
38 character.

39
40 **Current Use Program.** Vermont's so-called "Current Use" Program (technically called the
41 Vermont Use Value Appraisal Program) provides property owners with the ability to reduce their
42 tax burden, so long as the land remains enrolled in a sanctioned use category, e.g., agricultural or
43 timber use. The Program is of vital importance to property owners in Pomfret—73.8% of
44 Pomfret's land area is included in the Program. As of Tax Year 2024, there are 18,664 acres
45 enrolled in the Program (up from 15,157 acres in 2005). However, the Program is under constant

1 threat of change and navigating the choices of reducing the property tax burden is difficult for
2 the average property owner.

3
4 **Transfer of Development Rights.** Property owners may enter into private agreements
5 (generally, conservation easements or leases) to sell or donate development rights to land trusts
6 or other organizations involved in preservation of open space. Sale or donation of development
7 rights typically result in state and federal tax deductions. As of 2024, a total of 6,500 acres of
8 land are conserved, which is 26% of the total land area of the town. Because of their perpetual
9 nature, imposing a conservation easement has been a traditional means to preserve land and
10 consequently the rural character of Pomfret. An overreliance on the use of conservation
11 easements may have detrimental effects on future land use decisions.

12
13 Residents of Pomfret should take the opportunity to learn from each other to benefit from joint
14 discussions about tax policy and how best to leverage existing and alternative land use planning
15 tools to accomplish the twin goals of preserving Pomfret’s rural character while at the same time
16 minimizing tax burden. Any statewide action involving property taxes will have a serious impact
17 on all of us.

18 **Goals, Policies and Recommendations**

19 **Long-Range Goal**

- 20
21 1. Work with neighboring towns to address problems related to common goals.

22 **Policies**

- 23
24 1. The exchange of helpful and mutually beneficial planning information that will have an
25 impact on development trends and conservation efforts is encouraged.
26 2. Active participation in TRORC to assure that Pomfret’s goals, objectives, and policies are
27 considered in regional plans is encouraged.

28 **Recommended Actions**

- 29
30 1. It is in Pomfret’s best interest to become and remain involved in any future transportation
31 planning activities. The Selectboard should appoint a representative to serve on the
32 Transportation Advisory Committee, as well as other transportation organizations.
33
34 2. Review the town plans of neighboring towns as they are readopted or rewritten to
35 determine their potential impact on Pomfret’s future. (Planning Commission)
36
37 3. Continue to participate in studies that look at the need for public transportation in rural
38 areas of the region through TRORC. (Pomfret’s representatives to TRORC and the
39 Transportation Advisory Committee)
40
41 4. Continue to meet with neighboring towns. (Planning Commission)

1 **Chapter 12: TOWN PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

2
3 Planning is significant only if it leads to decisions and actions. This Town Plan clearly expresses
4 the long-range goals of the community that will define the Town that future Pomfret generations
5 can hope to find. The policies and objectives provide guidelines for making decisions.
6

7 Everyone should accept that changes will occur in Pomfret. Adoption of this new Town Plan
8 (2023) presents an opportunity to direct those changes. The tools for directing growth are this
9 new Town Plan, Pomfret’s Zoning Ordinance with the Ridgeline and Hillside Conservation Area
10 Amendment, and Pomfret’s Subdivision Regulations. These ordinances must be reviewed and
11 revised based on this Town Plan as well as current needs and conditions. These revisions, guided
12 by the policies and objectives of the Town Plan, will be extremely important to the future of
13 Pomfret. They will be based on decisions made with the long-term common good in mind.
14

15 The policies and objectives contained within the Town Plan are designed to establish clear
16 community standards. Equally important is recognition by the residents of Pomfret that many of
17 the goals and objectives of this Plan can be achieved more effectively by voluntary actions than
18 by town regulations. Information about conservation easements, restrictive covenants, and other
19 estate planning techniques, when shared with landowners by the Conservation and Planning
20 Commissions, should help to lead to wise decisions by individual landowners. Such information
21 would also convey important tax and land planning options that can help to protect family lands.
22

23 Recommended Actions are listed at the end of each chapter of the Plan. These are actions
24 designed to achieve objectives, carry out policies, and determine priorities. The group with
25 primary responsibility for implementing an action is indicated in parentheses.
26

27 The less urgent actions recommended in each section of the Plan cover a wide range of topics.
28 Implicit in the word “action” is involvement. Residents are encouraged to consider the many
29 areas in which action is recommended and to identify those that are most interesting to them.
30 Contact the group responsible for future action and get involved. Decisions based on wider
31 participation will be all the more meaningful.
32

1 Chapter 13: FLOOD RESILIENCE

2 Background

3
4 The town of Pomfret, much like the rest of Vermont, is no stranger to significant and damaging
5 flooding. Perhaps the worst flooding in recent history occurred on August 28, 2011, as the result
6 of Tropical Storm Irene. Approximately 4-5” of rain fell in the area on ground that was already
7 saturated, causing extensive flash flooding. Due to the flooding, the Sessions Meadow section of
8 town was temporarily cut off; of the sixty-two miles of road in town, 50 miles were damaged,
9 three bridges were washed out, and 200 culverts had to be replaced.³

10 Flood Hazard & Fluvial Erosion Hazard Areas in Pomfret

11
12 Some lands adjacent to the White River as well as tributaries to the Ottauquechee River are
13 subject to periodic flooding. This is to be expected as flooding every few years is natural in a
14 functioning floodplain. Floodplains and Fluvial Erosion Hazard Areas (those areas where lateral
15 erosion is more of a threat than inundation) are unsuitable for development because of the high
16 loss potential for life and property as well as the limited ability of septic systems to perform
17 adequately during periods of high water.

18
19 Approximately, 521 acres of Pomfret are in the flood plain (see flood hazard areas visible in the
20 Future Land Use Map in Appendix C). Areas of Pomfret that are vulnerable to flooding or are at
21 risk for erosion include (but are not limited to):

- 22
- 23 • Bartlett Brook’s lower section, which floods regularly in spring
- 24 • The brook that runs along Pomfret/Stage Road
- 25 • Gulf Stream along VT 12
- 26 • Atwood Brook
- 27 • Pomfret Brook
- 28 • Cloudland Brook
- 29 • Mill Brook
- 30 • Streams that have been modified in the past.

31
32 The Vermont Natural Resource Atlas depicts unnumbered ‘A’ flood zones in Pomfret based on
33 FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMS). “A flood zones” are areas subject to inundation by
34 the 1-percent-annual-chance flood event using approximate methodologies. Because detailed
35 hydraulic analyses have not been performed, no Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) or floodways are
36 shown. In the A zone areas, mandatory flood insurance purchase requirements and floodplain
37 management standards apply.

38
39 The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) will be preparing and disseminating River
40 Corridor maps this year (2015) that may indicate areas of greater vulnerability than are depicted

³ “2012 Town & School District Annual Report.” Pomfret, Vermont. (December 21, 2011).

1 in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Areas of Special Flood Hazard may necessitate
2 amending Pomfret's Flood Hazard regulations, possibly requiring buffers that can go beyond the
3 NFIP mapped areas.

4 **Promoting Flood Resilience in Pomfret**

5 **Flood Hazard Regulation**

6
7 The next Irene will come, and towns need to minimize damage to infrastructure. Rebuilding and
8 buyouts are slow and can be difficult financially and emotionally. New river corridor maps were
9 released in 2014 by the State. Towns can use these to plan for and protect infrastructure.

10
11 Pomfret's adopted Flood Hazard Bylaw sets the minimum development standards allowed by the
12 National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Considering the potential for severe flooding in
13 Pomfret, it is sensible to consider alternative approaches to Flood Hazard Regulation.
14 Additionally, State Statute requires that all communities have policies and strategies that protect
15 Flood Hazard areas.

16
17 Any updates to the Pomfret Flood Hazard Bylaw that are more restrictive than they are now
18 would apply only to new development – existing development would be grandfathered and could
19 continue to operate within the area, until it suffers major damage or is substantially improved, at
20 which point it has to come into compliance with flood regulations. Potential strategies to protect
21 the Flood Hazard area could cover a wide range of options, including:

- 22
23 ● **Prohibition on New Development** – No new primary structures (commercial or
24 residential) in the floodplain. New modest accessory structures and additions to existing
25 structures are still allowed. A prohibition within the floodway, however, is a good idea
26 and is essentially mandated by the NFIP.

27
28 Also important to consider is exactly what the definition of “new development” will
29 include. The Planning Commission could include adding smaller additions and minor
30 renovations to existing structures over a certain size. This is not a commonly used
31 methodology in most communities as it impacts grandfathered uses and can be
32 challenging to implement. Some additions and any redevelopment over 50% of a
33 structure's value must be done according to NFIP standards, though.

- 34
35 ● **Prohibition of Specific Types of Development** – An alternative to an outright
36 prohibition on development is to identify specific types of development that should be
37 kept from being developed within the floodplain. In some communities, new residential
38 and commercial development has been prohibited in the floodplain. In others, only
39 residential has been prohibited. Decisions on which types of use to prohibit are generally
40 made with substantial citizen input with considerations for what will most substantially
41 reduce risks to lives and property.

- 42
43 ● **Increasing Standards** – Communities can choose to increase the requirements for new
44 developments in the floodplain while still allowing all or most forms of development.

1 Increased standards could include a requirement that structures be elevated higher than
2 the minimum standards required by the NFIP. Going one foot above the base flood
3 elevation is a common standard in the region, but going even further and requiring two
4 feet of “freeboard” can result in major reductions to flood insurance premiums. Such
5 standards could also include more specific requirements for tying down structures,
6 elevating utilities so that floods are less damaging, making structures more capable of
7 allowing floodwaters to pass through them (such as using piers instead of fill to elevate),
8 and using the No Adverse Impact standard to not increase flood damage elsewhere.
9

- 10 ● **Create River Corridor Protection Area** - Some communities have created an area that
11 extends beyond the mapped flood hazard areas. Often this River Corridor Protection Area
12 uses fluvial erosion hazard data as part of its basis but can also include simple setbacks
13 from rivers in all parts of the community as a way to deter development in areas that may
14 erode in the event of severe flooding.
15

16 Future revisions to the Pomfret Flood Hazard Bylaw will require input from the community
17 regarding the level of regulation they believe is necessary to protect citizens and their buildings
18 from severe flood hazard events. Provided that all parts of the Flood Hazard Bylaw meet the
19 minimum requirements of the NFIP, communities have a broad range of flexibility in which to
20 regulate the flood hazard area. For example, a community could prohibit commercial
21 development in the floodplain everywhere except in a village, because in some communities
22 such a restriction would be damaging to the village center.
23

24 **Goals**

- 25 1. To protect the citizens, property and economy of Pomfret and the quality of their rivers as
26 natural and recreational resources by using sound planning practices within designated
27 Flood Hazard Areas and beyond.
28

29 **Planning Principles, Policies and Strategies**

- 30 1. Only agriculture, recreational and open space uses should be allowed in floodplains.
31
32
- 33 2. New development within the town’s 100-year floodplain is discouraged, excluding
34 properly designed outbuildings and renovations that meet the requirements for Flood
35 Hazard regulation as stipulated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.
36
- 37 3. Ensure that any new development allowed creates "no adverse impact" through design
38 and mitigation measures.
39
- 40 4. Reduce impervious cover that leads to flash flooding and increase retention and
41 infiltration of rain.
42
- 43 5. Lessen the conflict between roads and streams by moving the roads when possible,
44 abandoning redundant bridges, or upsizing water crossings.
45

-
- 1 6. Adopt road and bridge standards to the 50- or 100-year storm level.
 - 2
 - 3 7. Continue to promote emergency planning for flood response.

4 **Recommendations**

- 5
- 6 1. Strengthen Pomfret’s Flood Hazard Bylaws to mitigate risks to public safety, critical
7 infrastructure, historic structures and municipal investments from inundation and erosion.
8 (Planning Commission)
- 9
- 10 2. Work with VTrans on improving the flood capabilities of state-owned infrastructure or
11 town infrastructure. (Planning Commission)
- 12
- 13 3. Continue to develop emergency preparedness procedures. (Emergency Coordinator and
14 Selectboard)

1 **Appendix A: Glossary**

2 The following terms are used in this document and may need further explanation for some
3 readers. For an expanded list of terms, please visit the Land Use Planning Dictionary at:
4 <http://www.greenbelt.org/research/land-use-planning-dictionary/>.

5
6 **Agricultural Land** – tillable land, hayfields, and pastures currently being used for
7 farming. Also land that due to its soil type, slope, and location merits preservation for
8 future farm use.

9
10 **Assessed Value** - the value assigned to real estate by the Town's Listers that is used to
11 assess property taxes.

12
13 **"Arm's Length"** - a real estate transaction between parties that are not related in any
14 way that would affect the value of the transaction, e.g. relatives or business associates.

15
16 **Cluster Development** - grouping structures in one area of a parcel or a project thereby
17 permitting the balance of the land to remain open and undeveloped.

18
19 **Conservation Easement** - a permanent legal recorded agreement between a landowner
20 and a conservation group, land trust, or government body, whereby certain uses of the
21 land are restricted, generally the right to develop the land. Other uses such as agriculture,
22 forestry, or recreation may be permitted.

23
24 **Current Use Program** - a State program originally designed to enable owners of
25 working farms and managed woodlots of over 25 contiguous acres to pay property taxes
26 that are based on the agricultural or forestry value of the land as opposed to the
27 development value of the land. The State of Vermont reimburses municipalities for their
28 services, excluding school costs. The effectiveness of this program has been eroded in
29 recent years by being under funded by the legislature.

30
31 **Development** - dividing a parcel of land; building any kind of structure on previously
32 open land and forestland; the reconstruction, conversion, or enlargement of existing
33 structures; and the change in use of a structure or parcel of land relative to any kind of
34 commercial activity.

35
36 **Development Rights** - the right to develop a parcel of land (see development above).
37 These rights may be transferred to another party independent from the underlying
38 ownership of the land and, when transferred, should be recorded in the Town's land
39 records. (See Conservation Easement)

40
41 **Forestland** - an area with a high density of trees. Historically, a wooded area set aside for
42 hunting.

43

1 **Forestry** – The art, science, and practice of studying and managing forests and related
2 natural resources. Modern forestry generally concerns itself with assisting forests to
3 provide timber as raw material for wood products; wildlife habitat; natural water quality
4 regulation; recreation; landscape and community protection; employment; aesthetically
5 appealing landscapes; and a 'sink' for atmospheric carbon dioxide.
6

7 **Geographic Information System (GIS)** – A computer based mapping and information
8 system. A municipal or regional GIS may include layers for roads, surface waters,
9 topographical features, soils, structures, land cover, land use, and structures. Points,
10 areas, and linear features are represented spatially (on a map) and an unlimited amount of
11 information about each feature may be attached to it in a database. It may be used for
12 resource inventories, transportation and land use planning, and emergency response.
13

14 **Goals** - long range aspirations that establish a direction the town should take.
15

16 **Infrastructure** - public improvements such as roads, schools, municipal buildings, and
17 sewer and water systems that support existing and future development in a community.
18

19 **Objectives** - measurable components of goals that are attainable within a set period.
20

21 **Open Space** - areas that are undeveloped may include pastures, croplands, forestland,
22 and transitional land that may be reverting from meadow to forestland.
23

24 **Policies** – Frameworks for designing courses of action that will allow achievement of
25 desired goals or objectives and may be used to solve problems or avoid their recurrence.
26

27 **Property Tax Adjustment Program (formerly “Prebate”)** - The Act 60 property tax
28 adjustment program (also referred to as income sensitivity) to help homeowners pay
29 school property taxes that exceed a percentage of their household income.
30

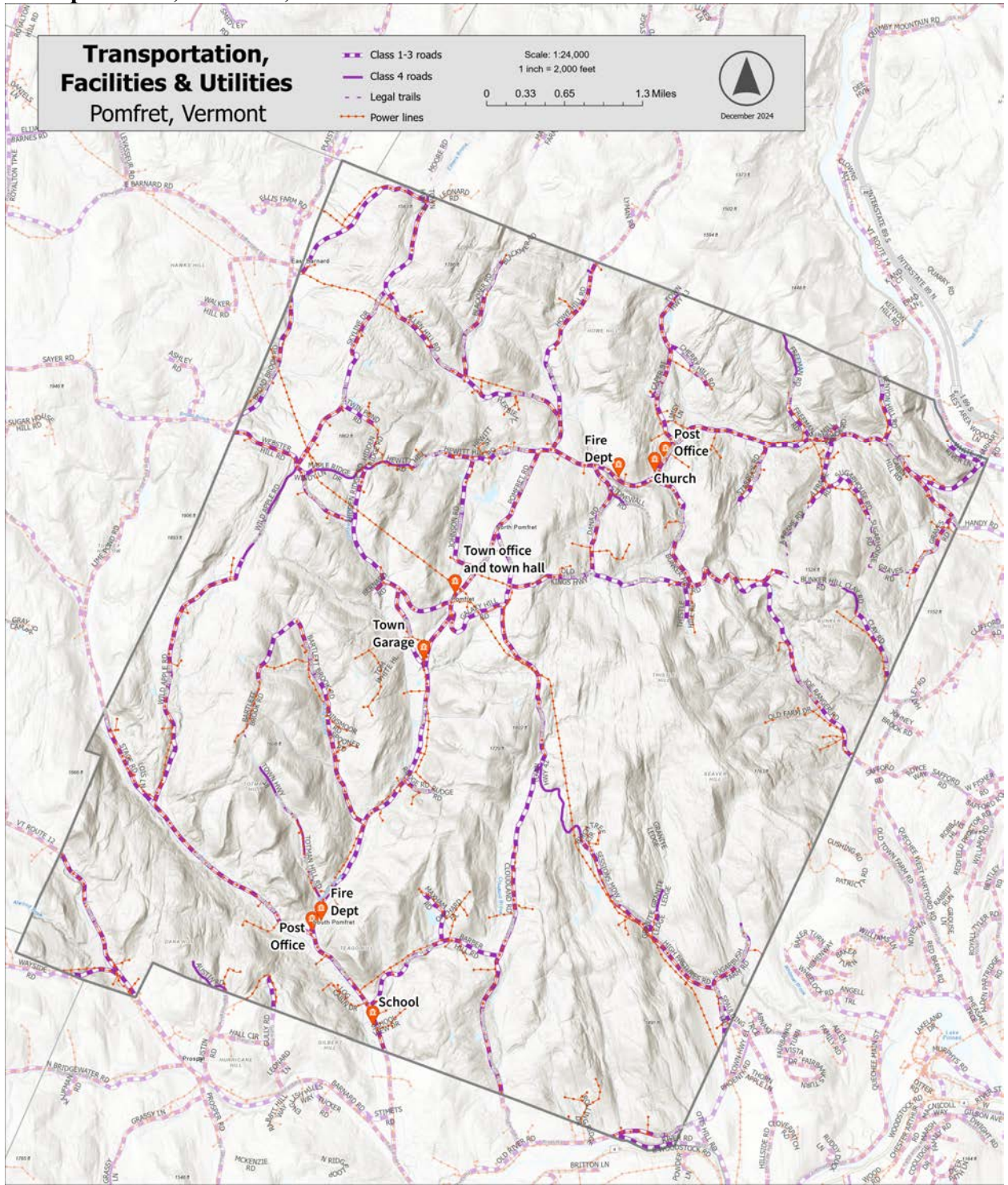
31 **Property Tax Rebate Program** - a state rebate program to ensure that lower income
32 property owners and renters pay less than a certain percentage of their income for rent or
33 property tax for their residence and up to two acres of land.
34

35 **Recommended Actions**- courses of action designed to achieve objectives and carry out
36 policies.
37

38 **Restrictive Covenant** - a restriction on certain land uses, usually development, placed on
39 a parcel and recorded in the land records.
40

41 **Wetlands** - areas saturated with water for a sufficient period of time, annually, to support
42 wetland vegetation. Also known as swamps, marshes, sloughs, fens, bogs, and ponds.
43
44

1 **Appendix B: Maps**
2 **Transportation, Facilities, and Utilities**



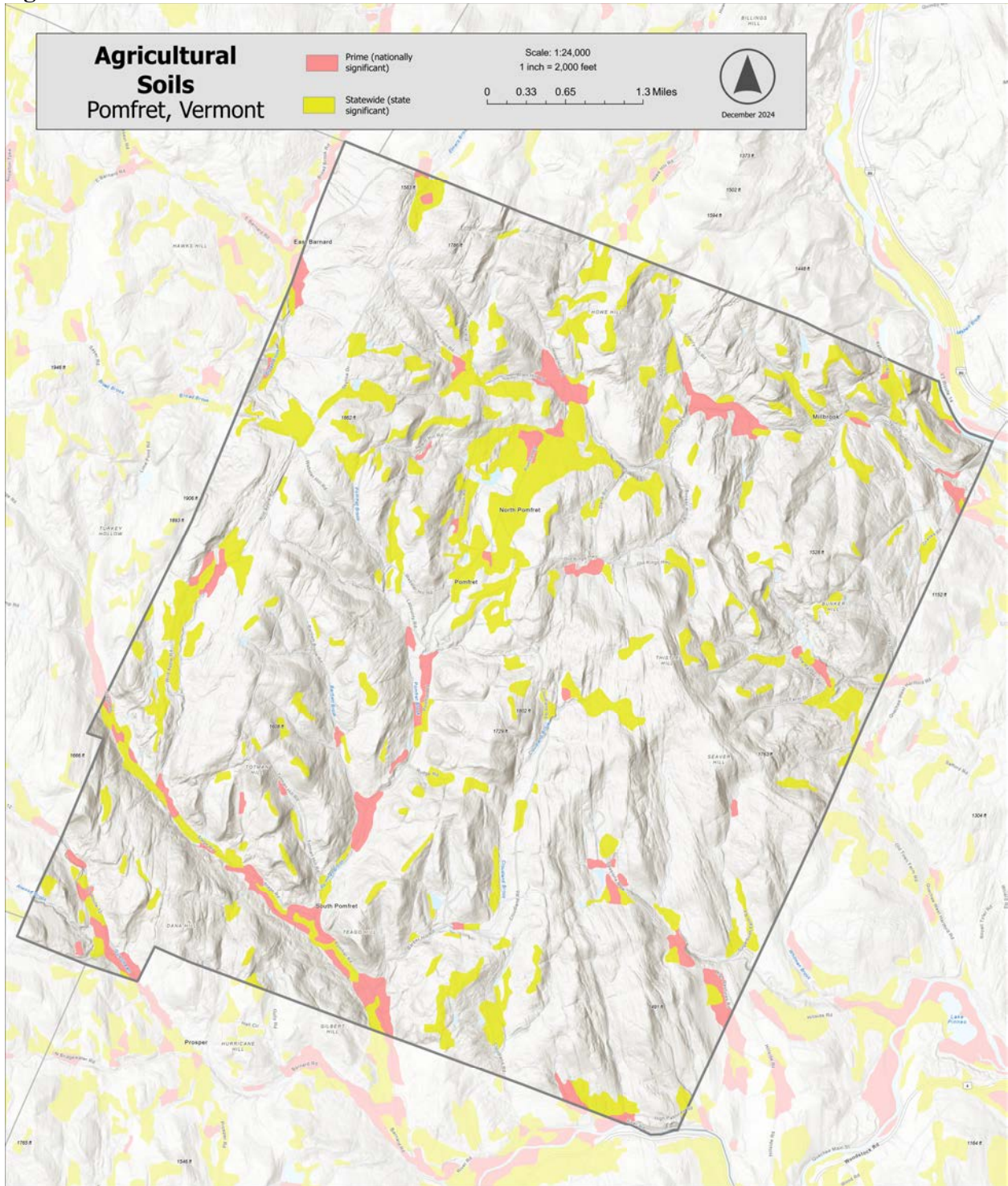
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4

1 **South Pomfret Village Area**



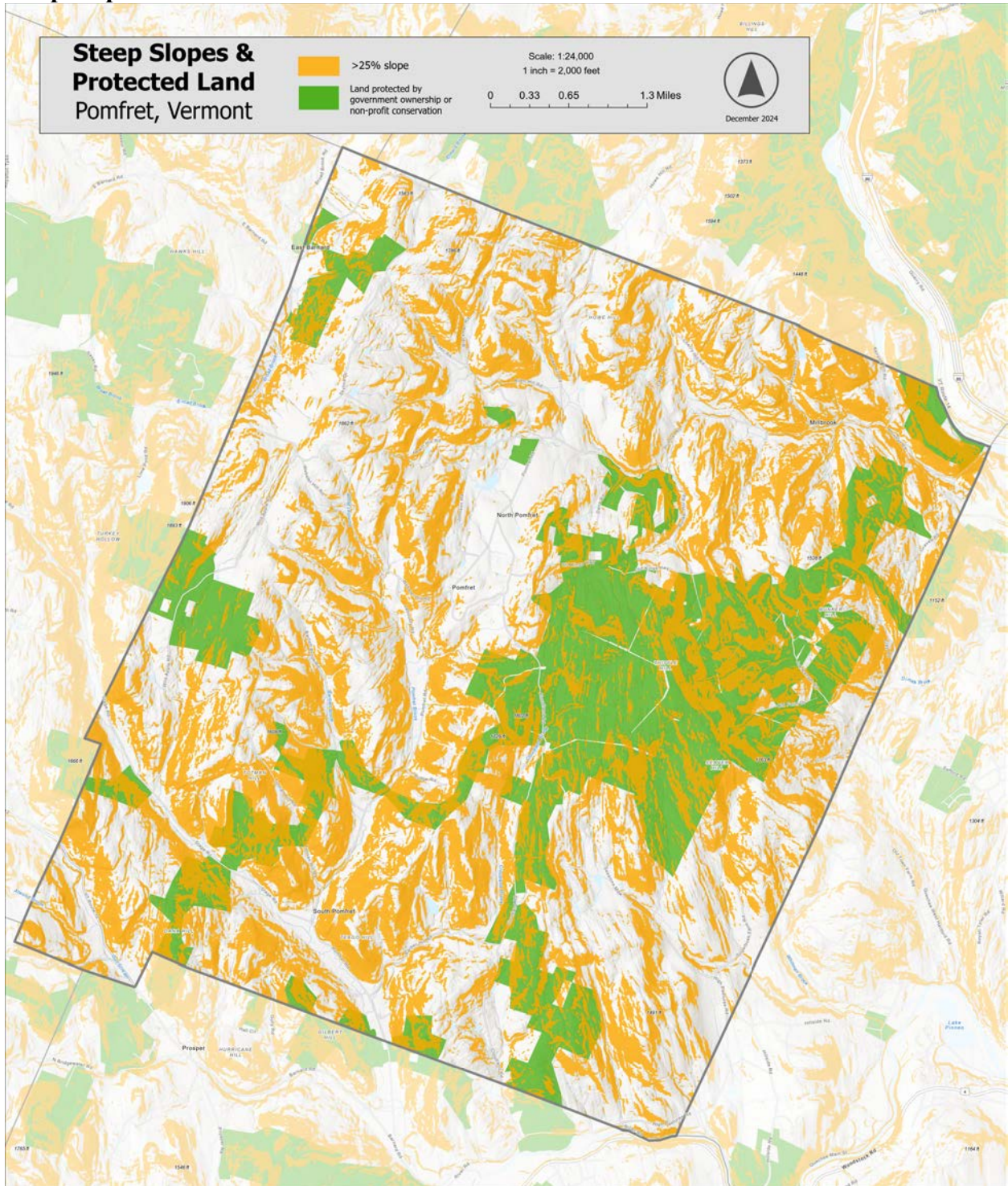
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3

1 **Agricultural Soils**



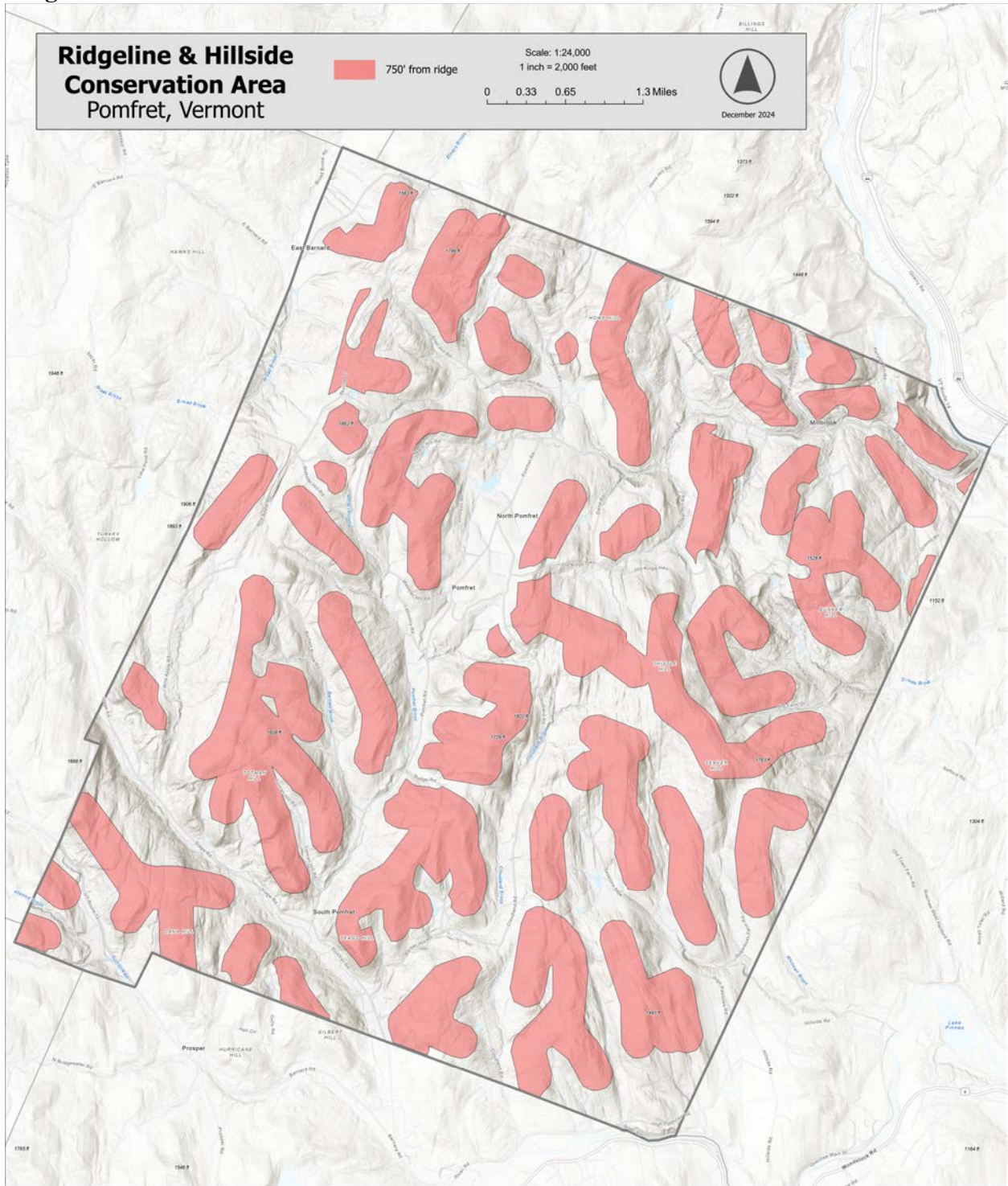
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3

1 Steep Slopes and Protected Land



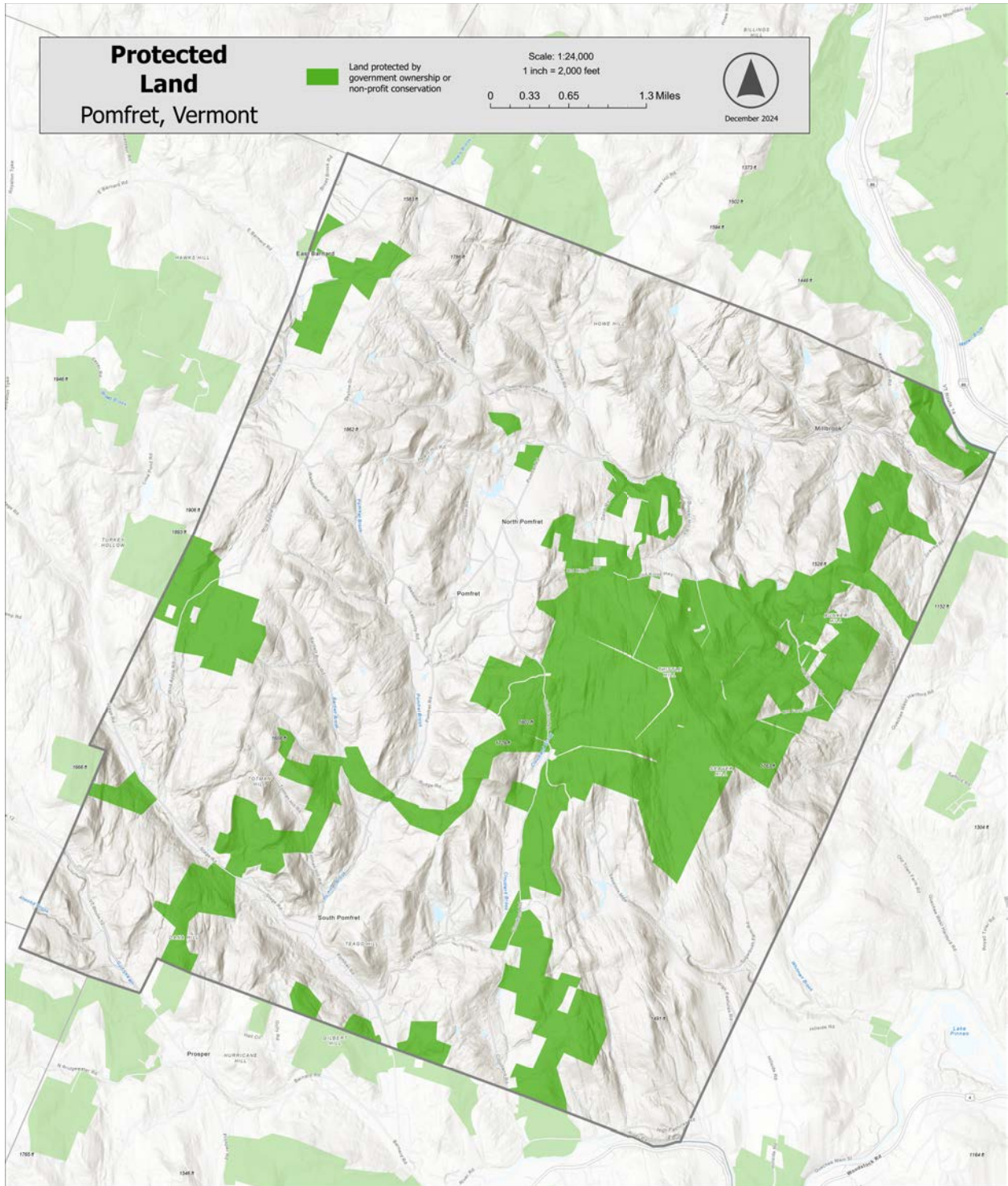
2
3

1 **Ridgeline and Hillside Conservation Area**



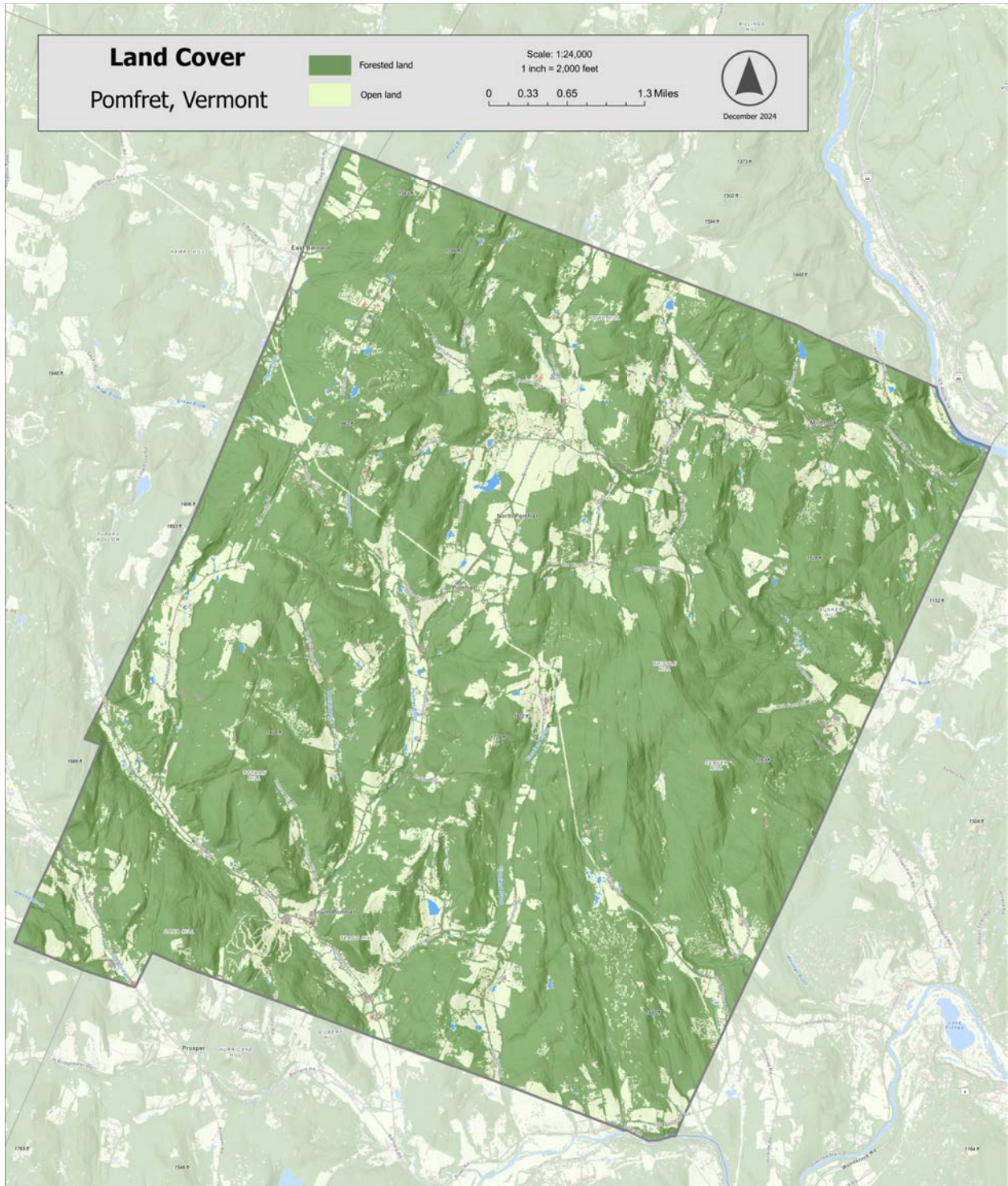
2
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1 Protected Land



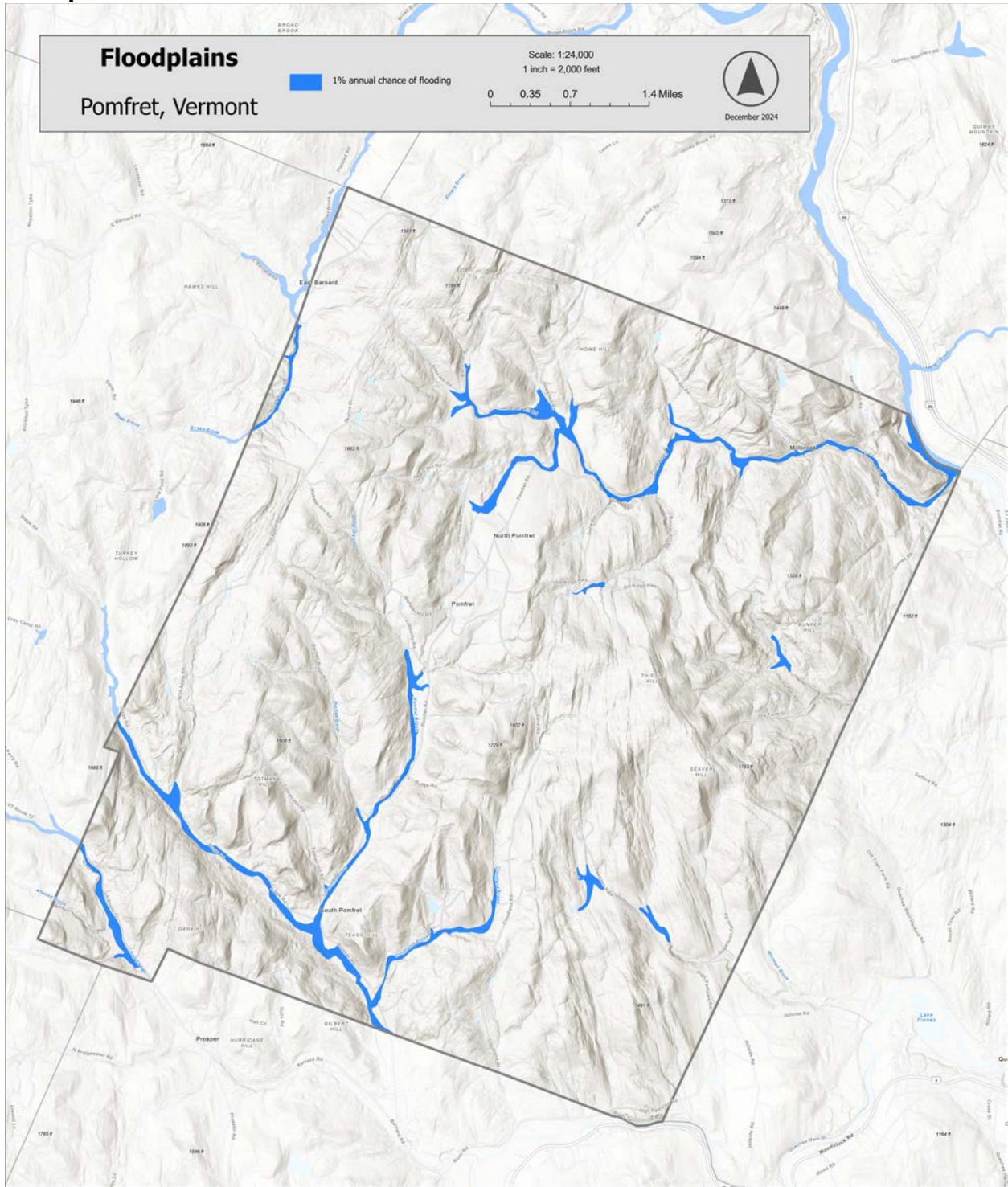
2
3

1 Land Cover



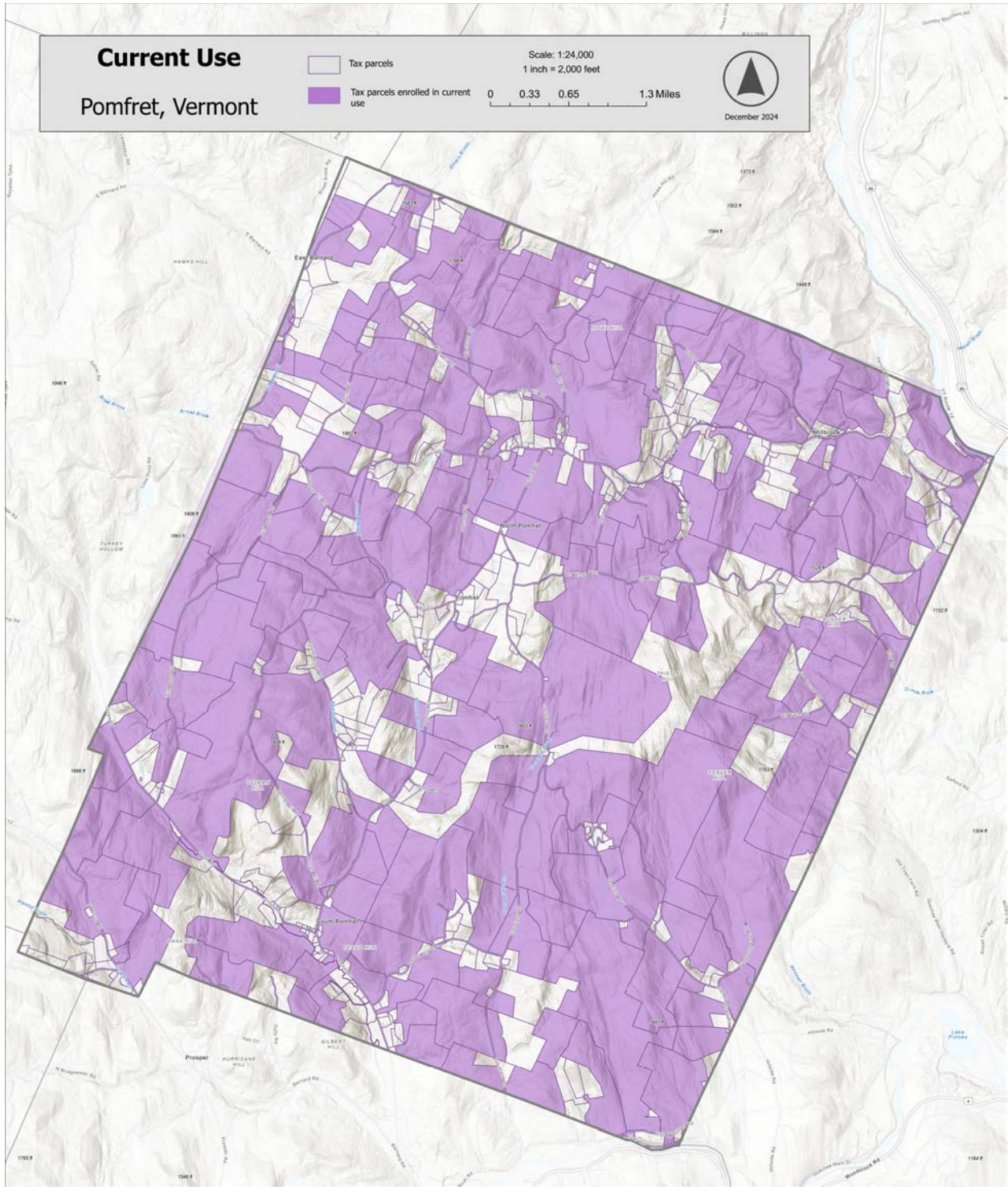
2
3

1 Floodplains



2
3

1 **Current Use**



2