



Wells Town Plan

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1. Introduction

1.1 What is the plan?

The Wells Planning Commission has prepared this Plan to help guide the future of the town.

The Plan, first developed in 1989 was updated and revised in 2005 with a great deal of public input. A special effort was made to include as many views on as many topics as possible in the update. Among the methods used were a town-wide survey, a town planning fair, and more than a year's worth of discussions at local planning commission meetings. The plan was renewed in 2010. It was updated in 2017 after five years of discussion and work.

This Plan reflects public input and is a guide to future growth and development in the Town, taking into consideration future needs and objectives of the citizens of the Town of Wells.

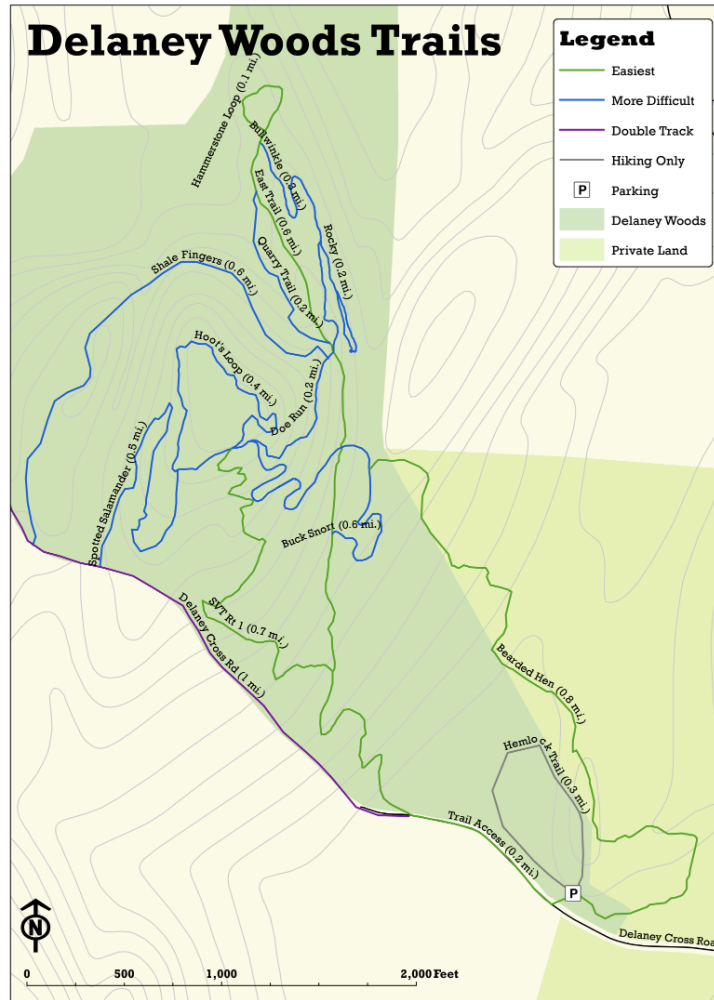
1.2 How will it be used?

This Plan includes analyses of current conditions and features of the town and includes a number of ideas for the town's future. While none of these ideas are binding, it is hoped that they will steer community members, town officials, and others.

1.3 Four Key Programs 2025-2030

Since the 2017 Wells Town Plan, in which the town outlined six key priorities – including programs or action to be taken – identified for focus, much progress has been made in key areas, including:

1. Establish hiking trails in the town to scenic resources
 - a. Since the 2017 plan, Slate Valley Trails (SVT) has developed 3.5 miles of hiking trails throughout the Delaney Woods. Slate Valley Trails maintains hiking, hunting and non-motorized vehicle (bicycle) trails. Trail users enjoy seeing wildlife and birds in nature.
 - b. The Town of Wells, in partnership with the Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA), used a 2020 VMBA grant to complete Phase 2 and the final 1.3 miles trail development in the Delaney Woods.



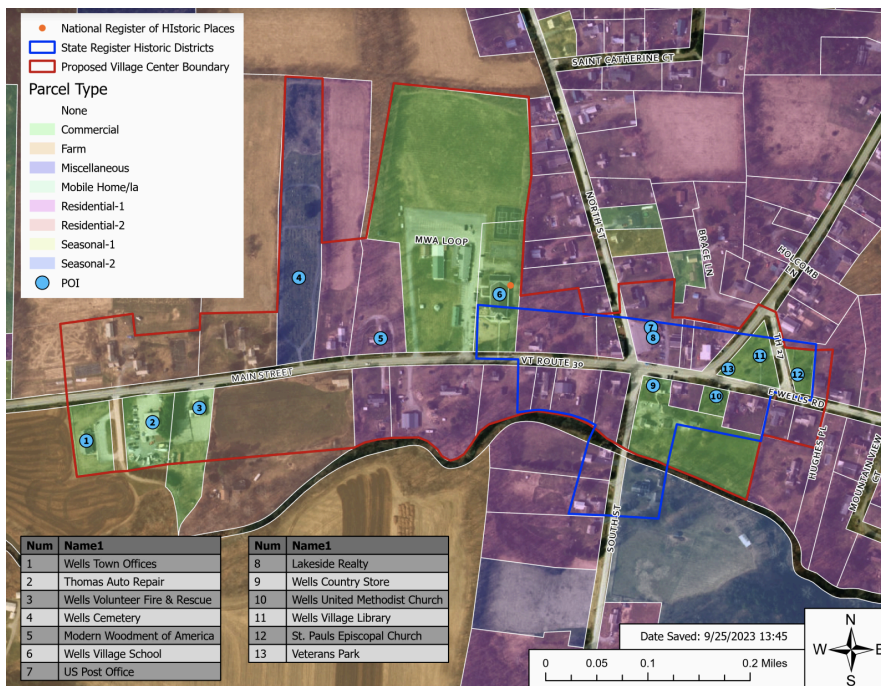
SVT is a chapter of the Vermont Mountain Biking Association (VMBA).

Volunteers, membership dues and donations make these and other trails in the area possible. Please join or make a donation to Slate Valley Trails (SVT) if you appreciate these trails!

Report any issues to info@slatevalleytrails.org. Get more info and become a member at SlateValleyTrails.org.

2. Apply for “designated village” status with the Vermont Downtown Board

- a. In 2023, Wells applied for and received a village designation from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for the following areas:



a.

CDP vs Town



b.

3. Maintain a Town of Wells website controlled by Town of Wells Officials

a. A new town website was created and has been maintained at wellsvt.com

4. Maintain the Delaney Woods and Lakeside Park

a. 173 acres of the town-owned woods, known as Delaney Woods, along with a 13-acre shoreline park, known as Lakeside Park, have both been well managed and maintained since the last plan was completed. The Delaney Woods property is currently in the Vermont Land Trust, ensuring it will not be developed and will remain open for public use.

In developing the 2025 Wells Town Plan, four key priorities were identified. The

community, through its selectboard, planning commission, volunteer groups, and citizens, will strive to make significant progress in these four areas over the next five years:

1. Attain broadband internet and wireless phone capabilities throughout the town
2. Minimize potential accidents along heavily traveled roads
3. Improve the Town Garage and better provide for storage of salt and sand.
4. Maintain roads throughout town

2.0 Purpose / Authority

2.1 Overall goal of the plan

The plan of the Town of Wells is designed to guide future growth and development in a manner that best matches the values of the community.

To guide the future growth and development of land, public services, and facilities, and to protect the environment, this Plan identifies the following goals:

- (a) encourage the maintenance of safe, affordable housing to meet the needs of all Wells residents
- (b) maintain a vibrant rural community with thriving natural ecosystems
- (c) make efficient use of energy
- (d) encourage flood emergency preparedness
- (e) provide efficient public services
- (f) ensure that all students attending our school are given optimal educational opportunities as a springboard for successful lives as well-rounded individuals
- (g) promote continuing education opportunities for all Wells residents
- (h) ensure that the Town's policies and ordinances encourage provision of childcare services, given the need for child care in today's society
- (i) promote access to wireless telephone and broadband internet services using technology that maintains the community's scenic character
- (j) support high-quality, efficient protection for Wells residents against emergencies of all kids
- (k) maintain a safe, efficient town and state highway network for all users
- (l) encourage commercial growth that meets the needs of town residents while preserving the small town community character
- (m) promote greater public access to the natural and scenic resources within the town
- (n) strive for having more areas open to public exploration of wildlife habitat (including wetlands), hiking access to scenic vistas, promoting nature walks and access to the rivers traversing the town
- (o) encourage more organized activities - such as 5k runs, tennis matches, bike races, kayaking events, and more
- (p) create plans to ensure the development in or near historic areas are compatible with

the surrounding historic buildings and people are encouraged to rehabilitate existing structures to preserve the buildings and maintain their historic and architectural character

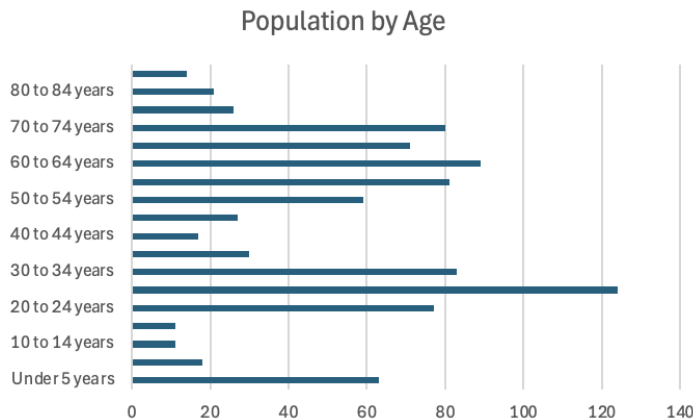
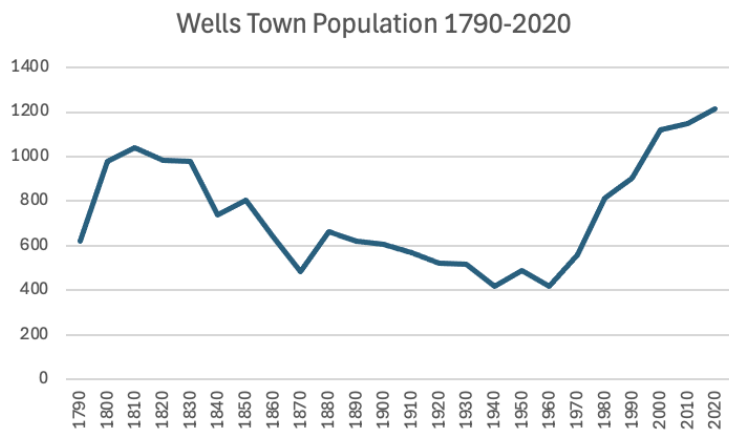
- (q) maintain the respect for the quaint residential nature of the Village with any proposed future growth or commercial activity
- (r) balance future development with the use of land for Agriculture and Forest
- (s) encourage conservation of the fragile highland area

2.2. Statutory Authority

The Town of Wells Planning Commission prepared this Plan under the authority of the Board of Selectmen and the provisions of the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act (24 VSA §4382) and to be consistent with the state planning goals established in (24 VSA §4302) and compatible with the RRPC’s Regional Plan and adjacent municipalities’ plans.

3.0 Wells in a Nutshell

The 2020 Census showed a permanent population of 1,214 people in the Town of Wells, a record high dating back to 1790.

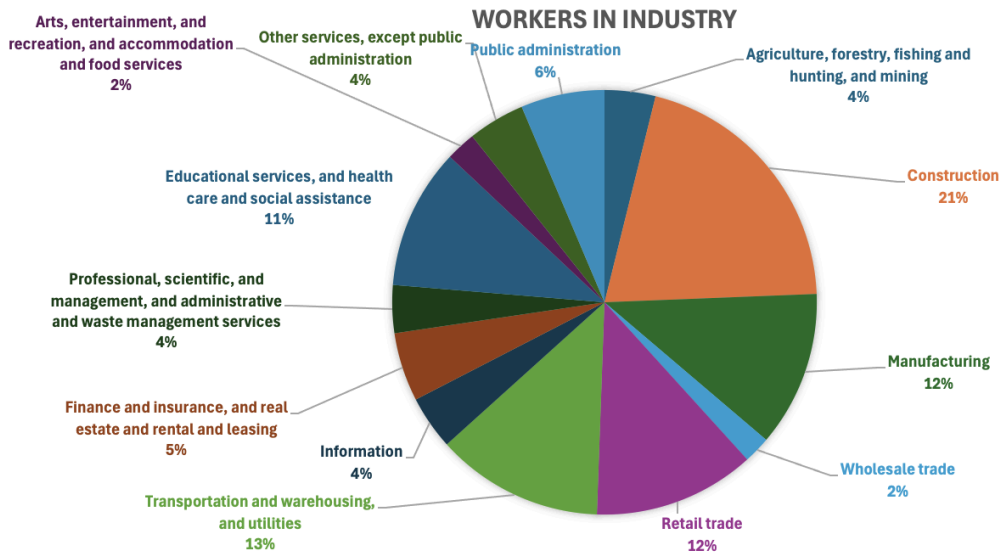


HousingData.org

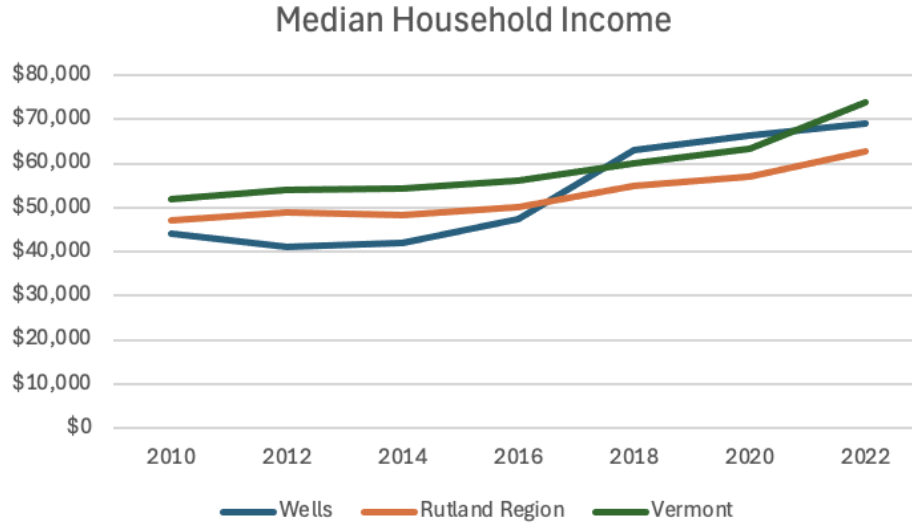
An influx of new residents in recent decades has reversed the century and a half long trend of population declines, which saw the town’s population reach a low of 419 in 1960. The tripling of the population since 1960 has had a considerable impact on the Town and is a true indicator of the need for active town planning.

Seasonal homes in the town cause the population to nearly double in the summer. According to the 2020 Census, 386 of the 828 homes in Wells were for seasonal use. The allure of country living and Lake St. Catherine can be expected to continue and must be taken into account in planning community facilities, services, and utilities. At the same time, the conversion of summer cottages into year-round homes is creating an additional need for security and other services.

In the last few decades, the Town of Wells has seen a shift in its economic base from dairy farming and slate quarrying to recreational land use and small business. According to the 2021 Census, 8% of all jobs in Wells were filled by local residents.



The majority of Wells residents, however, work outside of the community. Just over 7% of Wells residents work in the town. The remainder works in Washington County, New York, Bennington County, Rutland City, Poultney,, a handful of other communities and work-from-home/teleworking, which was an outcome of the work accommodations made during the pandemic 2020-2022.



The median household income in Wells in 2022 was \$69,167, under the Vermont average of \$74,041 but above the Rutland Region average of \$62,641.

Much of the Town is covered by water, most notably: Lake St. Catherine (Big Lake, Little Lake and Little Pond), Lake Lucidian, Wells Brook, Pond Brook (aka Wells River and Mill Brook), Snow Brook and their associated tributaries, marshlands and wetlands.



Lakeside development consists of seasonal and winterized cottages in high density on small lots along the shores of Lake St. Catherine, which consists of the Big Lake, the Channel and the Little Lake and the Little Pond at the outlet of the lake. Houses on small lots also dot the shores of the man-made Lake Lucidian; development being mostly on its eastern shore.

In general, residential development is mostly concentrated in the newly designated Village Center, and is sparse along the outermost sections of the town. Wells has a well documented historic district that radiates from the center of the town. The older housing is in a linear pattern along roads in the historic New England manner. Newer housing is generally located further away from roads and some are found in developments.

The wide variation in land formations has historically dictated the uses of land in Wells. The southern and southwestern parts of the town contain flat land and gently rolling hills that have been used for crops and grazing associated with dairy farming. In more recent years there has been a shift away from dairy farming to other forms of agricultural uses of this land, such as raising horses and vegetables. Elevated lands to the east of the center of town, both valley and upland areas are also suitable for certain types of agriculture.

A very notable slate vein runs through the western part of the Town. Many of the slate quarries were lying dormant until recent demand for this limited resource compelled the reopening of the quarries. The slate vein in Vermont runs from West Pawlet through Wells to Poultney, Castleton and Fair Haven and provides various colors of slate including unfading green, red, black, and model, a shade of purple.

The town supports several small-scale commercial establishments, offices and cottage industries. These commercial establishments frequently inhabit historic structures and are interspersed with residential development.

4.0 Housing

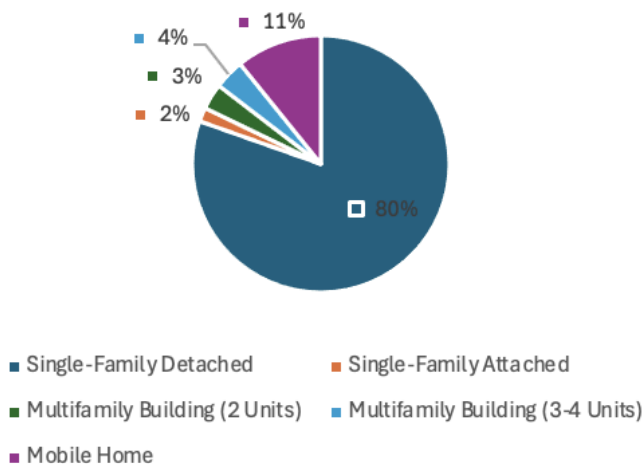
4.1 Housing Introduction

The most obvious and unique characteristic of the Wells housing supply is that 47 percent of the units are classified as vacation homes. That means of the 828 homes in the Town of Wells, 386 units are classified for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Affordable housing is scarce in town.

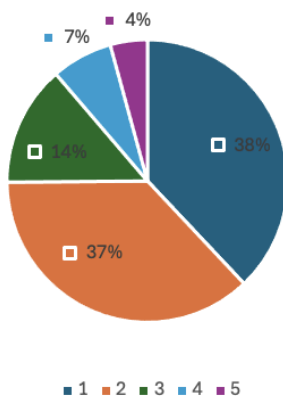
While mobile homes and some rental housing (2022 Census – 644 rental housing units in town, compared to 82 in town during the 2010 Census) seem to be addressing some of this problem, the town could seek more creative solutions. The dramatic increase in the rental housing units is due to the influx of short-term rentals through platforms like Airbnb, VRBO, and the like.

As late as 1969, no mobile homes were reported in the region. By 1988, 77 mobile home units were listed in the town's Grand List. In 2001, that number had grown to 99, which indicates that mobile homes have become more important in the Rutland region's housing mix.

2022 Housing Units by Housing Type



Households by Household Size



HousingData.org (2022)

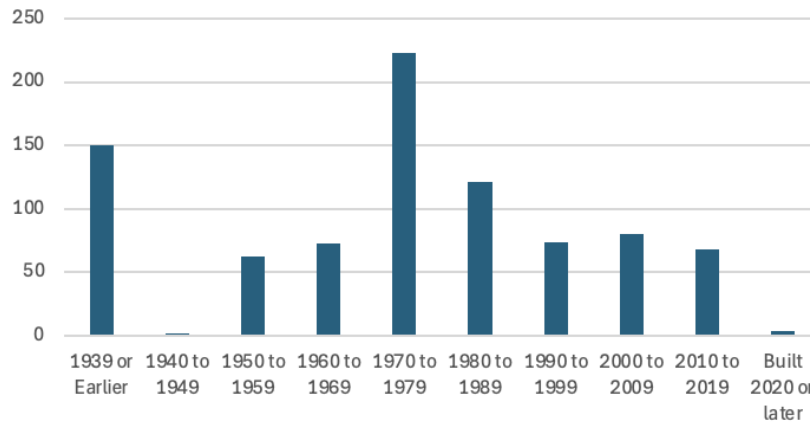
4.2 Seasonal Homes

Over 47% of all homes in Wells were listed as seasonally-occupied in the 2022 Decennial Census. The majority of these are situated on or near Lake St. Catherine. Many of the units in the vicinity of the lake are not winterized so that occupancy can only be maintained during the warmer months of the year. This has the dual effect of swelling needs for services at certain times of year and, from a cost perspective, limiting the number of homes available for year-round rent in the community. Of the 442 year-round housing units in Wells in 2022, 378 were owner-occupied while 64 were occupied by renters.

Seasonal and Year-Round Residences



Housing Units by Year



HousingData.org (2022)

4.3 Affordability of Housing

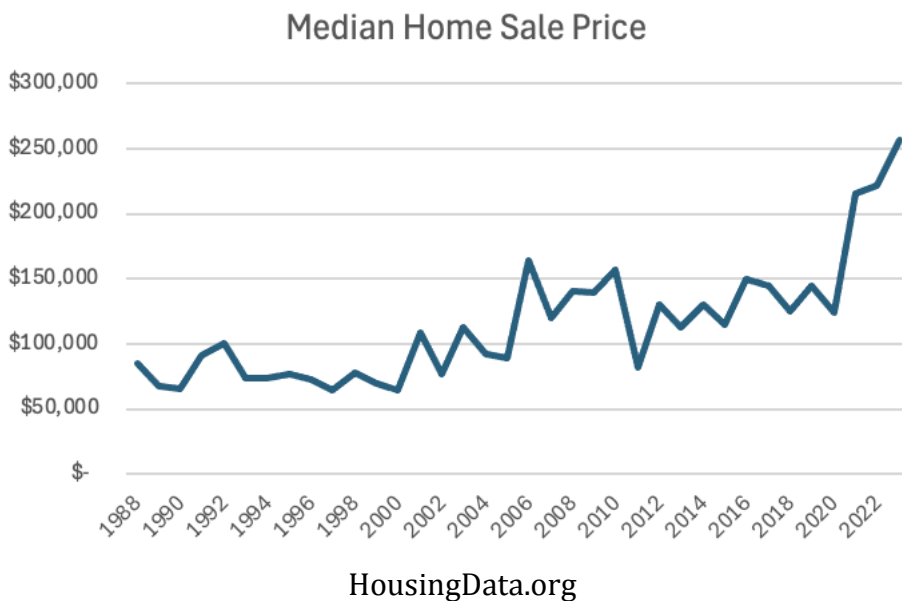
Affordable housing is commonly defined as spending 30% or less of income on housing expenses. For purchasing a home, the Vermont Housing Finance Agency’s (VHFA) Home Price Affordability Calculator estimates a home’s affordable purchase price for the average Vermont buyer by assuming a 5% downpayment, average statewide interest rates, property taxes, insurance premiums, and closing costs. 14 homes sold in Wells in 2023. A 2023 household would need to earn an annual income of \$86,293 to be able to afford the median home for sale in Wells in 2023, which was priced at \$257,500. This is 19.9% higher than the median household income in town in 2023 (\$71,964). At the median household income, a household can afford a house priced at \$214,500, according to the Vermont Housing Finance Agency’s Home Price Affordability Calculator.

Of the estimated 41 rental units in 2023, the median rent in Wells in 2023 was estimated at \$1,272. To afford rent at this rate (i.e. spend 30% or less on housing expenses), a renter household would need at least \$50,880 in annual income. This Plan acknowledges that rent

price estimates may be flawed given the small number of monthly rental units in the Town of Wells.

The Town of Wells has recently undergone a Town-wide Reappraisal. Wells much like other areas of the country has experienced the effects of the recent recession. According to the Garcia Appraisal Company, while the cost of housing construction has increased the value of land around the lakes has generally decreased.

Median home sale price in Wells follows Rutland County trends with lower average values, excluding 2024.



Rising real estate taxes has been a concern recognized by the Vermont Legislature. Real Estate is taxed on a two-tier system; residential and non-residential (including non-resident and commercial).

According to the 2022 Census Data, 49% of the population is aged 50 or older, 24% of the Town's population is aged 65 or older. Therefore almost half of the population of Wells is at or near retirement age and a quarter of the Town's population is likely to be on fixed incomes.

The poverty guidelines for Vermont as published in the Federal Register on January 17, 2024, are as follows:

2024 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	
Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$5,381 for each additional person.	
1	\$15,060
2	\$20,440
3	\$25,820
4	\$31,200
5	\$36,580
6	\$41,960
7	\$47,240
8	\$52,720

According to the 2022 census IRS tax status for 2008, there are 447 working people over the age of 16; 6130 persons reported income of under \$25,000 representing 1.211% of the population while 156 reported income between 10,000-25,000 representing 13.5% of the population of the Town. 156 persons reported an income over \$50,000 representing 35% of the town population. The Elementary School reported in 2021 that 35% of 27 households with elementary school children qualified for free and reduced lunch and so below the poverty level.

Per 2022 Census data nearly 45.38% of persons aged 65 or older were classified as disabled and 16,331 individuals were below poverty level with 19.9% of those persons aged 65 or older.

4.4 Housing & Conflicting Uses

The operation of slate quarries is part of the town's history. With quarries periodically opening and closing over time, residential development often followed suit, springing up alongside them. Special attention should be paid to the interrelationship between residential development and quarrying activity.

The town should consider speed limits and other traffic safety regulations along town roads shared by quarries and residents. Currently, the State of Vermont is responsible for setting the speed zones along Route 30 through the Village Center, although there is currently a plan in place to give local control to towns where state roads traverse through the center of towns.

Different types and locations of housing are needed to meet different household needs. Wells is a predominantly rural community, made up primarily of single family homes in wide-open areas. Housing in the village area is more compact. Both have their place and serve different needs – those who choose to live in more open settings with larger lots choose rural parts of the community, while those who seek opportunities to live closer to their neighbors or walk to local services and schools, are likely to prefer village settings.

It is important to consider these and other needs in Wells. Particular attention must be paid to Wells' older residents, who face changing needs for location, housing types, and services.

4.5 Future Needs and Wants

The 2025 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment projects the state will need to add 24,000 - 36,000 units during the period from 2025 to 2029. For Rutland Region (Rutland County minus Pittsfield), the target is 2,348 - 3,842. Wells represents 2.56% of the Rutland Region's total housing stock and if this percentage of the regional housing need target was allocated to Wells it would equal 62 to 98 units added by 2029. The Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) is required by law to disaggregate the regional housing target for 2029 by municipality in the 2026 Rutland Regional Plan, which is currently being developed.

The Plan supports Accessory Dwelling Units as affordable housing options, particularly for relatives, elders, or persons who have a disability, allowing for close proximity to relatives.

The 2003 Wells Town Survey asked residents which types of additional housing would best fit the needs of the community. Over 45% indicated that single family homes would be best. Another 28%, however, indicated that senior housing would be very important.

The Town should explore ways to help elderly citizens remain in their homes.

4.6 Housing Goals & Objectives

The HOME Act was passed in 2023 and requires municipal plans to develop a recommended program for private and public actions that considers year-round and seasonal dwellings and address the needs of people with low and moderate income. The below housing goal and programs consider federal estimates that 47% of Wells housing stock is occupied seasonally and the needs of the people with low and moderate:

Goal 1: Safe, affordable housing to meet the needs of all Wells residents.

Program 1: Develop links on the Town website to housing and financing resources.

Program 2: Gather public input on how the Town can support elderly citizens to remain in their homes, and take action as deemed appropriate by the Town/public.

Program 3: Support landowners interested in building new housing, unless such support conflicts with other parts of the Plan.

5.0 Natural Resources

5.1 Physical Setting, Soils, and Geology

The Town of Wells is composed of several different landscapes. While the entire town is part of the Poultney-Mettowee watershed basin – meaning that all water flows towards these rivers and eventually into Lake Champlain – two sets of mountains and valleys cut through the town in a north-south direction.

The westernmost set of hills borders Granville, New York. These hills abut a relatively broad valley which includes Lake St. Catherine, Little Lake, Lake Lucidian and Bullfrog Hollow. Cliffs and steep mountains line the eastern edge of the Lake. These mountains give way to the town’s upland area along its border with Tinmouth to the east. The town is transected by Pond Brook, leading from Little Lake, and by the Wells Brook, which runs westerly from East Wells.

Diverse natural ecosystems are present in the town, as are a series of habitats for rare, endangered, or protected plants and animals. The most striking and critical features of the town are Lake St. Catherine and Pond Mountain immediately to its east, which dominates the view from the village area.

5.2 Land Resources

Land cover in Wells is a mix of forests and agricultural fields dotted with residential sites. Development is most concentrated around Lake St. Catherine, Little Lake, Lake Lucidian and in the Wells Village.

Topography

Slopes and elevations in Wells vary widely, but as noted above, the village is in the valley. The most extreme features of the town, the cliffs of Pond Mountain, act as a physical and visual barrier, as well as an important habitat for deer and several rare and endangered plants and animals.

Several tall peaks line the central part of the town: St. Catherine and Pond Mountains east of the lakes, Moosehorn Mountain, Northeast Mountain, and the edge of Bald Mountain past the next valley, and Coy Mountain and The Pinnacle along the town's border with Middletown Springs.

Soils

Soils form the base from which natural ecosystems and the built environment develop. Wells is home to three broad categories of soils.

The Taconic-Macomber-Hubbardton association is the most common broad category of soils present in Wells. The town's mountainous areas contain these soils. In general, these soils, found in rugged terrain, have poor potential for hay or cultivated crops and provide limited opportunity for development and on-site septic systems because they are present along steep slopes and are relatively shallow.

Soils in the Dutchess-Bomoseen-Pittstown association are found at both ends of Lake St. Catherine, surrounding Little Lake, and in the town's upper valley. In general, these soils are found on smooth side slopes of hills and are well suited for crops, pastures, or hay. Key limitations to development include high seasonal water tables and, in some areas, steep slopes.

Parts of Pond Brook and Wells Brook – along the easternmost and southernmost borders of the town – are included in the Hinckley-Warwick-Windsor soil association. Unlike the other two common associations, which were formed by glacial till, these soils were formed as a result of water-deposited materials. Soils are generally very deep and, in some cases, are excessively well-drained. The soils are generally well-suited for cultivated crops, hay, and forests, and are generally suitable for onsite sewage disposal.

These broad categories, or *associations*, are further divided into more detailed *soil series*. Detailed information about soil associations and series are published in "Soil Survey of Rutland County" published by the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Geology and Minerals

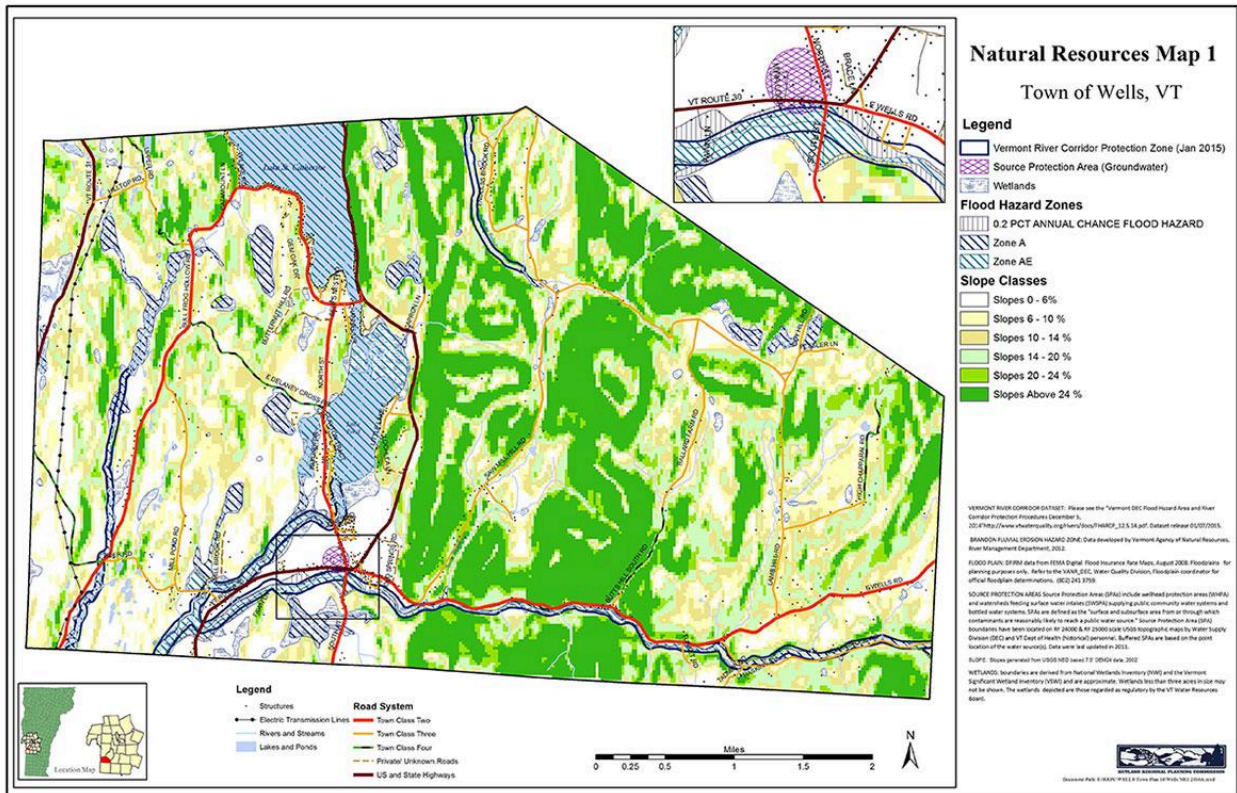
Wells is divided into two rough geologic areas. The eastern half of the town is part of the larger Taconic Mountain Range, while the western part is part of the Mettawee-River-Valley.

Deposits of slate line much of the Mettawee Valley and have provided employment in the quarry industry for decades. It is important to recognize that these deposits are limited, and that any quarrying has impacts on surrounding land, water, and air resources, and on nearby residential properties.

5.3 Wildlife and Natural Areas

Native plants, animals, landscapes and ecosystem processes are an important part of Wells' heritage. The accelerating pace of land development has made the need for preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas necessary in a municipal plan. By protecting biological diversity, ecosystem services are maintained; i.e., pollination, predation, flood and erosion control, and maintenance and preservation of our underground water resources to adequately serve present and future residents.

Rare and endangered species of plants and animals are present throughout the town. A total of seventeen sites have been identified by the Vermont Non-Game and Natural Heritage Program, including six in the cliffs above Little Lake. The approximate, generalized locations of these sites are shown on Natural Resources Map 1 below. The town continues to encourage the protection of these sites.

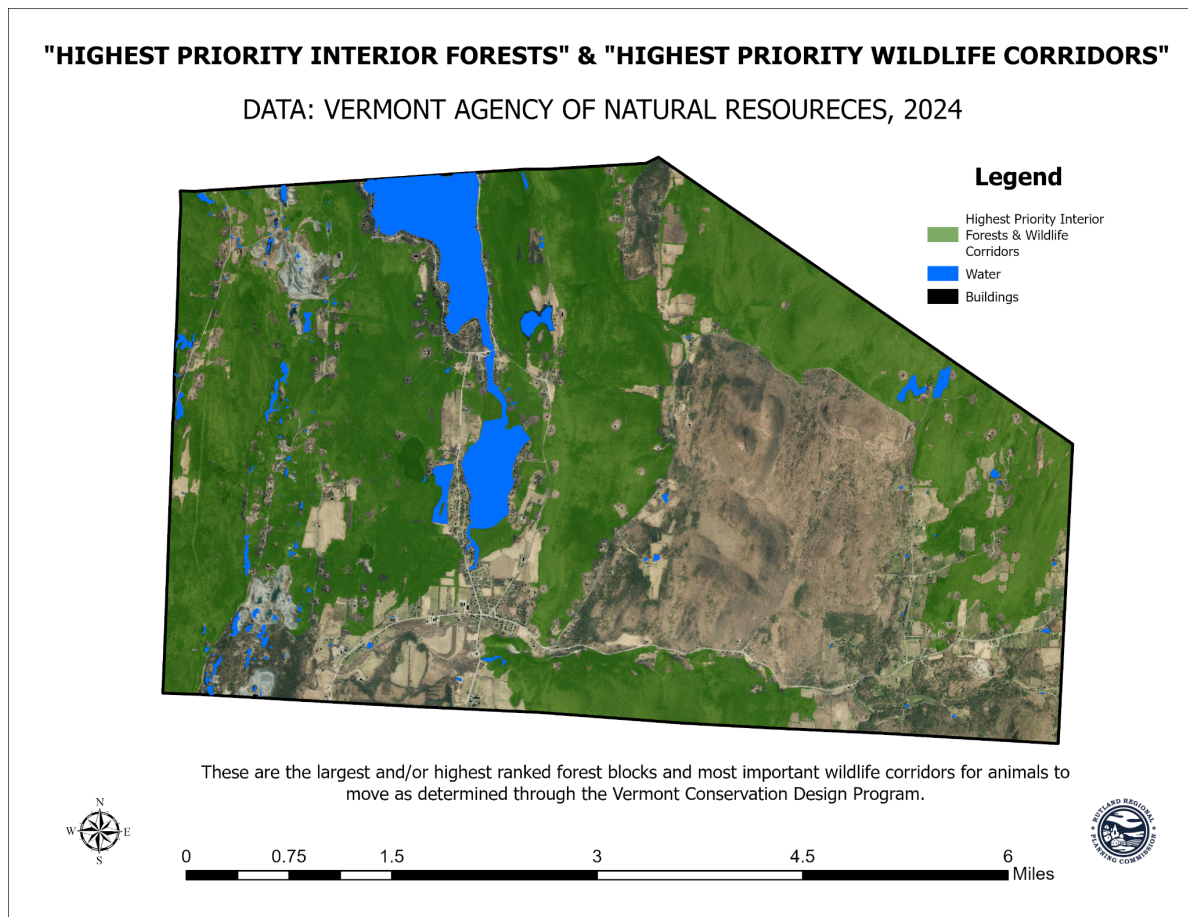


Likewise, other high elevation areas in the town are critical to maintaining a high quality environment. Maintaining protected high elevation areas are among the most important factors leading to the quality and availability of ground water resource valleys. They also provide wildlife habitat, recreation, and contribute to the scenic beauty of the town. Deer wintering areas are common in these highland areas.

Advances in technology and changes in lifestyles in recent years have increased the possibility of development at or near the top of the town's ridgelines. This includes homes, driveways, wireless telecommunications facilities, and small- and large-scale wind generation facilities.

The residents of Wells desire to preserve the natural beauty of our mountain tops and ridgelines including Pond Mountain, St. Catherine Mountain, Northeast Mountain, and Moosehorn Mountain.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (VANR) maps areas important as forest block and habitat connectors as 'Highest Priority Interior Forests' and 'Highest Priority Wildlife Corridors'. The State has a planning goal, which states "Vermont's forestlands should be managed so as to maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors." This Plan is required by state law to plan for land development in these areas to minimize forest fragmentation and promote the health, viability and ecological function of forests. This Plan supports landowners working to reduce the fragmentation of important forest blocks and habitat connectors through enrollment in the current use program, conservation programs, and other efforts.

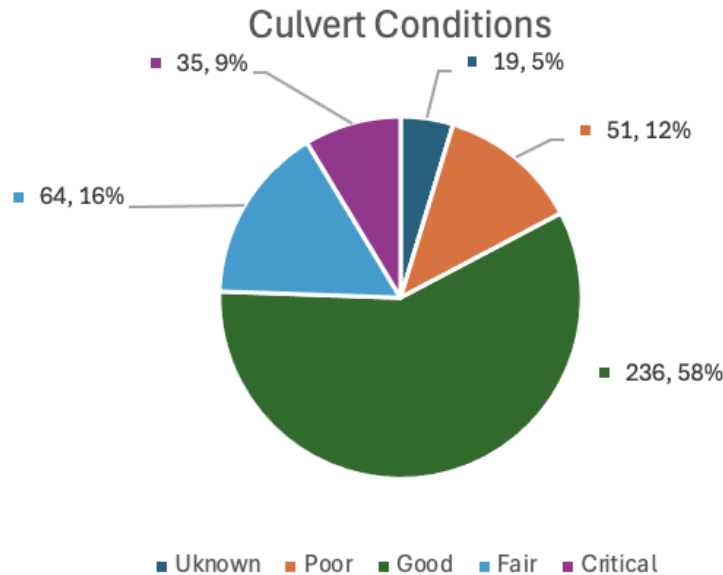


5.4 Watersheds

A watershed is a distinct, topographically defined land area that drains into a single river, river system, or standing body of water. The activities taking place in a watershed play a critical role in the quality of the water draining from it, and water quality awareness is an important key to maintaining a healthy watershed. All of Wells lies within the Mettowee River watershed, draining eventually into the Champlain Canal.

The town currently works with the Poultney-Mettowee Natural Resource Conservation District to improve understanding of the links between activities in the Watershed and water quality.

The town has over 400 culvers and 14 bridges. VAPDA counts and inventories these culverts and as of 2023 conditions can be seen in the following graph.



5.5 Surface Waters

Surface waters in Wells include Lake St. Catherine and Little Lake, two large, connected bodies of water, and Lake Lucidian, Mill Brook and Wells Brook, Bullfrog Hollow, and a series of smaller ponds and streams.

All of these bodies of water flow into the Mettowee River in Pawlet and towards the Champlain Canal. While each is subject to its own qualities and areas of concern, it is

important to consider that they all form part of the same basin and that threats to one often affect the others.

Lake St. Catherine, Little Lake, Lake Lucidian

Lake St. Catherine is a lake of 904 acres that begins at the north end of Lily Pond in Poultney and drains southward into the Town of Wells through a narrow channel into Little Lake. The lake is one of the region's most outstanding natural features.

Lake St. Catherine's average depth is 37 feet, with a maximum depth of 67 feet. Little Lake itself covers 162 acres at an average depth of just four feet and a maximum depth of five feet. Summer and, increasingly, winter homes line the two bodies of water and make use of the many amenities they provide. Public access is also available in Wells via the Vermont Fish and Game access area, and the Wells Lakeside Park on Little Lake. The Wells Lakeside Park encompasses about 18 acres.

Lake Lucidian is a man-made lake, which was created in the late 1960s and early 1970s by creating a dam on the south end of the property. Ted Pafundi, a local quarry owner, had the lake built and with his development group, Northeast Developers, surveyed and sold lots around the new lake. The east side of the lake borders North Street, where many homes and lots have access to Lake Lucidian. The west side of the lake is still mostly undeveloped. Lake Lucidian was named after Ted Pafundi's wife, but many locals still refer to it as Pafundi Pond.



The overall health of a lake can be measured by using three indicators: "Secchi Disk"

transparency, chlorophyll-a concentration, and phosphorus concentration. Together this information indicates a “trophic state” – or general health and evolutionary state – of a lake.

As is the case with forests, lakes go through a natural aging, or life cycle. The cycle can be greatly affected by human activity.

Lake St. Catherine is considered to be in a “Mesotrophic” or transitional state. Average transparency (the average depth of clear view) is approximately six feet, which is considered very good. Chlorophyll-a concentrations, which measures the amount of algae in a lake, are average for Lake St. Catherine, listed at four micrograms per liter.

Spring phosphorus concentrations are among the primary concerns for the lake, measured at 14 micrograms per liter. Elevated phosphorus concentrations indicate high levels of nutrients that lead to excessive plant and algae growth, dissolved oxygen depletion, and altered natural habitats for plants and animals.

While phosphorus occurs naturally in lakes, elevated levels are often caused by human activity, which includes sewage waste matter, land drainage and run-off from residential and agricultural fertilizers. These are concerns for Lake St. Catherine and Little Lake.

Aquatic nuisance species, including *Eurasian Milfoil*, are a second serious concern for water quality in Lake St. Catherine and Little Lake.

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, with the assistance of the Vermont Invasive Patrollers (VIP) Program, compiled a list of Vermont water bodies with a confirmed presence of an aquatic invasive species and species of concern. This data, as of 2023, reflects the presence of the following species in Lake St. Catherine: alewife, banded mystery snail, brittle naiad, curly leaf pondweed, eurasian milfoil, water chesnut. The report also reflects the presence of curly leaf pondweed, eurasian milfoil, and water chesnut in Little Pond.

<https://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/documents/Infested%20Water%20Bodies%20List%202023.pdf>

Eurasian Milfoil is a stringy, submerged plant that competes aggressively with native plant communities (reducing biodiversity), clogs propellers, impairs swimming, affects boating and fishing access, and affects water quality.¹ Eurasian Milfoil was first found in Lake St. Catherine and Little Lake in 1982.

The Lake St. Catherine Association and the Lake St. Catherine Conservation Fund work to improve water quality and recreational opportunities on the two lakes. Their activities include efforts to control the spread of invasive species and to educate the public.

¹ "Aquatic Nuisance Species in Vermont," VT Department of Environmental Conservation website: www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/waterq/lakes/htm/ans/lp_ans-index.htm

The *alewife* is a fish that is native to the east coast of North America. Typically, it feeds and grows to maturity in the ocean, then migrates into freshwater rivers and lakes to spawn, but under certain conditions, can exist solely in freshwater lakes. Alewife was first discovered in Lake St. Catherine in 1997, the first Lake in Vermont to be affected. The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation writes the following²:

"Alewives are planktivorous (their main food source is plankton), feeding predominantly on zooplankton as both juveniles and adults. However, large landlocked alewives also feed on the eggs and larvae of other fish species, as well as those of their own species...

"A large alewife population was discovered in Lake St. Catherine, in Rutland County, Vermont, in July 1997. How the alewives got into the lake is somewhat of a mystery....

"Lake St. Catherine... supports a large fish community which includes rainbow smelt, yellow perch, bluegill sunfish, pumpkinseed sunfish, common white sucker, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, black crappie, northern pike, brown bullhead, and various minnow species including golden shiner and emerald shiner. Lake trout, brown trout and rainbow trout are stocked annually on a put, grow and take basis... Although currently contained within Lake St. Catherine, the direct water connection between Lake St. Catherine and southern Lake Champlain makes migration of alewives to Lake Champlain very possible.

"Based on the impacts which exotic alewives have had on native ecosystems in the past, we can predict the specific impacts they are likely to have in Lake St. Catherine. The main impacts of alewives will likely result from competition for zooplankton and predation on eggs and larvae of other fish. We expect declines in rainbow smelt and yellow perch since all life stages are in direct competition with the alewife. Although initial impacts on adult bass could be positive (i.e., increased growth rates due to increased food supply), long-term impacts to larval bass from alewife competition and direct predation during spring spawning could be severe. We could also expect decreased growth rates of rainbow trout due to competition for food. Furthermore, we expect periodic alewife die-offs to occur, the first of which occurred in April 1999."

Users of Lake St. Catherine and Little Lake should also be mindful of *Water Chestnut*, a glossy, triangular -leaved plant that, like Eurasian Milfoil, can choke the water body it invades. While neither water body in Wells is currently affected, both Lake Champlain and Lake Bomossen are.

² "Alewife" VT Department of Environmental Conservation website:

www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/waterq/lakes/htm/ans/lp_alewife.htm Little Lake is a shallow pond with an average depth of four feet. A thick layer of silt and organic matter covers the lake bottom.

Since the writing of the last plan advances in both cases can be found. Alewives have migrated into Champlain and can be regularly found between both Lake St. Catherine and Champlain. As for Eurasian Milfoil, Lake St. Catherine underwent the usage of ProcellaCOR for the Milfoil control program starting in 2019. Vermont DEC performed analysis of Lake St. Catherine and the performance of ProcellaCOR and were able to show statistically significant decreases in Milfoil while increasing the rate of native aquatic species to Lake St. Catherine, specifically *Potamogeton illinoensis* and *Vallisneria americana*.

5.6 Wetlands

Wetlands are land areas that are saturated with water at least part of the year and include marshes, swamps, sloughs, fens, ~~and~~ mud flats and bogs. Wetlands provide important wildlife habitats, but also provide other benefits such as storing storm water runoff, purifying surface and groundwater supplies, recharging aquifers, controlling erosion, and providing areas for recreation.

Because of their many beneficial functions, direct loss of wetlands due to filling can have dramatic ecological effects in addition to habitat losses.³

The majority of Wells' wetlands are found along Bullfrog Hollow, and at the north and south ends of Little Lake. Most of these areas are within the 100-year floodplain and as such are prone to occasional flooding. These areas should remain free of development. On the West side of Lake Lucidian there is a large wetland.

5.7 Groundwater

Groundwater is water that has infiltrated the soil through sand, gravel, or rock. Aquifers are created where this water accumulates. Groundwater is drawn from aquifers through wells. In the same way that pollutants introduced from watersheds can affect the water quality of streams, rivers, and lakes, contaminants can be introduced into groundwater supplies. Groundwater pollution in rural areas is primarily associated with agricultural practices, road salt, and waste management problems.⁴

Groundwater is a critical water resource for the town, as all homes and businesses rely on individual wells for water supply. The most critical areas are typically those at the highest elevations, where much of the infiltration occurs. In addition, one source water protection area has been identified in Wells, immediately southwest of Lake St. Catherine. Keeping this

area free from potential contamination is critical to the homes in the area.

5.8 Air Quality

Maintaining clean air is a complex issue because it involves multiple communities, regions, and states. The impacts of actions in one community may be felt more strongly in another. Wells, as a small, rural community is not a significant contributor to air quality problems in the Northeast, but all residents and businesses share responsibility with those in larger, industrial communities. Installing and maintaining efficient heating and cooling systems, walking or bicycling to destinations instead of driving, and reducing the length and frequency of commutes are steps individuals can take.

³Rutland Regional Plan, Rutland Regional Planning Commission, Last Adopted June 2001, page 90.

⁴Rutland Region Natural Environment Technical Report, Rutland Regional Planning Commission, pages 36 & 37

5.9 Natural Resources Goals and Policies

Goal 1: A vibrant rural community with thriving natural ecosystems

Objective 1: *Determine each natural area's potential for recreational, educational, and research uses and any threat to its integrity when considering future development.*

Objective 2: *Support sustainable use of the town's agricultural, forest, and mineral resources.*

Program 1: Identify and map the town's most critical natural areas. Consider methods to protect the town's natural areas when development is proposed.

Program 2: Work with the Poultney-Mettowee Natural Resource Conservation District to increase education about water quality and sustainable land practices;

Program 3: Identify and work towards restoration of failing streambanks and lakeshores in Wells;

Program 4: Work with the Lake St. Catherine Association and Lake St. Catherine Conservation Fund to control and eliminate aquatic nuisance species, including Eurasian Milfoil and Alewife and to improve water quality in the lakes;

Program 5: Continue to use road maintenance techniques that minimize run-off into lakes, ponds, and rivers in Wells and minimize use of salt.

Program 6: Promote the placement or maintenance of lake shore and streambank vegetation to minimize erosion and runoff.

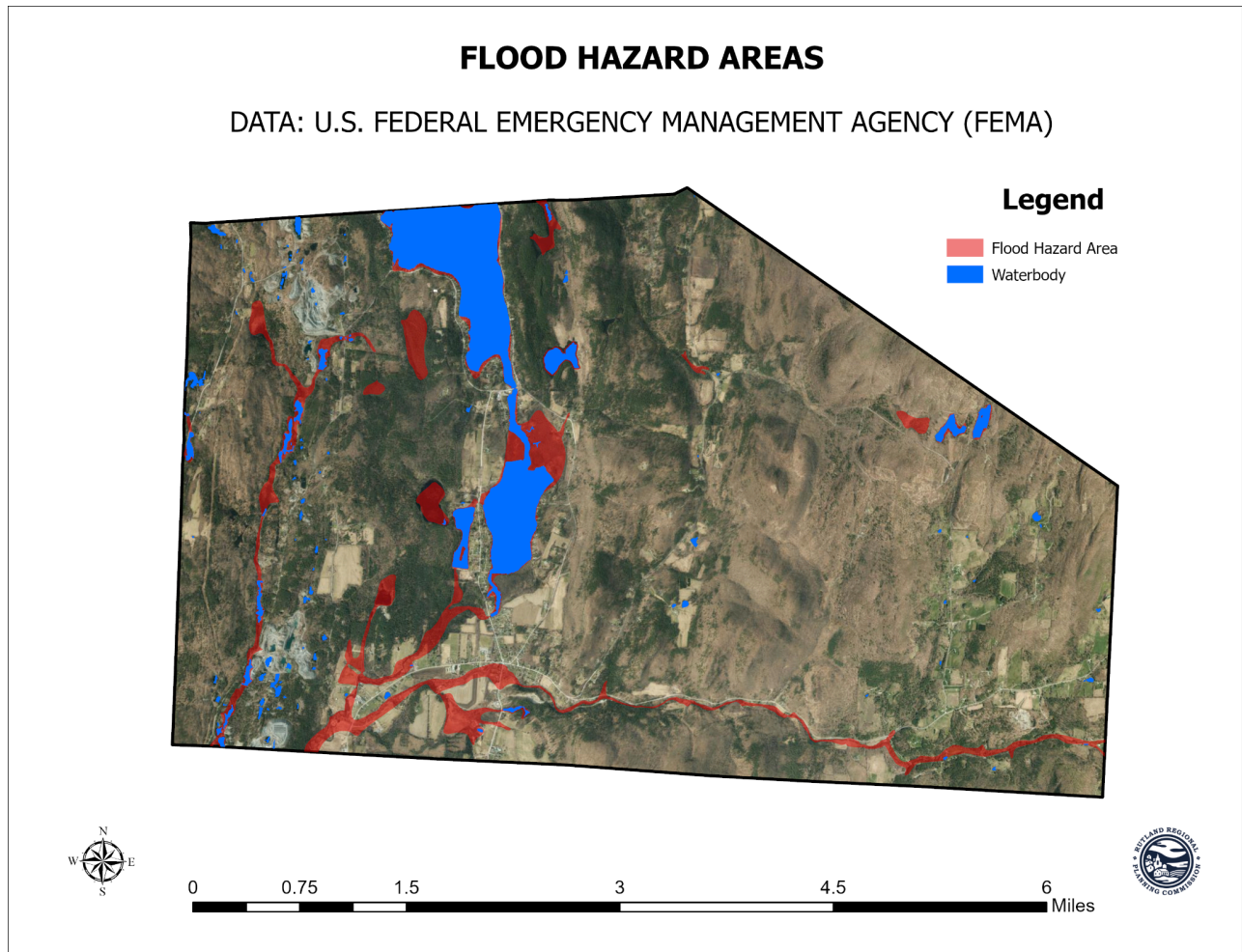
Program 7: Hold town-wide discussions and debates over controversial development issues when requested or needed.

Program 8: Promote the current use program and conservation programs to maintain/improve forest blocks and habitat corridors.

5.10 Flood Plan

5.10.a. Flood Resilience

The Town of Wells adopted Flood Hazard Area Regulations in July 2008. Anyone wishing to develop in the Special Flood Hazard Area must adhere to the Town's regulations, including filling out the application, which can be obtained at the Wells Town Clerk's Office.



5.10.b. Introduction

Flood events are Vermont's most frequent and costly type of natural disaster. There are two types of flooding which impact communities in Vermont: inundation and flash flooding. Inundation is when water rises onto low lying land. Flash flooding is a sudden, violent flood which often entails fluvial erosion (stream bank erosion). Per the Vermont Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, the state incurred costs of more than \$850 million from Tropical Storm Irene. Since the late 20th century, Vermont has experienced more frequent and severe flooding and will likely continue to in the future due to possible climate change.

5.10.c. Mapping and Assessment Flood Hazard Areas

Maps are an essential aid to meet the new state requirement of identifying flood hazard and fluvial erosion areas and designating areas to be protected. Because the methods of mapping inundation and fluvial erosion corridors differ significantly, river corridor maps are a critical addition to existing flood hazard maps.

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) was created by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to address inundation hazards. Flood insurance rates are based on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) or digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) which delineate areas of a floodplain likely to be inundated during a flood. These are identified as Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) or with a 1% chance of flooding. Town participation in Vermont is voluntary; Wells participates in NFIP.

In Vermont, two thirds of flood damages occur outside of federally mapped flood areas.

Vermont's River Corridor and Flood Plain Management Program, developed by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, delineates areas subject to fluvial erosion. River corridor maps consider the fact that rivers are dynamic by nature. A certain amount of erosion is natural when there is flooding because of the town's terrain and frequent storms.

Special mapping and geomorphic assessment scan identify fluvial erosion hazard areas along rivers, which allows for a more comprehensive definition of high hazard areas.

5.10.d. History of Flooding in Wells

5.10.d.1. Severe Thunderstorm History

February 24, 2019: Wells experienced a prolonged high wind event. A cold front moving from the west brought strong winds into Vermont with estimated wind gusts of 50-60 mph. Multiple trees and powerlines were knocked over across OH, PA, NY, and VT.

May 18, 2017: During an all-time recording heat wave VT was struck by a microburst storm with winds between 50-70 mph. A combination of hail and rain flooded the chaplain valley and many surrounding towns.

August 21, 2011: On the afternoon of August 21st, a cold front supported by a strong mid-atmospheric disturbance moved across an unstable air mass across Vermont. Numerous showers and thunderstorms developed during the afternoon with some containing hail and damaging winds. The strongest storm was in Rutland County near North Pawlet and Wells where a microburst produced straight line winds between 70 and 90 miles per hour as estimated by a National Weather Service (NWS) Storm Damage team.

August 16, 2007: Several thunderstorms, including a supercell which developed in the northern Hudson Valley of New York, moved across Rutland and Windsor counties in southern Vermont. Significant straight line wind damage estimated between 60 and 80 miles per hour caused significant damage. That damage in Rutland county included the following: snapped, uprooted, and downed trees, downed power lines, and some structural damage.

August 20, 2001: A large upper pressure system and a surface low pressure system were both located over the eastern Great Lakes region; this resulted in scattered showers and thunderstorms. In Wells, winds associated with a thunderstorm gusted to 37 miles per hour.

August 2, 1993: Thunderstorms and high wind affected Wells. Ultimately, damage associated with the thunderstorm cost Wells approximately \$3500.

5.10.d.2. Floods and Fluvial Erosion History

East Wells Road Stabilization Project - Update

Road bank washout on East Wells Road by Tropical Storm Irene on August 28, 2011. The bank slide eroded from Wells Brook up to the edge of East Wells Road. There have been two additional Tropical Storms since that time, making the road even more unstable up to the very edge of the road. This has created a 40+ foot drop-off to Wells Brook.

The Selectboard has worked tirelessly to get Federal and State funding to repair the road. The town hired GeoDesign to bore drilling and install an Inclinator that the town road crew would monitor on a bi-weekly basis to determine if the road slide was continuing. During that time, there was no significant change.

State and Federal officials were involved to determine the repairs needed for the road. The town hired an engineering firm, Fitzgerald Environmental Associates, that specialized in river hydraulic analysis. The town hired a construction engineer to facilitate the repair. Numerous permits from State and Federal agencies were obtained by the town to approve the project. The Town is currently very close to being able to put the project out for bid – hopefully by the end of March 2025. The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$300,000 - 500,000.

Other Significant Floods and Fluvial Erosion

April 15, 2019: In late evening into early night a shortwave trough came from the Northern lee of the Appalachians. The storm brought tornados through Southern New York to Virginia, eventually releasing 1-2” of rain into wells. This combined with a heavy snowmelt in April had Wells experience multiple reports of local damage.

July 1, 2017: During a very humid week a widespread thunderstorm brought torrential rainfall with recorded amounts of 5” of rain and estimated peak winds of around 100 mph. Mainly affecting regional infrastructure Wells experienced flash flooding and road closures

June 25 – July 11th, 2013: A fast-moving line of thunderstorms ripped through northern Vermont with winds reaching up to 60 mph in Wells. Hail over the size of 1 inch was widely reported across the region.

August 28, 2011: Tropical Storm Irene moved across southeast New York and southwest New England during the morning hours of August 28th and proceeded to track north along the Connecticut River Valley in Vermont during the afternoon and evening. The main impact from Irene was widespread, devastating flooding especially in central and southern Vermont. Widespread rainfall amounts of three to five inches occurred across Vermont with some areas receiving five to seven plus inches. This flood event currently ranks second to the November 1927 flood in the scope of meteorological and hydrological conditions/impacts as well as the loss of life of 84 persons. Economically, Irene ranks as the most expensive storm with monetary damage around \$500 million statewide; in 1927 the amount was approximately \$350 million statewide (equivalent to what the storm would cost in 2010 dollars).

October 7 to 9, 2005: A slow moving cold front, elongated north to south, moved across New York and New England the evening of the 7th through the 8th. In addition, the remnants of Tropical Storm Tammy added tropical moisture enhancing the rainfall amounts. Across portions of central Vermont between three and four inches of rain fell.

December 16-17, 2000: A storm system in the Ohio Valley on Saturday, December 16, 2000, tracked northeast across the Saint Lawrence Valley during December 17th. Heavy rain between two and a half and four inches and mild weather resulted in flooding across

Rutland county.

September 16-21, 1999: Tropical Storm Floyd moved into southern New England the evening of the 16th and then across eastern New England on the 17th. Strong winds combined with saturated soils from heavy rain resulted in many downed trees and power lines; multiple power outages ensued. The strongest wind reported in Rutland was 38 knots (44 miles per hour). Rainfall across the county associated with the remnants of Floyd was five to six inches with statewide flooding.

January 19, 1996: A strong storm system moved into the Great Lakes on Thursday, January 18, 1996, and then into Canada on the 19th and 20th. The circulation associated with this storm resulted in above normal temperatures, strong winds, and flooding. The total cost for Wells was \$31, 531.

June 28-30, 1973: A storm with up to six inches of rainfall in some locales resulted in statewide flooding.

March 11-21, 1936: Severe flooding occurred across Vermont. The flooding was attributed to snow melting and intense rain.

November 3, 1927: The remnants of a tropical storm dropped five to ten inches of heavy rain across the state. The intense rainfall combined with frozen ground resulted in widespread flooding. Eighty-four people lost their lives because of this storm.

5.10.d.3. Snow and Ice Storm History

February 1, 2015: A storm system originating in the South brought widespread snowfall. Temperatures hovered around 0 degrees, visibility was at a ¼ of a mile and Wells saw snowfall accumulation of 6" in certain parts of town. Road conditions were hazardous and wind chills brought the feels like to between -20 degrees.

December 9, 2014: Low pressure moved north along the eastern seaboard on December 9th; it then stalled across New England through December 11th before lifting northeast into the Canadian Maritime. This storm had three phases. The initial phase was rain and wet snow which moved into Vermont midday on the 9th. The precipitation changed to a heavy, wet snow during the evening. The second phase on December 10th was a band of moderate snowfall that impacted much of central and northern Vermont during the afternoon. The final phase was scattered snow showers which ended on the 11th and 12th. Rutland county received between ten and twenty inches of snow.

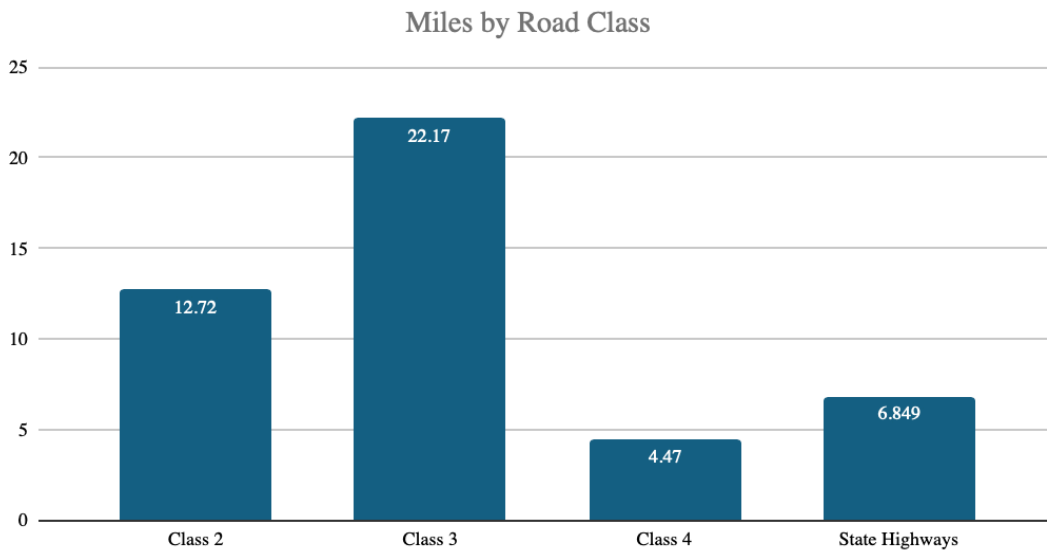
March 12-13, 2014: Snow began across Vermont around dawn on March 12th and fell heavily at times overnight before ending on the 13th. In addition to heavy snowfall accumulations,

strong northeast to north winds gusted to 35-40 miles per hour. The strong winds resulted in considerable blowing and snow drifting. Some snow changed to sleet and rain across Vermont. Snowfall in Rutland county ranged from eight to twenty-four inches.

December 26, 2012: Strong low pressure moved from the Tennessee River Valley on the morning of the 26th to near Long Island, New York by the morning of the 27th. The front eventually moved into Nova Scotia in the early morning hours of December 28th. Snow fell heavily at times with a snowfall rate of one to two inches per hour.

5.10.e. Wells Roads Vulnerable to Flooding

Flood-related road damage typically occurs on narrow and steep road ways, low-lying roads that follow a frequently flooded water body, or road segments near curves in the river.



Specific problems in Wells which historically have had flooding are on the Flood Hazards Map. They include areas near Wells Brook, Pond Brook, Bullfrog Hollow, Lake St. Catherine (the Big Lake and the Little Lake), Lake Lucidian and the Prey Brook.

5.10.f. Lands that Minimize Flooding

Riparian buffers reduce flood hazards and stabilize streambanks, attenuate floods, provide aquatic and terrestrial habitat and wildlife corridors, filter run off, absorb nutrients, and shade streams to keep them cool. Wetlands also prevent flood damage and are vital

components for maintaining the ecological integrity of land and water. In addition, upland forests also moderate flood and attenuate flood impacts. Steep slopes, on the other hand, can be a detriment during flooding by amplifying water volume and velocity in rivers and streams. Because impervious surfaces prevent the infiltration of water into the soil, these man-made surfaces exacerbate flooding by increasing the amount and velocity of stormwater runoff, particularly in areas where these surfaces are prevalent. The Poultney Mettowee Natural Resources Conservation District works with Towns to help stabilize stream banks and address issues related to stormwater runoff. Wells recognizes the value of having protected areas for water “calming” to minimize future flooding. For more connections between watershed resources and flooding, see *Section VI, Ecological, Scenic and Historical Resources*.

5.10.g. National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Participation

The Town of Wells received a flood hazard boundary map in June of 1974. The Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) and Flood Insurance Study were first published in September of 1978, and Wells joined the National Flood Insurance Program in 1978. The Rutland County DFIRM (Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps) became effective in August 2008. The hydrology and hydraulics were updated in the DFIRM (Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps). As of January 2018, there are 9 flood insurance policies through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) covering \$2,819,300 in value for properties in Town. Flood insurance is available for any structure in Town regardless of previous losses or location. The cost of flood insurance premiums rises in areas identified at a high-risk level.

Wells qualifies for an Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) rate of 12.5% (the second-highest rate) for post-disaster funding. To reach 17.5% ERAF the Town of Wells would need to identify river corridors, as listed in the LHMP goals.

5.10.h. Local Hazard Mitigation and Emergency Operations Plans

The Wells Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) was adopted in 2020 as an Annex to the Rutland Region All-Hazards Mitigation Plan.

<https://www.rutlandrpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2020-Wells-FEMA-Approved-LHMP.pdf>

The LHMP identifies known hazard issues in town and allows the Town to seek FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance funds to reduce current risk levels. The Town of Wells' Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) was adopted in March 2015 and is reviewed annually.

The LEOP encourages flood preparedness and identifies a process for response planning. Both documents can be viewed at the Wells Town Clerk's office; copies are also available by contacting Todd Fenton at 802-645-9522.

5.10.i. Recommended Actions

The Town of Wells recognizes that being flood resilient is essential. This requires ongoing work and coordination within the town between the Planning Commission, Select board, Highway Department, Emergency Management, and the Wells Volunteer Fire Department. Additional regional and state resources may also be required, and the Town is committed to continuing to work with the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, the Poultney Mettowee Natural Resources Conservation District, and other relevant organizations.

Storm Water Issues

1. Consider the need for additional stormwater master planning and/or further assessment of back roads.
2. Explore funding sources for stormwater management.
3. Identify measures to reduce the risk of future flood damage.
4. Update identification of wetland areas using most recent data.

Coordination and Outreach Efforts

1. Continue to work with first responders, Wells Emergency Management, and the highway department to plan improved emergency response capacity (operations, training, and equipment) during natural disasters, as identified in the Local Emergency Operations Plan.
2. Support flood hazard area education program and outreach effort.
3. Advise the State of Vermont, of any serious state highway flooding that has occurred and potential state highway flooding hazards in the Town of Wells.

6.0 Utilities, Facilities, Services, and Energy

6.1 Energy

Homes, commercial structures, and institutional buildings presently draw on a variety of energy sources in Wells. Fuel oil or kerosene (228 units/57%), bottled, tank or LP gas (99 units/25%), wood (46 units/12%), and electricity (25 units/6%) were the most common sources of heating fuel in the town, according to the 202200 Census.

The Green Mountain Power Company provides electricity to 887 Wells residential, commercial, and institutional facilities with 980 electric meters in the town. GMP has a total of 54.88 miles of distribution line in Wells, 98 percent of which is above ground. Any buried lines are the responsibility of the homeowner. The majority of this line is *single phase* rated

at 7.2KV. They have neither transmission lines nor any substations in the town. Electricity is supplied through a network of 300 distribution transformers that convert power for home and business use.

Automobile dependency is high in Wells because of the town's rural nature. While residents in Wells have the opportunity to walk to some local services, such as the Post Office, Village Store, Town Office, Churches, or the Library, the majority of the town's residents use vehicles for daily trips. According to the 2020 Census, 158 units/40% of the 398 occupied housing units in town own two cars, 163 units/41% own one car, 77 units/19% own 3 or more cars, and zero units had no vehicle available.

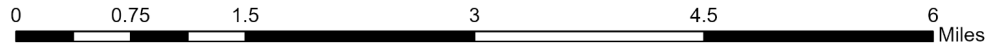
Wells supports the use of renewable energy resources, and the conservation of existing energy resources. The residents of Wells desire to preserve the natural beauty of our mountain tops and ridgelines, including Pond Mountain, St. Catherine Mountain, Northeast Mountain, and Moosehorn Mountain.

The 2023 Vermont Energy Burden Report identifies the Town of Wells as having a low energy burden, with the median household spending 10% on energy (5% on transportation; 3% on thermal; and 2% on electricity).

Commercial electric generation is constrained by access to three-phase power. Three phase power is only available near quarry lands in the southwest and northwest corner of town (as of December, 2020).

THREE PHASE POWER

DATA: VERMONT CENTER FOR GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, 2020



6.2.a. Energy Goals

Program 1. The Town of Wells supports energy efficiency and conservation in homes and businesses.

Program 2. The Town of Wells will work to create opportunities for walking, cycling, and other energy efficient, non-motorized alternatives to the automobile.

Program 3. The Town of Wells will work to pursue plans to create a charging station in the Town of Wells for electric vehicles at the Wells Village Library.

1. The Town has applied for grant funding in each of the last three grant cycles to obtain funding for the project.

6.3 Education

The Wells Village School is a member of the Wells Springs Unified Union School District, along with Middletown Springs Elementary School. Both the Wells Village School and Middletown Springs Elementary School provide education from preschool through sixth grade. Students in each community have intradistrict school choice, and may, with a process that begins in the Spring prior to the start of the school year, petition to attend either their hometown school or the neighboring school.



Picture: Wells Village School

Greater Rutland County Supervisory Union (GRCSU), which includes several school districts including Rutland Town School District (Rutland Town School and West Rutland School), Quarry Valley School District (Proctor Elementary School, Proctor Junior/Senior High School, and Poultney High School Poultney Elementary School). Wells Springs Unified Union School District (Middletown Springs Elementary School and Wells Village School). Ira operates a school district and is a member of GRCSU but is a sending town, as it does not operate a school in the town. Prior to the mergers in 2018, the Wells Village School was a member of the Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union.

The Wells Village School provides a quality education and adheres to the numerous curriculum requirements set by the State of Vermont and the federal government.

The town maintains the current building, keeping in compliance with state codes. There is additional space in the existing building which could be used as needed. It is important to

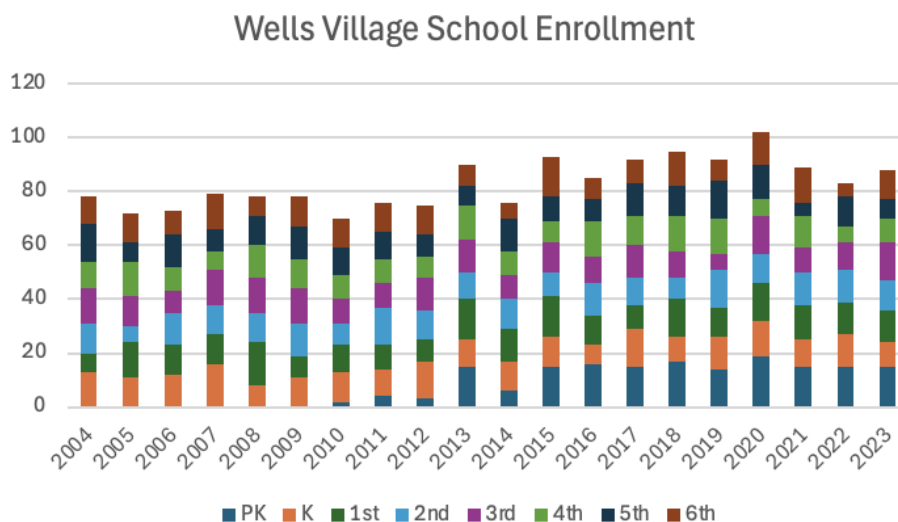
encourage collaborative efforts and a strong partnership among students, staff and parents to meet goals and to achieve positive outcomes.

During the 2022-2023 school year, the enrollment was 88 students from preschool through sixth grade. There were 67 tuition-based students from grades seven through twelve, the majority of whom attended the Granville High School in Granville, New York. Others attend Long Trail School in Pawlet, Vermont, Burr and Burton Academy in Manchester, Vermont, and Poultney High School in Poultney.

The full cost of public middle and high school is covered within the Wells Springs School District budget.

For private, non-religious schools a “state average” tuition is determined each year. This amount is paid directly to the receiving school by the Wells Springs School District. The student’s family is responsible for the balance of the tuition. Contacting the private school directly is the best way to find out what this amount is and whether there are scholarship monies available.

Vermont’s Town Tuitioning Program was launched in 1869, making it the oldest school choice program. The school voucher program provides educational options for students whose towns do not have public schools. The sending town pays school tuition directly to the “receiving” school, which can be any public or private, non-religious school in or outside Vermont.



The level of schooling in the population is slightly below the Rutland County average, with 8% of those over 25 years of age not having completed high school, compared with 6% County-wide. Those with an associate’s degree or higher accounted for 37% of the adult population in Wells compared with 42% County-wide. In this continually changing economic

environment, the Town should work to promote continuing education opportunities to ensure that Wells residents are able to compete for employment opportunities.

In the year during which the Wells Town Plan (2025) was drafted, the Agency of Education released plans to overhaul the structure and funding of the education system in Vermont.

<https://npr.brightspotcdn.com/8f/17/bba365b04a599b12b83458169596/education-transformation-policy-brief.pdf>

6.3.a. Education Goals

Goal 1: A primary goal of the Town of Wells is to ensure that all students attending our school are given optimal educational opportunities as a springboard for successful lives as well-rounded individuals.

Program 1: Seek opportunities to enhance technology available to students and teachers at Wells Village School.

Program 2: Promote links between school curriculum and community activities and initiatives.

Goal 2: To promote continuing education opportunities for all Wells residents

Program 1: Share information about courses offered through Stafford Technical Center, Community College of Vermont in Rutland, and the Castleton Campus of Vermont State University.

Program 2: Share information about funding for post-secondary opportunities, through VSAC and other channels.

6.4 Early Education & Child Care

In 2003, the Vermont Legislature amended the Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act (24 V.S.A. chapter 117) by adding a thirteenth state planning goal (§ 4302(c)(13)), which reads as follows:

“To ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and to integrate child care issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and childcare workforce development.”

“Ensuring accessible, affordable, quality child care is integral to sound economic development planning. Many families lead lives that require some type of child care outside

the home. Recognizing this reality, child care is a critical community need. Investments in the child care infrastructure, like investments in the infrastructures of transportation, public works, affordable housing and education, can have direct positive effects on the growth and vitality of the community.”

In 2024 the Vermont Legislature passed a Historic Child Care Bill, Act 76, with the goals of affordability, accessibility and quality in the child care industry – for families and those who work in or would like to work in the industry of child care. With a nominal payroll tax, the State of Vermont constructed a new system to financially support and stabilize the childcare industry. <https://letsgrowkids.org/vermont-child-care-bill-act-76-educators-families-kids>

In 2013, a preschool was started which meets at the town school. The preschool serves age 3 and pre-Kindergarten serves age 4. Students must be the age by September 1 of the school year to enter into the respective grades. Wells offers full-time preschool and pre-kindergarten, whereas other towns in Vermont provide for 10 hours of preschool.

To find more information about locating a child care provider, child care subsidies, or establishing a child care business, the Department of Children and Families provides resources and information, including a locator from Building Bright Futures. <https://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/providers>

6.4.a. Early Education Goals

Goal 1: To ensure that the Town’s policies and ordinances encourage provision of these services, given the need for child care in today’s society.

6.5. Telecommunications

Telecommunications services include land-line and wireless telephone service, dial-up and broadband Internet access, and most recently, wireless Internet access coverage. Coverage for all of these is marginal in Wells. While all homes do have access to traditional telephone lines, other forms of telecommunications are limited.

Wireless Telephone Service

Wireless telephone service is generally available in the western portion of Wells, but not available in the east. There is, however, interest among residents to gain service, for household, business, and emergency use.

Broadband Internet

Broadband Internet access is available to many, but not all, of Wells' residents. Broadband Internet access continues to grow in importance, for those who work from home, for students, and for general public use. It is important that all residents of the town of Wells have the opportunity to gain access. Broadband internet is available to all Wells residents who have access to a Green Mountain Power utility pole.

6.5.a. Telecommunications Goals

Goal 1: All residents of Wells should have access to wireless telephone and broadband Internet services using technology that maintains the community's scenic character.

Program 1: The Wells Planning Commission will continue to work with Rutland Regional Planning Commission and the state to plan for and implement wireless service and broadband Internet access.

Program 2: Work closely with fire, police, and EMS officials, and the Rutland Region Local Emergency Planning Committee to make progress in all areas of telecommunications.

6.6. Town Services and Facilities

The town should plan for future improvements to the town garage, salt shed and dog pound. The town's road equipment shop currently houses only some of the equipment and a small shop area.

6.6.a. Town Service Goals

Program 1. Construct or improve the town garage to meet the needs of the town for storage and maintenance of equipment.

Program 2. Research appropriate design and construction for salt and sand storage.

Program 3. Actively seek options to minimize costs for any town garage and salt/sand storage improvements.

6.7. Solid Waste

Solid waste disposal is an expensive and growing problem. The Town of Wells is a member of the Rutland County Solid Waste District. The state has adopted Act 78 that provides for solid waste disposal planning on a regional basis.

The citizens of Wells use the Transfer Station located on Bull Frog Hollow Road to dispose of their solid waste materials. Transfer station permits must be purchased in the Town Office or at the Transfer Station. The Transfer station offers zero-sort recycling, composting, and the disposal of a variety of household materials.

Some residents of Wells use curb-side services with local businesses to dispose of waste and recycling.

6.7.a. Solid Waste Goals

Program 1: Further study by the Town of Wells and the Solid Waste District should be encouraged to find more economical and efficient means of handling solid waste disposal.

6.8. Water & Sewer

Homeowners and businesses of the town have their own water and sewage systems. Water is most often supplied either by point driven shallow wells or drilled wells. Depths of wells vary throughout the town. Some cottages along Lake St. Catherine take water from the lake and treat or filter it to use the water for drinking, therefore protection of the quality of lake water should be a priority.

Sewage is disposed of by use of individual on-site septic systems. There is a high water table throughout much of the town and care should be taken when building so as not to contaminate the water supply. Much of the soil around the lake and many other areas of town is clay and is undesirable for septic systems.

6.8.a. Water & Sewer Goals

Program 1: The State of Vermont ANR regulates wastewater disposal systems and potable water systems, and should be contacted by residents regarding permits. The state contact information is as follows:

<http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/permits.htm>

Drinking Water Systems

Phone: 1-800-823-6500 or 802-241-3400 (weekdays 7:45am - 4:30pm, Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division)

For After-Hours Emergencies

24-hour Pager: Dial 741-5311 then enter your number (this is a local call within Vermont for a 24-hour pager for Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division emergency response) Or Dial 9-1-1 if an emergency.

Vermont Dept. of Environmental Conservation Commissioner's Office
National Life Drive, Main 2
Montpelier, Vermont 05620-3520
phone: 802-828-1556
fax: 802-828-1541
Hours: Monday through Friday, 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Program 2: Work with the Poultney-Mettowee Natural Resource Conservation District and surrounding towns to protect and improve the quality of water available for home and recreational use.

Program 3: Support testing of water (lake, brook, and river) to determine whether or not water supplies pose a health hazard.

6.9. Emergency Management

Wells has an Emergency Management and Mitigation Team. The complete Emergency Plan is in the Town Office, which is the designated Communications Center in the event of an emergency situation. The Modern Woodmen Hall is the first designated shelter and the Village School is the back-up shelter. The American Red Cross has approved both facilities as shelters.

Wells also has an Emergency Rapid Response Team directed by the Fire Chief, Todd Fenton.

6.10. Fire Protection

Wells has a well-equipped Volunteer Fire Department that is a member of the Washington County (New York) and Rutland County Mutual Aid System. The Fire Department is dispatched directly (via radio) by the Washington County Dispatch (New York), which is part of the E911 system. Calls placed from Wells will be received by the Rutland call center and requested Fire Department response will be transferred to the Washington County Dispatch. This is advantageous since the surrounding towns in Vermont and New York are also dispatched directly by Washington County Dispatch and the communication frequencies are the same.

The Wells Volunteer Fire Department is trained to the Awareness level for a hazardous material situation and trains its volunteers to the Standards of the Vermont Fire Training Academy. Response for hazardous material incidents will be from the Vermont Hazardous

Material Response Team and other trained fire departments that are certified to respond.

The Wells Fire Department provides rescue capabilities at accident scenes and incidents that require extrication from vehicles or removal from hazardous locations.

The Town of Wells has an appointed Fire Warden who is responsible for issuing burn permits after inspecting the location and substance to be burned.

6.11. Police Protection

The Vermont State Department of Public Safety provides Enhanced 911 (E911) to all residents of the Town of Wells and is based in the Rutland State Police barracks. This system of coordinating emergency response identifies the geographic location and primary residents of the originating call based on information provided by the serving telephone company and the 911 compliant address system which was implemented in Wells. The dispatching service will then coordinate the response based upon the required services including Fire Department, Medical Rescue and or Police. The current 911 implementation is the millennium system which assigns numbers based upon 1/1000 mile per digit. (example .2 miles north from the beginning of a Town road would be assigned number 200)

The primary agency responsible for law enforcement in the Town of Wells is the Vermont State Police. The State Police maintains a Satellite Office co-located with the Fair Haven Police Department in Fair Haven, VT. The State Police investigate and enforce the criminal laws of the State of Vermont, enforce motor vehicle laws and provide federally sponsored enforcement of snowmobile, boating and ATV laws in Wells.

The Rutland County Sheriff's Department provides contracted as well as State and Federal grant driven patrols and enforcement to Wells and can be called upon to supplement law enforcement resources in the Wells area as required. The Rutland County Sheriff's Department can also provide contracted services to residents and businesses as needed.

6.12. Rescue

The Granville Rescue Squad located in Granville, New York provides Emergency Medical Response. This Squad is supplemented by the ALS (Advanced Life Support) capability of Regional Ambulance Service that provides paramedic level responders with the capability of advanced methods of emergency medical treatment beyond the capabilities of local EMS services. The Wells area is also served by critical ALS services by helicopter from the Albany Medical Center in Albany, NY and Dartmouth Hitchcock Memorial Medical Center in Dartmouth, New Hampshire.

6.13. Fire, Police, Rescue, and Emergency Management Goals

Goal 1: High-quality, efficient protection for Wells residents against emergencies of all kinds.

Program 1: Encourage and support training for firefighters, law enforcement officers and emergency medical personnel serving Wells.

Program 2: Assist local response agencies in identifying and obtaining grants and other sources of funding for training and equipment needed by local responders to meet the new challenges of readiness since 09-11-2001.

Program 3: Maintain a current Rapid Response Plan for the community and participate in multi-community emergency planning programs. Ensure all Wells officials and employees are trained to the proper level of National Incident Management System (NIMS) as required to qualify for State and Federal funding.

Program 4: Seek opportunities to enhance preparedness at local shelters, including training of volunteers and acquisition of necessary equipment. Ensure the current 911 addressing is continually updated to correct errors and add new addresses as needed.

6.14. Health Care

There are several medical facilities available that provide general practitioners in a clinic setting. Mettowee Valley Family Health Care, located on Route 149 between Blossom's Corners and Granville, NY, is only a five-minute drive from the center of Wells and is open seven days a week. Granville Family Health Care, located on North Street, Granville, NY, is approximately 15 minutes away, Castleton Community Health Center is 25 minutes away, while Rutland Regional Medical Center (RRMC) and the Glens Falls Hospital are approximately 45 minutes travel time from Wells. University of Vermont Porter Hospital is an hour to the north in Middlebury. These facilities provide inpatient hospital care. The University of Vermont Medical Center in Burlington, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Memorial Hospital in Dartmouth, NH, and Albany Medical Center, in Albany, NY are all two hours drive away and are affiliated with the aforesaid local hospitals.

Dental services are available in Granville, New York and Poultney, Manchester and Castleton, Vermont. Pediatric dental services are available in Rutland and Middlebury. Nursing homes are available in Granville, New York and Manchester, Vermont.

The VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region provide in-home care visits so that patients can be discharged home instead of waiting for nursing home placement. Many other agencies

are available to Wells: Rutland County Parent/Child Center, NewStory Center (formerly Rutland County Women’s Network and Shelter), Vermont Center for Independent Living, Rutland Mental Health Service, Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging and The Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

6.15. Library



The Wells Village Library is located on the green in the center of town. This historic property was once a Universalist church. It is an important historical resource for the town and should be preserved. The Library is popular with the community and has an excellent wide-ranging selection of material available with a dedicated staff ready to assist the public with any request. Collections of children’s books, large print books, DVD’s, books-on-tape, as well as adult and juvenile fiction and nonfiction selections are available. Access to the internet is available. In cooperation with the Vermont

Department of Libraries, any title or subject matter is available upon request through an interlibrary loan.

6.16. Churches

The United Methodist Church and St. Paul’s Episcopal Church have been serving the community since the early 1800’s. Both are located adjacent to the green in the center of town, and are historic structures that contribute to the quaint appeal of the town center. These churches continue to be an important asset to the general quality of life in Wells. There are other churches of the same and other denominations available in the surrounding towns of West Pawlet, Poultney and Granville, New York.

7.0 Transportation

7.1. Transportation Overview

The town of Wells is served by three state highways, routes 30, 31 & 133.

Wells is faced with a number of important transportation issues including vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic on highways designed with a limited capacity.

7.2. Wells’ Highway Network

The Town of Wells has a hierarchy of state and town highways. The town has three

important regional highways and a series of other roads primarily serving local traffic. The Wells town highways are divided into four classes.

In total, there are 46.969 miles of public roads in Wells. Of that total:

- 6.849 miles are state highways
- 12.72 miles are Class 2 town highway⁵
- 22.17 miles are Class 3 town highways⁶
- 4.7 miles are Class 4 town highways⁷

Road	Dir	Latitude	Longitude	Traffic Count	Latest Date of Collection
E WELLS RD	2-WAY	43.4149017	-73.1352997	450	1/1/2024
WELLS BROOK RD	2-WAY	43.40958864	-73.1298826	19	1/1/2024
VT30	2-WAY	43.4233017	-73.1980972	898	1/1/2023
VT30	2-WAY	43.4169006	-73.2133026	2305	1/1/2023
NORTH STREET	2-WAY	43.4379005	-73.207901	865	1/1/2023
E WELLS RD	2-WAY	43.4137993	-73.1723022	595	1/1/2023
BULL FROG HOLLOW RD	2-WAY	43.4126015	-73.2442017	224	1/1/2023
W LAKE RD	2-WAY	43.4519005	-73.2115021	433	1/1/2023
LAMB HILL RD	2-WAY	43.4197998	-73.1423035	197	1/1/2021
WELLS: SAW MILL HILL RD 250' N OF E WELLS RD	2-WAY	43.4185982	-73.1900024	219	1/1/2021
WELLS: MILL POND RD 0.2 MI W OF VT30	2-WAY	43.4146996	-73.2265015	221	1/1/2021
E WELLS RD	2-WAY	43.413691	-73.195392	630	6/3/2015
SAW MILL HILL RD	2-WAY	43.413792	-73.195242	151	6/3/2015
E WELLS RD	2-WAY	43.413909	-73.19581	765	6/3/2015
E WELLS RD	2-WAY	43.417081	-73.203363	818	6/3/2015
VT-30	2-WAY	43.417253	-73.203573	912	6/3/2015
VT-30	2-WAY	43.417151	-73.203878	1642	6/3/2015

In general, these classifications reflect the capacity and level of use of each route. Towns receive different levels of state assistance for road maintenance depending on the class.

7.3. State Highways in Wells

Vermont Route 30 (Seth Warner Memorial Highway) is the town’s main highway, extending from Brattleboro to Middlebury, passing through the heart of Wells and along the shoreline

of Lake St. Catherine. The highway passes through town centers and along lake fronts in several other communities as well, making it one of the more scenic routes in western Vermont.

⁵*Class 2 town highways:* Those town highways selected as the most important highways (after state roads) in each town. As far as practicable they are selected with the purpose of securing trunk lines from town to town, and to places that, by their nature, have more than the normal amount of traffic.

⁶*Class 3 town highways:* Those town highways that make up the majority of local roads. The minimum standards for Class 3 highways are a highway negotiable, under normal considerations, all seasons of the year by a standard manufactured pleasure car. This would include, but not be limited to, sufficient surface and base, adequate drainage, sufficient width, and suitable for maintenance.

⁷*Class 4 town highways:* All other town highways. The Selectboard determines which highways are Class 4 town highways.

Obstacles / problems: Along the shoreline of Lake St. Catherine, the traveled way is extremely narrow, bordered by water or lakeside development on one side and steep slopes on the other. Certain stretches pose potential safety concerns to users, especially when multiple modes of transportation are using the road at once. Rock slides occur in certain areas and mesh should be added. In other areas large boulders are unstable and this should be addressed. A stone wall on one corner creates a very narrow road and limits visibility. Widening and/or straightening of the road to improve vehicular and bike/pedestrian safety and flow will be difficult. As traffic continues to increase along this highway⁸, improvements will become increasingly needed. All future improvements should enhance both the safety and scenic beauty of the road along the lake's eastern shore.

Short-term improvements to Route 30 along the lakeshore could include more guardrails along certain parts of Route 30 between the Town of Wells and the lake, as well as better drainage and visibility along the eastern side of the lake. Safety considerations, including shoulders for bike paths and pedestrian foot travel, are planning priorities for the future of this section of state road.

Special attention must also be paid to the area where Route 30 crosses WellsVillage. The highway's role is a thoroughfare for western Rutland County. There is a need for increased safety in the village area, where buildings are close to the road and pedestrians and students access the Wells Village School, Library, Churches and Store. Future development should take into consideration pedestrian safety in the village area.

Vermont Route 31 (the South Poultney Road) is a second important route that passes through the Northwest corner of the town. It runs from Poultney, Vermont to Granville, New York.

Vermont Route 133 Barely runs through the Southeast Corner of the Town. It runs from

West Rutland to Pawlet.

7.4. Town Highways in Wells

East Wells Road (Town Highway #1), running east from Wells Village to Vermont Route 133, is a primary link for residents of East Wells to the rest of the town and for residents of Wells and Granville to Rutland. The road follows along a narrow river valley – increasing in elevation, from west to east.

Obstacles/problems: The steep portions of this road may present a challenge in the Winter.

⁸ Traffic counts two miles north of Pawlet on Route 30 showed an increase in average annual daily vehicles from ~ 800 in the early 1980s to ~ 1100 in the mid 1990s and today, according to Vermont Department of Transportation data. In addition, on-going conversion of summer camps to year-round residences on the shores of Lake St.

Catherine is increasing winter travel on Route 30 and other highways. Town Highway #27

Connects East Wells Road to Vermont Route 30, this is just a small section of road that runs between the Library and the church.

North Street (A Portion of Town Highway #2) extends from the Village to West Lake Road. This is the most heavily used local road, as it serves as the main route to the west side of Lake St. Catherine.

Obstacles/problems: Signage should be considered to warn of the abrupt turn at the North end of the road. The Town should plan for the increased pedestrian and bicycle traffic between the Village and the Wells Lakeside Park.

West Lake Road (A Portion of Town Highway #2) It also connects Bull Frog Hollow Road and North Street.

Obstacles/problems: Like North Street, West Lake Road has sustained an increase in vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle traffic due to the substantially increasing number of vacation homes on the west side of the lake especially as increasing numbers of homes are winterized. Any future road improvements should take this into consideration.

South Street (A Portion of Town Highway #2) starts in the village and extends to the town line with Pawlet. The Town Garage is located on South Street.

Obstacles/problems: Visibility issues should be reviewed near the town garage.

Bull Frog Hollow (A Portion of Town Highway #2) is an unpaved road running from West Lake Road to West Pawlet. There are several slate quarries located on this road.

Obstacles/Problems: Mud season makes passage along this unpaved road difficult. The Town should consider paving this road in the future. Litter and abandoned vehicles are common along the road; solutions to this problem should be examined. During the summer travel creates a lot of dust when used.

Saw Mill Hill Road (Town Highway #6) is the residential part off East Wells Road and there is increased year round traffic on the road. It serves a growing residential population. (East of Pond Mountain)

Obstacles/problems: Most of Saw Mill Hill road is gravel. Increased traffic and the spring mud season make travel difficult or impossible. Paving and possible widening of this road should be considered.

Endless Brook Road (Town Highway #14) Runs from Saw Mill Hill Road to the Poultney line.

Mill Pond Road (Town Highway #8) Route 30 to Bullfrog Hollow is an increasingly heavily traveled route in Wells, providing access to both slate operations and the town's transfer station.

Obstacles/Problems: Passage is often challenging due to heavy commercial dump truck traffic from the slate quarries. Spring mud conditions make this road almost impassable at times. Paving, widening and drainage should be considered for this road.

Lamb Hill Road (Town Highway #7) Runs from Saw Mill Hill Road to East Wells Road. A portion of this road is closed in the winter due to steepness. The East Wells Cemetery and Barden Cemetery are on this road.

Obstacles/Problems: Spring mud conditions make this road almost impassable at times. Paving, widening and drainage should be considered for this road.

Butts Hill Road South (Town Highway #28) Runs from East Wells Road to 1477 Ballard Farm Road and is untraveled from 220 Butts Hill South to 1477 Ballard Farm Road.

Ballard Farm Road (Town Highway # 28) Runs from Lamb Hill road to 1477 Ballard Farm road. This is where Butts Hill Road South connects to Ballard Farm Road.

Snow Brook Lane: (Town Highway #26) Runs from Sawmill Hill Road to Hidden Valley Farm.

Bennett Road: (Town Highway # 17) Runs from Lamb Hill road to Middletown Springs.

Pessler Lane: (Town Highway #18) Runs from Bennett Road to a Dead End.

Town Highway #16: Cross section from Bennett Road to Lamb Hill Road.

High Chaparral Road: (Town Highway #29) Leads from Lamb Hill Road into Middletown Springs where it becomes a trail.

Brook Road: (Town Highway #5)Runs from East Wells Road to Route 133 in Tinmouth and Tadmer Hill Road, which runs from Brook Road to the Pawlet line.

Tunket Hill Road:(Town Highway #30) Runs from East Wells Road to 165 Tunket Hill Road.

Mountain View Court: (Town Highway #36) Loops from East Wells Road to East Wells Road. It serves a small residential population.

Little Lake East (Town Highway #23) **& North** (Town Highway #24): Serves cottages on Little Lake.

Capron Lane: (Town Highway #15) Runs fromCapron's Corners on Route 30 to Cannata's gate.

Bert's Nest Road: (Town Highway #12) Serves homes and cottages on the Big Lake.

East Delaney Cross Road: (Town Highway #19-Class 4 Town Highway) Runs from North Street to 415 East Delaney Cross Road.

West Delaney Cross Road: (Town Highway #19-Class 4 Town Highway)Runs from Bullfrog Hollow to 415 East Delaney Cross Road.

Western Shores (Town Highway #20) **& Quinn Cove Road** (Town Highway #35): **Clayton Trac** (Town Highway #25): all loop, from North Street to North Street and provide access to homes and cottages on the Little Lake.

Chan Hopson Road: (Town Highway #37) The Old Road formerly part of North Street.

St. Catherine Court: (Town Highway #38) Provides access to one manufactured homes development.

Geer Road: (Town Highway #22) Runs from Mill Pond Road to Bullfrog Hollow Road.

Hilltop Road: (Town Highway #11) Off Bullfrog Hollow to Vermont Route 31. However the road was moved and has been in litigation between a local quarry & the Town of Wells. This road has now been reopened as a public road.

Upper Road: (Town Highway #10) Runs from Hilltop Road to High Road in Poultney, Vermont.

7.5. Conclusions on Highway Network

With over 46.96 miles of local roads of varying classifications, Wells has an extensive system that is expensive to maintain. A periodic review to consider re-evaluation of classifications could help the town reduce maintenance costs, and control difficult accesses to service development areas. Using a system to classify roads as all weather, seasonal or unused is proving useful in controlling development, which should help to control maintenance costs.

The town should, in addition, pay close attention to development along all roads to ensure their adequacy for public travel.

7.6. Access Management

“Access management” is a series of tools designed to improve safety and efficiency along roads and highways. They include locating new intersections (or relocating older ones) to line up with one another and minimize potential accidents, installing stop signs and traffic lights in appropriate locations, and ensuring that driveways (curb-cuts) are located in safe and efficient places. In a village area, having two businesses share a driveway, for example, reduces the number of places where an accident is likely to occur.

Access management in Wells is most critical along Route 30. Blind driveways exist along much of Lake St. Catherine. Certain sections of East Wells Road, with many tight turns, are also important to consider. Future development in these areas should include street safety standards.

7.7. Road Maintenance & Funding

Road maintenance, including repairs, upgrades, and winter clearing, is one of the most significant items in the town’s budget and is a basic need of all residents. The town’s road crew currently consists of three full-time employees.

The town continues to seek new opportunities to improve road conditions and lower costs for delivering service.

One option open to towns is to adopt programs aimed at effective road maintenance.

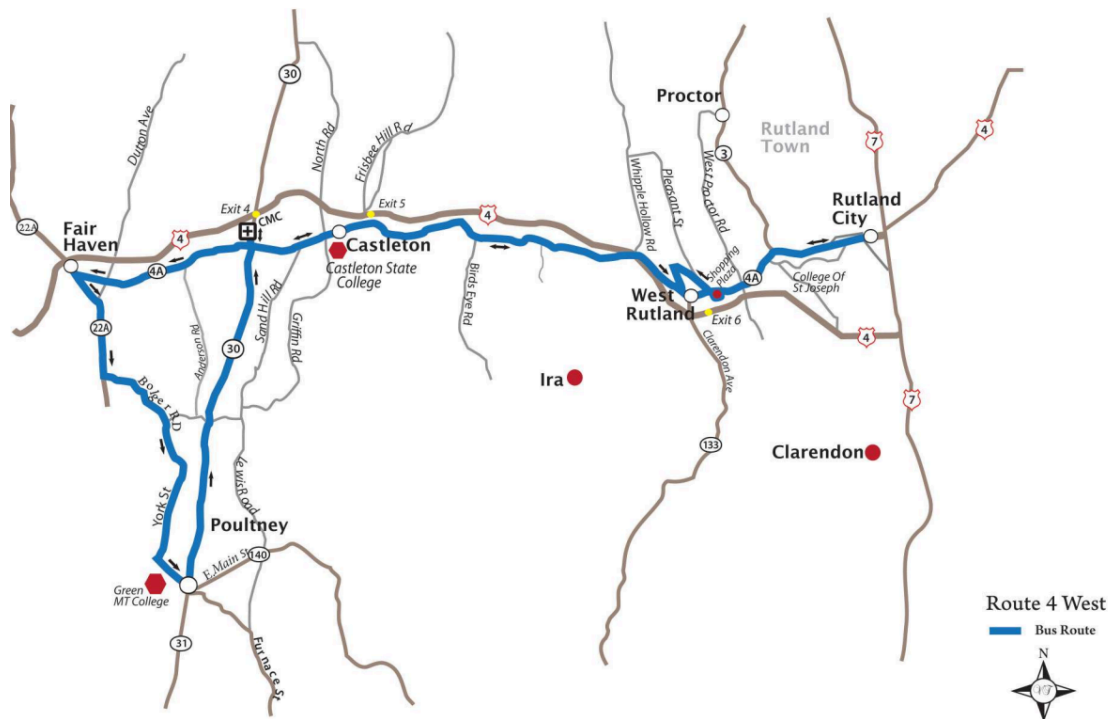
7.8. Transit, Bicycles, and Pedestrians

While most of the travel in and through Wells takes place using automobiles, other forms of transportation are also used and needed. Especially in areas of more concentrated development, such as the lakeshore and the village, adults and children alike use roads and road shoulders to walk and ride bicycles to visit family, friends, places of business, and the Wells Village School.

Key traveled routes serving these areas, including Route 30, North Street, and East Wells Road, should be able to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians (see also this Plan's recreation section, *9.0 Recreation and Historic/Scenic Resources*).

The Bus is available for public transportation (information at <https://thebus.com/routes/>). The Bus operates Monday through Sunday Rutland with service to Center Rutland, West Rutland, Castleton, Fair Haven, and Poultney. Service operates beginning at 5:30 AM and ending at 7:26 PM on Saturday and Sunday the 11:15 AM run does not operate.

Currently no fixed-route bus service in Wells. There are, however, paratransit services for the elderly and disabled. These services provide door-to-door transportation for a low per-trip fee.



The Fair Haven Route for The Bus (from <https://thebus.com/routes/fair-haven-route/>)

7.9. Rail & Air

There are no rail lines in Wells. Passenger rail service is available in nearby Fair Haven, Castleton, Rutland City and – in New York State – Whitehall, Fort Edward, and Rensselaer.

Scheduled commercial air service is available in Clarendon at the Rutland Southern Vermont Regional Airport, the Patrick Leahy Burlington International Airport, as well as from the Albany International Airport.

7.10. Transportation and the Built Environment

Road networks and the built environment are connected hand-in-hand. Development cannot occur without roads, and because of the complexity and high cost of highway construction, future development is most likely to occur along or adjacent to the existing road network in Wells.

7.11. Transportation Goals & Objectives

Goal 1: A safe, efficient town and state highway network for all users.

Goal 2: Minimize potential accidents along heavily traveled highways in Wells: routes 30, 31, East Wells Road, and North Street.

Program 1: Develop standards and regulations that ensure all public and private roads allow access by fire and emergency vehicles.

Program 2: Clearly advertise the town's policy that developers or land owners are responsible for new road construction serving new construction.

Program 3: Inform VTrans that traffic counts should continue to be performed along Route 30 and North Street.

Program 4: Periodically re-examine town highway classifications to make sure funding is being used where most effective.

Program 5: Work to solve the obstacles/problems listed for the major and important roads listed on previous pages.

Program 6: Examine historical records to determine whether the town retains rights-of-way along abandoned roads and determine an appropriate course of

action for any found.

Goal 3: Improve access to the village area by pedestrians and cyclists.

Program 1: Examine options for improved speed control in the village area, and for crosswalks, pedestrian paths, better road shoulders, and bike routes in the village area.

8.0 Economic Activity

8.1. Historic and Current Activities

Wells has historically been a small rural town with little industry. The predominant economic activities, since its inception, have been agriculture, forestry and slate mining. Agriculture continues to be an important economic activity in town with the shift from dairy farming to smaller diversified farms.

Several stores and small businesses serve the town including:

Brown's Farm	Law Office of Tracee Oakman
Chapparral Farm	Nine Acre Farm
CM Construction	Martelle Sand & Gravel
Dailey Design LLC (Custom Carpentry & Woodworking)	Mason Ridge Farm
Danbury State Fair Museum	Mill Brook Horse Farm
Earth & Time Studio	Miller's Screen Printing & Embroidery
Emma's Lakeside Market	Modern Woodmen of America
E-Z Marina	Pond Mountain Inn
Gould's Dog Services	P&P Landscaping & Property Management
Green Mountain Boys Landscaping	Slate House Airbnb
Green Mountain Building Services	Southern VT Stand by Power
Green Stone Slate Company	Stomski Tile and Masonry
Holcomb Sand, Gravel, Stone	SVT Farm
Ken Duell Building	Thomas' Auto, Marine & Self-Storage
Keyes Plumbing & Heating	Tile Specialist & Vintage British Bike Specialist
Lake Hill Farm	Vermont Creations
Lake St. Catherine Cottages	Wells Country Store
Lakeside Realty	Wellsmere Farm
Larson Farm	Your Kitchen Mistress
Larson Farm Appraisal Company	

However, residents of Wells rely on the more concentrated shopping center in Granville, New

York and in Poultney, Vermont for the bulk of their shopping needs. Stores, offices, auto repair, cottage industries and other small businesses are interspersed with residential development. Many are utilizing historic structures. This blends with the rural village character of the town and this should be encouraged. The greatest concentration of commercial establishments lies along Vermont Rte 30 from the center of the town, west to the Pawlet town line. Greatest commercial growth can be expected to continue along the most heavily traveled routes.

The operation of slate quarries is part of the Town's history. Because many slate quarries have periodically opened and closed, residential development has sprung up near quarries.

8.2. Desired future development to meet needs

Wells is a rural residential community without large commercial establishments or manufacturing facilities. Most residents will continue to commute for employment. Wells encourages the development of small businesses that provide local employment and needed community services, and which do not significantly change the rural residential character of the community.

8.3. Business Needs

Public transportation is an important component of community life, and may become important to the economy of the town. New public transportation initiatives should be encouraged.

8.4. Other Considerations

In contemplating any new commercial activity in Wells, consideration should be given to noise, pollution, traffic, and burden on existing public resources. Consideration must be given to the compatibility to adjacent or nearby land uses and aesthetics. Use and renovation of existing buildings should be encouraged.

8.5. Economic Activity Goals

Goal 1. Encourage commercial growth that meets the needs of town residents while at the same time preserving the small-town character of the community.

Program 1: Since Wells recently received approval for a Designated Village center, a goal is to share the information and resources related to that designation to ensure that residents and small businesses are accessing incentives to promote rehabilitation and re-use of structures in the area.

Program 2: Participate in the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) Community Visits program. The Community Visits program is a free program

that allows communities to engage in economic development planning with a facilitated structure.

Program 3: Gather public input on what types of businesses residents would like to see enter their community.

9.0 Recreation and Historic/Scenic Resources

9.1. Recreation Overview

Through the generosity of the members of the Modern Woodmen of America (M.W.A.), the Town of Wells has access to a softball and soccer field, a basketball court, and a tennis court. All are used fairly regularly, which indicates a demand for recreational opportunities within the town. The M.W.A. also sponsors two bingo sessions every week. Many people travel from surrounding towns in Vermont and New York to play. This event goes on year-round and is well attended at all times.

The Town of Wells Lakeside Park continues to grow in popularity; from kayaking, fishing and family picnics to ice fishing, sliding, and skating. The park is the halfway spot for the annual Wells PTO 5k races. It is also a beautiful backdrop for weddings and is the perfect place for birthday parties. The Park has picnic tables, grills, a port-o-potty, and a dock for public use. The Delaney Forest also attracts many as it has a variety of walking/hiking trails. The grade school children come out and do guided walks through the forest to learn about the different trees and nature.

Lake St. Catherine also offers many recreation opportunities for the Town of Wells. Tourists/summer campers come from all over the United States to enjoy fishing, boating, camping and swimming in the lake. The lake is enjoyed both summer and winter for fishing purposes. There is a lake access available to the town owned by the Fish and Game Department near the Lake Bridge which allows boat and fishing access.

Ice skating is prevalent on Lake Lucidian, a manmade lake located off of North Street.

Hunting has always been a favorite sport for many citizens of Wells. Where at one time hunting was free-range, in recent years the largest majority of private land has been posted for "No Hunting". To be in compliance with the law, permission must be asked of the owner before hunting on posted property.

Snowmobiling is a popular sport in the winter. The frozen lakes and streams provide easy access from one part of town to another

9.1.a. Recreation Future Needs

While 55% of respondents to the 2003 town-wide survey reported being satisfied with

recreational opportunities in the town, nearly 20% indicated that they were not. Some wanted better swimming access to Lake St. Catherine and more organized recreation opportunities.

Several spectacular vistas exist above the cliffs at Pond Mountain and elsewhere in Wells, though access to these sites is over private land. An opportunity exists to allow public use of trails though Vermont's landowner liability statutes. Efforts should be made to promote the existence of these statutes.

9.1.b. Recreation Goals

Goal 1: Preserve key vistas for posterity in this natural state.

Goal 2: Greater public access to the natural and scenic resources within the town.

Goal 3: Promote more areas open to public exploration of wildlife habitat (including wetlands), hiking access to our scenic vistas, utilizing nature walks and access to the rivers traversing the town.

Goal 4: Encourage more organized activities, such as a 5K run, a tennis match, bikes races, kayaking, etc.

Program 1: Develop walking and bicycle trails with emphasis along VT RT 30.

Program 2: Develop swim lesson opportunities for full-time and seasonal residents of Wells.

Program 3: Support kids' recreational organizations including 4-H clubs, Modern Woodman, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Junior & Teen services clubs and other clubs in the community. Participate in the establishment of a designated byway along Route 30.

Program 4: Support artistic and municipal events in the town

Program 5: Seek funding public and private to accomplish these programs.

9.2. Historic and Scenic Resources

The preservation of the town's scenic and historic resources is of utmost importance to the citizens of the town. When surveyed in 2003, more than 90% of those answering felt that the historic resources and architectural character of the town should be protected.

The historic area of the Town radiates from the Center of the Town, (at the intersection of VT

RT 30 and Town Highway #2) and its homes and structures have been well documented in The Historic Architecture of Rutland County Vermont State Register of Historic Places by The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. Most of the historic buildings are of wooden clapboard construction and have slate roofs. The historic homes tend to be of the Federal, Georgian, Cape or Greek Revival style and are built close to the road. The Center of the Town has high housing density and is most often referred to as the Village. Many of the historic homes were built near various mills that utilized the waterpower of Pond Brook (also known as Mill Brook) that flows from the outlet of Lake St. Catherine and the Wells Brook that runs east to west just south of the Center of Town.

At the Town Center is the historic Wells Village Store and the historic Lewis Hotel (now a private residence). Also at the Town Center are the Wells Post Office and a real estate office. To the east is the Town Green. The Wells Library is located in a historic building which was formerly a Universalist Church. Facing the Green are the Methodist Church on the south and St. Paul's Episcopal Church on the east. All of these historic structures have been frequently photographed. The Town Green is the site of the Memorial Day Celebration at the Veterans Monument and Honor Roll.

9.2.a. Historic & Scenic Resource Goals

Goal 1: Development in or near historic areas should be compatible with the surrounding historic buildings and people be encouraged to rehabilitate existing structures to preserve the buildings and maintain their historic and architectural character.

Program 1: Work with the Wells Historical Society to establish priorities for historic and scenic preservation in the town.

Program 2: With the recent Designation as a Village Center, determine what historic structures might benefit from grant opportunities.

10.0 Future Land Use

10.1. Land Use Plan

To pursue the planning objectives, the following land uses and resources have been identified and policies have been developed for their use and or location:

1. Town Center or Village
2. Rural Residential and Agricultural
3. Flood Plain Area
4. Highland Conservation Area
5. Lake Shore, Wetlands and Water Conservation Area.

In 2024, a new state planning goal 24 V.S.A §4302 (15), was added: "To equitably distribute

environmental benefits and burdens as described in 3 V.S.A. chapter 72.” An “environmental benefit” are natural or manmade assets and services that benefit communities and individuals, such as a lake, green space, or the Town Office. An “environmental burden” is a significant impact to clean air, water and land. This Plan must be “consistent with” this goal as defined in 24 V.S.A §4302 (f)(1). Public Facilities described in this Plan should be maintained or improved to benefit broader public interests. Goals and Programs in this Plan seek to maintain public access to important community spaces and address possible environmental impacts from varying land uses.

10.2. Town Center or Village

The Town of Wells is a quintessential New England town. It was organized in the year 1773. The Center of Town is the intersection of Vermont Route 30 and North and South Streets. To the west of the Town Center is the historic former Hopson’s Store; the historic Wells Village School which educates children from pre-kindergarten to sixth grade; the Modern Woodmen of America (M.W.A.) Property which is the site of the annual Wells Carnival, weekly bingo and recreation facilities as well as the Senior Center, and Our Neighbor’s Table (a food shelf) ; the historic Wells Cemetery, which is nondenominational; the Wells Volunteer Fire Department’s fire house, Thomas’ Auto, and the Wells Town Office.



To the south and north of the town center is a residential development with some cottage industries. Located to the north are a mobile home park and several cottages, some seasonal, along the Little Lake at the Outlet of Lake St. Catherine. Located to the south is the Town Garage.

Commercial activity within the Village is primarily housed in historic structures. Our historic Green and the library and the two churches facing on it should be preserved. Growth potential is limited in part because of water. A lot of places have private water and sewer/septic systems which are regulated by the State of Vermont and sewer/septic is on an individual lot basis.

The Village District contains the Wells Village Center Designation. This designation furthers the Plan's goals by making landowners eligible for rehabilitation tax credits and the municipality eligible for priority consideration for specific grants.

To view the map for the Town of Wells, visit [this link](#).

10.3. Village Goals

Goal 1: Any future growth or commercial activity within this area should respect the quaint residential nature of the Village.

Rural residences are those residences located outside of the Center of Town or the Village and including cottages and homes along Lake St. Catherine and Lake Lucidian.

Rural residences in the countryside have tended to be constructed off the road (often on hillsides) to take advantage of scenic vistas. In the past, due to State Subdivision Regulations, many ten-acre subdivisions were created to avoid the need for septic permits. Many have carved up the land resulting in irregular shaped lots and composed of very little flat land. These regulations have since been changed and no longer contain the 10-acre exemption.

Construction of home sites that would allow for maximum open land and forests should be encouraged. This will maintain the scenic beauty that is inherently ours and will continue to preserve the natural wildlife and its habitat.

The *agricultural areas* of the Town include the valley lands north, west and south of the Town Center and the elevated areas east of the Town Center. Both the valley and upland areas are suitable for many types of agriculture and development. The valley land sustains the largest developed uses because of its favorable soil type, depth and slope. The uplands are less suitable because of inferior soil conditions and increased slope. Currently much of this land is used for crops to support cattle.

Agricultural use of the land is desirable and should be encouraged to provide open spaces and habitat for wildlife. The State of Vermont Current Use Program offers real estate tax incentives to the landowner for the management of agricultural lands and forests. Land Trust Conservation Easements can ensure continued agricultural use of the land.

While very few farms exist in Town, land is still being utilized for crops for farms in other towns. The Town should encourage open land and maintenance of forests to foster the preservation of wildlife, promote recreational use, and to preserve our scenic beauty, harmony, and privacy. We want to sustain the landscape for which the Town and the State of Vermont are revered.

10.4. Rural Residential and Agriculture Goals

Goal 1: Balance future development with the use of land for Agriculture and Forest.

Program 1: Provide residents with information about tools for land conservation, including the current use program and the creation of conservation easements by the Vermont Land Trust.

Program 2: Promote preservation and maintenance of viable forest and farmland for the future.

10.5. Highland Conservation Areas

The highland conservation area includes the spectacular series of ledges that run parallel to Lake St. Catherine on the east, Pond Mountain and Lake St. Catherine Mountain. These ridges crest at between 1,300 feet and 1,500 feet above sea level. The highland conservation area also includes the larger and taller mountains that rise to the east of the ledges. The taller mountains to the east include peaks that range from 1,300 feet to Northeast Mountain that peaks at over 2,100 feet.

These areas generally consist of large woodland tracts. Due to the topography, road access to these areas is generally limited. Because of the fragile nature of these areas, it is recommended that very limited development occur. When such residential or commercial development does occur, we recommend that careful consideration be given to protect the important soil and ground water resources, and that such development not adversely affect the scenic beauty or views of those highland areas.

The Town's desire is to preserve the natural beauty of mountain tops and ridge lines including Pond Mountain, St Catherine Mountain, North East Mountain and Moosehorn and all other highland areas.

10.6. Highland Conservation Areas Goals and Programs

Goal 1: Encourage conservation of the fragile highland areas.

Program 1: Provide landowners with information about conservation easements and working with land trusts for preservation of key parcels of land.

10.7. Lake Shore District

The Lakeshore district is defined as lands within 1,000 feet of the mean high water level of Lake St. Catherine and Lake Lucidian, or the boundaries of Vermont Route 30, West Lake Road and North Street, whichever is less.

Many of the cottages and homes along Lake St. Catherine and Lake Lucidian are high density

due to the high cost of land in these areas and the desirability of access to the Lakes. Because of this high density there is always a concern about polluted water supplies, including drinking water and lake water, which in some instances is filtered and used for drinking.

The town should strive to foster a good relationship by supporting issues important to the lake community. The Town annually contributes to the Lake St. Catherine Association (LSCA) and the Poultney-Mettowee Natural Resources (PMNRCD). While most of the hotels on Lake St. Catherine have been torn down and their properties subdivided for cottages, several historic cottages remain along the lake and their preservation should be encouraged. There are several organizations such as Lake St. Catherine Association (LSCA), Lake St. Catherine Conservation Fund (LSCCF), and Poultney Mettowee Natural Resources (PMNRCD), which addresses issues relating to the lakeside district.

10.8. Lake Shore Goals

Program 1: Minimize erosion and pollutant runoff from roads

Program 2: Recommend that future development does not add to pollutant levels in lakes.

10.9 Flood Plain Area

Lands that lie within the Flood Plain Area are identified by the Flood Plain Maps available at the Town Office. The Flood Plain Area is chiefly along Pond Brook, and Wells Brook, although certain areas along the Lake are identified. Anyone wishing to build in a designated Flood Plain Area is asked to consult the Town's Flood Plain Regulations adopted November 6, 2001 and fill out the Flood Plain Compliance Application which can be obtained from the Wells Town Clerk.

See the map under Flood Resilience for the Flood Hazard Areas.

11.0 Wells Town Plan Update Process

The 2025 Wells Town Plan is based on the work of townspeople over several years.

In early 2002, the Wells Planning Commission revived an expired Town Plan that had been written in 1990. Over the course of six months, the Planning Commission worked to revise this plan. The town plan was adopted in the summer of 2002 with the understanding that the town would be applying for a grant to undertake a more thorough update.

The town received a Vermont Municipal Planning Grant in the Fall of 2002 and decided to work with the Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) towards a complete revision. Work on this version of the Wells Town Plan began in the winter of 2003 with a town-wide survey. Results of this survey were compiled and analyzed. Based on this, the Planning Commission decided to host a Town Planning Fair in March 2003. The fair, attended by

many people, featured workshops on six topics of town-wide interest⁹, displays by local organizations, and science project presentations by students at the Wells Village School.

The Planning Commission used this input to develop a draft Plan, which was circulated to community groups and officials in the fall of 2004. Members of the public were invited to a public input session and public hearing in early 2005, after which time the Selectboard adopted the new plan. This plan was in effect for five years. The town should make sure the plan is regularly examined and updated to reflect ongoing changes in the community.

11.1 Wells 2003 Town-Wide Survey

In the spring of 2003, surveys were mailed to each household (year-round and seasonal) in Wells with the objective of gathering input about priorities for development. A total of 227 surveys were completed and returned. This return provided the Wells Planning Commission with a starting point for developing a Town Plan for the community. A copy of this survey is available at the Wells Town Office.

11.2 Relationship to development patterns and town plans in Pawlet, Poultney, Middletown Springs, Danby, Tinmouth (Vermont) and Granville (New York)

The 2025 Wells Town Plan includes chapters devoted to many of the key issues facing Wells. The town, however, does not operate alone. Plans developed in Wells affect neighboring communities, and vice-versa.

Two of Wells' immediate neighbors – Granville, New York and Poultney, Vermont – are larger centers of population, employment, services, and education. Wells is and will remain a smaller and more rural community than either of these. That being said, Poultney's plan and development trends reinforce a rural character on its borders with Wells.

¹⁰ Workshop topics at the Town Fair were: the new town office, the current use program, telecommunications, wind energy, aquatic nuisance species in Lake St. Catherine, and the Route 30 scenic byways program.

It is the belief of the Town that this Plan is compatible with those of its neighbors, sharing many of the same values for water quality protection, concentrated development, and active agricultural and forestry practices.

11.3 Relationship to supporting local plans in the Town of Wells

The 2025 Wells Town Plan is the main, overarching plan for the town. Other more specialized plans have been consulted and will hopefully follow the overall guidance of this plan in the future. They include a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, a rapid response plan, and Local Emergency Management Plan

11.4 Relationship to the Rutland Regional Plan

This Plan is compatible with the Rutland Regional Plan. Some differences of emphasis occur, mainly due to the more rural and agricultural character of Wells compared to the urban and suburban parts of the Region, the relative size of Wells' population and economy, and Wells' mostly residential habitation.

It shares the Regional Plan vision of providing a place where residents enjoy a high quality of life, particularly deriving the benefits of rural life and character; a place with a well-cared- for environment; and a place with a vigorous economy, particularly informed by the sorts of local business, cottage industry, and creative endeavor that enhance the rural character of the Town.

11.5 Acknowledgements

This Plan was prepared by the Wells Planning Commission with technical assistance from the Rutland Regional Planning Commission.

Appendices

Appendix A. Acronyms

ALS - Advanced Life Support
DFIRM - Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map
ERAF - Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund
FEMA - Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRM - Flood Insurance Rate Map
GRCSU - Greater Rutland County Supervisory Union
GMP - Green Mountain Power
LSCA - Lake St. Catherine Association
LSCCF - Lake St. Catherine Conservation Fund
LEOP - Local Emergency Operations Plan
LHMP - Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
MWA - Modern Woodmen of America
NFIP - National Flood Insurance Program
PMNRCD - Poultney-Mettowee Natural Resource Conservation District
RRPC - Rutland Regional Planning Commission
SVT - Slate Valley Trails
SFHA - Special Flood Hazard Area
VANR - Vermont Agency of Natural Resources
VCRD - Vermont Council on Rural Development
VIP Program - Vermont Invasive Patrollers (VIP) Program
VMBA - Vermont Mountain Bike Association

Appendix B. Resources & Links

Greater Rutland County Supervisory Union: www.grcsu.org

Lake St. Catherine Association: www.lakestcatherine.org

Lake St. Catherine Conservation Fund: www.lakematters.com

Poultney-Mettowee Natural Resource Conservation District www.pmnrcd.org

Rutland Area Community Resource Guide:

<https://www.rrmc.org/app/files/public/298c981e-0d26-4598-add0-fbd5c24fc3aa/Patient%20and%20Visitors/Rutland%20Area%20Community%20Resource%20Guide.pdf>

Rutland Regional Planning Commission: www.rutlandrpc.org

Slate Valley Trails: www.slatevalleytrails.org

Town of Wells: www.wellsvt.com

Town Plans from Neighboring Towns:

Middletown Springs (2017):

<https://middletownsprings.vt.gov/town-government/official-documents/>

Pawlet (2024): <https://pawlet.vt.gov/documents/town-plan/>

Poultney (2022): <https://www.poultneyplanning.com/theplan>

Tinmouth (2019): <https://tinmouthvt.gov/resources/>

Vermont 2-1-1: www.vermont211.org

Vermont Agency of Natural Resources: anr.vermont.gov

Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility: www.vbsr.org

Vermont Council on Rural Development: www.vtrural.org

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation: dec.vermont.gov

Vermont Preservation Trust: www.ptvermont.org

Wells Fire Department: www.wellsvtfd.com

Wells Historical Society: wellshistoricalsociety.yolasite.com

Wells Library www.wellsvillagelibrary.com