



# Sheffield Town Plan

March 2025

# Acknowledgments

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Planning Commission Members: Carolyn Crankshaw (Chair), Keith Ballek, Bobbie Bristol, Frances Hersey (Former Chair), Biff Mahoney, and Alan Robertson

NVDA: Jesse Noone, Regional Planner



Photos of the 2024 Solar Eclipse taken from Sheffield



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# Overview

Sheffield’s Planning Commission began addressing the Town Plan Update in May of 2023, charting the course for an adopted plan to be established prior to the expiration of the town’s current plan in March 2025. The Planning Commission reached out to the Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) to seek consultation on how addressing the plan could aid specific issues within the community. NVDA met with the Commission monthly (and for a period twice a month) to understand the town’s history, social dynamics, opportunities, and requirements that the plan could lay out. The Commission was motivated to do something more with this iteration of the Plan Update and wanted to make a plan that represented its people, present, and future. The Commission applied for and was awarded a Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) to fund the services of NVDA’s consultation in November 2023. Below is a timeline of the group’s efforts, engagement attempts, and progress.



## Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to guide local governance at an important moment for the direction of the community. Sheffield looks to help its people; to be welcoming to newcomers; to maintain the local property tax base; and to keep the rural quality of life and traditional values that have defined Sheffield. The goals, policies, and strategies for implementation should reflect these purposes throughout.

The plan is also an active resource for the community, with links and sources relevant to local and regional information. The Town Plan gathers resources to present to the community while stating the directions the community would like to go and the goals they would like to achieve.



This plan is not a regulatory document—it is to be used as a visionary guide for planning and legislative processes for the next eight years and beyond.

While Sheffield does not have zoning, nor does the town intend to adopt regulations, planning still supports a number of non-regulatory initiatives, such as:

- **Village Center Designation:** This is a non-regulatory designation for core village areas. Owners of commercial properties can receive tax credits for re-investment in their properties.
- **Grant Writing:** Some grant programs, such as the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP), require an adopted Municipal Plan in order for a town to receive grant funding for housing or economic development projects. Other grant programs will consider funding for initiatives that are consistent with the Municipal Plan. Almost all grant standings will increase if the topic for which you are seeking funds is an expressed interest in the Town Plan.
- **Act 250 Development & Section 248 Hearings:** The intent of a Municipal Plan is considered in Act 250 hearings, as well as Section 248 hearings for telecommunications and energy projects. To be effective in this capacity, specificity about desired development patterns and outcomes is essential.
- **Town Forests:** The Town can purchase lands for the purpose of preservation, public recreation, protection of wildland habitat, watershed protection, and/or timber management for maintaining the health and intactness of those forestlands.

### ***How to Use This Plan?***

The goals, strategies, and priority actions serve as a blueprint for building opportunities and resources that give directly back to the community. This plan serves as a guiding support for municipal officials in future decision making while meeting the requirements of ([24 V.S.A. § 4382](#)).

Once adopted, the Planning Commission and Selectboard will create timelines, evaluations, and build capacity for what is pursued by the town. Ultimately, this plan intends to be a building block for future town plans.

### ***Changes Since Last Update***

This iteration of this Town Plan looks to make changes since the last plan, with more community input, thorough research, and specific, realistic goals that can better its people. While the previous plan did an excellent job in gathering information and inventory of the town, the Planning Commission wanted this plan to reflect future actions to improve community dynamics with goals that are consistent with the community's interests.

In particular, the Planning Commission intends to have this plan provide measurable outcomes to ensure that this plan is useful and can track changes and results from the implementation plan.

New requirements to town plans include:

- 1) a section pertaining to the future use of local and regional forest blocks and habitat connectors ([Act 171](#)),
- 2) a section that addresses the acknowledgement of [Act 47](#), or the HOME Act, which limits exclusionary housing practices.

### ***Regional Context to Adjacent Communities***

Four towns border Sheffield—Wheelock, Sutton, Glover, Barton. All these towns share the same watershed as Sheffield. While Sutton, Glover, and Barton all have flood hazard regulations, Sheffield is currently exploring its options and waiting for the updated FEMA-USGS maps before deciding on what to implement.

Sheffield, Sutton, and Wheelock share a multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan with Burke that expires in June 2026.

Sheffield and Wheelock may explore the possibility of constructing a recreational trail connecting the two communities along Millers Run.



## **Implementation Plan**

This section gathers the most important actions laid out in this plan. Through 18 months of monthly meetings and discussions that brought out understanding of Sheffield’s capabilities, capacity, and desires to bring community together, the priority actions below represent this plan in a summary review.



**PRIORITY ACTION : ADDRESS PROPERTIES WITH ABANDONED BUILDINGS AND SOLID WASTE BUILDUP**

**ASSOCIATED GOALS:** CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN TOWN'S RURAL CHARACTER; MAINTAIN & PROTECT LOCAL PROPERTY VALUES

**STRATEGIES:** FLESH OUT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES WITH HEALTH OFFICER AND SELECTBOARD BASED ON THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY PLANNING COMMISSION; FOCUS ON HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE. SUPPORT EFFORTS IN OTHER NON-REGULATORY WAYS

**TIMELINE** - 1-2 YEARS TO COME UP WITH A TOWN ENFORCEMENT PLAN AND BEGIN IMPLEMENTING

**RESPONSIBILITY** - PLANNING COMMISSION, HEALTH OFFICER, SELECTBOARD

**RESOURCES** - TOWNS WITH SIMILAR POLICIES; NVDA; VLCT; VADPA

**PRIORITY ACTION : ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY TRUST**

**ASSOCIATED GOALS:** REJUVENATION OF AESTHETICS; INCREASING COMMUNITY SPIRIT & SUPPORT; MAINTAIN AND PROTECT LOCAL PROPERTY VALUES; ESTABLISH A VISION FOR A COMMUNITY CENTER

**STRATEGIES:** APPLY TO VILLAGE TRUST INITIATIVE; CONTINUE DEVELOPING INTEREST AND MISSION STATEMENT; WORK WITH SELECTBOARD TO BUILD ACTION PLAN FOR OLD TOWN HALL;

**TIMELINE** - 1 YEAR TO BUILD A GROUP OF AT LEAST 3-5 MEMBERS AND ESTABLISH A VISION

**RESPONSIBILITY** - PLANNING COMMISSION; INVESTED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

**RESOURCES** - PRESERVATION TRUST OF VERMONT, VERMONT COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, VERMONT COUNCIL OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### PRIORITY ACTION : PURSUE AND ESTABLISH A VILLAGE CENTER DESIGNATION

**ASSOCIATED GOALS:** CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN TOWN'S RURAL CHARACTER; MAINTAIN AND PROTECT LOCAL PROPERTY VALUES; ATTRACT AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEAR TOWN CENTER, REJUVENATION OF TOWN AESTHETICS

**STRATEGIES:** CONTACT ACCD OUTREACH MANAGER TO AFFIRM ELIGIBILITY; WORK WITH NVDA TO ESTABLISH DRAFT MAP BOUNDARIES; SCHEDULE A LOCAL MEETING WITH DHCD COORDINATOR; CONTINUE TO BUILD AWARENESS AND SUPPORT ON DESIGNATION FROM COMMUNITY AND SELECTBOARD

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

**TIMELINE** - 1 - 2 YEARS TO SUBMIT APPLICATION AND HAVE HEARING SET

**RESPONSIBILITY** - PLANNING COMMISSION

**RESOURCES** - ACCD, DHCD, NVDA

### PRIORITY ACTION : IMPROVE PLANNING EFFORTS AND RELATIONSHIP WITH WHEELOCK

**ASSOCIATED GOALS:** BUILD RESILIENCY AMONGST COMMUNITY; EXPAND WALKABILITY AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

**STRATEGIES:** CONSIDER A JOINT COMMITTEE; EXPLORE VESTED PROJECTS THAT CAN BENEFIT BOTH COMMUNITIES, ENGAGE VERMONT COUNCIL ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT ON RESOURCES TO ENGAGE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

**TIMELINE** - CONTINUALLY ONGOING

**RESPONSIBILITY** - PLANNING COMMISSION, WHEELOCK TOWN OFFICIALS, INVESTED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

**RESOURCES** - VCRD, TOWN OF WHEELOCK, NVDA,



**PRIORITY ACTION : PURSUE STATE AND FEDERAL (FEMA) ACTION ON PROVIDING DRAFT WORK MAPS OF THE MILLERS RUN FLOODPLAIN MAPPING**

**ASSOCIATED GOALS:** BE PREPARED FOR IMMINENT FEMA MAPPING UPDATES AND ENSURE COMMUNITY HAS AWARENESS; BUILD AND MAINTAIN RESILIENCY AMONGST COMMUNITY; MAINTAIN WATER QUALITY

**STRATEGIES:** ENLIST CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO PRESS FEMA AND THE USGS TO FINISH THE LATE CONTRACTUAL WORK ON THESE PLANS

**TIMELINE** - ASK FOR COMPLETION OF THESE PLANS WITHIN 3 MONTHS; REVISE THE NEW TOWN PLAN ONCE THE DRAFT MAPS ARE AVAILABLE

**RESPONSIBILITY** - PLANNING COMMISSION ; NVDA

**RESOURCES** - FEMA; USGS; NVDA; VERMONT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

**PRIORITY ACTION : FOCUS PLANNING EFFORTS TO PRIORITIZE CHILDREN'S FUTURE IN SHEFFIELD**

**ASSOCIATED GOALS:** CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN VOCATIONAL SKILL FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES; ENHANCE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS; CONTINUE TO ATTRACT ENROLLMENT; IMPROVE HOUSING STOCK

**STRATEGIES:** ENCOURAGE VOLUNTEER WORK IN YOUNGER PEOPLE AND FAMILIES; WORK WITH ADJACENT COMMUNITIES ON DIFFERENT YOUTH PROGRAMS; ESTABLISH A LOCAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; SET UP FACILITIES LIKE NEWPORT'S CAREER CENTER TO ENCOURAGE VOCATIONS SUITED TO NEK AND KEEP YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGED HERE; IMPROVE BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY AND AFFORDABILITY

**TIMELINE** - ONGOING AND THROUGHOUT

**RESPONSIBILITY** - MILLER'S RUN SCHOOL OFFICIALS, PLANNING COMMISSION; KINGDOME EAST SCHOOL DISTRICT

**RESOURCES** - NVDA, KINGDOM EAST SCHOOL DISTRICT, VLCT

# Introduction to Town

Sheffield is a hill town located in northern Caledonia County; one of three counties often referred to as Vermont's "Northeast Kingdom." The Town was chartered in 1793. With arrival of settlers, farming and logging provided the economic basis for the town's population for 150 years.

Sheffield is a classic mountain community, with most lands over 1500' in elevation. The only areas below this line are the 1-½ mile long, valley bottom of Millers Run at the southeast corner of the town, and the rivers tributaries running upstream to the northwest. Sheffield's land terrain is marked by steep forested slopes leading to riparian areas along steep tributaries of Millers Run.

Like a majority of Vermont's communities, forests were generally cut down in the early 1800s; agriculture, sheep, and dairy prevailed until the end of the century. Today, Sheffield's traditional land use has been defined by keeping large, forested areas intact and in use, while working rich soil bases along Millers Run for agriculture. Dairy farming continued until about 2010 and today there are no major dairy farms in town. A new sheep enterprise and sunflower enterprise occupy the old potato fields on Sheffield Square Road. Farming is no longer a significant factor in the town's economy.



Sheffield is now a bedroom community for both workers who travel to their jobs in other surrounding communities, and retirees who have found the surroundings a pleasant location to live. However, there are a few smaller farms that seem to be well-established. Because of its remote location the town has a large number of camp properties located in the higher elevations and backwater areas of the town's class IV roads.

Sheffield has experienced a gradual and complete afforestation of cleared land since about 1900. Today, while there are several large established sugarbush operations in the town, most forests are still relatively young and even aged. The abundance of forests has helped create a healthy forestry industry in managing and harvesting trees for sawlogs, pulp, and more recently, biofuels.

Historically, farms were present throughout the entire landscape and old barns and home foundations abound throughout the town. Millers Run's steep gradient at the Post Office helped the establishment of mills, and the town's main concentration of homes and businesses developed around this feature. A substantial portion of the Sheffield homesteads and population still live in this area surrounding the intersections of Route 122, Berry Hill Road, and Chesley



Hill Road. Within this area are Miller's Run School, the post office, the old Town Hall, and Municipal office building currently housing the fire and highway departments. Outside traditional uses of forestry and agriculture, light industry is characterized by small private enterprises. The highest reaches in the NW corner of the town is site of a successful wind farm.

Many years ago, the state established Mathewson State Forest on the eastern edge of Sheffield, including some acreage in Wheelock, and Holbrook State Park at the northwestern corner of the Sheffield. The park includes two of the town's six major ponds.

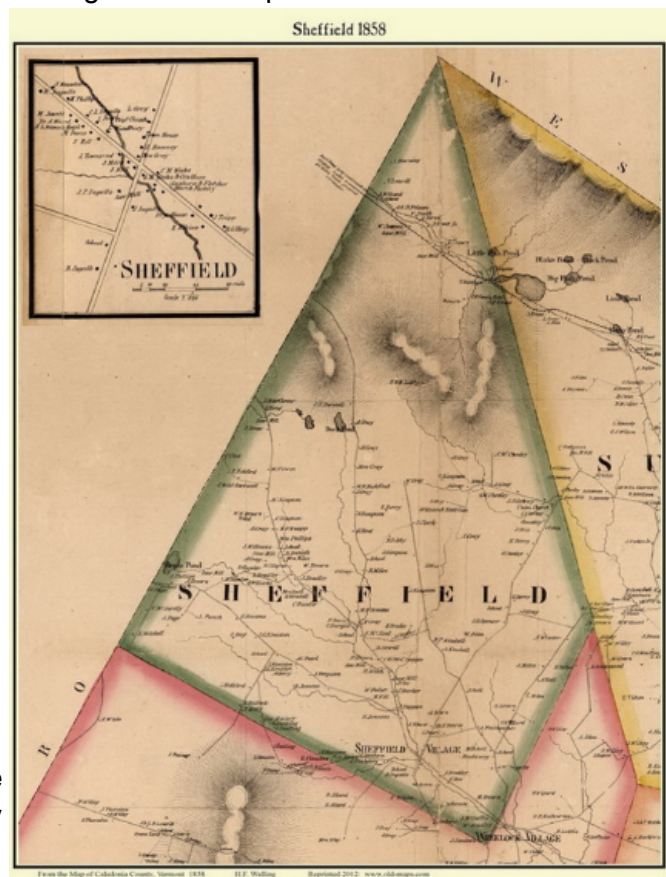
## History

Jessie Gilbert, Vermont Surveyor, laid out the town of some 24,000 acres in the 1780's. In 1792, the Vermont legislature transferred 960 acres to the Town of Wheelock. In 1858, the Town's boundaries were altered again when 3,000 acres of land were given over to Barton. Then, in the 1960's additional acreage was taken for highway right-of-way to construct a portion of Interstate 91. As a result of these transfers, Sheffield is now approximately 20,900 acres.

For more complete information about the history of Sheffield reference is made to the "History of the Town of Sheffield," written by Perry Townsend Barber, in 1936. Sheffield Historical Society reproduced history in 2008. Reference is also made to a publication prepared for Sheffield's bicentennial entitled, "Hopes and Dreams and Evergreens." The publication is available at the Town Clerk's office.

The Freewill Baptist Church, is located on Berry Hill Rd and was built in 1829 by members of the Society with donation from Sheffield residents. It is still used for church functions, including the annual Old Home Day held in August. The church is open for tours during the summer months, conducted by members of the Sheffield Historical Society.

In December 1846, Sheffield residents voted to construct a Town House on donated land next to the Freewill Baptist Church on Berry Hill Road. Construction was completed in 1847. Town Meetings was held there until 1903 when the current Town Hall was built in the village. H.E. Walling's map of 1858 shows the locations of both. A copy of that map is in the Sheffield Town Clerk's office. According to Town Records, the Town House was used over the years as temporary family housing, as well as for meetings of the Grange and 4-H Club. Sheffield Historical Society completed renovation of the building in 2007 and leases the building from the Town for use as a museum which is open during the summer months.



The original Sheffield Town Hall in the village, built in 1903 on land donated by the Methodist Episcopal Society, was destroyed by fire in 1942. An impressive building, it stood three-stories tall with ornate detailing. More than a decade after the fire, architectural plans were drawn and funds appropriated for construction of a replacement Town Hall that stands on the site today. It was completed in the fall of 1954 and first used for the 1955 Town Meeting.

## Community

The Planning Commission believes the town's greatest asset is its community pride, as evidenced in their survey, public listening sessions, and more. Countless times residents said the favorite thing about living in Sheffield are the people they knew here and relationships they've developed. The Commission hopes that in leveraging this pride and spurring civic engagement more can be done to help neighbors in need, share information and resources, and generally get people together in a positive atmosphere.



As a rule, fewer than 40 voters now show up to Town Meeting annually, a mere 5% of the total population. The Town should make greater efforts to engage the residents in town decision making.

## Services & Groups

### *Sheffield Food Pantry*

The [Sheffield Food Pantry](#) (SFP) was established September 28, 2011, as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, with a five-member Board of Directors. SFP is partnered with the Vermont Foodbank to distribute food to those facing food insecurity. As of December 2023, SFP serves 90 households per month (320 individuals) which is the highest number of people utilizing the Food Pantry in its history. That same year, SFP initiated two distributions per month, bringing the amount given out from a historical average of 1,500 lbs. per month to 5,000-8,000 lbs. per month. Operating out of the Sheffield Town Hall, SFP offers a “client choice” approach, giving clients the opportunity to pick items that are suitable for them. This reduces waste and allows those with dietary restrictions to select items that best fit their needs.



The Food Pantry's service area is a 20-mile radius from Sheffield, which includes: Wheelock, Sutton, Newark, West Burke, Burke Hollow, Brownington, Barton, Glover, Greensboro and East Hardwick. SFP is 100% volunteer based, with 15-20 volunteers working every month. Funding



comes from individuals and local businesses. Food is purchased from the Vermont Food Bank at minimal or no cost. Additional food comes from local farms and businesses.

### ***Miller's Run Community Garden***

Miller's Run Community Garden was started in 2009 by two Sheffield residents to engage the community in growing fresh produce for senior citizens. It consists of a 1/8-acre garden, a composting shed, tool shed and hen house, behind Miller's Run School. The farm stand, donated by a neighbor, typically contains a harvest of carrots, squash, lettuce, spinach, broccoli, tomatoes, beans, potatoes, beets, kale, chard, onions, leeks and garlic, often with donated surplus from other home gardens.

Community members have also given saved seeds and seedlings and helped with tilling and other chores. Compost is donated by a local farm. Vegetables are free to seniors; others are asked to make donations in the box at the farm stand. Before the pandemic, Miller's Run students helped to start seeds, weed, water and harvest; it is hoped that going forward they will again be involved, along with parents.



### ***Sheffield Field Day***

For 70 years, Sheffield Field Day has been held on Labor Day. Begun as a harvest celebration, today over one thousand people attend. The event includes a parade, pony pulling, midway with games, bingo, music, a floral hall of displays, and a silent auction and raffle. Featured are a chicken barbeque and food booths offering roasted corn on the cob, candied apples, and cotton candy. A fiddlers' contest, added a few years ago, is highly attended. Revenues help the Sheffield-Wheelock Volunteer Fire Department, camp scholarships, children's Christmas goodies, needed repairs to the Town Hall, and items such as a donation toward a new dishwasher. Contact: [Sheffieldvtfieldday@gmail.com](mailto:Sheffieldvtfieldday@gmail.com)





### ***Sheffield Historical Society***

The [Sheffield Historical Society](#) is a 501[c][3] not-for-profit corporation established in 1992, with a nine-member board of directors. Annual meetings are held the second Saturday in June.

In 2009, the Society completed a restoration of the 1847 Town House, and leases the building from the Town. A curator, appointed by the board each year, maintains the historical collection, including museum displays. In 1993, the Society published "Hopes and Dreams and Evergreens-The Two Hundred Year History of Sheffield". Since then, the curator has published several family genealogies. Overall, the Historical Society is a steward in curating and maintaining history in Sheffield.

### ***Diligent Dames Homemakers (now known as Home Demonstration)***

Sheffield [Home Demonstration](#) began in the 1920s to promote various home extension service activities, including cooking, sewing, gardening, and crafts. The group meets monthly from September to June. Goals are to provide Miller's Run School with annual magazine subscriptions; distribute Christmas "Thinking of You" boxes that include a craft; provide food for needy families; deliver Welcome baskets to new residents; assist with Town Hall dinners; donate to David's House near Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Hanover, New Hampshire; and afford fellowship for the ladies at meetings, and sometimes at a pot-luck lunch. The group is not exclusive, all ladies, young and old, are welcome.

### ***Keniston- Dane Educational Fund***

Harry A. Keniston and Marion K. Dane, brother and sister and educators, established an educational trust fund in 1964. The purpose. of the fund is to (1) "assist in the post-secondary education of [eligible] Wheelock and Sheffield..." students, and (2) provide certain funds "to the graded school... of the Towns of Sheffield and Wheelock to be used for special out-of-the-ordinary projects... connected with..." such school.

The selectboards of Sheffield and Wheelock are trustees, and town clerks administrators of the Trust.

### ***Jacob McNeal Testamentary Trust***

Jacob McNeal, a farmer from Burke, Vermont, made provision in his Last Will and Testament for the care of the burial lots of his parents and sister, who resided in Sheffield. In connection with that provision, any funds remaining from the bequest are to be used "in assisting to make more comfortable such people residing in the said Town of Sheffield who are most needy & deserving of such assistance, who do not receive aid from the said Town of Sheffield.

The Sheffield selectboard was appointed Trustee of the "Trust for Burial Lot and Poor Fund", so-called, by the Probate Court, District of Caledonia County.

In recent years, the Trust has assisted charities that provide eligible families from Sheffield with clothing and holiday food baskets.

## **Health & Wellbeing**

The Town of Sheffield recognizes the challenges we have faced since the last plan update—a global pandemic, catastrophic floods, rising cost of living, and more. Through the plan, the Planning Commission wishes to acknowledge that some in our community face tougher

hardships than others, and that resources can be limited. The Planning Commission believes that hardship can be overcome with community support.

This plan intends to provide pathways that can help the community's health and wellbeing by presenting opportunities to convene, recreate, mitigate costs, share resources, and invest in Sheffield.

## COVID-19

The impact of Covid-19 on various organizations in Sheffield was profound, but some of them responded with admirable resiliency, showing the way the town can choose to respond to a future pandemic.

Sheffield Field Day was canceled in 2020, as was the Pat O'Hagan Memorial Fiddlers' Contest. Because the venue for the contest was Miller's Run School Gymnasium and the audience tended to be somewhat older and vulnerable, the Fiddler's event has not restarted. Field Day has struggled since 2022 from lack of volunteers and was not held in 2024.

Two traditional events, the Chicken Pie Supper and the Harvest Ham Supper were canceled. Due to the aging population of their traditional volunteers the supper has not resumed.

The Sheffield Food Pantry operated continuously through the pandemic and was a vital source of food for the community of low-income Sheffield residents. It saw a significant increase in customers to nearly 100 households, 400 individuals. Town Hall doors remained closed while volunteers, inside, filled boxes with food & supplies to be delivered directly to customers' homes. They also offered 15-minute pickups—customers waited outside while volunteers loaded their vehicles with pre-filled boxes. Vermont Food Bank donated food in greater quantities and included other practical necessities such as light bulbs, toilet paper, diapers, masks & hand sanitizer.

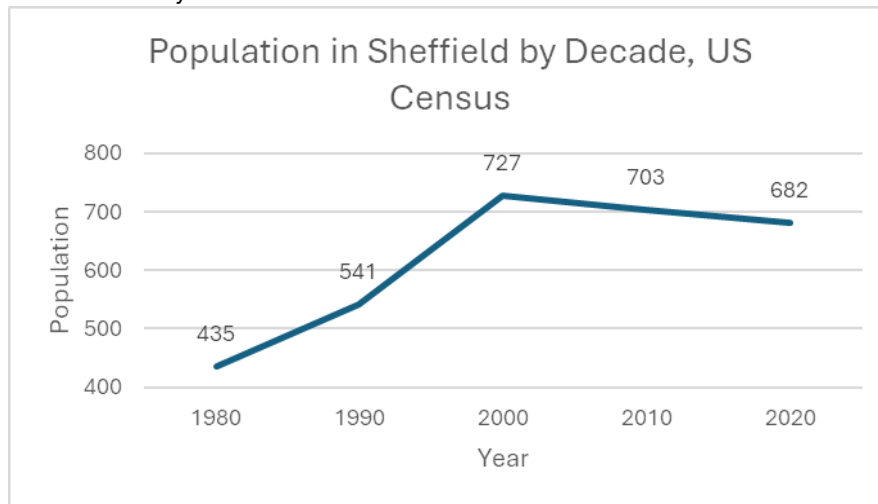
By the time vaccinations were widespread, the Food Pantry had returned to its earlier form of open doors and customers' choice. Some boxes are still delivered to those unable to make the trip to the Town Hall.

## Community Profile for Sheffield

This section was culled from U.S. Census and American Community Survey data, as well as local lister data. More data on the community and background information can be found in Appendix E.

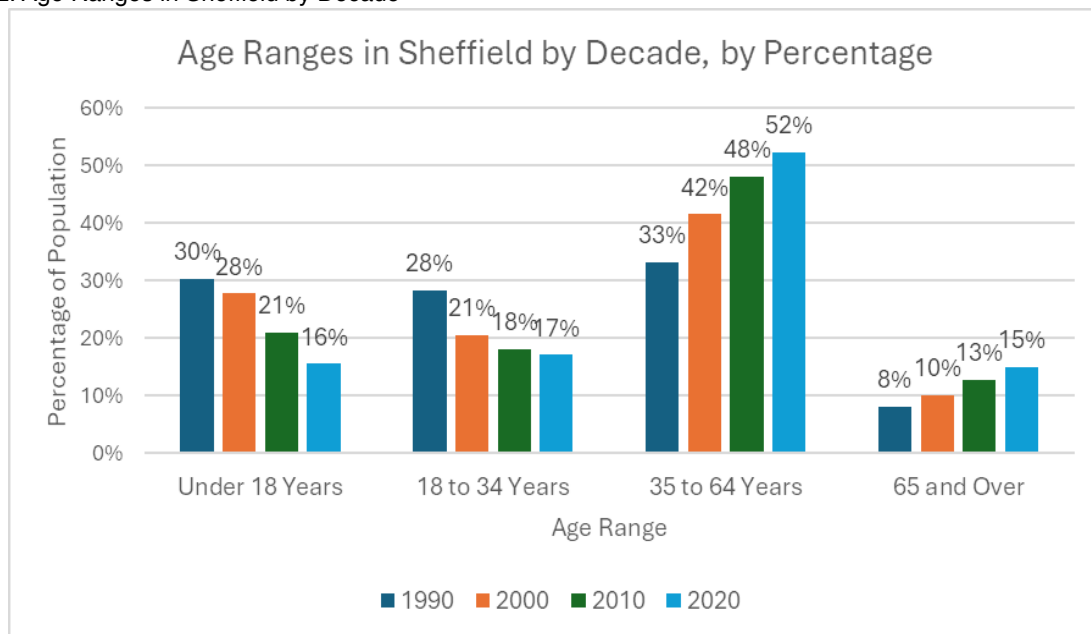
People move to Sheffield to be away from urban life. While Sheffield remains off the beaten path with no Interstate access, its proximity to larger towns like Lyndon, St. Johnsbury, and Newport seem to have made the difference in people deciding to move here. After seeing a sizable increase in population at the turn of the century, Sheffield's population has slowly decreased.

Table 1. Population in Sheffield by Decade. Source: U.S. Census



Furthermore, when looking at age ranges by decade since 1990, the older adult population has steadily increased while younger adults and generations steadily decreased. Without attracting workforce and families, this trend will likely continue.

Table 2. Age Ranges in Sheffield by Decade

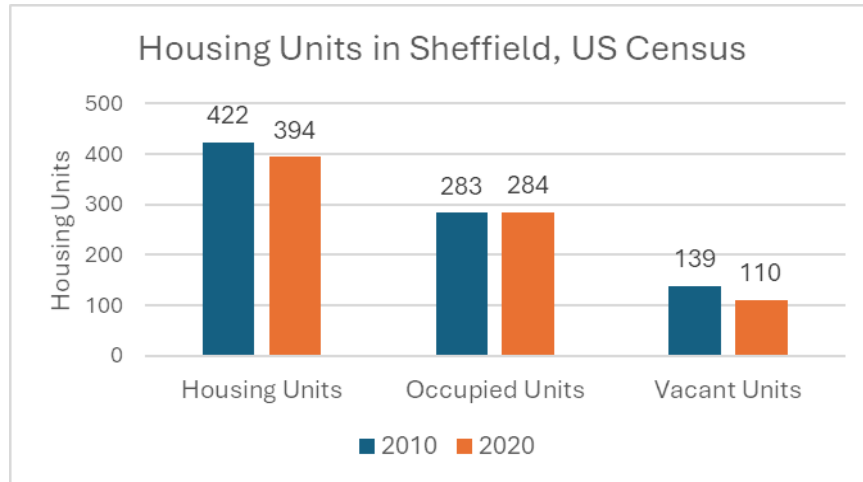


Source: American Community Survey (ACS)

Housing units have declined in the recent ten-year span, with the removal of a handful of vacant units. Because of Sheffield's remote, forested nature, roughly 28% of housing stock is seasonal (camps). The average household size is 2.6, yet the distribution of household sizes remains even. Majority of homes are owner-occupied (85%), single-unit households (82%). Most remaining housing consists of mobile units. Local Lister information shows a small decrease in mobile homes in this time period (see Table 5).

Table 3. Housing Units in Sheffield. Source: U.S. Census





Parcel trends from the Grand List of residential parcels larger than 6 acres (R-2), show an increase from 123 in 2013 to 144 in 2023. However, by all indications, housing production has declined over the last decade. Taking a closer look at parcellation with [VT Parcelization](#) site by the Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC), Sheffield does show an increase of 463 residential acres.

Contrary to VNRC's findings for most parcel counts, which have remained relatively unchanged for the past 20 years, a review of UVA parcel-increases indicates woodland parcels have been converted into larger, wooded parcels with a single residence or camp. Losses of real forested land—perhaps as much as 900-1,000 acres—were likely due to the construction of the Sheffield wind farm (which is in current use) and conversions of afforested land back to agricultural land (sheep farm, etc.). In this same period farmland acreage increased by 37%, so not all land changing uses are being converted to residential property. More information is needed to understand land use changes within town, and how both the seasonal and camper population may influence trends.

Table 4. R-2 Residential Parcels Assessed Year by Decade. Source: Sheffield Grand List

R2-Residential Parcels with a House and Over 6 Acres				
1983	1993	2003	2013	2023
52	77	98	123	144

Sheffield is an aging bedroom community where many of its residents have experienced greater financial and homeowner stability during the past decade. However, there seems to be a growing divide between those residents who have increased stability and those with decreased stability, as represented by only 2% of households that earn income between \$45,000-\$59,000 (Appendix E).

With 27% of the housing stock below \$100,000 value, coupled with 15% of the household community that is cost burdened making less than \$35,000, one can conclude a significant portion of the community live in a distressed property and poverty situation without the income to improve their home or situation. Poverty relief is less often represented as one of Sheffield's pressing needs. This can have the effect of making those needs less of a priority or unseen

altogether. Sheffield has an opportunity to establish greater social cohesiveness by identifying community spaces.

Though the total population is tapering off after a peak around the year 2000, school enrollment is slowly increasing back to levels at the turn of the century. This is supported by a small increase in families with children under age 18. These encouraging signs suggest that, while families may not be moving to Sheffield, Miller's Run is fulfilling an educational need for adjacent communities and serves as a community asset from which to build. Miller's Run School does have the capacity to serve more children, and this has the potential to attract more young families to Sheffield if greater supportive services are made available.



# Land Use

## Overview

Sheffield's land terrain is marked by steep forested slopes that lead to riparian landscape through brooks and streams. Sheffield's traditional land use has been defined by keeping these large, forested areas intact and in use while working rich soil bases along Millers Run for agriculture. Today, much of the town is operated and defined by Route 122, which parallels the Millers Run. The Town is ostensibly separated by Interstate 91. Though the development of the interstate ostensibly split the town, Sheffield is fortunate to not have an access point that would increase traffic. This helps maintain the village's status as a bedroom community. The town wishes to keep this status intact while being open to small-scale investments in housing, business, and economic development.

Traditional settlements are large acreages of dispersed settlements, with more localized housing at the town's center and along route 122. While there is no uniformity among land tracts, [parcels](#) range between ten and a few hundred acres. The traditional historic settlement of the town is along Route 122, from Berry Hill Rd to Miller's Run School. Along with the school, a post office, the old Town Hall, and the Municipal building fall within the area. Outside traditional uses of forestry and agriculture, there are light industry of private companies, as well as the recently developed wind farm.

## Act 250

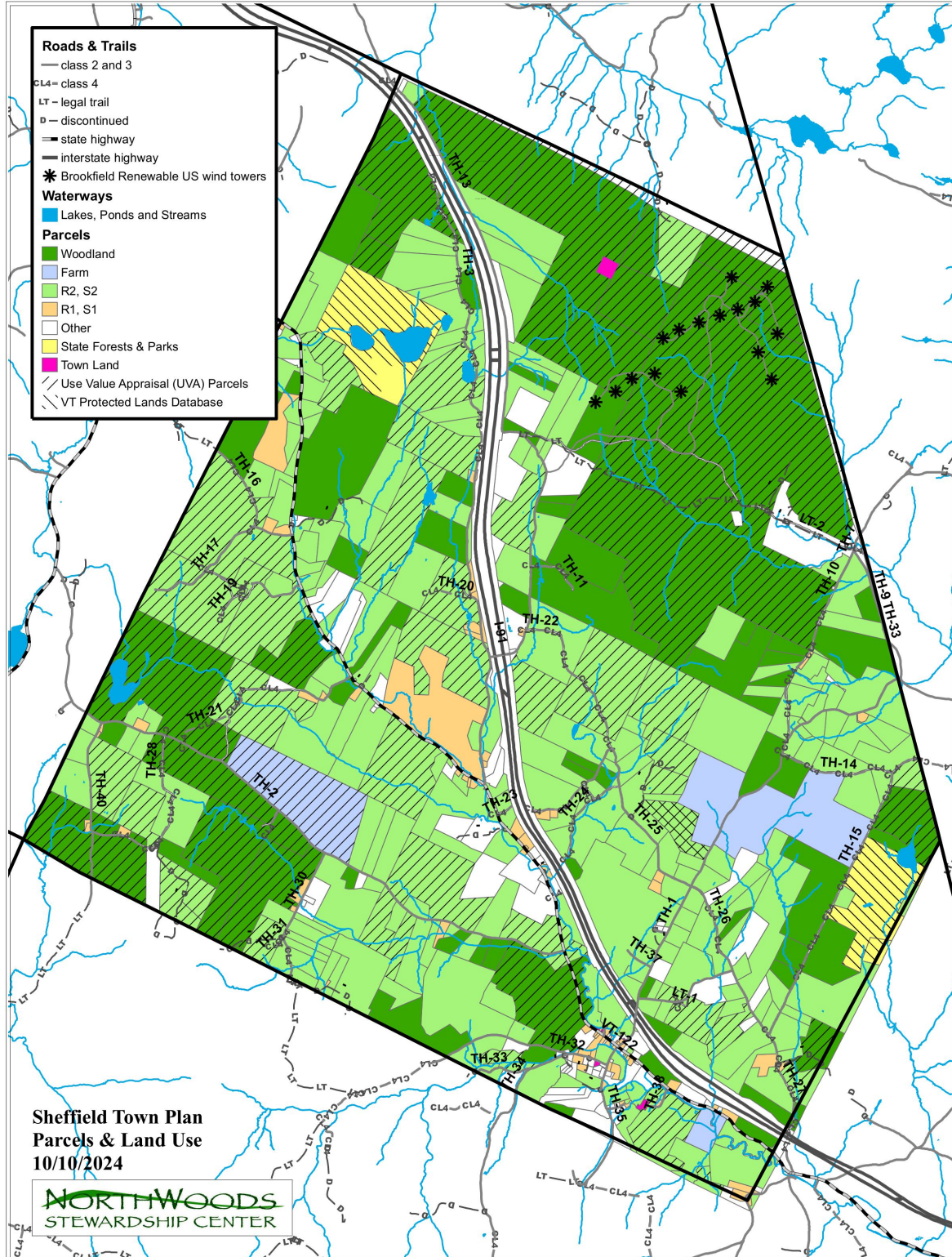
Vermont's land use law, enacted in 1970, was designed to mitigate the effects of development through an application process that views environmental and community impacts. The law provides a public, quasi-judicial review of proposed development. If a review is triggered, a town plan becomes the best resource for how a town wishes to address proposed development, as a proposal must be in compliance with the plan. ANR's [BioFinder](#) shows Sheffield has had 12 Act 250 permits issued. State review of energy projects also look to town plans for guidance through the [248 process](#) when issuing a certificate of public good.

## Local Context

To develop a land use plan for Sheffield one must understand the history of land use and development in Sheffield to the present and how those impact and direct future trends. Several past natural, social, governmental and political impacts unique to Sheffield have influenced development.



Figure 1. Parcels and Land Use in Sheffield. Source: Northwoods Stewardship Center



First, due to its local geography—end of a river valley and very considerable high elevation land — Sheffield was late to initial settlement (1793) compared to adjacent towns. That geography included great difficulty in constructing, and little reason to develop through-roads, a reputation for very bad winters, and shallow soils on mostly hilly ground.

The introduction of the interstate system in the 1970's, with no exit in the town, both split the town in two and removed most of the existing connecting roads from six to two, further restricting local community development and isolating large sections of the town area from easy access.

Considered an isolated community following completion of Interstate 91, Sheffield remained an under-populated forest and agricultural backwater while many surrounding communities were experiencing growth from improved secondary roads, interstate access, desirable geographical draws, and tourism. All these factors influenced land usage in Sheffield, and also preserved many of the community characteristics residents desired.



Politically, its location has resulted its representation in the legislature to fluctuate between counties—sometimes Orleans County, sometimes Caledonia County, even though access to the Orleans side is substantially more difficult than to the Caledonia side where Sheffield would rather be considered community-wise. Sheffield has traditionally remained a conservative community, carefully weighing possible changes and their potential impacts.

### ***How Land is Managed***

Sheffield regards its land parcels under the categories in Table 5 below. Over the last four decades, land use patterns have remained relatively stable. However, since the last plan update, and in the last decade overall, the town has experienced a decline in parcels of woodland acreage (W). Residential parcels (R2) with a home on land over six acres have increased during this same period. (Not listed are Farms (F), which total under 10 parcels.)

While parcel trends in many Vermont towns reflect the findings in the Vermont Natural Resources Council's [VT Parcelization](#) site, to date the increase in parcel numbers of R-2 land in Sheffield has not resulted in dramatic loss in forest composition and connectivity. R-2 & S-2 properties remain heavily forested. Most of Sheffield's forest loss is assumed to be from the installation of the wind farm.

Sheffield does not have any regulations regarding land use and does not intend to create regulations or zoning in subsequent years. Many people move to Sheffield for the flexibility of what they can do with their land.

Table 5. R-2 Parcels in Sheffield by Type. Source: Sheffield Grand List



Type of Parcel	1983	1993	2003	2007	2010	2013	2016	2020	2023
Gross # of parcels	355	482	527	525	534	535	514	506	524
<b>R1 – Residential &lt; 6 acres</b>	55	59	61	54	58	59	65	64	66
<b>R2 – Residential &gt; 6 acres</b>	52	77	98	116	122	123	126	136	144
<b>S1- Seasonal Camp &lt; 6 acres</b>	12	22	17	18	21	22	22	23	23
<b>S2 – Seasonal Camp &gt; 6 acres</b>	30	70	86	100	97	95	91	93	89
<b>W – Woodland Acreage</b>	122	124	127	99	96	101	83	74	77
<b>MHL – Mobile home owned on owner’s land</b>	26	68	71	72	72	73	69	63	63
<b>MHU – Mobile home not on owner’s land</b>	17	25	23	21	19	14	11	11	11

### ***Challenges of No Regulations***

Without zoning implementation or local ordinances, this concept has brought about challenges that the community faces regarding the health, safety, and welfare of the community, specifically regarding abandoned buildings and solid waste accumulation.

The Planning Commission has examined potential solutions to these issues while respecting the desire of some residents to not implement regulations to address these issues. The Planning Commission recognizes the most straightforward way to address these issues would be to create separate ordinances that regulate one’s ability to leave abandoned buildings in their dangerous conditions and solid waste accumulation that could otherwise be brought to the recycle station.

However, developing an ordinance would create challenges, including how to enforce violations, capacity to address complaints, and the potential for leading to difficulties within the community. The Commission worked to develop listening sessions open to the public, researched results of related ordinances throughout the state, met with the town’s health officer, and discussed deeper-rooted issues of health and well-being of the community. **The Commission believes strong landowner property rights must include the responsibility not to negatively impact their neighbors.**

Given difficulties of establishing an ordinance in addition to pushbacks it may receive from the community, the Commission has made recommendations regarding potential actions to address the issues of cleanup listed in Appendix B.

The Commission sought to display the avenues and resources it considered would attempt to fix the issues *before* suggesting regulation as a solution. The community and Selectboard should continue to discuss these issues with proposed solutions in mind, tracking progress between now and the next Town Plan update to inform future decision-making. The hope and intention are that action is taken sooner than later to address these issues.



Vermont's [universal recycling law](#) provides [dos and don'ts](#) on how to recycle. There are numerous local and regional transfers stations and trash haulers, including the [Sheffield and Wheelock Transfer Station](#) which is open Wednesday and Saturday, and the [NEK Waste Management District](#) in Lyndonville, which also participates in the [Vermont E-Cycles Program](#) where electronics can be brought and disposed of at zero charge at 224 Church St in Lyndonville.

Finally, local haulers such as NEK Rubbish, Allard's Metal Recycling, E-Z Trash, Got Trash, and more can be found [at The Town of Lyndon's website](#). Sheffield has a [local farm](#) that provides commercial and local food scrap hauling.

### ***Village Center Designation***

As Sheffield looks to address community needs, develop its municipal complex, and attract vibrancy to its town center, establishing a Village Center Designation (VCD) would provide numerous benefits. VCD is a non-regulative, place-based approach intended to revitalize Vermont's historic settlement centers. The program is intended to meet the statewide planning goal to plan development to maintain compact villages separated by rural countryside. These areas can be comprised of mixed uses that include residential, civic, religious, and commercial.

Benefits include technical assistance for all projects within the designated area, priority for a host of state grants, tax credits for buildings undergoing improvements, code compliance and utility upgrades, façade work, and flood hazard mitigation upgrades. Tax credits reduce income-tax liability and are better than a one-time tax deduction as they can be carried forward up to nine years. They can be traded for cash, debt reduction, or favorable loan terms.

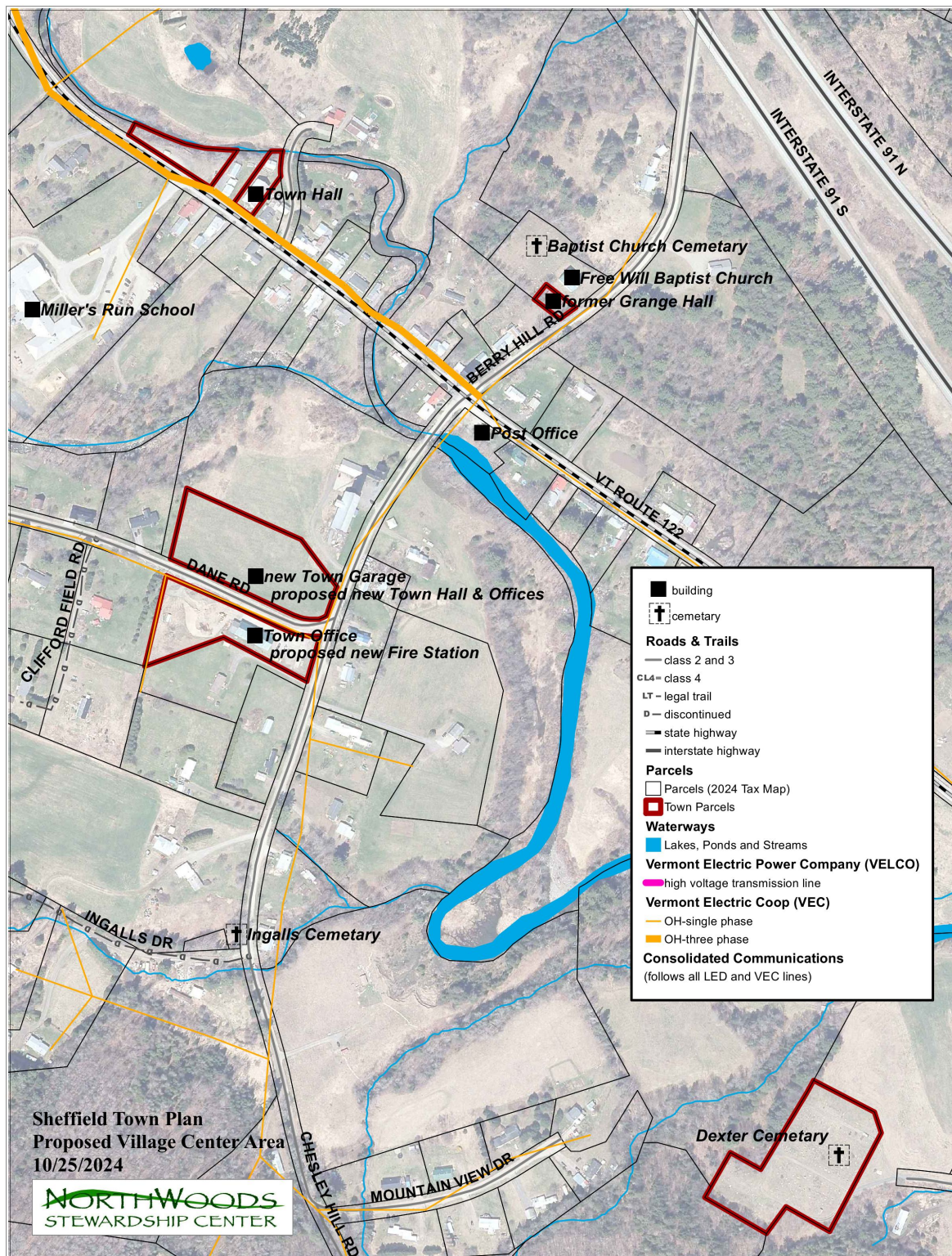
Village Center Designation can incentivize housing and building redevelopment. It has shown to increase property tax revenue which not only can revitalize communities but provides an increase in funding to support local education, social services, housing, and more that the town and community can decide upon. The Planning Commission supports and encourages the pursuit of a village center designation—the only requirement would be to keep a civic structure owned by the Town.

Pursuing this designation has the potential to bring vibrancy back to the center of town, help with an appropriate re-use of the Town Hall, and potentially more.





Figure 2. Proposed Village Center Area. Source: Northwoods Stewardship Center





## Getting the Community Together

Local Events in Sheffield	
Rummage Sale	End of September
Ham Supper	Near Veteran's Day
Christmas Craft Bazaar	First Week of November
Christmas Caroling	First Weekend of December
Tree Lighting and Santa	First Weekend of December
<i>Prior Events That Have Been Canceled due to Lack of Volunteerism:</i> Chicken Pie Supper, Field Day, Bi-annual Clothing Swaps	

The way we use our land also relates to how the community gets together. The way the community gets together can help with local needs, build relationships and neighbor support, and be a location of family memories.

While Sheffield organizes many local events, the town is without a reliable community center. The Town Hall is outdated. The Planning Commission has engaged conversations with the [Preservation Trust of Vermont](#) about the [Village Trust Initiative](#) to consider ways the Town Hall could be invigorated as a place to host events, serve needs, and inform residents. Members of the community could develop a Community Trust that could acquire the building from the town with the support of the program. The Village Trust Initiative provides funding support for both technical assistance in predevelopment work and implementation with rehabilitation and construction between \$200,000-\$450,000. While the current structure is likely in need of considerable refurbishing, combining this funding and support with tax credits available through the Village Center Designation could provide hundreds of thousands of dollars to rehabilitate the Town Hall with appropriate planning and design.

Developing a local community trust to identify an appropriate site, design, and uses for a community center, could accomplish these needs; it could make people aware of local events, be a site for the local economy or social services, and provide resources. The Town would eventually like to attract small, concerted amounts of development and economy, that would be from the community, for the community. Establishment of a multi-use community center could go a long way in addressing town issues through civic engagement and pride.

The Planning Commission is in the initial stages of conversation with the Preservation Trust of Vermont to see how developing a community trust could work in tandem with this designation.



The Town could also support a local newspaper, newsletter, or some sort of publication to provide local news and information. While many people use Front Porch Forum, having something with a local touch and pulse could promote community engagement.

### **Goals For Land Use**

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*Maintain the town's rural character and status as a bedroom community.*

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*Continuation of a stable town population, schoolchildren numbers, improved town living conditions, ambiance, and healthy forest environment*

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*Promote greater positive community member engagement.*

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### **Strategies to Implement Goals**

- Address issues of abandoned buildings and solid waste accumulation throughout town through a multitude of solutions
- Pursue Village Center Designation Process
- Encourage existing population concentration locations, especially around town facilities and Route 122
- Establish a 501c(3) Community Trust
- Develop a town newsletter to get information across broadly and consistently
- Discourage road and utility expansion outside population centers or in forested areas
- Discourage additional population concentrations in forested areas
- Improve services, infrastructure and utilities around existing population centers

### **Policies Regarding Land Use**

**Maintain development within village and existing infrastructure.**

**Maintain the health, safety, and welfare of all residents in Sheffield.**

**Educate and promote new Class IV Roads Policy (see appendix D)**

**Promote vibrant working lands and a vibrant community.**

**Discourage the abandonment of buildings and encourage clean-up, supporting local homeowners who wish to be compliant.**

**Discourage the accumulation of solid waste and encourage clean-up, supporting local homeowners**





who wish to be compliant.

## Natural, Scenic, & Historic Resources

### Overview

Sheffield residents value the rural character of the town. All management of Natural and Scenic resources should be done within this context to maintain its rural character and associated values.

### *Managing Sheffield's Natural Resources*

Residents have indicated a desire for the development of more trails, accessible to a wider variety of physical capabilities, and accessible scenic areas to include picnic areas. One specific proposal is for a trail along Millers Run between Sheffield and Wheelock that could even connect to Paths Across Lyndon. Representatives from Wheelock have shown enthusiasm for this idea and had independently thought of a similar proposal. Another involves improving Legal Trail #1 (see map above) for recreational use. When the next town plan revision comes due, the Commission should be able to demonstrate progress of multiple improvements for recreational use of Sheffield's natural resources.

Management should also consider public health and safety. For example, wild parsnip abounds along Route 122, both north and south of the village. Oils from wild parsnip cause severe burns when exposed to sunlight. The town should work with the state and other relevant resources to mitigate risk from these plants, including spread to areas used for recreation.

### *Invasive Species*

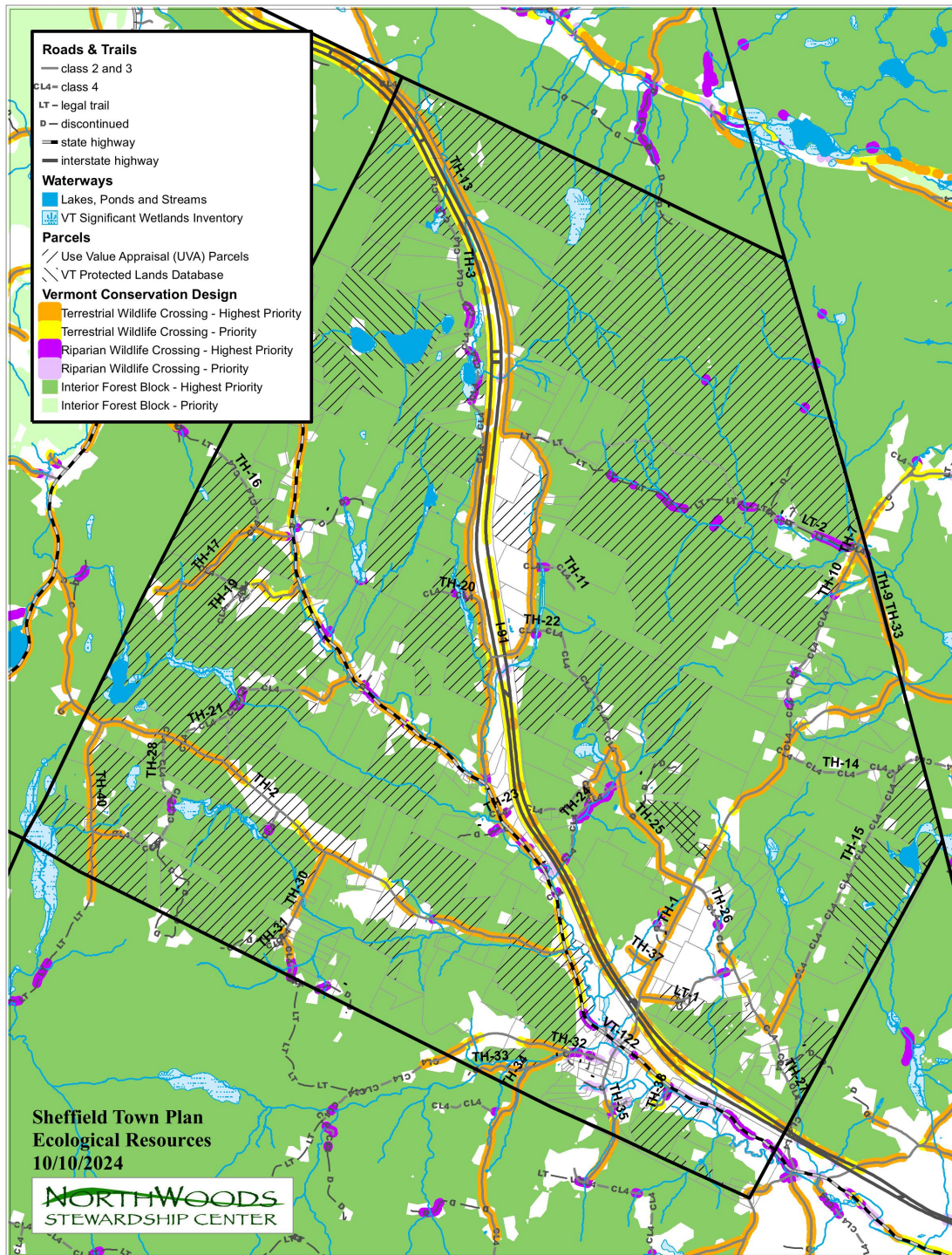
In general, it is important for landowners and residents to be aware of, and monitor for, invasive species to preserve and manage Sheffield's natural resources. Invasive species are plants, animals, and other organisms, when introduced to a non-native ecosystem, can cause harm to the environment, economy, or human health. You can learn more at [Vermont Invasives](#).

Terrestrial invasive plants can displace native plant species, disrupt the food chain, and contribute to various adverse outcomes, such as a loss of timber sales by reducing forest regeneration, flood hazard mitigation, or causing health hazards such as found with wild parsnip. Another prevalent invasive plant found in Sheffield is Japanese Knotweed, pervasive throughout the Millers Run stream banks. Knotweed outcompetes and replaces native vegetation through chemicals secreted from its roots. This loss hurts insect populations which depend on native plants for food. As insect populations decline, fish, birds, and mammals that



eat insects suffer as well. Rivers and streams also face an increased erosion risk from uncontrolled knotweed populations which can increase flood risk and streambank erosion. The ground beneath dense growths of knotweed rarely supports other vegetation, leaving the bare soil very susceptible to erosion. When projects are undertaken to mitigate flooding and effects of erosion on Millers Run, they should include efforts to mitigate the effects of Japanese knotweed. Resources for identification and management can be found through the [Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department](#).

Figure 3. Ecological Resources. Source: Northwoods Stewardship Center



## Current Use

Another non-regulative approach to land use conservation, in which many Sheffield residents already participate, is the [Use Value Appraisal](#), or [Current Use Program](#). Current Use is a tax equity program that enables farm and forest property owners to have their land appraised for its



“use value” rather than fair market value. The intention is to keep working lands in Vermont from development while incentivizing the landowner to do so. Sheffield has 50 parcels totaling over 8,750 acres enrolled (Figure 3 & Figure 5).

To qualify, parcels must contain at least 25 acres that will be enrolled as Managed Forestland and be managed according to a forest management plan approved by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. House sites and land under other private or commercial developments are not eligible.

## Priority Habitat Blocks

### ***Act 171***

Act 171 requires towns to manage the state’s forestlands, and maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors. Specifically, Act 171 requires the town to institute a plan that indicates areas that are important, or require special consideration as forest blocks and connectors, and plan for land development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation and promote health, viability, and ecological functions of forests. Act 171 does not regulate forestry operations; rather it enables a town to institute plans, processes, and regulations to control development and promote and protect existing forestland and agricultural land.

The most critical action against local forest connectivity was the construction of I-91 through the town. It destroyed wildlife “connectivity” in critical forest blocks within town limits and larger regional pathways. There have been numerous wildlife (moose and smaller) collisions on the higher regions of I-91 in Sheffield.

Although deforested in the 1800’s, Sheffield today is virtually all intact forest. Sheffield’s forests are considered to be healthy and reasonably well-managed. Of the 520 parcels, roughly 110 are “camps,” 140 are large residentials, and 75 are in uninhabited woodland. Seven landowners own almost 25% of town land, and all but one is in current use. In a landowner questionnaire, all firmly wished to see their property remain as undeveloped forest or agriculture lands (see Appendix C).

### ***Perry Holbrook State Park***

In 1991, Clair and Frances Holbrook deeded land on Sheffield Heights to the State of Vermont in honor of their late son, Perry. The 307-acre property, with two miles of walking trails, is situated northeast of Route 122, eight miles north of Sheffield, near the Glover border. From the trail head, an access road travels east to the first of three ponds:

Round, Long, and Mud ponds. These ponds, and a series of cliffs, create contemplative scenery and natural communities. The ponds are often used for swimming, fishing and picnicking. A foot trail travels along the north shore of Round Pond to Long Pond and intersects with the Summit Trail, which then climbs steeply to the O’Leary Leap overlook, and on to the



Summit of Big Rock Hill. Holbrook State Park is part of the Heights Management Unit of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

### ***Mathewson State Forest***

Mathewson State Forest is comprised of 788 acres in the town of Sheffield, Wheelock and Sutton. It lies between the Sutton-Wheelock Road and Town Farm Road. The parcel is managed for timber resources and wildlife habitat. Nine open fields cover 14 acres of the forest; many of these fields are associated with historical homesteads and contain apple trees, and a number of well-preserved cellar holes, some of which were used by Mathewsons.

Mathewson State Forest contains plentiful opportunities for dispersed recreational activities, such as hunting white-tailed deer, black bear, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare and wild turkey, trapping beaver and other furbearers, bushwhacking, and wildlife watching. The Class IV Road through the property is used by snowmobilers in winter. It is also open to vehicular access in the summer. The woods roads are used for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking. Mathewson State Forest is open to primitive camping.

### ***Pfälzerwald Tree Forest***

The Roberta and James Robertson Memorial Forest, also known as the Pfälzerwald Tree Farm, is located off Berry Hill Road and is a gift from Alan Robertson to the residents of Sheffield and the public. There are 2+ miles of trail available to the public. The land is held in trust, and eventually will be managed by a three-member Board of Trustees, including chair of the Sheffield Selectboard, and Executive Directors of the Vermont Woodlands Association, and NorthWoods Stewardship Center.



A "Walk in the Woods" is held annually during the summer, and serves to familiarize residents with the 60-acre woodland that will become a Sheffield town forest. It is also an opportunity to educate the public on the benefits of sustainable woodland management. Each year, certain aspects of forest management are highlighted during the Walk. For example, the effects of windstorms could be discussed along with ways to clean up and replant the forest. The Walk also serves as a point of community building, fosters appreciation of Sheffield's natural resource management, and provides networking opportunities for residents who are interested in getting additional support from sponsoring bodies to manage those resources. The Vermont Woodlands Association and the State Tree Farm Committee sponsored the Walk. There is no charge for the event, although donations given to the sponsors are gratefully accepted so that educational and outreach efforts may continue.

### ***Veterans' Memorial***

A memorial for all veterans of our armed forces was created in the 1980s through the efforts of Sheffield resident and veteran, Vernon Whitcomb. The nationally recognized memorial is

located near the entrance to Dexter Cemetery. The Sheffield Cemetery Association and volunteers maintain the memorial.

## Town Trails

The state and town recognize two legal trails running 2.78 miles between New Duck Pond Road, and intersection of Hardscrabble Mountain Road & King George Road. The other is a short loop off Nelson Hill Road. Two-plus miles of hiking/biking trails are open to the public on the Pfälzerwald Tree Farm.

## Historic Structures

Multiple buildings within town limits are considered historic structures, some being residential, some owned by the Town. Many private structures on Chesley Hill Rd are considered historic.

The Freewill Baptist Church, built in 1829, is an historic structure, as is the Town Hall (1954).

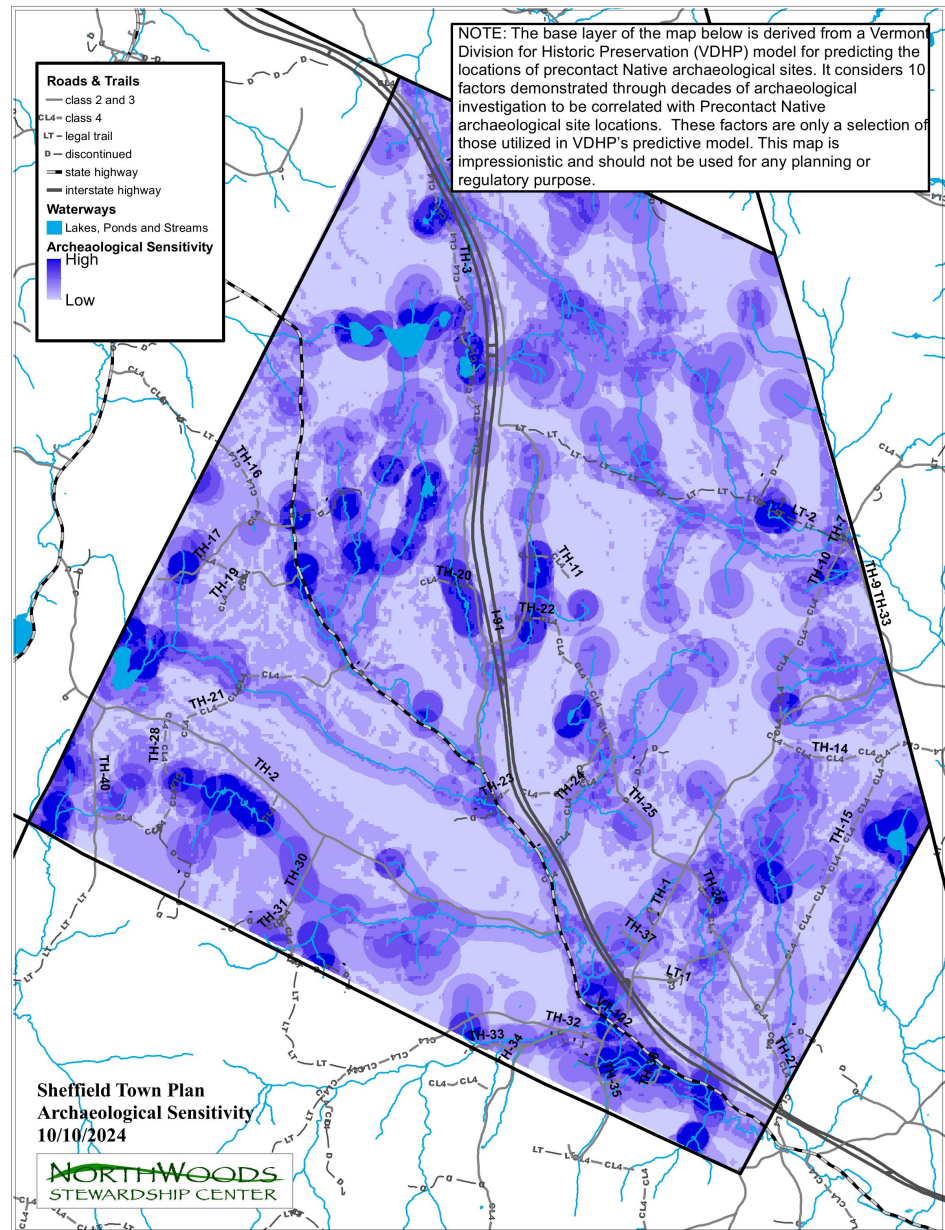


Figure 4. Archaeological Sensitivity. Source: Northwoods Stewardship Center



### **Goals for Natural, Scenic, and Historic Resources**

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*Encourage landowners with at least 25 acres to enroll in*

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*Current Use Value Appraisal Program*

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*Protect forest and streams from poor logging and agriculture practices*

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*Maintain historic and cultural value of Sheffield*

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### **Strategies to Implement Goals**

- Promote Acceptable Management Practices in all Town forest management activities, not just on UVA parcels
- Encourage public town funding of the Sheffield Historical Society
- Dissuade subdivisions of forested land beyond Village Center
- Educate landowners on Current Use and other conservation easements and support process of enrollment
- Have resources and summaries of Current Use program readily available
- Strengthen opportunities to study natural environments in grades K-8
- Encourage VTrans and NVDA to install wildlife passage structures, or “critter crossings” overpass at the higher points of I-91
- Consider tax breaks on parcels with forest/agriculture management plans, conservation easements, and VAST/VASA/ legal or public trails
- Encourage landowners to apply for federal and state extension grants for forest/agriculture improvements and control of invasives
- Encourage legislators to find additional ways to reward forest/agriculture landowners for their ecoservice contributions

### **Policies Regarding Natural, Scenic, & Historic Resources**

**To encourage Acceptable Management Practices and conservation of land in Sheffield**

**The Town will continue to keep natural, scenic, and historic resources in Sheffield in high regard**



# Housing

## Overview

With the establishment of a successful local elementary school within commuting distance of employers, such as Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital (NVRH), and reasonably close daily amenities in Lyndon, Sheffield has the unique opportunity to attract young workers and families looking to call the Northeast Kingdom home.

The lack of regional housing has led to a loss in potential hires. More acutely for Sheffield, the lack of available housing, prominent properties with distressed building facades, and accumulation of solid waste, and a lack of high-speed internet in some areas, presents numerous difficulties attracting such working people and families. The widening age gap and challenges of revitalizing the community are also byproducts of the lack of available housing.

The lack of housing deters new families, especially young families, from settling in Sheffield, and bringing new vitality, energy and ideas to the town. There are no housing options that allow families to downsize as children move on, or for people to age in place. Rentals to move into are few and far between. Children raised in Sheffield often cannot afford to stay and invest in their community. Few are encouraged to take vocational training (or become apprentices to a trade) post-high school, and thus they see few opportunities in Sheffield or nearby. Many move out of the state to more affordable communities with greater opportunity.

## S.100 and Future Housing

S.100 ([Act 47](#)) is intended to alleviate housing shortages in Vermont through modification of existing land use restrictions, and should be reviewed in the context of any housing development. In June of 2023, the State of Vermont passed Senate Bill 100, Housing Opportunities Made for Everyone (HOME) Act, which requires towns to address the missing middle housing in Vermont. Goal of the act is to enable new opportunities for housing that meet local needs while removing exclusionary language in housing development.

The Town Plan seeks to encourage the appropriate planning of a limited amount of cluster housing, structures that meet the current scale and aesthetic—to allow for more affordable residences, apartments, attached housing—with shared amenities, such as parking and

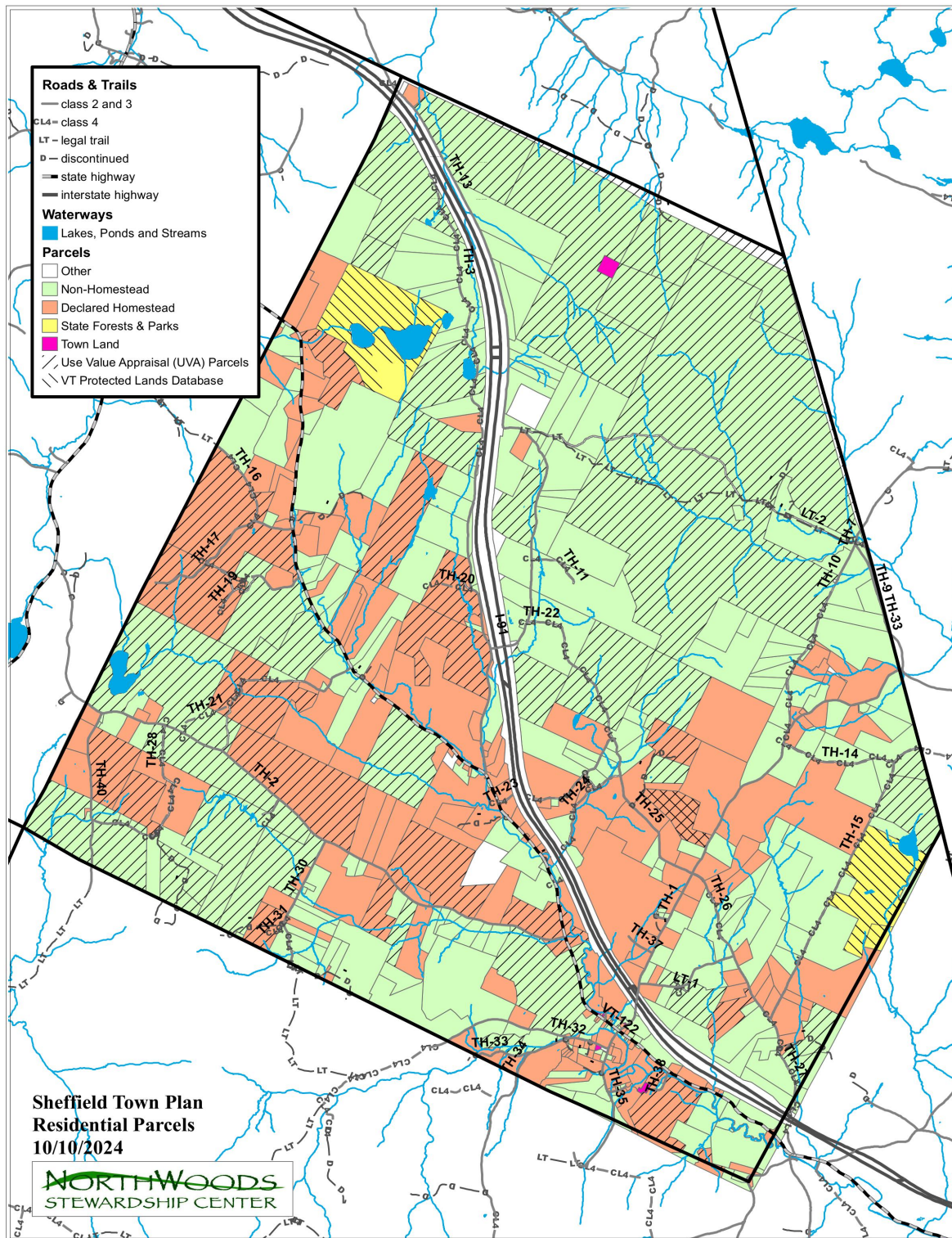
sidewalks. Concentrating housing units within the town can protect the integrity of forested lands and farms while building vitality and spurring village community.

The main marketing trend in Sheffield seems to be between family, acquaintances, or moving properties into family trusts. Sheffield does not have zoning; the Town has no subdivisions regulations or buildings codes.

As far as finding the number of homes in need of renovations, the Town really won't know until the next complete reappraisal due 2026-27. The last reappraisal was over a decade ago. Some parcels haven't been updated or inspected since. Listers are diligently working to get back on track.



Figure 5. Residential Parcels. Source: Northwoods Stewardship Center



## **Buildings in Disrepair, Abandoned Buildings, Solid Waste Accumulation**

The visual prominence of houses in disrepair, abandoned buildings, and houses surrounded by solid waste and old vehicles, deter new families looking for a town to settle in or small businesses looking for compatible towns in which to establish themselves. In some cases, the condition of these properties is a cause of concern for the health, safety, and welfare of the town's residents.

In a resident survey sent out in 2023 (Appendix A), the physical condition of the town was by far the greatest concern to the respondents (75% mentioned it as a problem.)

Through community feedback, as well as evaluation of efforts in other towns, a tiered approach to addressing derelict properties with solid waste accumulation is believed to be the most effective.

It can be found in Appendix B. The appropriate solution will vary by situation. Enforcement of any ordinance is problematic because it may be viewed as “backdoor zoning” and might create adversarial relationships with residents. Public health and safety includes the effect of poor sanitation on water quality, opportunity for rodent infestation with associated potential for disease, and possible fire hazard from accumulated solid waste materials. The Planning Commission will work steadily with the Town Health Officer in prioritizing residents who wish to receive assistance.

## **Associative Costs to Housing**

### ***Property Tax***

Regarding lowering property taxes, the [Vermont Property Tax Credit](#) assists many Vermont homeowners with paying their property taxes. Homeowners may be eligible for a property tax credit on their property taxes if their property qualifies as a homestead and they meet eligibility requirements. The maximum credit is \$5,600 toward the State education property tax portion, and \$2,400 for the municipal property tax portion. Help on [eligibility and how to file](#).

### ***Child Care***

The expense of creating and running a childcare center is a concern for providers, and the expense of paying for it are a concern of working families. For families where both parents work, (including self-employed), are attending school, have a special health care need, or other particular service need, Vermont provides a childcare subsidy on a sliding scale based on family size and monthly income. More about this program is available at [Bright Futures](#). The State of Vermont also holds information regarding [Child Care Financial Assistance](#) in relation to the Bright Futures program and has an up-to-date [search database](#) of licensed childcare providers.

### ***Utilities***

Resources for energy efficiency and reduction in use: [Efficiency Vermont](#), [Energize Vermont](#), [Button Up Vermont](#), and [Heat Squad](#).



## **Goals for Housing**

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*Improve local attraction of workforce for working families*

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*Address issues of abandoned buildings and derelict structures*

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*Improve Attainable Housing Stock near Village Center*

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## **Strategies to Implement Goals**

- Explore different housing types and opportunities and how it might fit in Sheffield
- Work with Town Health Officer to establish a reporting procedure and clean-up regimen based on the town's health, safety, and welfare
- Engage regional employers like NVRH to assess housing needs Sheffield may be able to fit
- Establish a Trust Fund for repairs and betterment projects of private residences in need housing rehabilitation support

## **Policies Regarding Housing**

Discourage abandoned structures that contribute to health and safety hazards





# Economic Development

## Overview

Economic vitality that is appropriate in scale is key to the prosperity of Sheffield, its residents, and its future. Due in part to the lack of a commercial town center, and a faltering farming culture, Sheffield continues to be primarily a bedroom community, with jobs and services located elsewhere. People transport to Lyndonville, St. Johnsbury, Newport, and beyond for employment. There are too few small businesses and cottage industries that can hire local employees, as most are family owned and operated. Sheffield could consider a means of support for workers and people who run a small business in Sheffield.

There does not seem to be a source for identification of small businesses and cottage industries in Sheffield, but an informal review indicates there are several small farms, and some forest-based industry and self-employed individuals. These include sheep farms, a farm selling honey and maple syrup, one larger maple syrup operation, a non-commercial alpaca farm, a couple of small vegetable stands at the end of a driveway, a large vegetable farm with a stand at two farms markets and eggs sold at White Market, and recently a major sunflower growing operation.

The range and diversity of employment is expansive for residents in Sheffield. This is an asset that should be promoted to display the vibrant, eclectic nature of Sheffield residents.

## Current Conditions

Small farms have faced challenges to farming viably, such as extreme weather—floods & droughts, climate change—bank debt, milk prices, fuel prices, lack of strong state government support for farmers. A few Vermont towns, such as Peacham, have non-profit organizations that support farmers, but these are ad hoc programs and do not address the root problem—that farms need government support to survive in this economic and weather-challenged climate.

One large enterprise, an industrial wind power project, is at the higher elevations of Sheffield's northeastern section near Sutton and Barton. It contributes an annual "royalty" to the Town of \$520,000, which is divided every year at Town Meeting: 50% toward the annual town budget to lower property taxes; 50% invested in money markets to be available for future needs, such as emergencies or exigencies such as a new town plow.

## Local Issues

### *Housing Stock*

Lack of suitable housing limits people's abilities to consider Sheffield a place of residency for regional employment. There is little turnover in housing and little new housing added.

### *Internet Access & Affordability*

Vermont has one of the [lowest internet access coverages](#) in the country. This is acutely felt in rural towns like Sheffield where broadband infrastructure has been neglected. Companies like [NEK Broadband](#) are working to improve these technology inequities.

### ***Supportive Services***

Supportive services include childcare, groceries, health care, EMT, gas and auto-mechanics, retail, and anything else required to facilitate the success of personal employment and livelihood. For example, there are some after-school programs offered by Miller's Run, but there is no current daycare offered for young working families in town. If a snow day is declared, one parent typically will have to lose a day of work to provide childcare.

Sheffield has no small general store to supply the immediate needs of its residents. It has no cafe or diner, where people traditionally gather to exchange information, offer help to each other, make plans, discuss local issues.

It has an underused Town Hall, which serves as the venue for Town Meeting, and the bi-monthly Food Pantry distribution. Occasionally it is rented out for family reunions, memorial observances, even weddings and receptions. But it has been many years since it served as a cultural and entertainment venue for musical performances, poetry readings, square dances, bingo, lectures.

### ***Going Forward***

The Planning Commission and Selectboard should continue to work with NEK Broadband to move with greater speed to bring access to rural areas, and develop grant programs to provide financial assistance to residents unable to afford broadband rates.

The Commission also encourages the development of a Village Center to draw residents into a sense of community and pride. It would ideally feature some commercial and cultural activity – such as a general store, small cafe, community center, farmer's market, an afterschool site, a tool library, yoga studio. Small-scale, local endeavors like these can stimulate economic growth, and get people together without dramatically changing the imprint of the town and community.

The Planning Commission seeks to encourage small businesses and cottage industries to enhance the economic health of the town. These should be of a size and scope that will not overburden existing infrastructure, or negatively impact Sheffield's rural setting. Equally important will be more community and cultural opportunities through a revitalized Village Center and town hall.

## **Vocational Opportunities & Other Resources**

[North Country Career Center](#) is a regional technical education center, based at North Country Union High School in Newport. NCCC serves students from several surrounding towns by offering a variety of adult education programs designed to help individuals improve skills, knowledge, and career prospects.

[St. Johnsbury Academy Adult Education Program](#) works to develop career skills that can be applied to local businesses and economies. It features online courses, skill-building training, and credential programs. Career fields include computer technology, culinary arts, health sciences and nursing, professional skills, and skilled trades.

[Lyndon Institute Adult Career and Technical Education](#) program is another regional educational resource that offers on-campus and online learning opportunities. Current courses include Licensed Nurse Assistant (LNA), Phlebotomy, and Welding.

Lastly is the [Northeast Kingdom Learning Services](#) (NEKLS) that offers alternative education for the modern world, helping people obtain high school diplomas and beyond with a wide range of teaching and learning services.

[Farm & Forest Viability Program](#), whose mission is to enhance the viability of Farms & Forestry enterprises, offers business advising to eligible farmers, agriculturally-related businesses, forest products enterprises, and forest landowners.

[Working Lands Enterprise Initiative](#) mission is to grow economies and communities of Vermont's working landscape to enhance Vermont's farm & forestry economy including industry related sectors.

The non-profit [Vermont Community Loan Fund](#), provides low-interest assistance to small business start-ups, including agriculture related, day care centers, and more.

### ***Goals for Economic Development***

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*Promote small-scale business, cottage, and agriculture-related industries*

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*Support employer base to remain residing in Sheffield & promote vocational diversity*

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*Encourage students to explore vocational courses at Lyndon Institute*

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### ***Strategies to Implement Goals***

- Establish Village Center Designation to attract small businesses
- Ensure awareness of economic assistance programs
- Work with NVDA to identify appropriate businesses and industries that fit current scale of Sheffield
- Request Vermont Council on Rural Development's Community visit

### ***Policies Regarding Economic Development***

**Encourage economic development that minimizes the burden on both the current infrastructure and environment**

**Attract small-scale businesses and industries that will directly support local residents**





# Education

## Overview

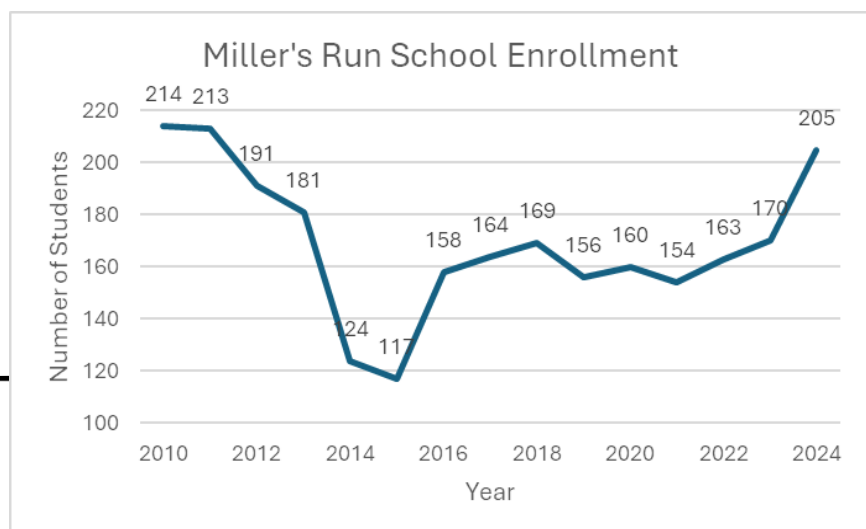
Sheffield and Wheelock established Unified School District No. 37 in 1971. In 2018, UD #37 became part of Kingdom East School District (KESD). Each school district elects one or more directors to the school board that meets monthly; Miller's Run has two, one each representing Sheffield and Wheelock. Under Vermont law, multiple town school districts are entities unto themselves and their place in a town plan is somewhat ambiguous. The school district budget is presented to Kingdom East voters at the annual school meeting and voted by ballot at Town Meeting.



## Miller's Run School

Miller's Run School, which educates pre-kindergarten through grade eight, is in Sheffield. The original eight classroom building was built in 1975; however, increased student population necessitated a major addition completed in 2000. The gymnasium is

Table 6. R-2 Miller's Run School Enrollment. Source: Miller's Run School



designated a community center for hosting various community and school functions, such as basketball, scouting activities, homework hall, concerts, social events, and school and town meetings.

The instructional environment reflects typical pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The number of students in each grade for the school year 2023-2024 ranged from 11 to 19, with a total enrollment of 205. This includes students from other towns in KESD, but primarily from Sheffield and Wheelock. Sheffield also has 15 homeschooled children.

In addition to the traditional academics of reading, writing, math, history and science, Miller's Run School provides students a variety of programs to support "the whole child", including violin, band, Chinese, sewing, Nordic skiing, soccer, media art, theatre, community involvement, and Town Meeting civic education. The school mission is: "For every student to thrive by having the opportunity daily to acquire the skills and to have the experiences they need to be successful and pursue their dreams."

Miller's Run students benefit from the availability of a range of high schools to match their needs and career goals. Lyndon Institute, located in nearby Lyndon, has traditionally been the school's designated high school. Sheffield appreciates the attraction of education both the Lyndon Institute and St. Johnsbury Academy provides. Students from Sheffield and Wheelock also benefit from the Dane-Keniston fund, encouraging post-secondary education.

### **Goals for Education**

<i>Focus planning efforts to prioritize investment in the youth of the local community</i>
<i>Foster greater community to attract enrollment</i>
<i>Support opportunities to learn vocational skills for people of all ages</i>
<i>Enhance after-school programs</i>

### **Strategies to Implement Goals**

- Encourage the KESD school board to concentrate on financial prudence and prioritize maintenance and upkeep of the Miller's Run School facility.
- Encourage the KESD school board to continue to invest in Miller's Run School as a community shelter, including acquiring a generator.
- Encourage KESD to work with the State of Vermont to fund State mandates through tax-structures, not predominantly based on property taxes, by opening a dialogue with State representatives to express concern over the property-tax burden.
- Encourage more local participation at school board meetings and school-sponsored events.
- Encourage the school board to explore alternative energy conservation strategies.
- Establish a local scholarship program
- Work with adjacent communities on different youth programs

### **Policies Regarding Education**

**The Town will look to KESD in supporting the mental health and educational growth of the community's children**

**The Town will continue to support the local availability of private school academies**

# Energy

## Overview

Energy source and usage considerations in Sheffield followed typical historic patterns until recently. Residents used heating oil, firewood, and propane to heat their homes, and their electricity from Lyndon Electric Department (LED) and Vermont Electric Co-op (VEC). A small, remote populations of landowners—primarily camp owners, who are “off grid” have installed solar systems. Their numbers are dispersed enough to preclude the economics of extending utility hookups to their locations. There are fourteen net-metering solar customers.

Climate change, rising energy prices, and improved energy technologies are changing the energy landscape in Vermont.

### ***Sheffield Wind Farm***

As early as 2003, UPC Wind Management LLC (UPC) began an effort to study the possibility of constructing a wind farm in Sheffield. The ridge system of Hardscrabble—Frost—Granby—Norris Mountains in the northwestern reaches of Sheffield, represented a promising site for wind turbines. That site is favorable, not for elevation, which is marginal for wind speed, but for the presence of an existing VELCO transmission line, that runs through the area. UPC planned 16-2.5 MW unit turbines—40 MW wind farm. Further meteorological research by UPC revealed above average wind volumes throughout Sheffield’s lower elevations.



At a special Town Meeting in December 2005, Sheffield vote 120 to 93 in support of an agreement between the Town of Sheffield and Vermont Wind LLC. In 2006, the Selectboard signed a contract with Vermont Wind LLC for construction of 16-420-foot wind turbines. The Vermont Public Service Board issued a Certificate of Public Good in 2007 and the industrial wind-turbine blades became active October 20, 2011. The 20-year contract provides a benefit of \$520,000 per year for Sheffield. NVDA conducted a [Wind Study Report in 2015](#) following the development of the Sheffield and Lowell Wind Farms.



The town should continue to support the current owner, Brookfield Renewables, and their facility. There are about nine years left of the present agreement with the town, and inflation has cut into the funding available for town tax relief and future initiatives. The town should begin to secure expert legal/technical representation for future negotiations with Brookfield Renewables.

### ***Municipal Facility Energy Source Changes***

Based upon the inefficiency of existing facilities, increasing cost of traditional energy sources, availability of state and federal grants for clean energy projects, and federal and state policy changes requiring reduction of fossil fuel usage, the town has embraced changing the source of all its energy needs for all town facilities,.

The existing Municipal Building has a 7KW solar array to reduce reliance on commercial power. Once the present municipal building is renovated to become Sheffield/Wheelock fire station, the propane heating plant will be replaced with a high efficiency wood pellet boiler system. The new town garage will have a 14 KW solar array and will also have four Tesla Power Wall lithium-ion battery storage units to insure emergency power during outages. Miller's Run School previously converted its heating systems to high efficiency pellet boiler system.

Resources for energy efficiency and reduction in use: [Efficiency Vermont](#), [Energize Vermont](#), [Button Up Vermont](#), and [Heat Squad](#). A full list of energy, electrical, and utility companies are listed below in the Utilities and Facilities section.

### ***MERP Level 2 Assessment***

The Town applied for the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) and received an energy assessment of the Town Hall and current Municipal Building. Its conclusion was that the Town Hall has multiple opportunities to reduce operating costs and concurrently upgrades to aging infrastructure in a cost-effective manner. The Planning Commission, or any potential community group, could use this assessment as a starting point in addressing the building's feasibility for new ideas or owners

### ***Goals for Energy***

<i>To be energy efficient and energy neutral where possible</i>
<i>Reduce dependence on oil &amp; diesel</i>
<i>Maintain interest in green energy</i>

### ***Strategies to Implement Goals***

- Coordinate with nonprofits and programs to educate about home insulation and weatherization
- Install a level II recharging station at the new municipal building
- Encourage the adoption of a community solar project with VEC and KESD
- Encourage solar arrays

- Encourage town to complete the municipal development with green energy
- Encourage the renewal of the present contract with Brookfield Renewables

***Policies Regarding Energy***

**The Town will continue to investigate ways to support its residents in mitigating rising utility costs**

**Town should continue to support green energy projects**



# Flood Resilience

## Overview

Millers Run, which drains 48.5 square miles, is a major tributary of the Passumpsic River—a 507 square mile watershed and one of the largest tributaries of the Northern Connecticut River. The two fastest flowing sections of Millers Run are in the villages of Sheffield and Wheelock, both of which originated as mill towns. Interstate 91, built in 1973, follows the river's corridor and crosses the river twice. The rest of the watershed is mountainous and forested and has a history of heavy agricultural use that reached its peak around the year 1850. Currently only about 11% of the watershed is in agriculture, though the river's wider, flat valleys are generally still in agricultural production.

Several factors contribute to Sheffield's potential vulnerability to flooding. Those factors include seasonal weather characteristics, geology and soils, elevation and stream gradients, ground cover, and human changes to the watershed. Sheffield has an abundance of unusual effects associated with wind events. Wind has been a notable presence, especially at higher elevations; a primary reasons for siting the wind farm in Sheffield. The presence of steady wind at an unusually low elevations has led to damaging wind shears. Associated with wind events are dramatic rainfall cloudbursts at higher elevations, adding to significant plug flows in streams.

Sheffield's geology is primarily Barton River lithologies, primarily composed of Schist and limestones. Soils are generally shallow and mineralized. Sheffield has five tributary streams—Millers Run, Square Brook, Oregon Brook, Trout Brook, and Calendar Brook, the first four combining at lower elevations within the town to become Millers Run.

USGS floodplain mapping has traditionally dealt only with flooding along flat, floodplain areas and in Sheffield that includes only the lower two miles of Millers Run along the lower SW corner of the town. Tributary streams, however, are of significantly higher elevations than the lower areas and have greater gradients than the lower river.

## Water Quality

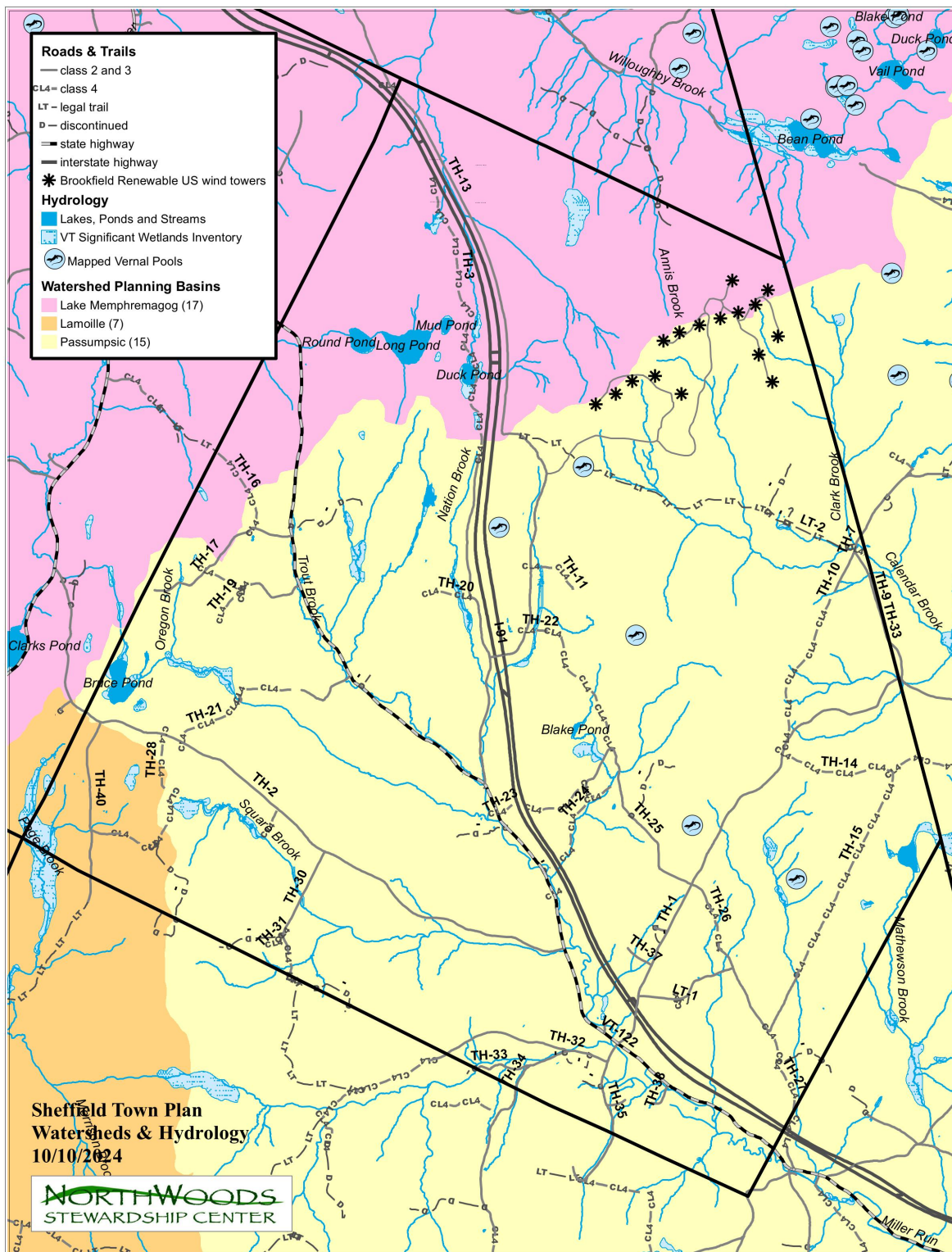
Riparian habitat within the corridor around Millers Run was classified, during the [Millers Run Corridor Plan](#) Phase 2 geomorphic assessment, as “poor” habitat, largely due to the stream lacking buffers and diversity of plant life. The ecology of the corridor has been significantly altered by human land use and agriculture. The river valley generally lacks habitat connectivity in the corridor but does provide small and occasional pockets of riparian habitat. In-stream habitat is largely impacted by increased thermal temperatures and excess fine sediments, though woody debris does provide occasional habitat opportunities.

Agricultural and urban land decrease floodwater storage capacity in the stream corridor. Forested swamps or wetlands slow, store, and absorb more water than agricultural lands. Partly due to the absorbent duff layer in forests, hydraulic roughness created by vegetation and root mass, and due to microtopography, may include small depressions in the landscape that



would store and absorb water. Clearing and tilling a streamside field reduces these opportunities and thereby alters the hydrologic regime of the watershed.

Figure 6. Watershed & Hydrology. Source: Northwoods Stewardship Center



The second most significant hydrologic stressor in the Millers Run watershed is roads. A 1997 report entitled The Miller's Run Stream Habitat Improvement Project, chronicled the series of

bank stabilization projects that were completed between 1994 and 1997 on the Millers Run. Landowner interviews summarized and shed light into some of the hydrologic alterations along Miller’s Run. The following excerpt from the report explains:

*“Anecdotal information collected from individuals who grew up in the [Millers Run River] valley, indicate that the building of the interstate highway had a major impact on the stream. Runoff from storms that once soaked into wooded hills is now concentrated into a small number of tributaries. Wetland areas, which were destroyed for the interstate, are no longer there to act as sponges or filters soaking up storm water and capturing silt. In at least one pasture below the highway, what was a seasonal feeder stream is now running year-round. In addition, housing development in the stream corridor has increased rapidly. These factors have had the overall effect of speeding the runoff from a storm into Millers Run so that a greater volume of water now tries to move through the channel in a shorter time period. People in the valley say that a storm which took hours to affect the stream in the past, will now cause high water very quickly. The stream has responded by trying to widen its channel to carry the higher peak flow. Floods are much more frequent now, leaving development along the stream vulnerable. (Dedham, 1997)”*

It is instructive to read the critical sections of the previously published [2009 Millers Run River Corridor Plan](#), by the Caledonia County Natural Resources Conservation District. Those sections related to Sheffield include further recommendations the town should take to mitigate flooding and improve floodplain capacity in junction with the town’s Hazard Mitigation Plan strategies.

## **Floodplain Mapping**

The first floodplain mapping for Sheffield was in 1985. The quality and scale of the mapping was so poor that it is impossible to determine whether properties or structures may be in the 100-year floodplain. The low quality of the mapping resulted in an abundance of Letters of Map Amendment- “LOMAs”—residents had to pursue with FEMA to prove their home were not in the actual floodplain.

Because of the damage caused by Hurricane Irene in 2011 FEMA and the USGS began the process of developing modern, digital, LIDAR-based floodplain mapping in 2019. The process to develop these maps is long and involves many steps. In October 2019, the town was told that mapping process would take roughly 50 months, resulting in the availability of maps in late 2023. The process has been delayed several times and Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) are now not scheduled to be available until 2026-27.



DATE	EVENT	FEMA DECLARATION	DAMAGE TYPE	FEMA FUNDING
1952	Floodplain east of village	N/A	floodplain flooding	N/A
1973	Rte 122 washout in village	N/A	road washout	N/A
June 1990	General flooding	875	road washouts, culvert damage	\$23,201
July 1997	General flooding	1184	road washouts, culvert damage	\$53,919
July 2002	Severe storms- 4 projects	1428	road washouts culvert damage, incl. New Duck Pond Rd.	\$27,232
August 2007	Severe storm- 1 project	1715		\$24,109
September 2008	Severe storm- 1 project	1790		\$13,921
September 2011	T.S Irene- 19 projects	4022	road, bridge, culvert washouts	\$184,761
August 2013	Wind/Flooding- 1 project	4140	blowdowns, road, culvert damage	\$5,048
January 2014	Severe freezing rain; ice	4163	blocked roads	\$18,378
July 2023	Severe rain storms- 10 projects;	4720	road, culvert washouts	\$115,000 (FEMA-\$86,250)
July 2024	Severe rain storms	TBD	road, culvert washouts	TBD

Of importance to the Town Plan, these Riskmaps will show the revised accurate 100-year floodplain boundary as well as the approximate parcel lines of properties. Reviewing parcel and structure elevations on the Sheffield Riskmaps may help residents along Millers Run eventually determine the availability of a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) once the town receives final FIRM.

Because of the factors affecting flooding on Millers Run, climate change effects (100-year flood events are now forecast to be 20-40% larger than in 1970), and recent flood events in 2023 and 2024, the town has reviewed several existing structures along Millers Run and its tributaries for probable future flooding damage. Based on this review there are additional recommendations the town should evaluate to ensure that possible flood damage is minimized.

### ***National Floodplain Insurance Program (NFIP)***

The National Flood Insurance Program allows property owners to purchase flood insurance for buildings and their contents in participating communities. Municipalities can choose to participate—this choice is voluntary. Towns that do participate enable flood insurance availability for every resident, not just those mapped in the floodplain. About 90% of Vermont's communities participate in the NFIP. Without NFIP, flood insurance is not available or must come from private sources; nevertheless, flood insurance is expensive for both NFIP and non-NFIP communities. The cost of flood insurance is not mitigated by NFIP participation, it is a matter of legal availability that lenders are required to offer. To participate, a community must regulate all new developments in Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) to ensure it is safe from flood damage. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) administers the insurance program.

Once bylaws are adopted, the community will select a local administrative officer, review board, and permitting process for floodplain development projects. The floodplain manager at VT Dept. of Environmental Conservation will assist the community with evaluating new projects by providing written technical review comments.

An individual property owner without a loan/mortgage may opt whether or not to buy flood insurance. However, any property owner wanting to do earthwork or a building project in a flood hazard area would need to get a permit from the community, whether or not that property owner has flood insurance. This allows all projects to be reviewed by the community, to ensure projects do not have negative flooding consequences for neighbors, public roads, or the owner. Bank lenders must require flood insurance for properties in the floodplain for the landowner to secure a mortgage. While that sounds like something homeowners may not want to be forced to do, it is meant to protect them from predatory lending.

For Sheffield, because the FEMA floodplain mapping process has been delayed, this town plan will be updated once the draft maps are made available, and update will include Selectboard recommendations on parcel development within the new floodplain boundaries.

### ***Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF)***

An important source of federal disaster aid is FEMA Public Assistance, which the town can apply to repair public infrastructure (like roads). FEMA reimburses 75% of eligible costs. Communities that do not participate in NFIP can get Public Assistance for some repair locations, but not if the damage is located within a mapped Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).

Through ERAF, the state also contributes toward Public Assistance eligible projects on top of the FEMA share, starting at 7.5% of the total cost. If Sheffield joins NFIP and takes certain other steps to become flood resilient, the state share will increase to 12.5%, or 17.5% if a community implements river corridor protections. This difference in state contributions can be tens of thousands of dollars in public assistance. Learn more about the state program [here](#).

## **Other Hazards**

### ***Wildfire***

Every year Vermont has wildfires. Most of the fires are of human cause, with the majority caused by debris burning. For a wildfire to grow to large-scale, several things need to be in alignment: critically dry fuels, wind event, ignition and terrain. Sheffield and Northern Vermont

have often had critically dry fuels, without wind event or ignition. Unlike long-term droughts in the western US, flash droughts may only last a few months, but can have an impact on our eastern fuel types. Though fire occurrence data in Vermont does not show an increase in the number of fires, or acres burning over time, Vermont will continue to experience periods of elevated fire danger, and given the right conditions, potential exists for significant wildfires. However, climate trends point to a wetter Vermont within a calendar year, but with longer spells of dry conditions.

In Vermont communities, local volunteer fire departments are the first line of fire suppression. Since most fires are human caused, these fires are easily accessed and quickly suppressed. The concern is that if a wildfire cannot be suppressed quickly, it can grow beyond the capabilities of the local fire department. With many towns experiencing a decline in volunteers, this is becoming a concern. A fire does not need to be on the scale of Quebec fires in 2023 to have a significant impact on lives and property.

Sheffield should actively recruit firefighting volunteers and provide training, technical support, and equipment, for wildland fire prevention and response. The town should support the fire department's efforts to keep and maintain ATV-type equipment to react to remote forest wildfires. The town should also make an effort to reduce or mitigate the rate of forest conversion, fragmentation and parcelization. Homeowners should be educated as to what they can do to make their property more resilient to wildfire. This includes vegetation management around structures that can make the difference between homes lost or not. Information about open burning, burn permits, fire danger, and more should be posted on the town website.

## Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP)

Sheffield has a [Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) with Burke, Sutton, and Wheelock. Last approved in 2020, the Town will have to work to adopt a replacement plan in 2025, or address an individual local plan. A full list of hazards, their potential risk, and strategies to mitigate, are laid out in the plan and is available in the Town Office. Having an active LHMP enables certain grant access and disaster recovery funding.

### Goals for Flood Resilience

<i>Be prepared for imminent FEMA Mapping updates &amp; ensure community is aware</i>
<i>Build and maintain resiliency amongst community</i>
<i>Maintain water quality</i>

### Strategies to Implement Goals

- Prioritize updates from road crew on improvements in ditching and culvert upgrades
- Ensure identified shortfalls on the recently approved hazard mitigation plan are programmed for funding and repair
- Be proactive in prioritizing mitigation action Hazard Plan
- Begin Local Hazard Mitigation Plan update to meet the June 2026 expiration date



- Ensure factual, consistent information is being provided to community about flooding, new mapping, and merits of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)
- Develop strategies to mitigate effects of climate change induced disasters
- Address and protect town's valuable water resources and drinking-water supply
- Establish a shelter in new town hall/offices building
- Develop recommendations limiting structural development on floodplain parcels and adjacent to tributary channels

### ***Policies Regarding Flood Resilience***

Discourage new building development in floodplain and river corridors

Build flood resilience with adjacent communities

## **Transportation**

### **Overview**

The Town of Sheffield has an abundant and effective surface transportation system including federal, state, town and recreational resources. Nevertheless, there are limitations and deficiencies which reduce the quality and capacity of the system.

Sheffield contains approximately 8 ½ miles of I-91, which runs NW to SE through Sheffield, dividing the town roughly in two. There are no public exits off I-91 in Sheffield, however there is an emergency access to I-91 from Berry Hill Road at the town highway underpass for the local fire department and other official vehicles. The Sheffield-Wheelock Fire Department has a responsibility to respond to interstate road incidents and emergencies throughout the interstate length in town. Most emergency responses are vehicle interactions involving bad weather and animals. The lack of an exit in Sheffield is seen as a positive asset by most residents. The construction of I-91 through Sheffield caused major changes and restrictions to the town road system and formed a significant barrier to wildlife passage through the town forest block.

There is only one state highway in Sheffield, Vt Rte. 122, running for approximately 7 ½ miles through the town, roughly paralleling I-91 along the southeasterly side of the interstate and Millers Run. Log and chip trucks, along with inadequate drainage maintenance, have caused significant structural damage requiring the state to provide cosmetic, two-inch overlay repairs approximately every ten years. The last repaving was completed in 2022. Route 122 is a critical state secondary connector highway between Lyndonville in Caledonia County and Barton and points north in Orleans County. Original construction of the route by the state eliminated sidewalks in the town center which has been a safety issue for many years.

### **Town Roads**

Sheffield has an effective Class II, III and IV road system, primarily surfaced with bank-run gravel and crushed limestone. The construction of I-91 reduced the ability of travelers to cross town from six town roads to two, thereby reducing direct access to parts of Sheffield and likely changing development patterns. There are about eight miles of Class II roads (Berry Hill and

Sheffield Square Rds.), 20 miles of Class III roads, and 15 Miles of Class IV roads. Sheffield is acknowledged to have some of the best-maintained roads in the county.

Maintenance of Class II and III roads are the responsibility of the town, for which the town receives state grants. Improvement projects with the state, and plans for others are on-going. Residents can refer to the Annual Report and the Hazard Mitigation Plan for projects.

Class IV roads are the town's responsibility only to the extent of the town policy—see Appendix D for the Class IV Road Policy. Sheffield is an active participant in the “Vermont Better Backroads” Initiative, a program of the Vermont Agency of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils. Goals include: 1) Speedy drainage of rainfall from roads, 2) stabilized and revegetated ditches and adjacent disturbed areas, 3) Diversion of runoff away from surface waters and on to vegetated areas, and 4) Timely road maintenance efforts.

### ***Culvert and Bridge Repairs and Upgrades***

Due to the increased storms and related damage over the past few years, Sheffield has identified tributary bridge deficiencies in some town-owned structures, specifically Bridge 18 at Sheldon Farm Road, and Bridge 17 at Dexter Cemetery Road. Efforts are underway to define the problems and make necessary improvements.

## **Trail Systems**

The state and town recognize two legal trails—one running between New Duck Pond Road and the intersection of Hardscrabble Mountain Road and King George Road (2.78 miles), the other a short loop off Nelson Hill Road. There are also approximately two miles of bike and pedestrian trails open to the public on the future town forest property off Berry Hill Road. There has been an increase in interest in maintenance of in-town trails, including expansion, for both bike and pedestrian usage as well as possibly ATV usage.

### ***VASA Trails***

The Vermont ATV Sportsman's Association is, by town ordinance, allowed to travel on town roads. Additionally, they maintain trails across private property allowing journeys between all surrounding towns. VASA assists the town in maintaining some of the Class IV roads used in its trail system.

### ***VAST Trails***

The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers maintains an important system of Class A Trails throughout the town linking together Wheelock, Lyndonville, Sutton, Danville, Greensboro Bend,

and the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. All trails are on private property and rely on good will for the viability of the trail system.

***Sheffield Town/State Projects Scheduled for 2024-2025 Construction Seasons***

2023 Grants in Aide project on Sheffield Sq Rd. (not completed due to flooding) \$12,500.

2024 Grants in Aide project (location to be determined) \$10,000.

2023 Better Roads Grant—bottom portion of Allard Hill Rd. (not completed due to the flood) \$10,000.

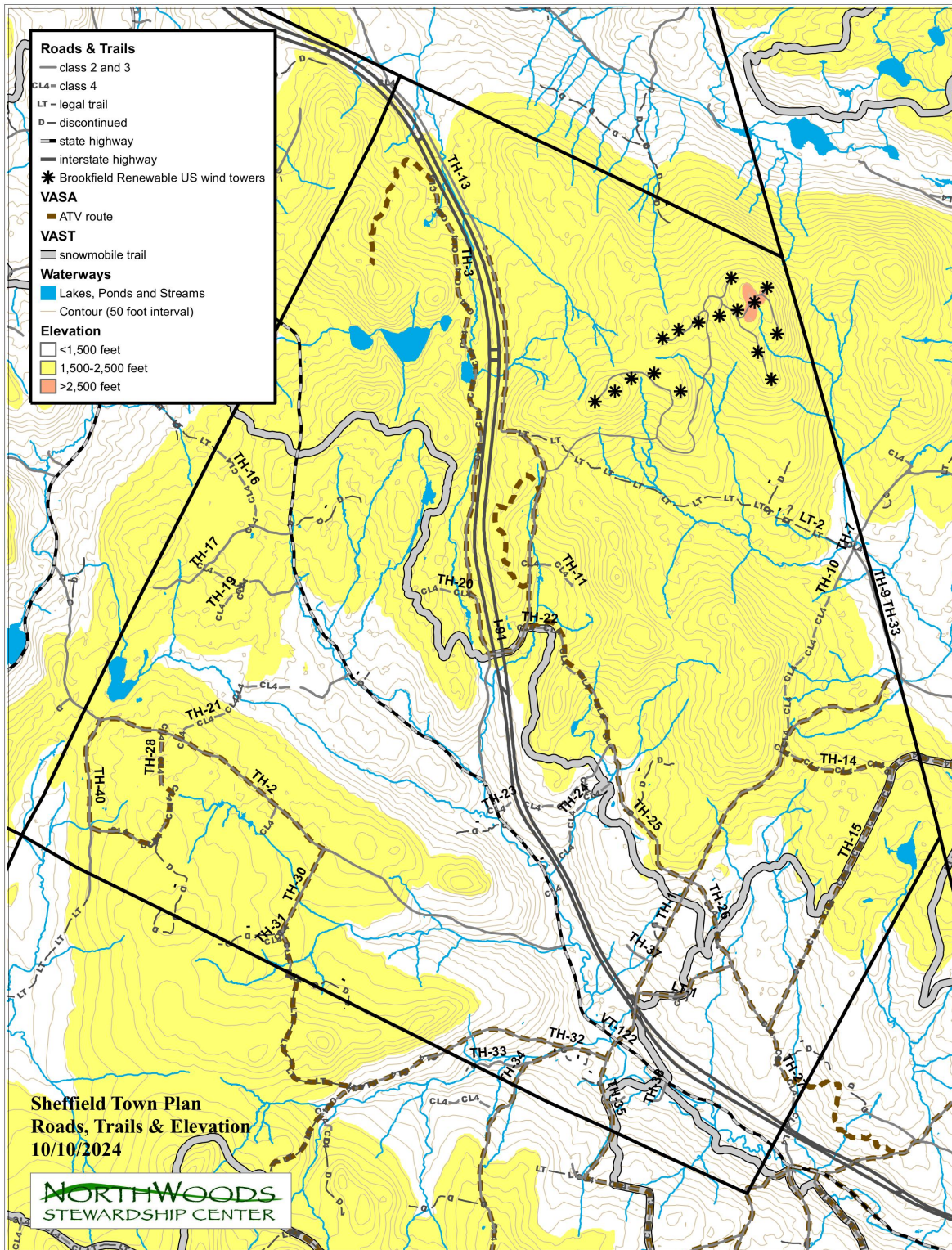
2022 VTrans Class II Highway Program project (held over for multiple reasons) \$ 250,000.

2024 VTrans structures program project (engineering portion to be completed this season, structure to be installed in the 2025 construction season) \$ 200,000.

2024 FEMA mitigation project on Dunn Mt. Rd. (engineering portion to be completed 2024, structure to be installed in 2025) amount to be determined. 100% financed.

Figure 7. Roads, Trails, & Elevation. Source: Northwoods Stewardship Center







## Regional Transportation

### *Airports*

Sheffield has no airport facilities. The closest local airports are in Lyndon and Newport; the closest regional/international airport is in Burlington, VT.

### *Railheads*

The state of Vermont owns most railroad Rights of Ways in the state and leases them to private and public rail firms. Vermont Railways (Vermont Rail System) leases the local rail routes in the NEK and there are commercial/industrial yards and sidings in Lyndonville and St Johnsbury. The closest passenger terminal for rail travel is the AMTRAK station in White River Junction.

### *Rural Community Transportation*

Rural Community Transportation, Inc. is a nonprofit, public transportation system headquartered in Lyndonville, Vermont. RCT serves the Northeast Kingdom and Lamoille County and provides regular bus and shuttle routes for commuters and shoppers as well as on-demand rides.

The [Rural Community Transportation](#) (RCT) bus service serves both the Northeast Kingdom and Lamoille County. While Sheffield residents are not served by RCT's fixed bus routes, residents can be serviced through on-demand Medicaid/Medicare schedule pick-ups near their home to utilize these routes. RTC schedules rides to and from school, health care appointments, jobs and more. Phone: (802) 748- 8170.

RCT's US2 commuter bus service connects Morrisville and Barre (via VT Route 15 & 14) with transfer connections to Montpelier and St. Johnsbury (via RCT's & GMT's existing US2 Commuter route). This route serves the roughly 11,500 residents of Morrisville, Wolcott, Hardwick, Woodbury, East Calais, and East Montpelier.



### **Goals for Transportation**

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*Execute town-state joint projects the town has previously approved and funded*

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*Continue to pursue funding for Route 122 sidewalk project*

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*Expand walkability and recreation opportunities*

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*Highlight the quality of work that our Road Foreman continues to provide*

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### **Strategies to Implement Goals**

- Coordinate with Wheelock to explore the feasibility of a multi-use trail system along Miller's Run Corridor
- Conduct a survey of Class III roads to be sure they are safe for school buses and emergency services
- Review town policy on Class IV Road improvements
- Re-establish sidewalks between Chesley Hill Road (Post Office) and the Miller's Run School (Joint state-town active project)
- Replace Cemetery Road Bridge
- Upgrade Sheldon Farm Road Bridge
- Berry Hill Road and Underpass improvements (Joint State-Town project)
- New Duck Pond Tube Underpass replacement (sought by the town)

### **Policies Regarding Transportation**

#### **No expansion of Town roads**



# Utilities & Facilities

## Overview

The Town of Sheffield has a Municipal Building and a Town Hall Building that serve the typical municipal needs of the town. Both buildings (built in the 1950's & 1980's) have many administrative, mission, safety, and operational deficiencies. In 2021 and 2022, because of their deficiencies and the clear abundance and availability of state and federal grant funding, the Selectboard and the Planning Commission began a long-term process of investigation, review, and planning to eventually replace these facilities.

With respect to deficiencies, the Town Garage portion of the Municipal Building is the most problematic, and will be the first to be replaced. The Town has purchased a roughly two-acre parcel across the street (Dane Road) for eventual construction of a new Town Garage and Town Hall. As of the publishing of this Town Plan update, the Town has awarded a construction contract for the construction of a new, expanded town garage and office building, which should be completed in the summer of 2025. A Park n' Ride will be integrated as part of the new garage. If a new Town Hall is built, the parking lot will be moved there, with a charging station included.

Pending approval of voters, and with hopeful receipt of grant funding, the next phase of work will be design and construction of a new Town Hall and Municipal Office building adjacent to the new garage. Design should begin in the Fall 2024 or Spring 2025, with construction in 2025-2026.

The last phase will be renovation and conversion of the current Municipal Building into a Sheffield- Wheelock Joint Fire Station. Scheduled time frame for this phase might be in 2026–2027.

Once completed, the old town hall could become an adjunct town facility. Town governing bodies should be open in considering how the building could still directly benefit the local community, such as a community center developed with support and vision of the Preservation Trust of Vermont's [Village Trust Initiative](#).

## Fire Department

The Sheffield-Wheelock Volunteer Fire Department has seen a larger number of calls for service over the years, with 91 various calls in 2023 alone. As a 16-member crew serving over 1,500 people over 70 square miles, the service provided by our first responders is unmatched, save for the other great volunteers in surrounding departments.



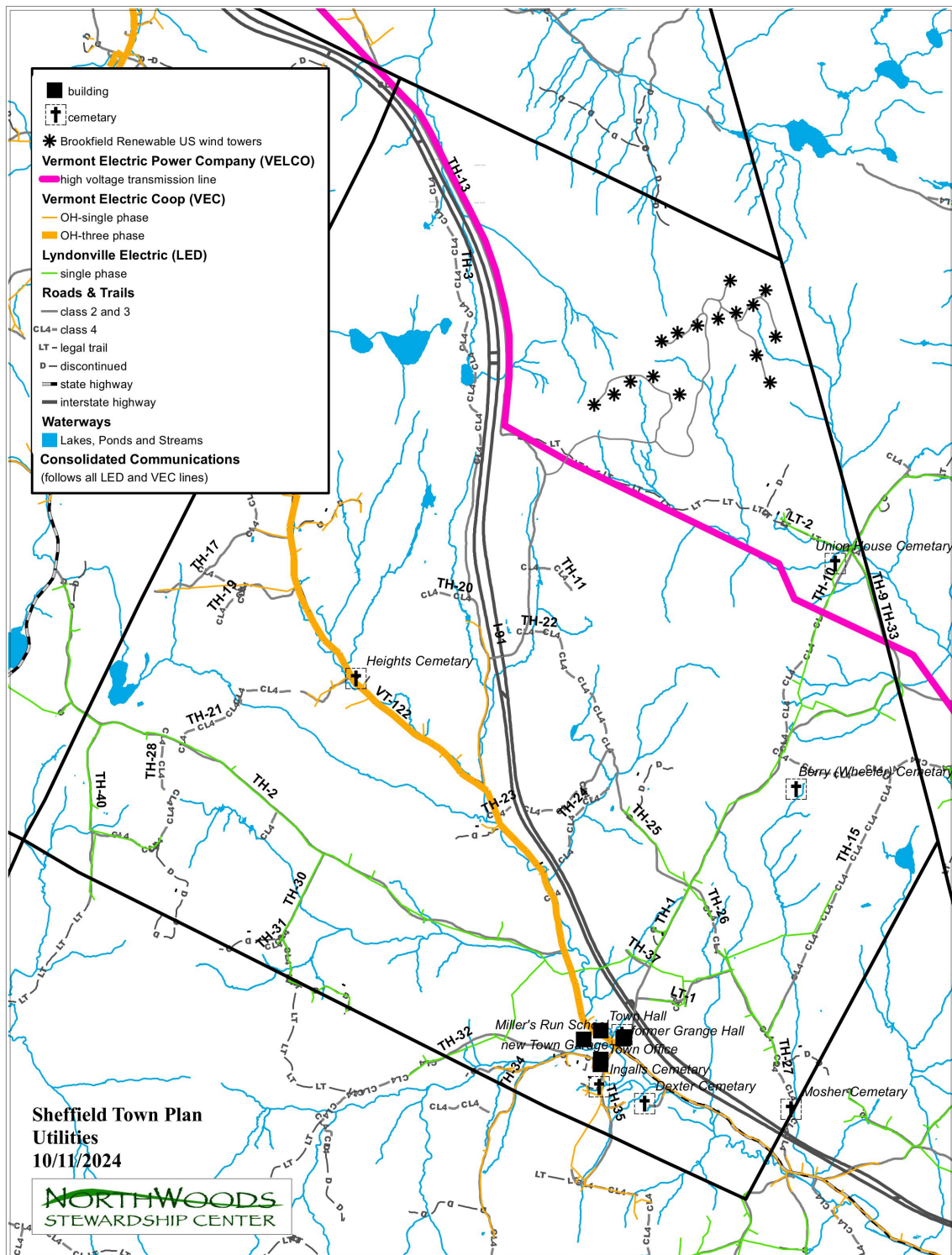
## Other Utilities

Residents within in the village along Rt 122 are served by a small private well and water line system. The state does require testing and monitoring of this system. Miller's Run School has its own well. There are no water treatment systems, or sewage treatment collection systems or facilities in Sheffield.

### *Trash and Garbage Collection and Removal*

Sheffield shares a transfer station located in Wheelock for recycling and collection of refuse. The town is a member of the Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District and has access to the

Figure 8. Utilities. Source: Northwoods Stewardship Center



districts recycling center in Lyndonville for the collection of hazardous waste and other controlled wastes. The two towns also hold “bulky days” every three months for the collection of furniture and mattresses.

## Property Taxes

Due to retirement or moves from town of all the Listers in the 2023–2024 period, the town will not be able to accomplish a state-mandated town-wide reassessment until 2026. In the meantime, the Common Level of Appraisal has dropped to .77, causing taxes to jump to unreasonably high levels. Once re-assessment is completed the town tax rate, and resulting bills, should fall in 2027.

The [Vermont Property Tax Credit](#) assists many Vermont homeowners with paying their property taxes. You may be eligible for a property tax credit on your property taxes if your property qualifies as a homestead and you meet the eligibility requirements. The maximum credit is \$5,600 for the State education property tax portion and \$2,400 for the municipal property tax portion. Eligibility and how to file can be found [here](#).

## Cemeteries

Sheffield has seven cemeteries. Properties belongs to the town, but there do not appear to be official recordings detailing exact locations or property details. **Dexter Cemetery**, located at the end of Dexter Cemetery Road off Rt 122, is the newest and only cemetery in active use. **Union House Cemetery** is on Kivimae Road, near the Sutton Town line; **Berry Cemetery (aka Wheeler)** is located just off Gold Mine Road and Berry Hill Road; **Heights Cemetery** is across from Oregon Brook Road on the east side of Rt 122; **Baptist Church Cemetery** is located behind the Free Will Baptist Church off Berry Hill Road; **Ingalls Cemetery** is located on the west side of Chesley Hill Road; and **Mosher Cemetery** is located at the end of Mosher Road near Wheelock's Sulphur Springs Road.

## *Other Land*

The town also owns a landlocked ten-acre parcel near the norther border of the town. Efforts are under way to sell the parcel to one of the surrounding landowners.

## Utilities in Sheffield

### *Electrical*

The electrical infrastructure of Sheffield is simple and hasn't changed significantly in decades. The town is serviced by two public utilities, Vermont Electric Cooperative and Lyndonville Electric Department. All lines are aerial, pole-mounted, and generally run along ROWs of state and town roads.

**VELCO- Vermont Electric Company** (VELCO) is the nation's first statewide, transmission-only company, created in 1956 to build and operate an interconnected electric transmission grid to deliver and share access to clean power, including hydro. VELCO remains unique in two important ways: the ownership comprises the state's 17 distribution utilities and a public benefits corporation and its for-profit status is structured to return value to its owners, customers, and every Vermonter. VELCO has a high voltage transmission line in Sheffield running east to west in the higher elevations of northern Sheffield. There are no connections to local utilities off this line in Sheffield.



**Brookfield Renewables** is a publicly traded company that owns the Sheffield Wind Farm, a 16 turbine, 40 MW facility located along several ridgelines across the northern section of the town. It is connected to the VELCO transmission line. See the Energy Section for more details.

**Vermont Electric Co-op (VEC)** is a large regional utility in the Northeast Kingdom and services the majority of residents in Sheffield. VEC's main is a 3-phase line running from Glover into town along Rt 122 and is capable of supporting commercial and light industrial development along the route. More can be learned their [net-metering](#) program. Renewables Situation and Community Solar: (From VEC) Vermont Electric COOP has a Community Solar program; details below:

- <https://vermontelectric.coop/net-metering>
- <https://vermontelectric.coop/co-op-community-solar>

**Lyndonville Electric Department (LED)** is a small town-owned utility based in Lyndonville. It has few residential programs and struggles to maintain service to customers outside the Lyndonville area. Outages are frequent and long as some of the lines in Sheffield do not always follow roads, but run through woods. Sheffield is serviced by a long single-phase line from Sutton in the north, crossing the VEC line and Route 122, and continuing on to service residents in southern Sheffield.

### ***Communication Services***

**Consolidated Communications Telecommunications Company** is the state-regulated provider of traditional communication services (telephone, cable, internet, data, voice, and cloud) for the state—the “provider of last resort”. Consolidated is available in Sheffield, but may not provide all levels of service, depending on your location in town.

**Northern Connections** provides one of the fastest wireless broadband in New England. Based in Saint Johnsbury, its network covers over 1600 square miles of the Northeast Kingdom. Northern Connections is available to most locations in Sheffield.

**NEK Broadband** is a Communications Union District formed under [30 VSA Chapter 82](#) that includes every town in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. It is building public infrastructure to ensure every address that has existing electric utility service will have access to affordable, reliable, and high-speed broadband internet. As a non-profit municipality, any revenue created will go towards building and repairing infrastructure and increasing affordability for our residents. NEK Broadband works in conjunction with neighboring Communications Union Districts (CUDs) to provide service in adjacent counties as deemed necessary, or expedient, based on utility

distribution lines. This is a joint coordination to help bring service to the unserved along these town and county boundaries. Sheffield is a member town and has a town resident on the NEK Broadband Board. NEK Broadband plans to expand into the Sheffield area to cover roads and streets presently not served by other providers. Streets likely to see NEK Broadband in the future include Berry Hill Road, Blake Pond Road, Duck Pond Road, Nelson Hill Road, Square Road, etc.

Xfinity Telecommunications Company provides market consumer cable television, internet, telephone, and wireless services. While available in the Northeast Kingdom, Xfinity is not available in Sheffield at this time.

[Starlink](#) is a satellite internet arrangement operated by Starlink Services, LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of American aerospace company SpaceX, providing coverage to 102 countries. It also aims to provide global mobile broadband. SpaceX first launched Starlink satellites in 2019. Starlink is available in Sheffield.

[Viasat](#) offers high-speed satellite internet service throughout continental U.S., with unlimited data plans and speeds up to 25-150 Mbps on select plans in select areas.

[Hughesnet](#) is a subsidiary of EchoStar. It is headquartered in Germantown, Maryland. It provides a high-speed satellite internet service. That service is called HughesNet and is available in Sheffield.

### **Goals for Utilities & Facilities**

<i>Finish the design and construction of Municipal Building</i>
<i>Enroll in Village Center Designation</i>
<i>Improve broadband affordability</i>
<i>Establish a vision for a community center</i>
<i>Rejuvenation of aesthetics</i>

### **Strategies to Implement Goals**

- Support the pursuit of a Community Trust
- Identify local nonprofits for potential partnerships
- Increase take rate to NEK Broadband
- Work with NEK Broadband to identify back roads needing cable and schedule improvements

- The town should take advantage of the myriad of state and regional programs being offered in the conversion of oil and propane residential heat systems to pellet and chip boilers, geothermal, and solar installations

#### ***Policies Regarding Utilities and Facilities***

**The Town will work to maintain function and aesthetics of all municipal-owned buildings and properties**

**The town should investigate a community solar installation for the village center area, and coordinate the effort with the Kingdom East School District**



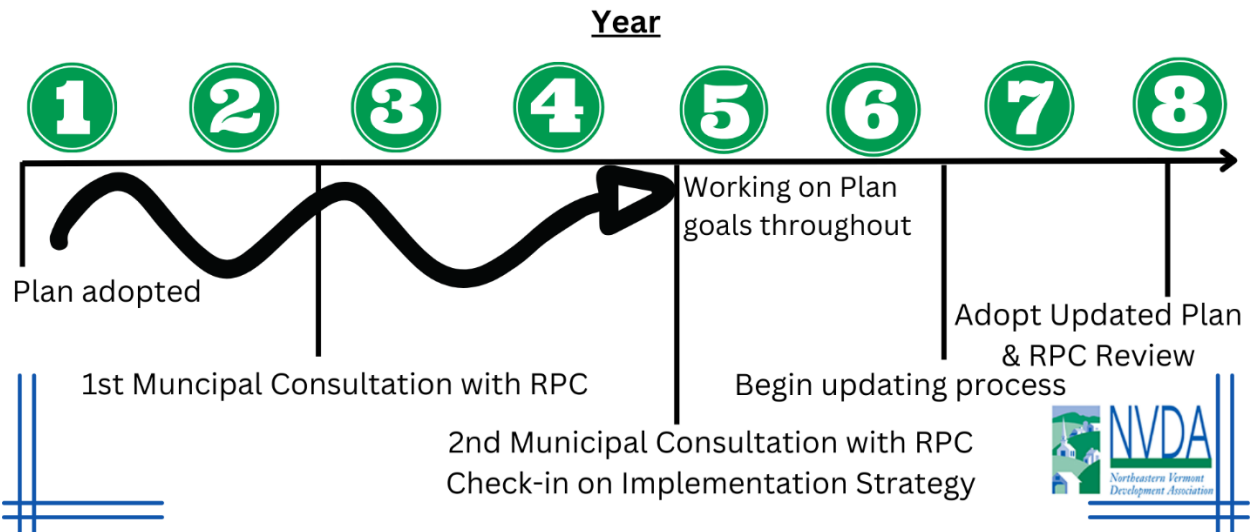
## **Evaluating The Plan**

Evaluating progress, both in performance and conformance with the community, is one of the most important steps in developing a comprehensive plan. Sheffield's town government should work to create benchmarks of achievements as the plan is utilized and referenced to advance and build capacity for the town. Instituting timelines, group evaluations, and developing committees to pursue goals are basic to ensuring this plan is functional to the community and does not accumulate dust off the shelf.

Below is a basic timeline created by NVDA to keep the town on a basic framework towards updating the next plan. Between now and 2030, Sheffield should actively work to implement this plan as adopted. With guidance of consultations with NVDA, the town's Planning Commission will be prepared to keep continuity through plan conformance, enabling a smoother process in updating the plan.



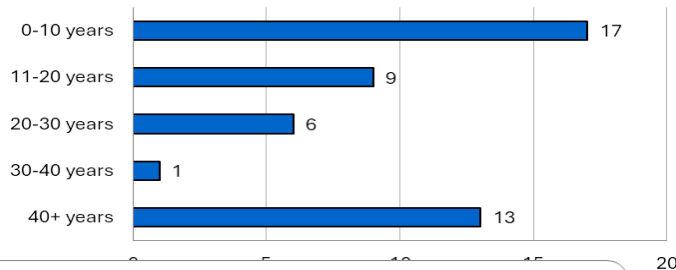
# Town Plan Re-adoption Timeline



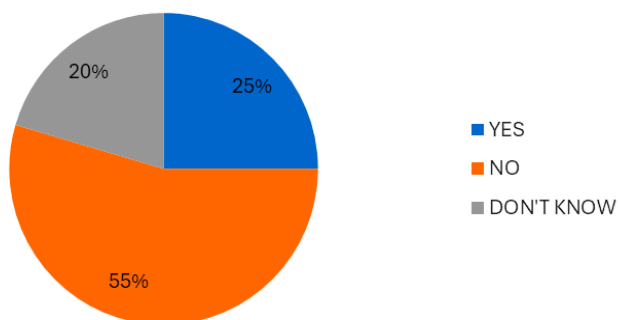
## Appendix

### A. Survey (Completed May 2023)

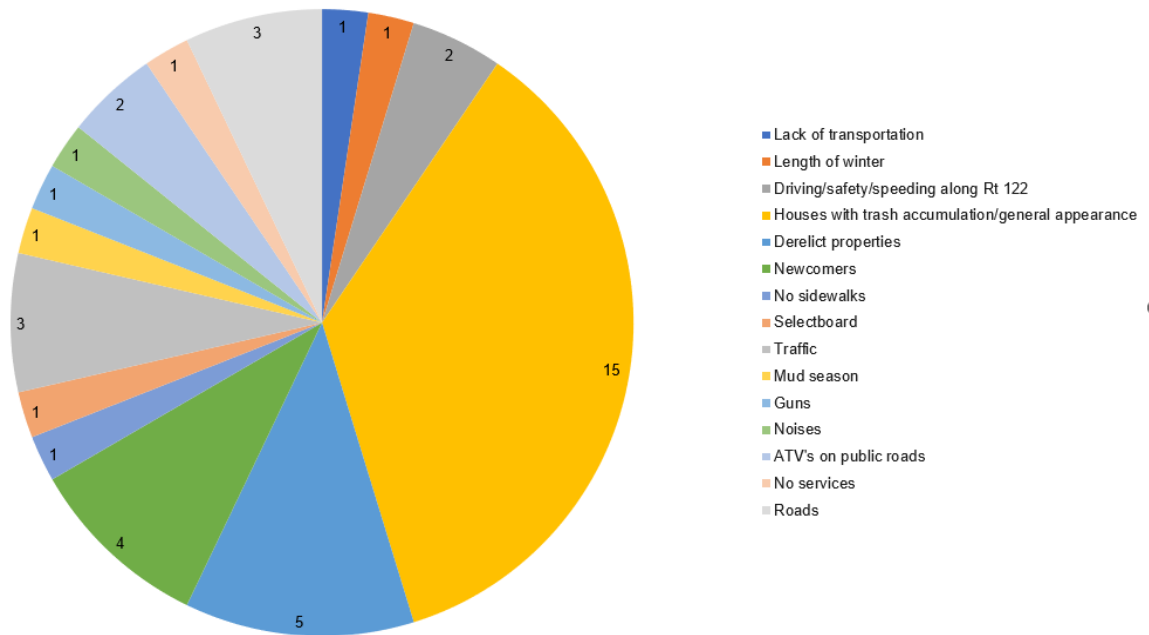
How Long Have You Lived in Sheffield?



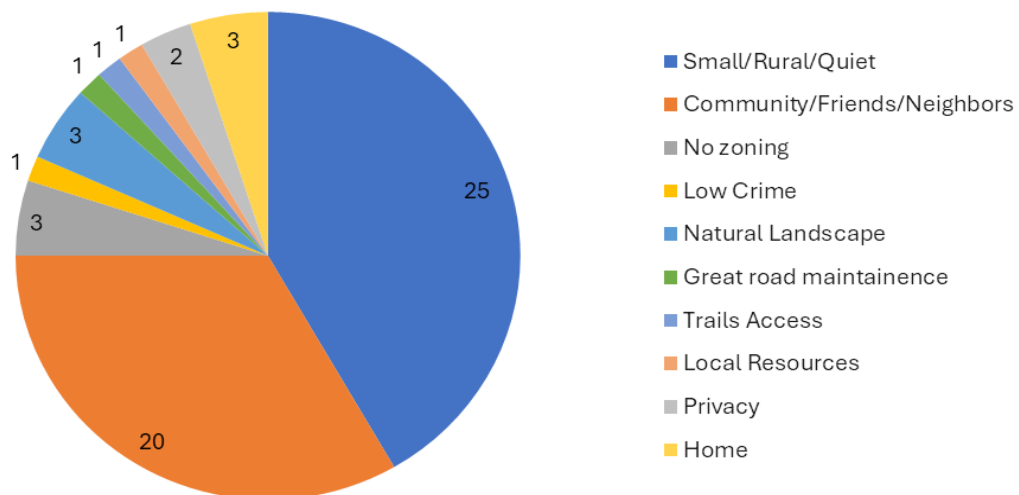
Should Sheffield Adopt Zoning?



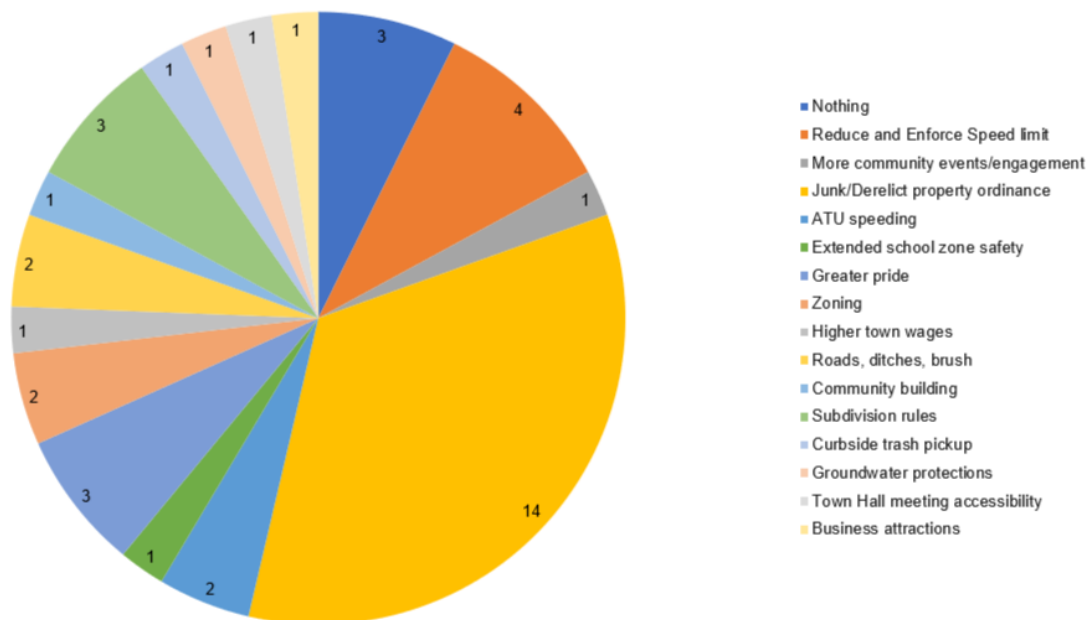
What do you like least about Sheffield?



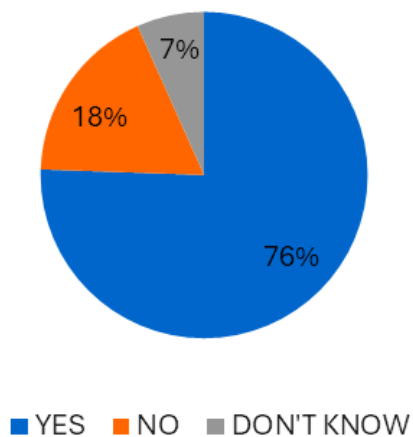
What do you like most about Sheffield?



WHAT ISSUES DO YOU THINK THE TOWN NEEDS TO ADDRESS?

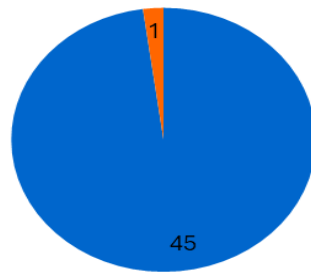


Should Sheffield adopt an ordinance to deal with derelict or abandoned structures?





Do you rent or own in Sheffield?



## B. Potential Solutions for Abandoned Buildings, Solid Waste

The Planning Commission is not recommending these issues be addressed by these potential solutions one at a time through this list. Rather, the Commission sought to display the avenues and resources they brainstormed would attempt to fix the issues *before* suggesting regulation as a solution

- 1) List resources, like recycling basics, local haulers and trash sites, and local composting solutions. Get information out front as much as possible to remove any individual's claim to ignorance or not knowing.
- 2) Larger promotion of Green Up Day. The Planning Commission worked to help a local resident who wanted trash removed, and did so on Green Up Day. Getting people more involved in, and interested in getting out, can help with smaller projects and community cohesion
- 3) Neighborhood Roundups to promote local civic pride and engagement. Set up on a neighbor-to-neighbor basis to keep the issue local and to support neighborly relationship building.
- 4) Establish Clean-Up Committee. The Selectboard could establish a Clean-Up Committee to get individuals together to meet regularly to address large and small issues.
- 5) Establish a Trash Bond to assist local clean up. The Selectboard could appropriate local budget for helping landowners with access to a one-time clean up bond, with an agreement to maintain the work accomplished.
- 6) Establish detailed program to place a municipal lien on properties that thwart compliance, or repeat offense(s) of waste accumulation or building

deterioration. This would begin the town's regulatory efforts in addressing residents' lack of compliance and/or repeat offenses after receiving help.

7) Selectboard and Health Officer issue a health order to address a chemical, biological, and/or physical issue. It is within the powers of the municipality to effect a health order addressing acute issues that derive from abandonment of buildings or solid waste accumulation; such as safety of children exploring derelict properties, or prevention of rat infestations.

8) Establish a local ordinance to address issues of public health, safety, and welfare. Develop municipal language and paid positions to track, implement, and enforce ordinance . If pursued, the Planning Commission has acknowledged that this would change the workload of the municipality and violations would need to be evident in order for penalties and enforcement to be handed effectively.

## C.Large Landowner Survey

### Sheffield Planning Commission

#### **Results of the Large Landowner Survey**

(Results from the seven largest landowners in Sheffield)

1. Do you plan on maintaining your ownership as long as possible?
  - Yes-6
  - No-
  - Comments: “Doing it through division to siblings”
2. Do you want to see the land developed or subdivided for development?
  - Yes-
  - No- 6
3. Have you planned for the future of your land?
  - Yes- 4
  - No- 2
  - Comments: “Working on it;” “Working on it”
4. Do you need assistance with intergenerational change?
  - Yes- 3
  - No- 3
  - Comments: “Sees a need for this”; “Would be interested”; Would be interested in information;
5. Opinions on the future of Sheffield?
  - “Just asking the town to provide leadership for active forest management and renewable opportunities. Currently there are many groups and organizations that are trying to stop forest management and the traditional practices that come along with living in a rural community.”
  - Concerned about development...
  - “I hope Sheffield continues to be supportive towards sustainable energy, agriculture and forestry.”
  - Worried about the appearance, but also the ability of the owners to deal with it.
  - Would like to see more agriculture practiced- working on Silveopasture
  - Glad Sheffield has a plan.

## D.Town of Sheffield Class IV Highway Policy

### ***Purpose***

The purpose of this policy is to define the standards by which the Town will maintain its class 4 highways and to set reasonable expectations for the use of those highways.

***Definitions:***

“Highway” shall mean a public road or highway that is Class 1, 2, 3 or 4 for the purposes of receiving state aid.

Class 1, 2 and 3 highways are defined for the purpose of receiving state aid and are passable with a pleasure vehicle on a year-round basis. “Class 4 Highway” are all other highways not falling under definitions of Class 1, 2 or 3 highways.

“Selectboard” shall mean the Selectboard of the Town of Sheffield.

“Town” shall mean the Town of Sheffield.

“Right of Way Permit” or “Permit” shall mean a permit authorization by the Selectboard for access to a Town highway pursuant to T19 VSA 1111.

***Maintenance by the Town***

The Town shall not provide summer maintenance of Class 4 highways except regarding structures. The town shall keep the roadway passable in the summer months on roads labeled “graded and drained” on the State of Vermont Sheffield highway map when staff and financial resources allow.

The Town shall not provide any winter maintenance on Class 4 highways. Plowing by private parties shall only be allowed with an advanced permit agreed to by the selectboard. Any winter plowing granted by the selectboard to parties other than the municipality shall not nullify snowmobiling privileges under T23 VSA 3206(b)(2)

***Maintenance and Right of Way access of Class 4 Highway.***

Any person wishing to perform, or arrange for the repair, maintenance, improvement, restoration, or installation on a Class 4 highway may do so only after receiving authorization from the Town Selectboard.

All work within the highway right or way shall be in conformance with current Town highway specifications and the highway shall be left in as good as or better condition than when the permission was granted. In addition, the Selectboard may attached any or all the following conditions to the permission:

1. Posting of a surety bond or damage deposit with the Town in an amount that reflects reasonable estimates of repairs that may be necessary in the event of the noncompliance with the provisions of the Policy, or the condition issued for the project;
2. Supervision by the Road Commissioner or Highway Foreperson; and
3. Any other reasonable conditions as deemed necessary.

By requesting permission to work in the right of way the applicant agrees to bear all costs associated with the work on the highway, that all the requirements for signage, work safety and public safety required by law or reasonable prudence will be adhered to in connection with the work done. The applicant also agrees that the applicant and the applicant’s agents shall not hold the Town responsible for any claims or injuries which may arise out of the work and agrees to indemnify and hold the Town harmless against legal liability for any and all damages, loss or claim associated with the work.



### **Control**

The selectboard shall exercise control of Class 4 highways to ensure their integrity as public rights of way by means of which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Establishment of vehicle weight limits;
2. Prohibition or restriction of use by motorized vehicles;
3. imposition of requirements for temporary permit for heavy equipment access, which may include a stipulation that any highway damage will be repaired by or at the expense of the user, or posting or a bond or other security to guarantee that repairs are made; either or both of which may be required as a condition of any permits;
4. establishment of speed limits.

### **Change in classification**

It is the policy of the Selectboard to discourage the reclassification and/or upgrading of Class 4 highways. However, upon receipt of a petition filed pursuant to T19 VSA 708, the Selectboard will consider a request to alter, reclassify or discontinue a Class 4 highway.

Reclassification or discontinuance will be done in accordance with T19 VSA 708-717. A decision to alter, reclassify or discontinue a Class 4 highway will only be made in situations where the Selectboard determines that the public good, necessity, safety and convenience of inhabitants of the Town require such actions.

The Selectboard may require that the cost of upgrading a Class 4 highway to a Class 3 highway will be borne by those seeking the change in classification. Pursuant to T19 VSA 7089(b), a Class 4 highway need not be reclassified to Class 3 merely because there exists within the Town one or more Class 3 highways with characteristics similar to the Class 4 highway.

### **Highway Closure**

No Class 4 or other highway of any class may be intentionally closed by a gate, or traffic otherwise impeded by other obstructions. T19 VSA 1102, 1111(b). The Selectboard may grant permission to an adjoining landowner to enclose pent roads by erecting stiles, unlocked gates, and bars in the places designated. T19 VSA 304(a)(5), 1105. The Selectboard may restrict the use of a highway in accordance with T19 VSA 1110 and T24 VSA 2291(4).

### **Compliance with Other Regulations**

This policy is intended to supplement state law and local ordinances. All other ordinances and policies adopted by the Town shall remain in full force and effect.

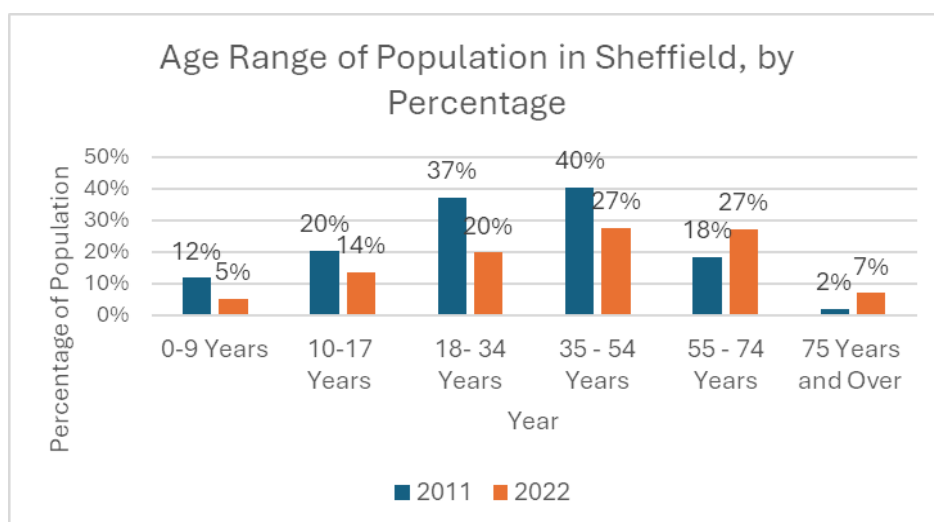
Approved on October 2, 2024;

## **E.Expanded Community Profile**

*Note: The following data are provided by the Decennial US Census, the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, and locally gathered data by the Sheffield Planning Commission. The data are used as a way to inform decision making through notable changes in community demographics. Because of the rural scale and population of the town and region, data from the ACS does have a wider margin of error and therefore should only be taken to*

*address trends and not literal counts. To mitigate this margin of error, percentages are used to display trends.*

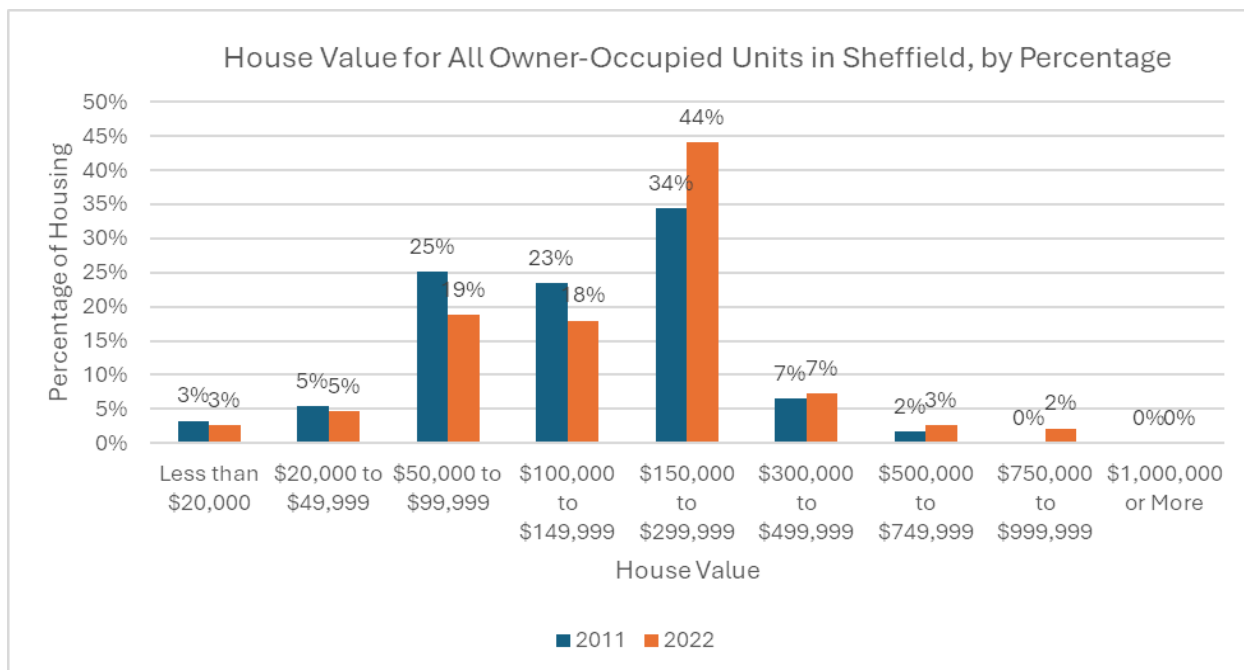
Age demographics have trended toward older age range categories. While the median age has remained at 48 in an 11-year span, the town has seen a 16% increase in residents aged 55 and older. Declining populations between 18-34 and 35-54 indicates child populations would also decline. This indicates a general decrease in buying interest in Sheffield housing, as younger generations are not taking advantage of more affordable housing prices. Both indicators also suggest working families are not moving in to town. Of the occupied housing units, roughly 31% of homes in 2022 are families with children under 18. This is slightly up from the 26% of households in 2011, but not a significant change.



## Housing

Sheffield median house value is approximately 25% lower than the median house value for Caledonia County, creating a level of affordability in comparison to the local region.

2022 Median House Value for Owner-Occupied Housing	
Sheffield	\$158,000
Caledonia County	\$197,700
Northeast Kingdom	\$191,706



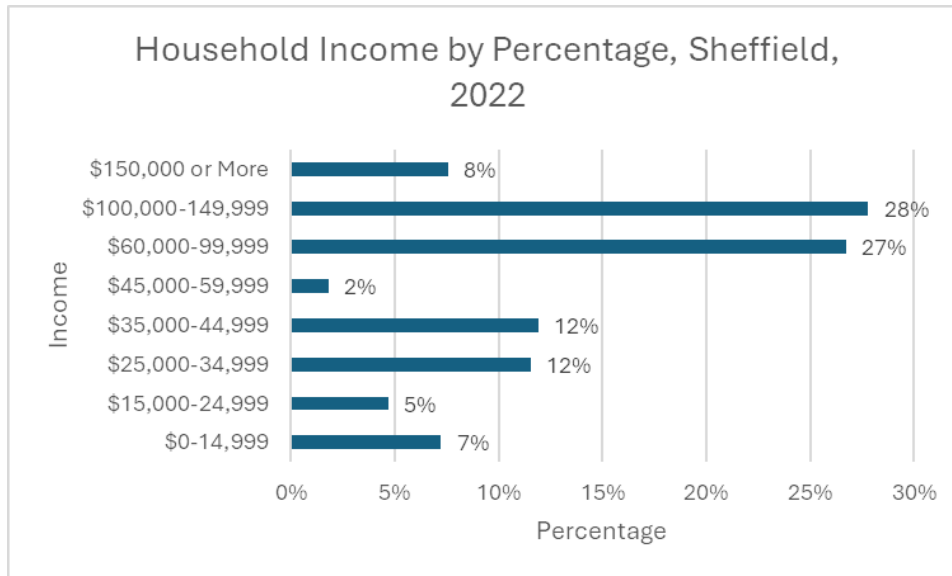
According to ACS data, Sheffield is experiencing an increase in housing value over \$150,000. Most house value lies within the range of affordability for families, with the largest increase being represented in the \$100k-\$300k range. This mix of affordability is likely capitalized by people working in Lyndon, St. Johnsbury, and Newport, who commute from the more rural and affordable Sheffield. However, roughly 27% of owner-occupied housing in Sheffield is valued at less than \$100,000, highlighting a depressed housing stock.

## Income

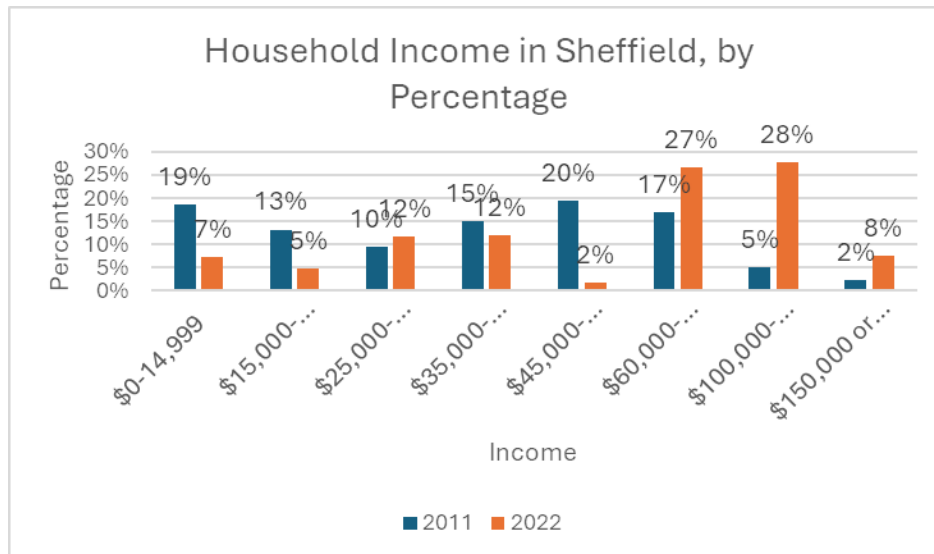
Median Household Income	2011	2022
Sheffield	\$38,750	\$69,750
Caledonia County	\$44,433	\$62,964
Northeast Kingdom	\$41,790	\$61,874

While house values have not changed drastically in the past decade, household income has almost doubled in Sheffield and has surpassed the median household income for the county.

In Sheffield, 62% of the households have an incomes above \$60,000. However, 27% of households have incomes below \$40,000, and 12% below \$20,000. Roughly 25-30% of households receive retirement benefits and/or social security and about 75% of households receive earnings. The town has a 98.5% employment rate. By and large, the disparity between higher and lower incomes for residents with earnings creates a divergence of needs and lifestyles among the community.

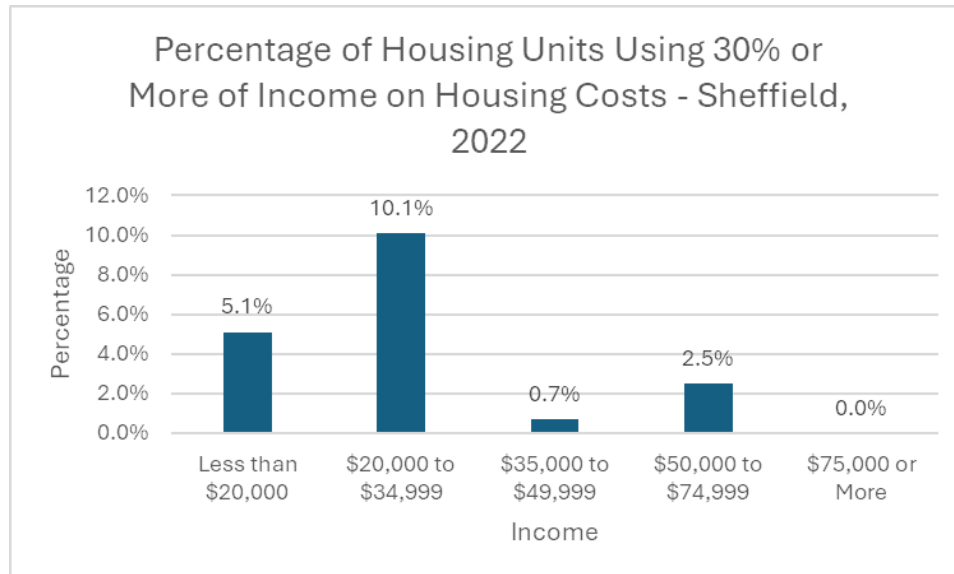


By proportion, the number of households with incomes above \$60,000 a year have increased 39%, while the number of households with less than \$25,000 a year has decreased 20%. This is an indicator of greater residential stability with people who can invest in their properties and community. This also represents a demographic change from who has chosen to live in Sheffield over the past decade.



Those who do earn under \$35,000 as a household represent most residents that are cost-burdened in Sheffield.



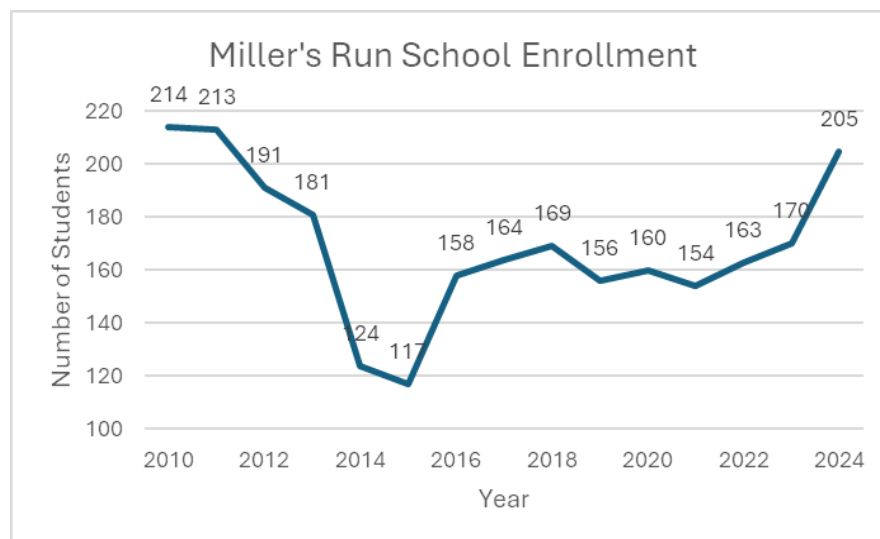


Additionally, roughly 10% of the community is cost-burdened yet owns a home without a mortgage, compared to 4% of the community that is cost-burdened with a homeowner mortgage. This disparity highlights acute needs of long-standing homeowners with low income in contrast to the 80% demographic of the community that spends less than 30% of their income on housing costs.

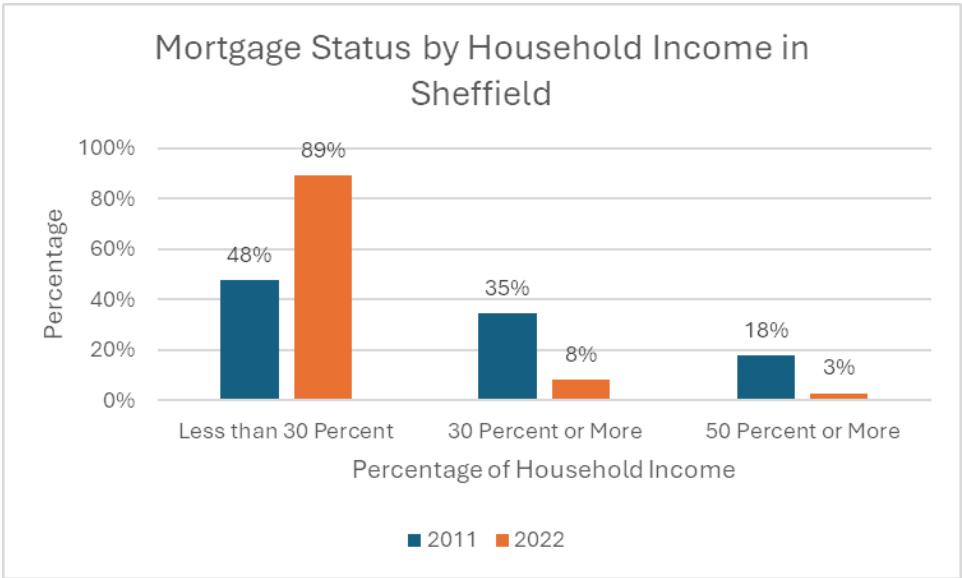
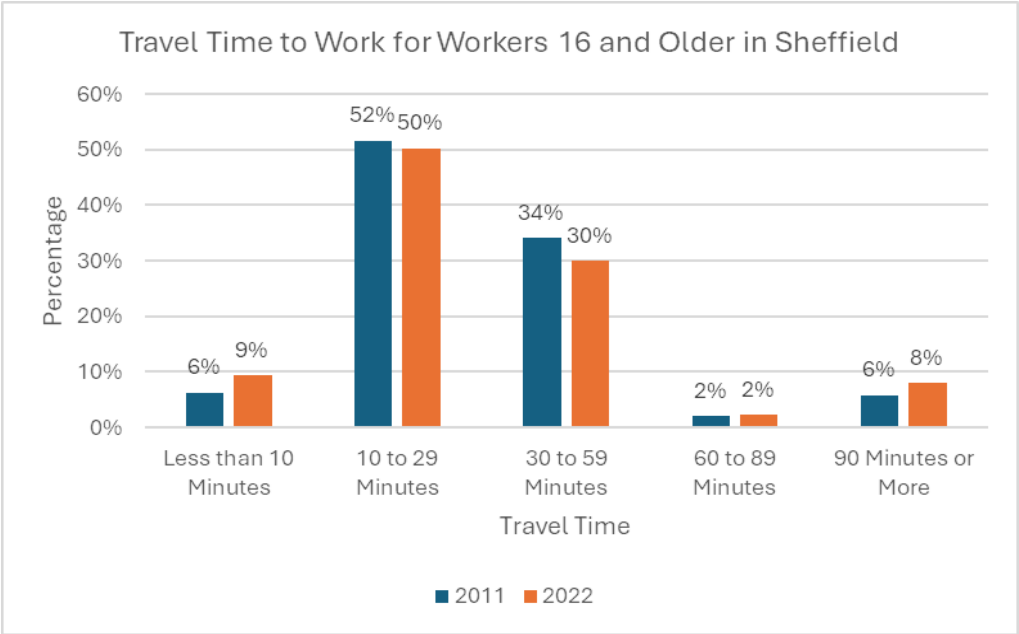
## Education & Employment

Despite a new and attractive Miller's Run school, Sheffield's student enrollment has remained stagnant over the years, but is now recovering after a sizable dip in the past decade. Miller's Run student enrollment estimates—not including students maturing to high school—are difficult to pin down. Apparently, no one in either the old or the new school system has tabulated an assessment of Sheffield school population. Numbers available from the KESD always combine Sheffield and Wheelock.

Miller's Run School estimates approximately a little over 50% of enrollment is from Sheffield.



A 2022 American Community Survey estimates roughly 20% of the town’s population age three and over are enrolled in school of some sort. Roughly 88% of the population have their high school equivalency, about 18% achieving a bachelor’s degree or higher. The highest percentage of occupations reside in Education, Health Care, Manufacturing, and Retail.



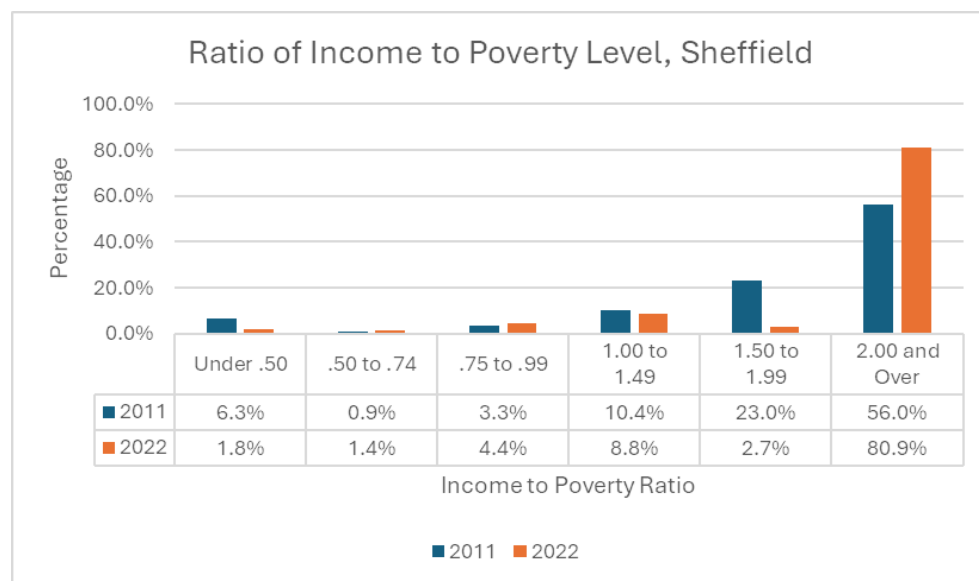
## Economic Stability

Travel time to work has remained relatively consistent over the past decade. These travel times represent distances to regional job centers of Lyndon, St. Johnsbury, and Newport, with some potentially travelling as far as Montpelier and Burlington areas. Those who work from home increased from 3.6% to 10.5%

Sheffield's increased median income and the anticipated stability and quality of life that comes with that is supported by a near two-fold increase in homeowners with mortgages paying less than 30% of their income on their housing costs. Occupied housing units with mortgages have decreased by about 26%. This suggests that those who are invested in mortgages can afford them and less people overall are investing in new mortgages. Roughly 54% of the household population of an owner-occupied house own their home without a mortgage.

Despite this stability, roughly 10% of the population of children under 18 live in poverty, according to 2022 ACS. This data is supported by the Vermont Department of Health's [Social Vulnerability Index \(SVI\)](#). Census tract 9570, which encompasses Sheffield, Sutton, Newark, Wheelock, Stannard, and Walden, has a 10% population living in poverty. Overall, the SVI for the census tract is zero, or low. Approximately 5% of families receive an income below poverty level.

Lastly, there has been approximately a 25% increase of residents whose income-to-poverty ratio is 2.0 or over, further suggesting that a number of residents in Sheffield have experienced increased financial security and investment. Roughly 7.6% of the population is considered [“doing poorly”](#), meaning this portion of the community's income is at or below the [2020 Poverty Level](#).



## F. Road Names and Numbers

### Town of Sheffield

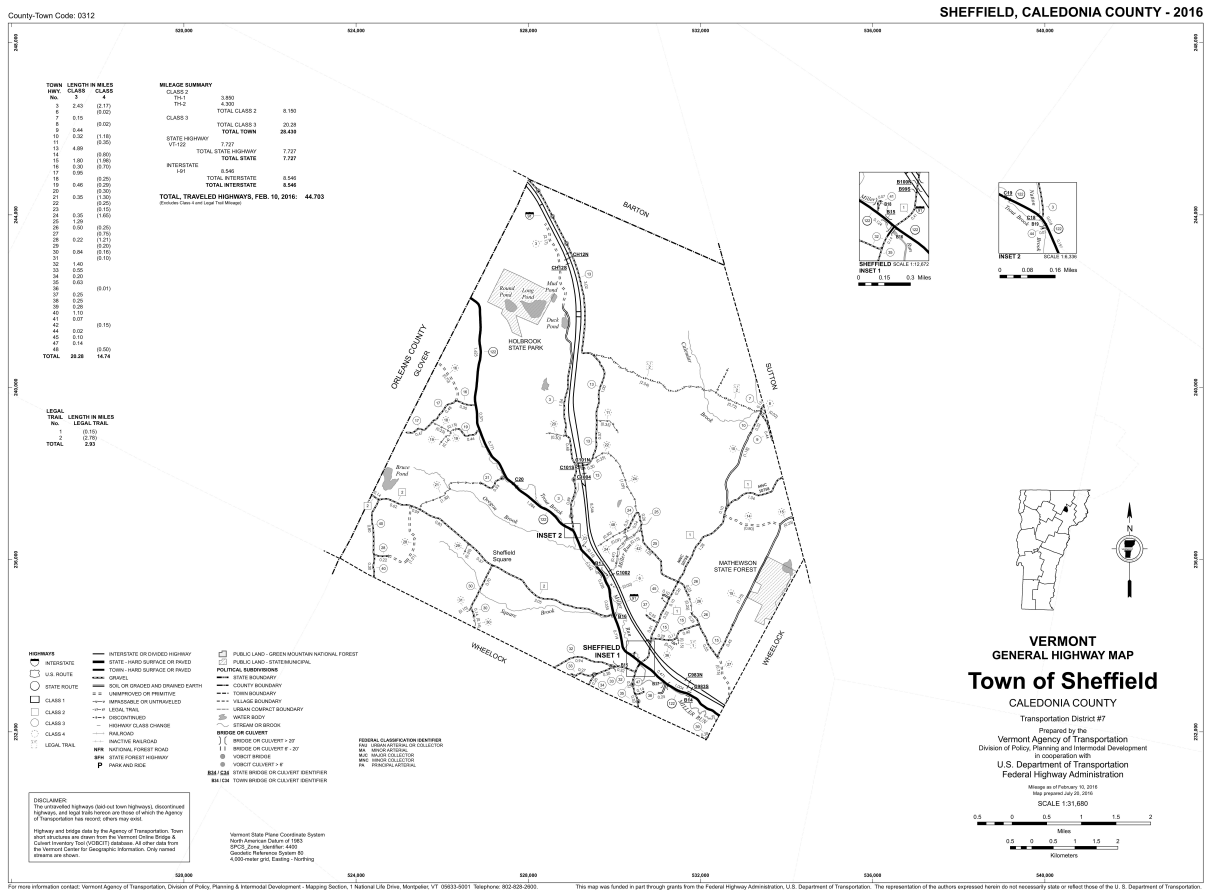
#### Road Numbers and Names Legend

<u>Town Highway #</u>	<u>911 Name</u>
1.	Berry Hill Road
2.	Sheffield Square Road
3.	Old Duck Pond Road
6.	Whittier Road
7.	King George Road
8.	Queen Elizabeth Lane
9.	Union House Road
10.	Hardscrabble Mountain Road
11.	TH 11
13.	New Duck Pond Road
14.	Gold Mine Road
15.	Nelson Hill Road-Town Farm Road
16.	Town Highway 16
17.	Town Highway 16
18.	TH 18
19.	Dwyer Road
20.	TH 20
21.	Oregon Brook Road
22.	TH 22
23.	TH 23
24.	Drake Place Road
25.	Blake Pond Road
26.	Maple Row- Ott Road
27.	Mosher Road
28.	Holbrooks Road
29.	TH 29
30.	Dunn Mountain Road- Gilman Field Rd
31.	Hams Camp Road
32.	Keniston Hill Road
33.	Dane Road
34.	TH 34
35.	Chesley Hill Road
36.	TH 36
37.	Gayland Drive
38.	Dexter Cemetery Road
39.	TH 39
40.	Quarry Road



- 41. Sheldon Farm Road
- 42. TH 42
- 44. Legal Trail 44
- 45. Phillips Road
- 47. TH 47
- 48. TH 48
- LT2 Dareios Road

## G. VTRANS General Highway Map



## H. Solid Waste and Abandoned Buildings Solutions List

### **Solid Waste and Abandoned Building Solutions Lists**

**List resources like recycling basics, local haulers and trash sites, and local composting solutions**

**Larger promotion of Green Up Day**

**Local Street Roundups to promote civic pride**

**Establish Clean-Up Committee**

**Establish a Trash Bond to assist local clean up**

**Selectboard and Health Officer issue a health order to address a chemical, biological, and/or physical issue.**

**Establish a detailed program to put a municipal lien on properties for lack of compliance or repeat offender**

**Establish local ordinance to address issues of public health, safety, and welfare. Develop municipal language and paid positions to track, implement, and enforce**