

Halifax Planning Commission Report on the Town Plan Update

August 24, 2026

This report is in accordance with 24 VSA § 4384(c), which states: *“When considering an amendment to a plan, the Planning Commission shall prepare a written report on the proposal. The report shall address the extent to which the plan, as amended, is consistent with the goals established in § 4302 of this title.”*

The last revision of the Halifax Town Plan was completed in 2019. The proposed 2027 Halifax Town Plan is an update from this prior plan. The Planning Commission has reviewed all aspects of the plan and made updates to reflect the changes in our community. The Planning Commission believes this update makes the plan more compatible with all the Vermont Planning goals listed in 24 VSA § 4302, as described in more detail below:

Goal 1. To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.

The plan encourages compact settlement patterns within the Village District and incorporates two other land use districts (Conservation and Rural Residential) to preserve undeveloped land, natural resources, and agricultural character while limiting extended development in outlying areas.

Goal 2. To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.

The plan encourages cottage industries, home-based work and entrepreneurial ventures that revitalize Halifax’s rural character and have minimal impact on the community’s environment and infrastructure. The plan notes the recent increased cell phone and internet access and continues to strive toward improved service to support local business and the home workforce.

Goal 3. To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.

Halifax children can attend the Halifax Elementary School grades K-8. Halifax students attend secondary (9-12) education at various approved regional public and private secondary schools in Vermont and Massachusetts. Vocational and educational opportunities for Halifax residents shall be investigated by the selectboard.

Goal 4. To provide for safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.

The Town Plan promotes a safe well maintained road network while retaining the rural character of local roads. Halifax does not have public transit except some limited service

through Southern Vermont Transit through MOOvers.

Goal 5. To identify, protect and preserve important natural and historic features of the Vermont landscape, including significant natural and fragile areas; outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands and wetlands; significant scenic roads, waterways and views; important historic structures, sites or districts, archeological sites and archeologically sensitive areas.

The plan's Land Use chapter has strong policies protecting these features. The Scenic Resources chapter encourages protection of the Green River Valley and all land lying between the East branch of the North River and Route 112. A new addition adopting Dark Skies practices are also recommended to protect the nighttime viewing of the stars, planets, and other celestial bodies. Natural areas such as the Halifax Gorge, Jolly Mountain and Deer Park Pond are called out with policies and recommendations to protect and preserve.

Goal 6. To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, forests and other natural resources.

This goal is addressed through policies in the Natural Resource Use and Conservation section of the plan establishing protective measures for groundwater, surface waters, air quality, unfragmented forest blocks and wildlife corridors.

Goal 7. To make efficient use of energy, provide for the development of renewable energy resources, and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

The plan encourages residential and community solar and the use of locally obtainable resources such as wood. Solid waste management efforts offer Halifax opportunities to conserve energy through ongoing recycling operations. The plans policies encourage development suitable for maximum energy efficiency such as southern orientation and slope, protective wind barriers and energy efficient construction. Two of the main goals of the Town Plan are to promote energy efficiency and are followed up in the Energy recommendations.

Goal 8. To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors.

The town's topography and land use patterns have created a network of logging roads, cellar holes, and agricultural land that function as the town's primary recreational assets. Halifax offers low impact non-motorized recreational opportunities across public and private land on the 9.21 miles of town trails. The plan seeks to expand possible connections between trails, nature preserves, and areas open to the landowners and residents of Halifax.

Goal 9. To encourage and strengthen agriculture and forest industries.

The plan recognizes that Halifax's agricultural lands are valuable, irreplaceable natural resources and supports the utilization of them to ensure a viable agricultural community. Employment opportunities in the forests are excellent. The Forest resource policies and

recommendations ensure that Halifax's forests remain a renewable resource.

Goal 10. To provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.

While earth and mineral extraction could economically benefit the town and region, the plan addresses the potential impacts of the removal of such resources be regulated and requires a site rehabilitation/restoration plan.

Goal 11. To ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters.

The Housing Chapter addresses these challenges through low interest loans to low- and moderate-income homeowners, encouragement of Cluster housing, Accessory Dwelling Units and the recommendation to monitor the Zoning Bylaws to ensure that existing provisions enhance affordable housing.

Goal 12. To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.

The Community Facilities and Services chapter identifies current Town Government services, Emergency Planning, Police and Fire protection and public facilities in Meeting Places.

Goal 13. To ensure the availability of safe and affordable childcare and to integrate childcare issues into the planning process, including childcare financing, infrastructure, business assistance for childcare providers and childcare work force development.

The plan supports town and regional efforts to address the availability and affordability of quality childcare when considering new development.

Goal 14. To encourage flood resilient communities.

The Flood Resilience Policies and Strategy Recommendations Chapters incorporate the protection of floodplains, river corridors and upland forested areas that moderate flooding and fluvial erosion with the town's Flood Hazard Area Regulations and Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Goal 15. To equitably distribute environmental benefits and burdens as described in 3 V.S.A. Chapter 72.

In accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4302 (Goal #15) Halifax integrates Environmental Justice principals throughout the Town Plan to ensure fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. The Plan seeks to maximize opportunities for all residents to participate in the public planning processes and ensures that no geographic area or group bears a disproportionate share of environmental burdens.