



**GEORGIA**  
VERMONT

# TOWN OF GEORGIA, VERMONT

## 2024 TOWN PLAN



**PREPARED BY:**

Town of Georgia Planning Commission

**ADOPTED BY:**

Town of Georgia VT Selectboard [DATE]

**DECEMBER 19, 2024**

**VERSION 3.0 - SELECTBOARD REVIEW**



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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### TOWN SELECTBOARD

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### SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to Georgia Fire & Rescue for hosting many of our community meetings, Town Administrator Cheryl Letourneau, Northwest Regional Planning Commission, as well as the town staff and volunteers whose assistance was instrumental in helping to organize this planning effort.

### PLANNING SUPPORT PROVIDED BY:



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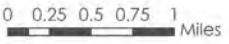
# Town of Georgia

## Town Plan Update

### 2023 Orthoimagery



- Tax Parcels
- Surface Water
- New England Central Railroad



Map is for conceptual planning purposes only



Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads, Vermont Center for Geographic Information; Imagery: USDA NAIP, 2023



# PART I

## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose of the Town Plan

This plan was developed to assist Town Officials, residents, and persons contemplating actions involving land use and development in the Town of Georgia. It provides a comprehensive framework and statement of policies, goals and implementation strategies from which to make decisions regarding land use, economic development, energy, provision of services and facilities, resource use and conservation (including historic, scenic, cultural, and natural resources), and public health, safety and welfare.

The Georgia Town Plan also serves as the legal basis for the adoption of local land use regulations, capital budget programs, and impact fee ordinances. By statute, plans must be readopted every eight years or they expire.

It is important to note the legal link between the plan and other regulations the Town may adopt. The policies, goals and implementation strategies found herein should serve as a guide for decision making by the appropriate branches of government as well as the private sector. The plan policies give definition and meaning to the regulations and should be used in concert with one another in order to be effective in directing growth and development in desirable ways. A good plan is one that is used by both the public and private sector to make reasonable decisions concerning development and land use for the overall benefit of the citizens residing in the Town.

This plan updates a plan adopted on January 9th, 2017. This 2024 plan has been developed by the Georgia Planning Commission with assistance from a consulting planner, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and with input from other Town

boards, municipal offices, private citizens and the Town Administrator. The plan has been developed to conform to current state statutes, including 24 VSA Chapter 117.

As part of the 2024 plan update, the Planning Commission sought to further engage the public in an open discussion to identify what issues were most important.

This Town Plan included considerable public involvement and effort. Demographic and economic data from the U.S. Census 2020 Decennial Census as well as the more recent American Community Survey was utilized, as well as a review of past Town reports.

The Town Plan is given consideration in state agency planning decisions, state and federal regulatory schemes, such as Act 250 Hearings, Agency of Transportation Hearings, and Public Service Board Hearings. The Planning Commission and Selectboard are statutory parties in any Act 250 Hearing involving Georgia and conformance with Plan Policies is one method of participating in those hearings.

A less tangible, but much desired, goal of this Town Plan is to serve as a focus for community action and governmental action. There is much that citizens can do for the benefit of themselves and the town by working towards an identified common goal. Georgia has many excellent examples of this, including the Historical Society, the Community Events Committee, the Solid Waste Committee, the South Georgia Fire District, and the Conservation Commission, to name a few. These and other groups continue to work to make Georgia a better place to live.



Planning is a continuing and dynamic process, the purpose of which is to prepare for the future by understanding where we came from, how we got there, where we want to go from here, and how that can be best accomplished. The process involves developing a “community vision.” This plan is an attempt to provide that vision for the town over the next five years and beyond. As stated in previous plans, “A community which plans has decided to exercise some choice over its future. It rejects the idea that the undesirable consequences of growth are inevitable.”

Georgia took the first steps toward planning over fifty years ago when it adopted zoning in 1967. The first town plan was adopted in 1972 and was updated in 1986, 1995, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2017. This plan will be another step in the continuing process of promoting a desirable community setting while protecting and improving environmental quality.

Another statement from previous plans is as true

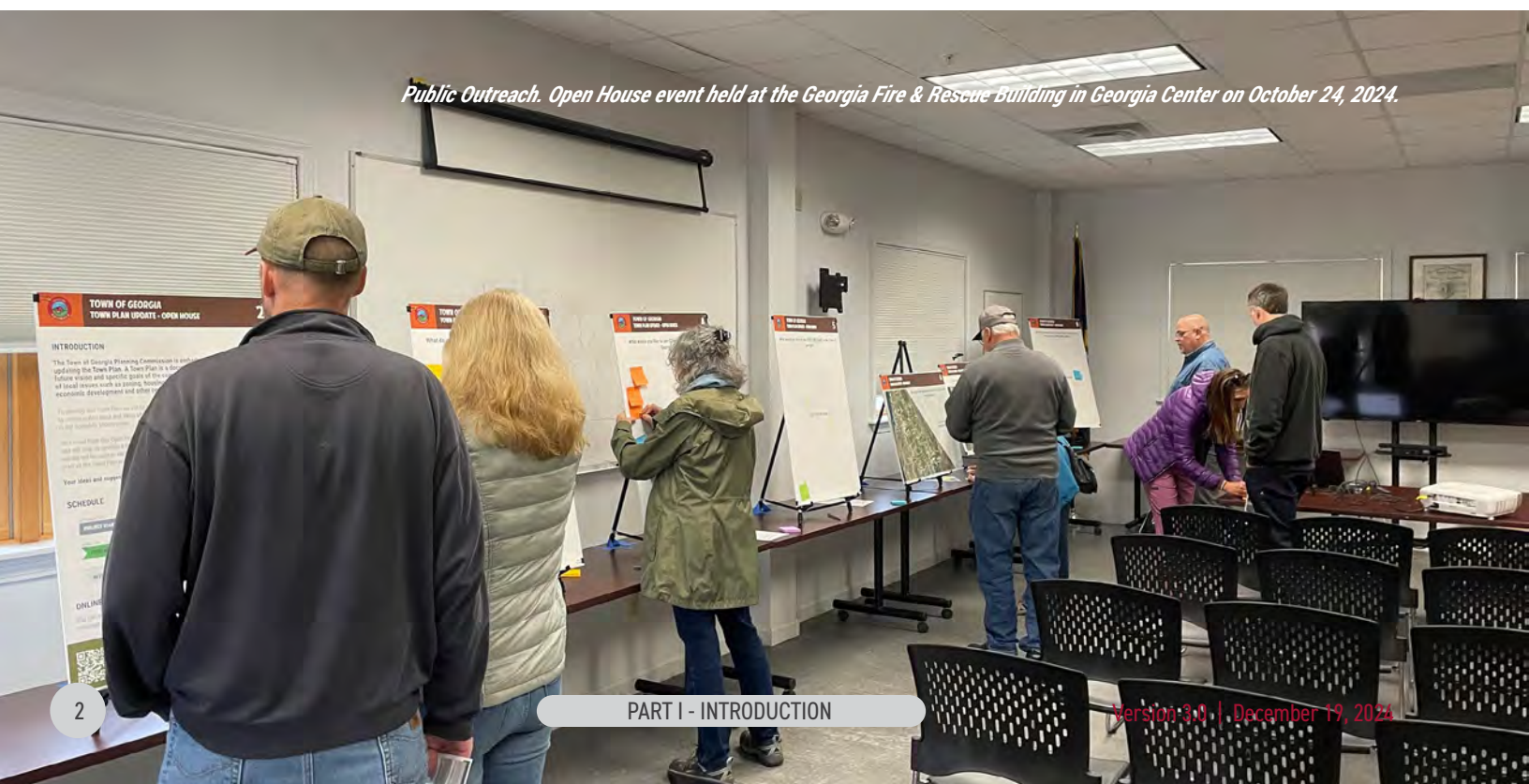
today as when it was written and sums up the purpose of this plan: “Changes are coming and at an increasing rate. The problems posed by these pressures must be addressed by comprehensive forethought to ensure that future decisions will provide long term solutions rather than stop gap measures. Since communities exist primarily for the health and enjoyment of those who live in them, it follows that the nature, location, and timing of any future development should be determined by the people of Georgia rather than left solely to chance or the decisions of developers. The intent is not to eliminate any existing land uses or to stop all future development, but to channel the desired growth to appropriate locations within the Town.”

*“A community which plans has decided to exercise some choice over its future. It rejects the idea that the undesirable consequences of growth are inevitable.”*

*~ Former Town Plan*

While municipal planning can lead to many positive actions and benefits to the community, it must also be recognized that there are external factors, over which we have little control, which will influence our community. The national economy, tax policy, federal and state regulation or

*Public Outreach. Open House event held at the Georgia Fire & Rescue Building in Georgia Center on October 24, 2024.*





legislation, natural disasters, the weather, dairy prices and the real estate market are a few factors that can have major impacts on all of us. No plan is perfect nor can anyone anticipate all the factors affecting us as individuals or as a community. Not all of the goals, policies and implementation strategies outlined in this plan will be achieved. So why plan at all? If only a few of the goals are met and the result is that we leave our community a better place for our children, then, the efforts will have been worth it.

## Statement of Authorization

The Georgia Town Plan has been prepared in accordance with and under the authority of Title 24, Chapter 117 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated (V.S.A.) which will henceforth be referred to in this document as “the Act.” As such, the provisions of the Act are hereby incorporated by reference into this Town Plan and the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations and may be used by the Planning Commission to further define and clarify any policies, goals, implementation strategies, powers and duties expressed herein. This Act is also known as the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act.

## The Planning Commission

This Town Plan update was overseen and guided by the Georgia Planning Commission. In July of 2023 the Planning Commission advertised a Request for Proposals (RFP) to planning consultants who could assist the town with the update. A consultant was selected in August, and work began in September of that year. From that point forward, the Planning Commission met regularly once a month to coordinate with the consultant, provide input and review materials as part of the update, including review of the draft and final plans as they were developed.

## The Planning Process

The process of identifying updates for the plan began with an effort to reach out to the public to inform them that this planning effort was taking place, and gather public comment about the future needs and vision of the town. From the beginning, a dedicated webpage was created for the town plan update which provided information about the process, schedule, meeting announcements, and provided access to draft materials, notes and videos. The first public event which was held was an afternoon Open House with interactive display boards inviting people to share their ideas and concerns about the future, followed by a presentation and discussion period. The preliminary input collected at this event was used to help identify and craft questions for an upcoming community survey which would reach a much larger audience.

The survey which followed was instrumental in gathering public input on the plan across a variety of topics known to be of importance to local residents. The results of this survey were detailed in a Survey Report (*see appendix*) and then presented in a public meeting, where discussion included some preliminary ideas for plan recommendations. Additional outreach was also arranged with a display table at the 2024 Town Meeting Day to provide more opportunity for people to be informed about the update and invite their comments.

Based on these initial outreach steps, the Planning Commission began a review of the existing plan to identify information and ideas which should be carried forward, as well as new ideas which should be added to the plan. Mapping information and existing conditions data was updated, and the text of the draft Town Plan was developed over the spring of 2024.

A first draft of the plan was made available for public review in July of 2024. A public meeting and presentation was held soon after at the Georgia Fire & Rescue meeting room to review and discuss the document and collect initial public feedback. This



meeting was also broadcast on Zoom, and recorded so that people who were not able to attend in person or online would still have an opportunity to see the discussion. A one week public comment period was provided after the meeting where people could submit comments and suggestions on the draft document to the Planning Commission through the online comment form.

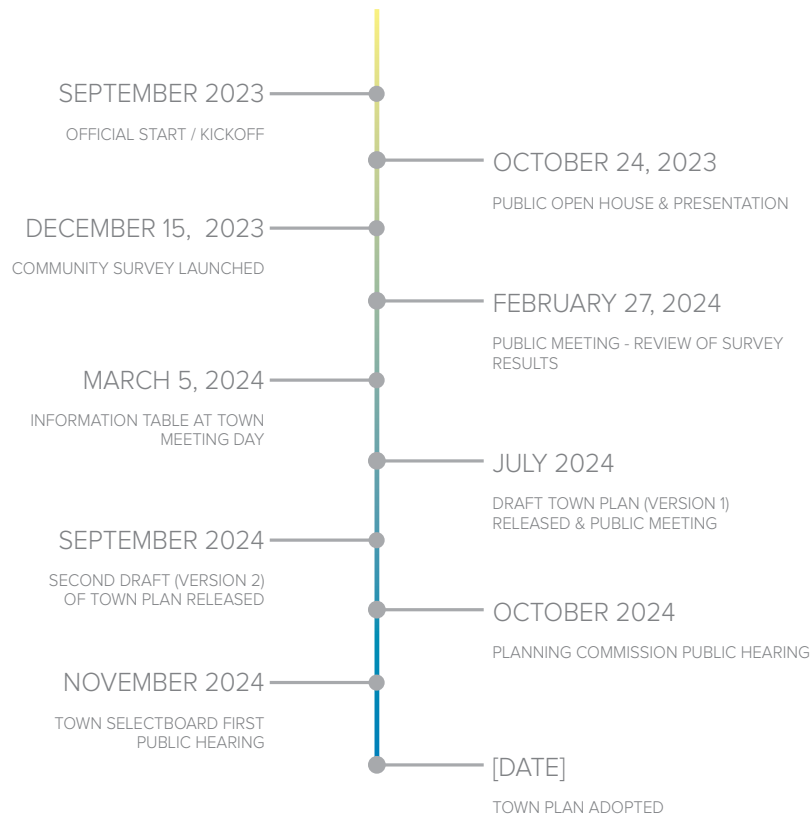
Based on the public comments on the initial draft plan, a revised Town Plan was then developed for review and consideration in the fall of 2024. This document was distributed for review in advance of a public hearing by the Planning Commission, followed

by two public hearings by the Selectboard. *[insert new information as process continues]*

Throughout this process, the public could review materials on the project webpage, and submit comments through an online comment form. Additional information about this process, and the feedback collected as part of the outreach, is provided in Part II - Issues & Opportunities.

The final Town Plan was adopted in *[date]*.

### TIMELINE OF TOWN PLAN UPDATE





# PART II GEORGIA TODAY

## The Community Setting

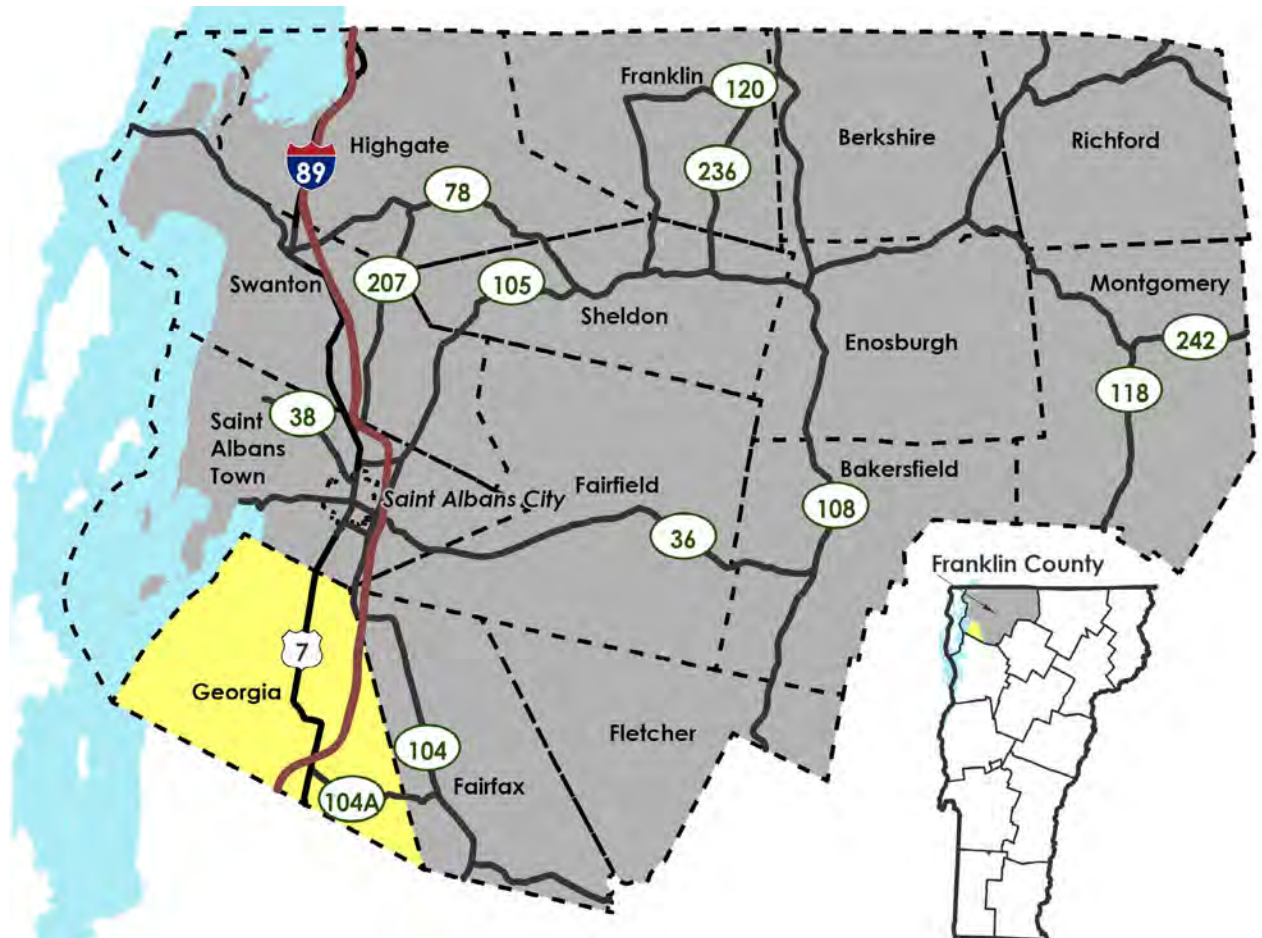
### Location and Boundaries

Georgia is located in the southwest corner of Franklin County and borders the Chittenden County towns of Milton and Westford to the south, the Franklin County towns of Fairfax to the east, St. Albans and Fairfield to the north and Lake Champlain to the west. Georgia has over seven miles of shoreline along Lake Champlain and part of its border with Milton bisects Lake Arrowhead.

The Town of Georgia has an area of approximately 45 square miles, including about 5.9 square miles of water in Lake Champlain. Excluding the water, the town is similar in size to the average Vermont town of around 39 square miles.

The Town is characterized by a narrow shoreline, a broad, relatively flat plain, the foothills of the Green Mountains, the Lamoille River and tributaries, as well as various other smaller streams, tributaries and wetlands. The Town is roughly half open land and half forested, with much of the open land devoted to agriculture.

Georgia’s long boundary with Lake Champlain, it’s relatively flat plain, and foothills of the Green Mountains make it a diverse and beautiful town.



MAP 2.1 - Location Map

## History

Georgia is a town with a lot of history, of which much of that has been well documented and preserved. The Georgia Historical Society has a vast collection of photos, documents, diaries, family genealogies, town histories and other memorabilia. There 17 cemeteries in Georgia, many with gravestones that mark burial sites of our very first settlers. The Town of Georgia has sent its citizens to aid in the war effort in every conflict since the Civil War. A few of the highlights of our history reflecting the major changes in our community are collected below.

**1763** - Georgia chartered by the first royal Governor of New Hampshire, Benning Wentworth.

**1785** - Families of William Farrand and Andrew Van Guilder the first to winter in Georgia.

**1788** - Georgia organized on March 31, 1788 at the first town meeting as part of Chittenden County.

**1791** - Vermont becomes a state. Population of Georgia: 340.

**1792** - Georgia becomes part of Franklin County.

**1800** - Construction of a “meeting house” was started.

**1802** - The Old White Meeting House/Church / School was dedicated and it served the town as a meeting house, school, town hall and center of activities until it was destroyed by fire on October 2, 1952.

**1805** - First post office in Georgia opened. Five more opened in town, but later all closed. One common complaint of Georgia residents is not having our own town post office today.

**1812** - Smugglers drove beef cattle into Canada to supply the British Army, but the men of Georgia sided with the customs officers and put up such a courageous fight that the smuggling traffic was stopped. The smugglers called Georgia “Hells Gate.”

**1850** - Population of Georgia: 2,686.

**1850** - The Central Vermont Railroad was completed through Georgia. The High Bridge over the Lamoille River is the highest railroad bridge in Vermont; it is also the most photographed railroad bridge.

**1881** - Telephone lines extended to Georgia

**1896** - Georgia established a public library.

**1910** - Population of Georgia 1,090.

**1928** - Route 7 paved through Georgia.

**1937** - Arrowhead Lake was created.

**1952** - The Georgia Fire Department was organized.

**1959** - Consolidated school opened replacing the former one room schools (there had been 12).

**1967** - First Zoning Regulations were approved by voters.

**1968** - Interstate 89 was built through Georgia.

**1973** - Land was purchased for a town beach, which formally opened in 1977.

**1977** - Town garage and fire station built on Plains Rd.

**1989** - Town Municipal Office building built.

**1992** - Georgia First Response established.

**1998** - Georgia Public Library relocates to the former Northwest Regional Library building on Route 7.

**2011** - Georgia Fire and Rescue building constructed on Rt 7.

**2022** - Town Public Works building constructed on Plains Rd.





## Existing Facilities & Services

### Town Offices

All town administrative functions continue to be provided at the Town Offices in Georgia Center, which was remodeled in 2010. This facility includes the offices of the Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Treasurer, Administrator, Zoning Administrator, Assessor, a meeting room used by the boards and commissions, and two vaults. The town has contracted services for the Assessor by Hinman Assessments, LLC for the past several years.

The building is utilized by the Selectboard, Planning Commission, Development Review Board, Conservation Commission, Community Events Committee, as well as the Boards of Civil Authority and Abatement. The facility is also utilized to support other important functions such as the First Constable, Delinquent Tax Collector, **Auditors**, Animal Control Officer, and Health Officer.

### Highway Department

The Georgia Highway Department is responsible for maintaining all town roads, bridges, culverts and drainage systems. It currently operates out of a new facility off of Plains Road, and also utilizes the old Town Garage for storage as well as the sand and salt shed.

The department has 5 full-time employees and 1 seasonal employee, overseen by the Public Works Director. Currently one of those positions is filled by the Public Works Director, but as that job takes on more and more duties, there may be a need to hire another highway worker. The Highway Department not only maintains roads, culverts, bridges and ditches, but they mow all the town properties (municipal building, fire and rescue building, old and new town garages, Georgia beach area, used clothing shop, and three historical properties), mow the cemeteries, service the town highway vehicles and fire department vehicles, and do general repairs to town structures. In addition, the Public Works Director duties include: to review and issue driveway permits,



oversee project management of municipal projects, handle complaints from the public, write grants for town road and public works projects, make sure the department remains up to date on laws, regulations and training and more.

In 2021 the town of Georgia purchased adjoining property and built a new highway garage, behind the old garage on Plains Road. It contains 8 total bays, a maintenance bay, a wash bay, 2 offices, a breakroom with a kitchen, and 2 bathrooms. This is the only building in the Town of Georgia rated to withstand a category 4 storm.

In 2024 the highway department equipment inventory consisted of: 2020 6-wheeler truck, 2020 tandem truck, 2017 tandem truck, 2014 6-wheeler truck, 2013 6-wheeler truck, 2020 1-ton dump truck w/plow, 2022 ¾ ton w/ plow capabilities, 2001 grader, 2018 loader, 2012 backhoe, 2001 roadside mower, 2007 chipper, 2005 equipment trailer, 2018 landscape trailer, hydroseeder, 3 zero turn mowers, 4 chainsaws, 2 backpack blowers, hot water pressure washer, 3 generators and other small tools. Trucks are generally replaced on a ten-year cycle. In the next seven years the Highway Department is likely to require 3 plow trucks, a backhoe and a 1-ton truck to be replaced.

The former town highway garage is currently being used for cold storage of equipment. This stored equipment currently consist of: a loader, a backhoe, **Zamboni**, Music on the Green stage and supplies, fire department miscellaneous supplies, plow supplies, signs, mowers, chipper and trailers.

## Transportation & Roads

Town roads are classified, according to a statutory scheme, into Class 1, Class 2, Class 3, Class 4 and Town legal trails. (*See Map 2.2 - Transportation*) These classifications are primarily for the purpose of distributing State Aid and often do not reflect the actual usage of the roads. Class 1 town highways are those town highways that form the extension of a

State highway route and that carry a State highway route number. These are determined by the Vermont Agency of Transportation.

Class 2 town highways form connections from town to town, carrying more than normal traffic. These are determined by the Selectboard with approval from the state agency.

Class 3 roads are all traveled town highways other than class 1 or 2 highways which meet the minimum standard of being negotiable under normal conditions all seasons of the year by a standard manufactured pleasure car. These are determined by the Selectboard after conference with the state agency.

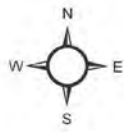
Class 4 town highways are all other town highways that are not class 1, 2, or 3 town highways or unidentified corridors. The Selectboard determines which highways are class 4.

Legal trails are former roads which are not considered highways and the town is not responsible for their maintenance.

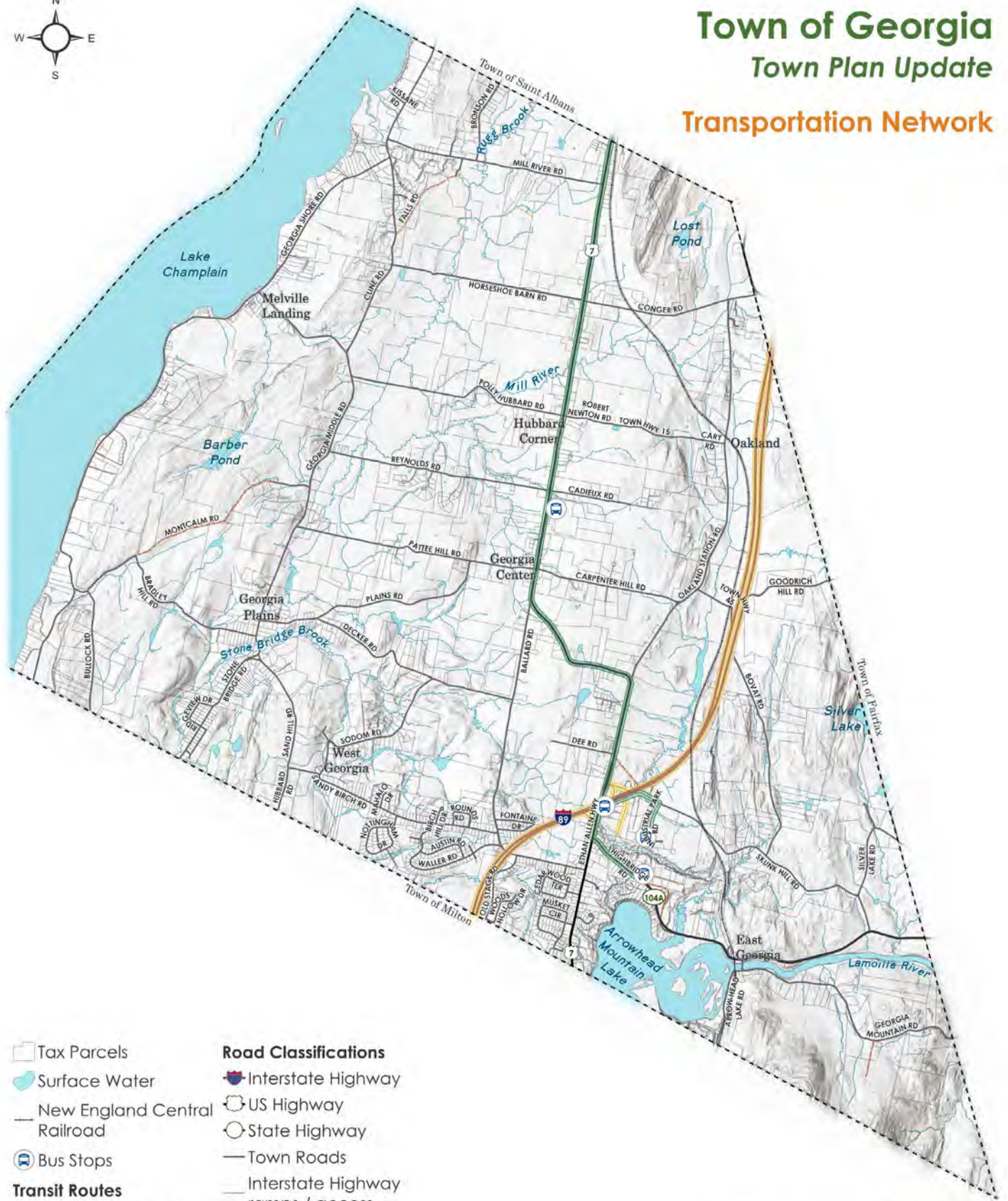
The roads in Georgia are comprised of 19.53 miles of Class 2 roads, 43.64 miles of Class 3 roads, 7.72 miles of Class 4 roads and 2.59 miles of legal trails, for a total of 73.48 miles. There are 11.09 miles of State Highways and 6.53 miles of Interstate Highway running through Georgia that are maintained by the state of Vermont. In 2022 there were 2.5 miles of roads repaved. In 2023 there were 2.3 miles of roads repaved. The number of roads in need of repaving is increasing. The rate of repaving will need to be increased in order to maintain good quality travel lanes on our paved roads. As of 2024 there were 16 miles of roads in need of repaving and the 2024 budget allowed for about 3 miles to be done.

In addition to roads, the town maintains bridges, culverts, and drainage systems along these roads. This can be enormously expensive. The state of Vermont provides grant funding to help with some of these projects. Since 2017 the town has received the





# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update Transportation Network



- |                              |                                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Tax Parcels                  | <b>Road Classifications</b>       |
| Surface Water                | Interstate Highway                |
| New England Central Railroad | US Highway                        |
| Bus Stops                    | State Highway                     |
| <b>Transit Routes</b>        | Town Roads                        |
| Alburgh / Georgia Commuter   | Interstate Highway ramps / access |
| St Albans LINK Express       | Private Road                      |
|                              | Legal Trail                       |

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only



Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads, Transit Lines and Bus Stops: Vermont Center for Geographic Information

MAP 2.2 - Transportation

following grants: Structures Grants, paving grants, clearwater grants, and FEMA grants. These funds help offset the total costs of repairs and maintenance, but overall contribute only a small portion of the funding needed.

In 2023 the town of Georgia spent \$111,989 on sand and \$52,135 on gravel to maintain the town roads. The town purchases this sand from out of town, since the town owned sand pit ran out. They can purchase gravel from local sources in town, but not all gravel is the same. Some packs better, and some types cause washboarding, so a sieve analysis is done before purchasing gravel from a new source. The Public Works Director is always looking for local sources of sand and gravel.

Georgia has one major railroad line running north/south through town which is owned by New England Central Railway, allowing several large freight trains to pass through Georgia each day, however this line does not currently provide any passenger or freight service within the town itself. Amtrak service is provided twice per day locally with passenger service out of nearby St. Albans, approximately 2.5 miles north of town. Amtrak “Vermont” service here provides connections south to Essex Junction, Montpelier, Brattleboro, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., among other stops.

The Green Mountain Transit Agency (GMTA) provides two overlapping bus/shuttle route which serve Georgia. The Alburgh/Georgia Commuter (#115) connects Alburgh, VT, Swanton, Highgate Center, St. Albans in the north to local destinations at GEMS, the Arrowhead Industrial Park, and the Georgia Park and Ride commuter lot maintained by the state near the intersection of Route 7 and Interstate 89. The St. Albans LINK Express (#96) connects St. Albans in the north to the Georgia Park and Ride commuter lot in town and further south to locations in Chimney Corners, Winooski, and Burlington. There are also limited transportation services provided to the elderly and special needs persons through various

service providers.

Airline service is provided to the region primarily by the [Patrick Leahy Burlington International Airport](#) ~~in Burlington~~, approximately 25 minutes south, and by the Franklin County State Airport in Highgate, approximately 20 minutes to the north. There is no local taxi service in Georgia.

There are currently limited sidewalks and established pedestrian paths in Georgia, although there has been increasing discussion regarding this issue and the desire for safer means of pedestrian and bicycle travel.

Lake Champlain has also historically served as a transportation corridor for all lakeshore communities in the past. The lake has a rich history involving everything from naval battles and rum smuggling to passenger steamship service. Today however, most lake transportation takes place in a recreational context.

## Public Safety

The Town of Georgia has a contract with the County Sheriff’s Department and the Vermont State police to provide local law enforcement. Several arrangements for increased police services have been previously considered by the Selectboard, including a contracts with other area town police departments as well as the Sheriff and State Police. The cost and liability exposure to the Town from having its own Police Department has been deemed as cost-prohibitive in previous analysis, while existing contract services have been deemed most cost-effective. Recent negotiations to increase the existing contract hours have been unsuccessful due to a lack of available law enforcement manpower to cover the additional hours.

## Fire & Emergency

The Georgia Fire and Rescue Department is a paid on-call Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)



force and is a member of the Franklin County Mutual Aid Agreement. The Department's primary coverage area is the entire Town of Georgia (47.8 square miles) and mutual aid to neighboring communities from one station at 4134 Ethan Allen Highway in Georgia Center.

The department's financial needs are supported by the Town budget, Impact Fees, and some grant funding. This Department also has an Association that does fundraisers in support of the Department and its members. "911" emergency dialing is available throughout all of Georgia, and dispatch services are provided by Central Dispatch of the St. Albans Police Department.

The Department responded to 439 emergencies in 2023 and 472 in 2022. Starting July 1st, 2024, Georgia's Ambulance transport services are contracted by Fairfax Rescue. Emergency response is a significant issue in Georgia as the Fire and Rescue Department must be prepared for numerous types of emergencies. The Department covers homes, farms, industrial

parks, businesses, waterways, Interstate 89 and other roads and natural areas. The majority of the calls are from the interstate.

The Fire and Rescue Department is comprised of 24 members. The membership consists of 15 Firefighters, 3 EMTs and 6 Firefighter/EMTs ranging from months of service to over 50 years of service to the Town of Georgia. In August of 2023 the Fire and Rescue Department hired the first Full-Time Firefighter/EMT in Department history. The new position allows the Department to have a person at the fire station Monday through Friday during the day to cover emergencies, doing administrative work, and maintaining the equipment and the station.

A new fire station was constructed in 2011 in Georgia Center. The new station is 8,996 square feet and has four apparatus bays, with 3 of them having front and rear access to the building. The station meeting/training room provides a safe and convenient location for Department training as well as use by other Town entities and community members.

*Georgia Fire & Rescue - Georgia Center.*





The Fire and Rescue Department has 5 fire trucks. They are as follows:

- » 2005 E-One 75' Ladder Truck with a 1500 GPM pump/500 gallon tank.
- » 2014 E-One Tanker with a 2000 gallon tank/500 GPM pump.
- » 2019 E-One Engine with a 1500 GPM pump/780 gallon tank.
- » 2020 Ford F550 Crew-Cab Rescue/Utility truck.
- » 2023 E-One Tanker with a 2000 gallon tank/1250 GPM pump.

## Solid Waste

Georgia is a member of the Northwest Vermont Solid Waste Management District (NWSWD), which offers disposal options for several types of solid waste such as Household Hazardous Waste and Special Trash that are open to residents of Georgia, including collections within the Town of Georgia itself. Recycling and composting is mandatory within the District, and all haulers are required to provide curbside pick-up of

recyclables and composting, if optioned. NWSWD posts a complete list of fees and accepted materials on their website, [nswsd.org](https://nswsd.org). Georgia's Conservation Commission organizes Green Up Day activities on the first Saturday in May every year in coordination with NWSWD.

## Water & Sewer

The Town does not own or operate its own municipal water or sewage treatment facilities. The vast majority of all water systems and sewage disposal systems within the town are provided by private on-site wells and septic systems on individual properties.

The South Georgia Fire District owns and operates a water system which currently serves approximately 175 users, and there are also several small private water systems and wastewater systems in residential housing developments.

With a majority of townspeople getting their drinking water from groundwater sources, it is extremely important that local septic systems be properly designed, constructed and distanced to eliminate contamination of local groundwater resources. The



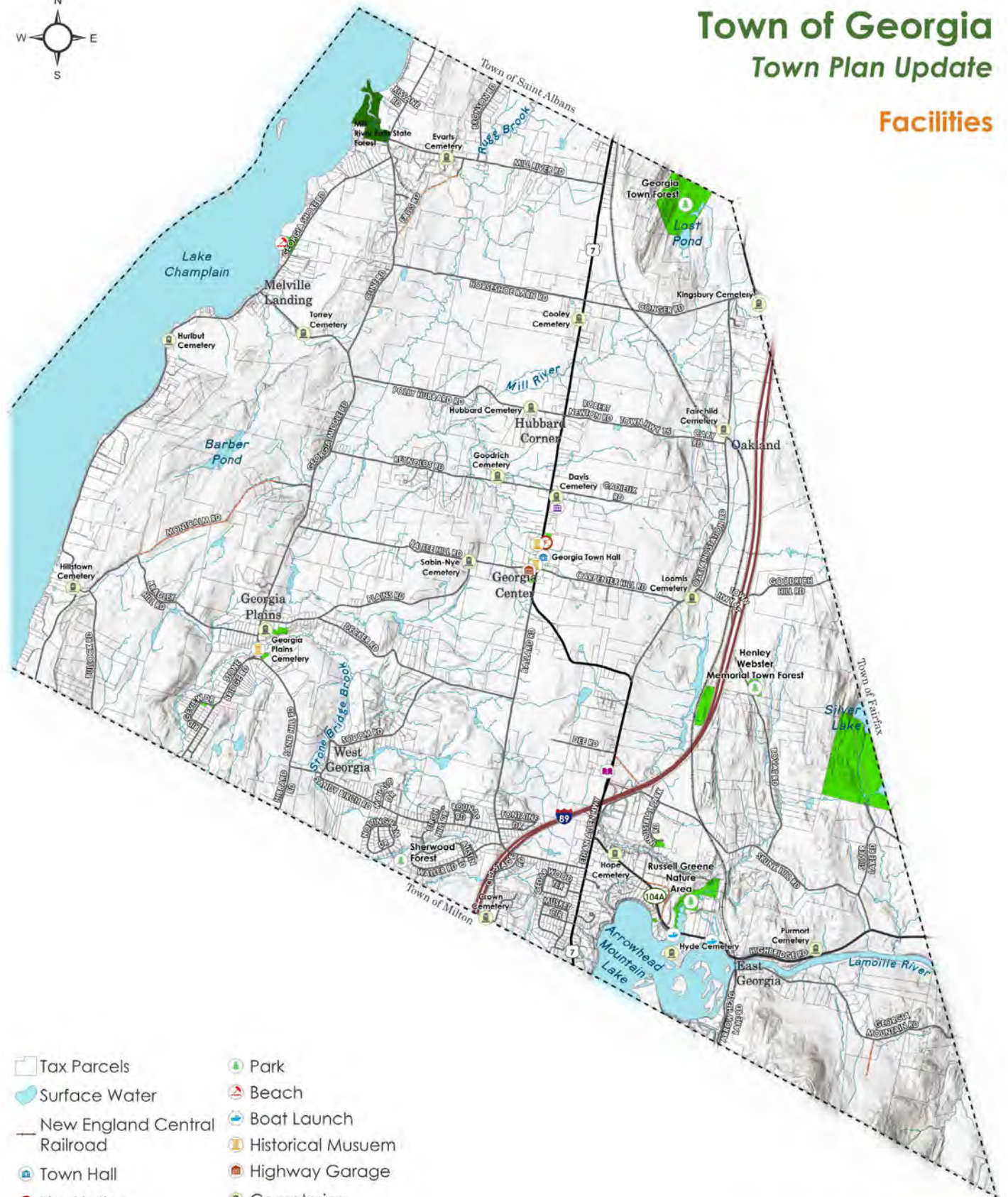
*Recreation and Playground Facilities at the Town Beach.*





# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update

## Facilities



- |                              |                   |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Tax Parcels                  | Park              |
| Surface Water                | Beach             |
| New England Central Railroad | Boat Launch       |
| Town Hall                    | Historical Museum |
| Fire Station                 | Highway Garage    |
| Schools                      | Cemeteries        |
| Public Library               | Town Land         |
|                              | State Forest      |

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only



Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads, Parcels, Library and Town Hall; Vermont Center for Geographic Information; Other Points of interest: USGS GNIS and parcel data; Cemeteries augmented from Cemeteries of Georgia map

MAP 2.3 - Town Facilities

lakeshore also presents unique concerns for sewage treatment and potable water supplies. Various areas of the town have been studied to determine the feasibility of wastewater disposal and community water systems to help address these concerns and/or support additional growth and density in specific areas. (See Appendix 'D' for a listing of town reports and studies) These areas include the South Village area, Georgia Center, and the Georgia Shore.

## Outdoor Recreation

The Town of Georgia and State of Vermont own and maintain several recreational lands and facilities, as follows (*See Map 2.3 Town Facilities*):

- » The Town Beach (10 acres). Facilities include the beach, fishing access, softball and baseball fields, tennis, pickleball, volleyball and basketball courts, bathrooms, playground, and a pavilion which can be rented for private events. The Town Beach facility is maintained and operated by the Georgia Public Works Department. During normal operations, the Town Beach is used for summer outings, Little League, picnics, swimming, fishing and boating access. In the winter, the beach welcomes visitors for ice fishing. Annually, the beach is also used for Fall Fest. Georgia Beach and the parking lot can be accessed from dawn to dusk via an electric gate.
- » Georgia Elementary and Middle School (GEMS) - (36 acres). Recreational facilities on this site include two gymnasiums; numerous soccer, softball and baseball fields; a walking path outside of the school, as well as several playgrounds.
- » Russell Greene Natural Area (43 acres). Recreational facilities here include multiple walking trails totaling 1.8 miles.
- » Falls Road Trail connects between Falls Road to Cline Road for 0.7 miles. There is no parking areas on either end of the trail.

- » Town Trail #4 is a short walking path off of Route 104A that starts near the entrance to Arrowhead Lake Industrial Park and travels along the fence and down the hill meeting up with 104A again near the Russell Greene Natural Area at Trayah Road. There is no parking for Trail #4.
- » Boat access is available off of Route 104A at Arrowhead Lake and at the Town Beach.
- » Henley Webster Memorial Town Forest (10 acres) includes walking trails and a picnic area with parking off of Bovat Road.
- » Silver Lake Woods (162 acres) includes 1.75 miles of trails abutting Silver Lake, with parking off of Silver Lake Road.
- » Mill River Falls Natural Area (35 acres) is a State Forest which includes 3.5 miles of trails with parking near the intersection of Mill River Road and Georgia Shore Road.

## Electric & Gas Service

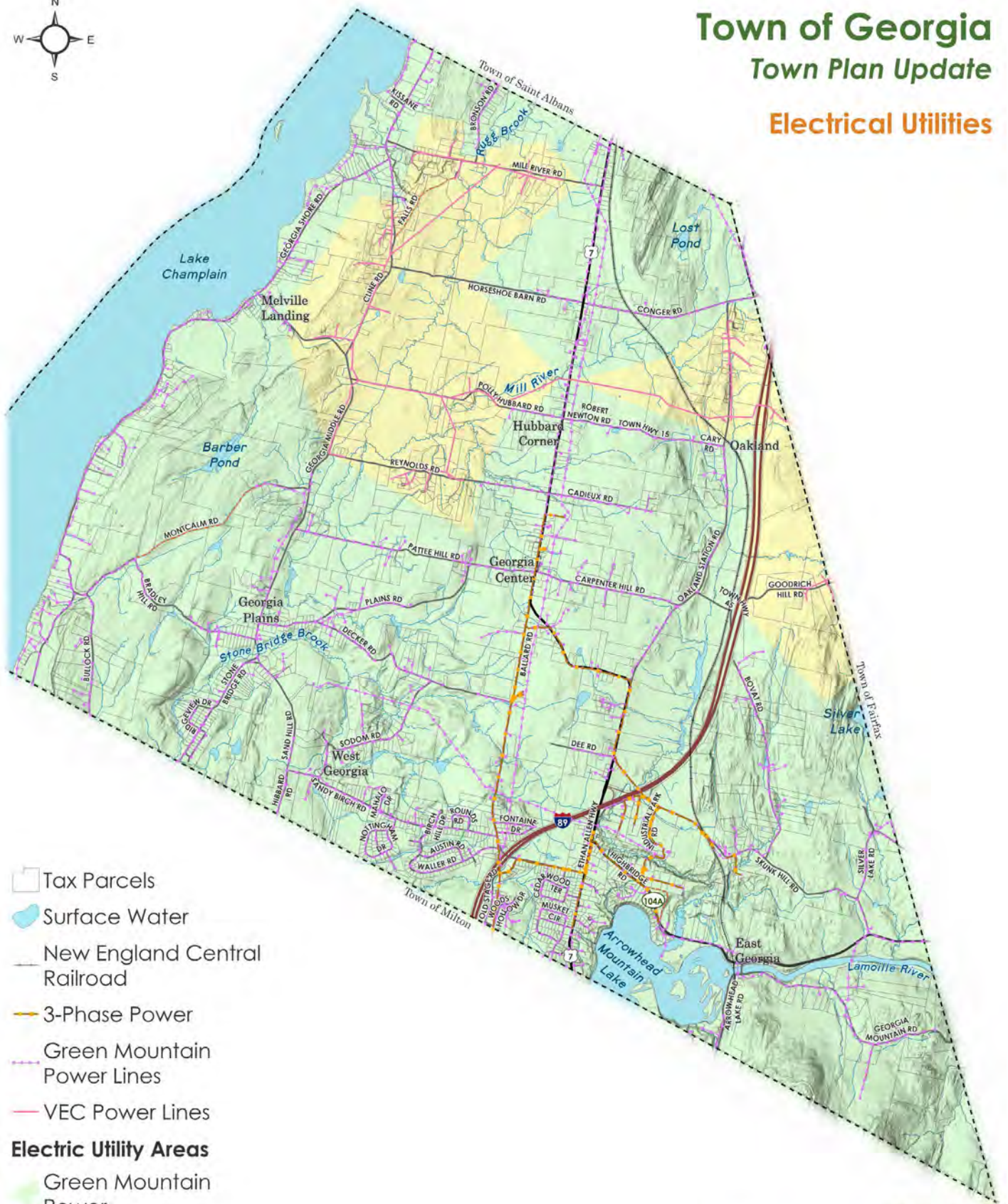
Georgia is served by several utilities which provide needed electricity, gas and communication services. As shown on *Map 2.4, Electrical Utilities*, Green Mountain Power (GMP) serves a majority of the residential, commercial and industrial electrical needs of the town, with Vermont Electric CO-OP (VEC) serving the remainder, particularly in the northern end of town.

Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO) owns and maintains a major 115 KV transmission line which bisects the Town in a north/south and east/west direction, as well as transmission substations, and is currently planning to upgrade the 3-Phase electric power. These lines serve as a major transmission link for the power grid from Canada to the Northeast. Three phase power, which can deliver twice the amount of electricity and is important for supporting the growth potential of commercial and industrial





# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update Electrical Utilities



- Tax Parcels
- Surface Water
- New England Central Railroad
- 3-Phase Power
- Green Mountain Power Lines
- VEC Power Lines

### Electric Utility Areas

- Green Mountain Power
- Vermont Electric Co-op

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

MAP 2.4 - Electrical Utilities

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only



Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads, Parcels, Powerlines and areas: Vermont Center for Geographic Information

land, is available along several corridors within the town.

**Wind Turbines.** Georgia Mountain Community Wind (GMCW) operates four utility-scale wind turbines at the top of Georgia Mountain, with two turbines located within the Town of Georgia and two in the adjacent Town of Milton. Together, these turbines generate 10 megawatts of power which is purchased by Burlington Electric.

Vermont Gas Systems provides gas service to approximately 440 residential, business and industrial customers in town. It has a major supply-line corridor running through Georgia, however this line does not supply local houses or businesses. The presence of this energy source near the southern end of town enhances the potential of commercial and industrial development in those areas.

## Telecommunications/Cellular Service

The coverage of local wireless cellular phone service has grown, however the relatively sparse population density, hilly terrain, and concerns about tower locations are often an impediment to full coverage. Unlike other utilities, maps of service areas often depend wildly on the different carriers. Today, the Town of Georgia continues to have inconsistent and spotty cellular coverage. While many residents would like improved coverage, this must be balanced with how additional towers may impact the scenic landscape. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 (federal statute) placed certain limitations over municipal control of telecommunication structures. Within these confines however, Georgia can use land-use regulations to help protect the town's rural nature, historic character, and scenic beauty.

## High Speed / Broadband Internet Service

The increasing importance and influence of the Internet on our daily lives is hard to ignore, and has many implications for the Town of Georgia. High-Speed Internet in particular provides many advantages including the ability for people to work from home, or start a small at-home business, and the data speeds and coverage of these networks continue to grow. The Town of Georgia is served by cable internet with some fiber optic service as well as satellite internet services. The town is represented by Northwest Vermont Communications Union District (a.k.a. Northwest Fiberworx NWFX), an organization composed of multiple towns working together to build shared communications infrastructure.

Up until recently, the minimum speed to qualify as "high-speed" Internet was 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload, which appears to be available along most major roads in Georgia<sup>1</sup>. This year, the FCC raised the minimum standard speed benchmark to 100 Mbps/25 Mbps. This higher level of service appears to be available in many areas of the town as well<sup>2</sup>. Much of the adjacent Town of Fairfax appears to already served by 100 Mbps/100 Mbps service, which is relatively rare in the northern part of the state, so it may be possible to expand that service into Georgia in the not-so-distant future.

In May of 2024 Northwest Fiberworx was awarded a \$20 million grant to help expand and improve internet services in its membership area, including Georgia, with priority focus seeking to connect homes which are currently unserved or underserved in the region.

<sup>1</sup>—High speed Internet coverage based on 2021 maps prepared by the Vermont Department of Public Service;

<sup>2</sup>—Broadband Availability Map <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/62c5b602401d48d7aee08249ffd92d76/>



## Health Services

The Town of Georgia includes two local outpatient medical centers. The Northwestern Urgent Care walk-in clinic on Ethan Allen Highway offers non-emergent care for minor medical conditions with no appointment necessary, occupational health services, x-ray imaging, and physical therapy. This facility is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the larger Northwestern Medical Center (NMC) in St. Albans. The Georgia Health Center, located on Highbridge Road in Georgia, is part of the Northern Tier Center for Health (NOTCH) providing primary care for adults and children within Franklin and Grand Isle counties.

The closest full-service hospital to Georgia is the Northwestern Medical Center (NMC) in St. Albans. NMC is a 70-bed community hospital providing coverage for the greater Franklin and Grand Isle County region, including the Town of Georgia. NMC offers a comprehensive array of diagnostic and rehabilitative services as well as Chronic Disease Management and Health Promotion initiatives.

The nearest trauma center is UVM Medical Center in Burlington. Georgia has several doctors and other medical services in addition to the above.

## Historic & Cultural Resources

Georgia is rich in cultural and historical resources. According to the State Division for Historic Preservation, the Town of Georgia includes 74 structures listed on the State Register of Historic Places, and 8 structures on the National Register, including the brick schoolhouse. The town also includes two historic districts, located in Georgia Center and Georgia Plains, as well as 17 cemeteries. These assets are important in defining the historic rural character of our town and represent a significant cultural resource, a visual reminder of our history.

The Lamoille River and Deer Brook corridors have sites of known archeological sensitivity, while

the stream corridors extending northward from Arrowhead Mountain Lake to Silver Lake contain sites of expected archeological sensitivity.

These historic and prehistoric sites are an essential link to our past and represent significant social and cultural investment deserving consideration in the planning process. Efforts should be made to reduce or mitigate negative impacts on these valuable resources.

## Georgia Public Library

The Town of Georgia includes one municipal library, located on Route 7 in the building which formerly housed the Northwest Regional Library. The Georgia Public Library (GPL) is primarily supported by the town budget, and provides books, e-resources, and other items for loan, as well as a variety of programs and services to benefit the community. GPL cardholders can check out books, audio books, videos and electronic books; as well as area museum, swimming pool and park passes. The library also lends out e-readers, character cake pans, disc golf materials, blood pressure monitors, snowshoes, and a variety of other items.

GPL programming includes weekly story time, book clubs, summer reading programs, art-based activities, tech education classes, author visits, dance classes, and a variety of clubs including chess and dungeons & dragons. Services offered by the GPL to the community include providing meeting space to accommodate various groups in the community, serving as a cooling station for townspeople in extreme heat, providing seniors with tax services through AARP, giving shelter to high school students after being dropped off by the afternoon school bus, and providing technical and writing support. The library works in cooperation with the Town of Georgia to provide discounted swim passes to the community, distribute trash bags to residents for Green Up Day, and serves as a location for residents to receive town communications. The Library shares building space with the Georgia Food Shelf.

## Georgia Food Shelf

The Georgia Food Shelf operates to benefit community members in need, providing perishable and non-perishable foods as well as toiletries and pet food when available. The Food Shelf is generously supported by area groups, individuals, and businesses working in cooperation with Vermont Foodbank, area grocers and through donations of extra garden produce from the community.

## Schools

The Town of Georgia has grown significantly over the past decades, which has resulted in associated growth in the local educational system. The Georgia School District, under the Franklin West Supervisory Union, oversees the public education system for Georgia's school-aged students.

Georgia's schools evolved from multiple school buildings spread across multiple smaller school districts within the Town into a centralized system, the Georgia Elementary School, which opened in 1959. Student population growth over the next 10 years necessitated the rental of an additional school building in St. Albans to house Grades 5-8. In 1973, the "Big School" was opened on the same grounds as the Georgia Elementary School. In 1991, the two schools were connected with a new addition, and this became the Georgia Elementary and Middle School (GEMS) that we know today, which houses students from Pre-K through 8th Grade. Today, all 3 to 4 year olds have the option to attend GEMS.

The Georgia Elementary and Middle School facility was designed for a capacity of 900 students. The current enrollment is 605 (2023-2024), which is slightly down from 635 in 2022-2023, and from 620 as reported in the 2017 Town Plan. Given this steady trend, the current facility should be adequate for the foreseeable future.

Since the Town of Georgia does not have its own High School, students in Grades 9-12 have "school choice", which affords them the option to attend any public high school in the state at no additional cost. Students that choose to attend a private high school receive a financial benefit equivalent to that of attending a public high school, and the individual's family is responsible for the remainder of the annual cost of tuition to attend private high school. Individual families are generally responsible for the transportation of their students to high school, but there are enough Georgia students that attend certain high schools that busing is available for those schools (i.e. South Burlington High School and Colchester High School).

In recent years, most Georgia students of high school age chose to attend nearby schools such as BFA St. Albans, South Burlington High School, Colchester High School, Essex High School, Rice Memorial School and BFA Fairfax. There are vocational opportunities at technology centers located at Burlington Technical Center, Northwest Technical Center in St. Albans and at the Center for Technology in Essex (CTE).

There are also several post-secondary educational facilities in northeastern Vermont, including the University of Vermont (Burlington), Champlain College (Burlington), St. Michael's College (Colchester) and Community College of Vermont (locations in St. Albans, Winooski and throughout the State) as well as other trade schools. Castleton University, Johnson State College, Lyndon State College and Vermont Technical College (Randolph and Williston) have recently combined to become Vermont State University.

## Post Office

The Georgia Station Post Office opened in 1993 at Bob's Hardware, and was later located at the Georgia Market on Route 7. This did not provide the town with its own zip code, but did provide mailboxes and shipping services. Today however, the Town of Georgia no longer has its own U.S. Post Office after



it closed in 2021. The town shares three different zip codes with adjacent communities: 05454 with Fairfax, 05468 with Milton, and 05478 with Saint Albans. The lack of a unique town zip code and local post office continues to be an inconvenience which bothers many people, and undermines the sense of identity of our town.

## Churches

There are currently five active churches in Georgia, up from four since the previous plan. These include the Methodist Church in Georgia Center, Georgia Plain Baptist Church in Georgia Plains, Ascension Catholic Church on Route 7 just south of Georgia Center, Redeeming Grace Church in Georgia South Village, and the City of Light Worship Center in North Georgia.

## Childcare

Childcare can be a growing concern for existing and prospective families, whether it means finding quality or securing the costs of services. High quality, available childcare is a critical component supporting a stable workforce.

According to state data, the Town of Georgia has 5 registered childcare homes, 3 childcare centers and 1 after school childcare program, with a total capacity of 150 children. The 2022 U.S. Census indicates that there are 747 children from birth to age 12 living in Georgia.

The Town of Georgia, along with surrounding towns in Franklin County, do not have enough sufficient childcare options for our families.

## Adult Daycare

Taking care of our seniors and special needs adults is very important. There are currently no known care facilities for this population within the town. However, the Carepartners Adult Day Center in St. Albans has Green Mountain Transit services available to Georgia residents.

## Doggie Daycare

Taking care of our furry family members is important to many Georgia residents. As of right now, the Town of Georgia does not have any doggie daycare services. There are however about ten services found in the surrounding area.

## Other Community Groups

Georgia has several other community-based groups, including: active Boy, Girl and Cub Scout troops, 4-H Club, Riding Club, Snowmobile Club, Georgia United Soccer Association, Champlain Little League, GEMS Athletics, Arrowhead Trail Run Group, Girls on the Run, Community Volleyball, Bone Builders, James Messier Memorial Youth Center, Georgia Fire & Rescue Association, Lions Club, Veterans War Memorial Group, Senior Meal Group, Parent Teacher Community Organization (PTCO), Georgia Historical Society, Conservation Commission, and the Georgia Community Events Committee (GCEC).

## Existing Demographics

In order to plan successfully, a community must understand its demographic composition. This section of the town plan includes a community profile of Georgia, which provides a solid baseline for town planning activities. An understanding of recent growth trends, current community make up, and future growth projections, planners can better respond to residents’ needs, and better account for the impacts and opportunities of growth. A community profile accomplishes the following: 1) documents the growth trends which have brought the town to its current situation, 2) assesses the current makeup of the town, from demographic, economic, housing and social perspectives, and; 3) assesses the range of growth factors affecting the town.

Much of the information in the demographic overview, and throughout the entire plan, comes from the American Community Survey (abbreviated as ACS in this plan). This is because the US Census no longer collects a considerable amount of data that was previously collected. When information previously

obtained via the US Census was no longer available, data from the most recent American Community Survey was used.

The main difference between the American Community Survey and the US Census is that the American Community Survey contains statistical estimates based on surveys of random households within a community during a five year period (ex. 2009-2013). It is not a “count” like the census. The ACS is collected via mail, with follow up phone calls or personal visits by U.S. Census workers to households that do not respond to the mailed survey.

Since Georgia is a small community, and the ACS is a survey and not a census, data from the American Community Survey for Georgia typically has a considerable large margin of error. This should be kept in mind while reading this data. Despite issues with the American Community Survey, it is the best available data for a variety of data points used in this plan.

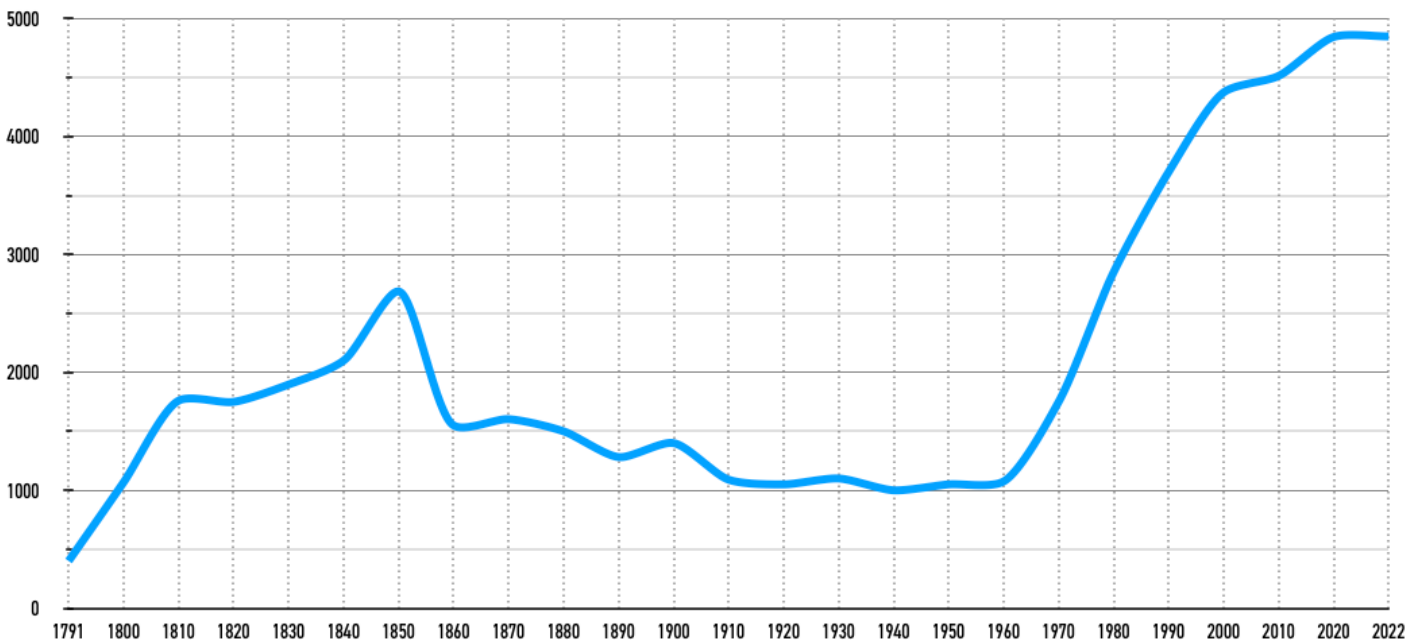


Figure 2.1. Population of the Town of Georgia, 1791 - 2022. (Source: Town of Georgia; U.S. Census ACS Data. 2022 data estimated by American Community Survey)



## Population Growth

Georgia now ranks as the 31st largest town in the State of Vermont, up from 33rd in the previous Town Plan.

A review of historic population data for Georgia, **Figure 2.1**, indicates early rapid growth, reaching a population of almost 2,700 persons in 1850. The growth which characterized the town's early years was followed by almost 100 years of population decline reaching a low population point of just over 1,000 persons in 1940. Population levels began to increase again at a relatively slow rate in the 1940s and 1950s, picking up speed between 1960 and 2000, increasing by almost 3,300 persons. Clearly, those 40 years have been a time of tremendous change in the town.

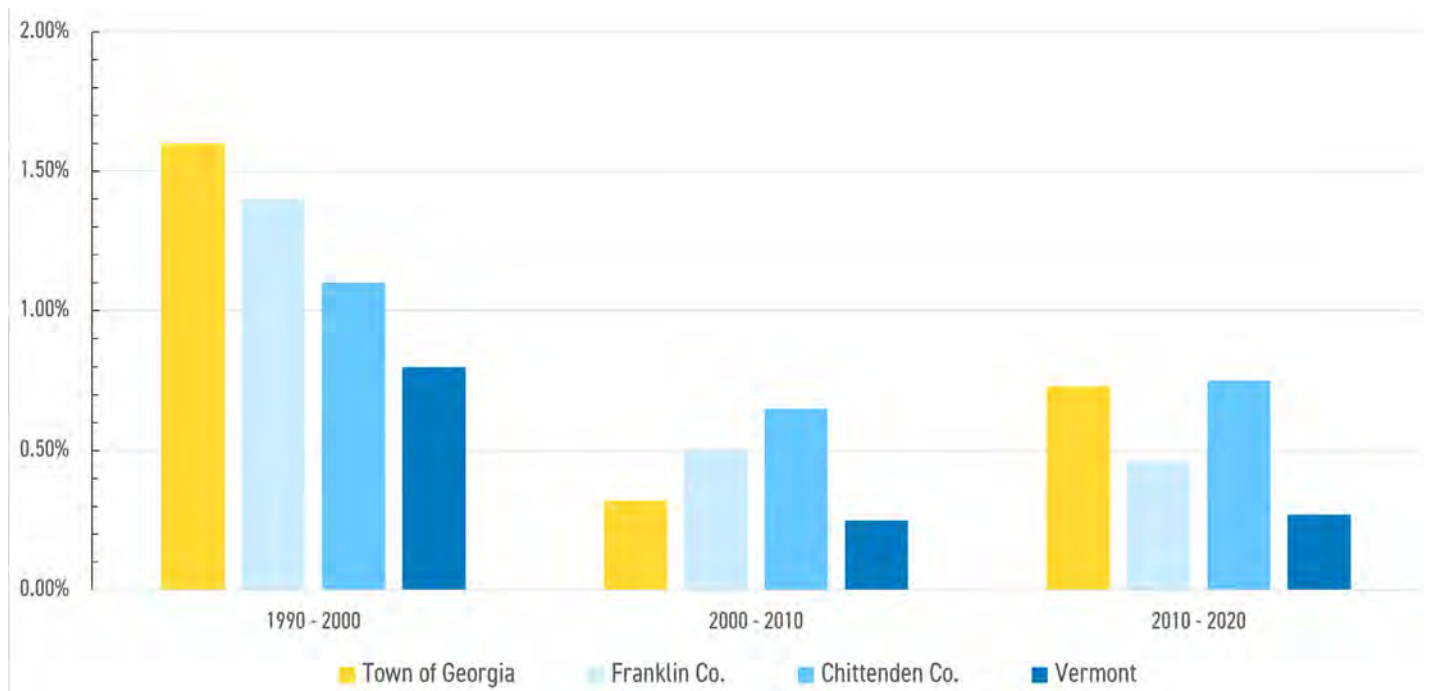
Since the last plan was adopted, the population of Georgia has increased from 4,515 (2010 decennial) to 4,845 (2020 decennial) and was estimated to be at 4,850<sup>3</sup> in 2022.

## Population Growth - Comparison

A comparison of the average annual population growth rate in Georgia compared to Chittenden County, Franklin County, and the State of Vermont overall is shown in **Figure 2.2**. In the period from 1990 - 2000, Georgia experienced a higher yearly growth rate overall than surrounding areas.<sup>4</sup> In the next decade from 2000 - 2010, Georgia's growth rate was significantly below that of Franklin County and Chittenden County, and was only slightly above the state average. More recently however, in the period between 2010 and 2020, this has changed. The average annual population growth rate in Georgia (0.73%) has increased significantly just behind Chittenden County (0.75%) and well above Franklin County (0.46%). In that same period, the annual population growth rate in the State of Vermont remained relatively steady at 0.27%. This period represented a new growth spurt for the town after the relatively calm period of the previous decade.

3 - 2022: ACS 5-Year Estimate data profile.

4 - 2017 Town Plan, U.S. Census ACS Data, 2000, 2010, 2020



**Figure 2.2.** Comparative Average Annual Population Growth Rate, 1990-2020 of the Town of Georgia compared to Chittenden County, Franklin County, and the State of Vermont. (Source: U.S. Census ACS Data and 2017 Town Plan)

## Population Projections

The prior Town Plan included population projections under both “moderate” and “small” growth scenarios<sup>5</sup>. Interestingly, the moderate growth projection for the Town of Georgia for the year 2020 came to within 23 people of the estimated population at that time (4,822). Projections for the same moderate growth scenario for the year 2030 would put the population of town at 5,055.

## Age Distribution

The 2017 Town Plan noted the continued trend of our aging population, experienced both nationally and locally, as part of the “baby boom” generation. The plan noted that in 2000, the percentage of the population which was above age 35 had grown to reach an equilibrium with the number of people below age 35 - with younger/older both split at roughly 50%—50%. Since that time, the percentage of people above the age of 35 had continued to grow, and was estimated to have reached 56% of the local population by 2013. As we look at this same data today, it is remarkable to

<sup>5</sup> Vermont Agency of Commerce and Development, Vermont Population Projections 2010-2030, 2013.

note that the number of people age 35 and over has now grown to over 62% of the population. (Figure 2.3)

This aging bubble can also be illustrated by looking at the growing percentage of people above the age 65 over the last few decades, as shown in Figure 2.4, which has been growing at a rate of about 5% every 10 years.

The Town of Georgia is going to continue to experience this aging trend as a natural course of mathematics, however it could be amplified by other factors, such as a failure to attract and retain younger people in the Georgia area, as well as an overall decline in families having children. Georgia, like many other communities, will need to anticipate this aging population, and also take steps to help attract and retain younger families if it wishes to have a balanced and age-diverse community.

## Household Income

Median household income in Georgia is estimated to be \$97,232 in 2022, an increase of over 19% since 2013, and continues to be higher than the surrounding

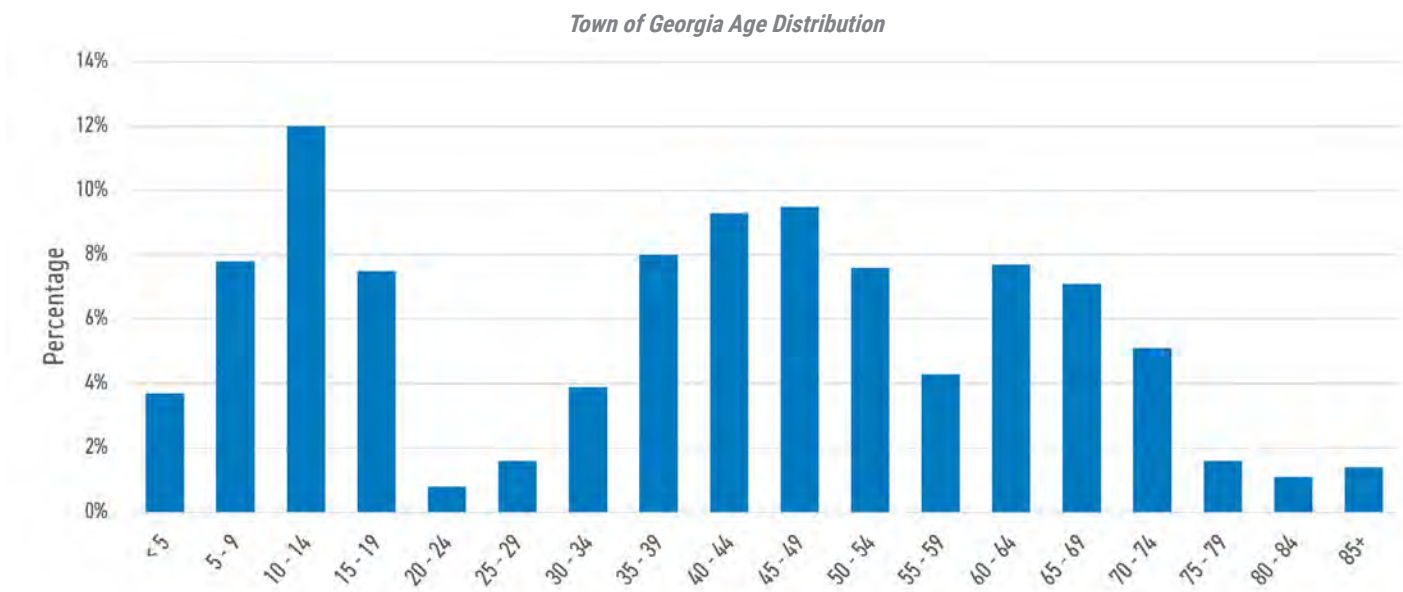
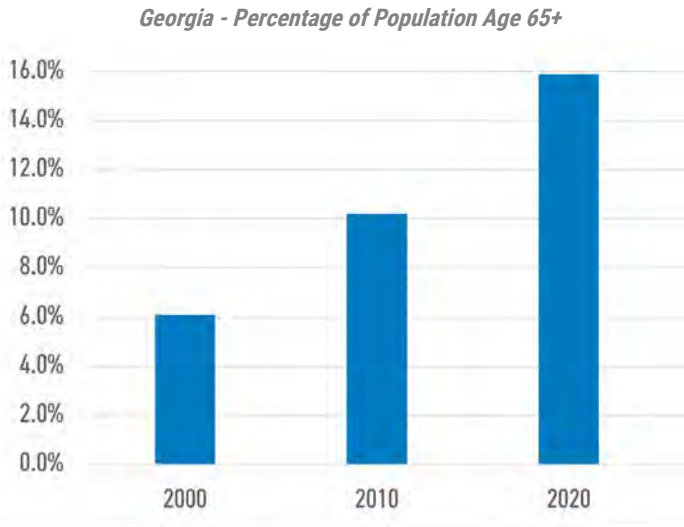
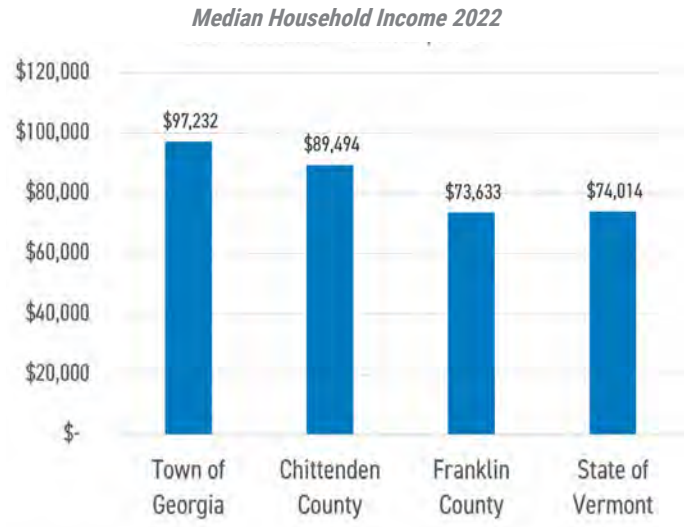


Figure 2.3 - Age distribution in Georgia, 2022. (Source: U.S. Census ACS Data, 2022)





**Figure 2.4** - Percentage of population above the age 65 has been steadily growing. (Source: U.S. Census ACS Data, 2000, 2010, 2022)



**Figure 2.5** - Median household income, Georgia and surrounding areas, 2022. (Source: U.S. Census ACS Data, 2022)

areas of Chittenden County, Franklin County and the State of Vermont overall. (Figure 2.5).

While the local household income still remains higher, it should be noted that these surrounding areas have been experiencing a noticeably larger percentage increase in income over the same 9-year period. Since 2013, the median family income has increased over 30% in Franklin County, over 36% in the State of Vermont, and over 39% in Chittenden County.

### Property Values

The median home value in the Town of Georgia drastically increased by 105% in the ten year period between 2000 and 2010, and then increased by 7.6% in the following ten years. It is believed that the dramatic increase in values between 2000-2010 was due in part to a town-wide reappraisal in 2006.

Based on U.S. Census ACS data, in 2020 the median home value in Georgia was estimated at \$262,000. In relative terms, this was significantly above the median home value in Franklin County (\$219,200), above the median value in the State of Vermont (\$230,900), however far below the value in Chittenden County

(\$314,200).<sup>6</sup> However this census estimate of recent home values is considered to be very inaccurate, particularly after the effects of the Covid pandemic on the real-estate market. Actual real-world observations over the past few years point to home prices which are far higher in this area than census estimates are reflecting. The housing market in Georgia is influenced by nearby Chittenden County and Burlington to the south, which typically have much higher values.

More up-to-date data available from Zillow Corporation reflects market trends which have been happening more recently since the Covid pandemic. This data continues to show that housing values in the Town of Georgia have remained generally higher than those in the larger context of Franklin County, but below those in Chittenden (See Figure 2.6 - Typical Home Values). However, this data also indicates that beginning in 2020, home prices began to rise more rapidly, and sale prices were higher than U.S. Census estimates. In the three year period before 2020, home prices in the Town of Georgia appeared to rise by approximately 11%. In the three year period after 2020 however, home prices appeared to rise by 30%. Based on most recent Zillow data from May 2024,

<sup>6</sup>- U.S. Census ACS Data, 2020

**Zillow Typical Home Value - Comparison**

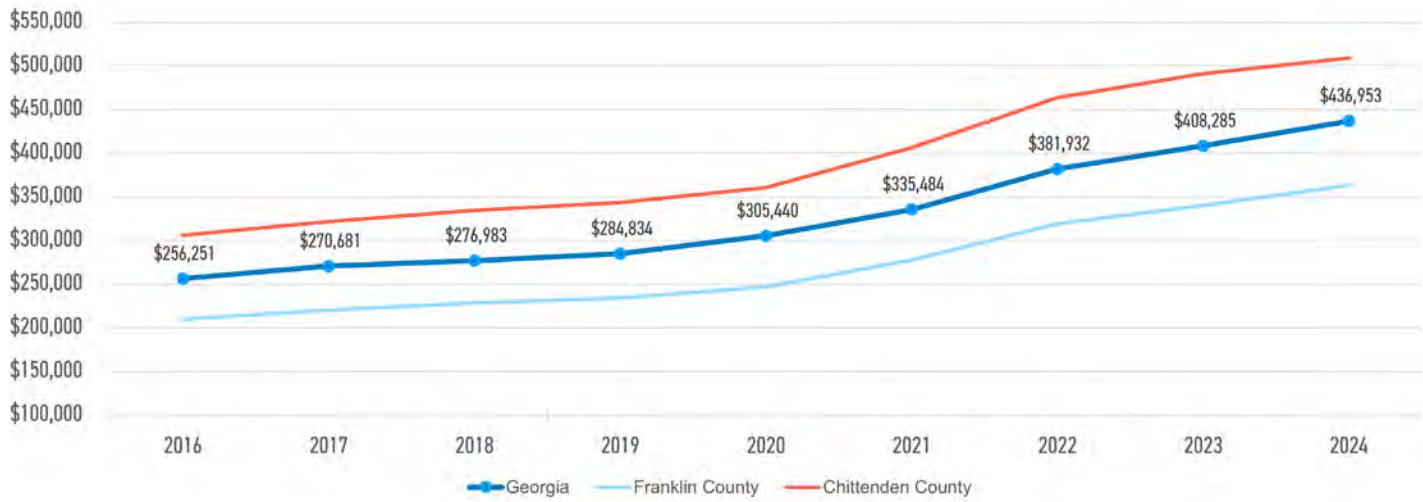


Figure 2.6 - Typical home values in Georgia compared to Franklin and Chittenden County. (Zillow Home Value Index)

average home prices have risen by over \$130,000 since 2020. Today, the Zillow data estimates that the average house in Georgia is valued at over \$400,000.

While the absolute values of the Zillow data may be somewhat anecdotal, their relative percentage increases likely reflect what has been happening in the local housing market, and that is a steep increase in prices which has been growing faster than median household incomes.

This trend is further supported by recent data released by Realtor.com<sup>7</sup>, which ranked Chittenden County 72nd among the top 100 hottest real estate markets nationwide, with median listing prices soaring over 19% above the year before. Adjacent Franklin County was the second hottest market in the state, experiencing median listing prices rising over 9% from the year before, and a median listing price of \$389,950.

The result of this is that housing prices continue to rise at an unusual rate, making housing less and less affordable and accessible for most people.

7- Burlington Free Press, Vermont Real Estate Market Report for Chittenden and Franklin Counties, May 2024: <https://data.burlingtonfreepress.com/real-estate-market-report/>

**Housing Affordability**

According to Vermont Statute, housing is considered affordable when a household earning not more than 80 percent of the county median income pays no more than thirty percent of their income on housing. A household consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit. Based on 2020 ACS estimates, approximately 11% of the homeowners with a mortgage in Georgia are paying more than 30% of their household income on housing expenses, and 17% are paying more than 35%<sup>8</sup>. The costs for non-owners are similar, where ACS data suggests that 14% of renters are paying 35% or more of their household income on housing.

Between the year 2000 and 2020, the median rent in the Town of Georgia has climbed over 220% from \$713 to \$1570. (See Figure 2.7 - Median Gross Rent Comparison.) It is interesting to note that this rent is higher than the median rents for both Franklin and even Chittenden Counties, and the rate of increase appears to be outpacing the others in terms of growth. During the same period, the median rents in Chittenden County increased 208%, and 190% in Franklin County.

8- U.S. Census ACS data, 2020.



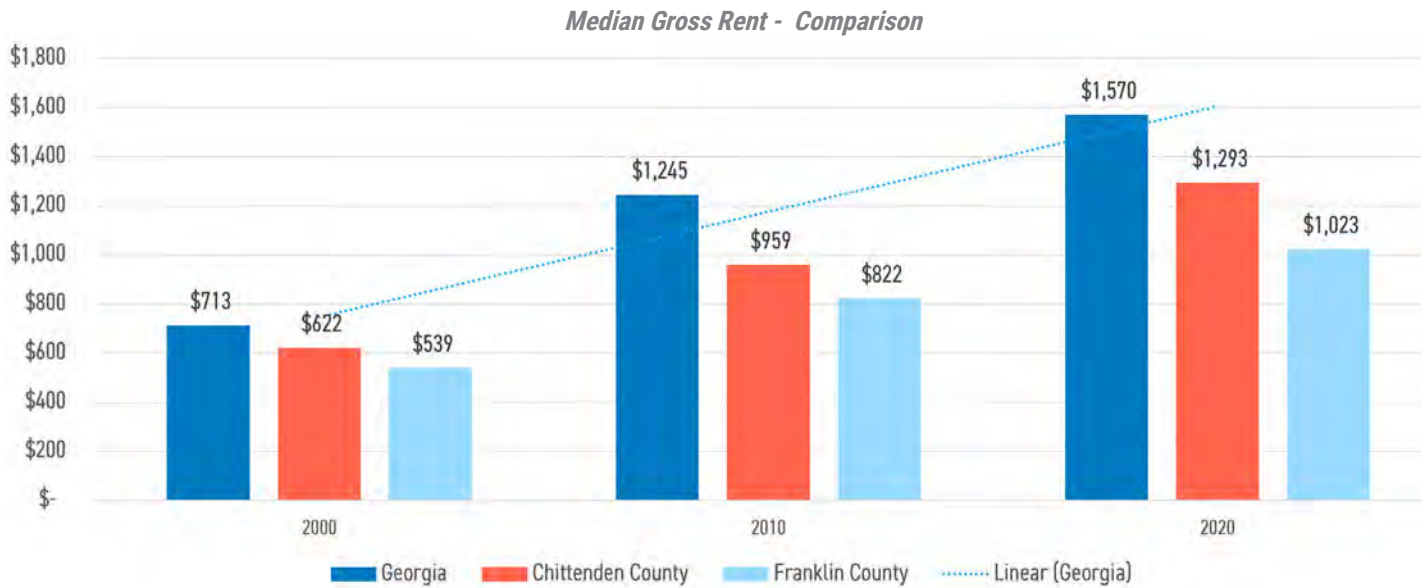


Figure 2.7 - Median Gross Rent Comparison (Source: U.S. Census ACS Data)

The housing affordability gap continues to grow. Zillow data estimates that housing prices in the Town of Georgia increased 7% in just the past year. This estimate might seem aggressive, however it should be noted that a recent nationwide analysis by the Federal Housing Finance Agency determined that home prices across the United States rose by an average of 6.6% in the past year between 2023 and 2024. Interestingly, the state with the highest percentage increase was Vermont, which ranked 1st in the nation with the highest price increase, rising by an astounding 12.8%.<sup>9</sup>

### Housing Supply

Georgia’s housing trends directly reflect population growth trends. As a primarily residential town which, in part, serves as a bedroom community for regional job centers, the town’s housing stock is focused on single family units that are used year-round. The town also has a notable second home component, although it is generally consistent with the state average.

### Vermont leads the nation in home price rise

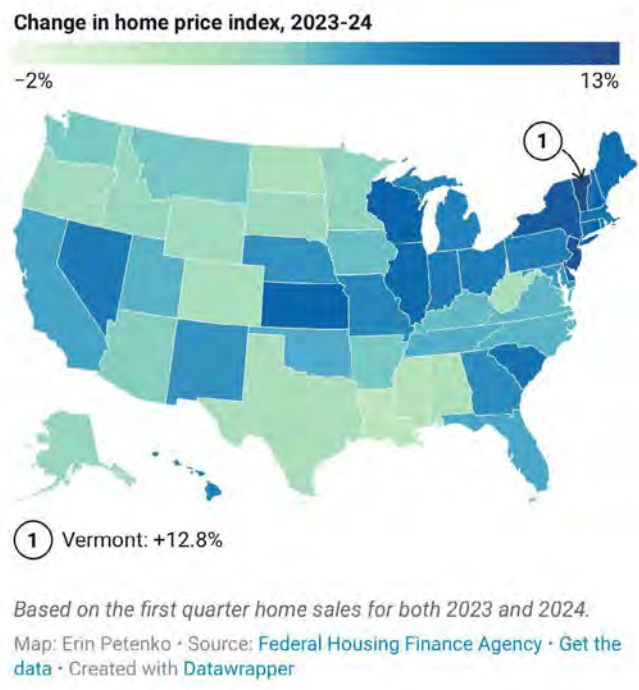


Figure 2.8 - National home price increases (Source: Federal Housing Finance Agency)

9- Berlin, C. (2024) 'Vermont home prices spiked more than any other state last year while fewer homes sold', Vermont Public, 31 May.



*New housing constructed just off of Route 7.*

Over the past two decades, the number of residential homes and condos in Georgia—as defined by Grand List data—has been on the rise (*See Table 2.1 - Housing Units by Type*), while manufactured housing has been slowly declining over the past 20 years. Seasonal homes in particular have declined steadily over that same time period. It is believed that many seasonal homes have been converted or improved into year-round homes, reflecting this change.

Similar housing type information from the U.S. Census ACS data for this area appears to show that the number of two-family and multi-family housing options has been wildly fluctuating and declining, however Grand List data from the town does not divide housing types into these same categories so it is difficult to compare, and it is unclear if the census data is accurate.

This trend is also reflected in the number of owner occupied vs. renter occupied units over the years. The number of renter occupied units has been in steady decline, estimated at just 3.4% of inventory in 2022. (*See Table 2.2 - Housing Units by Occupancy*) This is

far below Franklin County as a whole, which is around 23%. The popularity of short-term rentals have also contributed to the shifts in the market, something which was not foreseeable when the previous town plan was written. The result of these trends is that the availability of housing options which were once considered more affordable for younger adults and families are becoming harder to find, particularly in Georgia.

## Housing Demand

Statewide, the rate of new homebuilding has been on the decline for some time, and latest projections from the 2020 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment indicate that Vermont as a whole will need to increase total housing stock by 5,800 units by 2025 to meet demand, with roughly half of those as rentals<sup>10</sup>. Chittenden County alone is anticipated to see 89% of all of the additional household growth in the State

<sup>10</sup> - 2020 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment, Vermont Housing Finance Agency.



**Table 2.1 - Housing Units by Type**

UNIT TYPE	2001		2010		2020		2024	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Residential	1,253	81%	1,412	83%	1,586	85%	1,632	86%
Manufactured Homes	98	6%	92	5%	85	5%	83	4%
Condos	0	0%	40	2%	57	3%	73	4%
Seasonal	193	13%	160	9%	130	7%	118	6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,544</b>		<b>1,704</b>		<b>1,858</b>		<b>1,906</b>	

Source: Town of Georgia Grand List Data

of Vermont between 2020 and 2025. This demand on Chittenden County is likely to have a spillover effect on adjacent areas, such as the Town of Georgia.

### Local Economy

Georgia is largely a bedroom community to the greater Burlington metropolitan area, however it does have some substantial local business and industrial presence.

Georgia experienced strong employment increases through the 1980’s and 90’s, largely in response to the establishment of new industries in the local business parks. While Georgia’s employment base has experienced significant growth, the town is still not a regional job center.

While employment in Georgia varies from regional

**Table 2.2 - Georgia Housing Units by Occupancy**

	2010	2020	2022
Owner Occupied	1,495 (89.8%)	1,620 (95.2%)	1,687 (96.6%)
Renter Occupied	170 (10.2%)	81 (4.8%)	60 (3.4%)

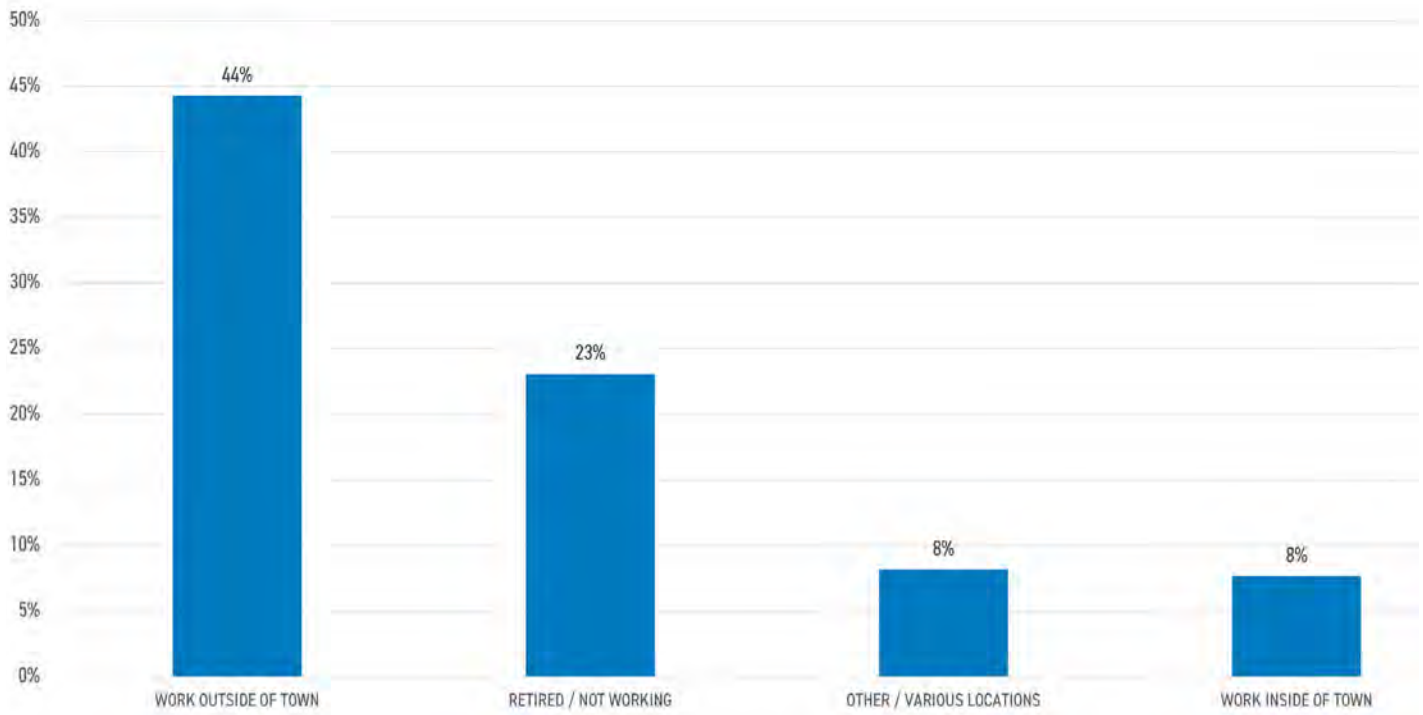
Source: U.S. Census ACS Data

norms, Georgia residents are part of the regional economy, and find jobs in a variety of industries and occupations. Overall, the data shows that Georgia residents find jobs in industries and occupations which do not differ significantly from regional or statewide averages.

Employment data makes it clear that the greater Burlington area is the dominant job center in the region. Many Georgia residents commute to Burlington on a daily basis for employment. Anecdotal data from the Community Survey completed earlier this year suggests that about 44% of Georgia employees commute to locations outside of the town, compared to about 8% who work inside of town. (See [Figure 2.9 - Work Location](#)). This is to be expected of communities outside a larger metropolitan area such as Burlington, however the survey data was limited, derived from a total of 355 responses.

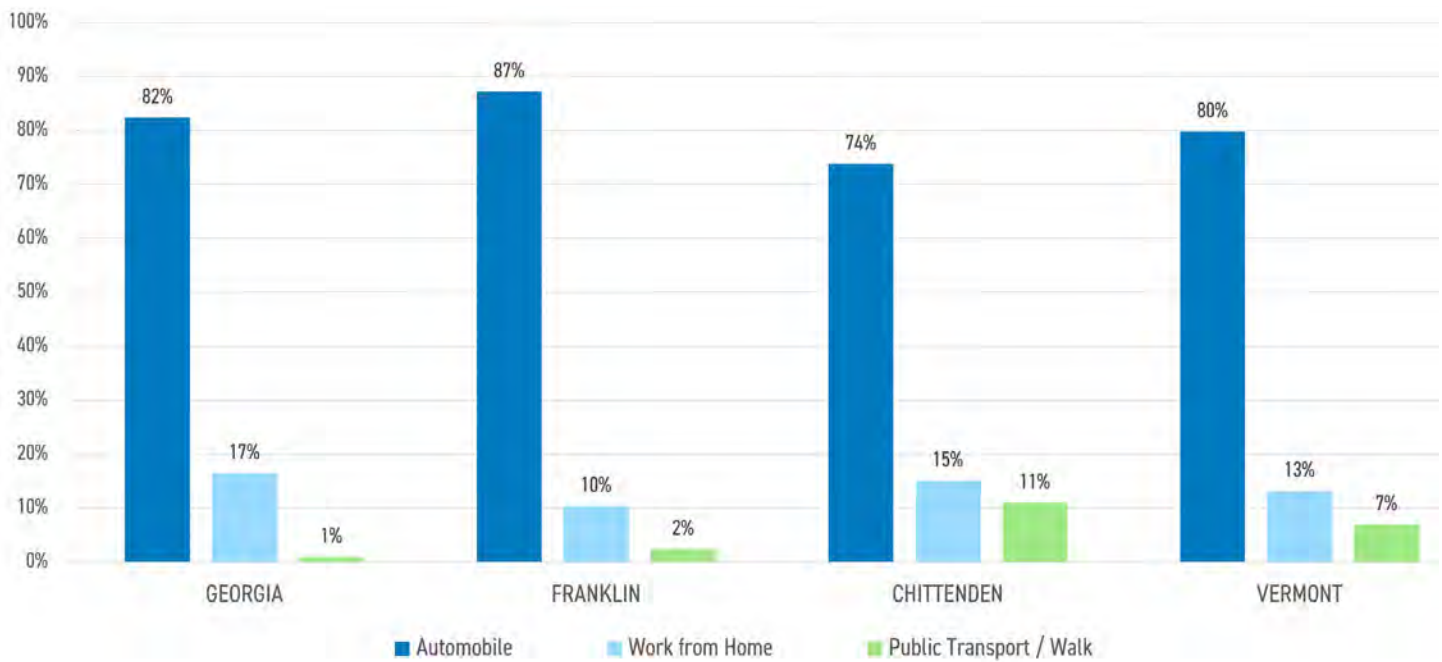
A second source of data for this measurement comes from the U.S. Census “On The Map” online tool, which estimates inflow and outflow of employees in a given region. That analysis indicates that around 2,405 of Georgia employees commute to work outside of the town, while 1,059 commute into town from other areas, and 192 both live and work within the town.

**Work Locations**



**Figure 2.9 - Work Location.** Anecdotal data from the 2024 Community Survey suggests that roughly 44% of Georgia employees work commute to areas outside of town, while only 8% work inside of town. (Source: Town of Georgia Community Survey 2024)

**Comparison of Commuting Habits**



**Figure 2.10 - Commuting Comparison.** Percentage of workers who commute to work in a private vehicle, those who work from home, and those who take public transport or walk. (Source: U.S. Census 2022 ACS 5-Year Data)





*View looking east across the farm fields on Middle Road.*

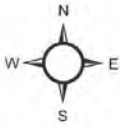
Approximately 82% of Georgia's workers commute or carpool to work via a private automobile, which is on par with the state, slightly higher than Chittenden County while below the average in Franklin County. ***(See Figure 2.10 - Commuting Comparison)***

Only about 1% of Georgia workers take public transport or walk, which is well below the Vermont average but not surprising in a rural community.

One significant change is that 16.5% of Georgia's workforce currently works from home, which is higher than these other geographic areas. The number of people who work from home in Georgia has grown substantially since 2015, up from only 4%.

Looking at employment by types of occupations, Georgia continues to largely mirror other regional and statewide trends, with some exceptions. Overall, most employees are found in the management, business, science and arts sectors, comparable to Chittenden County where many Georgia residents presumably work. A relatively small percentage (7%) work in the service industry however compared to the other regions.

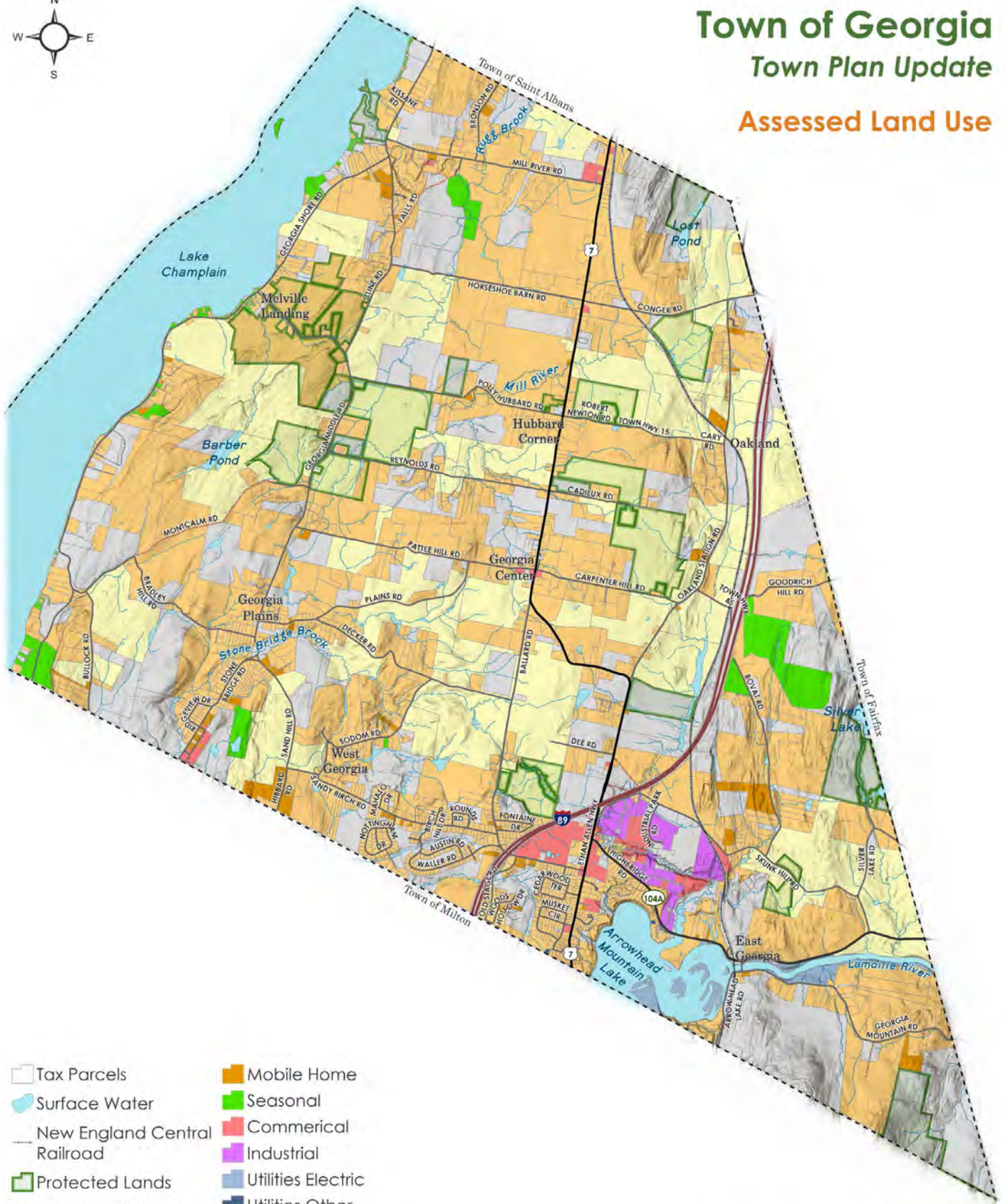




# Town of Georgia

## Town Plan Update

### Assessed Land Use



- Tax Parcels
- Surface Water
- New England Central Railroad
- Protected Lands
- Assessed Land Use**
- Farm
- Residential
- Mobile Home
- Seasonal
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Utilities Electric
- Utilities Other
- Miscellaneous/ Other/ Unclassified

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only



Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads, Protected Lands: Vermont Center for Geographic Information; Land Use: CAT field from Georgia Parcels, Vermont Center for Geographic Information, 2024

MAP 2.5 - Existing Land Use - based on assessor data



## Existing Land Use

The use of land, both historically and currently, defines the physical make-up of Georgia, providing not only a sense of place, but an insight to how the town functions economically, physically and socially. The changing distribution of land use types affects the town’s ability to provide services and has implications for taxes. **Table 2.3 - Land Use Types by Parcel** shows the distribution of different land use types by parcel over the years, showing residential uses comprise over 80% of the properties in town, while commercial/industrial uses represent only about 3%.

Overall, since the last plan, there was an increase of 179 parcels in the town, 81 of which were identified as residential and the remaining identified as “other.”

The number of seasonal vacation homes has been decreasing since the 1980’s, often converted into year-round residences, and the latest data shows this continues to be the case. The number of agricultural/open space properties has remained relatively the same. The number of commercial/industrial parcels has been slowly increasing since 2005 however the latest data shows an apparent decrease. It is not clear

why this is the case, however it should be notes that the land use classifications provided in the latest GIS data did not fully align with the categories in the previous town plan. It may be important to note that growth in the number of parcels only indicates that a property was subdivided, but does not tell us if anything was built on the new property.

As a rural and agricultural community, much of the existing development concentration has taken place in one of three village centers: Georgia Center, Georgia Plains, and more recently South Village near the highway interchange. **See Map 2.5 - Existing Land Use.** The highway in particular has been very influential in attracting new residential, commercial and industrial growth at the southern end of town. Concentrating growth in limited, selected areas of town has been a valid strategy for helping to reduce sprawl and undermine the rural character of the area. These focal points of growth, along with other notable character areas of the town, are briefly described below.

**Georgia South Village.** The Georgia South Village is an area of approximately 120 acres located south of the Exit 18 interchange of Interstate 89. This area

**Table 2.3 - Land Use Types by Parcel**

PARCELS	2005 <sup>1</sup>		2010 <sup>1</sup>		2015 <sup>1</sup>		2024 <sup>2</sup>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Residential	1,419	77%	1,504	76%	1,582	77%	1,663	75%
Vacation	184	10%	160	8%	141	7%	113	5%
Commercial/Industrial	57	3%	66	3%	76	4%	64	3%
Agricultural/Open Space	39	2%	37	2%	36	2%	36	2%
Other	149	8%	218	11%	214	10%	352	16%
TOTAL	1,848		1,985		2,049		2,228	

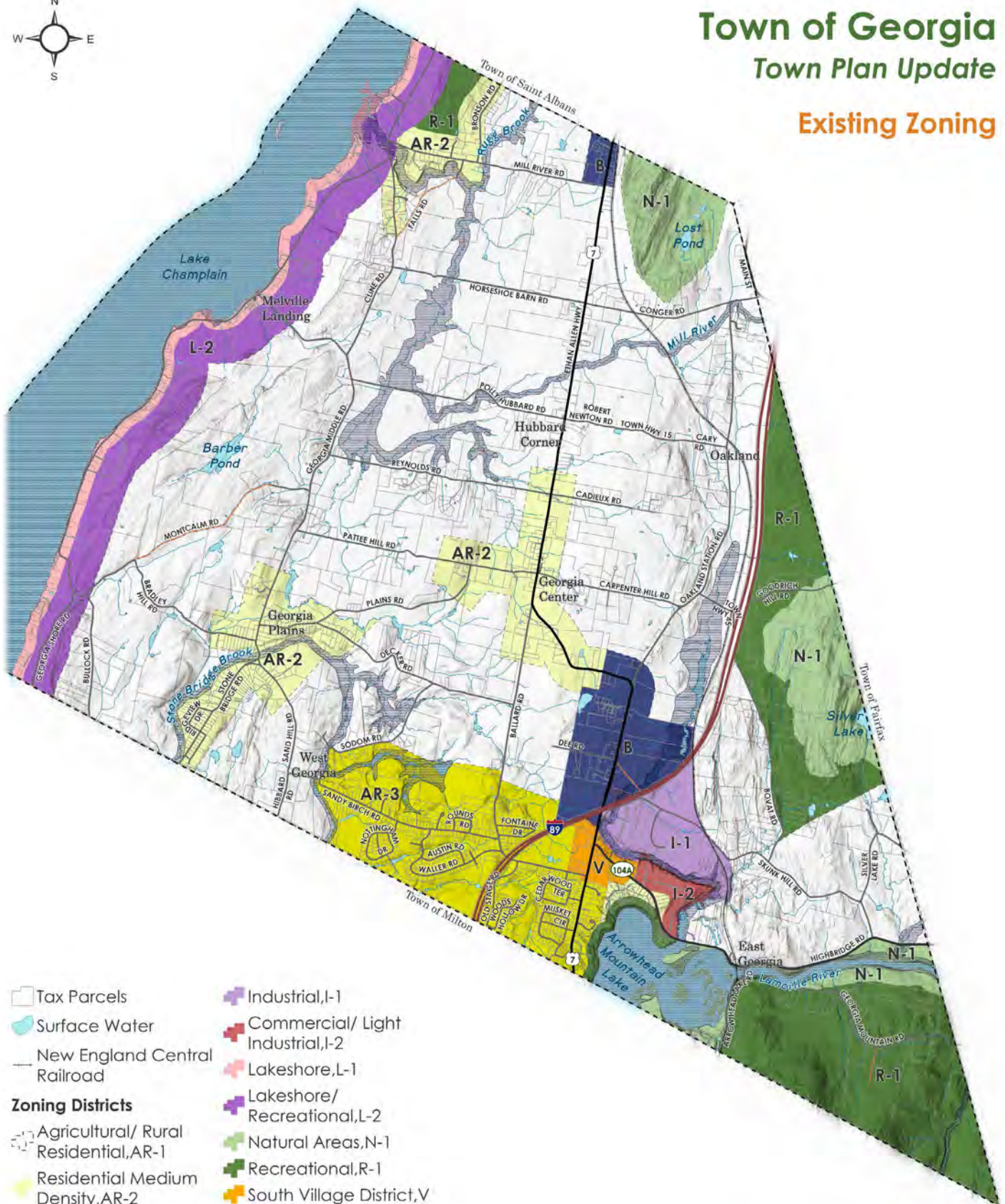
1 - Source: 2017 Town Plan

2 - Source: 2024 Vermont State GIS data. Note land use categories from 2017 Town Plan do not align fully with 2024 GIS data. “Vacation” properties include parcels identified as Seasonal 1 & 2; “Other” land use includes parcels identified as Unlisted, Miscellaneous, Other, and Utilities.



# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update

## Existing Zoning



- Tax Parcels
- Surface Water
- New England Central Railroad
- Zoning Districts**
- Agricultural/ Rural Residential, AR-1
- Residential Medium Density, AR-2
- Residential High Density, AR-3
- Business, B
- Industrial, I-1
- Commercial/ Light Industrial, I-2
- Lakeshore, L-1
- Lakeshore/ Recreational, L-2
- Natural Areas, N-1
- Recreational, R-1
- South Village District, V
- Flood Hazard Overlay District

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only



Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads, Zoning; Vermont Center for Geographic Information

MAP 2.6 - Existing Zoning



consists of commercial and residential development along routes 7 and 104a, surrounded by high-density residential neighborhoods to the south and southwest. Because of its proximity to major transportation corridors, this area has been envisioned for many years to become a walkable mixed-use neighborhood similar to a traditional Vermont downtown village, where the core commercial activity would take place. Several studies have been conducted toward this goal, including the Georgia Village Plan (2003); Georgia Sewer Feasibility Assessments (2005); South Village Bicycle and Pedestrian Feasibility Study (2012); US Route 7/104A Intersection Scoping Study (2013); the South Village Transportation Master Plan (2019); and was the focus of a new rezoning to enable the desired vision. Despite these efforts, the South Village area has not yet realized the desired growth or form envisioned. The obstacles which have been preventing this are discussed further in Part III of this plan.

**Georgia Center.** Georgia Center has served as the municipal center for our community, reinforced by the presence of the Town Offices and the Georgia Fire and Rescue facility. This historic hamlet was the subject of the 2003 Georgia Village Plan (along with the South Village), which outlined a vision for the expansion of municipal and educational facilities, multi-family and senior housing, and modest commercial together with ample greenspace and parks. Today, it continues to be a focus of potential new growth.

**Georgia Plains.** The third focal point for village type growth has been the area of Georgia Plains. While the soils in this area drain less well than those in the primary development corridor, the area contains fewer natural resources than either to the east or west. While this area remains primarily residential, there is potential for some very limited small-scale non-residential uses which would serve the immediate area and provide a place for people to interact and congregate.

**Georgia Shoreline.** Although not a focal point of potential growth like the areas described above, the Lake Champlain shoreline is a unique and

important feature in the town. The area along the lake has traditionally developed over time as a mix of residential and agricultural uses, including many seasonal/vacation homes. This area comprises most of the seasonal residences within the town. The views of this lake and the sensitive natural environment here are important considerations in future planning.

**Agricultural/Open Space.** Much of Georgia outside of the traditional village centers has historically been agricultural lands and open space which contribute greatly to the rural character of the town. Agriculture and forestry continue to be important components of the local culture and economy. It is important to remember that owners of farms and forests provide a public benefit by not developing their property, and cost the town little in terms of municipal services. These lands provide agricultural industry, popular scenic vistas, and important wildlife habitat which must be balanced against the desire for future development.

**Industrial Lands.** Industrial Development is generally concentrated in the two industrial parks located to the east of Exit 18, which measure approximately 600 acres. These industrial activities contribute greatly to the local tax base, and are designed to have minimal impact on adjacent residential areas due to their location and buffers.

## Existing Zoning

The Town of Georgia is currently divided up into 11 different zoning districts as follows: (*See Map 2.6 - Existing Zoning*)

**Agricultural/Rural Residential (AR-1).** The primary purpose of this district is to provide a place in Georgia for agriculture and silviculture uses, and encourage development in other areas of town. Residential and other uses permitted in the district are intended to be very low density and should not interfere with the agricultural and rural nature of the district, and should not place an unreasonable burden on the town's ability

to provide and maintain services to all residents. Land here should be developed so that large contiguous (non-fragmented) expanses of agricultural, forestry, significant geological areas, wildlife habitat, scenic areas, and other important open space land will be protected. Development may be phased in order to meet the purposes of this district.

**Medium Residential (AR-2).** The purpose of the AR-2 District is to enable, in areas where historic centers of the Town are located, residential development at a higher density than surrounding rural districts. In addition, small scale commercial uses will be allowed. Development in the district should reflect historic village patterns, protect important resources, enable the economic provision of services, plan for pedestrian and vehicular access, avoid strip development, and be planned so as not to burden the ability of the Town to provide adequate facilities and services.

**High Density Residential (AR-3).** The purpose of the AR-3 District is to enable higher density residential development where existing development at a higher density has already occurred. Development in the district should enable the economic provision of services, reasonable pedestrian and vehicular access within the district and to nearby business and recreation districts, protect important resources, avoid strip development, and be planned so as not to burden the ability of the Town to provide adequate facilities and services.

**South Village Core (SV).** The intent of the South Village Core District is to promote development of a compact settlement with a mix of small-scale business, civic, and residential uses and to foster a built environment patterned on a traditional Vermont village center with streetscapes and public spaces where people can walk, gather, and meet comfortably. Design of development in this area is 2009 South Village Core Strategic Plan.

**Business (B).** The Business District is a moderate traffic area with good access to major highways. The purpose of the Business District is to enable

mixed commercial and residential uses in an interconnected, unified pattern that does not result in strip development. Development in the district will have controlled access on highways, screening and landscaping, creative design and layout, some pedestrian circulation, and connections to adjoining residential and commercial districts. This district is not intended to serve as a regional growth center. Commercial uses shall be of a scale and size appropriate only for a local growth center.

**Industrial (I-1).** The I-1 District enables industrial development in an area with good highway and rail access and is set apart from agricultural and residential districts. The I-1 District enables heavy and light industrial development in an efficient pattern.

**Commercial-Light Industrial (I-2).** The purpose of the I-2 District is to enable commercial and light industrial development in an area with good highway access and set apart from agricultural and residential districts. The I-2 District enables light industrial development to develop in an efficient and integrated pattern. This district is not intended to serve as a regional growth center. Commercial uses shall be of a scale and size appropriate only for a local growth center.

**Recreation (R-1).** The Recreation District has severe limitations for development, including steep slopes, poor soil suitability, and high elevations. Therefore, much of the district is best suited to remain in a natural state or to be used for outdoor recreation purposes. Residential uses are limited to large lots to limit fragmentation and minimize the impact on the land and prevent substantial alteration to the landscape. Land should be developed so that large contiguous expanses of agricultural, forestry, significant geological areas, wildlife habitat, scenic areas, and other important open space land will be protected.

**Natural Areas (N-1).** The N-1 District has significant natural features or areas which are unique or irreplaceable. The purpose of this district is to protect



these features and areas in their natural state to the extent possible for present and future generations and to protect significant geological areas, wildlife habitat, scenic areas and other open space land. Structures are limited to large lots to limit fragmentation and minimize the impact on the land and prevent substantial alteration to the landscape.

**Lakeshore (L-1).** The L-1 District contains a 500-foot strip of land measured from the mean water mark of Lake Champlain inland 500 feet bordering Lake Champlain - one of the most significant natural features of the Town of Georgia. The purpose of the district is to protect the water quality of the lake and the recreational potential and natural beauty of the shoreline, significant geological areas, wildlife habitat, scenic areas, and other important open space land. The building height dimensional standards established for this district are intended to preserve visual access to Lake Champlain. This district includes all islands.

**Lakeshore Residential-Recreation (L-2).** The L-2 District which contains land close to Lake Champlain beginning at the easterly border of the L-1 District continuing inland 1,500 feet. The purpose of the district is to protect the water quality of the lake and the natural beauty of the shoreland area. Development within the district should preserve contiguous open lands, significant geological areas, and wildlife habitat and protect the view looking eastward from Lake Champlain. There are some severe limitations on development in this district due to soil conditions and slopes and thus densities in the district should be low.

**Flood Hazard Area Overlay.** In addition to the above mapped districts, the Town of Georgia also has a Flood Hazard Overlay which spans other mapped zoning districts based on special flood hazard areas from the National Flood Insurance Maps. This area can also be seen on *Map 2.8 - Flood, Water and Wetland Resources*. The purpose of this district is to minimize threats and damage caused by flooding in areas where it is most common.



*Arrowhead Mountain Lake.*

# Existing Physical Setting

## Introduction

The Town of Georgia is rich with natural resources. The diverse landscape stretches from the shores of Lake Champlain across the sandy flats of Georgia Plains and the open farmland of Georgia Center, to the western foothills of the Green Mountains. These resources enrich the lives of all those who live, work and play in our community. Our natural resources provide recreational opportunities, a scenic landscape, and support the local economy. Through good planning and sustainable management of these resources, we seek to enhance the quality of life for current and future Georgia residents.

The Georgia Conservation Commission was formed in 1992 by the voters of the town in accordance with state statute. The commission has seven members who are appointed by the select board for a term of four years. The members work to preserve, protect, and enhance the native plants, animals, and their habitats in the town for current and future residents. Topics studied have included stream bank buffers, and invasive plants and insects in Vermont. Conservation Commission members also work on controlling invasive plants, increasing wildlife habitat, controlling erosion, building trails, improving water quality along Georgia's extensive Lake Champlain shoreline, tree plantings, and Green Up Day held in May. Other duties include managing town-owned properties including Russell Greene Natural Area at Deer Brook, the Henley Webster Town Forest, and the Silver Lake Woods.

On the recommendation of the Commission, the Town purchased a 70 acre parcel in 2004 at the North end of town near Lost Pond; this area has a management plan which is overseen by commission members. The Town also established a Conservation Reserve Fund, to help preserve property deemed valuable to the Town of Georgia.

## Water Resources

Georgia's hydrology is largely a function of Lake Champlain and its tributaries which pass through Georgia. As shown on [Map 2.7 - Watersheds](#), the Town of Georgia is divided into three subwatersheds.

The northwestern portion of Georgia drains into the Mill River, which is joined by Rugg Brook and ultimately drains to St. Albans Bay. The southwestern portions of Georgia, which includes the Stone Bridge Brook watershed, drains directly into Lake Champlain. Eastern portions of Georgia are part of the Lamoille River Watershed, including Arrowhead Mountain Lake.

**Rivers and Floodplains.** The Town of Georgia includes portions of the Lamoille River, Rugg Brook, Mill River and all of Stone Bridge Brook, in addition to many smaller streams and brooks. Erosion is a major issue in Georgia's rivers, due in large part to unstable soil types and significant conflicts between rivers and road infrastructure. The Town of Georgia has been successful in obtaining grants from the Agency of Natural Resources and the Better Backroads Program to address some of the most pressing erosion issues that threatens public roads and bridges. The Georgia Zoning Regulations also require a fifty (50) foot buffer from the edge of the waterways, Class II wetlands, river corridor zones, and a "no development" buffer of two hundred (200) feet along Deer Brook and Arrowhead Mountain Lake in the I-1, I-2 SV, and B-1 zoning districts. [Map 2.8 - Flood, Water and Wetland Resources](#).

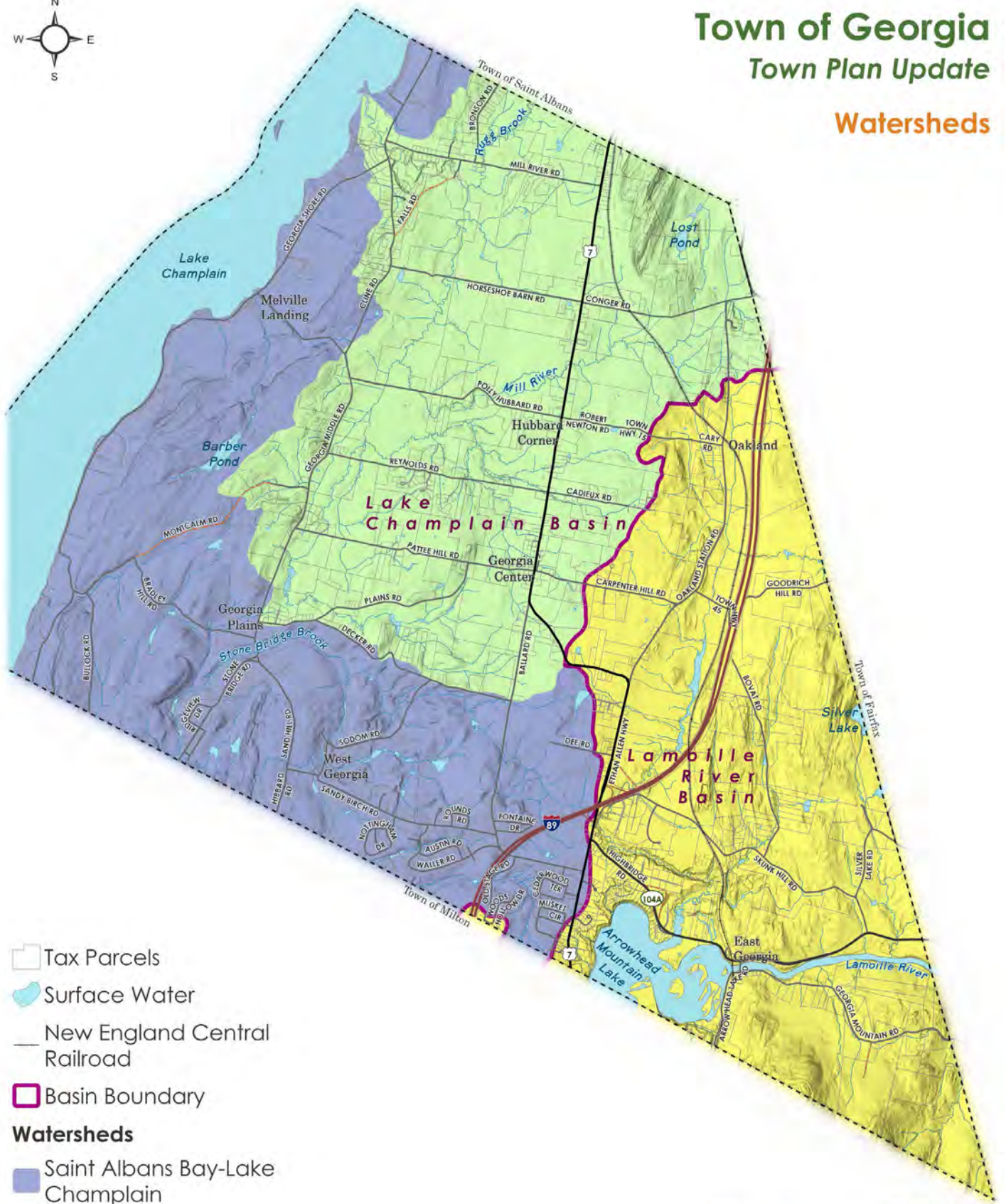
Stormwater runoff has also been identified as a threat to our local waterways as it carries sediment and pollutants, increases the volume of water in our rivers, accelerates flows, and exacerbates erosion in the stream channel. Ensuring stormwater from roads, parking lots, roofs and other impervious surfaces is adequately captured and treated is an important step to protecting our water quality and improving the stability of our streams and shorelines.





# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update

## Watersheds



- Tax Parcels
- Surface Water
- New England Central Railroad
- Basin Boundary

### Watersheds

- Saint Albans Bay-Lake Champlain
- Mill River
- Lamoille River

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only



Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads, Watersheds, Vermont Center for Geographic Information

MAP 2.7 - Watersheds

**Arrowhead Mountain Lake.** Arrowhead Mountain Lake was formed by the impoundment of water by the Green Mountain Power dam at Milton Falls in 1923. The lake that was formed has provided significant new areas for wildlife over the years. The water level fluctuates based on need for water in the plants turbines. The level is regulated by the State of Vermont and the Federal Government. Arrowhead Mountain Lake also provides a valuable source of water for the Georgia Industrial Park. Water is drawn from the Lake, treated at the Park, used for industrial processing, re-treated and discharged back into the lake.

**Lake Champlain.** The Town of Georgia has approximately 7 miles of lakeshore frontage on Lake Champlain. The lake, which is more than 400 sq. miles in size is the largest freshwater body in the United States besides the Great Lakes. Georgia forms the easternmost shore of St. Albans Bay and holds, within its waters, several small islands, the largest of which is Lazy Lady Island. To the west, St. Albans Point and Burton Island form a peninsula which separates the northerly half of Georgia's waters from the broad lake.

The water quality of St. Albans Bay is impaired primarily by excessive levels of phosphorus which lead to algal blooms and growth of aquatic weeds. This problem impacts recreation in the lake, making boating, swimming and fishing less enjoyable for residents and visitors of our community. The State of Vermont's recently adopted a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Lake Champlain. The TMDL aims to reduce phosphorus pollution in Lake Champlain. The State also recently adopted Act 64, which aims to address increased phosphorus loads in Lake Champlain through increased regulation of agriculture and stormwater discharge.

Lake Champlain is a sensitive resource. It is sensitive environmentally, aesthetically and in terms of its ability to absorb development. The area's "carrying capacity" and development requires extensive oversight and planning initiatives to ensure its long term health and viability.

Sewage disposal along the lakeshore also has the potential to degrade water quality. Regional solutions are currently cost-prohibitive. However, alternative individual system options, now permitted by the State of Vermont, are working to improve the waste disposal issue for several shore owners. As they become more generally applied, these will substantially reduce this as a problem.

Lake Champlain continues to be a valuable asset for recreation and enjoyment, but access to the lake remains an issue. The Town Beach is the primary means of access for the public to the lake. The bulk of shoreland is in private ownership which limits the use and enjoyment of the lake for the citizenry as a whole. The town will continue to investigate ways to increase public access to the lake.

**Shoreline.** The Lake Champlain shoreline is a unique ecosystem that provides an important habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial animals. The shoreline in Georgia is relatively open with typical grasses and cultivated fields running adjacent to the shore itself, typically to the east of Georgia Shore Road, particularly in the central part of the lakeshore in town. In the northerly section there are more wooded areas in the vicinity of Melville Landing, Lime Rock Point and the Mill River Delta.

Much of the Georgia shoreline was previously characterized by high-density, seasonal camps, many of which have since been converted to larger, year-round homes. Although much of the lakeshore is densely developed, there are notable open sections at Lime Rock Point, the Mill River Delta, Rhodes Shore, and White Shore. This is contrasted dramatically by the extensive open space to the east of Georgia Shore Road, and indeed pressure is mounting to develop these lands with their views and potential access to the lake.

The shoreline, characteristic of many Champlain Valley lakeshore sections, alternates between bedrock shales, limestones and loamy bank conditions, (Lordstown is a predominant soil type in this area).

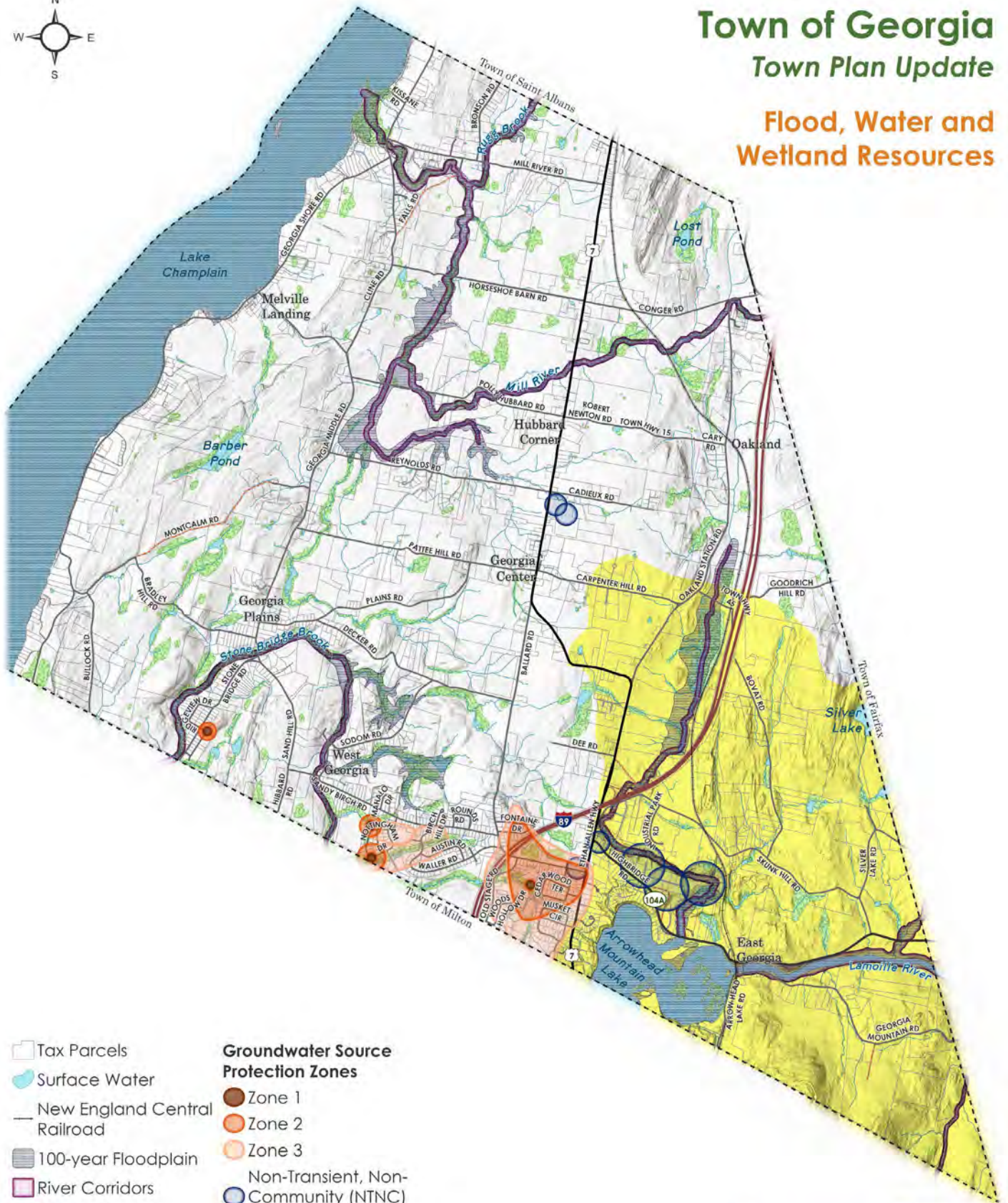




# Town of Georgia

## Town Plan Update

### Flood, Water and Wetland Resources



- Tax Parcels
  - Surface Water
  - New England Central Railroad
  - 100-year Floodplain
  - River Corridors
  - Wetlands
  - Surface Water Source Protection Areas
- Groundwater Source Protection Zones**
- Zone 1
  - Zone 2
  - Zone 3
  - Non-Transient, Non-Community (NTNC) Wellhead

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only



Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads, Wetlands, Water protection areas, River corridors, Flood: Vermont Center for Geographic Information

MAP 2.8 - Flood, Water and Wetland Resources

Several areas along the shore are subject to erosion.

**Wetlands.** Wetlands are abundant throughout Georgia and play an important role in maintaining water quality. The location of known major wetlands are shown on *Map 2.8 - Flood, Water and Wetland Resources*.

The extensive biological activity of a wetland area enables the absorption and assimilation of nutrients and thus purifies to some extent the water that is discharged. These areas store large quantities of water during periods of high runoff and gradually release water during low flow periods. Therefore, the wetland regulates stream discharge both during low flow and peak flow. Loss of this storage capacity not only adversely affects stream behavior but also increases floods and reduces stream flow during crucial low flow periods. Wetlands also provide habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals, including a disproportionately high number of threatened or endangered species, compared to other ecosystem types. Many wetlands receive some protection through State and Federal regulations.

**Drinking Water Supply.** There are three Groundwater Source Protection Zones that have been delineated to protect public drinking water sources: one which serves Rhodeside Acres, one which serves Sherwood Forest, and one which serves the South Georgia Fire District (*See Map 2.8, Flood, Water and Wetland Resources*).

Most Georgia residents obtain their drinking water from ground water resources. The management of all our water resources has a direct impact on the present and future quality of the water we consume.

Abundant clean water is a basic need for public health and economic and community development. Protecting these resources from pollution and inappropriate use is of paramount importance to the citizens of the town and is the public good. Because these resources do not follow municipal boundaries, it is also important to coordinate and cooperate with

adjacent municipalities to see that the resource is wisely managed.

## Geology

Perhaps the most notable geologic feature in Georgia is the 5-mile north/south length of Champlain thrust fault ledges, a limestone and dolomite precipice that overlooks the lake. The shoreline slopes west of the Champlain thrust fault are generally less than 12%. The Champlain thrust fault is typically made up of rock outcrop and west facing slopes greater than 12%. These rock outcrops and steep slopes of the Champlain thrust lie in a sparsely populated area several thousand feet east of the shoreline and west of Middle, Cline, and Bronson Roads.

The Town of Georgia spans across two Physiograph Regions: The Champlain Lowlands and the Foothills of the Green Mountains (*See Map 2.9 - Steep Slopes and Physiographic Regions*).

The Champlain lowlands extend eastward from the Champlain thrust fault to the Hinesburg-Oak Hills Thrust fault, which is generally marked by I-89 and the ridge of quartzite it rides along. The slopes are typically less than 12%.

The eastern part of Georgia is considered to be the foothills of the Green Mountains. Many of the forested slopes east of the northern half of I-89 and around Cushman Hill and Georgia Mountain are greater than 12%, while a few areas of slopes greater than 25% exist around Lamoille River, Arrowhead Mountain lake and several of its tributaries.

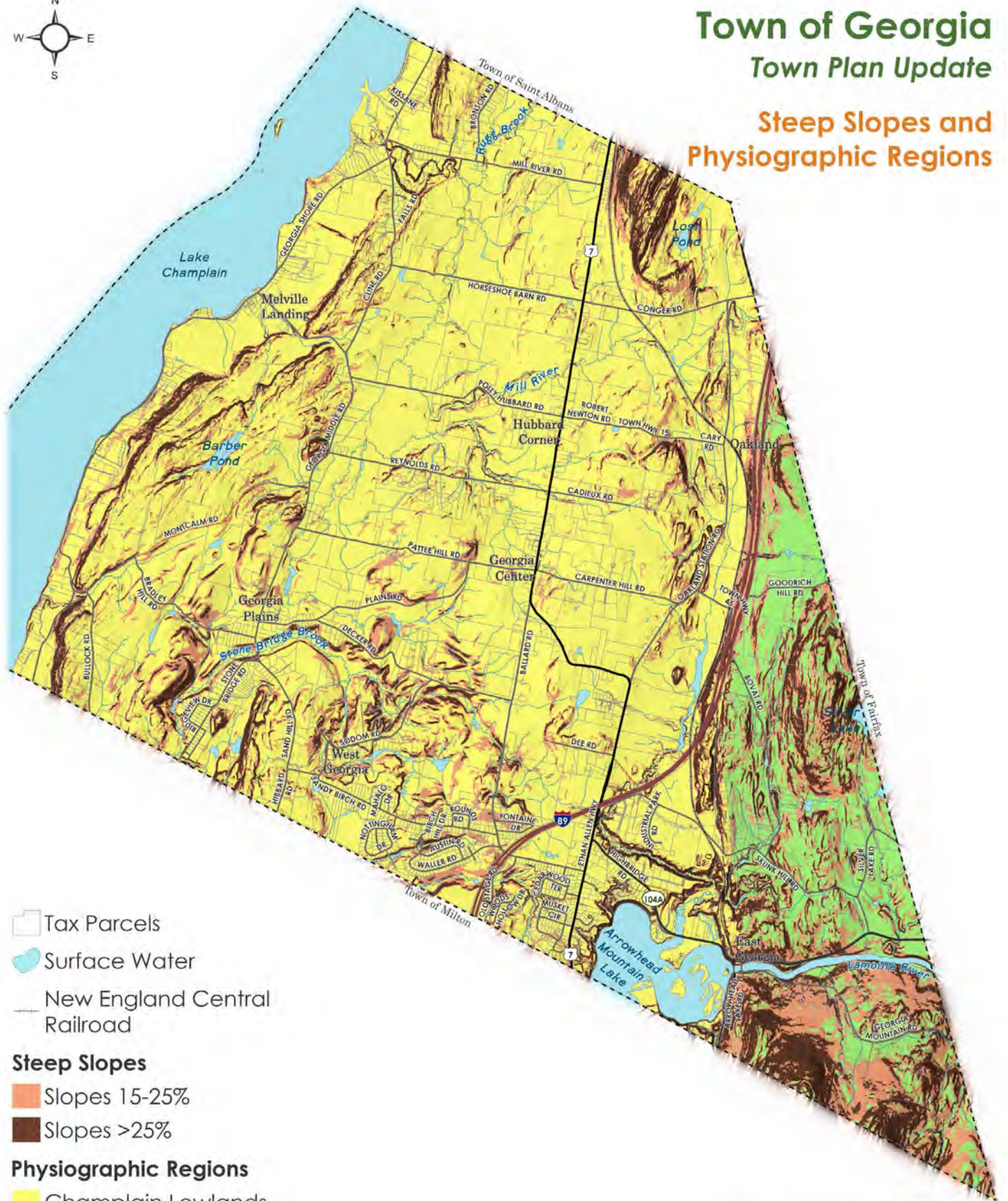
The Champlain lowlands were formed as a result of Lake Champlain's predecessors (Lake Vermont and the Champlain Sea), glacial action and weathering. The Geological history of the bedrock and soils are therefore much different than the history of the Green Mountains. The bedrock tends to be less complex and not as highly metamorphosed. Dolomite and Limestone marbles, shales, slates, and occasional





# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update

## Steep Slopes and Physiographic Regions



- Tax Parcels
- Surface Water
- New England Central Railroad

- Steep Slopes**
- Slopes 15-25%
  - Slopes >25%

- Physiographic Regions**
- Champlain Lowlands
  - Green Mountain Foothills

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only



Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads, Vermont Center for Geographic Information; Slopes, derived from 2019 USGS 10-m DEM; Regions derived from description in 2017 Town Plan and data from ANR

MAP 2.9 - Steep Slopes and Physiographic Regions

quartzite are the most common bedrock materials in the Lowlands. Soils in the Lowlands also reflect the geological history and are predominately marine sediments, such as clays and sands. These are most often found in elevations of less than 700’.

The Green Mountain foothills have a much different geological history than the Lowlands. The Bedrock is highly metamorphosed and complex due to the numerous upheavals and folding of the earth’s plates and enormous heat and pressure created in the process. In the vicinity of the Hinesburg Oak Hill Thrust, the bedrock is primarily Dolomite Marble. As you move eastward to the foothills, the bedrock changes to predominately Quartzite.

Parker Cobble is identified in the Vermont Natural Area Inventory as a significant geological site in Georgia containing fossils which are used as age indicators for the Cambrian Geologic Period.

## Topography

The topography of Georgia ranges from an elevation of 95.5 feet above sea level along the shores of Lake Champlain, to 1,400 feet at the peak of Georgia Mountain in the southeast corner of town. Much of our everyday human activity however remains confined within the 103 feet to 500 feet elevation range. (*See Map 2.9 - Steep Slopes and Physiographic Regions*)

Georgia’s shorelands slope to the lake from a distinct south to north trending, which is the Champlain Thrust Fault line, and which tops out at almost 500 feet and creates a distinct, narrow sloping lake edge 1/4 to 1/2 mile in width. At several points, outcroppings which are perhaps remnants of one “wave” of the Champlain Thrust Fault emerge, most notably at Lime Rock Point, 35 to 40 feet above the Lake. The Georgia lakeshore is perhaps less dramatic than further south in Milton, where the Thrust Fault emerges in the bedrock hills of Milton creating a more elevated and cliff-like environment, such as Eagle Mountain.

Topography is one of the major factors that determine suitability of specific land uses. Traditionally, major settlements have been located near water courses, for power and transportation, and roads have followed the course of valleys and streams for ease of construction.

Georgia’s drainage pattern is a result of its geology and topography. Our drainage network includes meandering streams, lakes and ponds, and significant wetland areas. Poorly draining soils and high ground water tables in many parts of town present a challenge to development.

## Soils

Georgia’s soils originate from two general sources; those formed from the Green Mountain’s glacial till, and those formed from lake and marine sediments and the Champlain Lowlands glacial till. *Map 2.10 - Agricultural Soils* shows the approximate location of soils deemed important to the livelihood of farming crops, including farmland of local importance, farmland of statewide importance, and prime farmland.

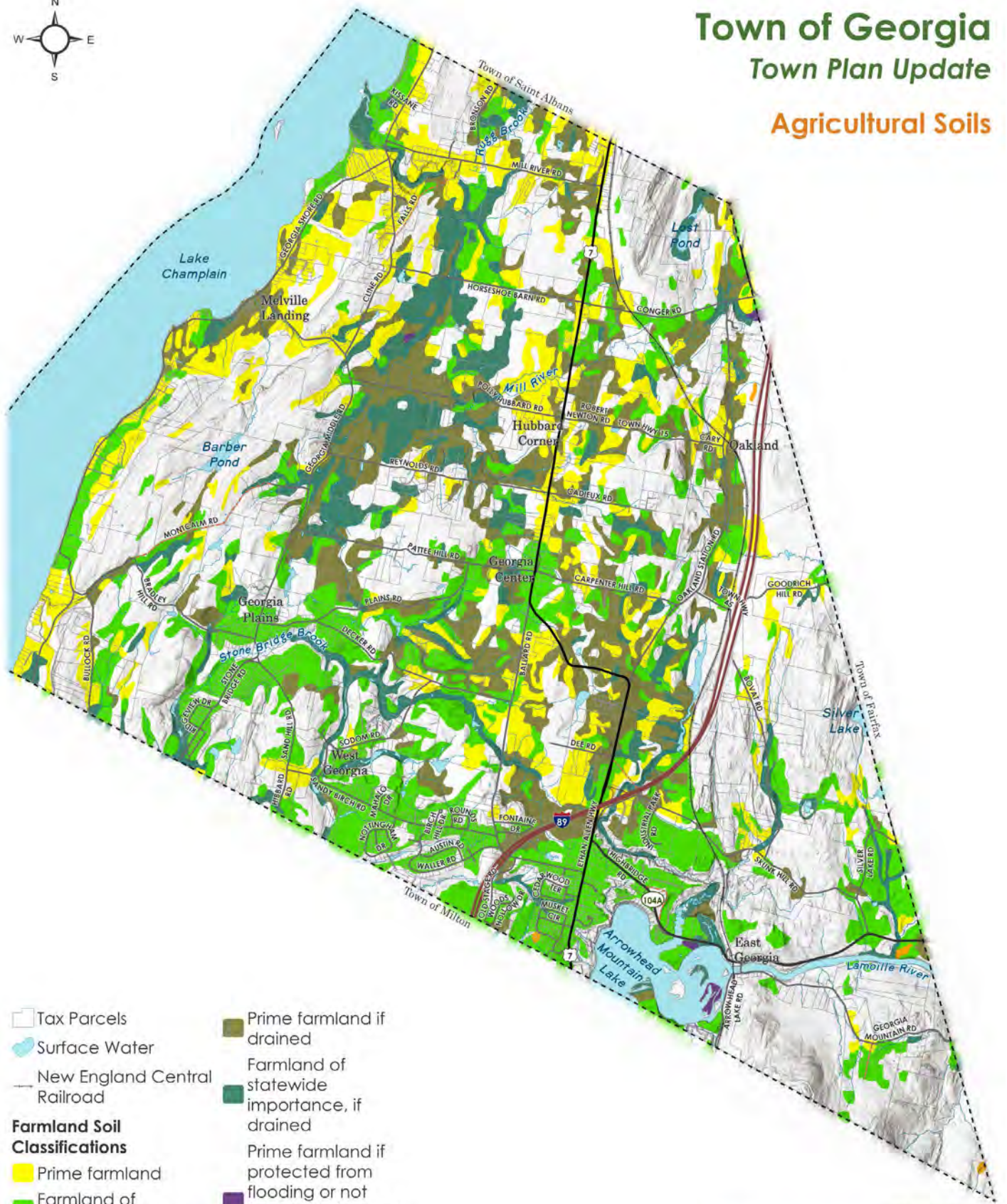
The two main categories of agricultural soils are Prime Soils (divided into classes 1 thru 3) and Statewide Soils (divided into classes 4 thru 7). Prime Soils are described as “having the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, forage, and fiber crops, and are also available for these uses.” Statewide Soils are defined as “having good potential for growing crops, but have one or more limitations which restrict the choice of crops and require more intensive management than prime soils.” While the location of these soils does not necessarily correspond to areas presently being farmed, it however indicates areas that have the highest capability for producing crops from a soils capability perspective. Preserving large, contiguous blocks of these agricultural soils is necessary to continue to have viable agricultural operations in Georgia, and ensure adequate food supplies for future generations as our human population increases.





# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update

## Agricultural Soils



- Tax Parcels
- Surface Water
- New England Central Railroad
- Farmland Soil Classifications**
- Prime farmland
- Farmland of statewide importance
- Farmland of local importance
- Prime farmland if drained
- Farmland of statewide importance, if drained
- Prime farmland if protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only

Map prepared by  
 REGROWTH PLANNING  
 Upstate GIS

Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads: Vermont Center for Geographic Information; Soils: USDA NRCS and ESRI

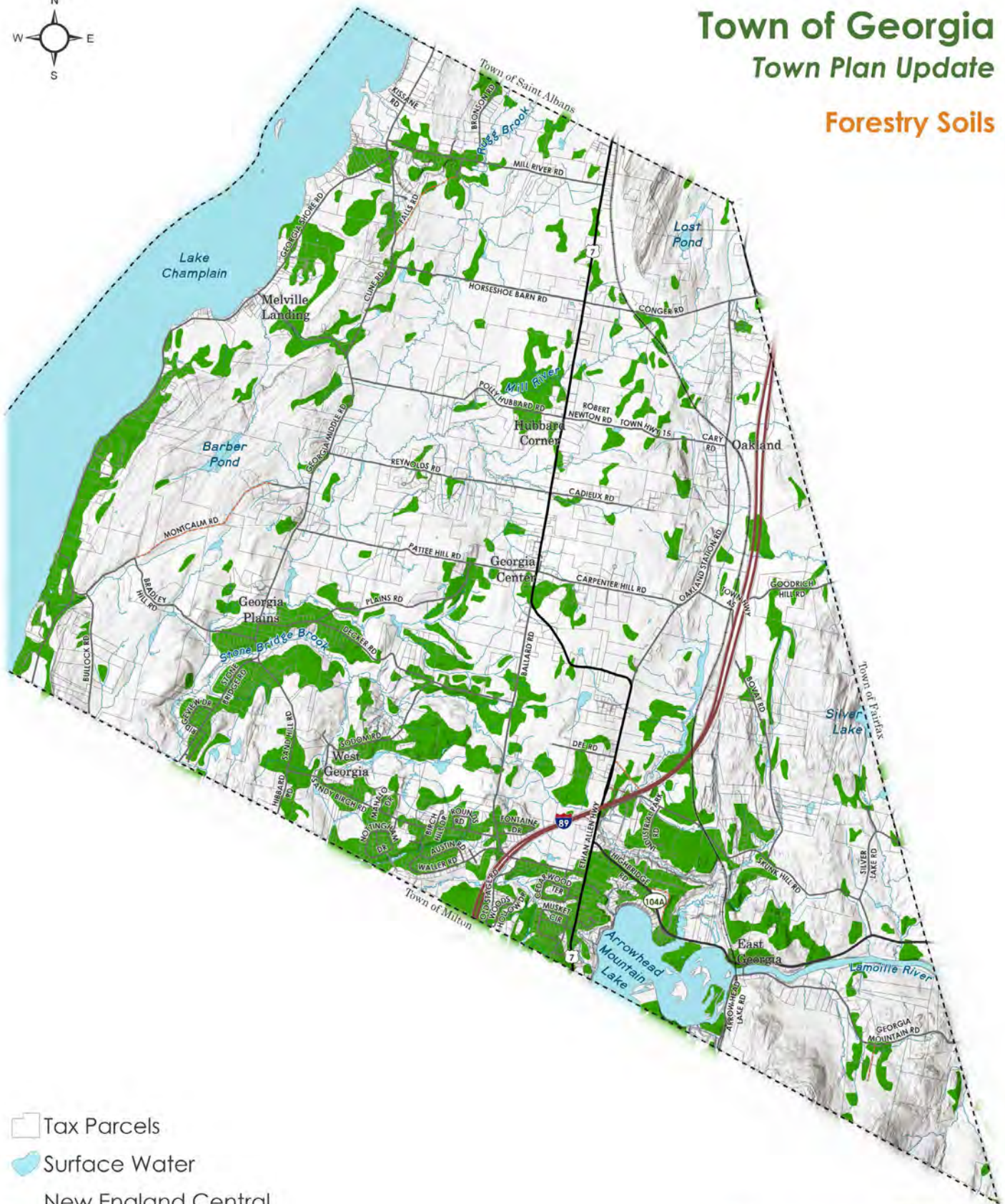
MAP 2.10 - Agricultural Soils





# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update

## Forestry Soils



-  Tax Parcels
-  Surface Water
-  New England Central Railroad
-  Primary Forestry Soils

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only.



Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads, Soils:  
Vermont Center for Geographic Information

MAP 2.11 - Forestry Soils



The presence of appropriate soils is also critical to supporting other working landscapes in Georgia, including forestry. *Map 2.11 - Forestry Soils* indicates the approximate locations of soils that best support forestry operations. Primary forestry soils are important to sustain commercial forestry operations, wood supplies, and wildlife habitat in the region, based on their relative soil productivity. As development occurs, these areas can become fragmented and weakened. Sustainable management of the soils resource base through accepted management practices should be considered in determining which tracts of forest land should be maintained long-term for commercial use.

Note these maps show a broad picture of the town soil locations and do not indicate that specific sites might or might not be suited for development, however they are useful for general long-term planning.

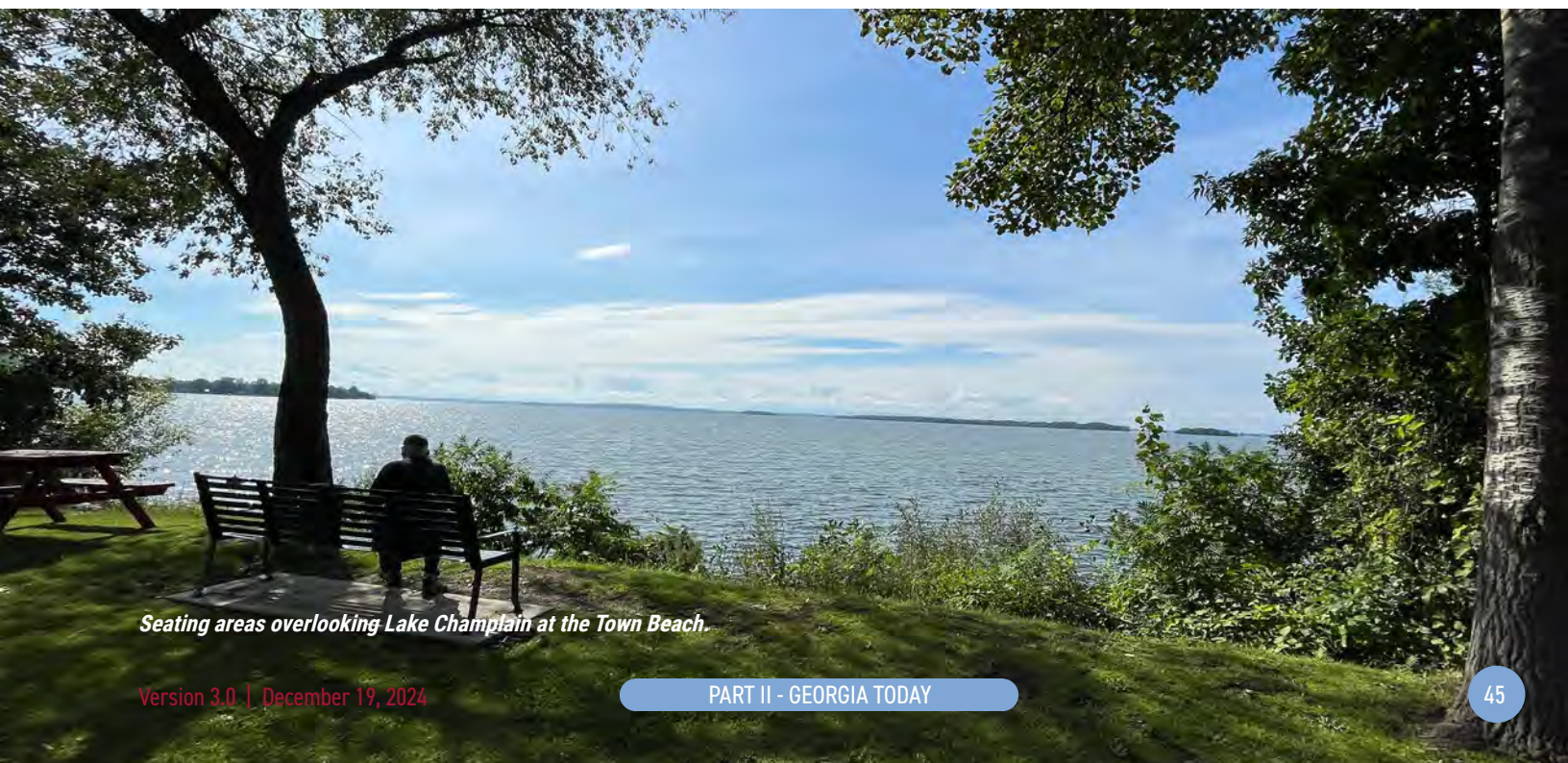
As far as more specific development potential is concerned, the town has a mix of soils which vary widely in suitability on a more property-specific scale. Some lands are ill suited to development, having low permeability (or high), shallow depth to bedrock, or high water table. Others are well suited because

they present few development constraints. Because Georgia relies on private septic systems for disposal of sewage and ground water for our drinking water supplies, the individual soil types of each property is an important variable in locating development.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) maintains soil survey maps for approximately 95% of the United States. This information is publicly available online through the Web Soil Survey, which can be accessed through their home page at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>.

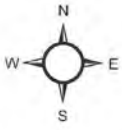
## Scenic Resources

The views and scenic beauty of the Georgia landscape are greatly valued and appreciated by residents and visitors alike. Georgia's gradual transition from the foothills to the lake provides beautiful scenery: The juxtaposition of rolling farmland, historic settlements, and forest within the Champlain lowlands creates a landscape that enhances our community and our quality of life. The scenic resources of our town take many forms, including ridgelines, the foregrounds of distant views, open agricultural lands, vistas of the



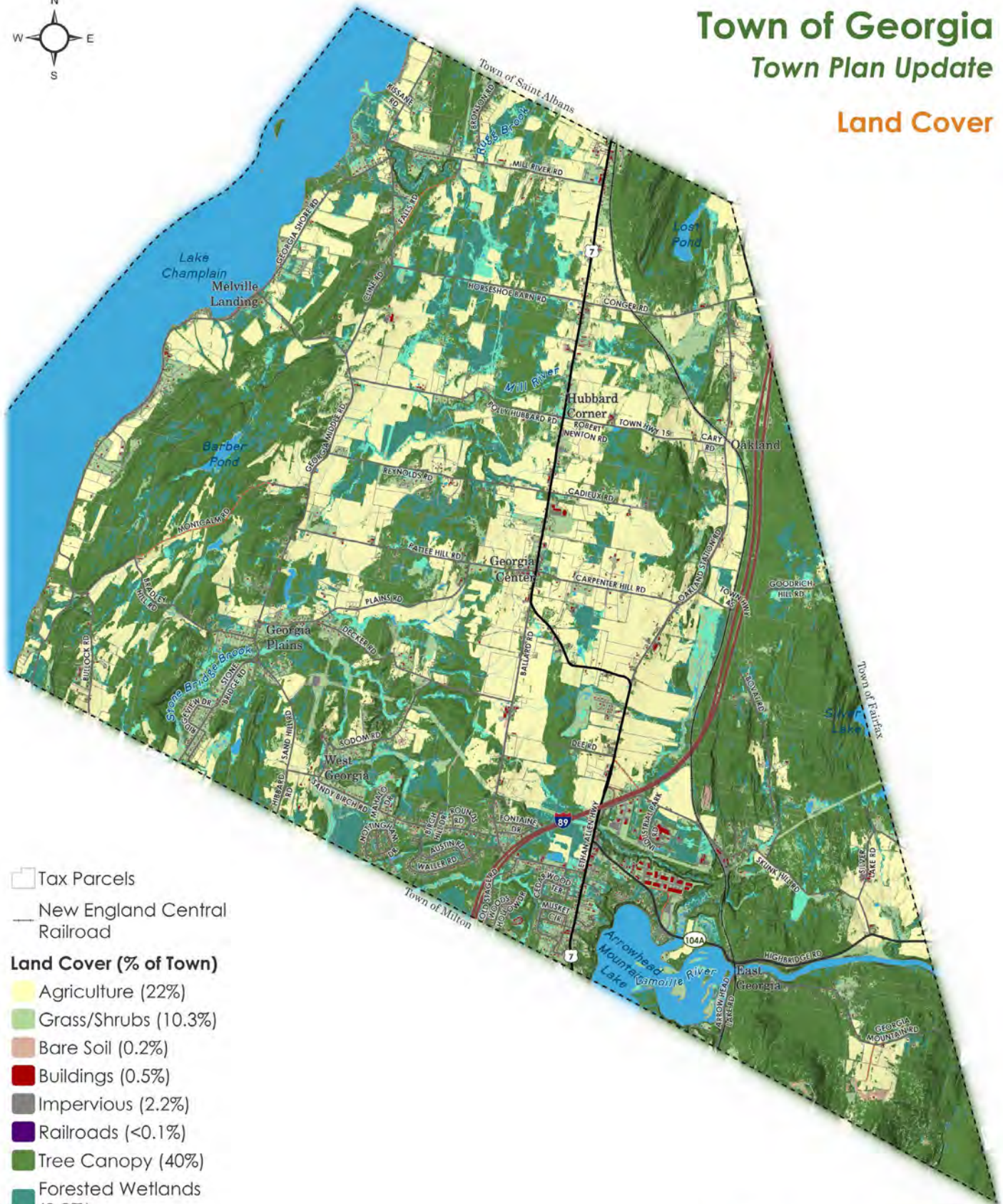
*Seating areas overlooking Lake Champlain at the Town Beach.*





# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update

## Land Cover



- Tax Parcels
- New England Central Railroad

### Land Cover (% of Town)

- Agriculture (22%)
- Grass/Shrubs (10.3%)
- Bare Soil (0.2%)
- Buildings (0.5%)
- Impervious (2.2%)
- Railroads (<0.1%)
- Tree Canopy (40%)
- Forested Wetlands (9.2%)
- Wetlands (2.7%)
- Water (12.9%)

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only



Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads, Parcels: Vermont Center for Geographic Information; Land Cover: Modified from 2016 0.5-m Vermont Center for Geographic Information by Upstate GIS, 2024

MAP 2.12 - Land Cover





*Ballard Woods on Sodom Road*

lake, scenic roadways and historic village settlements. Lake Champlain is particularly important as visual and aesthetic resource for the Town of Georgia. To the west, we enjoy beautiful views of the Adirondacks and to the east we see the Green Mountains. The shoreline itself is a scenic resource and is particularly sensitive to human and natural change. These resources are highly regarded yet often difficult to quantify and map like other elements, though they are no less important.

## Land Cover

Today, the Town of Georgia still remains a mostly rural and natural community. The single largest type of land cover in the town is wooded areas with tree canopies which represent 40% of the total land area in town. This is followed by agricultural lands, which represent 22% of the land area. Taken together, the various different natural areas in town including wooded areas, wetlands, waters and fields cover at least 87% of the town. Buildings, roads and other man-made impervious surfaces represent less than 3%. (See [Map 2.12 - Land Cover](#))

## Fragile, Unique and Sensitive Ecology

All physiographic regions of the town contain sites which include natural, unique, and fragile areas or species. [Map 2.13 - Wildlife Areas](#) indicates the approximate locations of critical habitat areas of threatened and endangered species, as well as uncommon species and deer wintering areas.

The 1992 Non-game and Natural Heritage Program Report identified five sites in Georgia as Biological Areas of State-Significance. The Program, part of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, determined the sites on the basis of uncommonness of the natural community type, ecosystem integrity and lack of major disturbance, and the presence of rare species. State significance implies that a site is one of the best examples of its natural community type in the state, or that it is the site for at least one rare species.

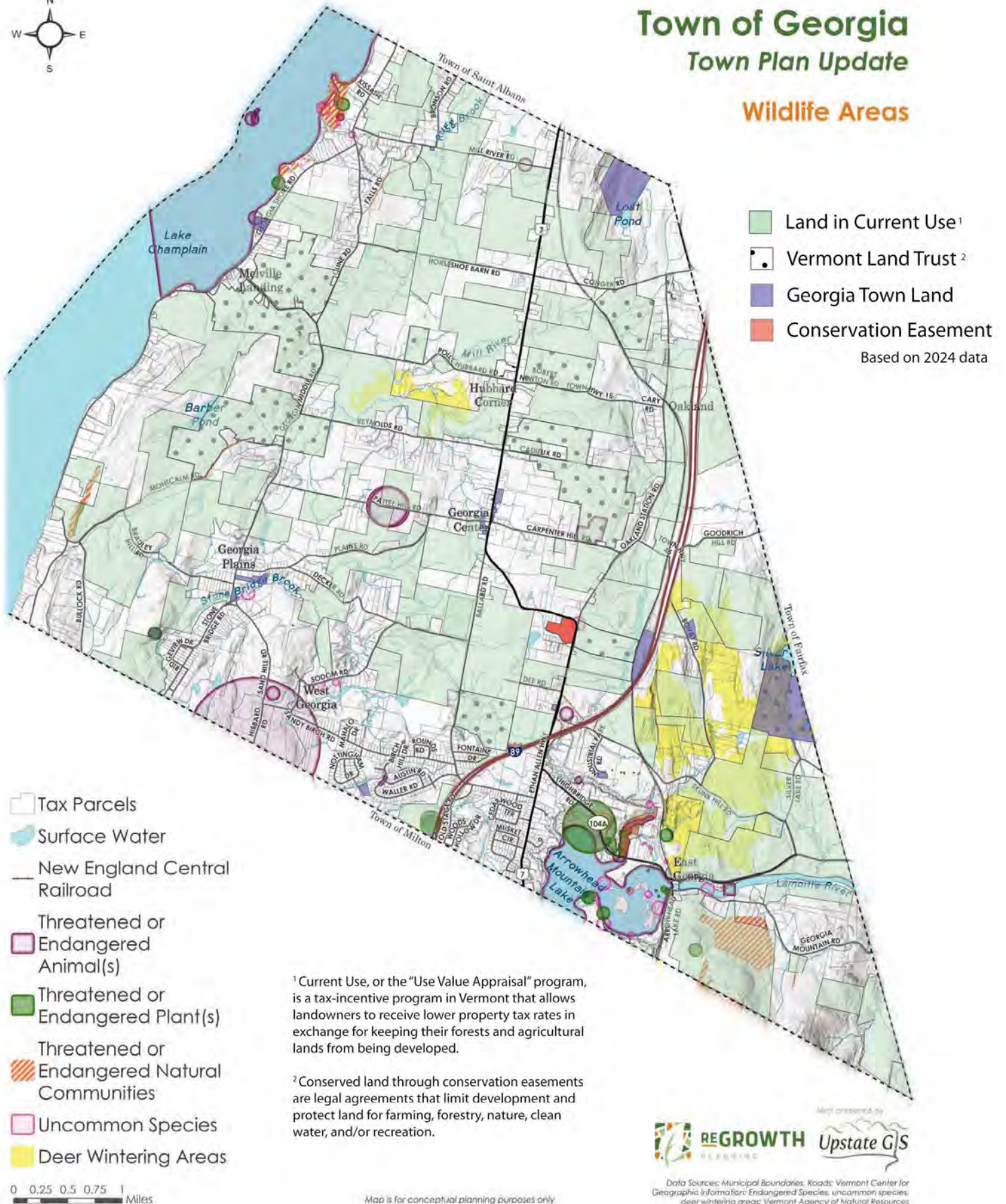
Habitat loss and fragmentation, non-native species, and a rapidly changing climate all pose grave threats to regional species and ecosystems. These changes pose many long-term threats to humans as it slowly





# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update

## Wildlife Areas



MAP 2.13 - Wildlife Areas



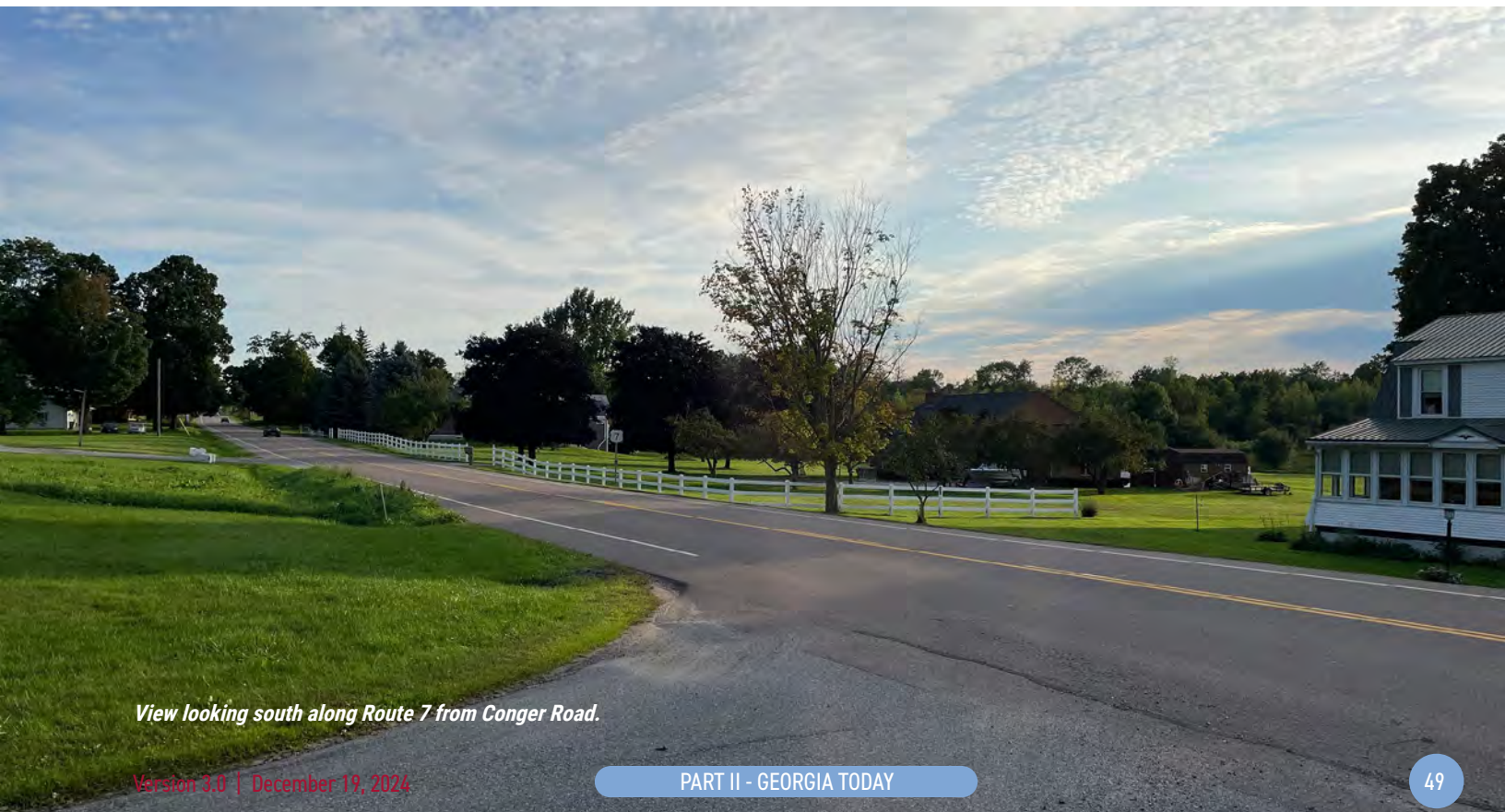
impacts our environment, health and economy. Some of these changes can be anticipated, and some we cannot yet predict.

In an effort to help mitigate the potential impacts of these changes, the State of Vermont has embarked on an effort to identify the most critically important natural areas, forests, waters, wildlife and plants which make up our regional ecology at a statewide level. This effort was documented in the 2018 summary report entitled “Vermont Conservation Design - Maintaining and Enhancing an Ecologically Functional Landscape.”

The purpose of the Vermont Conservation Design is to identify and protect a connected network of un-fragmented forest blocks, surface waters, and riparian areas which provide habitat for interior forest wildlife, clean air and water, wildlife migration, carbon sequestration, and help reduce flooding and other negative effects of climate change.

This results of this scientific analysis identified the highest priority natural communities and habitat features in the state, the highest priority landscape blocks in the state, and the highest priority surface waters and riparian areas in the state which should be conserved.

The statewide analysis identified a number of these important conservation resources within the Town of Georgia, illustrated in *Map 2.14 - Landscape Priorities* and in *Map 2.15 - Ecological Priorities*. The Vermont Conservation Design report recommends and provides different strategies for the long-term conservation of these areas based on local conditions and realities. These options include voluntary conservation easements, land use regulations, incentives, ownership by a public agency or conservation organization as well as general public awareness and support for the thoughtful stewardship of the land.

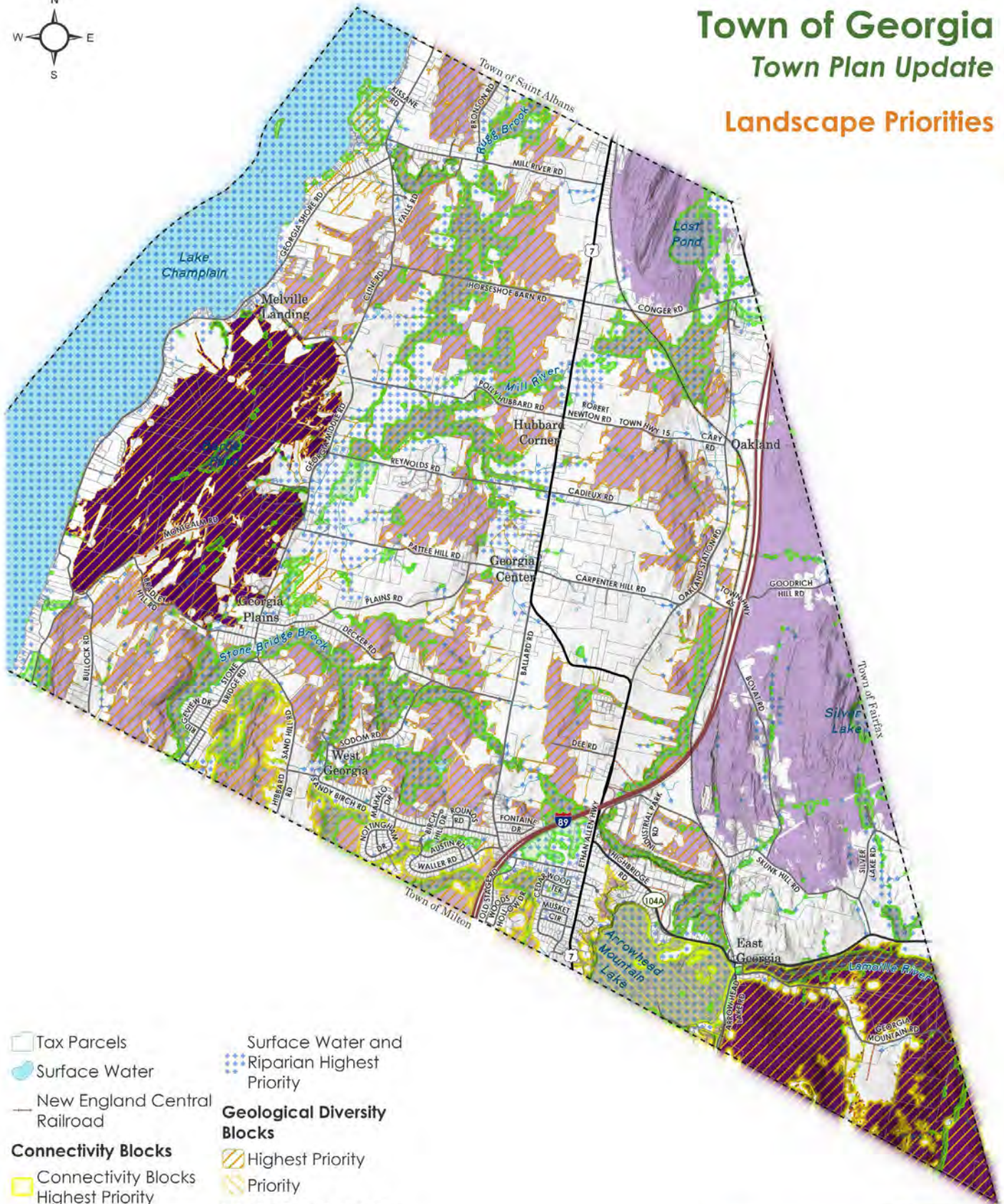


*View looking south along Route 7 from Conger Road.*





# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update Landscape Priorities



- Tax Parcels
- Surface Water
- New England Central Railroad
- Connectivity Blocks**
- Connectivity Blocks Highest Priority
- Riparian Wildlife
- Connectivity Highest Priority
- Surface Water and Riparian Highest Priority
- Geological Diversity Blocks**
- Highest Priority
- Priority
- Interior Forest Blocks**
- Highest Priority
- Priority

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only



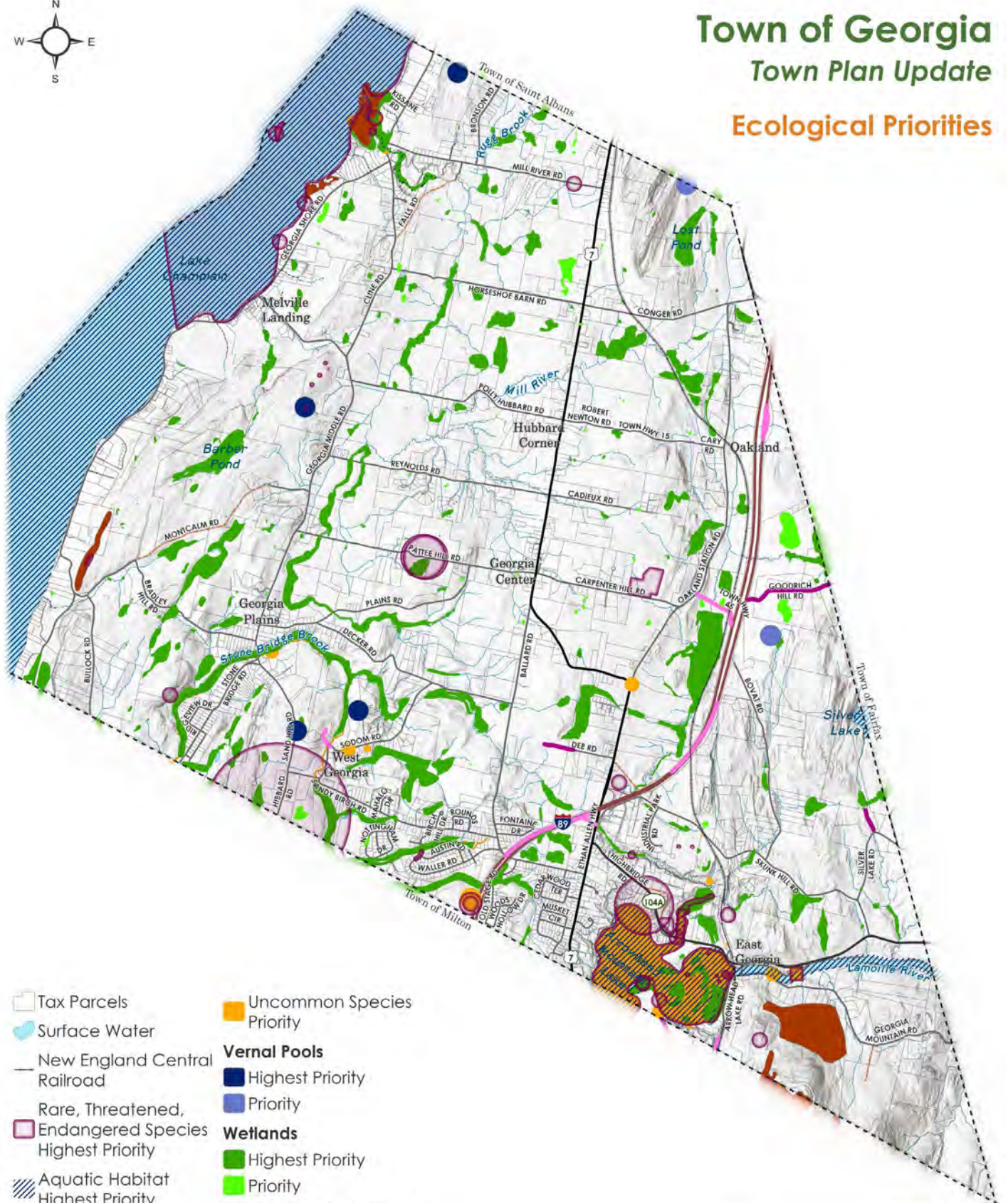
Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads: Vermont Center for Geographic Information; Priorities: Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Biofinder

MAP 2.14 - Landscape Priority Conservation Areas (Vermont Conservation Design)





# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update Ecological Priorities



- Tax Parcels
- Surface Water
- New England Central Railroad
- Rare, Threatened, Endangered Species Highest Priority
- Aquatic Habitat Highest Priority
- Natural Communities Highest Priority
- Uncommon Species Priority
- Vernal Pools**
  - Highest Priority
  - Priority
- Wetlands**
  - Highest Priority
  - Priority
- Wildlife Road Crossings**
  - Highest Priority
  - Priority

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only



Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries; Roads: Vermont Center for Geographic Information; Priorities: Vermont Agency of Natural Resources BioIndex

MAP 2.15 - Ecological Priority Conservation Areas (Vermont Conservation Design)

## Flood Resiliency

Flooding is the most common and impactful natural hazard that affects Georgia. Several small streams and wetland complexes drain into Lake Champlain, causing it to rise above flood levels in the spring of each year when snow melts, and also rises during major summer rain events. Flooding along the shores of Lake Champlain affected a considerable amount of the community in the spring of 2011, resulting in thousands of dollars in property damage. Flooding can also occur on Georgia's rivers and streams.

Flooding is a natural occurrence and can occur in two ways: inundation and fluvial erosion. Inundation flooding is when water rises and covers the adjacent low-lying land, referred to as a floodplain. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines a floodplain as an area of land adjacent to lakes and streams that is subject to recurring inundation or high water. There are several areas of floodplain in Georgia, including areas along the banks of the Lamoille River, the Mill River, Deer Brook, and the shoreline of Lake Champlain. (*See Map 2.8 - Flood, Water and Wetland Resources*).

Development within floodplains can have damaging consequences, often by obstructing the natural flow of water or displacing soil and raising base flood elevations. A strategy to mitigate this is to prohibit development below the base flood elevation, or set an elevation from which development is prohibited. The State of Vermont has implemented a statewide buffer regulation on all lakes and ponds greater than 10 acres (including Lake Champlain). The Shoreland Protection Act essentially prohibits new clearing and development within 100 feet of the mean water level of Lake Champlain (95.5 feet above sea level) and places limits on clearing and development from 100 to 250 feet from the mean water level. The intent of the regulation is to limit bank erosion, to protect shoreland habitat, and to improve water quality.

The Town of Georgia has adopted land use regulations for special flood hazard areas, as defined by FEMA

on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its residents and to allow the community to participate in the National Flood Hazard Insurance Program (NFIP). It is important to note that the existing FIRMs are dated September 16, 1981 and the Flood Insurance Study was published in August 1980. While this information is the best currently available, the hydrology that these maps are based on has not been updated and therefore does not account for shifts in shoreline, effects of development, or changes in climate and weather patterns since that time.

Flooding can also occur through fluvial erosion, a condition that occurs when fast moving flood waters, typically in steep areas, cause erosion of areas surrounding streams and rivers. To identify areas prone to fluvial erosion hazards, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resource has identified River Corridors in all Vermont municipalities. River Corridors are based on the individual conditions of streams and rivers including topography and the existence of public infrastructure. River Corridors are not mapped for streams that have a watershed of less than 2 square miles. Instead, the Agency advises using a 50 foot buffer on each side of a stream with the intention of protecting stream stability and natural flow. *Map 2.8 - Flood, Water and Wetland Resources* shows the mapped River Corridors in Georgia.

River Corridors regulations currently apply only to Act 250-related land development and land development not regulated by municipalities (like agriculture). Municipalities may adopt River Corridor maps and regulation as a part of their development regulations. Adoption may provide financial benefits to the Town in the event of federally declared natural disaster due to changes in how the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) is administered.

Georgia has adopted zoning regulations to address fluvial erosion hazards on named rivers and streams in the community. Specifically, Georgia has adopted a riparian buffer zone regulations. These regulations include a 200 foot setback from Deer Brook and a 50



foot setback from all other named rivers and streams. Setbacks are measured from the top of bank or top of slope depending on topographic conditions. Within these setback areas development is highly restricted. These setbacks are based on the work that was done with Northwest Regional Planning Commission and the Agency of Natural Resources in the early 2000s that identified areas susceptible to fluvial erosion. Since the last Town Plan, the Town of Georgia has adopted River Corridor regulations for flood resiliency in addition to wetland buffers.

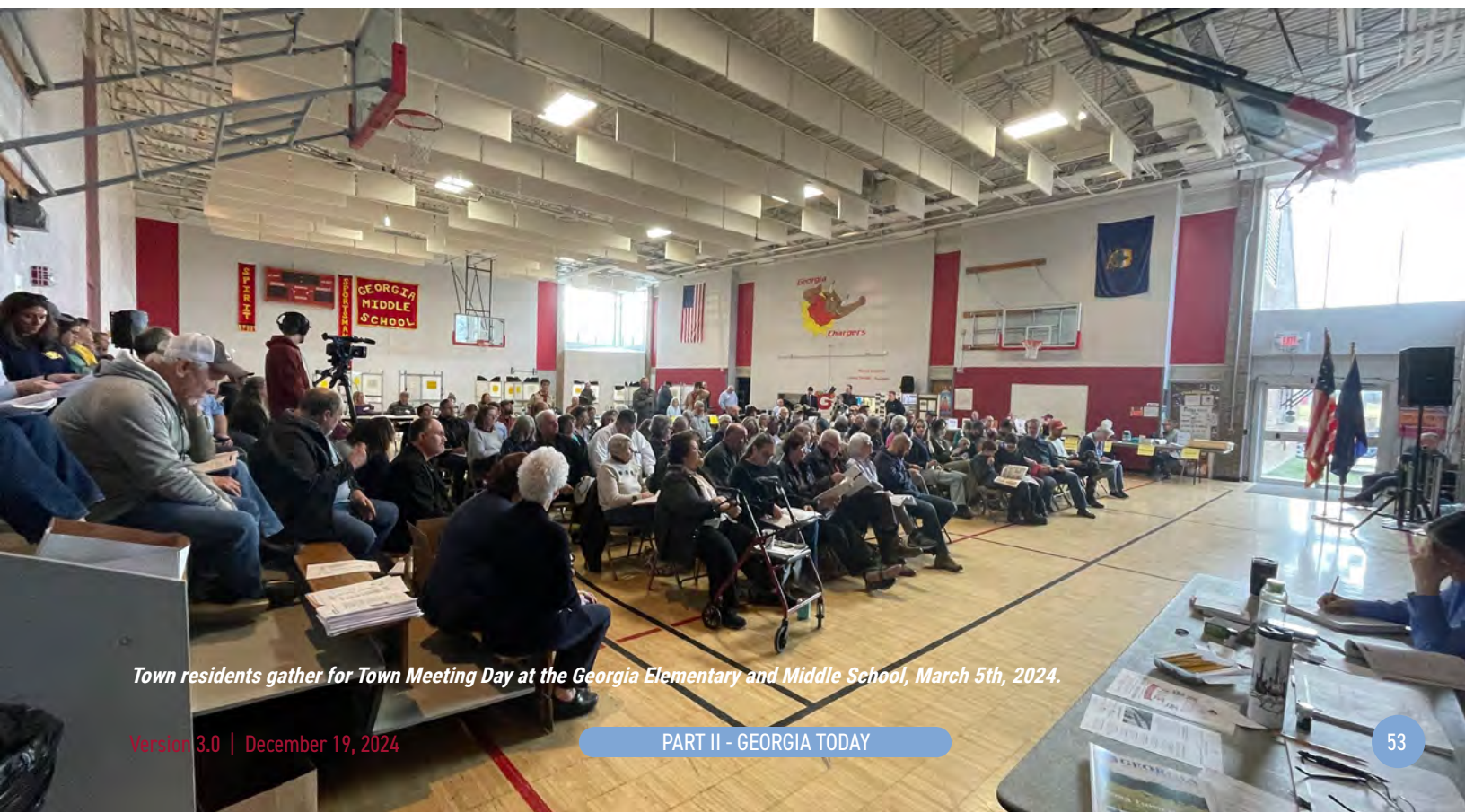
## Climate & Air Quality

Georgia's climate is humid and continental, with precipitation relatively equally divided between rain and snow. The influence of Lake Champlain has moderated Georgia's climate, giving it a longer growing season than in other parts of the county. In the eastern quarter of the town, where agricultural land does not dominate the terrain, the vegetation is the northern temperate deciduous forest typical to

Franklin County. The quality of the air we breathe is an essential requirement of continued good health and should be protected from degradation in the interest of the public good. Our climate has a great effect on our lives, including social, economic, natural resource, and energy considerations.

## Earth Resources

The Town of Georgia has a limited amount of earth resources available to it, including locally sourced sand and gravel. Such earth resources, including sand, gravel and stone, are important materials for use in construction and road maintenance, however they are in finite supply.



*Town residents gather for Town Meeting Day at the Georgia Elementary and Middle School, March 5th, 2024.*







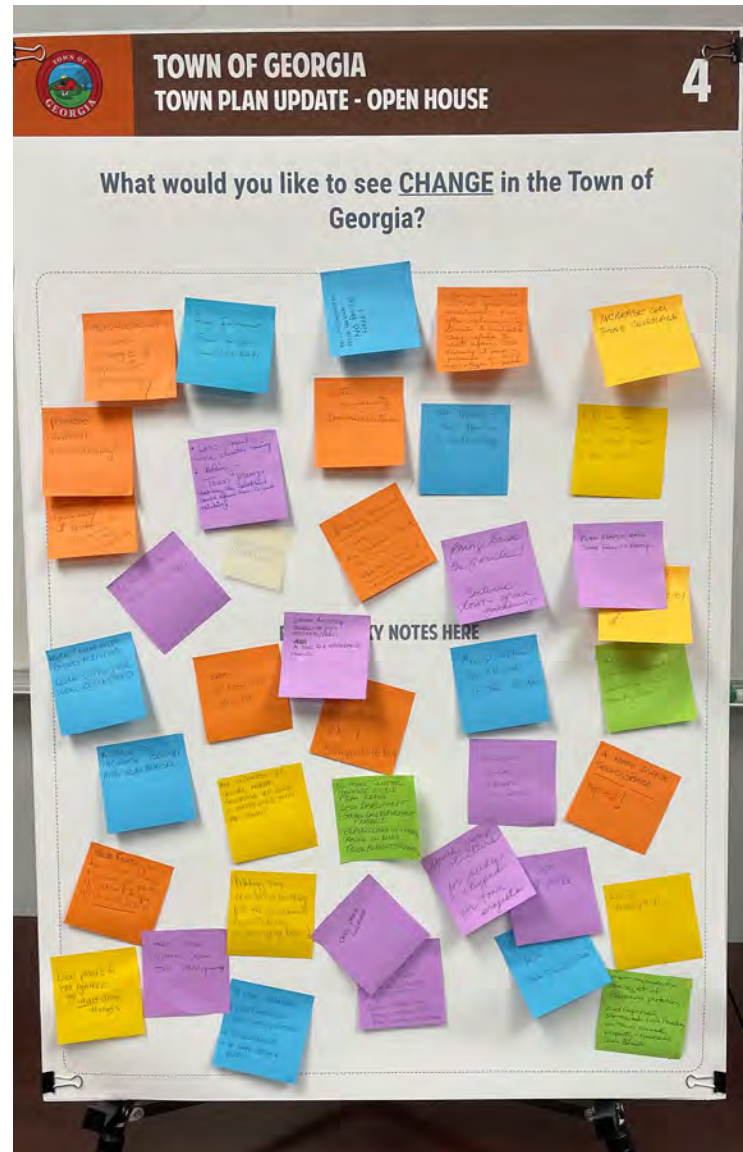
# PART III ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

This planning process began with an effort to reach out to the community and learn what issues and topics were important to local residents, business and property owners so that they would have a say in the formation of their updated Town Plan.

On October 24th, 2023, an Open House and Presentation event was held at the Georgia Fire & Rescue Building in Georgia Center. The purpose of this event was to make the public aware of the Town Plan update effort, and begin to solicit input on various planning issues through a series of display boards where visitors could write ideas and suggestions. The questions provided were designed to help identify issues of importance, as well as help develop questions for a community survey which would be targeted toward a much wider audience in town. The Open House was followed by a presentation outlining the expected schedule and steps of the Town Plan update process and an open discussion of issues with the public. Notes from this event have been provided in the Appendix for reference.

A dedicated webpage was also set up as a central repository of information about the Town Plan, so that people would be able to find information and announcements quickly, including notes and videos of meetings, as well as draft review materials.

The Open House was followed by the development of a Community Survey which was provided to the public both online and in paper format for more accessibility. This survey was designed to solicit input on a variety of topics, many of which were identified as areas of importance from the initial open house public discussions to help inform some of the community vision and goals for this plan, and identify potential priorities. The results of this survey were presented at a public meeting on February 27th,



2024 for additional discussion and feedback, and have been incorporated here as part of a larger discussion on issues and opportunities. (A copy of the full Survey Results Report has been provided in the Appendix for reference.)

This section of the Town Plan outlines the different issues, opportunities and considerations discussed, many of which originated from the public outreach process. What follows in this section is a summary of these and other findings which together help to formulate the overall goals of this community.



## Protection of Local Character & Natural Resources

An overarching theme emerging from the public input was a strong desire by many residents to protect the Town of Georgia from changes which would erode its historic rural setting and natural resources. This position was supported in the public comments and responses to several survey questions. When asked in the survey to identify which factors were most important for managing future growth and development in the town, the top three responses were: protection of water quality and natural resources, protection of local working farms and agricultural lands, and protection of small-town rural character and scenic views. A combined 76% of survey respondents also felt it was either important (22%) or very important (55%) to protect the view of the lake along Georgia Shore Road. When asked to rank overall priorities for the town to address, “preserving town character and natural resources” ranked as the highest overall priority, noticeably higher than all other topics provided.

Specific natural resources suggested for protection included Lake Champlain, Arrowhead Lake, Silver Lake, as well as local wetlands and streams. The view of Lake Champlain along Georgia Shore Road was often suggested as an area for viewshed protection.

These natural resources are important not just for maintaining the scenic beauty and charm of our town however. As our climate changes, having contiguous

### COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

*The “Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act” (CRBPA) was enacted by the State of Vermont in 2022. This Act seeks to address the loss of critical biodiversity from human development, climate change, pollution, habitat fragmentation, and invasive species. The Act seeks to protect the priority ecological areas of the state identified in the Vermont Conservation Design, with the goal of conserving 30% of Vermont’s land area by 2030, and 50% by 2050. This plan seeks to support and coordinate with those goals.*



areas of the natural landscape which maintain ecological function helps plants and animals to survive, reproduce, migrate, adapt and be more resilient to change, in turn helping us and our localized environment. The preservation of these resources, in short, helps make us more resilient for future generations. It is clear from the public input that this issue is of high importance to the community, and should be a focal point of this plan.

**PLAN GOALS:**

Protect the quality of Georgia’s water resources, including groundwater and surface water.

Protect fragile, unique and sensitive natural resources, including those which contribute to Vermont’s high priority inventory for ecological integrity.

Protect the existing open spaces, agricultural lands and scenic views which define Georgia’s rural character.

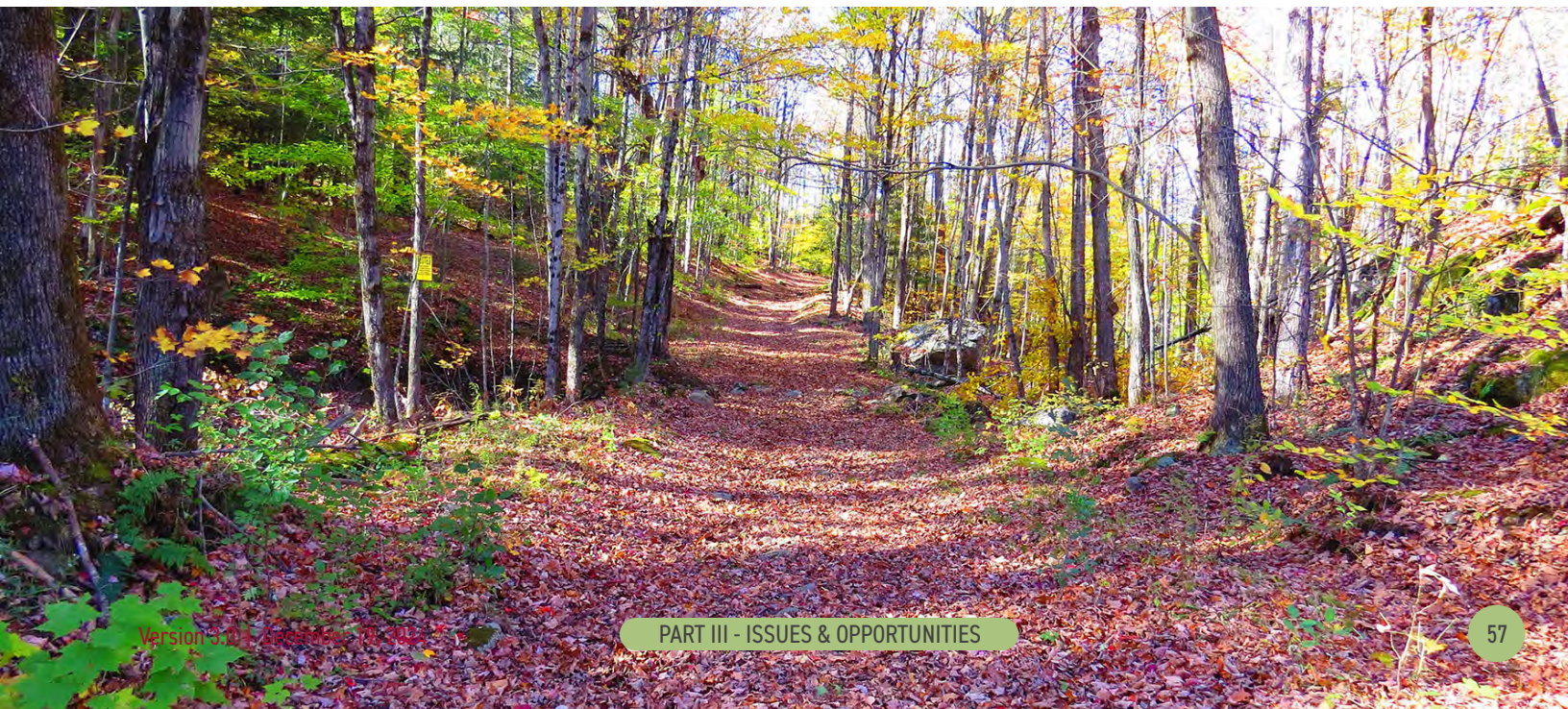
Maintain and preserve the quality of important soils, such as agriculture and forestry soils, when considering the future development of the town.

Protect private and public investment and maintain the natural environment by considering topography and geology when determining land use.

Protect local earth resources until needed for future use for the benefit of the community; and to minimize the impacts of extraction on the environment.

Consider climatic factors and to protect the quality of the air when planning for future development.

Support the goals of the Vermont Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act with the conservation of important natural areas and critical biodiversity lands.







## Protection of Historic & Cultural Resources

Much like our natural resources, the cultural and historic artifacts of our community help to define the rural character of Georgia. As with many Vermont towns, the value of Georgia's cultural and historical resources is greater than the sum of its parts. The development pattern of villages and countryside, the context for Georgia's historic sites, is a valuable asset. In addition to Georgia's historic structures, numerous cemeteries are located around the town. These cemeteries serve as a link to the previous generations of Georgia residents. Their preservation is of utmost importance, as they represent a significant cultural resource of the town. The Lamoille River and Deer Brook corridors have sites of known archaeological sensitivity, while the stream corridors extending northward from Arrowhead Mountain Lake to Silver Lake contain sites of expected archaeological sensitivity.

These examples are fragile and fleeting, and it is important that we work to maintain them as a reminder of our past. Once they are gone, they cannot be bought back.



### PLAN GOALS:

Ensure that Georgia's noteworthy historic and cultural resources remain intact.



# Roadway Maintenance and Safety

Improving roadway maintenance and safety is a common desire of local residents today. This topic was ranked in the survey among the highest priorities for the Town of Georgia to work on in the coming years. The winter maintenance and plowing of both state and town roads ranked reasonably well in the survey, with a majority of respondents having a favorable opinion on the level of service which is provided. This was followed by the clearing of right-of-ways, mowing and ditching along both state and town roads, which received more mixed reviews. However, the level of service paving and repairing roads ranked the lowest among the topic of roadway maintenance overall, and appears to be an area for improvement.



In general, residents had a slightly more favorable view of the state roadway upkeep compared to the town, which would seem to support the notion that more could be done to keep the local roads in shape. In particular, residents noted that there were some unpaved roads which should be considered for paving, potholes which were in need of repair, and that it sometimes takes too long for mowed roadside materials to be cleaned up. Bicycling or walking along the roadways is often a cause for concern, with narrow lanes and no shoulders and potholes creating obstacles.



The Town of Georgia relies on processed aggregate to maintain town roads. With the availability of a local quarry in Georgia, the town is currently purchasing its aggregate from a combination of in-town and out-of-town sources. If possible, the town should secure additional economical sources of gravel from a location close to town to meet future road construction and improvement needs. A local gravel inventory should be taken to determine if local sources are available.

The town should look for ways where roadway maintenance and services could be improved in order to provide for a safe, efficient and cost-effective transportation network.

## PLAN GOALS:

Work to improve roadway maintenance.

Provide a safe, efficient, cost effective transportation network to meet the varied needs of the residents of the Town.

## Police and Law Enforcement

The need to increase overall police presence and law enforcement was a popular topic for people during the public outreach process. In a ranking of various municipal services, this topic was rated as the most unfavorable overall among respondents, and was identified as the third highest priority for the town to address. Several people noted that the speed limits on local roads are not being enforced adequately, and that additional police coverage in general should be provided before the town expands with additional commercial or residential development.

Unfortunately, this service is outside the direct control of the town, which must rely on outside support from the County Sheriff, State Police, and other town police departments through contract agreements. Attempts to negotiate additional service in recent years have been stymied due to a current lack of available manpower to cover all of the service areas needed in the region, but it is clear that a resolution to this issue must be found. The town should work to identify ways in which it may be able to secure better support from the County Sheriff, State Police and other town police departments.

In 2024 at a town meeting a proposal was introduced on increasing the budget amount spent by the town on public services to cover 40 hours per week by the Sheriff's department. The proposal lost on the vote taken at the meeting. ~~Past concerns with a previous contract with the Sheriff's department was just one of many reasons the vote had failed.~~

### PLAN GOALS:

Seek ways to improve local police and law enforcement coverage within the town.

## Cellular and Internet Coverage

The availability of local cellular and Internet coverage continues to improve and expand throughout the region, however it remains lacking in some areas and can be spotty or inconsistent. In the community survey, a majority of people felt that current high-speed Internet service was adequate for their daily needs, while most felt that current cellular service was inadequate. Overall, the improvement of these combined services ranked 4th in terms of town priorities in the community survey.



The private service providers who supply this technology naturally prioritize population centers which more efficiently provide coverage to many people, and as a result more rural areas such as Georgia receive less attention. However, these technologies remain increasingly important for the growth of local businesses, home occupations as well as safety and convenience. The expansion of cellular service coverage in particular needs to be balanced with the desire to maintain our natural rural and scenic countryside.

Similar to police presence, this service is outside the direct control of the municipality, however the town has representation with the Northwest Vermont Communications Union District (a.k.a. Northwest Fiberworx NWFx), an organization composed of multiple towns working together to build shared communications infrastructure. The town should continue to work to influence and lobby for improved and more consistent communications services while mitigating the potential negative impacts it may have on the Vermont landscape.

**PLAN GOALS:**

Continue to expand local availability of cellular and high-speed Internet communications services.

Seek ways to mitigate potential negative visual impacts of cellular towers on the scenic landscape.







## Municipal Government & Communication

Throughout the public outreach process, there were comments received about the need for improved communication between the municipality and local residents. People noted that they weren't often aware of what was happening in town, had missed announcements, or felt that better transparency was needed. Town Office communication and information generally received an unfavorable rating in the community survey, and addressing this issue was ranked as the 5th most important priority for the town.

Public comments on this topic ranged from a need for more mailed notices/newsletters, use of local newspapers, more reliance on online/electronic notices, and a general distrust of local government and decision making. Some people were not aware that the town has an official Facebook page, others felt that the Facebook page was not utilized well enough, and others felt there was a need for mailed/paper announcements since they do not use social media.

A newly redesigned and updated town website was launched shortly before the community survey was conducted, and this update addressed several of the commonly requested improvements—such as the ability to sign up for email announcements—however many were not aware of this. The town could work on educating community members on navigating the website. A portion of the communications issue is apparently a lack of awareness of the media sources



available, however there is still room for improved communication methods. While it is true that some residents would prefer mailed notices or newsletters, printing and mailing incurs additional expense on the town, and the multiple zip codes in Georgia complicate matters. There is no denying the cost-savings, reach and convenience which online-digital media can provide. Therefore, the town should develop a strategy to improve both digital and paper communication methods, and launch an educational campaign to make the public aware of how it will be used and the different media sources available. This should be done to both improve municipal communication and begin to address concerns regarding transparency.

**PLAN GOALS:**

Improve municipal communication methods with the public including notices and announcements, as well as internal coordination.

Conduct municipal duties and decision-making in a manner which is fair, ethical, transparent and in the interest of the overall population.

Update land use regulations to comply with this plan, including diversified housing, smart growth principles, emerging uses and resolving outdated or confusing standards or code organization.

Coordinate with adjacent municipalities on long-term growth management, road network and multi-modal connections which may improve connectivity between communities.







## Economically Strong Tax Base

Each town must find a balance between the tax revenue it collects from commercial, industrial, agricultural and residential land uses, and the cost of providing municipal services to those uses. As new development and growth occurs in town, it generates additional revenue, however it also requires more servicing and cost to the town. Generally speaking, commercial, industrial and agricultural operations tend to be more profitable to municipalities because they require relatively little work to service, based on the findings of multiple “cost of community services” studies.<sup>1</sup> Residential uses, on the other hand, have traditionally been less profitable for a variety of reasons. Much of this was due to their impact on local schools and school taxes, however this impact is much more complicated to quantify locally since Act 60 was enacted and schools began to get funded through a statewide pool. Residential uses are also often spread out across an entire town, requiring a large and inefficient area for the municipality to service compared to commercial centers.

Maintaining the right balance of growth and land uses to keep taxes low is a moving target, however the right amount of commercial/industrial development can potentially provide the town with sufficient tax revenue that they can help keep residential taxes relatively low. This is the goal of increasing revenues

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<sup>1</sup> “Cost of Community Services Studies” - Farmland Information Center - 2016;  
<https://farmlandinfo.org/publications/cost-of-community-services-studies/>





to support a healthy tax base. In the community survey, respondents indicated that increasing tax revenue to maintain a healthy tax base was among the top four most important considerations in managing future growth and development, after protecting local character and natural resources. It was also identified as the 6th-ranked priority in overall town goals. Respondents also indicated a preference in attracting more industrial and commercial growth over residential due to the financial benefits it could bring.

While Act 60 helps to ensure that residential uses aren't really costing the town much money, commercial, industrial and agricultural uses will likely bring more revenue. Although the 2017 Town Plan noted that big picture land-use decisions should be postponed until the longer-term effects of Act 60 on land use profitability are better understood, we have to act now to address the housing issues. Another consideration is that since the adoption of Act 60, municipalities have seen more muted financial benefits to local economic development. Going forward, the town needs to find the appropriate mix of land uses and development to support a balanced tax base, and currently a focus on growth in the industrial and commercial sectors, with continued preservation of agricultural operations, is most likely to provide the best financial benefits to the town.

The town should continue to diversify and densify the nonresidential land uses in the area, particularly in the southern end of town where commercial and industrial operations are focused. The South Village area has an opportunity to create a special destination that could be an attractive place to work, shop and live. Further expansion of the business and industrially-zoned areas may be required to accommodate new growth. However, because of their location along major travel corridors, the South Village and industrial areas represent the best location to focus future economic growth. If the South Village area can be successfully shaped into the walkable "traditional village downtown" it has been envisioned as, instead of an average commercial strip, the town could be well positioned to create a high-value location which would help support it financially. This growth needs to be measured however to stay in check with the ability of the town and local road network to handle it.



**PLAN GOALS:**

Encourage the development and expansion of appropriate, diverse and compatible industry and business in the town.

Maintain a sound fiscal balance for the town, to encourage reasonable, functional, orderly development of facilities, utilities and services, and to promote the health of agriculture while providing a stable economic base for the other sectors of the economy.

Development and growth in Georgia should occur at a rate which can be accommodated by reasonable expansion and/or improvement of municipal facilities and services.

Regulation of land development in Georgia should not negatively impact the availability of safe and affordable child care and adult care services.

Broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities for all ages, sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of current and future residents.

Strengthen and support existing local agricultural industries.

# Housing

Nationwide, our country is experiencing a significant issue where housing has been in short supply, and is becoming increasingly unaffordable. This problem is particularly acute with the lack of available “long-term” rentals for people who aren’t yet ready or able to buy, and small properties for young families and seniors looking to downsize. The Town of Georgia is not immune to this phenomena. Data in Part II of this plan illustrates a continued decline in the number of rental properties, a growing lack of diversity on housing types, and home prices which are rising faster than the surrounding region. This is reflected in the community survey where a majority of respondents felt that the types of housing needed in Georgia were not available for people, and a larger majority felt they were not affordable. The current lack of diversity in the local housing stock is creating a landscape where young people, new families and seniors cannot afford to live here, including local employees. Seniors looking to downsize and age-in-place are holding on to their larger houses due to the lack of availability of smaller local options.

The town has an obligation and self-interest to address this issue, however public support for new housing in Georgia is extremely low. Attracting additional residential growth or affordable rental properties scored at the bottom of importance for managing future growth in the community survey, and ranked last in terms of overall town priorities. Residential growth is still going to occur however, and we have some control over how it may happen.

The town should address these housing needs by providing more variety in the types of housing which are allowed, with careful consideration as to where they are each appropriate. Some of this needed variety been recently mandated by the passage of the Vermont State “HOME” Act of 2023 (see sidebar) which will open up some options on a town-wide level. Additional, denser housing types such as apartments, senior apartments, senior living and cottage courts are also still needed. These are more appropriately located in the southern end of town in the already established development of South Village and hamlet areas in order to help preserve and protect the rural character of the remainder of town.

## 2023 Vermont HOME Act

*The “Housing Opportunities Made for Everyone” (HOME) Act was enacted by the State of Vermont in 2023. This Act amends state law regarding planning and development, Act 250 and other laws to help enable new housing opportunities to address the housing crisis. This Act calls on local municipalities to address housing affordability through a variety of mechanisms, including allowing 2-family duplexes in any district where single-family homes are permitted, allowing Accessory Dwelling Units in all districts where single-family homes are permitted, and allowing small multi-family apartments (3-4 units) in any area served by municipal water and sewer.*



**COTTAGE COURT** - Example of a Cottage Court style development where a cluster of small scale cottages are arranged around shared open space and parking areas on a relatively small plot of land.

### PLAN GOALS:

Allow for a more balanced and diverse mix of housing types that meets the needs of Georgia’s population at every stage of life.

Ensure that the town is enabling the creation of adequate housing which is available and affordable for Georgia residents.

Utilize the development potential of the South Village area to accommodate denser housing options where infrastructure is able to support it while protecting the rural areas of the town.





## South Village

South Village represents the core commercial area for the Town of Georgia. Located at the intersection of Route 7, Route 104A and Interstate I-89, it is a well positioned and logical place to focus future economic growth which will help to support the town financially. Focusing growth in this limited area of town would help to protect the more rural areas from much of the commercial sprawl which often takes over these travel corridors. The town has the opportunity to help shape this area into something much more inviting than the average strip development that is found in many other towns. This area has been envisioned as something different—a walkable mixed-use “traditional downtown village”—which could make it a very attractive and financially sound asset to the town. Multiple planning and visioning studies for South Village have depicted how it could work, with tree-lined streets, two and three-story shops and offices and attractive greenspace creating a welcome destination to live, work and shop.

Despite its high potential, the vision for this area has not yet been realized. Today the corridor remains an otherwise unremarkable commercial strip along Route 7 just off the highway. One reason has been that some of the provisions in the new zoning for the South Village did not align well with developers interest or a post-covid real estate market. Constructing multi-story development is more complicated, and demand for retail and office space has been in steady decline. The major stumbling block which has been holding back development interest in South Village is the lack of water and sewer service required to sustain the type of redevelopment which is envisioned here, including support for multi-story construction and fire suppression systems. The town is still working to get this area designated by the state as an official “village center” or similar designation. A village center designation for this area would qualify it for a number of grant funding programs which would greatly enable the desired vision for South Village to be realized, particularly the development of municipal water and

sewer. Water and sewer service here is likely necessary to attract and enable the creation of a more walkable downtown village.

Without the introduction of water and sewer service, the South Village corridor will most likely continue to slowly develop as an average commercial strip with standalone, single-use chain businesses, much as it is today. This would represent a missed opportunity to create a more attractive, welcoming and profitable destination to financially support the town.

Many local residents have mixed feelings about future development in this location. The community survey indicated South Village was the most appropriate location for additional commercial development to help support the tax base, and there was moderate support for the creation of water and sewer services depending on how it would be paid for. There are however valid concerns about current traffic conditions. The Route



7 corridor often gets backed-up with traffic congestion, and the public is wary of inviting more growth here if it will only make the traffic conditions worse. State VTrans is responsible for these roadways and the highway interchanges which are at issue, and is currently working on a redesign which should alleviate the congestion and provide some room for growth. In order for South Village to be improved, the town must continue to work with the state to resolve the traffic issues and find adequate funding solutions for water and sewer.

Given that the demand for traditional retail and office space has been in decline, the town should position itself to attract other markets. The service industry and food service industry still remain in relatively high demand. Public input showed that there is a strong desire for local dining options, particularly a casual restaurant, bakery/coffee shop and a take-out restaurant. Child care and other daycare services are also in high demand. Recreational rentals for bikes, canoes or kayaks could be very popular as well. Georgia residents do not want to see much fast-food/chain type restaurants, and this aligns well with the desired future vision for South Village. Lastly, reasonably priced housing is in extremely high demand right now, and could be integrated into new development proposals as part of rear-lot or second story designs. The town should carefully take the time to ensure that future growth in the South Village area lives up to the high potential that is envisioned for it, provided that traffic and municipal services are adequate provided to support it.

### PLAN GOALS:

Concentrate residential, commercial and industrial growth in the Village Center and the South Village area to protect the Town's rural character and resources.

Continue to coordinate with the State of Vermont on design improvements along Route 7, Route 104A in South Village to improve traffic issues, access management, bicycle/pedestrian accommodations and accommodate future growth.





## Energy, Sustainability and Resilience

### 2022 Vermont Energy Plan

*The “Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan” was developed in 2022 providing goals and strategies for energy adequacy, reliability, security and affordability. This plan sets statewide goals to meet 25% of our energy needs from renewable sources by the year 2025, 45% by the year 2035, and 90% by the year 2050.*

Many communities are working today to try to address the growing issues of climate change, increased sustainability, energy independence and storm resilience. At a time when severe weather events appear to be more prevalent and destructive, finding alternative sources of energy is prudent to make long-term changes in our behavior and provide short-term backup plans. In general, these efforts seek to conserve energy, reduce reliance on foreign energy sources, and protect the environment with less energy pollution. Public input during the development of this plan showed that there was very strong support for the town to take a more active role in leading or supporting sustainable energy solutions. This includes energy and fuel reductions at the municipal level, switching to cleaner energy solutions, as well as providing support to private homeowners and businesses who wanted to pursue similar efforts.

Georgia is not alone in identifying the benefits and needs of taking such steps. The Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan was recently updated to outline the need for more sustainable energy sources, providing ambitious statewide goals for energy independence (see sidebar). A Regional Energy Plan is also developed by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission to help to achieve these milestones at a more localized level. Each municipality shares a responsibility to work toward this effort. The town should support and take an active role in addressing these issues where we are able, for the long term health of the community.

There are funding sources and incentive programs available which the town could participate in, including the Municipal Enhanced Energy Plan and the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP). A Municipal Enhanced Energy Plan is an optional plan that municipalities are authorized to adopt under 24 V.S.A. §4352 to help implement the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan at the local level. Plans typically include an assessment of current energy use and generation, analysis of priority locations for future energy generation, and recommended strategies to support the state's overall energy goals. Adopting a local energy plan increases a municipality's leverage in Section 248 proceedings, giving them substantial deference in the potential siting of future electric generation and transmission facilities. These programs provide specific metrics, goals and funding to help municipalities adopt local changes, with benefits upon certifying certain milestones. It is beneficial for the town to participate in such programs.

It is also important for the town to continue to provide strong guidance regarding the placement of any future energy facilities, and keep these standards up to date with changes in technology and best practices. Georgia supports the development of renewable energy, provided they can be located in appropriate places in the community. Rooftop, building-integrated installations, and the use of formerly developed areas such as industrial lands, gravel pits or brownfields should be prioritized and streamlined as alternatives to systems located in otherwise rural lands. The town currently has specific standards to help avoid larger-scale energy generation systems from adversely affecting sensitive areas such as scenic viewsheds, primary agricultural soils, environmentally sensitive areas, farms, and forests. These areas must be avoided where they would adversely impact our natural systems or rural community character, and these standards should be periodically updated to ensure they are sufficient to do so.

Lastly, our community should be vigilant in preparing for and mitigating the potential effects of severe weather and other hazards. The continued update of our local Hazard Mitigation Plan and Emergency Preparedness Plan is necessary to address our changing times, and can save money, lives and unnecessary disruptions to our way of life.

## PLAN GOALS:

Support the goals of the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan by working to promote and pursue sustainable energy solutions for all town operations, including but not limited to geothermal systems, heat exchangers, solar and wind energy systems, and reduced energy and fossil fuel consumption.

Support the goals of the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan by working to encourage and support the use of sustainable energy solutions by local homeowners and businesses.

Public utilities and services should be enhanced in ways that improve economic development opportunities and quality of life, but that do not jeopardize public health, the environment or scenic resources.

Ensure that Georgia is a flood resilient community.

Prepare for emergency contingencies and work to limit their potential impact on local citizens, services and infrastructure.





## Recreation & Quality of Life

The Town of Georgia provides a variety of outdoor recreational spaces, events, trails and public lands which contribute to our enjoyment of the area. Among the most requested community amenities were additional off-road recreational walking/biking trails; refurbished or improved facilities at Georgia beach; more activities or facilities for local youth; and new activities or uses at Georgia Beach. Public input during this planning process suggested that while upgrades to some public amenities were desired, residents often wanted to see our existing parks fully maintained before additional new features were considered. Such upgrades may need to be addressed slowly over time as the town has sufficient resources to support it. It was also noted that the full variety of existing trails and public lands may not be generally well known to some residents.

A wider variety of multi-modal transportation alternatives provides a community with improved accessibility as well as active recreation and exercise options that can improve our health and reduce energy use. Sidewalks, bike lanes, wider road shoulders and multi-purpose paths were desired by many residents, particularly along Georgia Shore Road. In the long-term, the town may want to consider the development of a bike and pedestrian trails feasibility study to plan for prioritized connections which help link together missing gaps in an overall network. Ideally, these connections should be coordinated with adjacent municipalities for both on and off-road improvements.





The costs and maintenance associated with creating other potential facilities, such as new youth and senior centers, playgrounds, or multi-purpose gathering spaces is a concern. Residents noted that many such features can be found in adjacent communities. Instead of taking on the burden of providing such features ourselves, the Town of Georgia would be better suited to proactively reaching out to adjacent municipalities and discussing a strategy of shared facilities where each community provides some of what is needed, but not all. The town may also benefit from investigating ways GEMS can further support the wider community by providing more access to existing facilities and grounds which are typically only accessible to students when school is in session.

This approach would allow the town to be able to focus more of its effort and funding on proper upkeep of existing facilities, and keeping the town well cared for. The Town of Georgia is an example of natural scenic beauty. It is in the best interest for our quality of life to maintain this scenic quality and keep our town looking attractive and welcoming for all.

Lastly, the town has been hampered by being divided into 3 separate zip codes which it shares with adjacent municipalities. For a long time this has caused confusion among residents and undermines any sense of identity for the community. The town should continue to push for a single zip code for the Town of Georgia to simplify communications, reduce confusion and help reinforce community identity and pride.

## PLAN GOALS:

Work toward the diversification of the local transportation network to include multi-modal options of pedestrian sidewalks, on and off-street bike paths, public transit and interconnectivity with local trail systems as growth occurs.

Continue to maintain and expand recreational opportunities throughout the town which contribute to a high quality of life, as the town has capacity to maintain them.

Work to keep Georgia a beautiful town with a strong sense of pride and community identity.



## Changing Times

It is also worth noting that since the last Town Plan was adopted, there have been several notable changes locally and globally which have an impact on our area. The continued growth of the Internet is one such phenomena, expanding its presence and influence into our everyday lives more than ever before. This growth has had many implications. Working from home (“remote work”) has become increasingly popular, enabling many people to start up small at-home businesses which have increased demand for allowable home occupations. This shift was largely influenced by the global COVID pandemic, which also saw an increase in people leaving urban areas in search for more rural, country living. The Internet has also fueled an increase in online shopping, putting strain on more traditional brick-and-mortar retail businesses, and given rise to the exploding popularity of short-term rentals.

Many communities are dealing with the gradual loss of agricultural lands as it becomes harder for traditional farmers to compete in the modern market. Challenges include an aging farmer population, increasing land values, commodity price volatility, lower profit margins, climate instability, labor shortages, with increased pressure to sell to developers. Changes in our working landscape will also affect the aesthetics of our community. Just as Vermont’s forest cover has rebounded since the 1850’s, we can expect to see our landscape change as the economics of forestry and agriculture change. We can also expect that demand for new renewable energy sources will create interest in solar and wind power development in our town and others within our viewshed. Balancing these economic, environmental and aesthetic interests will require careful review of projects and consideration of all potential costs and benefits.

Changes in our climate should also be considered, as Vermont communities today experience severe weather events with increasing frequency and severity. Planning and preparing for future events such as flooding is important to ensure that our community is more resilient, and that it is also willing to do its part to help mitigate some of the fundamental problems behind them, instead of just treating the symptoms. Such forward thinking is necessary across a broad range of issues so that we can hopefully pass along this community along into the hands of future generations, perhaps better than we found it.

The Town of Georgia will continue to grow, despite our desire to often see it remain unchanged. With close access to I-89, Lake Champlain on its western shore, Mt. Mansfield not far away, and Burlington within a half-hour, the town has strong appeal. It is a nice place to live and it will continue to attract people. Our goal with this plan is to help shape and direct that growth in the best way possible.







# FUTURE LAND USE

## PART IV VISION, GOALS & POLICIES

### Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Vision Map (*Map 4.1*) is intended to serve as a guide of present and prospective land uses which describe the anticipated location, character and use-intensity of future land development activities as envisioned in this plan. It is not intended to act as an official zoning map, however is intended to help inform future zoning map changes. The different land use character areas identified on the map are described as follows:

**Conservation/Recreation.** The Conservation/Recreation character area largely covers the areas currently zoned as “Natural Areas” (N-1) and “Recreation” (L-1). These areas of town have significant natural features and development constraints which make development in these areas unfavorable. These areas are best suited to remain in their natural state to the extent possible for present and future generations. Any future development permitted in these areas should be limited to large lots and sensitive design to minimize the impact on the land.

**Lakeside.** The Lakeside character area largely covers the areas currently zoned as “Lakeshore” (L-1) and “Lakeshore/Recreational” (L-2). This area of town contains land bordering Lake Champlain, a significant natural feature of the town. The purpose of this character area is to continue to allow for the sensitive residential and recreational enjoyment of the lake while protecting the water quality, natural beauty of the shoreline, and scenic views. Future development within this area should remain at low densities in response to the soil conditions and steep

slopes, and take steps to preserve the open lands and viewshed of both the lake and shoreline.

**Agricultural Residential.** The Agricultural / Residential character area largely covers the areas currently zoned as “Agricultural / Rural Residential” (AR-1), covering a significant percentage of town. This character area largely defines the natural and rural residential character of Georgia as an agricultural community. Future development within these areas should continue to be relatively low density residential growth. Disruptions to existing agricultural lands and natural features should be minimized by strategically clustering new housing or avoiding these areas entirely. Land should be developed so that large contiguous expanses of agricultural, forestry, significant geological areas, wildlife habitat, scenic areas, and other important open space land will be protected. Development may be phased in order to meet the purposes of this district. Strip development is strongly discouraged, and as the town continues to grow and develop, long-term growth is encouraged to be directed away from this character area and instead located in other areas designated for denser living where possible.

**Residential Hamlet.** The Residential Hamlet character area largely covers the areas currently zoned as “Residential Medium Density” (AR-2) and is proposed to be added to the Hubbard Corner hamlet and along northern Route 7. This character area is intended to provide a location around historic hamlet areas of the town for residential development

# FUTURE LAND USE

at a higher density than surrounding rural areas, in addition to some small scale commercial uses which serve the immediate area. Future development in this area is intended to reflect historic village development patterns and plan for safer pedestrian routes and accessibility.

**Residential Neighborhood.** The Residential Neighborhood character area largely covers the areas currently zoned as “Residential High Density” (AR-3). This character area is intended to enable higher density residential development in the vicinity of commercial growth areas where existing development at a higher density has already occurred. Future development in this area should allow for higher density residential uses, smaller scale commercial uses, and plan for safer pedestrian routes and accessibility with connections to commercial areas.

**Residential Village.** The Residential Village is a newly-defined character area developed for the highest density residential growth of future multifamily development adjacent to the South Village as the current neighborhood evolves over time, supported by water at the south end of town and by the Route 7 transportation corridor.

**Hamlet Business.** The Hamlet Business character area is a newly-defined area centered around the hamlet of Georgia Center. This area serves as the municipal center by hosting the Town Offices, Town Garage, Fire & Rescue, Elementary School, Historical Society Museum and historic cemeteries. The area is intended to promote a mix of smaller-scale commercial development together with residential living that is appropriately scaled and patterned to match the older historic hamlet development patterns. As such, the allowable uses in this area should be focused more on smaller local business, shops, services and residential living, while avoiding larger auto-centric uses such as shopping plazas, car washes, drive-thrus, and vehicle

or heavy equipment sales. Strip development here should be strictly avoided by encouraging sensitive site design, reduced setbacks, limited front yard parking, and an emphasis on improved landscaping with strong pedestrian connections and accessibility.

**Business.** The Business character area includes lands currently zoned as “Business” (B) but is proposed to be scaled back away from the Interstate to the east, and also added to a new location along Route 7 at the north end of town. This Business area is intended to function as a moderate-traffic, medium scale commercial and residential area as it transitions from the busier South Village and St. Albans commercial areas to the more rural residential areas on either side of Georgia Center. This area should enable mixed commercial and residential uses in an interconnected, unified pattern that does not result in strip development. The gradual accumulation of strip development along this corridor should be strictly avoided using sensitive and creative site design, shared and controlled access to and from the highway, improved screening and landscaping, limited front yard parking, and safer pedestrian accessibility. This district is not intended to serve as a regional growth center. Commercial uses shall be of a scale and size appropriate only for a local growth center.

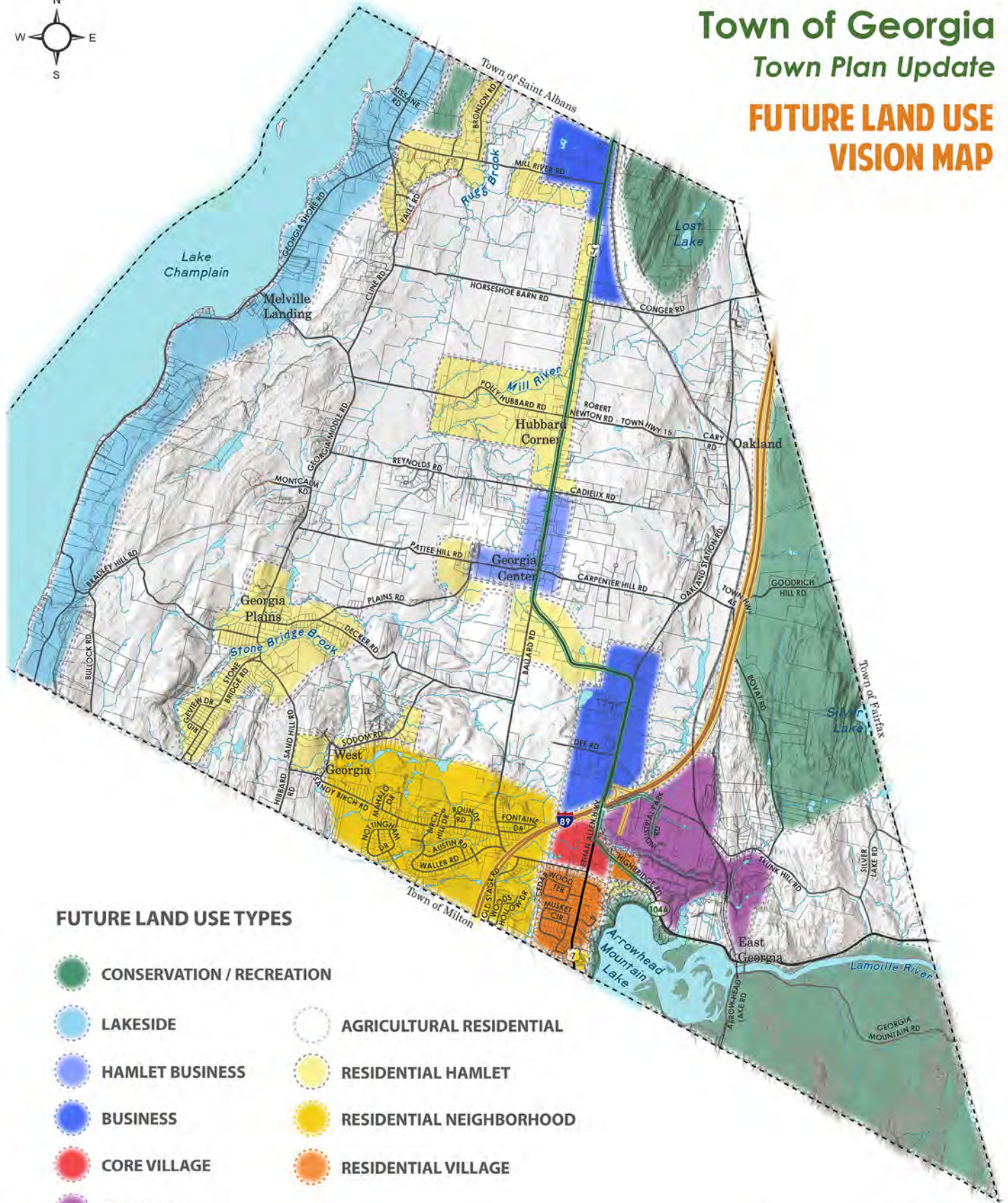
**Core Village.** The Core Village character area largely covers the areas currently zoned as “South Village” (V) but is proposed to be scaled back to accommodate some new adjacent Residential Village areas to the east and expanded to the west. This character area is intended to provide a concentrated core settlement of commercial, governmental, mixed-use and residential uses in a traditional Vermont village setting with a strong emphasis on the pedestrian streetscape and public realm of walkable tree-lined streets and storefronts. A diverse mix of commercial and residential uses is encouraged here at a higher density than allowed anywhere else in town to create a





# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update

## FUTURE LAND USE VISION MAP



### FUTURE LAND USE TYPES

- CONSERVATION / RECREATION
- LAKESIDE
- HAMLET BUSINESS
- BUSINESS
- CORE VILLAGE
- INDUSTRY
- AGRICULTURAL RESIDENTIAL
- RESIDENTIAL HAMLET
- RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD
- RESIDENTIAL VILLAGE

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only

Map prepared by  
**REGROWTH** *Upstate GIS*  
 PLANNING

Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads, Transit lines and Bus Stops: Vermont Center for Geographic Information

MAP 4.1 - Future Land Use Vision Map

# FUTURE LAND USE

destination where people can live, work, shop, gather and socialize in a welcoming environment.

**Industry.** The Industry character area largely covers the areas currently zoned as “Industrial” (I-1), with proposed expansion to the south and east to allow for continued growth in this sector and support greater tax revenue for the town. This character area is intended to enable industrial development in an area with good highway and rail access and set apart from agricultural and residential districts.

## Assessment of Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Vision Map does not deviate significantly from the current land use patterns and zoning currently established in Georgia, and is generally intended to maintain these patterns as they currently are. The map however does include increases in area for Business, Industrial and higher-density residential to accommodate growth in those sectors.

**Adjacent Communities.** This Town Plan and Future Land Use Map generally aligns with the land use districts in the neighboring municipalities of St. Albans, Fairfax and Milton, without causing any undue juxtaposition of incompatible land use types. This plan does not modify its land use classifications or proposed land use intensity along any of its municipal borders, except at the Route 7 Milton border.

**St. Albans.** The land use classifications along the neighboring border of St. Albans are primarily composed of “Rural” and “Conservation” districts, with a narrow band of “Lakeshore” on the Lake. These three district types closely align with the “Agricultural / Residential”, “Conservation / Recreation” and “Lakeside” vision outlined in this plan respectively. The southern Route 7 corridor in St. Albans includes a narrow band of “Mixed Residential / Commercial”

zoning on either side of the highway which corresponds to the “Business” land use character area on the other side of the border in Georgia. No land use classification changes are proposed in this plan along this shared municipal border.

**Fairfax.** The land use classifications along the neighboring border of Fairfax are primarily composed of “Rural”, and “Residential”. The land use types envisioned on the Georgia side of the border includes the closely aligned “Agricultural / Residential” rural land type, as well as the “Conservation / Recreation” areas which are a less intensive land use. No land use classification changes are proposed in this plan along this shared municipal border.

**Milton.** The land use classifications along the neighboring border of Milton are primarily composed of “Agricultural/Rural Residential” and “Forestry/Conservation/Scenic Ridgeline”. These districts largely align with the land use and intensity on the Georgia side of the border found in the “Agricultural / Residential” and “Conservation / Recreation” character areas, and remain unchanged. The only proposed land use change along this border occurs on the west side of Route 7, where the new “Residential Village” character area would abut the existing “Transitional Residential” (R-4) of Milton. However, this area is already currently zoned as “High Density Residential” (AR-3), and both areas on either side of the municipal line are residentially zoned areas. Route 7 is the only thru-road which connect these two areas.

Lastly, this plan establishes new goals and policies which directly call for the coordination with adjacent municipalities on long-term growth management, road network and multi-modal connections which may improve connectivity between communities.

**Regional Plan.** This Town Plan seeks to support and help implement many of the overall goals and policies established by the most recent Northwest Regional



# FUTURE LAND USE

Planning Commission Regional Plan, adopted in 2023. At its most basic level, the plan seeks to protect the natural and cultural resources of the town while directing future growth primarily to a focused and compact area of the town best suited to development at the confluence of major transportation corridors, where it hopes to develop a sub-regional growth center. Other notable goals and policies include:

- » **Economic Development.** Expanding economic development particularly with mixed-use commercial and industrial growth in an already established center; Pursuing a regional growth center plan with the establishment of new water and sewer infrastructure; Promoting improvements to local broadband and cellular service through FiberWorx; Promoting the sensitive design and co-location of new telecommunication facilities; Recognizing the need for expanded access to child-care services.
- » **Housing, Recreation & Lifestyle.** Promoting zoning changes that expand and diversify the availability of a wider range of housing types at different levels of the affordability spectrum; Supporting equity and diversity in the community without discrimination; Expanding recreational opportunities both in-town and through shared agreements with adjacent municipalities.
- » **Natural and Cultural Resources.** Working to protect significant natural resources and viewsheds within the town; Cataloging and conserving significant cultural resources
- » **Land Use.** Protecting the natural and scenic resources of the town by keeping development density very low along the shores of Lake Champlain and in the most rural areas of town; Focusing the core commercial and industrial growth of the town in a confined area supported by the intersection of two major highway

corridors; Promoting and advancing the use of the South Village area as a future Village Center or sub-regional growth center; Supporting infill development of existing commercial and industrial areas; Allocating higher density residential growth to the established mixed-use area of town where existing transportation and public transit network can best support it; Promoting the conservation of high-value natural resources by providing the latest Vermont Conservation Design spatial data as a reference overlay to future land use;

**Future Energy Goals.** This Town Plan seeks to support and help implement many of the overall goals and policies of the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, adopted in 2022. Notable goals and policies include:

Focusing future development in already established growth center areas where transportation and public transit systems can support it; Planning for the expansion of additional sidewalks, bike routes and walking paths to encourage alternative transportation networks and healthier, more active lifestyles; Supporting both municipal and private sector homeowners and businesses to reduce energy use and convert to alternative energy sources; Reducing annual fossil fuel needs and fuel costs; Cooperatively working with regional authorities to help site new energy generation facilities; Reducing sprawl and energy use by working to concentrate higher-densities of development into limited areas already served by transportation and public transit networks;

**Future Land Use Conservation.** The long term conservation goals of the State of Vermont have helped to inform local communities on priority and high-priority natural resources which should be protected through their Vermont Conservation Design Summary Report, provided in the Appendix

# FUTURE LAND USE

for reference. The landscape and ecological priorities identified in that mapping have been incorporated into this plan, and also provided as an overlay comparison map provided for easy reference on the next page. *(See Map 4.2 - Overlay of the Conservation Design “High Priority Areas” on the Town of Georgia)*

The Planning Commission and Development Review Board are highly encouraged to use this overlay comparison as an initial screening tool to identify areas in town which may likely warrant additional consideration during development review. Further detail at a more local parcel-level is then enabled through the use of the online “BioFinder” mapping resource, made available by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. This resource is included as a planning tool available to local review boards and the Conservation Commission in helping to protect these resources. At present, this interactive mapping tool can be found at:

<https://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/BioFinder4/>



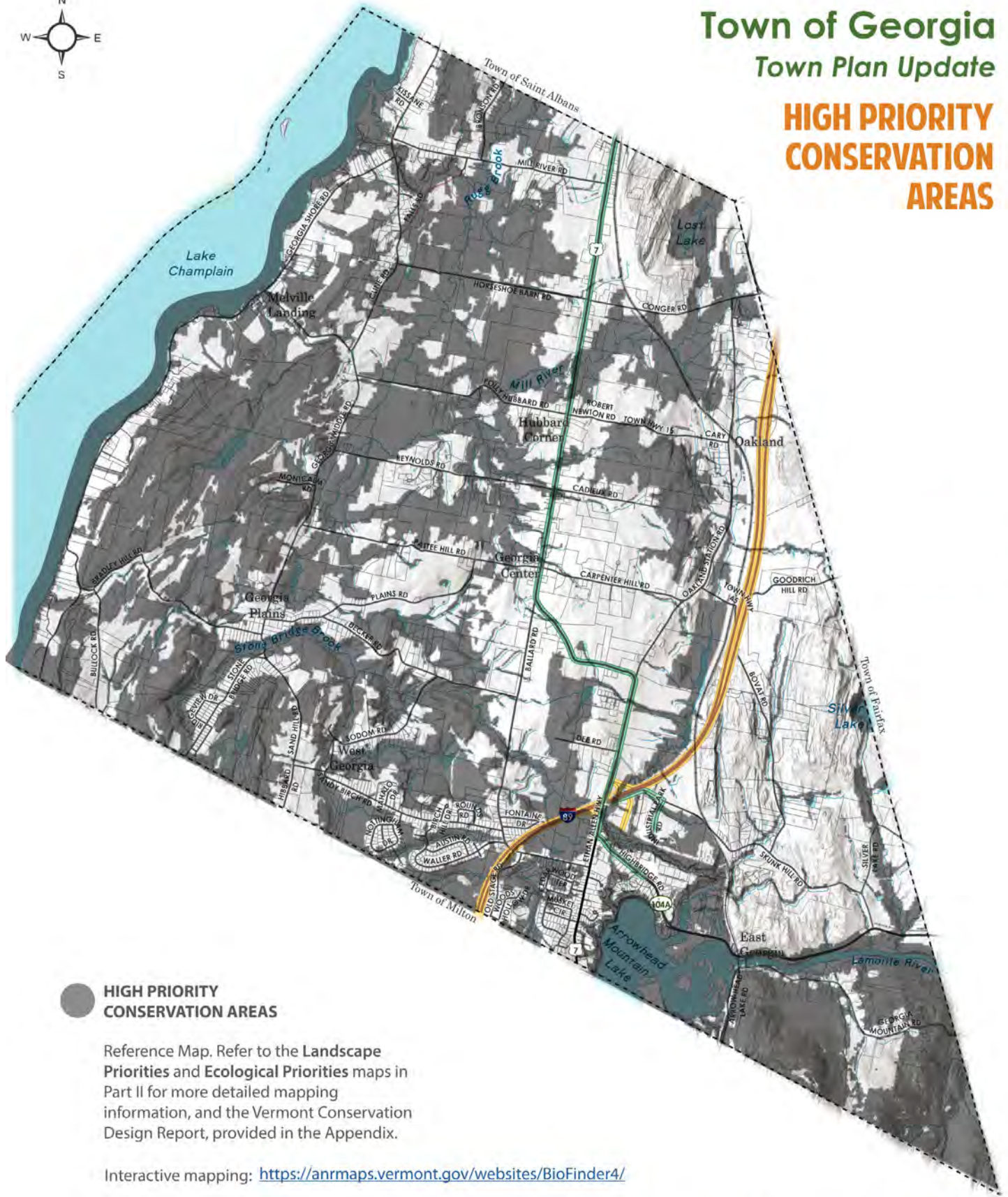






# Town of Georgia Town Plan Update

## HIGH PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS



### ● HIGH PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS

Reference Map. Refer to the Landscape Priorities and Ecological Priorities maps in Part II for more detailed mapping information, and the Vermont Conservation Design Report, provided in the Appendix.

Interactive mapping: <https://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/BioFinder4/>

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Map is for conceptual planning purposes only

MAP 4.2 - Overlay of the Conservation Design "High Priority Areas" on the Town of Georgia.



**REGROWTH**  
PLANNING

Map prepared by

**Upstate GIS**

Data Sources: Municipal Boundaries, Roads, Transit lines and Bus Stops, Vermont Center for Geographic Information



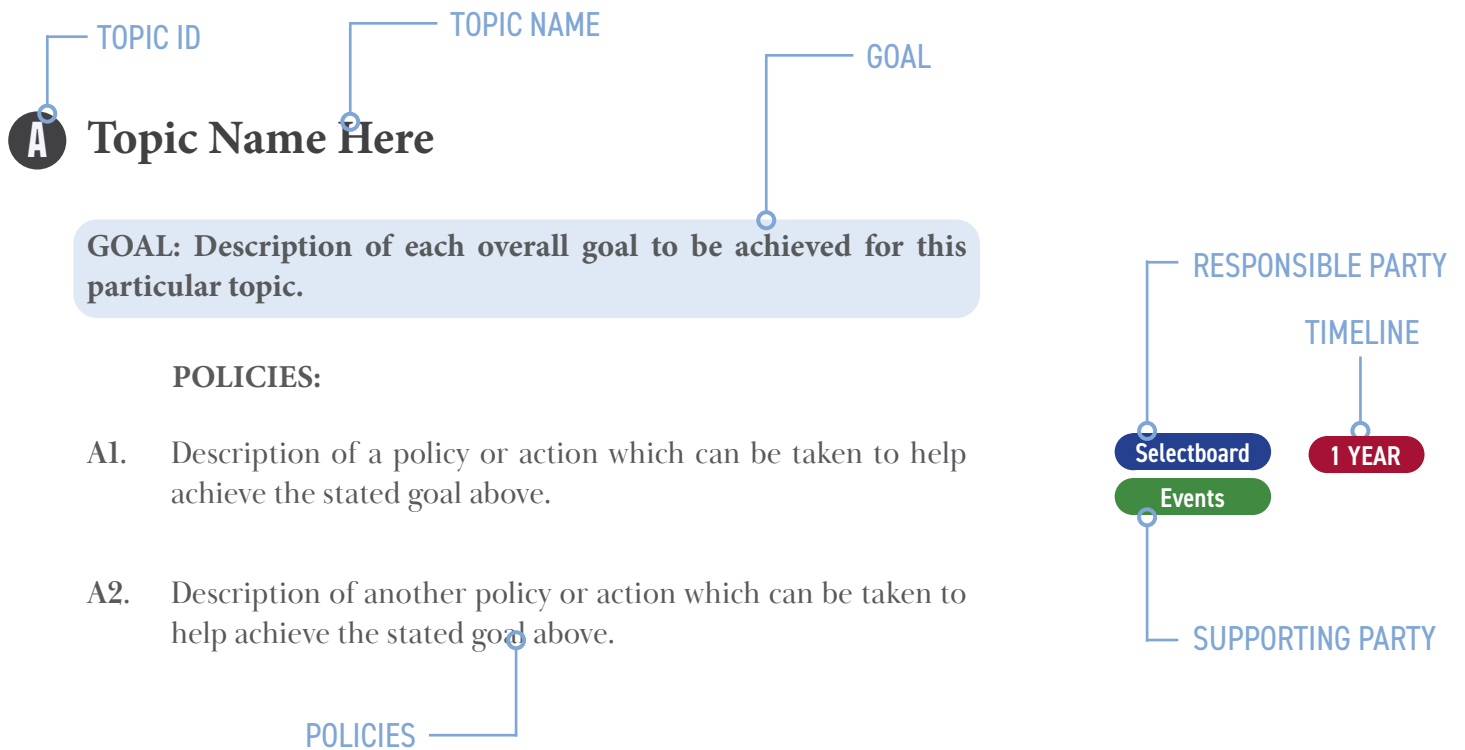
# PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Town Plans will often have a long list of aspirations which they seek to pursue, and it is not uncommon for the list to exceed the town's ability to complete everything desired before it is time once again to update the plan. For this reason, it is often beneficial to identify a short list of the most important priorities which it should tackle, even if those items may take years to implement. The following list of overall priorities was put together in consideration of the priorities identified by the public in the Community Survey in combination with Planning Commission assessment on what is truly important for the long-term health of the town. While these priorities may need to change due to outside factors, it is recommended that the Town of Georgia use them as a starting point to get moving. We have a lot to accomplish..

- » **South Village.** The realization of South Village as a concentrated core settlement of commercial, governmental, mixed-use and residential uses in a traditional Vermont village setting is paramount to the future financial health of the community, as well as addressing the local needs of housing diversity and additional shops and services which serve the population. The town must work in earnest to leverage the support of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission to establish this area as a sub-regional growth area through a Village Center or New Town Center designation available through the State of Vermont to unlock funding for necessary water and sewer systems, [either through the existing designation process or the upcoming revised process](#). This work should be done in parallel with necessary zoning updates and cooperative discussions with property owners and potential developers interested in helping the town realize this vision.
- » **Protection of Town Character and Resources.** A top priority and theme emerging from this planning effort was the desire to protect and maintain the existing rural character which defines much of Georgia. The town should begin by considering regulatory options for the protection of important local viewsheds, utilize the Landscape and Ecological Priorities maps to provide enhanced development review in areas of sensitive natural resources, promote land conservation strategies and pursue the creation of a Transfer of Development Rights program to support this goal.
- » **Police Presence.** The town must continue to pursue and negotiate updated service contract(s) with the County Sheriff, State Police or other town police departments, including through potential cooperative partnership arrangements with other municipalities.
- » **Roadway Maintenance & Traffic.** The town should review and revise roadway maintenance procedures to improve the overall quality and condition of local roads, as well as coordinate with the State of Vermont on potential improvements along Route 7 and 104A in South Village to improve conditions.
- » **Development Regulations Update.** Lastly, many of the goals and policies of this plan are dependent on updates to the local development regulations. This is importantly one topic where the town has direct control over the results, unlike many other desired goals in this plan which we do not have control of the progress. It is also required by State statute that our local regulations are in compliance with the goals of the plan. For this reason, these updates should begin within the first year of adoption of this plan.

# Legend - Goals & Policies

The Goals and Policies of this plan are organized by topic as shown in the example below. For each numbered policy identified, the primary “Responsible Party” for its implementation is listed first, followed by any supporting party. Each numbered policy is also given a timeline for it to be completed.



## PARTIES RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

<b>Selectboard</b>	Town Selectboard	<b>Historic</b>	Historical Society
<b>Planning</b>	Planning Commission	<b>Conservation</b>	Conservation Commission
<b>DRB</b>	Development Review Board	<b>Library</b>	Library Board
<b>Zoning</b>	Zoning Administrator	<b>GEMS</b>	Georgia Elementary / Middle School
<b>Events</b>	Community Events Committee	<b>Fire / EMS</b>	Fire & Rescue
<b>Public Works</b>	Highway / Building & Grounds	<b>Private</b>	Private Sector / Citizens
<b>Town Staff</b>	Town Staff	<b>Vermont</b>	State of Vermont

## TIMELINES

- 1 YEAR**
- 2 YEARS**
- 3 YEARS**
- 4 YEARS**
- EACH YEAR**
- SPRING**
- ONGOING**



# A Historic & Cultural Resources

## Goals & Policies, Continued

The following pages list the goals and policies of this Town Plan. Many of the policies were developed as part of past town plans and have been carried forward to this 2024 update because they continue to be relevant. Other goals and policies are new, reflecting newly identified planning goals.

## A Historic & Cultural Resources

**GOAL: Ensure that Georgia’s noteworthy historic and scenic cultural resources remain intact.**

### POLICIES:

- |     |   |                                   |         |
|-----|---|-----------------------------------|---------|
| A1. | Places of outstanding historical, educational or cultural value shall be protected from development that would unreasonably impair their character or quality.                        | Planning                          | ONGOING |
| A2. | Encourage the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic structures.   | Planning<br>Historic              | ONGOING |
| A3. | To encourage innovation in design and layout of development so that the visual impact can be minimized.   | Planning                          | ONGOING |
| A4. | To encourage the use of vegetative buffers and other screening methods to reduce the visual impact of development.  | Planning<br>Zoning<br>DRB         | ONGOING |
| A5. | Update and regularly maintain a list of all historic sites and structures within the town.  | Historic                          | 2 YEARS |
| A6. | Work with the Vermont Department of Historic Preservation to assess the current Historic Sites and Structures Survey and determine if additional sites or structures should be added. | Historic<br>Planning              | 2 YEARS |
| A7. | Encourage the use of names which reference local historic elements in the vicinity when considering the naming of a new public or private road, trail, park or similar destination.   | Selectboard<br>Historic<br>Zoning | ONGOING |

**B** Scenic & Natural Resources

**GOAL: Protect the quality of Georgia’s water resources, including groundwater and surface water.**

**POLICIES:**

- |   |                         |                |
|---|-------------------------|----------------|
| <p><b>B1.</b> Following the use of required agricultural practices and best management practice is essential to protect water resources. Accepted forestry practices and/or best management practices are encouraged as a way to protect water resources.</p>   | <p>Vermont</p>          | <p>ONGOING</p> |
| <p><b>B2.</b> Impacts to prime agricultural soils due to land development shall be mitigated to ensure the future viability of agricultural uses in Georgia.</p>  | <p>DRB</p>              | <p>ONGOING</p> |
| <p><b>B3.</b> Future development near surface waters should be low density and low impact.</p>  | <p>DRB<br/>Planning</p> | <p>ONGOING</p> |
| <p><b>B4.</b> As much as reasonably possible, streams, ponds, rivers, and wetlands should be maintained in a natural state and protected from pollutants so they can provide their natural functions. Buffer areas shall be encouraged so as to protect these natural functions.</p>  | <p>DRB<br/>Planning</p> | <p>ONGOING</p> |
| <p><b>B5.</b> Consider impacts to Public Source Water Protection during the development review process.</p>   | <p>DRB<br/>Vermont</p>  | <p>ONGOING</p> |
| <p><b>B6.</b> Development shall be prohibited on wetlands and hydric soils.</p>   | <p>DRB<br/>Vermont</p>  | <p>ONGOING</p> |
| <p><b>B7.</b> Development within shoreland and streambank areas shall, where reasonable, maintain existing vegetation, prevent soil erosion, prevent pollution of the water body, and be set back in accordance with established buffers so as not to detract from the natural beauty or cause harm to the environment.</p> | <p>DRB<br/>Planning</p> | <p>ONGOING</p> |
| <p><b>B8.</b> Encourage the use of naturalized stormwater methods in future site plan development which is in harmony with the Vermont landscape, such as rain gardens, bioswales and retention ponds.</p>  | <p>Planning</p>         | <p>ONGOING</p> |



# B Scenic & Natural Resources

## Goals & Policies, Continued

**GOAL: Protect fragile, unique and sensitive natural resources, including those which contribute to Vermont’s high priority inventory for ecological integrity.**

- B9. Buffer areas shall be encouraged to prevent harmful effects of development from affecting these areas. DRB ONGOING
  
- B10. Carefully review development proposed in areas identified in the Landscape Priorities map and the Ecological Priorities map to reduce unnecessary impacts to these resources. DRB ONGOING
  
- B11. Work to promote and pursue a variety of conservation strategies in areas identified in the Landscape Priorities and Ecological Priorities maps for eventual protection. Conservation Selectboard ONGOING

**GOAL: Protect the existing open spaces, agricultural lands and scenic views which define Georgia’s rural character.**

- B12. Investigate regulatory alternatives for protecting the view of Lake Champlain along Georgia Shore Road, as well as the view of Georgia from the lake, in a way that balances the protection of the viewshed with private property owner rights. Planning Selectboard 4 YEARS
  
- B13. Conduct a study of specific scenic resources and viewsheds within the town to identify locations and potential protection options. Planning Selectboard 4 YEARS
  
- B14. Site planning should try to take into consideration the preservation of unique or sensitive site features such as old growth trees, historic stone walls, hedgerows, streams, viewsheds and similar elements to design with the land. DRB ONGOING
  
- B15. Establish a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program which would allow high-priority conservation areas to be permanently protected in exchange for higher density development where it is more appropriate. Selectboard Planning 4 YEARS

# B Scenic & Natural Resources

## Goals & Policies, Continued

**GOAL: Maintain and preserve the quality of important soils, such as agriculture and forestry soils, when considering the future development of the town.**

- B16. The Town shall require proof of a State wastewater permit as a condition of local Zoning Permits, where applicable. DRB ONGOING  
Zoning
- B17. Slopes in excess of 8% may be highly subject to erosion, depending on soil type, and consideration should be given to the use of acceptable soil erosion control measures. Vegetative cover shall be established and maintained after construction. DRB ONGOING
- B18. Development on poorly drained soils shall be avoided. DRB ONGOING

**GOAL: Protect private and public investment and maintain the natural environment by considering topography and geology when determining land use.**

- B19. Geologic factors should be considered in planning to insure the proper use of land. DRB ONGOING
- B20. Development on ridges and hilltops shall be discouraged and their adverse aesthetic and environmental impacts should be prevented. DRB ONGOING
- B21. Site modifications necessary for a particular project should be allowed but there should be no substantial change to natural drainage ways. DRB ONGOING
- B22. Land development on slopes in excess of 25% shall be prohibited and every effort shall be made to maintain a suitable cover of natural vegetation to reduce erosion. DRB ONGOING
- B23. Development shall be performed so as to prevent runoff and soil erosion. Vegetative cover should be maintained or established and erosion control measures shall be undertaken at the time of construction. DRB ONGOING



# B Scenic & Natural Resources

## Goals & Policies, Continued

**GOAL: Protect local earth resources until needed for future use for the benefit of the community; and to minimize the impacts of extraction on the environment.**

**B24.** Extraction of earth resources should be permitted when it has been demonstrated that the activity will not have an undue impact on the Town of Georgia and its residents.

Planning  
DRB

ONGOING

**B25.** All proposed earth extractions shall have a plan for the reclamation of the site, acceptable to the Development Review Board, to ensure the wise use of resources. Guarantees may be required of the developer to assure that the site is properly reclaimed.

Planning  
DRB

ONGOING

**GOAL: Consider climatic factors and to protect the quality of the air when planning for future development.**

**B26.** Development and activities, including home occupations, which degrades air quality should be strongly discouraged.

DRB  
Zoning

ONGOING

**GOAL: Ensure that Georgia is a flood resilient community.**

**B27.** Development in identified flood hazard and river corridor areas shall be prohibited in all but rare, specifically defined circumstances to ensure that the impacts of flooding and fluvial erosion are not exacerbated.

Vermont  
DRB

ONGOING

**B28.** Protect and restore floodplains and river corridors that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.

Vermont  
DRB

ONGOING

**B29.** Support implementation of high priority projects as identified in the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Selectboard  
Planning

ONGOING

**B30.** Encourage flood emergency preparedness and response planning.

Selectboard  
Planning  
Zoning

ONGOING

**C** Economic Development, Growth & Taxes

**GOAL: Encourage the development and expansion of appropriate, diverse and compatible industry and business in the town.**

**POLICIES:**

- |   |                                 |                |
|---|---------------------------------|----------------|
| <p>C1. To promote a diversified and stable economy by encouraging compatible industrial and commercial development and the continuation of existing industries, small businesses and home occupations.</p>  | <p>Planning<br/>Selectboard</p> | <p>ONGOING</p> |
| <p>C2. To provide necessary infrastructure to accommodate more intensive land uses (such as industrial and commercial) within areas designated for such growth. To avoid those areas where infrastructure is not available, the land will not support the use, or there would be a conflict with present land uses.</p> | <p>Selectboard<br/>Planning</p> | <p>ONGOING</p> |
| <p>C3. When planning for commercial and industrial development, encourage such development to serve the public good in terms of employment, revenue, environmental quality, health and safety, and services.</p>  | <p>Planning</p>                 | <p>ONGOING</p> |
| <p>C4. To encourage home occupations that are compatible with the surrounding areas through specific standards in the zoning bylaws.</p>  | <p>Planning</p>                 | <p>ONGOING</p> |
| <p>C5. To enhance and protect the quality of Villages and population centers as important community assets.</p>   | <p>Planning</p>                 | <p>ONGOING</p> |

**GOAL: Maintain a sound fiscal balance for the town, to encourage reasonable, functional, orderly development of facilities, utilities and services, and to promote the health of agriculture while providing a stable economic base for the other sectors of the economy.**

- |  |                                 |                |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------|
| <p>C6. Ensure that the location, form, and rate of growth of new commercial, industrial and residential development does not exceed the ability of the residents of the town to pay for the necessary services and facilities required to maintain it, but must be sufficient to offset the increasing cost of services.</p> | <p>Planning<br/>Selectboard</p> | <p>ONGOING</p> |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------|



# C Economic Development, Growth & Taxes

## Goals & Policies, Continued

- |  |                                 |                  |
|--|---------------------------------|------------------|
| <p>C7. <u>Consider maintaining</u> <del>Maintain</del> the existing Building Permit cap of 35 new residences per year, however <del>consider</del> raising the number permitted per builder.</p> | <p>Planning<br/>Selectboard</p> | <p>1 YEAR</p>    |
| <p>C8. Design and phase development so as to minimize impacts on municipal services, local tax burden and important resources.</p>   | <p>DRB</p>                      | <p>ONGOING</p>   |
| <p>C9. Revise and update the adopted Capital Facilities and Equipment Impact Fees to reflect current costs and conditions.</p>   | <p>Selectboard</p>              | <p>1 YEAR</p>    |
| <p>C10. Review the Capital Budget and Program and revise consistent with the adopted Capital Facilities and Equipment Impact Fee Ordinance.</p>  | <p>Selectboard</p>              | <p>EACH YEAR</p> |
| <p>C11. Development should occur based on projected need, availability of revenues to provide services, and recognition of the limits of human, financial, and natural resources.</p>            | <p>Planning<br/>DRB</p>         | <p>ONGOING</p>   |
| <p>C12. Development of infrastructure shall not significantly impact natural or human resources outlined in this plan unless there is a compelling public need.</p>                              | <p>Selectboard<br/>Planning</p> | <p>ONGOING</p>   |
| <p>C13. Growth shall be guided toward locations which can make use of existing services and facilities.</p>  | <p>Planning</p>                 | <p>ONGOING</p>   |

**D** Housing

**GOAL: Allow for a more balanced and diverse mix of housing types that meets the needs of Georgia’s population at every stage of life.**

**POLICIES:**

- D1.** Encourage a diversity of housing types and ownership styles that meets the needs of Georgia residents, including accessory dwelling units, smaller starter homes, duplexes, senior apartments, senior housing, and year-round rental apartments.

Planning 1 YEAR  
Selectboard
  
- D2.** Encourage the provision of more affordably accessible housing in various price ranges through planning for appropriately sized lots, accessory apartments, and clustered developments which provide denser and more efficient use of land.

Planning 1 YEAR  
Selectboard
  
- D3.** Allow for a more streamlined review and approval processes for needed housing types including accessory dwelling units and duplexes.

Planning 1 YEAR  
Selectboard

**GOAL: Ensure that the town is enabling the creation of adequate housing which is available and affordable for Georgia residents.**

- D4.** Encourage the rehabilitation of existing housing through the use of programs or volunteer efforts, such as Habitat for Humanity.

Planning ONGOING  
Private
  
- D5.** Continue to monitor the growth of short-term rentals and their potential impacts on the community.

Planning EACH YEAR  
Selectboard



# D

## Housing

### Goals & Policies, Continued

**GOAL: Utilize the development potential of the South Village area to accommodate denser housing options where infrastructure is able to support it while protecting the rural areas of the town.**

D6. Continue to pursue the development of centralized water and sewer services in the South Village to support new growth and housing options.

Selectboard

4 YEARS

Town Staff

D7. Encourage Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) that allow for clustered housing and less infrastructure to reduce the cost and other impacts of housing development.

DRB

ONGOING

Planning

**E** **Transportation**

**GOAL: Work to improve roadway maintenance.**

**POLICIES:**

E1. Review roadway maintenance procedures to identify potential new strategies or methods which would improve the quality and efficiency of road maintenance, particularly with regard to roadway paving, repair and the mowing and ditching of right-of-ways.

Public Works

EACH YEAR

Selectboard

**GOAL: Continue to coordinate with the State of Vermont on design improvements along Route 7, Route 104A in South Village to improve traffic issues, access management, bicycle/pedestrian accommodations and accommodate future growth.**

E2. Work cooperatively with the state to develop a transportation network that meets both state and local needs. Play an active role in the planning of new improvements proposed by the state which might affect Georgia. Such plans shall conform to the overall goals and policies of the Town.

Planning

ONGOING

**GOAL: Provide a safe, efficient, cost effective transportation network to meet the varied needs of the residents of the Town.**

E3. Development of roads shall meet specified standards as set forth by the Selectboard. Roads may be accepted into the Town highway system only after meeting these requirements and a finding that it is in the public good to do so. Developers shall bear all costs associated with acceptance of roads.

Public Works

ONGOING

Selectboard

E4. Highway access for the purpose of development shall be strictly limited on Rural Principal and Rural Minor Arterial Roads. Wherever possible, lots will be required to provide one access/ egress point onto said highways which shall serve the entire parcel. Multiple curb cuts are strongly discouraged.

DRB

ONGOING



# E Transportation

## Goals & Policies, Continued

E5. Plan development so as to avoid the need for major public investment in transportation networks. Particular regard shall be given to impacts on the carrying capacity of transportation networks affected by the development. Developers will be required to pay for the costs of necessary improvements, including potential traffic studies.

DRB  
Planning ONGOING

E6. Public and private roads shall not be constructed or extended into fragile, unique, and sensitive area, as designated by this plan, when it would lead to the destruction or degradation of those resources.

DRB  
Planning ONGOING

**GOAL: Work toward the diversification of the local transportation network to include multi-modal options of pedestrian sidewalks, on and off-street bike paths, public transit and interconnectivity with local trail systems as growth occurs.**

E7. Support alternative forms of transportation such as bike and pedestrian paths or lanes, particularly in conjunction with new development or road projects, and connect these systems, where possible, to form a comprehensive network.

Planning  
DRB  
Selectboard ONGOING

E8. Work toward the mapping of all trails and trail easements that are currently on record so that information is brought up to date.

Planning  
Town Staff 1 YEAR

E9. Consider pursuing grant funding for a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to provide short and long-term priorities for transportation.

Selectboard  
Planning 3 YEARS

**GOAL: Coordinate with adjacent municipalities on long-term growth management, road network and multi-modal connections which may improve connectivity between communities.**

E10. Arrange and schedule a yearly coordination session with municipal peers in the towns of St. Albans, Fairfax and Milton to discuss status of current efforts, common goals, and potential joint grant application opportunities.

Zoning  
Town Staff EACH YEAR

**F** **Town Services & Infrastructure**

**GOAL: Seek ways to improve local police and law enforcement coverage within the town.**

**POLICIES:**

F1. Continue to pursue and negotiate updated service contract(s) with the County Sheriff, State Police or other town police departments, including through cooperative partnership arrangements with other municipalities.

Selectboard

ONGOING

**GOAL: Conduct municipal duties and decision-making in a manner which is fair, ethical, transparent and in the interest of the overall population.**

F2. Adopt a formal ethics policy which reaffirms local government’s commitment to ethical and fair conduct and maintains the trust of the community.

Selectboard

ONGOING

F3. Uphold the Declaration of Inclusion statement which prohibits discrimination against persons based on their race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age or disability.

Selectboard

ONGOING

Town Staff

**GOAL: Improve municipal communication methods with the public including notices and announcements, as well as internal coordination.**

F4. Adopt a policy for all announcements and notices which uses a strategic and cost-effective combination of paper and electronic media. Develop a campaign to increase public awareness and education on using the various sources for town announcements and notices.

Town Staff

1 YEAR

Vermont

F5. Consider the creation of a coordinated “town administration” meeting which is held annually with the Selectboard, Planning Commission and DRB to review ongoing issues , plan and coordinate for the year ahead.

Selectboard

2 YEARS

Planning

DRB



# F Town Services & Infrastructure

## Goals & Policies, Continued

**GOAL: Development and growth in Georgia should occur at a rate which can be accommodated by reasonable expansion and/or improvement of facilities and services.**

- F6. Review projects based on their individual impact, as well as their conformance with the overall rate of growth and facility/service capability planned for the town.

DRB  
Planning

ONGOING
- F7. Continue to periodically review the efficiency of local services to determine if additional resources may be needed to accommodate additional growth, and report conditions to the Town Selectboard and Planning Commission so that they are aware of current limitations.

Public Works  
Events  
Fire / EMS

EACH YEAR
- F8. Secure support and funding for the development of a centralized water and sewer system in South Village to accommodate denser commercial and residential growth.

Selectboard  
Planning

4 YEARS

**GOAL: Work to keep Georgia a beautiful town with a strong sense of pride and community identity.**

- F9. Continue to enforce the town Junk Ordinance and periodically assess its effectivity for any potential improvements.

Zoning  
Town Staff

ONGOING
- F10. Consider the development of design guidelines for future commercial development, commercial apartment or mixed-use buildings, and cottage courts and multifamily development throughout the town.

Planning  
Selectboard

3 YEARS
- F11. Continue to push for the adoption of a single zip code for the Town of Georgia.

Selectboard

ONGOING

**GOAL: Continue to maintain and expand recreational opportunities throughout the town which contribute to a high quality of life.**

- F12. Ensure that the town is able to maintain existing recreational facilities at the Town Beach and other before expanding with new amenities.

Events  
Selectboard

ONGOING

# F Town Services & Infrastructure

## Goals & Policies, Continued

- F13. Consider the development of a Trails Master Plan which would identify long-term goals for on and off-road bike and trail connections, including the infill and connection of missing segments in the network.

Planning
3 YEARS
  
- F14. Proactively coordinate with adjacent municipalities to plan for shared community and recreational amenities so that each community does not need to rely on constructing their own facilities.

Selectboard
EACH YEAR
  
- F15. Explore the use of GEMS buildings and grounds, outside of school hours, to enhance the availability of local community activities and services.

GEMS
Events
Town Staff
3 YEARS

**GOAL: Public utilities and services should be enhanced in ways that improve economic development opportunities and quality of life, but that do not jeopardize public health, the environment or scenic resources.**

- F16. All commercial telecommunication facilities, utilities, solar and wind energy systems shall be located in appropriate areas, respecting the integrity of residential areas, aesthetic concerns, and natural resource issues. As noted elsewhere in the Plan, the protection of scenic and natural areas is very important to the Town of Georgia.

Selectboard
DRB
Planning
ONGOING
  
- F17. New telecommunications facilities shall be co-located on or near existing structures, unless the Planning Commission determines that separate facilities will create less visual and aesthetic impact.

Planning
DRB
ONGOING
  
- F18. Locate infrastructure facility and service improvements in existing development areas and areas that are designated for future growth.

Planning
DRB
ONGOING

**GOAL: Continue to expand local availability of cellular and high-speed Internet communications services.**

- F19. Continue to lobby and coordinate with regional service providers and groups such as the Northwest Vermont Communications Union District (Northwest

Selectboard
Planning
ONGOING



# F Town Services & Infrastructure

## Goals & Policies, Continued

Fiberworx) to upgrade and improve local cellular and high-speed Internet communications.

**GOAL: Seek ways to mitigate potential negative visual impacts of cellular towers on the scenic landscape.**

F20. Promote the co-location of cellular transmission equipment and strengthen local laws to enhance visual protections.

Planning  
DRB  
ONGOING

**GOAL: Prepare for emergency contingencies and work to limit their potential impact on local citizens, services and infrastructure.**

F21. Adopt and regularly maintain a Local Emergency Operations Plan.

Selectboard  
Public Works  
Fire / EMS  
SPRING

F22. Update the Georgia Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP)

Planning Com  
Selectboard  
RECURRING

**GOAL: Continue to adapt and evolve the Georgia Public Library to meet the changing needs of a growing community.**

F23. Bring the Georgia Public Library building into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

Library  
Selectboard  
2 YEARS

F24. Upgrade library electrical services to increase the number and availability of electrical outlets to serve patrons and equipment.

Library  
Selectboard  
3 YEARS

F25. Continue to assess the needs and demand for additional staff, programming and facility space, including the potential for a new building.

Library  
Selectboard  
ONGOING

# G Energy

## Goals & Policies, Continued

### G Energy

**GOAL: Support the goals of the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan by working to promote and pursue sustainable energy solutions for all town operations, including but not limited to geothermal systems, heat exchangers, solar and wind energy systems, and reduced energy and fossil fuel consumption.**

#### POLICIES:

- G1. Consider the use of alternative energy systems, including energy costs and efficiencies, whenever upgrading or needing to replace existing systems, equipment or vehicles. Selectboard ONGOING
  
- G2. Consider coordinating with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission on the adoption of a Municipal Enhanced Energy Plan and Solar Screening Ordinance. Selectboard 4 YEARS  
Planning
  
- G3. Conduct periodic energy audits of Town buildings and vehicles. Town Staff ONGOING  
Public Works

**GOAL: Support the goals of the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan by working to encourage and support the use of sustainable energy solutions by local homeowners and businesses.**

- G4. Work to reduce administrative or procedural barriers to local sustainable energy adoption, including the development of streamlined or simplified applications. Zoning 3 YEARS  
Planning
  
- G5. Promote the use of small scale renewable energy sources. Planning ONGOING
  
- G6. Promote educational opportunities which increase energy awareness of students, local officials and townspeople. Selectboard ONGOING  
Town Staff  
GEMS  
Events



# G

## Energy

### Goals & Policies, Continued

G7. Encourage the use of carpools and van pools, public transportation and park and rides for commuters and others.

Selectboard

ONGOING

Town Staff

G8. Investigate the creation of a Municipal Energy Committee.

Selectboard

1 YEAR

**H** Future Land Use

**GOAL: Support the goals of the Vermont Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act with the conservation of important natural areas and critical biodiversity lands.**

H1. Encourage the preservation of land in an agricultural, wooded or open state, particularly in areas of the town which are important scenic viewsheds and not well connected to service systems.

Conservation  
Planning  
Selectboard  
ONGOING

**GOAL: Concentrate residential, commercial and industrial growth in the Village Center and the South Village area to protect the Town’s rural character and resources.**

H2. Apply for Village Center or New Town Center designation in the South Village and Georgia Center areas to promote more compact and efficient growth.

Planning  
Selectboard  
2 YEARS

H3. Avoid strip development in town by requiring developers to use techniques such as clustering along highway corridors. Strip development along highway corridors shall be strongly discouraged.

DRB  
Planning  
ONGOING

**GOAL: Strengthen and support existing local agricultural industries.**

H4. Review and revise land use regulations to reduce potential obstacles to the growth of local agricultural industries, and encourage supportive uses such as value added agricultural products, ag-related services and industry diversification as well as the importance of locally grown food products.

Zoning  
Planning  
2 YEARS

H5. Support Vermont’s “right-to-farm” statute.

DRB  
Planning  
ONGOING

H6. Support the preservation and protection of open land agricultural fields and forests through programs that encourage farming and forestry such as the current use tax program and land conservation easements.

Conservation  
Selectboard  
ONGOING





# Future Land Use

## Goals & Policies, Continued

H7. Georgia’s rural landscape shall continue to be characterized by open land agricultural fields and forests. Agriculture shall be the predominant use in the Agricultural/Rural Residential District (“AR 1”).

Planning  
DRB

ONGOING

H8. Recognize that important resource lands such as prime and statewide agricultural and forest soils are a unique and limited resource, which are essential for food and fiber production.

Planning  
DRB

ONGOING

H9. Consider mitigations or protections for residential neighborhoods from the potential impacts of keeping livestock in areas outside the Agricultural/Rural Residential (AR-1) district.

Planning  
DRB

1 YEAR

**GOAL: Update land use regulations to comply with this plan, including diversified housing, smart growth principles, emerging uses and resolving outdated or confusing standards or code organization.**

H10. Use the site plan review process to encourage innovation in design and layout for improved traffic flow, pedestrian access, parking, landscaping and screening, lighting and aesthetics.

DRB

ONGOING

**GOAL: Regulation of land development in Georgia should not negatively impact the availability of safe and affordable child care and adult care services.**

H11. Review and revise land use regulations to reduce potential obstacles to the siting and availability of childcare and adult care operations.

Planning  
Zoning

1 YEAR

**GOAL: Broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities for all ages, sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of current and future residents.**

H12. Review and revise land use regulations to reduce potential obstacles to the siting and availability of local trade school and vocational training operations.

Planning  
Zoning

1 YEAR

## I Other Implementation

**GOAL: Update Town of Georgia Development regulations to align with latest data and recent changes in State and Federal policies.**

- |  |  |                |
|--|--|----------------|
| <p>I1. Review River Corridor Maps created by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR). Work with ANR to amend maps based on local knowledge. Consider incorporating river corridor maps and regulations into the Georgia Development Regulations.</p> | <p>Planning<br/>Selectboard</p>                  | <p>ONGOING</p> |
| <p>I2. Review current Flood Hazard Zone District standards in the Georgia Development Regulations for compliance with National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) minimum standards. Consider adopting higher standards for this district.</p>                 | <p>Planning<br/>Selectboard</p>                  | <p>1 YEAR</p>  |
| <p>I3. Investigate and consider adopting a “stretch code” for residential and commercial structures to require greater energy efficiency. The code would be integrated into the Georgia Development Regulations.</p>                                       | <p>Planning<br/>Selectboard</p>                  | <p>1 YEAR</p>  |
| <p>I4. Review Georgia Development Regulations to ensure that the regulations address development and farming exempt from Required Agricultural Practices from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture.</p>   | <p>Planning<br/>Selectboard</p>                  | <p>1 YEAR</p>  |
| <p>I5. Adopt Vermont Road and Bridge Standards each year.</p>  | <p>Selectboard<br/>Public Works</p>              | <p>SPRING</p>  |
| <p>I6. Review and update the Town Road Ordinance including standards for Class IV roads.</p>   | <p>Planning<br/>Selectboard<br/>Public Works</p> | <p>1 YEAR</p>  |
| <p>I7. Develop and adopt a solar facility screening ordinance enabled by 24 V.S.A. 4414.</p>   | <p>Planning<br/>Selectboard</p>                  | <p>1 YEAR</p>  |
| <p>I8. Research and pursue State and Federal Grant Programs to secure funding for projects that improve water quality such as shoreline stabilization and buffers.</p>   | <p>Town Staff<br/>Selectboard</p>                | <p>ONGOING</p> |
| <p>I9. Work with NRPC to update Georgia buildout analysis.</p>   | <p>Planning</p>                                  | <p>2 YEARS</p> |





# Other Implementation

## Goals & Policies, Continued

- II0.** Conduct a study of the South Village Zoning District to assess previous changes made to the zoning district in the Development Regulations. This study shall also investigate the possible future use of form-based code and/or design standards in the South Village Zoning District.

Planning 2 YEARS
- II1.** Pursue State and Federal Grant Programs to secure funding for recreational projects that are consistent with the recreational goals of the town.

Town Staff ONGOING  
Selectboard
- II2.** Reach out to community land trusts, housing trusts, other municipalities and NRPC to learn more about obstacles to developing affordable housing and use this information to inform changes to the Plan and the bylaws.

Selectboard 2 YEARS  
Planning
- II3.** Hold semi-annual meetings with the Planning Commission, Development Review Board and Selectboard to coordinate the implementation of the goals, policies and implementation strategies in this Plan.

Selectboard ONGOING  
Planning  
DRB
- II4.** Continue the existing coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions by the Georgia Planning Commission and continue to encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process.

Planning ONGOING
- II5.** Reevaluate and revise all town ordinances to assure conformance with the town plan.

Planning 1 YEAR  
Selectboard

# APPENDIX

- A. Community Survey Report
- B. Public Meeting Notes
- C. List of Reports and Studies
- D. Vermont Conservation Design Report



# A - COMMUNITY SURVEY

# B - PUBLIC MEETING NOTES



# C - REPORTS & STUDIES

The following related planning documents and studies are available on the Town of Georgia website through the Planning Commission page:

2003 - Georgia Village Plan

2005 - Town of Georgia Sewer Feasibility Study

2005 - Wastewater Feasibility Study

2006 - Georgia Town Center Economic Feasibility Study and Master Plan

2012 - Georgia South Village Bicycle and Pedestrian Feasibility Study

2013 - U.S. Route 7 / VT 104A Intersection Study

2019 - South Village Transportation Master Plan

2023 - Town of Georgia Development Regulations

# D - CONSERVATION DESIGN





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