

# West Pawlet Master Plan

## DRAFT PLAN PRESENTATION

April 20, 2023



APRIL 20TH, 2023

# Welcome Everyone!

Thank you for joining us, and thank you to **West Pawlet Volunteer Fire Department** for hosting us – once again – today!



# Draft Plan Presentation

Michael Allen - Regrowth Planning

Tonight would like to review the recommendations of the draft plan and collect input we can use to refine it.



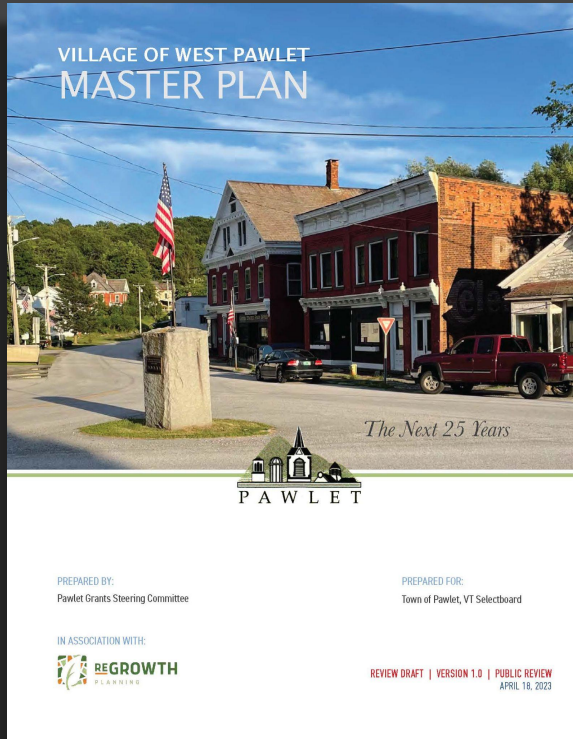
RUTLAND REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Funded by a Municipal Planning Grant awarded by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development.



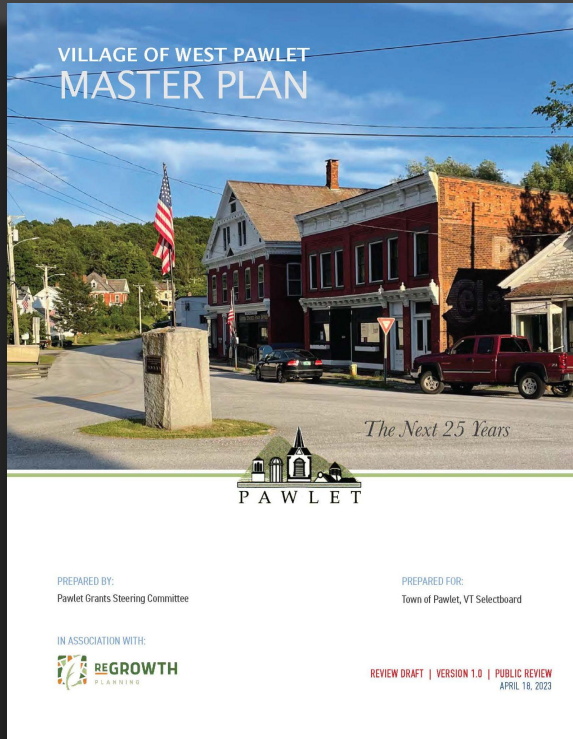


# Review of Draft Plan



# Document Organization:

## Part I – Background & Context



# Document Organization:

Part I - Background & Context

Part II - Process & Public Engagement



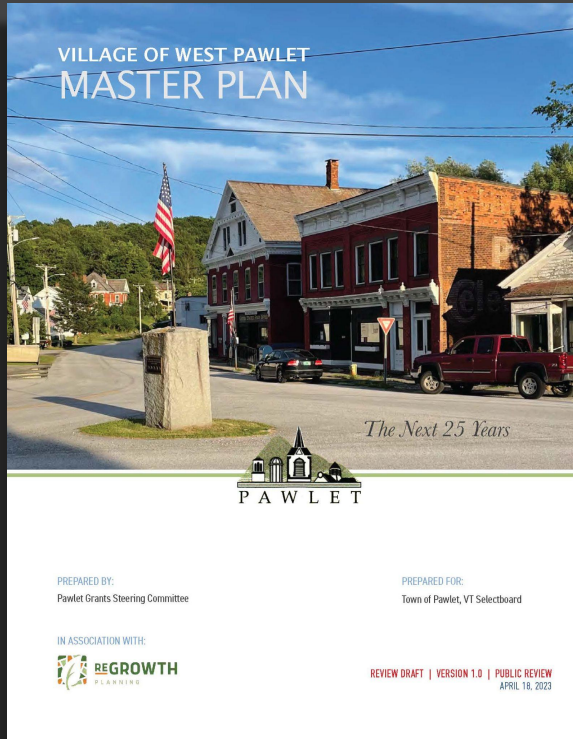
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Part I - Background & Context

Part II - Process & Public Engagement

Part III - Issues & Opportunities





# Document Organization:

Part I - Background & Context

Part II - Process & Public Engagement

Part III - Issues & Opportunities

**Part IV - Recommendations**

## PRIORITY PROJECTS

### #1: Reduce Wastewater Treatment Plant User Fees

Resolving the current system inefficiencies and high operational costs of the wastewater treatment plant is the top priority for the Village of West Pawlet. In order to achieve this, a multi-pronged approach will be necessary to break the cycle of rising costs and declining users. The Town of Pawlet should continue its effort to mitigate rising end-user costs with the use of subsidies and available state program rebates as may be possible to temporarily delay the problem from worsening while more permanent remedies are prepared. In the short-term, the Town should seek grant funding through the CRFP grant program (See Resources, page 56) and others to directly improve the efficiency of the plant operations to reduce costs, particularly related to current storage limitations, staffing and monitoring needs, and energy costs.

Currently, accumulated sludge must be pumped out of the facility and trucked to an off-site processing center in Rutland on a regular basis, representing the largest expense of the plant at over \$14,000 per year.<sup>1</sup> A potential solution identified includes retrofitting the existing sludge tanks to distill or bake a much more concentrated waste mixture, allowing the plant to increase its effective storage capacity and reduce the number of times the waste must be trucked out of town. A second potential solution—

which would likely require the expansion of the facility and grounds—involves expanding the overall capacity of the plant with additional storage to achieve the same reduction in trips, or potentially a combination of these two measures.

It is recommended that if facility expansion is required, that a lot-line adjustment be conducted with the adjacent former Datchies lot to expand the property only as much as necessary, with buffers, so that the remainder of the adjacent lot can be sold off and redeveloped, placing it back on the tax rolls.

The costs associated with properly managing the facility must also be considered. Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators are required to be licensed by the Secretary of State's Office of Professional Regulation (OPR), a position with an average salary of \$48,000/year. The long-term cost-benefit of reconfiguring the facility to permit remote monitoring could potentially reduce the costs by eliminating the need for an operator to regularly travel to Pawlet for on-site inspections. A part-time site operator may also be considered who splits their time between two or three area municipalities may also help to reduce costs.

With a significant portion of plant expenses (18%) coming from energy and fuel costs, the Town should continue to investigate potential electrical cost savings by evaluating more efficient variable-frequency pumps and motors, pumping more during off-peak hours, and investigating the use of a solar panel system to supply electrical power. Utilization

<sup>1</sup>Source: Town of Pawlet Wastewater Budget 2022

# Summary Handout:

- Provides copy of recommendations

of solar power may also have a secondary benefit of maintaining some operational capacity during power outages and providing the Town with renewable energy credits. These potential cost-saving measures should be analyzed as part of an overall cost-benefit analysis and energy audit to determine the feasibility and efficacy of each so the Town can make strategic decisions that improve operations.

The State of Vermont is currently considering new requirements for increased monitoring to prevent PFASs, (per- and polyfluoroalkyl) more commonly referred to as “forever chemicals”, from making their way into wastewater treatment systems and landfills. It is unclear if this legislation may translate into additional costs, but rising inflation, labor and energy prices will likely continue to make this issue more difficult to overcome the longer it goes untreated. It is for these and other reasons that the wastewater facility remains a top priority.

In the longer term, the Town of Pawlet should work to actively encourage and support the establishment of new businesses in and around the village center which would be able to take advantage of the available wastewater service. This would provide the triple benefit of increased tax revenues for the town, creation of some new local jobs, and increased service connection fees to support the treatment plant. The potential for a small to medium-scale light industrial operation to be eventually established at the former Hookery site on Route 133 south of the village center would be a strong start to such an effort, as well as other underutilized properties. The Town of Pawlet should continue to reach out to and coordinate with these landowners and businesses to discuss how we may be able to support their plans, including pursuing joint grant-funding options.

Finally, the provision of some additional housing

### Summary Recommendations

#### Wastewater Treatment Plant

- » Continue efforts to mitigate rising end-user costs using subsidies and available state rebate assistance programs;
- » Apply for and secure grant funding for short-term facility upgrades/expansion to reduce operational expenses of trucking accumulated sludge to off-site processing facility;
- » Investigate available alternatives for operational cost savings related to plant operator salary, having a part-time operator shared with other municipalities, and available grant funding for monitoring or inspections;
- » Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of potential savings realized from reduced electrical usage from more efficient equipment, off-peak operations and solar power;
- » Actively encourage and support the establishment of new businesses in and around the village center which would utilize the wastewater plant to increase user fee revenues;
- » Remove any unnecessary obstacles to housing conversions with multiple dwelling units;
- » Allow for new housing growth which is appropriately scaled to the historic village in terms of form and lot size.

# Summary Handout:

- Provides copy of recommendations
- Summary of each in darker text box

# Today's Discussion:

- Do you agree with the recommendations?
- Is something not covered which should be?
- Other improvements to the document, correcting errors, etc.

# Questions Before We Begin?

# Priority Projects

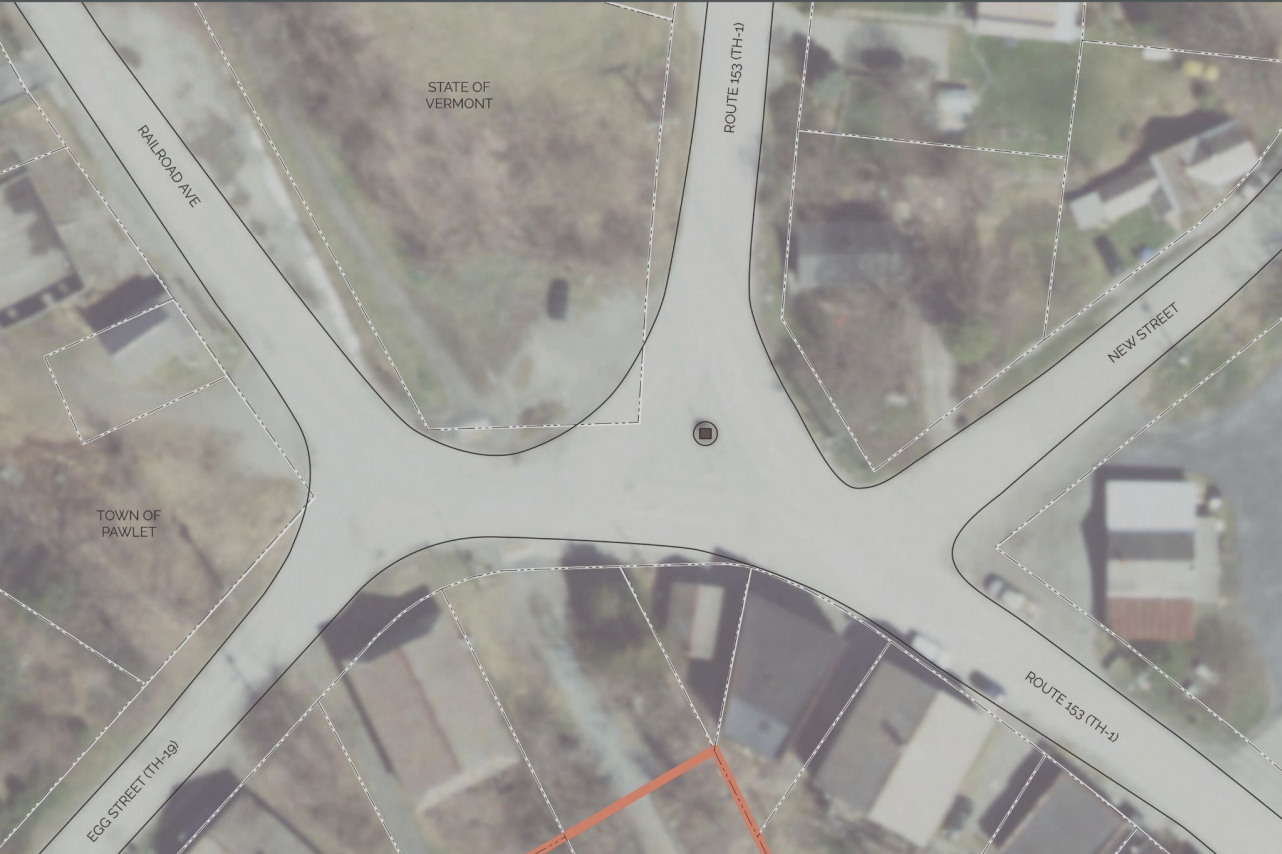
- Three “Priority” projects identified:
  - Reduce Wastewater Treatment Plant User Fees
  - Road Safety Improvements
  - Establishing a New Local Store

# Priority Projects

## Reduce Wastewater Treatment Plant User Fees

- SHORT-TERM: Continue using subsidies and available state rebate assistance programs to keep costs from rising;
- Grant funding for facility upgrades/expansion to reduce #1 expense of trucking sludge off-site, CRRP grant funding specifically available for this;
- Investigate cost saving measures for plant operator salary, reduced electrical usage, solar power electrical supply;
- Encourage and support new business and residential growth to have more users paying into system and operational expenses divided among more people.

# Priority Projects





# Priority Projects



# Priority Projects

## Road Safety Improvements

- SHORT-TERM: Review proposed intersection redesign concept with VTrans;
- SHORT-TERM: Install radar speed sign on Route 153 approach into village;
- Grant funding for roadway and trail realignment;
- Incorporate roadway redesign with rebuilt (slate) sidewalks in front of Fish & Game, Post Office;
- New speed limit sign(s) and 'West Pawlet Village' sign to help slow down vehicles coming into village.
- Re-dedication ceremony honoring WWI Veterans when work is complete.

# Priority Projects

## New Local Store

- SHORT-TERM: Identify volunteer(s) dedicated to beginning effort of organizing other people and establishing 501(c)(3) non-profit for fundraising;
- Officers of Non-Profit should represent a diverse group of people of different local perspectives, backgrounds, skillsets and incomes - old and new residents alike;
- Establish broader mission of West Pawlet revitalization;
- Start small to get established, then work toward fundraising for expansion or larger space;
- Utilize educational, support and available funding of Preservation Trust of Vermont;

# Priority Projects



**Albany General Store, Albany, VT.** After a fire destroyed the previous business in 2013, the Albany Community Trust—a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization—was founded to establish a new store on the property. Partnering with the Preservation Trust of Vermont, they purchased the building and raised over \$200,000 in donations and were awarded over \$400,000 in grants to renovate and expand the building. Donations made to the cause are sent to Preservation Trust of Vermont, who in turn passes these funds down to the non-profit organization. The new store was opened in 2021. The store is operated by the owners of the Craftsbury General Store who have partnered with the non-profit organization.

# Priority Projects



**Barnard General Store, Barnard, VT.** *The original store, founded in 1832, closed in 2012. Members of the local community established the Barnard Community Trust—a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization—with the goal of bringing the store back into operation. With the assistance of the Preservation Trust of Vermont, the organization raised over \$650,000 to purchase the building and make necessary repairs. Volunteers ran the store part-time in exchange for donations while they worked to get the store running more permanently again. The trust now leases the building to new store operators, and the store was re-opened in 2013.*

# Priority Projects



**Sheldon General Store - Cafe & Community Space, Rupert, VT.** *The Rupert Village Trust—a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization—was established to purchase and expand the building with the goal of developing a local cafe and community space. Partnering with the Preservation Trust of Vermont, the group has raised \$145,000 in community donations and \$490,000 in grant awards. The building was purchased in 2019 and completed necessary structural upgrades the next year. They currently host regular local events including game night and yoga while working toward the goal of constructing a 2-story addition to accommodate restrooms, stairs and elevator and completing a commercial kitchen in order to serve a variety of food dishes designed for both affordable and fancy budgets.*

# Other Village Goals

## Volunteers Needed



- SHORT-TERM: Identify a person within the community to maintain a list of volunteer efforts and help recruit and organize people for them;
- This person does not need to lead any individual tasks, but serves to organize them;

# Other Village Goals

## Volunteers Topics Identified:

- Establishing Non-Profit for Local Store
- Fire Department Volunteers
- Grant application writing
- IT/Web design for fundraising and marketing efforts
- General village cleanup / repair
- Community events coordinator
- Landscaping, flower planting of public areas
- Design services / renovation labor for Local Store
- Artists and craftspeople for local improvements
- Rail Trail / Village marketing
- Donating money or materials



# Other Village Goals

## Volunteers Needed



- SHORT-TERM: Identify a person within the community to maintain a list of volunteer efforts and help recruit and organize people for them;
- This person does not need to lead any individual tasks, but serves to organize them;
- In spirit of community, I would like to volunteer for one of these efforts;

# Other Village Goals

## Replace Sidewalks

- SHORT-TERM: Develop a creative/decorative removable cover for wellhead protruding out of sidewalk in front of Fish & Game;
- In coordination with new street/intersection work, rebuild sidewalks, utilizing slate material where possible;
- Utilize local talent (artists, craftspersons, metalworkers) to make design reflect creative side of the community, give it a local touch;

# Other Village Goals



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- Utilize local talent (artists, craftspersons, metalworkers) to make design reflect creative side of the community, give it a local touch;
- Seek grant funding for additional sidewalk restoration areas.

# Other Village Goals

## Support Business Growth

- Coordinate with West Pawlet business and property owners in applying for grant funding to help establish or expand business, such as former Hookery property;
- Revise allowable uses in the Village Commercial and Industrial zones to identify additional uses which may be considered;
- Proactively reach out to local property owners - particularly vacant or underutilized structures - to discuss potential plans and how the town can help;
- Consider a liaison to Planning Commission who can reach out to property owners and identify issues that may be preventing them from implementing their plans.

# Other Village Goals

## Support the Fire Department

- Provide coordinated write-in support for pending state legislation which would give \$500 tax credit for volunteer firefighters;
- Encourage state (and local) lawmakers to enable local municipalities to provide property tax exemptions for volunteer firefighters;
- Encourage friends and neighbors to take part in more Firehouse events become more involved in the community;
- Annual (or bi-annual) outreach program to new residents.
- Work to revive lost events such as pancake breakfast, and ask the community what type of events they would most like to see, most like to attend.

# Other Village Goals

## Revive Community Events

Re-establish old events and organize new ones;

- Community Pot Luck Dinners
- New Resident Welcome Event
- Farmer's Market
- Community Cleanup Day
- Outdoor Movie Night
- Trivia Night
- Christmas Tree Lighting
- Bake Sales / BBQ Roasts

# Other Village Goals

## Revive Community Events

Re-establish old events and organize new ones;

- Work toward the creation of one or two larger annual events which would attract people from larger area to visit West Pawlet;
- Build off of and enhance existing “Tour de Slate” rails to trails fundraiser;
- Historical Society walking tour, 5K Fundraising Walk between Village and Consider Bardwell/Wayward Goose, Artwork with slate materials;
- Coordinate local events with area businesses.



# Other Village Goals

## Rail Trail Enhancements

- SHORT-TERM: Continue to work on incremental improvements which support the trail such as new parking area;
- Coordinate with intersection redesign to introduce new landscaping and tree plantings;
- Raise awareness and marketing of the trail, coordinating with other towns and businesses to create an online & print brochure map with local attractions all along the way;
- Over time, establish other trail amenities such as bike racks, shaded seating picnic areas, visitor information and public restrooms.

# Other Village Goals

## Repurpose Railroad Freight Shed

- SHORT-TERM: Continue to monitor legal status to look for opportunity to have a say in the future of this building;
- Get input from Preservation Trust of Vermont on potential interest and funding for restoration;
- If possible, work to restore and re-align structure away from the road;
- Partner with Historical Society and VTrans to establish as D&H Rail Trail / West Pawlet Welcome Center, showcasing the history of the village, the railroad, and the slate industry;
- If structure must be removed, try to keep it in Pawlet in lieu of destruction. If must be destroyed, seek to salvage parts. Restore site to trailside picnic area.

# Other Village Goals

## Improve River Access

- Conduct outreach to local property owners about potential of creating enhanced access or walking paths down to the water edge;

# Other Village Goals

## Adapt the Quarry

- Continue to offer quarry materials to local residents through approved Town Selectboard process of local contractors;
- Coordinate with Slate Valley Museum of Granville to add West Pawlet to their Slate Valley Driving Tour and other collaborative opportunities;
- Review existing quarry parcels to identify what areas of land may be suitable for carving off and selling back into private sector, get land back on tax rolls.
- Investigate remaining quarry site for feasibility of limited (safe) walking paths, trails and overlooks which might serve as local attraction, educational hiking tour.

# Other Village Goals

## Former Landfill

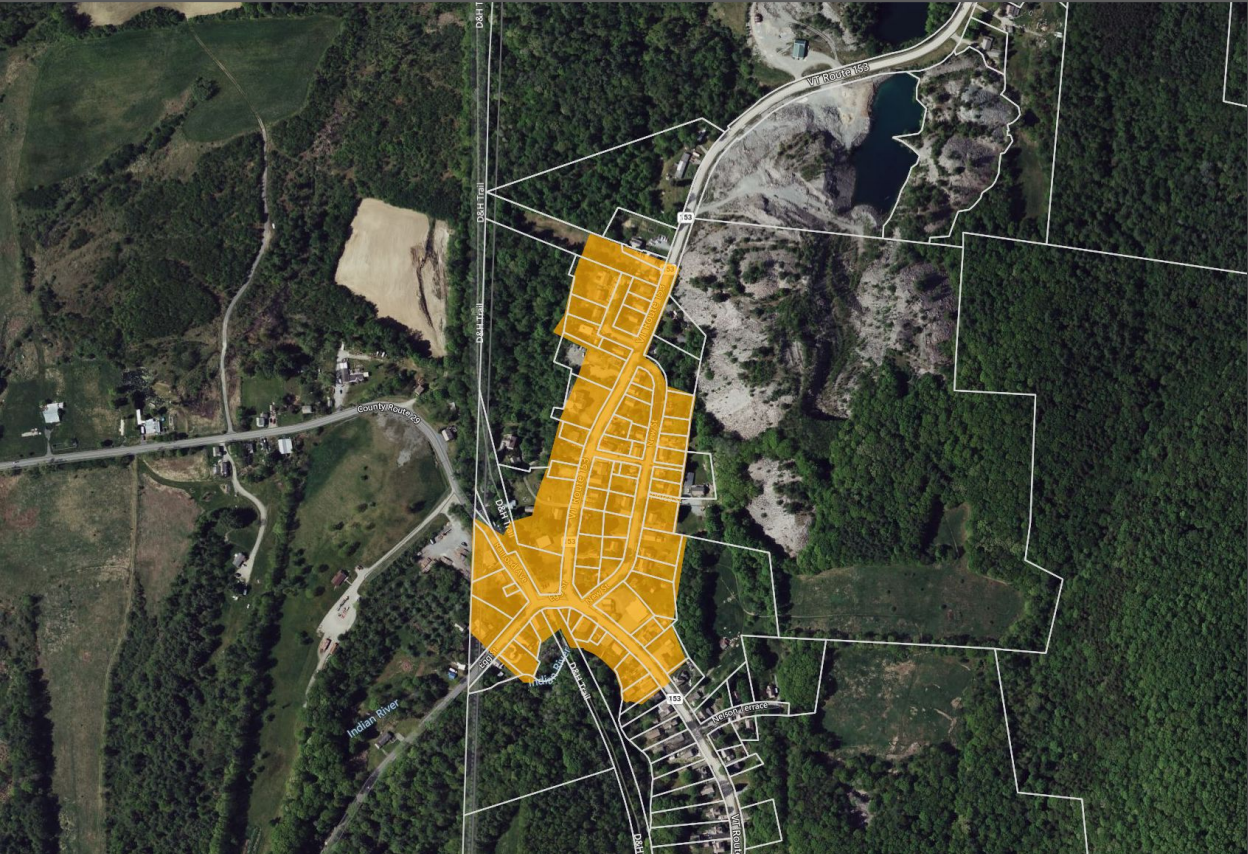
- SHORT-TERM: Continue to monitor ongoing infrastructure plans of local utilities to stay up to date on planned upgrades or changes;
- Update Town Plan and Energy Plan to identify landfill as one of the best candidate sites for a larger solar installation;
- Update town requirements to include design guidance on any future public solar projects, including desired screening, fencing, wildlife support, pollinator plantings, viewshed protection and decommissioning plans.
- Incorporate recreational walking trails/paths around property.

# Other Village Goals

## Vacant Town Land

- Review southern quarry parcel to identify what areas of land may be suitable for carving off and selling back into private sector, get land back on tax rolls;

# Other Village Goals



WEST PAWLET VILLAGE MASTER PLAN

# Other Village Goals

## Vacant Town Land

- Review southern quarry parcel to identify what areas of land may be suitable for carving off and selling back into private sector, get land back on tax rolls;
- Instead of letting this land develop randomly, prepare a pre-planned design for the property as part of a Planned Unit Development concept;
- Design for a reasonable number of small cottage homes on very small lots, geared toward providing housing options for younger family starter homes or seniors downsizing;
- New housing to connect to and support wastewater treatment plant;
- Remainder of property as shared open space and walking trails.





# WEST PAWLET VILLAGE MASTER PLAN



# Discussion / Questions

## Recap:

- Do you agree with the recommendations?
- Is something not covered which should be?
- Other improvements to the document, correcting errors, etc.

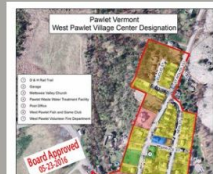
## West Pawlet Village Master Plan

**The Town of Pawlet is in the process of developing a Master Plan to help guide the future of the West Pawlet Village.** A Master Plan is a document—often with photos, drawings and maps—which outline the desired future vision and general goals of the community. This planning process seeks to invite local residents to provide input on what issues are most important to them and what they would like to see to help shape the plan.

Topics of discussion can include any variety of issues, including business needs, parking, streetscape improvements, housing, zoning, recreation, water and sewer services, tourism, industry, youth and senior activities, trail improvements, and many more. But we need your help—a Master Plan needs to be developed using the input of the community—we want to hear your ideas! Please join us at any of our various events and meetings, described below, to hear different ideas and share your own.



### Document Downloads



# Document Downloads



West Pawlet Village Center Map



Community Survey Results



Open House Notes



Open House Display Boards



## Pot Luck Dinner Presentation 1

January 12

Intersection & Streetscape



Pot Luck Meeting 1 - Notes

## FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the goal of this effort?

The goal of this effort is to develop a vision document which will help guide the Town of Pawlet on achieving both short and long-term priorities for improving the community. The document can be used by local town officials, community leaders and residents to enable an organized and focused approach to getting things done. It can also be used to help leverage future grant funding for specific projects which the community supports.

### How is this work being paid for?

The Town of Pawlet Municipal Planning Grant Committee (MPGC) applied for—and was awarded—a grant from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development through the Rutland Regional Planning Commission. Regrowth Planning, a local planning consultant, has been hired to organize the public outreach and assist the MPGC with the writing of this plan.

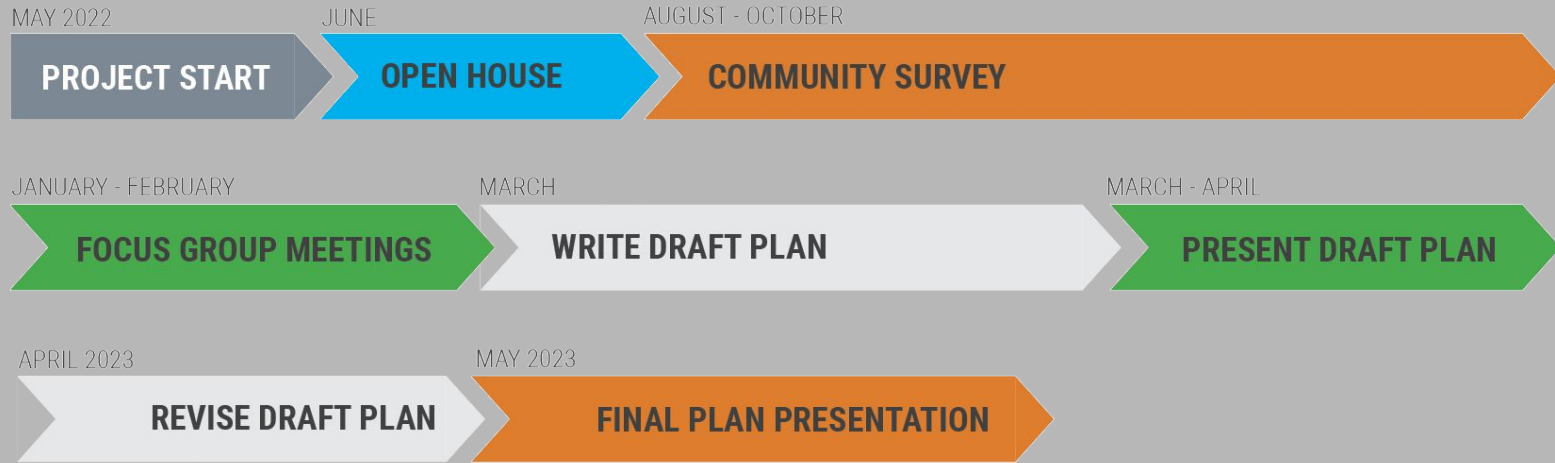
### How can I submit comments or suggestions?

West Pawlet residents are invited to attend the various meetings and events for this effort, including the Open House, Pot Luck Dinners and presentations scheduled over the year. You may also submit comments and questions through our online form, located here: [LINK TO COMMENT FORM](#)



COMMENT FORM

# SCHEDULE



Information on project webpage:

[www.regrowthplanning.com/pawlet](http://www.regrowthplanning.com/pawlet)

You can submit additional comments and suggestions via our online form.