

VILLAGE OF WEST PAWLET MASTER PLAN



The Next 25 Years



PREPARED BY:

Pawlet Grants Steering Committee

PREPARED FOR:

Town of Pawlet, VT Selectboard

IN ASSOCIATION WITH:



REVIEW DRAFT | VERSION 1.0 | PUBLIC REVIEW
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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RUTLAND REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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PHOTO CAPTION



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West Pawlet Master Plan

Executive Summary

The Village of West Pawlet has completed this planning effort to identify community needs, a vision for economic growth and overall improvements. A number of immediate priorities emerged from this process. At the forefront of resident's minds is the need to address issues at the wastewater treatment plant to reduce the high user fees. These fees have been an economic burden on the community and stifle future growth. Short-term upgrades are necessary to improve the operational efficiency of this facility and reduce costs while longer-term goals of establishing more users can be realized.

The community also identified a number of important changes which should be made to improve vehicular and pedestrian safety in the village, which was a priority for many. A solution to solve this problem was found which would likely enhance the village center and better showcase the WWI Monument.

Residents also identified a strong need to establish a new corner store in the village that could help fill the void left after the tragic fire that destroyed Dutchies. This was seen as an important first step in attracting new activity and local business growth.

In the larger sense, West Pawlet seeks ways to strengthen their sense of community, bringing old and new residents together, and inspire measured growth that supports the unique and simple personality of the village. Finding opportunities to adaptively re-use existing properties in the village is an important first step toward that goal. This plan also outlines a number of measures and ideas which, over time, are intended to help realize the vision of a stronger and livelier community. As West Pawlet works to achieve some of the changes set out in this document, one is reminded that the village should remain a quiet, peaceful and friendly place to live. Changes should be implemented with care. This effort will require support from the Town as well as a strong commitment from local volunteers to help achieve it.

Sincerely,

Pawlet Grants Steering Committee

PART I

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

All communities need a vision to help guide them and plan for their future. The ability for all communities to develop their own Town Plans or Village Master Plans is authorized by the state to help empower local citizens to have a voice in the long-term vision for their community which should span multiple elected administrations. This helps to provide each administration with a guide to future decision making that remains on course with the overall will of the people.

The State of Vermont also provides municipalities with the ability to establish designated “Village Centers.” The purpose of the Village Center Designation is to identify historic settlement and population areas which are opportunities for revitalization and infill redevelopment, helping to create economic development while reducing sprawl and growth from spreading out into the more rural portions of the state. Designated village centers qualify for a number of additional state grants which are not otherwise available, helping to support and incentivize the revitalization of our older settlement areas.

In 2016 the Town of Pawlet applied for, and was awarded, official Village Center Designation for a core area of West Pawlet. The boundaries of this village center (see map on page 5) were approved by the Town Selectboard on May 23rd, 2016. Utilizing the new grant opportunities it provided, the town

applied for a Municipal Planning Grant to develop a community-based plan for the Village of West Pawlet. The purpose of this master plan was to identify problems and opportunities in West Pawlet, [see grant app] and draft a vision for what could be done to address them. In December of 2021, the Town of Pawlet was awarded the grant, and the master planning process was begun in the spring of 2022.

Although the focus of the planning effort centers on the area within the village center designation boundaries, it is recognized that these lines are invisible to the people who live and work here. What happens just outside that boundary can have a profound impact on the village itself, and so we recognize that some ideas outside the village are also important to the improvement of the overall community.

Grants Steering Committee

This planning effort, and the grant which fuels it, was spearheaded and overseen by a group of volunteers who form the Grants Steering Committee. These volunteers include Jessica Van Oort (Chair, and town selectboard representative), Rhonda Schlangen (resident), Mike Beecher (resident and town selectboard representative), Frank Nelson (resident), and Bruce Sirjane (property owner).

West Pawlet, VT *Circa 1891*

1. Welch Presbyterian Church
2. Welch Congregational Church
3. Baptist Church
4. Church of Christ
5. Academy
6. D&H Railroad Station
7. S.D. Dennison's Slate Quarry
8. Rising & Nelson's Slate Quarry, No. 4
9. W.H. Hughes' Slate Quarries
10. Rising & Nelson's Slate Quarry, No. 3
11. Rising & Nelson's Slate Quarry, No. 2
12. Rising & Nelson's Slate Quarry, No. 1
13. Powell House, J.B. Powell, Prop.
14. F.J. Nelson, Speculator & Carriage Repository
15. General Merchandise & Post Office, Owen W. Williams
16. Brown & Mayo, Meat Market
17. Variety Merchandise, H.W. Owens
18. D. Hawkins, Manufacturer of Wagons and Potato Starch
19. Drugs & Groceries, F. Johnson
20. Jewelry & Fancy Goods, Geo. R. Pratt
21. Furniture & Undertaking, H.B. Jones
21. Office of Rising & Nelson
22. Hardware, G.W. Beecher & Bro.



The History of West Pawlet

Originally known as “Mark’s Corners” before being chartered as part of the Town of Pawlet, VT in 1761, West Pawlet has witnessed many industries come and go with the changing times. Early industrial activity in the area centered on the extraction of potassium fertilizer (“potash”), as salts were leached from the ashes of trees which were cleared to make way for new fields. This fertilizer was essential in replacing lost potassium in the soil after repeated farming harvests, and its long shelf life made for a good export commodity to distant places.

By the early 1800’s merino sheep were introduced to the United States by William Jarvis, a Weathersfield, Vermont resident, leading to a wool craze later known as “merino mania.” This introduction gave rise to the first fulling and cloth-dressing mills being established in West Pawlet around 1812, along with a woolen factory. Later tariffs on imported wool created a huge demand for this material, and great profits could be found producing it locally. At its peak of popularity around 1837, there were over one million sheep in the State of Vermont, a number given greater weight when one considers it is almost double our human population today. By



Lithography - Published by E.R. Burleigh Lithographing Establishment, Troy, N.Y. 1891, provided by Pawlet Historical Society. Number legend at top-left reproduced for formatting, including duplicate numbering of item 21.



the late 1840's however, changes in wool tariffs—as well as competition from larger farms out west—severely hurt local sheep farms and eventually led to the decline and closure of many farms and wool mills in Vermont. As it declined, dairy farms began to dominate afterwards, with milk and cheese being produced locally at many homesteads.

▲ **Caption.** Description text.

▼ **Caption.** Description text.

The opening of the Rutland & Washington Railroad in 1851 ushered new opportunities, allowing for milk, cheese and other local goods to be transported from the center of the village to cities down south. The first cheese factory in Vermont was opened in 1864 by C. S. Bardwell in West Pawlet, just south of the village center, where it remains a locally known farm today. The 1860's also witnessed the establishment of the first slate quarries in West Pawlet, including the Rising and Nelson Slate Company, founded in 1869. Fueled by the nearby railroad, slate roof shingles and flagging could be shipped off to distant lands. The opening of the slate quarries saw a wave of Welsh and Italian immigrants, often quarrymen



from their own lands, come to make West Pawlet their home. Rising and Nelson would go on to become the dominant mining company in West Pawlet. At its peak, there were more than 100 individual quarries in operation.

West Pawlet grew to become the epicenter of industrial and commercial activity within the entire Town of Pawlet. Home to numerous businesses, it was more populous and active than its sister hamlet Pawlet to the east. When people spoke of “going into town” in those days, they were usually referring to West Pawlet. It was home to a variety of commercial and industrial activities, including a grist mill, distillery, tavern, grocery market, drugstore, meats, and a large hotel, among others. So populous and active was West Pawlet at that time, that in 1886 they considered splitting off from the town and becoming their own entity, although this never came to pass.

▼ *Caption. Description text.*



▲ *Caption. Description text.*

In 1895 the Great Fire of West Pawlet destroyed many of the buildings in the village, and resulted in the loss of three lives. Much of the history of the village was lost that day, though much was rebuilt. By the turn of the century, West Pawlet was experiencing the approximate peak of the slate industry. A new railroad station was built in the village in 1905 to help the transport of goods, however it wouldn't be long before this heyday would be challenged. The turn of the century also saw other innovations, including the development of asphalt shingles. Designed to be lighter and cheaper than slate, these would begin to compete with slate roofing at an increasing rate. By the 1940's, the slate roofing industry began to suffer steep declines, and would shrink to only a shadow of itself by the 1970's. Many of the quarries in West Pawlet, including the surrounding region, would close.

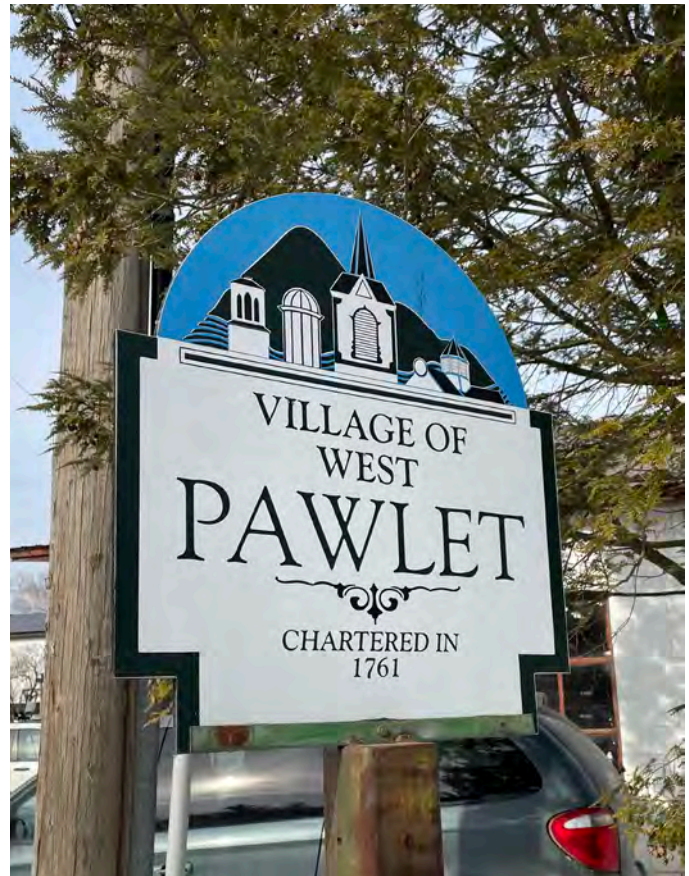
Gone are the days of sheep and dairy farming, wool production and slate mining. Times changes, and we adapt to new ways of keeping ourselves productive as always.



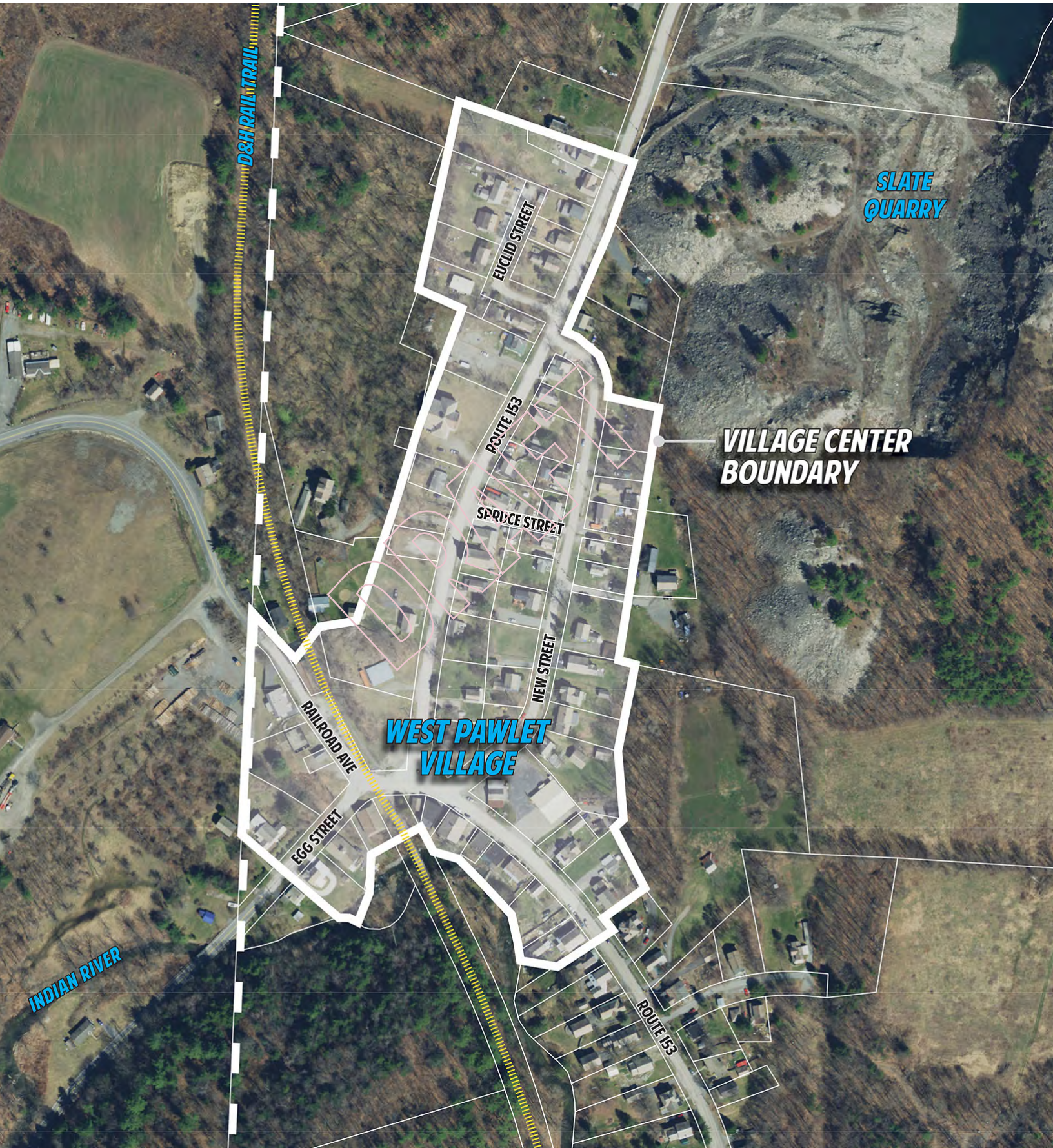
West Pawlet Today

Today, West Pawlet remains an unincorporated village which includes two National Register Historic Districts of the main village and Spruce Gum to the north. Over 90 historic buildings remain within West Pawlet today, representing a cross section of history and varied architectural styles.

Today, west Pawlet remains a quieter version of it's once self. The Indian River still meanders through the valley, but without the mills which once took their power from it. The slag pile remnants of the quarries mark a visible feature of the landscape, with one quarry still remaining in operation even today. Many of the more recent activity centers which were once here have since disappeared, including the local school, an iron works, and the local general store, destroyed by fire in 2011.

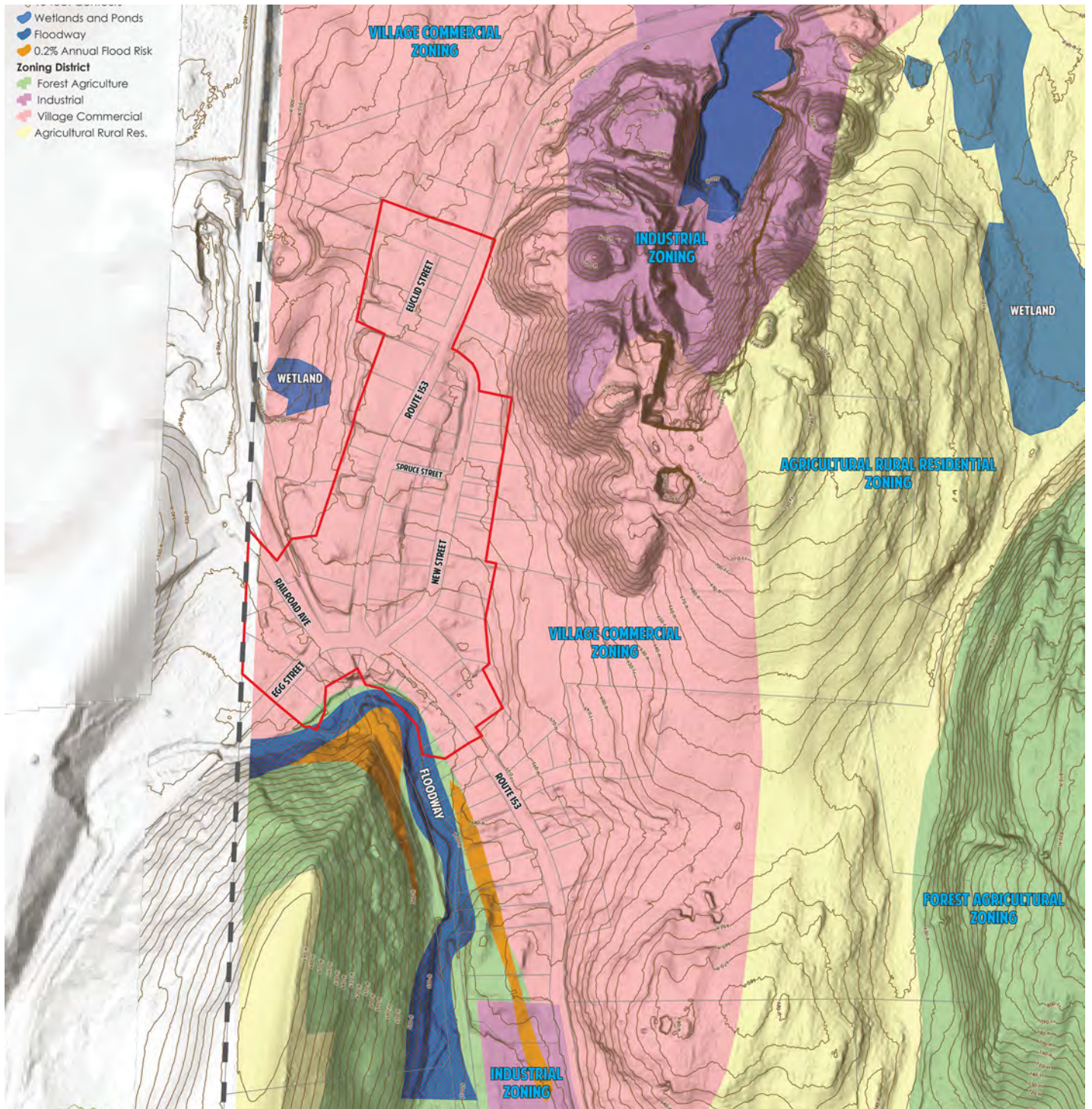






The village, now home to an estimated population of 220 people (2020 Census) is primarily composed of single family homes and a few commercial buildings. The zoning in this area is predominantly Village Commercial, with some Industrial to the north and south, and surrounded by the more

rural Agricultural Rural Residential and Forest Agricultural zoning. The village holds potential to restore some of its former activity, and it will be interesting to see what the next generation of changes and opportunities can bring.



PART II

PROCESS & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The planning process used to develop this master plan was designed to rely heavily on recurring public input opportunities to collect ideas, concerns and feedback from residents.

The process began with a walking tour of the village with members of the Steering Committee and several members of the general public to take a fresh look at the village and discuss ideas. This was followed by an open house event to officially kick-off the planning effort, introduce the project to the public and invite people to identify the general issues the community might want to discuss. The input from the open house was used to help design a community survey which would help identify what residents felt were the top priority issues in

the village and gather other ideas for exploration. Using the results of the survey, different discussion meetings were developed to explore some of the top issues in more detail and discuss potential solutions. Once the draft ideas and recommendations were developed, a public workshop was held to review them and get feedback on any changes to the draft plan which people felt were needed.

Meetings and events were advertised locally with posters, announcements in the town e-Newsletter, as well as local social media for the West Pawlet Facebook group and Front Porch Forum. This process allowed for an orderly community discussion which provided many opportunities for residents to take part in the effort.



OPEN HOUSE EVENT



▲ **Open House Event.** *The open house introduced the planning effort to the residents of West Pawlet and collected preliminary ideas and concerns to help design the community survey.*

On June 27th, 2022 an Open House event was hosted at the West Pawlet Volunteer Fire Department as an official kick-off to introduce the public to the planning process. The overall goal of this event was to identify early ideas and concerns which could be evaluated by the wider community in an upcoming survey.

Attendees were provided maps of the village and surrounding area, with a series of preliminary ideas and issues for them to react to and help spur discussion. People were also invited to answer a series of specific questions, including what do they think would improve the quality of life in the village, what would they like to protect, and what would they like to see change in the village?

Not surprisingly, attendees were quick to note several suggestions which had already been anticipated by the grants steering committee, including reducing the wastewater treatment plant fees, the need for a new corner/general store, and desire for more community events or spaces which bring neighbors together. However, a number of new ideas and issues also emerged from this session which had not been identified before, such as adaptive re-use concepts for the former slate quarry, bicycle road-race events, and fire department facility needs. This input was useful in helping to design the upcoming community survey.

Meeting notes from the open house have been provided in the appendix for reference.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Using the preliminary input from the open house event and steering committee, a brief survey was designed help identify what the top priority issues in West Pawlet were, and provide residents with the ability to suggest other improvements. Paper copies of this survey were mailed to about 130 households, and an online version was also created which was advertised on social media through the West Pawlet Neighbors Facebook group and the local Front Porch Forum. This survey collected responses from late August to early October.

The results of the survey indicated that there appeared to be five topics which easily rose to the top of the priority list among local residents. These included decreasing the wastewater treatment plant fees, roadway and intersection safety improvements, creation of new local businesses, cleanup and restoration of vacant buildings, and pedestrian



▲ **Community Survey.** Social media advertisement for the community survey. Hardcopies of the survey were mailed to 130 households, and was also made available online.

sidewalk/safety improvements. Specifically, a new corner general store to replace the former Dutchie’s Store topped people’s needs for the type of new local business needed.

Overall, the community survey seemed to indicate that people very much wanted to maintain and protect the relaxed charm that makes the village unique, but there was need for some specific improvements. Enhancements which improved the rail trail and supported tourism were desired, but these were secondary to meeting the immediate needs of the locals first. There was also a desire for more community events and socialization opportunities, which many felt was important to maintaining the fabric of the community which was changing with an influx of many newcomers moving to the area in the aftermath of Covid.

The survey also reflected some lesser-priority issues, such as a desire to improve and take better economic

advantage of the rail trail, increase tourism, simplify and streamline local zoning requirements, better speed limit enforcement, restoration of some of the old slate sidewalks as well as some general village beautification and landscaping.

A copy of the full survey results report has been provided in the appendix for reference.

RAIL TRAIL SURVEY

In addition to the community survey made available for local residents, a separate survey was created to capture input from visitors passing through the village along the rail trail. This allowed us to ask—from the outsider’s perspective—what amenities and services people would like to find when they come to West Pawlet. Laminated signs were posted at the West Pawlet trailhead inviting people to participate



▲ **Rail Trail Survey.** Poster inviting travelers along the D&H Rail Trail to participate in an online survey to learn what amenities they would like to find in West Pawlet.

in the online survey, which collected responses from August through October.

A majority of respondents indicated that they either stopped in West Pawlet or began their trip here, stopping to take a break, have some food or drink, sightsee, and look around for any shops, food choices or restrooms that might be available. When asked what would they have *liked to find*, the most popular answers were public restrooms, sale of light refreshments, shaded seating areas, water station, as well as a restaurant, outdoor dining and the sale of local goods and crafts. Other desired amenities included trash/pet waste receptacles, local tourism information, and picnic tables.

With more than half of the rail trail respondents coming from out of state, the rail trail represents a good potential driver of local tourism interest in the village, particularly if some of the desired local amenities could be provided.

POT LUCK DINNERS

To discuss some of the priority topics in more detail, a series of four pot luck dinner meetings were held. These meetings began with a short presentation showing the results of the community survey, followed by a discussion period as people enjoyed the food dishes brought by their neighbors. The topics selected for these meetings included Roadway & Intersection Safety, Village Revitalization & Cleanup, New Corner Store, and The Firehouse and Community Events. These topics were selected because they covered high priorities identified by village residents, and were considered the most productive in terms of brainstorming ideas and solutions. The presentations often included preliminary ideas or designs to help solicit feedback and discussion from the attendees, and were extremely productive in identifying desired options for the village.



PROJECT WEBPAGE

To help facilitate public outreach, a project webpage was set up to act as a home for information about the planning effort. The webpage provided documents for review, maps, as well as copies of meeting notes and presentation materials for people who were unable to make it to some of the meetings. It also included a link to an online comment form which was made available for the length of the project so that residents could submit comments or ideas for review by the Steering Committee.

AREA STORE OWNERS

Because of the popularity of the Corner Store topic, additional outreach was added to solicit input and advice from the individual owners of a half-dozen local “general” stores in the wider area from Pawlet, Wells, Rupert and Dorset, Vermont. Short questionnaires were delivered to each, followed by phone calls or interviews to discuss responses. Although this resulted in mixed input, it was useful

in identifying obstacles which a new store in the village might experience, and determining that there was very little interest in expanding their existing operations.

MASTER PLAN WORKSHOP

On April 20, 2023, a public workshop was held at the West Pawlet Volunteer Firehouse to present the draft findings and recommendations of the plan for resident feedback. [complete this section once workshop has concluded.]



IMAGE
PENDING

PART III

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The Village of West Pawlet, like many small-town American communities, is trying to adapt to a changing economic landscape in which the industries and professions which built it have been replaced with something often less tangible and more difficult to predict. What has not changed have been the assets of the community, including the beautiful countryside, the meandering Indian River and a small community of people who love their village. Discussions with residents on what they would like to see for the future of West Pawlet identified a number of issues and opportunities which they would like to see addressed.

Wastewater Treatment Plant

The West Pawlet Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) once served as the backbone of a more populous and industrial village, and represents a significant asset to the potential growth and economic vitality of the area. Many small towns and villages in Vermont would very much like to have a similar facility, as the lack of municipal sewer services often limits their ability to accommodate new growth and activity. Today, West Pawlet is a smaller community than it once was—employing over 100 people as recently as the 1990’s—but that activity has since diminished. Over time, the demand for local sewer service has also diminished,



and currently the plant is operating at under 25% of its designed capacity¹. At the same time, growing operational expenses—coupled with stricter health and environmental regulations—have increased the costs of running this facility. Wastewater sludge currently needs to be trucked to the regional treatment facility in Rutland on a regular basis, accounting for a considerable expense. Operational expenses of running the facility increased over 30% from 2021 to 2022, fueled by a 55% increase in biosolids management and disposal (its highest expense) and a 183% increase in testing expenses. Total user fees have jumped from \$95,721 in 2020 to \$103,700 in 2022 in an effort to help cover the costs.

This one-two punch of less users and higher expenses has resulted in higher operational costs being saddled on a smaller number of households, resulting in extremely high wastewater fees for each user. Over time, these costs have led local property owners to disconnect from the system, converting some duplex housing units down to single dwelling units in an effort to reduce service costs. This in turn begins to lead to a downward-spiral effect, where less income from connection fees means more burden on the remaining users. These rising service costs also create a chilling effect on potential economic development which would otherwise help to solve the problem. This unfortunate circumstance has put the Village of West Pawlet in a difficult position where it needs to break the cycle that is creating an economic burden on local residents while also holding it back from potential recovery.

¹ *Estimated percentage of total flow capacity. The facility has capacity for an average of 200 hookups, but is currently only serving 120 - Source: 2016 Town Plan. Actual flow from each hookup varies.*

This single issue was identified as the top priority for the village based on input collected from the community survey, testimonials at public meetings, and individual comments. The wastewater service issue is a burden on most village residents and is dampening future growth.

To help mitigate this issue, the Town of Pawlet has been working to subsidize some of the operational costs of running the facility to help reduce end-user costs, and has been actively working to help enroll local residents in the Household Wastewater Payment Assistance program through the State of Vermont Economic Services, a relief program which helps to offset some of the user fees residents are experiencing. These efforts have been successful in reducing service fees from over \$1,000 per year down to about \$825. While this has helped somewhat, and has been successful in keeping costs from continued increases, a more permanent solution to reducing operational costs is desperately needed before the cycle can be broken. The wastewater treatment plant represents a critical asset that the town and village are not currently able to take proper advantage of until this issue is resolved.



▲ **Wastewater Treatment Plant.** *Currently operating well under capacity, this facility represents growth potential, but needs new users to help bring down operational costs.*



Intersection / Roadway Safety

The center of West Pawlet Village hosts the convergence of four separate roadways in a uniquely non-traditional arrangement which served the village well in the early decades of its growth, but does not lend itself well to modern automobile speeds. The roadway arrangement, wide asphalt coverage, absence of typical signage or obvious right-of-way procedures creates confusing conditions, particularly for unfamiliar travelers. The many issues experienced from different approaches into the village are illustrated in the accompanying photos and map for reference.

These conditions have led many residents to be concerned about vehicular and pedestrian safety in the heart of the village, especially when not everyone obeys the posted limits. [This concern for intersection safety was identified as one of the top priority issues during the master planning process, and was the topic of its own public meeting during the pot luck](#)

[dimmers](#). A very important variable in this discussion is the presence of the WWI Memorial stone, which has stood prominently in the center of this roadway convergence for decades, and represents a proud part of village history which many residents would prefer not to see changed. Although many people supported changes to improve the safety of the intersection, most respondents in the Community Survey indicated that they wanted the war memorial to remain where it was. Many people have felt that the present location of the monument gives it the attention it deserves, and that relocating it could undermine its visual prominence. However, the present location of the monument has so far been an obstacle to making intersection improvements that would address some of the safety concerns.

It was also noted by many people that vehicle speeds in the village often exceed the posted limits, and they very much wanted additional measures put in place to help deter such behavior.



Approach from North. Vehicles approaching the main West Pawlet intersection from the north on Route 153 are presented with a road which splits both left and right to either side of the WWI monument, creating a potentially confusing condition. A lack of signage indicating that Route 153 continues to the left may add to this uncertainty, especially when yellow roadway markings are faded or obscured by snow. Vehicles coming the opposite directions can also travel left or right of the monument, leading to potential confusion about who has right-of-way.

(See viewpoint marker '1' on map, next page).



Rail Trail Crossing. The D&H Rail Trail crossing currently does not have a marked crossing, and visibility of vehicles approaching up the hill from Egg Street is obscured by the hill. Although the rail trail provides a stop sign for pedestrians and bicyclists heading east on the trail, there is no similar sign in the westbound direction, where visibility of vehicles coming up the Egg Street hill are even more obscured.

(See viewpoint marker '2' on map, next page).



Approach from West. Vehicles approaching the main West Pawlet intersection from the west on Railroad Avenue do not have a stop sign, and can turn right or left. These vehicles may not be able to see cars coming from their right up the hill on Egg Street, which also does not have a stop sign. This can lead to potential confusion about who has actual right-of-way.

(See viewpoint marker '3' on map, next page).



Despite some relatively minor accidents over the years (some involving the WWI monument itself) **this intersection has so far avoided any serious vehicular incidents in recent memory.** This is possibly due to the relatively lower volume of traffic which passes through the village, and the local’s knowledge of its peculiar nature. However, with a gradual increase in local travelers unfamiliar with the area, the issues identified should be addressed.

▲ **Existing Roadway Conditions.** *Some potential vehicle conflicts at the intersection are illustrated here without clear right-of-way rules.*

“I feel the traffic intersection at the World War I monument is confusing to visitors and outdated by current standards.”

~ Community Survey Response



Approach from South. Vehicles approaching the main West Pawlet intersection from the south on Egg Street are presented with limited line-of-sight visibility until they reach the top, providing no warning of pedestrians crossing along the rail trail just ahead. They also may be unable to see cars coming from the left on Railroad Avenue, which also does not have a stop sign. The stop sign which was once at the top of this hill for this approach was removed because larger trucks climbing this hill were unable to stop and start moving again in slippery conditions, often getting stuck or sliding back down the hill.

(See viewpoint marker '4' on map, previous page).



Approach from South. Vehicles which have crested the top of the hill on Egg Street are suddenly presented with a roadway which veers to the right, and then splits to either side of the WWI monument, creating a surprise condition and potentially confusing choice for those not familiar with the road. Travelers in this direction are sometimes confused if they should stay to the left of the monument to continue north, or if they should pass around the right side of it and then turn left on Route 153 like a traffic circle.

(See viewpoint marker '5' on map, previous page).



Approach from East. Vehicles approaching the main intersection from the east on Route 153 are presented with a very wide roadway which splits left and right on either side of the WWI monument, without a clear indication of which way the road actually continues. Adding to the potential confusion is a sign which says "Yield Left to Oncoming Traffic".

(See viewpoint marker '6' on map, previous page).

Loss of Local General Store

West Pawlet Village used to be the home of several local businesses, including the Dutchies General Store on Railroad Avenue. Dutchies served the community for decades, providing much needed supplies, foods and other goods to area residents. Unfortunately, that changed in March of 2011 when a fire broke out in a neighboring storage building and consumed both structures, resulting in the tragic death of one person and two dogs. While the owners were able to escape the blaze with relatively minor injuries, the building was a complete loss. The community rallied with a robust fundraising effort to help the owners rebuild, but it was ultimately unsuccessful. This tragic loss left the community without a local store, which was not only a source of goods, but also served as an important landmark and social hub within the village.

The site of the adjacent storage building has since been redeveloped, however the Dutchies site itself ran into financial and administrative difficulties shortly after a new foundation was poured, and construction was halted. Today, the property remains vacant, with the new basement foundation filled in for safety. The Town of Pawlet has since acquired the property in the hopes that it can one day be redeveloped, or that it may be useful to help resolve issues at the adjacent wastewater treatment plant. Environmental questions about the site and its redevelopment potential have been raised due to its proximity to a former industrial railway. The town has since completed a Phase I environmental assessment of the property to resolve these questions, and funding has been earmarked to complete a Phase II assessment this year. It is anticipated that these investigations will help clear the way for future active use of the property



▲ **Dutchies.** Photo courtesy of Pawletvermont.com..

The community still mourns the loss of Dutchies today, and has identified the need for a new local general store to replace it as one of the top priorities for the village. Whether any replacement would occur on the same site or a different property remains an option. Within the broader goal of generally attracting new local businesses to the area, a new local corner store which could provide basic household goods and supplies was identified as the most needed type of service. This need outranked other more specific uses such as a bakery, deli, coffee shop, or cafe (which could ultimately be rolled into such a store) as well as a restaurant, bike shop or commercial employer. Respondents in the community survey also noted that if such a store could be established, a majority would frequent it several times a week. Such a store would also provide much needed amenities and goods to rail trail users, providing a compelling reason for travelers to stop, and a catalyst for new activity in the village.

The feasibility of constructing a new store in West Pawlet however faces several hurdles. Small local general stores such as this in Vermont are having an

increasingly difficult time remaining economically viable in today’s modern economy. The West Pawlet area has a relatively low population, providing a small market to support what are already slim profit margins. Finding an experienced store operator (preferably someone local) was also needed. Outreach was conducted to six existing local store owners in the wider area to learn what obstacles this effort might face and inquire if they had any interest in opening a smaller satellite operation of theirs in West Pawlet. Despite being generally supportive of the effort, none of the existing store owners were interested in opening up another store—anywhere—because they are already working overtime running the one store they have. Some also expressed skepticism about the population of West Pawlet being able to adequately support a profitable

venture, and noted their own struggles in finding reliable labor.

An informal discussion was also held with Stevens and Associates, an architect/developer firm in Brattleboro, to discuss the feasibility of preparing a “shovel-ready” store site as a strategy for attracting potential developers willing to construct a new store in West Pawlet. A shovel-ready site would include a pre-approved design, site plan and all necessary permits among other incentives. Again, the low population density of the village was identified as being an obstacle to making such an investment very attractive. The developers did note that a strategy with housing units above the store may work better, since housing was in high demand and the rent could help subsidize the store below. Overall however it was viewed as risky. The premise of constructing or operating a conventional “for profit” store in the village was seen as financially difficult.

▼ **Dorset Union Store.** *Despite being well-established businesses with high visibility and a relatively wealthy tourist population, small general stores such as this still often struggle to remain profitable.*



Alternatives to the conventional model were also suggested by the group, as well as by some local store owners and residents. These ideas included local cooperatives and community supported fundraising models which have seen some success in similar Vermont towns. These options would likely require some creative solutions and leveraging the support of the whole community, but may be able to overcome the traditional hurdles.

Underutilized Properties

There are a number of vacant or underutilized properties within the village and immediate surrounding area, as illustrated on page 22 and accompanying photos. Importantly, many of these properties are right in the heart of the village, or owned by the Town of Pawlet. These properties represent an opportunity to bring in some new local businesses, and increase the general activity of West Pawlet. **The creation of more local businesses was identified as the third highest priority in the community survey, followed by the cleanup and restoration of vacant buildings.** Activating these underutilized properties with new uses would address two of the top interests of local residents, and could represent a big win for the community. It would also represent increased tax revenue for the town. While a new corner store was identified as the most desired type of business, other needs were raised including local child care, farmer’s market, restaurant, larger commercial employer, as well as a bike shop or local arts and crafts store to cater to visitors.

Freight Shed. (#3 on map, page 22) Specific opportunities of note include the 1890 railway freight shed, located directly adjacent to the D&H Rail Trail and occupying land controlled by the



▲ **Antiques Store.** *Contributing structure circa 1910 store, featuring original storefront design. Currently vacant. Owner would like to rehabilitate building and turn into small store serving community and rail trail users.*



▲ **Railway Shed.** *Railway freight shed, contributing historic structure circa 1890 featuring original stickwork and extended rafter tails. Unfortunately, due to the building’s proximity to the road, the rafter tails and corresponding roof overhang were cut off to avoid vehicle collisions. Currently vacant, ownership in dispute.*



▲ **Duquette Property.** *Non-contributing structure, recently rebuilt to replace 1910 structure lost in Dutchies fire. Currently vacant.*

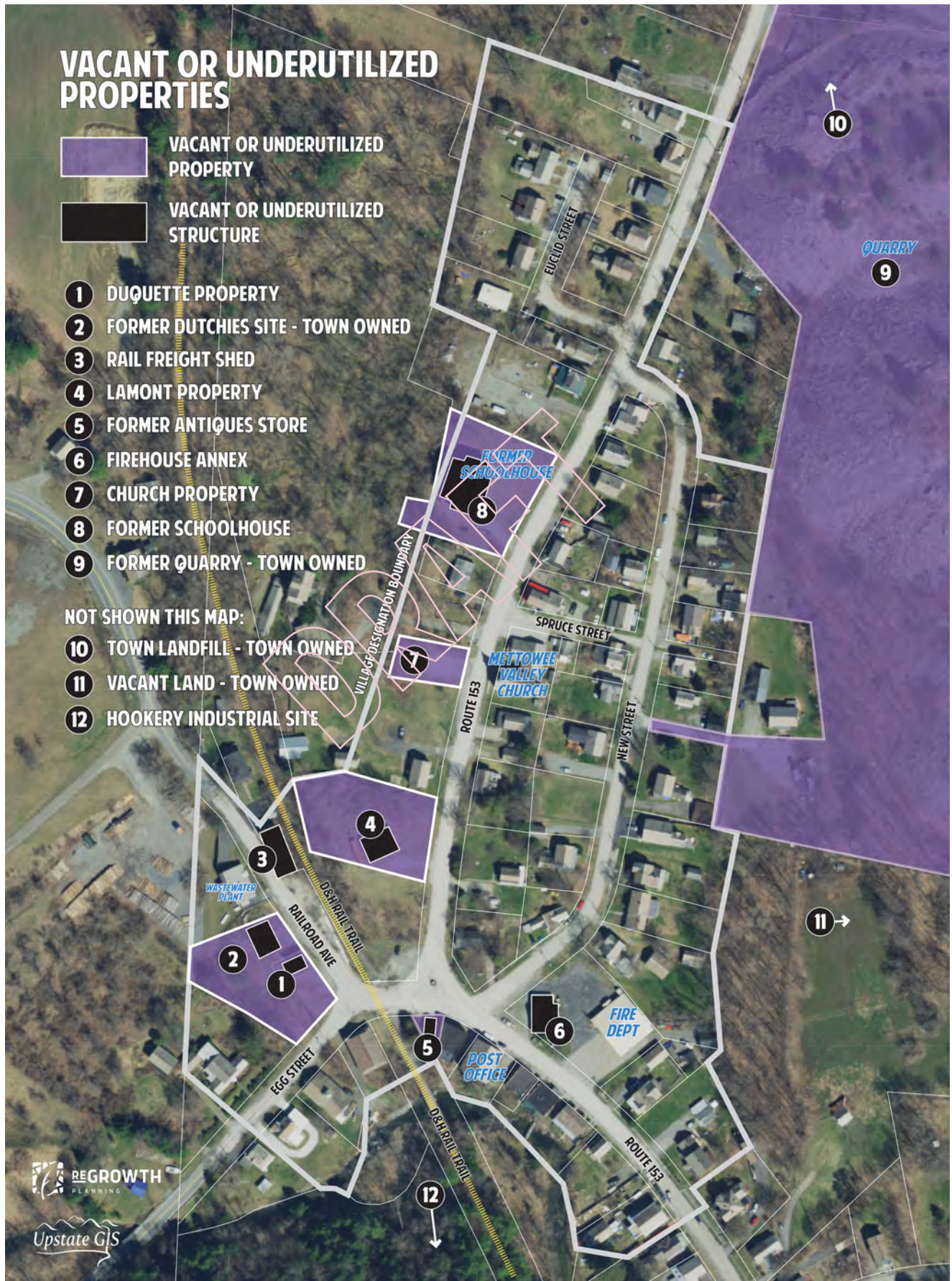
VACANT OR UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES

-  VACANT OR UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTY
-  VACANT OR UNDERUTILIZED STRUCTURE

- 1 DUQUETTE PROPERTY
- 2 FORMER DUTCHIES SITE - TOWN OWNED
- 3 RAIL FREIGHT SHED
- 4 LAMONT PROPERTY
- 5 FORMER ANTIQUES STORE
- 6 FIREHOUSE ANNEX
- 7 CHURCH PROPERTY
- 8 FORMER SCHOOLHOUSE
- 9 FORMER QUARRY - TOWN OWNED

NOT SHOWN THIS MAP:

- 10 TOWN LANDFILL - TOWN OWNED
- 11 VACANT LAND - TOWN OWNED
- 12 HOOKERY INDUSTRIAL SITE



State of Vermont (VTrans). The future of this historic structure has been in limbo due to ongoing bankruptcy proceedings of the private owner. Up until recently, the State of Vermont has wanted this building removed from its land. More recent discussions have opened up the potential that the building might be allowed to remain on state land if it were fixed up and converted to a use which supported the Rail Trail. However, the current legal proceedings would still need to be resolved.

Quarry. (#9 on map, page 22) The former slate quarry north of the village has remained dormant for many years. Now filled with water, it is surrounded by unstable slag piles which make it unsafe for casual visitors. Nevertheless, it represents a highly visible landmark to the history of West Pawlet and remains a local resource. Although not open to the public, the town has developed official procedures which allow local contractors to access the site with permission to collect leftover slate for use by Pawlet residents. Contractors are permitted to charge for their labor and hauling, but are not permitted to charge for the slate, which is intended to be provided to town residents for free. In community conversations, many ideas were discussed for the adaptation of this site including an outdoor concert venue, community solar farm, fire department tanker refueling spot as well as a potential gravity-fed water supply for village sprinkler systems. It remains however a difficult and expensive property to adapt to other uses.

Town-Owned Vacant Parcel. (#11 on map, page 22) South of the former quarry, on an adjacent second lot, the Town of Pawlet owns 82 acres of other vacant land. While the north half of this parcel was used for slag storage, the southeastern portion remains mostly untouched, including a 7-acre meadow which appears to still be farmed for



▲ **Former Slate Quarry.** *The former slate quarry located just north of the village is currently owned by the town, and represents a difficult but potential opportunity for adaptive reuse.*



▲ **Parcel South of Quarry.** *The adjacent parcel south of the former quarry is town-owned and contains a significant amount of vacant land which is not being utilized.*

hay. This parcel represents a significant amount of land for the Village of West Pawlet which is currently not on the town tax rolls. Approximately half of this parcel is currently zoned Village Commercial while the rest is Agricultural Rural Residential, and has limited road frontage accessed from the end of Spruce Street. Converting a portion of this lot back over to private ownership to be utilized for other uses may have potential benefits to the village as well as the town, provided future uses there are carefully planned.



Growth of Existing Businesses

There are existing businesses within the village which are opportunities to support further growth and economic activity in the village. The Indian River Furniture Makers, occupying the former garage building at 39 Egg St, produces high-quality handcrafted custom furniture and cabinetry.

The industrial park, former site of Leslie Iron Works (aka the Hookery) is located just outside the village boundary and offers large amounts of space and several buildings on industrially zoned land. The new owners of this site are in the process of ramping up a CBD production facility with room to spare. This large property may also offer potential space to be home to other small startup businesses. Other businesses in the village have emerged as home-occupations, particularly in the wake of the Covid pandemic. It will be important to recognize and support these and other local businesses for the economic livelihood of the village.

▲ **Existing Industries.** *Indian River Campaign Furniture & Cabinetry (Above); the industrial park campus (below) commonly referred to as the Hookery.*





The D&H Rail Trail

Running right through the heart of West Pawlet Village, the former D&H Railroad line has been converted to a recreational trail connecting the neighboring towns of Granville, Rupert and beyond. This trail represents probably the best economic development asset within the village. However, it is not being utilized to its full potential. Currently, most travelers along the trail pass through the village, with little or no reason to stop because there aren't much in the way of amenities or services to capture their attention.

Rail trail enhancements ranked 6th in overall priorities in the community survey. Discussions with community members suggested that they would prefer to see improvements which addressed local needs before those of tourists, however there may be many overlapping needs. [When asked what rail trail improvement might be needed most, a place for sale of refreshments and foods was the most](#)

[popular response.](#) This of course would tie directly into the need for a new local corner store. When actual rail trail users were asked what amenities or services they would most like to see in West Pawlet, the most popular responses were public restrooms; sale of light refreshments; shaded seating areas; water station / drinking fountain; and restaurant / outdoor dining. Providing these and other amenities would attract more people to use West Pawlet as a waypoint destination along their travels, and generate more activity.

"A little country store like East Poultney or Wells would be great."

~ Rail Trail User Survey Response

Pedestrian Amenities

Historically, the Village of West Pawlet enjoyed a small network of beautiful slate sidewalks connecting most of the historic homes to one another, courtesy of the local abundance of this native rock. Much of these slate paths have since disappeared over the decades and sunk beneath the surface of new sediment and growing lawns. The slate paths that are still visible have typically fractured and heaved, creating a very uneven and awkward path to walk, with many people often preferring to walk in the roadway instead. Other areas of sidewalk that have since been replaced or patched with concrete or asphalt are also falling into disrepair. Years of repaving the local roadways have also raised the street surface in some areas to the point where it is level with (or even above) the adjacent sidewalk, and the once grand slate curbs have disappeared in many cases. Lastly, there are no crosswalks to be found.

The sum of all these factors has created a very unwieldy and uneven pedestrian environment which is not accessible, particularly to the elderly and those with mobility issues. For these reasons, pedestrian and sidewalk safety improvements were identified as the 5th highest priority in the community survey, and was the topic of one of the pot luck dinner meetings. Local residents particularly wanted to see better sidewalk, curb and crosswalk conditions in the vicinity of the post office and rail trail where conditions are often the worst. There was limited consensus on specific sidewalk needs in other areas, noting that in some cases the sidewalk area is used for parking.

Importantly, residents expressed an interest in shunning conventional concrete sidewalks for the

use of slate, which would be more attractive and appropriate for the historic village. The use of slate in some instances may need to be considered with respect to meeting ADA (American's with Disabilities Act) requirements, however slate inlays in concrete were discussed as an acceptable solution. Restoration of these sidewalks and crossings would not only improve pedestrian safety and mobility, but enhance the visual appeal of the village in attracting new residents and businesses.



▲ **Existing Sidewalks.** *The existing sidewalks in front of the Celery Compound (former Fish & Game building) and Post Office are in an advanced state of disrepair. The water wellhead which serves the Celery Building can be seen protruding up in the middle of the sidewalk, creating a potential hazard.*



Community Cohesion

Vermont has always been an attractive destination for people to relocate to. The covid pandemic amplified this attraction, bringing a wave of new homebuyers to the area, many of whom come from a different way of life. This turnover can result in a loss of community cohesion as new residents may be slow to adapt to local ways and longtime residents may not have much in common with them. People have a tendency to remain in their own bubble. The covid pandemic also caused the shutdown of many regular community events which have traditionally been social gathering opportunities for neighbors to get to know one another and become friends. The effects of this are already being seen, and many West Pawlet residents noted that there was a need for more community and social events to bring people together again. At issue is the importance of maintaining social opportunities, and welcoming new residents while helping them appreciate and respect local living so that we may avoid becoming a fragmented community.

The Fire Department

The West Pawlet Fire Department has been the heart of the village for years, serving as protectors as well as the social hub of the neighborhood on many occasions. Discussions with residents and fire department members has revealed that both of these roles have been harder and harder to fill each year. The fire department greatly depends on fundraising events throughout the year to maintain operations, yet has been noticing a lack of enthusiasm and participation from local residents. Many events they have held in recent years, even before Covid, relied on people from out of town to support their efforts due to a low local turnout. It has been increasingly



difficult to run and maintain some events, with the fire department abandoning some because it was no longer worth the effort to continue doing them. This has made fundraising more challenging, and reduced local socialization opportunities as well.

The fire department has also experienced a dramatic loss of local volunteers, a problem which is not unique to Pawlet but is a national concern. Volunteerism is down across the country. The Rutland Fire Department recently went from 50 members down to 24 in a span of 8 years. The average age of West Pawlet members is now over 50, with few young recruits to replace the ranks. This issue is on track to become a serious problem if not addressed. [While some of these issues can be attributed to the lack of community cohesion discussed above, steps must be taken to help activate community participation and incentivize more local volunteers.](#) A recent report by the Firefighter’s Association of New York underscored the financial savings which that state’s many volunteer departments bring. Converting these volunteer stations to full-time paid positions

across the state would cost over \$4 billion annually in salaries, benefits, debt servicing and operational costs. Many small communities would not be able to support the cost increase.

Inspired by a new legislative action signed into law last December in New York, the Village of Round Lake recently passed a resolution providing volunteer firefighters a 10% break on their village taxes to help encourage more volunteers. Similar legislation is being debated in the State of Vermont, however the current draft of that bill appears to cap the tax reduction at around \$500. As one West Pawlet fireman joked, “That maybe would cover my gas bill from responding to calls.” The time commitment of increasingly long hours of state-mandated training have also made volunteering less attractive. A solution to increasing community participation and incentivizing volunteers must be found to help address this issue.

The Fire Department has other needs as well. They are currently looking to demolish the Annex

Building at the corner of New Street, potentially replacing it with greenspace which can be used to host outdoor events and expanding storage elsewhere. This corner building, although somewhat dilapidated, would make an excellent home for a new local store if renovated. Highly visible at the corner, with three large garage doors opening up onto an outdoor eating area at the corner like an open-air market. The Fire Department is currently not interested in this option, with concerns about parking and public activity potentially blocking their site access during emergency calls. The department is also seeking to expand and complete their kitchen to host more dinner events. It remains to be seen if there are any potentially creative solutions where the commercial kitchen of a future store could also serve the Firehouse, freeing up the kitchen space in the firehouse to meet other needs such as storage, but these options should at least be considered.

The Indian River

One of the most notable natural features of West Pawlet is the beautiful Indian River which meanders through the village, however this river is shrouded from view behind the many buildings and homes lining the main road. There are few vantage points where one can see it, and a visitor to West Pawlet might be forgiven for not even realizing it is there. The river is a wonderful feature and asset which is unfortunately not being fully appreciated. Several residents as well as rail trail visitors have suggested that better access and visibility with the river would be a welcome improvement, possibly with a walking path or lookout, although much of this waterside land is privately owned. There is a 1.6 acre private parcel locked between the rail trail and the river's edge which does not appear to have any road frontage, but is accessed from a small gate off of the rail trail. It is unknown what plans the owner has for this land, or what options it may present for them.



Energy & Sustainability

Energy independence, sustainability and resilience are becoming increasingly popular and often necessary practices, particularly with climate change concerns. At the state level, Vermont is pursuing the ambitious goal of reaching 90% renewable energy by the year 2050, and 75% by 2032. Other measures coming down from the legislature in Montpelier include proposed bill S.5 to establish a clean heat standard in Vermont. This controversial bill has yet to be tested, as many people are questioning what impact it will actually have on home heating costs, as well as fuel suppliers, before it should be considered. Nevertheless, solar adoption and cleaner, more efficient heating systems are the current trend.

Locally, the Town of Pawlet Energy Group is currently working to draft an updated energy section of the Town Plan, which is due to be reviewed by the Rutland Regional Planning Commission this

year. [insert additional relevant info from local draft energy plan]

Solar adoption in Vermont has grown steadily over the past several years. Unfortunately, the historic slate roofs and small lot sizes of the village makes residential solar unworkable for many residents. Considering this limitation, some residents in the village have envisioned community solar solutions on nearby sites such as the former quarry and town landfill which could serve the village. However, this idea has hit a roadblock.

The local energy grid infrastructure is already nearing capacity for accommodating new large solar installs, as the remaining capacity (up to 95%) is earmarked for other large solar installs already in the planning pipeline, such as the Bullfrog Lane project between Pawlet and Wells. Green Mountain Power reserves the last 5% of capacity for private residential solar systems that may be requested.



This means that the grid cannot accommodate a new community solar project in this area until the infrastructure and substations are upgraded, something which will likely require significant investment and years to complete. For now, the idea of community solar in West Pawlet will have to wait.

It should be noted that solar development projects are currently directed to areas within the town which have nearby 3-phase power and are industrially zoned, however larger energy projects (solar, wind, etc) are regulated by the Public Utility Commission, not by local law. The former town landfill, which would make a more suitable solar site than the quarry, has been identified by the town as a preferred site, even though it is not currently zoned Industrial. The town garage in West Pawlet has also been identified for potential smaller-scale rooftop solar. Overall, the town is encouraging the use of rooftop or other impervious surface installations wherever possible to minimize ground loss.

The Town of Pawlet is more suited to solar energy generation than wind, and has concluded that industrial-scale wind generation should not be included in the town Energy Plan. However, the town is considering allowing small-scale wind generation in areas identified with high wind-energy potential. A number of high wind-energy locations exist within the town, but only a limited amount of these areas exist just outside of West Pawlet. Likewise, hydroelectric generation has been determined to be not optimal within the town, and therefore not a priority of the energy plan.

Reducing energy consumption and waste is also an important goal. A FLIR (forward-looking infrared) camera uses thermal imaging technology for a variety of uses, including being able to detect and see heat loss in a structure. Once prohibitively

expensive, the costs of these cameras as come down considerably, and can now be purchased for just a few hundred dollars. Such a camera could be provided at the library for individual homeowners to borrow and use to detect heat loss locations in their homes so that they can improve insulation and weatherstripping weak points.

Housing & Zoning

The Town of Pawlet received a Bylaw Modernization Grant in 2022 and the Planning Commission has been working with the Rutland Regional Planning Commission to make changes to the Unified Bylaws in order to address the need for housing and for economic development in the two village centers of Pawlet and West Pawlet.

Currently, the town is considering zoning changes which will ease zoning requirements in the Village Commercial district, which comprises a majority of the West Pawlet village area. These changes are intended to address setback, lot coverage and parking restrictions to make it easier to redevelop properties and bring the dimensional requirements more in line with the actual historic building patterns of the village. This is anticipated to allow denser development, particularly where West Pawlet has a municipal wastewater system to support it. The changes are also intend to make it easier to get permits for common village center businesses such as restaurants and shops.

PART IV

VISION & RECOMMENDATIONS



DRAFT

A Brief Disclaimer

This planning process has revealed a number of improvements desired by the residents of West Pawlet, however the word “improvement” can sometimes be a double-edge sword. No one would take pleasure in seeing West Pawlet’s uniqueness transform into a Starbucks-sipping suburban everywhere township. Roadway changes, for example, which might only be executed with a hundred reflective yellow directional signs, would undermine our vision and goals for improvement.

When implementing any of the recommendations of this plan, care should be taken to use a light touch. West Pawlet should maintain its casual and quirky personality. Modernization, where necessary, should be gentle and unassuming. Utilizing local natural materials, skilled craftsmen and artists instead of off-the-shelf solutions reflects who we are as a community. This vision should always be in the back of our minds.

Keep West Pawlet funky. Keep it unique. Keep it simple.

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 CRRP 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.¹ A potential solution identified includes retooling 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 Dutchies 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

¹Source: Town of Pawlet Wastewater Budget 2022

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 PFAS's, (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 ratables 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 153 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 remote 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.

stock should be explored which is carefully scaled and aligned with the older character of West Pawlet. Steps should be taken to ensure that the zoning code does not present any unnecessary obstacles to the conversion of larger, older homes into multi-unit residences. New housing options should also be explored, however it is not recommended that the Town pursue the creation of new housing solely for the purposes of filling untapped capacity of the wastewater plant. Any new housing in West Pawlet should be allowed to grow organically, driven by actual demand, provided it is scaled appropriately to the village. This could include small cottage houses on small lots with a shared greenspace which might appeal to older residents seeking to downsize and new families seeking relatively affordable starter solutions. If and when the time is right, some ideas for how this could be accommodated have been included later in the Housing recommendations.

#2: Road Safety Improvements

Addressing the awkward convergence of roadways into the village center is one of the top priority issues in the community. This issue was discussed in greater detail during a pot luck dinner meeting on January 12th to discuss and consider different design alternatives. Three separate design options were presented at this public meeting which reconfigured the roadway, reduced unnecessary pavement areas, and added traffic control signage with crosswalks to address the identified problems. These alternatives included a simple “T” intersection, a traffic circle, and a central median design, with proposed ideas for moving or re-accommodating the existing WWI Memorial stone. Each option also included a partial re-alignment of the Rail Trail as it crosses Egg Street, providing better view and safer distance separation from northbound traffic as it crests the hill.

Of the three options presented, attendees were unanimous in their support of the “T” intersection (See conceptual design, next page) due to its relative simplicity and obvious safety benefits. Although this option required that the WWI Monument stone be moved approximately 40 feet south, people were supportive of its proposed location because it remained a highly visible and prominent feature at the intersection. This location would also be more safely accessible, and provided space for decorative landscaping which created an attractive and honorable setting befitting its importance. The Rail Trail crossing was moved to the end of the new intersection, providing a crosswalk at the new stop sign for a much safer crossing condition. This revised crossing location had the added benefit of giving visitors a better view into the village and more welcome arrival as they entered. A crosswalk was also added connecting New Street to the Post Office.

It is recommended that the town take steps to advance this preferred design solution and work toward its eventual implementation. Initial steps should include outreach to VTrans to review and refine the design concept as may be needed, followed by securing grant funding for survey, engineering and design work.

In the short-term, the town should install a radar speed sign on Route 153 to slow traffic coming down the hill into the village. As a longer term solution, the town may wish to install a new “West Pawlet Village” sign (similar to the one in front of the firehouse property) with posted speed limit in a similar location approaching the village to help remind people they are entering a populated area and discourage speeding.




The intersection redesign work and crosswalks should be coordinated and combined with the restoration of the slate sidewalks in front of the post office commercial block. It should also incorporate wherever possible the craftwork of local artisans and tradespeople in creating amenities such as signs, planters, benches, bike racks, sculptures and similar items that are called for in the final design.

Once completed, the new intersection work should be recognized with a re-dedication ceremony honoring the WWI veterans commemorated in the memorial as an event to bring village residents together.



▲ **Proposed Intersection Concept.**

- 1 Original monument location
- 2 New monument location
- 3 New crosswalk location
- 4 New sidewalks and landscaping
- 5 Rail Trail
- 6 Landscaping to help redirect rail trail
-  New stop sign

Summary Recommendations

Road Safety Improvements

- » Review proposed roadway and intersection reconfiguration concept with VTrans to determine initial feasibility and any necessary design modifications;
- » Install radar speed sign on Route 153 on approach to deter speeders coming down hill into village;
- » Seek grant funding for any necessary survey, design or engineering work required for intersection reconfiguration;
- » Construct new intersection configuration with relocated WWI monument and crosswalks in coordination with VTrans re-alignment of D&H Rail Trail;
- » Coordinate intersection construction work with adjacent sidewalk and landscaping improvements in front of Antiques building, Celery Compound and Post Office;
- » Consider longer-term installation of a new or relocated “West Pawlet Village” sign at the top of the hill across from Hookery to help slow traffic approaching village from the south.
- » Complete the intersection and sidewalk work with a re-dedication ceremony honoring the WWI veterans at the new memorial stone location.

#3: New Local Store



Establishing a new local store to fill the void from the loss of Dutchies is a top priority project within the Village of West Pawlet. Such a store would have multiple benefits to the village beyond the obvious convenience of selling goods and supplies to area residents. It would also help to re-establish a common socialization spot for people to gather and see their neighbors. It would become an attraction and destination waypoint for visitors traveling along the rail trail, providing them a place to stop and rest for a bite to eat or use the restroom. A store would also provide a space to showcase local goods and crafts for sale, helping to support area businesses. Perhaps most importantly, it would bring some additional activity and attention to the village, acting as a catalyst to help jumpstart other projects.

Initial outreach and research into a conventional for-profit retail store identified several obstacles and risks discussed in Part III. However, alternative strategies of community-supported and cooperative models were increasingly pointed to as examples of how it could be done in West Pawlet. Community Supported Enterprises (CSE) have been experiencing a lot of success in re-establishing small local stores in several communities across Vermont in recent years. Notable examples include the Barnard General Store (Barnard, VT), W.E. Pierce Store (North Shrewsbury, VT), Albany General Store (Albany, VT), and Hancock General Store (Hancock, VT). More locally, this same strategy is being employed nearby in Rupert with the Sheldon General Store Cafe & Community Space.

CSE’s work by establishing a non-profit organization for community fundraising. The organization would use the fundraising to acquire and renovate

a property to create a local store, leasing the space to a store operator at a very low cost. The strategy of this approach is that most of the financial burden of rent, building maintenance and taxes is taken care of by the non-profit, allowing the store to operate with much more room to breathe. Also, if the store operator should leave for some reason, the organization (and space) is still there to find a replacement.

There are many grant programs available to assist with such an effort, particularly if they involve the restoration of older, historic buildings. The Preservation Trust of Vermont has been instrumental in helping to support and fund a number of the revitalized stores noted above, and also offers technical assistance and training to people looking to do the same in their community. This community-supported approach has a lower barrier to entry than establishing a new for-profit business, with smaller investment risks. Likewise, the renovation of an existing building would generally require less investment over construction of a new building. **For these reasons, it is recommended that the community establish a non-profit organization to acquire and adapt an existing building for the creation of a new store in West Pawlet.** The preliminary steps to achieve this are provided in the Summary Recommendations box on the next page.

Start Small. It is recommended that the organization goals start out small initially, acquiring a relatively small space to get started and work toward establishing larger presence later. Although the future decisions of the organization will need to be made by the organization members, two example scenarios for how this process could work with existing properties are provided for reference.

New Corner Store Recommended Features

- » Good visibility from road and rail trail
- » Provides basics of coffee, beer, wine and beverages, low price everyday items geared for locals; Common household grocery items; Locally grown produce and foods; Snack items for visitors
- » Outdoor seating / picnic area
- » **Longer-Term:** Add locally-made goods and crafts; Higher-end organics and tourism food products; Indoor tables/seating, local visitor information, hunting weigh station.

Example One. In this example scenario, the organization works to acquire the historic former antiques building at 13 Egg St., currently vacant. Although a small space, this property has excellent visibility from the rail trail, provides shaded outdoor space and would be suitable for historic restoration funding. The store provides a small selection of goods, coffee, food and drink geared directly toward the requested needs of local residents, but also rail trail visitors (particularly in summer). May be beneficial to query local residents for exact items they would like to see sold in store, and provide those. During this period, the store works to establish itself while the organization plans and fundraises for an eventual move to a new space in the coming years.

The property could then be sold (or leased) to a new local business, or sold back to the original owner through a re-purchase agreement established at the beginning. Using the money from the sale (or lease)

Summary Recommendations: New Local Store

- » The community should identify core individual volunteer(s) who would be dedicated to taking on the responsibility of establishing a 501(c)(3) or similar non-profit organization and recruiting like-minded individuals in pursuing an ongoing, concerted community effort.
 - » It is recommended that the organization directors/officers be composed of a diverse group of people representing different local perspectives across a range of income levels. This includes locals from multi-generation Pawlet families as well as new residents.
 - » The organization should consider including representatives from the greater Pawlet area or similar measures to help make this initiative more of a town-wide effort, rather than a village-only effort. This may help with volunteerism and fundraising.
 - » It is recommended that any potential directors/officers should agree in advance on some basic expectations in terms of everyone's ongoing time commitment and level of effort to this cause. This will be important to set expectations and help reduce attrition or burnout over the course of the effort.
- » The group should seek initial guidance and technical assistance from the Preservation Trust of Vermont, taking advantage of their educational resources and experience in the initial options, setup of the organization and first steps identifying potential target properties.
- » The organization should be established with the broader goal of West Pawlet revitalization and economic enhancement, rather than the specific goal of only establishing a local store. This will allow the organization to also take on other related village improvement efforts if desired, and allow their cause to appeal to a wider audience.
- » The organization should assess options and identify a target property for acquisition and renovation, with preliminary plans/concepts prepared in order to help the general public visualize the goals and support fundraising.
- » It is recommended that the organization goals should start small, potentially working to acquire a small space as a first "trial phase" of the new store, and getting something established. It can then use this time to work toward later goals of expansion or acquiring a larger property. Two examples of how this could work are provided.
- » Once a property has been identified and progress is being made toward establishing a store, the organization should seek assistance from the Vermont Retail and Grocers Association, who can assist them with finding a potential store operator.

Store Recommendations, Cont.

- » Buyback/Repurchase Agreement. The organization may wish to consider a “buy back” or repurchase agreement with the property seller for the property they wish to acquire. In this arrangement, both parties agree in advance that the owner has the option to buy back their original property after a set period of years, at a pre-agreed price. This would potentially give the seller more reason to sell their property knowing that they can get it back at a later time, perhaps when they have better use for it. This would also allow the organization to get a cash inflow which they could use to move into a larger space.
- » As the store and organization grows, it can then seek to expand or move to a larger space, providing more goods and amenities to local residents and visitors.

of the property and historic preservation grants, the organization then purchases the railway freight shed at 42 Railroad Ave. The historic railway building is repositioned on the site and restored, providing a massive increase in space to serve as a rail trail welcome center and local store.

Example Two. The organization works to acquire the small commercial building at 21 Railroad Ave., adjacent to the Dutchies site, currently vacant. Although a small space and not a historic structure, this property also has excellent visibility from the rail trail, has outdoor space and most importantly has plenty of room to expand utilizing the former Dutchies land. The store operates much the same as in example 1, working to establish itself initially while fundraising for a future expansion. The organization eventually acquires surrounding land from the town, constructing an addition and outdoor seating/dining space and landscaping in front with parking and deliveries in the rear.

These examples are intended to illustrate potential strategies, but other variations exist. If the Fire

Department were willing to sell the Annex Building on the corner, it would provide ample space for a store without the need to later expand. Funds from the sale of that corner could go toward meeting other Fire Department needs, such as increased storage and new equipment. Other case studies (a few featured on the following page) can also serve as useful examples of how this has been done in other communities.

This effort, if truly desired by the residents of West Pawlet, will require a dedicated group of people who are passionate about its potential and a concerted effort by the greater Pawlet community to help support it. It will be important to recognize that this goal is not just about creating a store, but starting momentum on a catalyst project in the village which will generate activity that gives birth to other business and local growth. Achieving this goal will make progress on a number of other village goals related to community socialization, economic development, tourism, municipal tax revenue and reducing wastewater treatment fees.



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.



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.



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!

Some of the recommendations in this plan will require implementation by the Town of Pawlet, and others are more suited to grassroot-efforts of local village residents. During the course of planning discussions, a number of people offered to volunteer to help with various initiatives, offering their time or expertise on everything from planting flowers to computer help and grant writing. They wanted to know what tasks were needed and how they could help. **It became clear that an overall strategy was needed to help identify volunteering tasks and organize the proper people around them to take advantage of this untapped potential.**

Ironically, the first step toward getting this strategy organized is to find a volunteer willing to start it.

The use of an online platform or phone app may be a useful tool in organizing and recruiting people, especially through social media pages like the West Pawlet Neighbors group on Facebook. Habitat for Humanity uses their own proprietary online app (“Volunteer Up!”) to allow people to sign up for certain tasks or donate materials, but there are many other similar ones available which might be suitable.



Within this plan, goals or tasks which could possibly benefit from a larger overall volunteer strategy are indicated with a raised hand icon for easy reference.

Summary Recommendations

Local Volunteerism

- » Identify a person within the community willing to maintain a simple list of volunteer needs in the village and help recruit and organize people toward different tasks.
- » This person does not need to lead any of the individual tasks, but serves only to help recruit and organize others.
- » Initial volunteer topics may include:
 - Establishing a non-profit for local store
 - Fire department volunteers
 - Grant application writing
 - General village cleanup
 - IT/web design for non-profit fundraising and marketing
 - Landscaping, flower planting around monument and other public areas
 - Design services / renovation labor to establish a new store in the village
 - Community events coordinator
 - Artists and craftspeople to construct various improvements like flower boxes or bike racks
 - Rail trail marketing
 - Donating money or materials



Replace Sidewalks

The existing sidewalks and curbs fronting the main commercial block from the Post Office to Egg Street should be replaced in coordination with the intersection re-design and proposed monument location. This sidewalk design should attempt to incorporate local slate as much as possible to reflect the history of the village, as well as the handiwork of local craftspersons or artists willing to donate their efforts. A standing table / flower box design should be considered as a removable cover to the wellhead which protrudes from the sidewalk.

In the longer term, the village should seek grant funding for a bike and pedestrian study to take a closer look at the actual needs for other sidewalk improvements in the village later on, such as missing connections where new sidewalks are needed or existing slate sidewalks could be restored.

Summary Recommendations

Improved Sidewalks

- » Construct new sidewalks, curb repairs and landscaping along the Post Office commercial block in coordination with new intersection design, utilizing slate materials where possible;
- » Develop a creative removable cover for the wellhead currently protruding out of the sidewalk;
- » Seek grant funding for a Bicycle and Pedestrian Scoping Study to identify other sidewalk connections and areas which should be candidates for restoration later on.
- » Utilize local talent when possible.



IMAGE
PENDING



Support Business Growth

While the municipality of Pawlet does not have control over the private sector, they can adjust the levers of what may be permitted and approved. The allowable uses in the zoning for Village Commercial and Industrial zones should be reviewed to consider what additional uses, if any, may want to be added. These may include (but not limited to) child day care, microbrewery/distillery, winery, bar, farmer’s market, bakery, enclosed autobody work, garden center nursery and landscaping supplies, recreation rentals, equipment rentals, marijuana farm or cannabis dispensary. It is not clear if these specific uses already fall under any of the uses in the current code.

If some of these uses are deemed appropriate for West pawlet, but not in other areas of town where the same districts occur, then a separate district for West Pawlet should be considered.

The municipality may also want to be proactive in finding out what individual landowners might be planning for their (business) property and identifying ways it can help. This is especially true of existing vacant or underutilized properties. Although several business and property owners were approached during this planning effort, others remain. It is not known what plans they have for their property, or if there are real (or perceived) obstacles to them moving forward with their plans. This effort could be lead by a liaison who can report any findings back to the Selectboard, helping to identify problems or select grant applicant candidates.

The municipality should select one local property or business owner each year and coordinate with them in applying for CRRP (See Resources, page 56) or similar grant funding in establishing or expanding

Summary Recommendations

Business Growth

- » Coordinate with and support West Pawlet property or business owners in applying for CRRP grant funding to help spur ongoing community revitalization.
- » Review allowable uses within the West Pawlet Village Commercial and Industrial zones to identify any additional uses which may be added;
- » Be proactive in outreach to individual landowners, particularly vacant or underutilized properties, to discuss potential plans and how the town may be able to support or assist them;
- » Consider a liaison to the Planning Board or Selectboard who is tasked with reaching out to property owners and identifying problems which may be preventing them from implementing their future plans.

their business in the West Pawlet area for the purpose of spurring economic revitalization. Volunteers may be able to assist with the grant application process.

The municipality may also consider being somewhat lenient in granting necessary variances where it could help promote economic growth. Although this was not identified as a current obstacle or problem, it may be helpful during this special phase where our goal is to generate positive momentum.



Supporting the Fire Department

The West Pawlet Volunteer Fire Department is an important hub of the community, and they need our support. In the short-term, the Town of Pawlet and West Pawlet residents are encouraged to contact legislators in Montpelier and register their strong support for Bill H.263 (2023) proposing to establish a refundable income tax credit of \$500 for emergency responders (including volunteer firefighters) among other provisions.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the Town of Pawlet and local residents express strong support for the passage of a bill similar to H.156 (2019) authorizing local municipalities to exempt (in whole or in part) local property taxes for volunteer firefighters. It is believed that these measures may help Pawlet and other communities offset the steady decline in volunteer members which threatens to undermine our ability to protect citizens and property. These campaigns could be coordinated with the help of a local volunteer.

Hosting events is a core element of fundraising, and the community should inform the department what types of events it would most like to see, and make an effort to participate in them. Identifying and inviting new families who have moved to the area will be helpful in this.

The department may consider introducing themselves to new area residents each Spring, and providing them information about the different events held during the year. This effort could be supported by the Town Clerk who could provide info on what households have changed hands over the year.

Summary Recommendations

Support the Fire Department

- » Provide strong support for pending state legislation giving a \$500 income tax credit for volunteer firefighters;
- » Encourage state lawmakers to pass legislation which would enable local municipalities to provide property tax exemptions for volunteer firefighters;
- » Residents should encourage friends and neighbors to attend events hosted by the Firehouse, including new residents who can meet their neighbors and learn to become part of the community;
- » The Fire Department should consider an annual outreach program to new residents;
- » The Department should continue to work on reviving lost events such as the pancake breakfast, and establish outdoor space for department events and social gatherings.

If the Fire Dept ultimately decides to demolish the annex building, it is recommended they work to replace it with something which can benefit both the department and the community, such as an outdoor gathering space which can be used to host community events. This could include an open-air pavilion and BBQ pit which would be the centerpiece of summer events, while also being usable by residents for a random picnic lunch or reserved for small gatherings.



Community Events

During the planning process many people expressed an interest or need for more social events in the village which bring neighbors together, however there has been lower attendance in recent years and Covid has also caused many events to be suspended.

It is important that these and other events are established once again to help nurture a strong sense of community. Local groups are encouraged to re-establish lost traditions and explore the creation of new ones.

A variety of hosting locations is recommended to help share the responsibility and provide different venues and exposure. In addition to the Firehouse, events could be coordinated with the Hookery/Industrial Park, Celery Compound (former Fish & Game building), Consider Bardwell Farm, or Wayward Goose.

It will also eventually become helpful to promote West Pawlet to people from outside the area who may not be familiar with the village. The “Tour de Slate” rails to trails ride annual fundraiser—which begins and ends in West Pawlet—is one such example. The village should coordinate with this existing effort and help boost marketing to increase awareness and attendance, providing local vendors or businesses an opportunity to showcase their offerings.

In addition, the village may also benefit from the creation of a completely new local event such as: Wilderness outing with geocaching / scavenger hunt; Guided historic slate walking tour around (the safe areas of) the quarry with Historical Society and Newmont Quarry representatives to learn about the history of the industry; or 5k walking event between the village and Consider Bardwell/Wayward Goose.

Summary Recommendations

Community Events

- » The Town of Pawlet, local groups and institutions should work to re-establish old community events and organize new ones. Some examples may include:
 - 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 / Suppers
- » Pursue the establishment of one or two annual events which are designed to attract people from the larger area to come visit West Pawlet and learn about what it has to offer.
- » Coordinate local events with area businesses and groups so that they can participate and help make the occasion more interesting.



Rail Trail Enhancements

The D&H Rail Trail is currently a small asset to the community. The benefits of this trail are expected to grow slowly over time as the activity and businesses of West Pawlet also grow, much like a matching investment.

Beyond the already planned improvements and intersection redesign described in this plan, short-term goals should likely focus more on increased public awareness, visibility and cross-marketing of the trail than adding more physical features just yet. West Pawlet residents often noted that while rail trail improvements were important, our energy is better spent improving the village, which will then in-turn eventually make the trail more popular.

In the interim, steps can be taken to raise awareness and visibility of the trail. Coordinate with VTrans, neighboring municipalities and area businesses to develop a marketing pamphlet about the trail, with map showing points of interest and businesses all along the NY and VT route, including local farms, Sheldon Cafe & Community Center, Sherman's Store, Merck Forest, Granville, Poultney, etc. Ultimately, this information should be available as a dedicated webpage and downloadable PDF that is easily findable in a related google search.

If public restrooms can be accommodated as part of a new business in the village, they should ideally be made also accessible from the exterior so that visitors can use them even if the business is closed, with information directing trail users to their location.

Later enhancements along the trail should include bike racks, seating areas and local visitor information as the needs of the trail grow. It is recommended

Summary Recommendations

Rail Trail Enhancements

- » The Town of Pawlet should continue to work on completing incremental improvements which support the adjacent rail trail, including establishing the new parking area along Railroad Avenue;
- » Utilize the opportunity of the intersection redesign and revised trail crossing to introduce new landscaping and tree plantings;
- » Consider relocating the trailhead information board and interpretive signage out away from the bridge to a much more visible location;
- » Develop a complete marketing brochure and map (print and pdf) of the entire trail with attractions in coordination with area businesses, towns and VTrans. Eventually work toward a dedicated website for all of this information which is easily findable.
- » Incorporate public restrooms in a future store or other business which can serve the rail trail.
- » Establish other desired trail amenities such as bike racks, seating areas and visitor information as the village grows.

that these items be developed with local volunteer craftspersons and artists who can bring a unique or quirky design perspective. For example, a bike rack modeled after the historic slate quarry lifting poles or sculptural seating, which showcases local talent and craftsmanship.



Repurpose Freight Shed

Although currently a minor nuisance, the railway freight shed represents a very unique opportunity to restore and showcase a historic structure within the village as an important local attraction. If the ownership of this building can be resolved and local control can be secured, it is recommended that historic preservation funding be sought to save the building for future use by a local non-profit or similar group.

The recommended ultimate goal of this effort would be to restore the building and convert it into a combined Pawlet Historical Society Museum / VTrans Welcome Center directly adjacent to the rail trail. This welcome center could be used to showcase the history of the railroad, the village of West Pawlet and the local slate quarries which were once such a tremendous influence on the area, in a museum-type fashion. The Welcome Center could provide light refreshments and snacks for travelers, as well as restrooms and information about other local attractions and businesses.

If this effort were successful, it would create a local attraction in West Pawlet village which would serve visitors on the rail trail, as well as be a notable attraction to people in the greater region who are history lovers, and enthusiasts of the railroad and slate industries. It could also serve as an educational center for local schools. It is believed that this may be the highest and best use for this structure.

Alternately, if the Welcome Center/Museum were unworkable, the structure should be reserved for a local store or other supporting rail trail use amenable to the state. Relocation and demolition options should be avoided where possible.

Summary Recommendations

Repurpose Freight Shed

- » Continue to monitor ownership status of this historic structure so that an opportunity for a local group to take ownership is not missed;
- » If ownership/control can be secured, seek historic restoration grant funding to preserve and restore it, potentially re-aligning it away from the road and closer to the rail trail, in lieu of removal or destruction;
- » Work to establish the freight shed as a D&H Rail Trail Welcome Center in association with the Historical Society showcasing the history of West Pawlet, the railroad and the quarry as a local attraction;
- » If the structure has to be removed, seek to relocate it to local buyer to keep it in Pawlet for a business expansion elsewhere, in lieu of destruction;
- » If the structure must be destroyed, seek to salvage parts which could be used and showcased in another local project.
- » If the structure must be removed or demolished, then it is recommended that the Town of Pawlet coordinate with the State of Vermont to have the site cleaned up and enhanced with lawn area, landscaping and picnic tables as an attractive outdoor relaxation space for local residents and rail trail visitors.



Improve River Access

The village should work over time, in cooperation with local landowners, to open up visibility and access to the Indian River. One potential access point may be available on the south side of the river, between the water and the rail trail. A landlocked 1.6 acre parcel without road frontage exists here which appears to have limited development potential but great waterfront access. This property appears to have an access gate from the rail trail, and could potentially provide walking paths down to and along the waterway, creating a pleasant retreat. Although it is unknown if the current property owner would have any interest in this future use someday, it may be worth discussions.

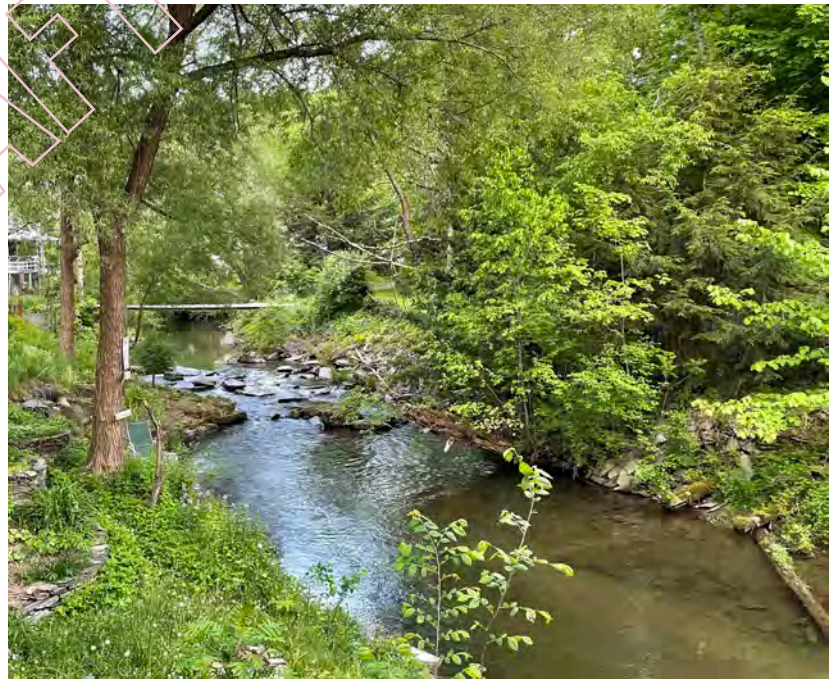
A second condition occurs behind the Celery Compound and former antiques building where a rock outcropping provides a view down to the water below. This spot, just on the north side of the rail trail adjacent to the bridge, may be suitable for a future patio or overlook area that could be part of any future antiques building use.

It is recommended that future discussions with these and other property owners be pursued over time to invite discussion on potential park space and walking trails along the water.

Summary Recommendations

Improve River Access

- » Conduct outreach to village property owners about the potential for creating public access and walking paths along the Indian River;
- » Preferred access would likely be from the rail trail side to avoid conflicts with properties directly fronting Route 153.





Adapt the Quarry

The former quarry lands, now owned by the town, present a difficult property for adaptive re-use. The town should continue to offer the leftover materials there to local residents to encourage their use in local building projects. The village should look to coordinate with the Slate Valley Museum in Granville, NY to identify any collaborative ideas which could increase local tourism, such as adding West Pawlet to their popular driving tour.

The remainder of adaptive-reuse options of the actual quarry site remain limited due to the relatively unstable nature of the slag piles and hazardous terrain. If the town is eventually able to pursue a community solar project, the former town landfill across the street represents a much easier and less visibly obtrusive location. Instead, it may be possible to identify limited portions of the quarry site which could be made safe enough for discrete walking trails, overlooks and interpretive/educational signs showcasing the history of the site and industry. This could create a local recreational asset and tourism attraction.

The remainder of the town-owned southern parcel includes a large amount of natural wooded areas and open fields which are not being utilized. It is recommended that the town consider carving much of this area off to be sold so that the land can return to the tax rolls and provide additional income to the town. Potential housing in this area would have low visibility, provide additional housing stock to the village, and serve to increase the number of wastewater treatment plant users. It is recommended that any housing in this area be carefully pre-planned as small cottage-style homes on small lots to maintain the scale and character

Summary Recommendations

Adapt the Quarry

- » Continue to offer the quarry materials as a resource to local residents through approved contractors;
- » Coordinate with the Slate Valley Museum in Granville, NY to see if the local West Pawlet quarry could be added to their popular Slate Valley Driving Tour as well as other collaborative opportunities;
- » The Town of Pawlet should review the existing quarry parcels to identify what areas of land might be appropriate to subdivide-off as separate lands and sold back into private ownership to return it to the tax rolls.
- » The Town of Pawlet should consider, as part of the previous recommendation, utilizing some of the southern portion of the quarry lands for a well-planned development of new housing lots. These should be small cottage style homes on small parcels with shared greenspace, in keeping with the scale and character of the historic village.
- » The Town of Pawlet should investigate the former quarry site to determine the feasibility of any limited walking trails and overlooks which could be created as a local recreational attraction and educational hiking tour.

of the village, and provide reasonably affordable housing options for younger families and seniors. (See ‘Future Housing’ recommendations below.)

Former Landfill

The former town landfill, now capped, does provide an opportunity to still serve the village. If the current limitations on the regional electrical grid infrastructure are eventually upgraded to handle higher capacities, this could enable Pawlet to pursue the potential of community solar. This move would provide the town with a source of lower cost, clean energy and enable many West Pawlet residents to take advantage of solar power even though the small homes of the village are not suited to panels.

The landfill is a preferred location for this use (instead of the former quarry) because it involves far less terrain complications and the solar arrays would likely be less visible than on the hillsides of the quarry.

Summary Recommendations

Former landfill

- » Continue to monitor the ongoing infrastructure plans of Green Mountain Power and other area utilities to stay up to date on potential changes.
- » Consider an update to the Town Plan and Energy Plan which will clarify the intent and desire of utilizing the former town landfill as a potential site for larger solar installations. Update town requirements to provide design guidance on future solar installations, including desired screening, fencing, viewshed protection and decommissioning plans.
- » Consider the creation of walking and hiking trails on and around the landfill property.

DRAFT

Vacant Land/Future Housing

The Town of Pawlet should consider carving out a large portion of the southern quarry parcel and selling this land back into the private sector. This would get the property back onto the tax rolls, providing tax revenue for the town as well as cash from the sale. It would also provide an opportunity to provide additional housing around the village which would increase local activity and connect new users to the wastewater treatment plant.

This land is primarily zoned Agricultural Rural Residential, and appears to provide approximately 22 acres of area undisturbed by quarry operations.

If the town were to simply sell this property, it would likely be subdivided into four or five average residential homes. Instead, it is recommended that the town proactively develop a plan as part of a Conservation or Planned Unit Development approach for a series of small cottage homes on small lots sharing a common greenspace. Such a development would be more in-keeping with the traditional scale and character of the adjacent village. These smaller, relatively more affordable homes would be attractive to young families seeking a starter home as well as seniors looking to downsize and reduce home maintenance.

Because West Pawlet is a Designated Village Center, such a project would qualify as a Neighborhood Development Area, making it exempt from Act 250 regulations and land gains tax on housing units sold. The actual number of units which could be built in this area would likely be limited to a threshold acceptable to adjacent property owners, and finding a secondary access point into the property. Currently, the property only has a narrow amount of road frontage accessed by Spruce Street. Having

Summary Recommendations

Future Housing

- » Review the southern quarry parcel to identify lands which may be suitable for selling back into the private sector.
- » Consider a Conservation or Planned Unit Development design for this property which requires small cottage homes on small lots, geared toward providing more affordable local housing options.
- » Seek to identify a potential secondary means of accessing the site.
- » Apply for grant funding to develop a plan and associated zoning changes so that the town can specify the parameters of future development here.

a secondary access point would help to alleviate concerns about the number of vehicle trips using Spruce Street and Fire Department access.

Municipal Planning Grant Funding is available to develop such plans and amend the zoning to help plan for and dictate exactly what the community would like to see from such development, including design, density, protection of natural resources and other considerations. (See Resources, Page 56)

Although housing needs did not rank very highly among residents in the community survey, it remains a critical issue at the state and national level. Providing more reasonably affordable housing in West Pawlet would help to support the other growth measures described in this plan.

NEW YORK / VERMONT BORDER

TOWN OF PAWLET

STATE OF VERMONT

ROUTE 153 (TH-1)

RAILROAD AVE

RAIL TRAIL PATH

EGG STREET (TH-19)

RAIL TRAIL PATH





RESOURCES

Community Recovery and Revitalization Program (CRRP)

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development CRRP grant program provides funding for projects that spur economic recovery in communities throughout Vermont. These funds may be used for the following efforts (emphasis added):

- » Capital improvements related to the renovation or creation of **childcare** and affordable housing;
- » Capital projects that assist **non-profits** and **small businesses** in industries including **Food Services**, Accommodations, Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Education and Agriculture;
- » **Municipal water supply and wastewater projects** that create jobs through business creation or expansion, or build housing.

At this time, it appears that the eligible industry “food services” does not appear to include a local retail grocery or convenience stores, but seems to be limited to restaurant-type activities impacted by Covid. This funding source has a rolling application deadline.

For more information, see: <https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/community-recovery-and-revitalization-program>

Vermont Agency of Transportation - Municipal Assistance

The Vermont Agency of Transportation Municipal Assistance Program provides grant funding for a wide variety of subjects, including roadway design, erosion control, best management practices, park and ride facilities, bridge rehabilitation, as well as:

- » Bicycle & Pedestrian Program: Pedestrian accessibility scoping studies; , feasibility studies, design and construction projects, small scale construction projects;
- » Planning, design and construction of on-road and off-road bike and ped trail facilities, safe routes to school, rail trails, overlooks and viewing areas
- »