

7. Adjacent Towns and the Region

This chapter describes how the Irasburg Town Plan relates to the plans and trends for adjacent towns and the Northeast Vermont region of Vermont. The town of Irasburg lies within Orleans County in Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom, comprising Caledonia, Orleans, and Essex Counties. Six towns border the community: Coventry, Newport Town, Lowell, Albany, Barton, and Brownington.

Albany

The town of Albany, located south of Irasburg, finished developing its town plan in late 2016. The primary roads connecting Irasburg to Albany are VT Route 14 and the Creek Road. These roads follow the Black River and Lords Creek, respectively. Development along both sides of the shared town line with Albany is primarily rural residential in nature, with working farms in the river valleys and forested uplands. Irasburg and Albany share solid waste facilities. Citizens of Albany have formed the Albany Community Foundation to strengthen the economic and social well-being of the town. A primary goal is to rebuild the Albany General Store as a center for community life.

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Lowell

The town of Lowell, located east of Irasburg, has both an adopted Town Plan in effect (August 31, 2014) and a Zoning Bylaw (March 4, 2003). Lands bordering Irasburg under Lowell’s zoning bylaw are designated as “Conservation – Mountain” (primarily forested lands 2,000 ft. or higher in elevation) or “Rural – Residential.” The latter district includes scattered residential development, farms and forests. The primary road connecting Lowell with Irasburg is VT Route 58. North of, and paralleling the highway, is an electric transmission line. Watershed drainage from the Lowell Mountains flows into to the Black River. Irasburg and Lowell share the Kidder Hill ridgeline. While Irasburg voters have overwhelmingly rejected utility-scale wind turbines on the town’s ridgelines, Lowell has supported ridgeline wind on Lowell Mountain.

Newport

The town of Newport borders Irasburg’s northwest corner. Poutre Road, a Class 3 town highway, is the only road connecting the two towns. The town of Newport has an adopted Town Plan (June 2015) and a Zoning Bylaw (Feb. 2, 2006) in effect. The area of Newport adjacent to Irasburg is known as South Newport



Road sign just outside Irasburg

(also known as Coventry Gore). This area is mostly uninhabited, but with some scattered residential development and some agriculture.

Coventry

The town of Coventry borders Irasburg to the north. Coventry adopted its new Town Plan in September 2018. The main roads connecting the two communities are U.S. Route 5 and VT Route 14, intersecting near the town line. A significant number of trucks use these highways to travel to and from the Waste USA landfill in Coventry, the only such facility in operation in Vermont. The truck traffic tears up the roads, in particular Route 14, in Irasburg. Additionally, there are many trips through Irasburg to reach the city of Newport and Jay Peak Resort—both north of Irasburg—and then returning. Near the Route 5 and 14 intersection are a church, a mini-mart/gas station, a post office, the elementary school and the town offices. The Coventry Town Plan (adopted July 8, 2013) identifies this area as one that could become a focal point for future development. There are also Class 3 roads connecting the towns – Hillendale Road, the Back Coventry Road, River Road, and Covered Bridge Road.

Brownington

The town of Brownington adopted its Town Plan in September 2015. The two towns share no direct road connections. Land uses are rural on both sides of the town line, and Brownington is isolated from Irasburg by the Interstate 91 right of way.

Barton

The town of Barton and village of Orleans border Irasburg to the east. Barton's Town Plan was approved by the voters in 2018 and recommended by the NVDA review

committee for regional approval. A Zoning Bylaw (March 27, 2006) is in effect, with updates being drafted. The Joint Plan and Bylaw apply to the Town and the incorporated Villages of Barton and Orleans. Barton is connected to Irasburg by U.S. Route 5 and VT Route 58, by Burton Hill Road, and also by Lake Region Road (serving the union high school and connecting to Route 58). Irasburg students are part of the Orleans County Supervisory Union and attend Lake Region Union High School. There is some limited commercial development along Route 5 in Irasburg to the

northwest of Orleans Village and Interstate 91 at exit 26. Barton's plan is that Lake Region Road is residential in nature and should remain so into the future. The Willoughby River joins the Barton River near the shared town line, flowing north to Lake Memphremagog.

Northeastern Vermont Regional Plan

The Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) is the regional planning and development organization for Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans Counties. NVDA is required to maintain a regional plan for the

three-county area, and also provide a classification of communities within the region based on their levels of development (i.e. size, public facilities and services offered).

Service Centers Historically, a number of sub-regional service centers in the Northeast Kingdom met the everyday needs of residents, farmers and loggers in the surrounding rural areas. While the function of these service centers has changed somewhat over the years, these communities remain important centers for commerce, services, employment and community. The adjacent Town of Barton, with its two villages, is considered a regional service center.

Irasburg is confident this town plan is compatible with the formal and informal plans of its neighboring communities.

Village Centers The Northeast Kingdom has retained many of its small, traditional New England villages located in rural settings. These continue to provide convenient access to basic goods and amenities for the local population in the form of general stores, dining, and fuel. Villages also usually have some small-lot residential housing, and such community buildings as libraries, schools, town halls, clubs, and churches. Many villages offer services for visitors from outside of the region, including inns, bed and breakfasts, dining, and access to recreational activities. The Regional Plan considers the village area of Irasburg to be a Village Center.

Irasburg is confident this town plan is compatible with the formal and informal plans of its neighboring communities. Irasburg strongly supports NVDA's policies and recommendations on the development and siting of future energy facilities. Irasburg does not anticipate rapid growth within its borders in the coming years. The Irasburg Selectboard maintains communication with its neighbors and with NVDA. In particular, the Irasburg Planning Commission has developed this Town Plan in close collaboration and with the help of NVDA.