

Jamaica Planning Commission Report on the Town Plan Update

August 19, 2025

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

The last revision of the Jamaica Town Plan was completed in 2017. The proposed 2025 Town Plan is an update from this prior plan. The Planning Commission has extensively reviewed all aspects of the plan and made updates to reflect the changes in our community. The Planning Commission believes this update makes the plan more compatible with all of the Vermont planning goals listed in 24 VSA § 4302, as described in more detail below:

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

The Town Plan recognizes that future higher density settlement should occur in areas in Jamaica where moderate and higher development already exists. Areas outside of these districts would be maintained as rural countryside. The moderate and higher density areas are delineated on the Future Land Use map as Commercial-Residential Areas, Jamaica Village and Rawsonville. This goal is also supported through the Town’s maintenance of a Village Center designation for Jamaica Village. Areas outside of these districts may contain a variety of uses, but should be used in a manner that will protect existing natural resource values of the land, rural character, and their attractiveness to tourists and second homeowners valuing remote homesites. Protecting Jamaica’s scenic ridgelines is seen as critically important.

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

The Plan encourages small business to locate in Jamaica, especially service-based and professional businesses, home-based businesses, and forestry and agricultural businesses. To further this goal, the Plan has not restricted the location of any particular type of business in any specific area of Town, although they are primarily encouraged in Commercial-Residential Areas, Jamaica Village, and Rawsonville. Broadband internet service is available in areas designated for moderate and high density development. With this critical infrastructure in place, the town should encourage remote work opportunities. Finally, the Town is seeking funding to complete a community wastewater project in Jamaica Village, which is critical for supporting economic development opportunities in the village.

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

Jamaica is a member of the West River Education District (WRED), along with Townshend, Newfane, Brookline, and Winhdam. The WRED was formed in 2019 following the passage of Act 46 and is part of the Windham Central Supervisory Union. Currently, elementary school-aged children have the option of attending Townshend elementary or NewBrook elementary, or alternative private school options. Students in 6th through 12th grade attend Leland and Gray Union High School & Middle School in Townshend. The WRED is governed by an 11-member Board, including 2 representatives from Jamaica. While overseeing all schools in the District, Jamaica members ensure the unique interests of the Jamaica Village School and the Town are represented and met. With the passage of H.454 in June 2025, the Town will need to monitor State education reforms on local educational opportunities and continue to advocate for the community’s interests.

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

The Jamaica Town Plan promotes a safe and well maintained road network. It encourages alternative forms of transportation, such as pedestrian and bicycle travel, in all areas of the Town. The Plan encourages the extension of public transportation routes along Route 30. All road building and maintenance shall respect the scenic and resource value of the area served and be consistent with the policies of this Plan. The Plan recognizes the challenge faced by rural villages located along State highways and seeks to ensure that village districts are protected from the adverse impacts of through traffic and that pedestrian safety is adequately planned for.

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

Jamaica has done an extensive review of its natural areas, resources, and features, and recognizes the importance of protecting these sites. A thorough inventory of these areas is included in the Natural Resources chapter. The Land Use chapter identifies and discusses the protection of these resources and sites, and specifically through the designation of Conservation areas on the Future Land Use map. Specific features are identified on the various Resource and Special Sites Maps included as part of this Plan. Historic structures and sites are primarily located within Jamaica Village and are addressed in the Land Use chapter.

Goal 6. To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, forests, and other land resources.
To a great extent, this goal has been addressed under the response to State Goal 5.

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

The Town has reflected this goal in its Town Plan policies and priorities for action in its Energy chapter and the Enhanced Energy Plan included as an appendix to the Town Plan. The Enhanced Energy Plan includes goals and policies that address energy efficiency and conservation, support the development of renewable energy resources in Jamaica, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through transportation and land use planning strategies.

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

Jamaica residents, second-home owners and visitors place a high value on recreational opportunities. This goal is addressed in depth in several sections of the Town Plan, including the Transportation, Community Services and Facilities, Economic Development, and Land Use chapters. The Plan seeks to protect the quality of the natural environment for recreation and encourages informal recreational activities throughout the Town. Jamaica is home to Jamaica State Park and is in close proximity to major recreational resorts.

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

Although these industries are not as important to the local economy as they once were, they are still important to the Town. The Forestland section of the Plan encourages forest industry in areas well suited for growing and harvesting timber and encourages the cooperative management of small forest parcels. Although not rich in farmland, the Agriculture section of the Plan encourages small-scale production and innovative and non-traditional farming operations that develop specialty products for niche markets. The Land Use chapter also supports the continuation of forestry and agricultural activities in Jamaica.

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

This goal has been addressed under the discussion of Goal 5. Specific policies have been developed to address concerns in the Earth and Mineral Resources section of the Natural Resources chapter.

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

The Housing chapter includes information on existing housing characteristics and needs in Jamaica, and a variety of approaches to address the availability of safe and affordable housing. A diversity of housing types, costs, and locations is encouraged to promote a diverse population.

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

The Town recognizes that the community facilities and services it provides are the heart of Town government. As such, a significant portion of the Town Plan addresses community facilities and services issues.

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

The Town Plan recognizes that accessibility, affordability, and quality of child care affects parents' ability to enter the workforce, be productive while at work, and remain employed. The Plan supports the provision of childcare for supporting the community's local economy and attracting and retaining young families

Goal 14. To encourage flood resilient communities.

The Plan addresses this goal in the Flood Resilience chapter. The Plan identifies areas in Jamaica vulnerable to inundation flooding and fluvial erosion and makes recommendations on how the community can become more flood resilient.

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

The Town Plan addresses and provides for environmental benefits equitably across the community. No population would share a disproportional impact of environmental burdens based on the policies in the Plan.