

10. AESTHETIC, HISTORICAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Special land use features that reflect the cultural development and character of the Town include its scenic views and vistas, scenic roads, and historic sites, buildings, and districts. The visual character of a community is of great value to its residents and helps to define for them a sense of place or identity.

10.1 Scenic Resources

A landscape which is aesthetically pleasing can only help to contribute to a better quality of life for those who live within and around this landscape. Scenic resources can include natural features only or a mixture of natural and human elements (such as houses, roads, farms, etc.). The view may be a compilation of a vast area containing different elements and textures.

The scenic resources in the Town of Essex include many of the landscape varieties, which have come to represent Vermont. A drive on any of the roads radiating from the center of the Town will put the observer in contact with active farmland, pastures, rolling hills, forests, views of distant mountains, historic buildings, rivers and streams.

The Town has had several inventories prepared on its more significant scenic resources. The “Essex Natural Resource Inventory” prepared by graduate students from the University of Vermont’s Natural Resource Planning Program in 1988, the “Essex Open Lands Study” (1989), the “Quality Environment Plan” (1973), and the “Town Center Master Plan” (1991) all provide a wealth of information. The UVM visual analysis by Karen Yacos as its primary author offers the most descriptive inventory. Yacos finds that the scenic landscapes observed in Essex are the result of the following union of land types:

- Parallel north-south ridge lines running the length of Essex, divided by roadways. These form the backdrop for views from lower areas and also provide high elevations for viewing distant ridges and mid-ground expanses of farmland divided by hedgerows.
- Distant views of Mt. Mansfield, Camel’s Hump, Bolton range, northern mountains and the Adirondacks.
- Large, relatively flat terrain, in the internal areas of Essex, along the Winooski River valley where views of mountains in both directions are possible. This arrangement provides long distance views which are not often available in the hillier areas of Vermont.
- Dirt roads through closer land forms (forested hills and steep slopes) provide for appealing foreground views.
- Several stream beds and flood plain areas create interesting foreground and mid-ground views, especially when close to farmland.
- Historic buildings and homesteads in rural settings or compact settlements.

- 38 • A sense of separation of the developed central part of the Town from surrounding lands and
39 towns. This is especially evident on Route 15 leading to Jericho, the River Road leading to
40 Jericho/Williston/Richmond, and roads heading north toward Westford. These are
41 gateways to the Town, and are presently visually appealing due to little development in these
42 areas.
- 43 • Flat terrain in the vicinity of Old Stage, Chapin, Colonel Page and Towers Roads is
44 comprised of development, farmland, pasture, and open space surrounded by ridges and
45 undulating wooded hill areas.

46 In 1997, the Selectboard established a Committee on Scenic Roads to look at the principles and
47 guidelines for following the State's Scenic Road designation and to inventory the Town's roads to
48 determine if a scenic road ordinance was needed, justified or recommended. The Committee's
49 report was submitted to and accepted by the Selectboard in February 1998. The Committee listed
50 six "intrinsic qualities" that potentially merit a road's special designation – natural, cultural, historical,
51 scenic, recreational and archaeological quality. The final report included the following
52 recommendations:

- 53 • The Selectboard should not adopt the State's scenic road designation program.
- 54 • The Town should follow a locally developed program that would ascribe a Unique Features
55 Designation to certain Town roads in order to protect the special characteristics of the roads
56 and the adjacent landscape.
- 57 • Designation of such roads would follow a process including petition to the Selectboard by
58 landowners, input by the Conservation Committee and Planning Commission, and action by
59 the Selectboard.
- 60 • Roads approved by the Selectboard would then be added to the Town's Significant Features
61 Map, currently shown on Map 17.

62 The scenic resources identified in the above sources are
63 listed in D. Most of these areas are also included on Map
64 18, *Scenic Resources*, which shows areas that are high priority
65 for conservation, based on a broad analysis of the Town.

66 The Town's aesthetic qualities are not limited to designated
67 scenic resources. All roads and properties can benefit from
68 landscaping. The Planning Commission can require
69 appropriate plantings and green space during site plan and
70 subdivision review. The Town can include those elements
71 in any road improvement or other public facility projects.
72 On-going maintenance of trees and plantings also will
73 enhance the overall scenic qualities of the Town.

74

75 10.2 Historical & Cultural Resources

76 The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation has an extensive inventory of historic resources in
77 the Town. There are a total of 88 individual sites scattered throughout the Town, a significant
78 portion of which are located in what the Division considered the Essex Center Historic District.

ESSEX RESIDENTS RESPOND

Q: *Over the next 5 years how important is the issue of "protection of scenic roadside and ridgeline views" to the Town of Essex?*

A: Very Important – 36.8%

Important – 31.8%

Somewhat Important – 21.9%

Not Important – 8.4%

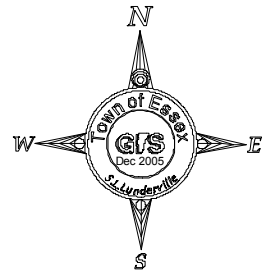
No Opinion – 1.0 %

Based upon 1,054 responses to this question

Appendix C

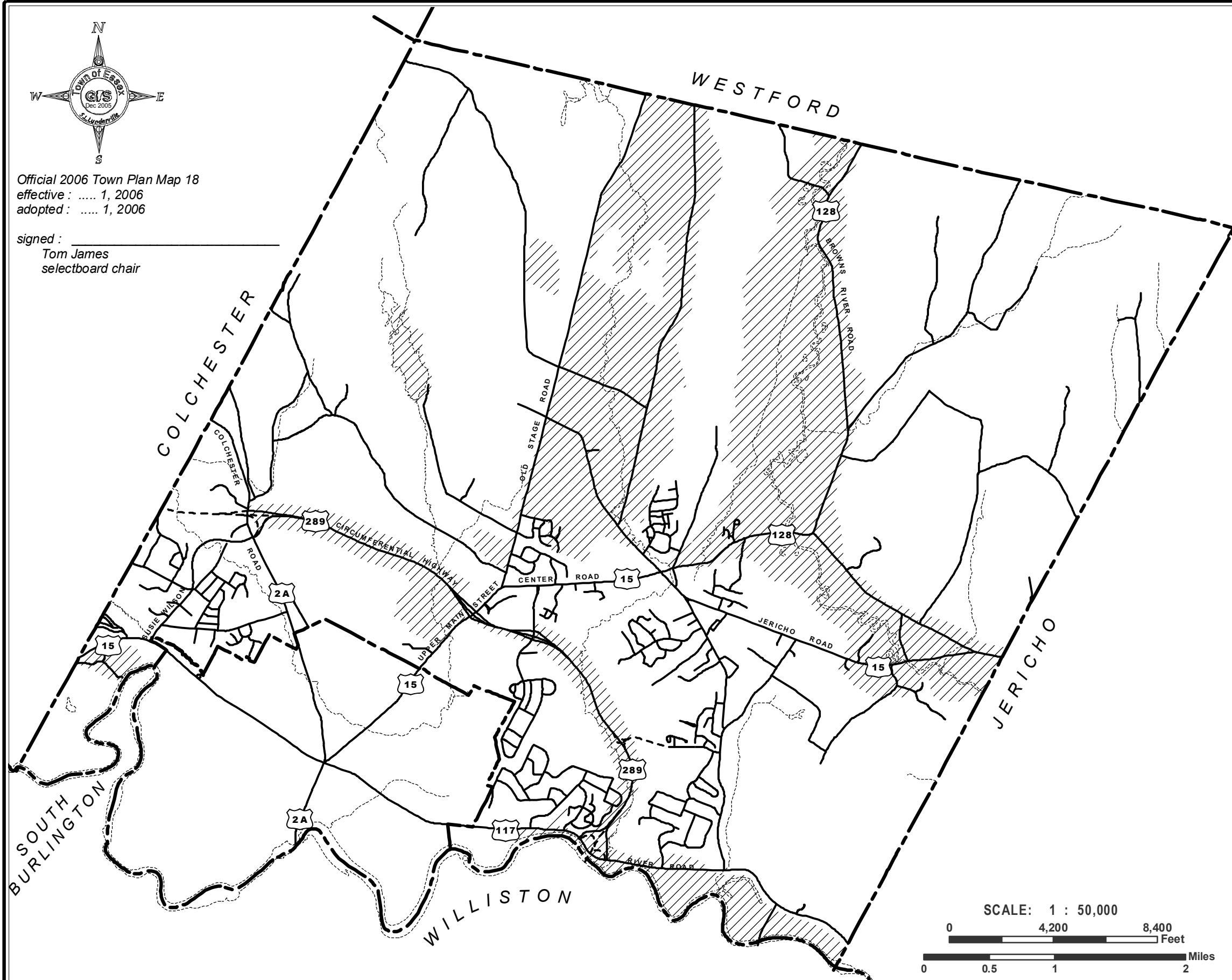
Scenic Resources

1. Alder Brook Valley – Old Stage Road East
2. Alder Brook Valley – Chapin Road West
3. Browns River Floodplain – Bixby, Osgood Hill, Browns River Road, Ellis Road, Hanley Lane, Weed Road, Route 15
4. Route 15 – Between Essex Junction and Essex Center; Winooski Valley Park District Overlook across from Fort Ethan Allen
5. Brigham Hill Road/Lane
6. Towers Road
7. Allen Martin Drive
8. River Road (select points particularly near No. Williston Bridge)
9. Circumferential Highway (proposed)
10. Hanley Lane (Osgood Hill)
11. Osgood Hill East & West
12. Weed Road
13. Sleepy Hollow Road
14. Old Stage Road East
15. Chapin Road
16. Browns River Road
17. Winooski River
18. Farms and adjacent landscape – Whitcomb Farms (Village and Town); Hunter Farm – Robert Lemire; Earl Mathews; Holmes; and others
19. Essex Center Commons
20. Saxon Hill Fire Tower Site (no longer standing)
21. Fort Ethan Allen Stone Tower
22. Fort Ethan Allen Officers' Row and Parade Grounds



Official 2006 Town Plan Map 18
 effective : 1, 2006
 adopted : 1, 2006

signed : _____
 Tom James
 selectboard chair



Map Number 18
Town of Essex
 Outside of the Village

SCENIC RESOURCES

2006

LEGEND

SYMBOL	FEATURE
	Scenic Resource Area

See Appendix C for a complete listing of the Scenic Resource locations.

Resource data for this map have been transferred from the Essex Open Lands Study. Actual boundaries of resource areas are subject to field verification.

The information provided here is for planning purposes only.
 The larger official version is available at the Town Offices.

Community Development Department
Town of Essex, Vermont

SCALE: 1 : 50,000

