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## STAFF MEMO

DATE: October 15, 2024

TO: Council Ordinance Committee  
THROUGH: Bob Burns, Assistant Town Manager  
FROM: Steve Puleo, Planning Director  
Cc: Windham Town Council  
Barry Tibbetts, Town Manager

RE: **South Windham/Little Falls Zoning Implementation Meeting**

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On March 28, 2023, the Director of Planning presented the South Windham/Little Falls Master Plan to the Council. The towns of Windham and Gorham have recognized the importance of South Windham and Little Falls as vital "crossroads" between the past and the present and have funded a joint effort to understand and identify the defining character of these villages. The municipalities are working together to implement the plan. The report below compares Windham's existing zoning districts in the study area to the new zoning district proposed by the contractor, NorthStar Planning (NSP). On August 20, 2024, the Town Council authorized the Director of Planning to convene a joint Council Ordinance Committee meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the future zoning of the two villages by adopting zoning provisions that will have unifying characteristics. NSP will be at the meeting to explain their proposed recommendations.

### **South Windham/Little Falls Master Plan**

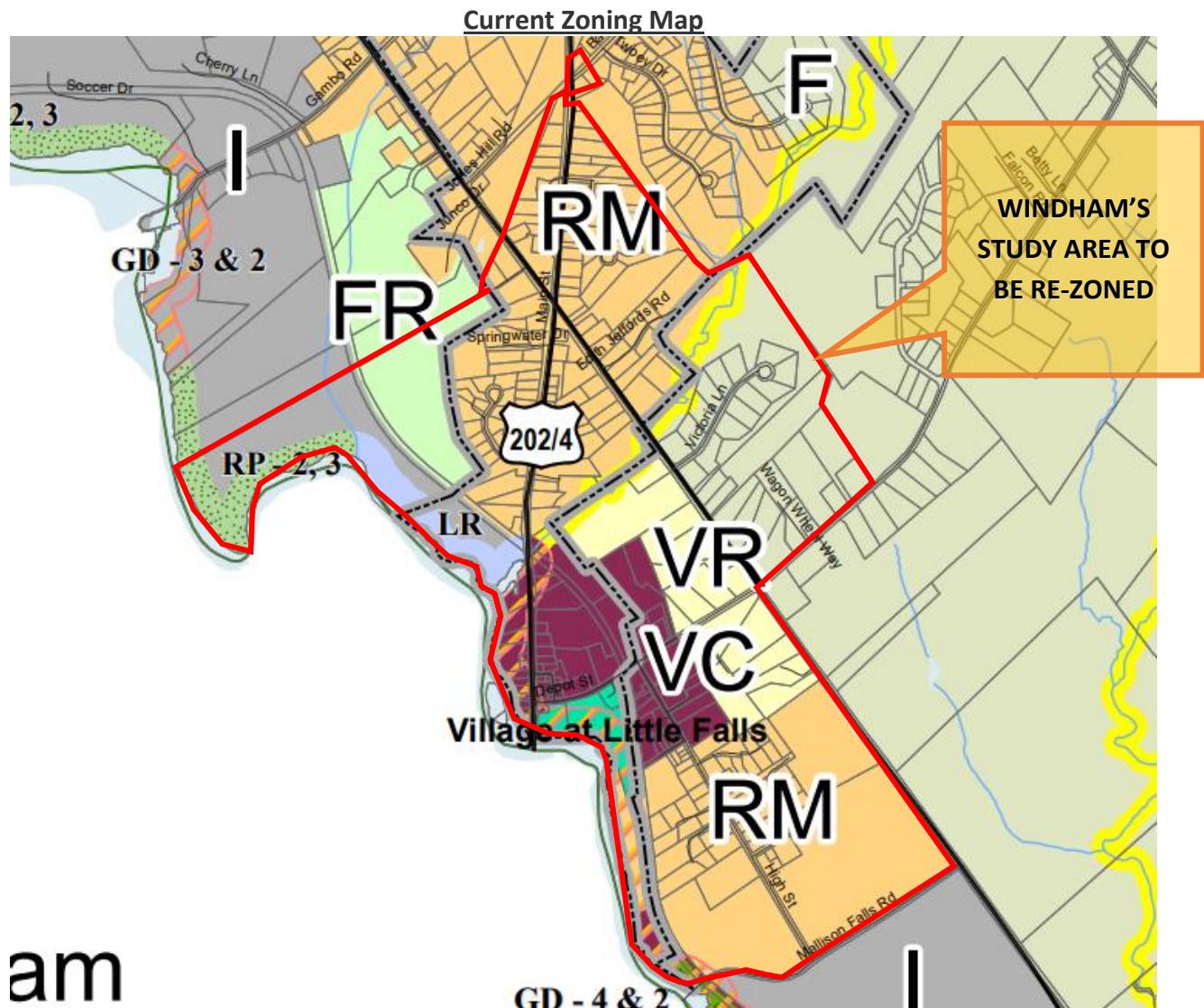
The following are key recommendations aimed at revitalizing the area and preserving its unique character. Here are some of the main points (see attachment;

SWLF\_MasterPlan\_Zoning\_Recommendations.pdf):

- **Streetscape Improvements:** Narrower travel lanes, wider sidewalks, and the addition of trees to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.
- **Conservation Efforts:** Focus on preserving natural resources and farmland.
- **Public Transportation:** Efforts to seek and improve public transportation options.
- **Mixed-Use Development:** Allowing a mix of businesses and increased residential density to create a vibrant community.
- **Public Art and Recreation:** Incorporating public art and increasing access to the Presumpscot River and other recreational areas.
- **Parking and Infrastructure:** Parking behind buildings and paving the Mountain Division Rail Trail to Westbrook.
  - These recommendations aim to create a more walkable, community-focused environment that balances growth with the preservation of the villages' historical and natural assets.

**South Windham/Little Falls Village District (SWLFV) Study Area and Current Zoning.**

The existing land use zoning map of South Windham and the surrounding area. The study area involves rezoning from Windham's current zoning district scheme from Village Commercial District (VC), Village Residential District (VR), Medium-Density Residential District (RM), Farm District (F), Farm Residential District (FR), Industrial District (I), and Village at Little Falls Contract Zoning.

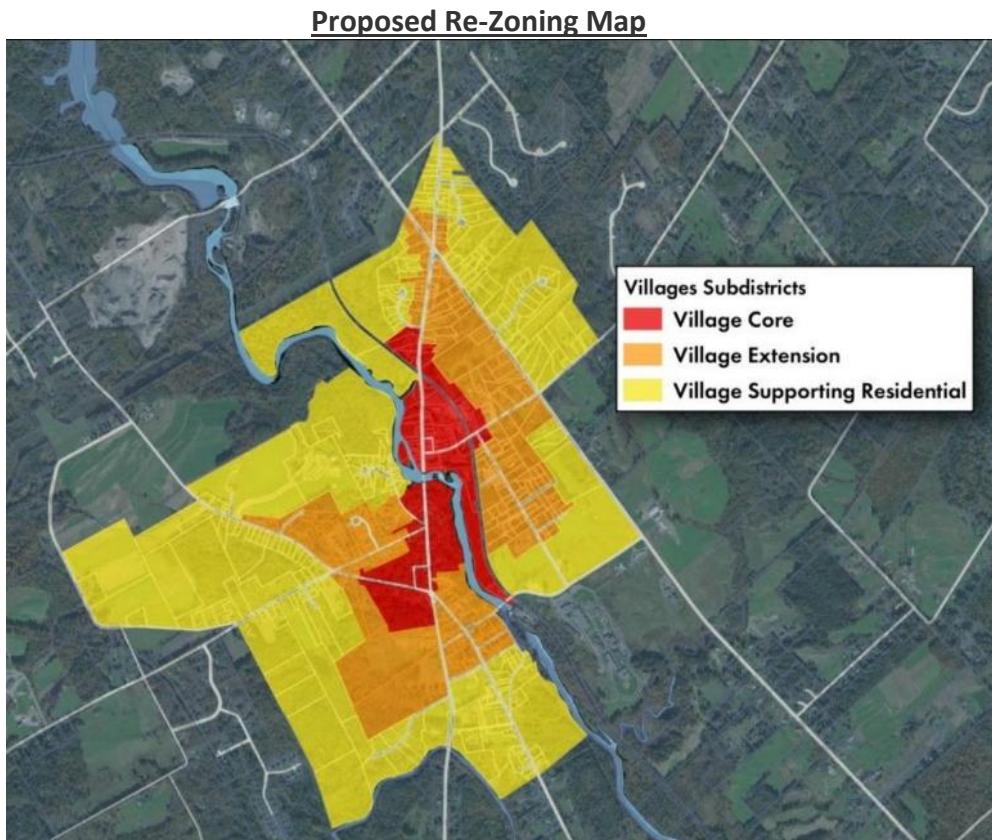


**South Windham/Little Falls Village District (SWLFV)**

The proposed re-zoning of the study area was created by the NSP. The follow is the proposed re-zoning for the "SWLFV" District (see Attachment: NSP\_VillageProgressMemo\_May2024.pdf)

- NSP is proposing three new zoning districts:
  - **Village Core (in red)**. To create a dynamic, pedestrian-friendly downtown village including a mix of development.

- **Village Core Extension (in orange)**. To create walkable residential neighborhoods , which will sustain the Village Core district.
- **Village Supporting Residential (in yellow)**. To preserve existing neighborhood character, while allowing for infill residential development.



#### Proposed Dimensional SWLFV District

- The dimensional and district standards were created from the visioning work developed through the Master Planning process.
- The zoning approach proposed by the consultants is to strike a balance between flexibility and creativity in development design and use. This includes promoting a higher level of quality urban design and attractive appeal.
- The proposed standards are targeted at private development that will be attractive, consistent, and pedestrian friendly with less reliance to the automobile.
- The dimension standard (see below) being proposed will specify building heights, setbacks, and requirements that support the cohesive village characteristics between the two municipalities.
- The design specification will allow for variations and alternatives, and zoning and performance standards will minimize undue burden on developers.
- The proposed performance standard amendments may already address a number of existing sections in the Windham's Chapter 120 Land Use Ordinances for open space requires in [§120-814 Multifamily development standards](#), [§120—501.1 Affordable](#)

housing development, §120-813 Commercial district design standards, and §120-511 Buffer yard.

**Proposed Dimensional Standards**

	Core	Extension	Supporting
Lot Size (min.)	No minimum	5,000 sq. ft. (sewer/water) 15,000 sq. ft. (septic)	20,000 sq. ft. (sewer/water) 25,000 sq. ft. (septic)
Net Residential Density (min.)	750 sq. f.t / DU	2,500 sq. ft. / DU	7,500 sq. ft. / DU
Front Setback (max.)	10 ft.	15 ft.	20 ft.
Side Setback (min.)	None	None	10 ft.
Rear Setback (min.)	20 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.
Frontage (min.)	25 ft.	50 ft.	100 ft.
Height (max.) *	4 stories	3 stories	2 stories
Lot Coverage (max.)	None	None	80%

**The Draft Village Zoning Language (see Attachment; Village Zoning Language Draft 07-03-2024.pdf) :**

- Draft zoning language goes a step beyond just writing new dimensional and district standards.
- By amending the LUO regarding the applicability and classification of projects by allowing:
  - The division of new or existing structures with 3 to 12 dwellings to be classified as a Minor Site Plan/ Minor Development.
  - The division of new existing structures with 12 dwelling units be classified as a Major Site Plan/ Major Development.
  - Developments up to 10,000 square feet of total new construction or building additions shall be classified as a Minor Site Plan/Minor Development.

**Zoning Amendment Process**

Please note Windham has no specific standards in the Land Use Ordinance by which to judge the proposed zoning change, but State statute requires all proposed zoning to be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Staff Recommendations**

Windham's Senior Leadership recommends first rezoning the Village Core (red area on the map), followed by the Village Core Extension (orange), and finally the Village Supporting Residential (yellow).