

# ***VIEWS TO THE MOUNTAIN: A SCENIC PROTECTION MANUAL***

***A RESOURCE PREPARED FOR THE TOWNS OF ESSEX  
AND JERICHO BY SMART GROWTH VERMONT***





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# VIEWS TO THE MOUNTAIN: A SCENIC PROTECTION MANUAL



## PART 1 - INTRODUCTION

Look to the east while driving the back roads in the towns of Jericho and Essex, and you will see a view so iconic and so central to Vermont's identity that it is seen on the state's flag and coat of arms. This manual documents the efforts the two towns have made to preserve that heritage and the steps they have agreed to implement to further secure these essential scenic assets.

### MANUAL PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

This manual encompasses the joint effort of the towns of Jericho and Essex to assess each town's scenic roadscapes and find ways to protect world-class views through individual and joint regulatory and non-regulatory means.

The manual has several goals. First and foremost, the Manual's authors aim to provide a road map for implementation of the current project. Second, it will serve as a record of the two towns' efforts to protect scenic resources from the spring of 2009 until the end of 2010. And finally, the towns and their project partners hope that the manual will serve as a guide for other communities seeking to preserve their scenic assets.

The manual has four parts, the first of which is this introduction. Part 2 provides the assessment of resources and documents the current state of scenic resources in both towns. Part 3 offers each town design guidelines for future development within scenic areas. Part 4 details each town's scenic protection implementation plan.





## PROJECT BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2009, the towns of Essex and Jericho met with representatives of Smart Growth Vermont, the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission and the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization to put together a joint project to protect the towns' scenic road corridors. The result was a fifteen month endeavor to assess the current state of these resources and identify regulatory and non-regulatory options for their protection, develop this manual to offer a roadmap for other towns, and develop regulatory language for the towns to adopt. As a joint endeavor, the manual offers other Vermont communities insight into working with neighbors to preserve their natural and historic viewsheds.

The project is part of Smart Growth Vermont's Roadscape Guide Initiative, which grew out of the Champlain Valley Greenbelt Alliance (CVGA), established in 2000 to protect the spectacular

roadscape from Shelburne to Middlebury. CVGA published the *Roadscape Guide* to help other Vermont communities working to preserve their views and working landscapes. Smart Growth Vermont continues this effort with the Roadscape Initiative, helping communities identify, assess, and protect scenic road corridors.

## PROJECT GOALS

The four overarching goals of this collaborative, multi-town project are to:

1. Protect Scenic Roadsapes
2. Focus Development in Traditional Settlements
3. Conserve Scenic Working Landscape
4. Celebrate Scenic Assets

## PROTECT SCENIC ROADSCAPES

The basic aim of this project is to take action to secure the iconic views along roads in the towns of Essex and Jericho, whether the peerless views of the Green Mountains, the bucolic views of working lands, or the traditional character of their villages.

Why road corridors? Beyond the fact that our road corridors by definition form the ‘bones’ of our communities, roads are the primary means by which visitors and neighbors experience our towns. They are the outward expression of community identity and heritage.

Ensuring that scenic corridors endure is important not only for the identity and heritage of a town or region, but also its economic vitality. Scenic settings attract tourists, residents and businesses seeking to capitalize on the Vermont brand. The quality of life Vermonters experience is due in large part to stepping out each day into vistas that feed the soul.

In the past, communities seeking to protect scenic resources have found it difficult to establish the needed criteria. One purpose of this project is to quantify and record such criteria for the two-town area, and to offer that approach for others to use in their communities.

Scenic quality is a measure of the visual appeal of a tract of land – its contrasts, layering, focal points, uniqueness and integrity. It includes both the natural and ‘built’ environment, as attractive buildings in the local vernacular can contribute significantly to the overall quality of a view.

By dissecting and quantifying criteria identified in methodological studies in recent decades, communities can document a greatly refined assessment of their resources. The partners in this collaborative conducted a rigorous assessment of roadscape views to form the basis of their prioritization of resources to be protected, and the design and implementation of protective measures.



*Travelers along roads in Essex and Jericho can easily glimpse Mount Mansfield and Camel's Hump.*



*Hillsides covered with fall foliage and tree farms are also common sights that add to the scenic roadscape.*

## FOCUS DEVELOPMENT IN TRADITIONAL SETTLEMENTS

To reduce development pressures on open and scenic lands, communities can structure land use regulations and incentives to encourage settlement in traditional community centers and away from open lands. These nodes of development provide a contrast to scenic vistas of natural and working lands with development that reflects the look and feel of existing historic villages.

Many communities have recognized that such an approach yields a host of benefits, not just preservation of scenic landscape.

In Vermont, the state offers attractive incentives to encourage new development in existing compact centers through downtown and village center legislation as well as the state's Growth Center and Vermont Neighborhood Programs.

Although both communities have already suffered significant scenic corridor degradation to roadside commercial and residential development, Essex and Jericho have begun work to focus new development in village centers and promote redevelopment and 'in-fill' within these centers. The steps outlined in this manual enhance and strengthen these initiatives.

## CONSERVE SCENIC WORKING LANDSCAPE

Concentrating new development away from scenic areas can ensure that the working landscape – farm and forest – is both functional and sustainable. Much concern has been expressed about the 'hollowing out' of Vermont's rural communities, a problem across America.

Loss of family farm and forestry operations causes rural infrastructure to fail, forcing people to turn to commercial and retail centers to meet their daily needs. Beyond the loss to the local economy and increased cost of living, the failure of

### COMPACT DEVELOPMENT

- ★ Places homes within walking or biking distance of recreation, shopping, health, financial and other services, schools, post offices, and public transit
- ★ Locates businesses within easy reach of their consumers, employees, suppliers and services
- ★ Ensures sufficient student populations to support the school systems
- ★ Provides a critical mass of ridership for transit services
- ★ Dispenses public services more efficiently so that they are cost effective
- ★ Lessens the burden of traffic on roads and streets
- ★ Reduces air and water pollution
- ★ Makes homes more affordable for families and reduces their transportation costs



rural infrastructure has health impacts. It moves families away from local food sources and toward corporate food, and toward less walking and cycling, and more vehicular travel.

By keeping farming and forestry operations viable, Essex and Jericho retain the intrinsic value of these open lands, preserve unfettered views to the mountains, maintain the character of their towns, and save significantly on infrastructure.

## CELEBRATE SCENIC ASSETS

Not everyone makes the connection between scenic preservation and the many benefits outlined above. “Celebrating” scenic beauty in Jericho and Essex is not limited to the traditional seasonal tourist, but also encompasses outreach to residents, landowners, businesses, and neighbors; it heightens awareness of not just scenic beauty, but all of the enterprise connected to that beauty. Thus the fourth goal for this project is to plan for and implement an outreach effort to celebrate and significantly raise awareness of the extent each town’s economy is tied to its iconic scenic beauty and to boost enterprises that benefit from the scenic setting in Jericho and Essex. This in turn will reinforce the mutual benefit to economy and nature.

## PROJECT PARTNERS

This project is a collaborative enterprise with five partners:

- ★ The Town of Essex
- ★ The Town of Jericho
- ★ Smart Growth Vermont
- ★ Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization
- ★ Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

*“[A] visitor does not take one jot from the landscape or the community [...] in return for the money he contributes, nor does the natural beauty of a district or country need to be repaired or replanted each year. And yet the community may sell it and resell it without losing any part of the original bulk of the commodity.”*

Mark Daniels



## TOWN OF ESSEX

The Town of Essex, at 39 square miles, is home to the largest population of any town in Vermont, with more than 19,000 residents. It was one of the original “New Hampshire Grants” from King George III in 1763. Settlement began in 1783, and grew from scattered colonial villages to the town it is today. The town is at the periphery of the Burlington metropolitan area and has truly diverse working landscape, business community, and residential areas.

An early powerhouse of industry with ample river power and a railroad junction, Essex has grown to become one of the state’s largest suburban residential communities and home to its largest employer, IBM, located in Essex Junction, an incorporated village in the southwestern part of the Town of Essex. IBM employs one quarter of the state’s manufacturing sector workers and contributes roughly \$1 billion annually to the Vermont economy. The sole Amtrak passenger rail station in Chittenden County is in Essex Junction. The village and town maintain separate governments and school districts.

Commercial and residential development has spread along Route 15 toward the Colchester border. Butler’s Corners and Essex Center, two historic population centers, are now connected by commercial and residential development. Yet Essex has retained many locations where bucolic working lands form the foreground allowing for spectacular views of the Green Mountains beyond. The town has determined that nearly one quarter of its land base is in threatened visually-sensitive areas.



## TOWN OF JERICHO

Just east of Essex is the Town of Jericho, also an original grant from King George III. Settled first in 1774, the town was officially organized in 1786. Nestled in the foothills of the Green Mountains, Jericho did not experience the kind of industrial and residential development that Essex did, but now faces significant residential development pressures as it has evolved into a commuter town, especially along Route 15. With almost as much land area as Essex, Jericho's population is significantly smaller at just over 5,000 residents. Most residential growth is focused in suburban tracts in the west central portion of the town off of Route 15. Two of the town's three village centers are on Route 15: Jericho Corners and Underhill Flats at its eastern boundary. The third village center, Jericho Center, is south of Route 15 on Browns Trace. Jericho shares an active land trust with the Town of Underhill.



## SMART GROWTH VERMONT

Smart Growth Vermont is Vermont's only nonprofit organization devoted exclusively to promoting smart growth, an approach to managing land use that integrates development with conservation by using land efficiently and sensibly. Its mission is to forge growth and conservation solutions for Vermont's communities and rural countryside. One of the ways the organization carries out its mission is through the Community Planning Partnership, an ongoing initiative in which Smart Growth Vermont helps communities that are interested in implementing smart growth principles. The organization works with local leaders to turn those principles into on-the-ground solutions by crafting town plan amendments, new bylaw language, and other building blocks of effective local planning, tailored to the particular circumstances of each



partner community. The Smart Growth Vermont online Community Planning Toolbox (<http://www.smartgrowthvermont.org/toolbox>) provides support 24 hours a day on a wide variety of land use and community development issues, with tools, case studies and resources.

## CHITTENDEN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) was founded in 1966 to promote the mutual cooperation of its 19 member municipalities and to facilitate the appropriate development and preservation of the physical and human resources in Chittenden County, the state's most populous county.

CCRPC provides technical assistance to its municipalities for local planning projects and provided mapping support for this project including Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of the data gathered during the scenic assessment.

## CHITTENDEN COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

The Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Chittenden County. CCMPO is Vermont's only MPO and oversees about \$30 million in transportation investments annually.

In addition to overseeing and planning for transportation expenditures, CCMPO sponsors and conducts studies and assists local municipalities with planning activities like this project. It also provides a forum for interagency cooperation and public input into funding decisions.





## PROJECT STRUCTURE

The project was broken out into four distinct phases that build on each other to form the foundation for current and future preservation of scenic assets:

1. Assessment of Scenic Roadscape Resources
2. Identification of Preferred Strategies
3. Preparation of a Scenic Roadscape Protection Manual
4. Drafting of Town Plan and Bylaw Language

### ASSESSMENT OF SCENIC ROADSCAPE RESOURCES

The first phase of the project focused on a broad-brush inventory of the kinds and extent of scenic resources in Essex and Jericho. With existing scenic inventories as a starting point, the project team conducted a more detailed scenic resource assessment,

identifying key vantage points, describing the attributes of each in narrative and photographic form, and then scoring each using the methodology outlined in the *Roadscape Guide*. This labor-intensive process relied upon the help of trained volunteers from each town's Conservation Commission as well as other interested local residents. The end product of this phase was a series of GIS layers and accompanying descriptive texts that document the current status of identified scenic corridors in both towns. The Scenic Assessment, detailed in Part 2 of this Manual, forms the basis for the design guidelines found in Part 3 and for proposed regulatory measures detailed in each town's scenic protection plan outlined in Part 4.

### IDENTIFICATION OF PREFERRED STRATEGIES

In the second phase, Smart Growth Vermont worked with the towns to develop preferred strategies for protecting scenic roadscapes. Strategies fell into three major categories: regulatory protections such as overlay districts and siting standards,



non-regulatory tools such as landscaping and marketing, and direct land conservation.

Strategies were presented in tables (see Appendices 9 & 10) that lay out a broad range of options for review and comment by the two planning commissions. The towns' planning commissions then refined and prioritized the final options, which are incorporated in this Manual in Part 4.

## **PREPARATION OF A SCENIC ROADScape PROTECTION MANUAL**

This Manual, the third phase of the project, brings all of the pieces together. It gathers scenic resource evaluation, maps and data, proposed strategies and recommended actions in a single document. Part 4 of the Manual includes an implementation plan for each town - a step-by-step overview of the specific actions each town will take to implement the plan – and resources to aid in implementation. The Manual also includes a section on opportunities for collaboration between the two towns. Once completed, the Manual will be submitted to each town's Planning Commission and Select Board for approval and adoption.

## **DRAFTING OF PLAN AND BYLAW LANGUAGE**

The final phase of this project focuses on drafting Town Plan and bylaw language for adoption by each town that incorporates language implementing the top identified strategies, which will be completed after publication of this Manual.



*Scenic assessment volunteers worked in pairs — and came in all sizes and ages! This young volunteer is holding up a sign to identify the specific part of the road segment.*

# VIEWS TO THE MOUNTAIN: A SCENIC PROTECTION MANUAL



## PART 2 – SCENIC ASSESSMENT

### INTRODUCTION

Before communities determine the best strategies for protecting their scenic resources, they need to understand what they are looking at, what makes vistas special and why they want to protect scenic resources. Community input in both Essex and Jericho has identified scenic resources such as the views of Mount Mansfield and Camel's Hump and the views across sweeping agricultural fields as important historical, cultural, economic and community assets worthy of protection.

### ROAD SELECTION

Once a community identifies the “what” and “why,” developing a scenic assessment is the next step. In a scenic assessment, scenic resources are systematically inventoried, documented and evaluated. For the assessment conducted in this project, both communities, working with the other project partners, selected and refined the roadways to be assessed.

Essex based its list of roads to assess on the Scenic Resources section and map in the Essex Town Plan, which incorporated work done in the *1973 Quality Environmental Plan for the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction*, the *1989 Essex Open Lands Study*, the *2001 Essex Rural Lands Study*, the *1998 Report of the Committee on Scenic Roads* and the *2008 Essex Open Space Plan*.

Jericho based its selection of roads on the Jericho Town Plan, which in turn was based on a 1989 scenic road assessment using State of Vermont assessment forms, the 1994 Village Triangle Plan and an inventory conducted as part of the last Town Plan update.

GIS-based maps for each road segment were developed (see Figure 1) that plotted assessment locations roughly 500 feet apart along either side of the identified road segments. Although the roads were identified as scenic assets by both towns, the individual points to be assessed were not selected for best views, but were meant to be a random sampling along roads thought to be scenic.



## SCENIC EVALUATION

Volunteers from Essex and Jericho were recruited and trained to evaluate the identified roadways. These volunteers fanned out across dozens of road segments in Jericho and Essex. After locating each designated assessment point on the roadway, volunteers noted whether or not they had moved to a new view (around a bend, over a hill, etc.) along the road at each new segment, and noted anything unusual about the spot. Each volunteer would then take a 180 degree panorama of photos moving from left to right to document each assessment point as objectively as possible.

After taking the photo series, volunteers rated each segment view on ten criteria. Some criteria were answered with a simple “yes” or “no,” while others were assessed on a scale of 1 to 3 (see Appendix 3 for the volunteer instruction.) The criteria were as follows:

**EXTENT OF VIEW.** This criterion refers to the horizontal sweep of the view from a given point and assesses how

“big” the view is from that segment location. For instance, are they sweeping, long-distance views or totally obstructed?

**SENSE OF DEPTH.** This criterion asks viewers to consider not just the distance to the horizon, but how ‘layered’ a particular view may be. In other words, if the view is open, are there fields, forest, hills, or mountains between the viewer and horizon, and if so, do they form multiple layers engaging visual interest? Does the view have various layers, both built and/or natural, that transition from fields to mountains or are there few or no layers?

**TRADITIONAL LANDSCAPE PATTERNS.** Is the view still dominated by a traditional rural or village pattern of land use or are subdivisions and strip developments intruding into the view? For the current assessment in Essex and Jericho, traditional landscape patterns include barns, farmhouses, fields and woods.



**FOCAL POINTS.** This is a more subjective criterion that asks the assessor to determine whether there are one or more “pleasing” dominant features that draw the eye. Volunteers determined whether a mountain peak, lake, or other dramatic feature dominated the view or if multiple focal points vie for attention. The negative end of the spectrum for this criterion includes two options - (1) there is no dominant feature, or (2) the dominant feature is unattractive.

**QUALITY OF NATURAL LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS.** This is a more subjective criterion where the assessor ranks the quality of the natural landscape elements as outstanding, moderately interesting or unremarkable.

**QUALITY OF BUILT LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS.** This criterion assesses the quality of the built landscape elements on the same scale as the natural landscape elements.

**VIEW OF MOUNT MANSFIELD.** This a yes or no response – can Mount Mansfield be seen from that assessment point?

**VIEW OF CAMEL’S HUMP.** Another yes or no criterion.

**OTHER SIGNIFICANT NATURAL FEATURES.** This is a yes or no response where the assessor notes significant natural feature such as ridgelines, waterways or key meadows in the comment section of the form.

**SIGNIFICANT BUILT FEATURES.** This criterion notes any significant built feature such as historic barns, town greens, etc. in the comment section of the form.



*Landscaped yards and gardens help developed land fit in with the surrounding natural environment and complement the scenic resources of an area.*



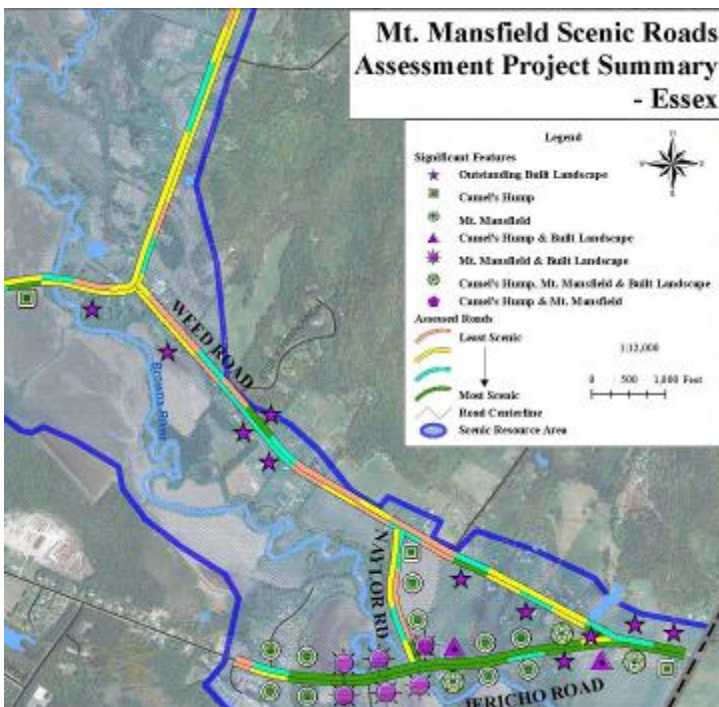
*Silos are an example of a built feature that adds to the pastoral character of the scenery.*



## WEIGHTING AND MAPPING

Once road segments were assessed and given numeric scores for each criterion, all data were compiled in a master spreadsheet. The formula averaged most criteria, but views of Mount Mansfield and Camel's Hump were weighted higher in the computation, in recognition of their central role in the assessment.

The data were then digitized into geographic information systems (GIS) format by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission and maps were created which graphically display the assessment values. The rating values noted on the maps are graded from highest overall quality, green, to lowest, red. In addition, specific scenic assets such as views of Mount Mansfield or excellent examples of traditional built environment (barns, farmhouse, silos, etc.) are mapped with unique identifiers.



*Volunteers rated vistas using a variety of scores, with comment fields for significant built features in the landscape such as barns.*



*Natural features such as mature trees and narrow winding roads are characteristic of a rural roadscape.*

## ESSEX ROADS

### BIXBY HILL ROAD (BX-01 TO BX-02)

Bixby Hill Road runs north from Browns River Road (Route 128) just east of its meeting with Center Road and Jericho road (Route 15) in Essex Center. At its southern end is the Essex Elementary School complex. The road is paved here and transitions to gravel along its rise into a residential area containing homes on relatively large lots, many that each have driveways directly off the road.

Along the western edge of the road, with the hill rising east to west, there are minimal views. Along the eastern side of the road there are spectacular panoramic views of the Green Mountains at the bottom and top of the road. Between these locations, views are obstructed either by vegetation or residential development. At the very northern end of Bixby Hill Road, a large new residence is under construction which will likely completely obstruct a spectacular panoramic view of at least Mount Mansfield. Much of this segment is wooded hill to the road and thus has a lower scenic value.

In this road segment, particular attention should be given to the remaining scenic views of Mount Mansfield and Camel's Hump. Building envelopes should not obstruct these views and should be located so as to maintain visual access from the road or frame the views with new construction. The photos to the right of the garage and the new construction illustrate the consequences of poorly placed structures in relation to scenic views. Consideration should also be given to how land in the foreground can be maintained or used while preventing vegetation growth from obscuring these remaining scenic views of Mount Mansfield and Camel's Hump.

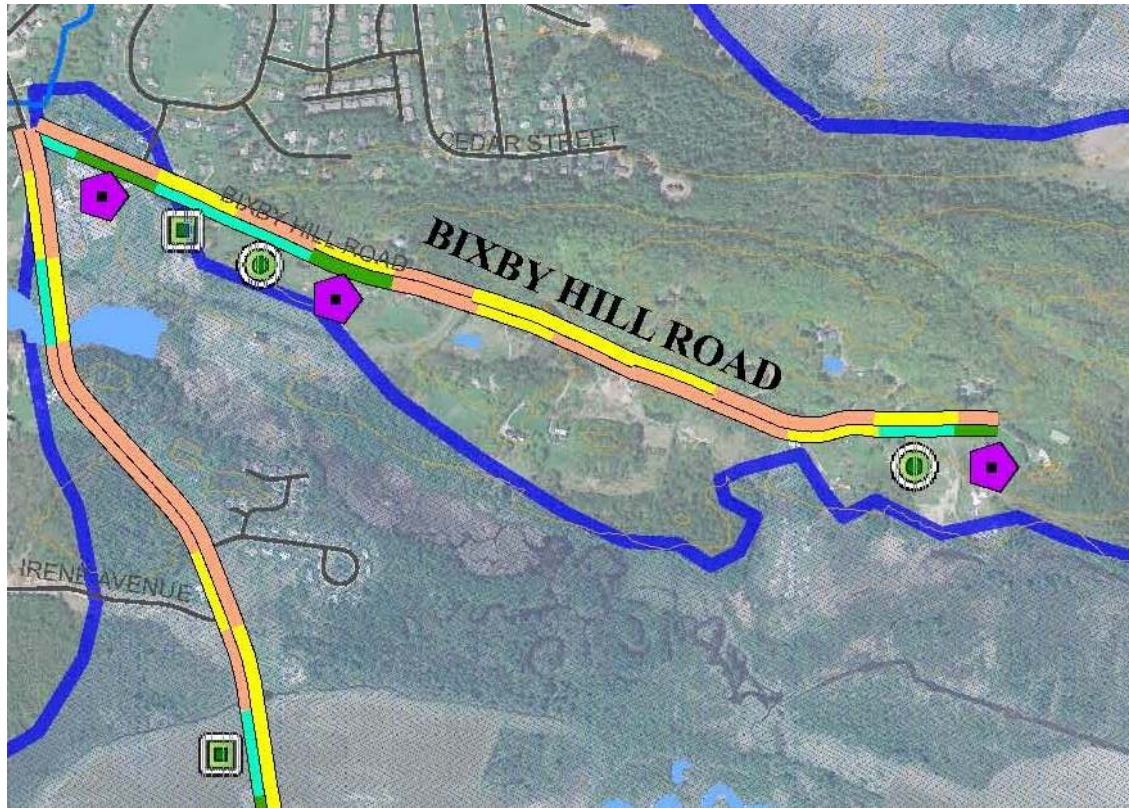


*The garage in this photo obscures the views to the mountains.*



*New construction illustrates the impact on scenic views if not thoughtfully located.*





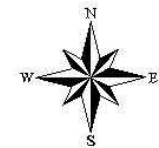
# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex

### Significant Features

- ★ Outstanding Built Landscape
- ◻ Camel's Hump
- ⊙ Mt. Mansfield
- ▲ Camel's Hump & Built Landscape
- ☆ Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⊗ Camel's Hump, Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⬠ Camel's Hump & Mt. Mansfield

### Assessed Roads

- Least Scenic
- Most Scenic
- Road Centerline
- Scenic Resource Area



1:12,000

0 500 1,000 Feet





## BROWNS RIVER ROAD (BR-01 TO BR-05)

Browns River Road is Route 128, a state highway that runs north from Essex Center to Westford and Fairfax. The southernmost segment assessed, BR-01, begins at the intersection with Bixby Hill Road near the Essex Elementary School, with its parking lot and bus turn around. The road opens up heading north, moving from rural residential to open fields and horse pastures to the west and more rural homes on large parcels and foot condition. There is also a former farm now in use as a nursery at the intersection with Weed Road.

The scenic resources on this road are less about views of dramatic mountain peaks and more about a traditional working landscape. Open meadows, farm fields, and barns are the key scenic resources in this area. When siting homes on these lots, locating building envelopes along the tree lines or clustering buildings should be considered to maintain these resources. In this type of rural setting, new buildings that are designed in vernacular New England styles will fit more harmoniously into the landscape than buildings that are designed in post-WWII and modern styles.



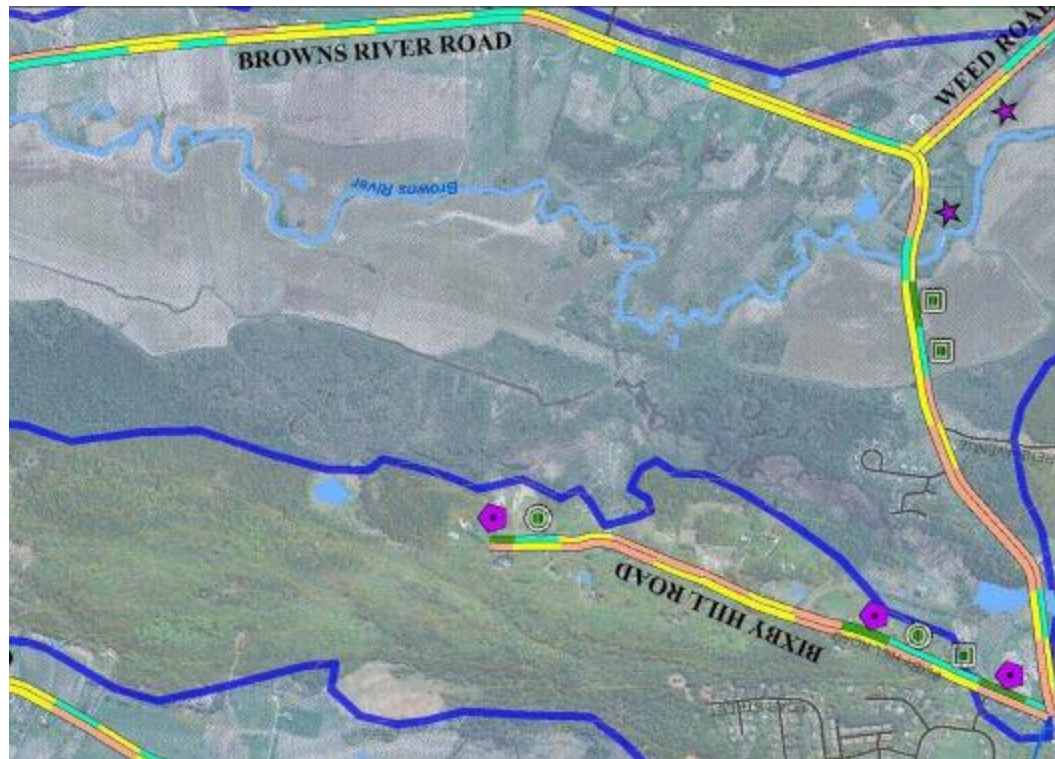
*Homes tucked into the trees blend into the landscape.*



*Historic homes and new houses designed along these lines add to the landscape.*







# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex

### Significant Features

- ★ Outstanding Built Landscape
- Camel's Hump
- Mt. Mansfield
- ▲ Camel's Hump & Built Landscape
- ☀ Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- Camel's Hump, Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⬠ Camel's Hump & Mt. Mansfield

### Assessed Roads

- Least Scenic
- Most Scenic
- Road Centerline
- Scenic Resource Area



1:12,000

0 500 1,000 Feet





## CHAPIN ROAD (CP-01 TO CP0-4)

About a mile east as the crow flies from Browns River Road is Chapin Road, a gravel town road that runs north from Towers Road into Westford. Chapin Road is home to Chapin Orchard, a well-known landmark farm first settled in the 1860s. Several Chapin descendants still live on the road and raise a variety of agricultural products including apples, pumpkins, maple syrup and Christmas trees. At several points, Chapin Road has expansive views of both Mount Mansfield and Camel's Hump at point. At its southern end, the view from Chapin Road looks across an open field toward the range of Green Mountains including Mount Mansfield. In the mid-ground, a newer housing development comprised of large, single-family homes on ¼- to 1-acre lots rises up a foothill. Just north of this area is Chapin Orchard, with its historic home and barns. Foothills are seen intermittently on both the east and west sides of the road depending on the level of vegetation. Notable features include a historic farmhouse and barn, apple orchards, and Christmas tree farm. Beyond that, foothills can be intermittently seen among increasing roadside brush, fieldstone walls, rural homes, a ponds and large fields.

The scenic resources along this road vary from sweeping views of Mount Mansfield and Camel's Hump over open fields to fieldstone walls, historic farms and orchards. A mixture of tools may be needed to protect scenic resources. If the site is going to be developed, placement of building lots should be carefully considered. To maintain the sweeping views, lots should be tucked along tree lines or at the foothills. Clustering homes may help protect orchards, tree farms, fieldstone walls or ponds. Managing access on this road via shared driveways should also be considered. Consideration should also be given to how land in the foreground can be maintained or used while preventing vegetation growth from obscuring the scenic view over farmland to the distant hills and mountains.



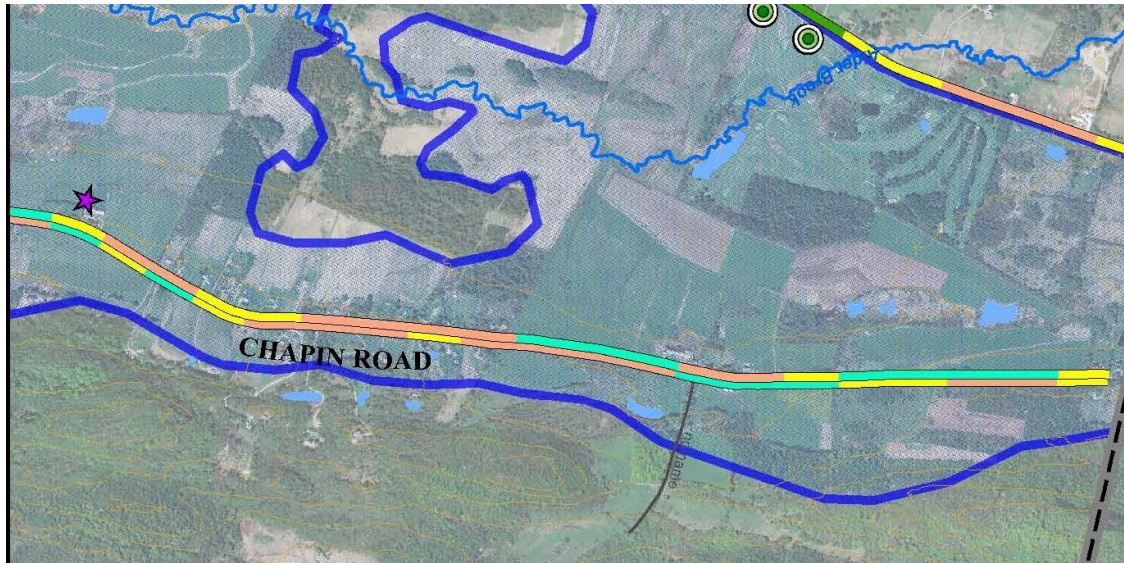
*Traditional stone walls such as this one can enhance and frame a view.*



*Brush growing on abandoned farmland can obscure vistas.*

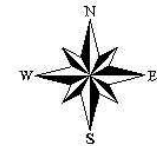


# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex



## Significant Features

- ★ Outstanding Built Landscape
- ◻ Camel's Hump
- ⊙ Mt. Mansfield
- ▲ Camel's Hump & Built Landscape
- ⊙ Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⊙ Camel's Hump, Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⬢ Camel's Hump & Mt. Mansfield



## Assessed Roads

- Least Scenic
- Most Scenic
- Road Centerline
- Scenic Resource Area

1:12,000

0 500 1,000 Feet





## COLONEL PAGE ROAD (CL-01)

Colonel Page Road, which runs west from Chapin Road to Old Stage Road, shares roughly the same characteristics as Chapin Road, with intermittent views of the Green Mountains increasingly disrupted by a tree line and brush along the roadsides. Homes in this area are located along most of the road and the open fields at its westerly end are dominated by a large, handsome barn. Midway along Colonel Page Road there is a meandering stream.

Consider similar planning tools on this road as were suggested for Chapin Road.

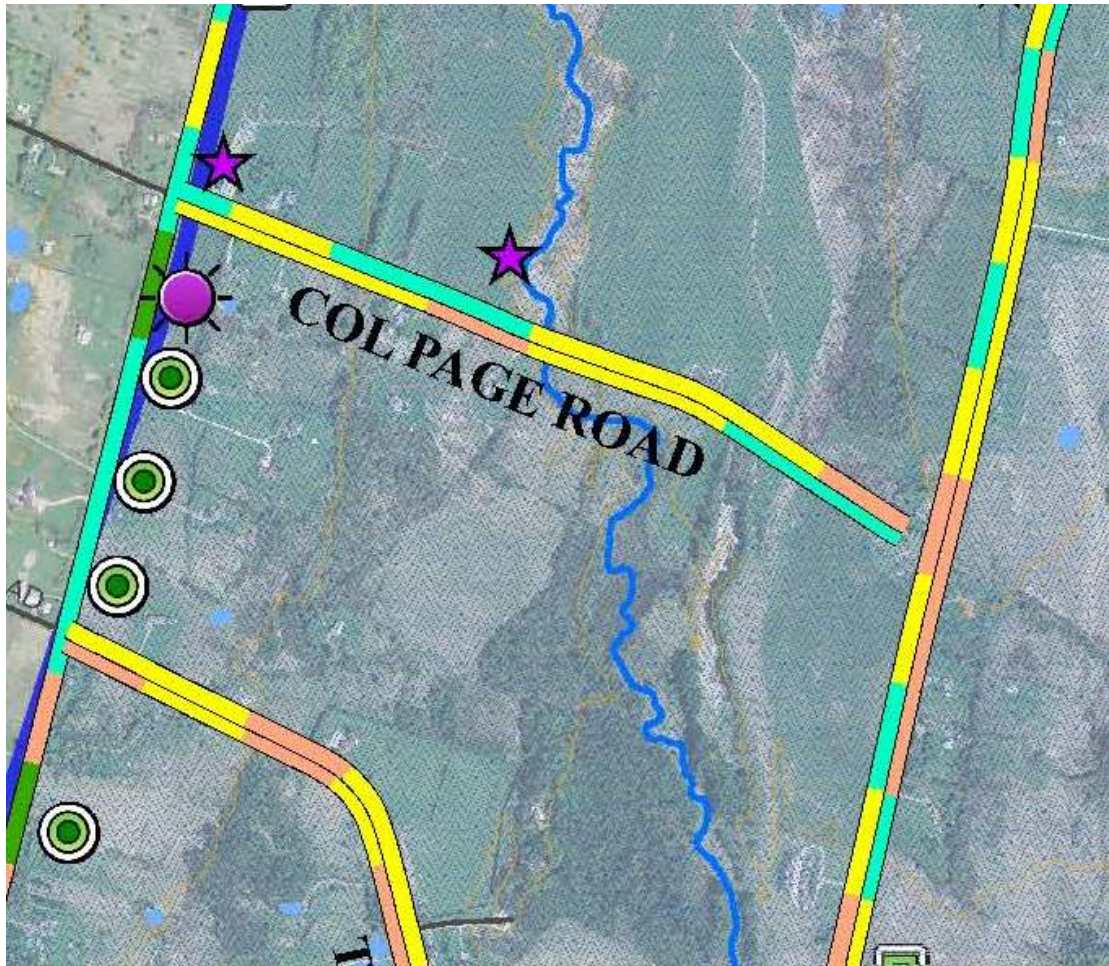
*Large agricultural buildings such as barns can also be visual focal points.*



*Linear features like fence lines, hedgerows and tree lines that define the edges of fields and properties create a visually appealing land use pattern.*



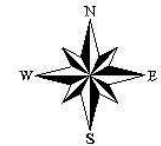










# **Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex**

## **Significant Features**

-  Outstanding Built Landscape
-  Camel's Hump
-  Mt. Mansfield
-  Camel's Hump & Built Landscape
-  Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
-  Camel's Hump, Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
-  Camel's Hump & Mt. Mansfield

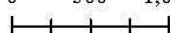


## **Assessed Roads**

-  Least Scenic
- 
- 
-  Most Scenic
-  Road Centerline
-  Scenic Resource Area

1:12,000

0 500 1,000 Feet





## JERICHO ROAD (JR-01 TO JR-02)

Route 15, a state highway, is called Jericho Road from Essex Center to the Jericho town line. The views from this segment are spectacular – the type of view often used to represent and market the essence of Vermont. There are historic farmhouses, barns, open fields, wooded hillsides, stables and sweeping views of Mount Mansfield, Camel's Hump and the Green Mountains.

While a lot of development has occurred on other segments of this road, these segments of Jericho Road still have views of working landscape and sweeping views of Camel's Hump.

Maintaining or enhancing these views can also help delineate the transition from traditional center to working landscape. Again, planning tools that thoughtfully place building envelopes, clustering homes around historic buildings or framing views with new development should be considered for this road.

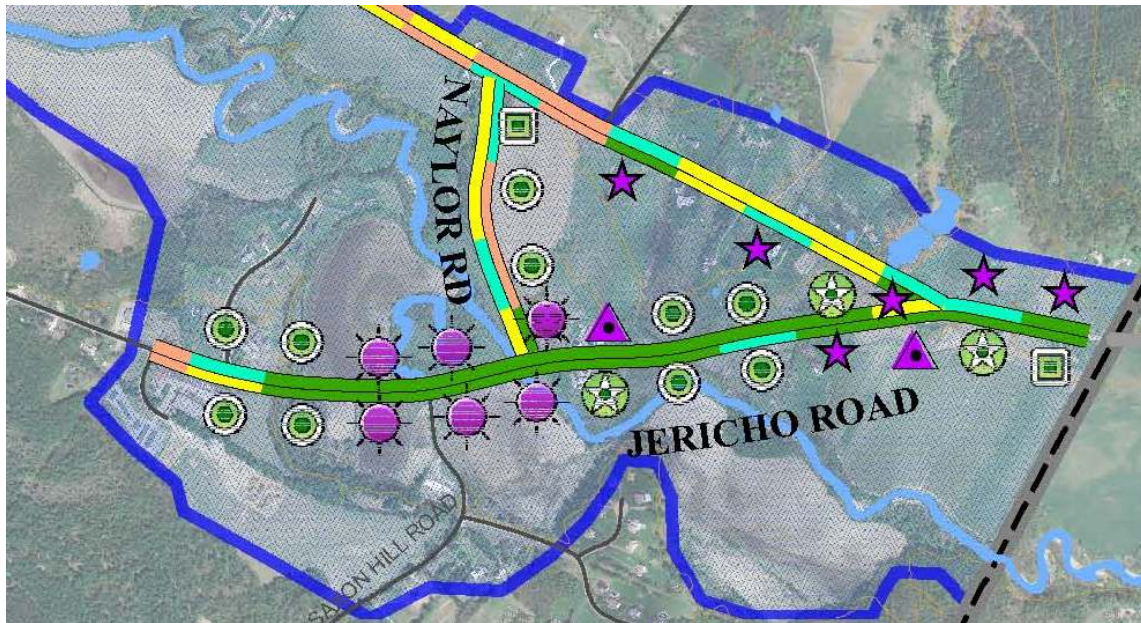


*Jericho Road has vistas that include many of Vermont's most iconic rural images.*

*Tucking a home into the trees works well here to avoid distraction from the viewshed.*







# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex

## Significant Features

- ★ Outstanding Built Landscape
- Camel's Hump
- Mt. Mansfield
- ▲ Camel's Hump & Built Landscape
- ✱ Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- Camel's Hump, Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ◆ Camel's Hump & Mt. Mansfield



## Assessed Roads

- Least Scenic
- Most Scenic
- Road Centerline
- Scenic Resource Area

1:12,000

0 500 1,000 Feet





## NAYLOR ROAD (NY-01)

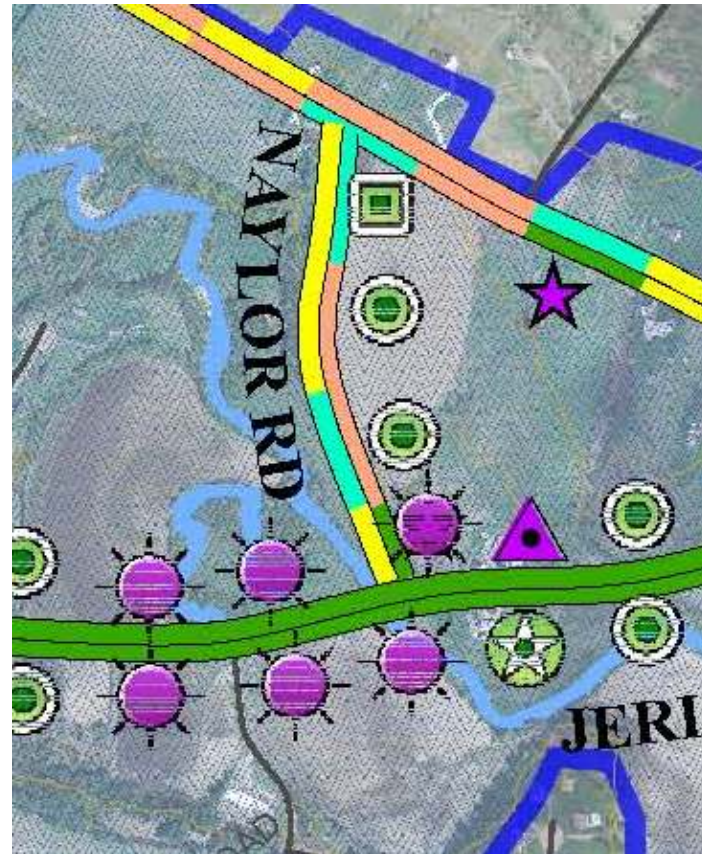
Naylor Road is a short north-south connector between Weed Road and Jericho Road with Green Meadow Farm with historic barn and silo and pastures at its southern end. The Browns River runs along the west side of the road. Newer vegetative growth is obscuring most views along the road .



*Brush alongside the road can obscure vistas and at the same time create a more intimate roadscape. The contrast between sections of rural roads that are enclosed by mature vegetation and sections with wide open vistas over open land creates variety that is appealing to travelers.*



# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex

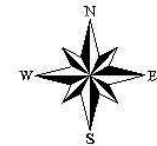


## Significant Features

- ★ Outstanding Built Landscape
- ◻ Camel's Hump
- ⊙ Mt. Mansfield
- ▲ Camel's Hump & Built Landscape
- ⊙ Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⊙ Camel's Hump, Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⬢ Camel's Hump & Mt. Mansfield

## Assessed Roads

- Least Scenic
- Most Scenic
- Road Centerline
- Scenic Resource Area



1:12,000

0 500 1,000 Feet



## OLD STAGE ROAD (OS-01 TO O-05)

Old Stage Road has a wide variety of land uses as it runs north from the Essex Shopping Center through dense suburban development, past the Essex Alliance Church and then opens up to farm fields and large tract suburban housing. There are partial Adirondack views to the west and wide open views across fields to the east and the Green Mountains. At the intersection with Colonel Page Road, Old Stage Road exhibits excellent examples of both traditional built and natural environments. Further north along the road, newer residences on large lots dominate. As the area becomes more rural again, new roadside growth and woods obscure Green Mountain views in all but one spot. At the Westford border, a large open yard has views to the foothills of the Green Mountains.

Old Stage Roads offers an opportunity to not only protect scenic resources as well as encourage development in and around existing nodes of development, like the Essex Shopping Center. This area, and other existing developed areas, could be an area to consider planning for new homes and perhaps apply for the state's Vermont Neighborhood program. In areas with views of the Green Mountains or open meadows, placement of buildings, clustering and access management should all be implemented.



*Placement of homes outside of the direct view and framing with elements such as stone walls can enhance the viewshed.*





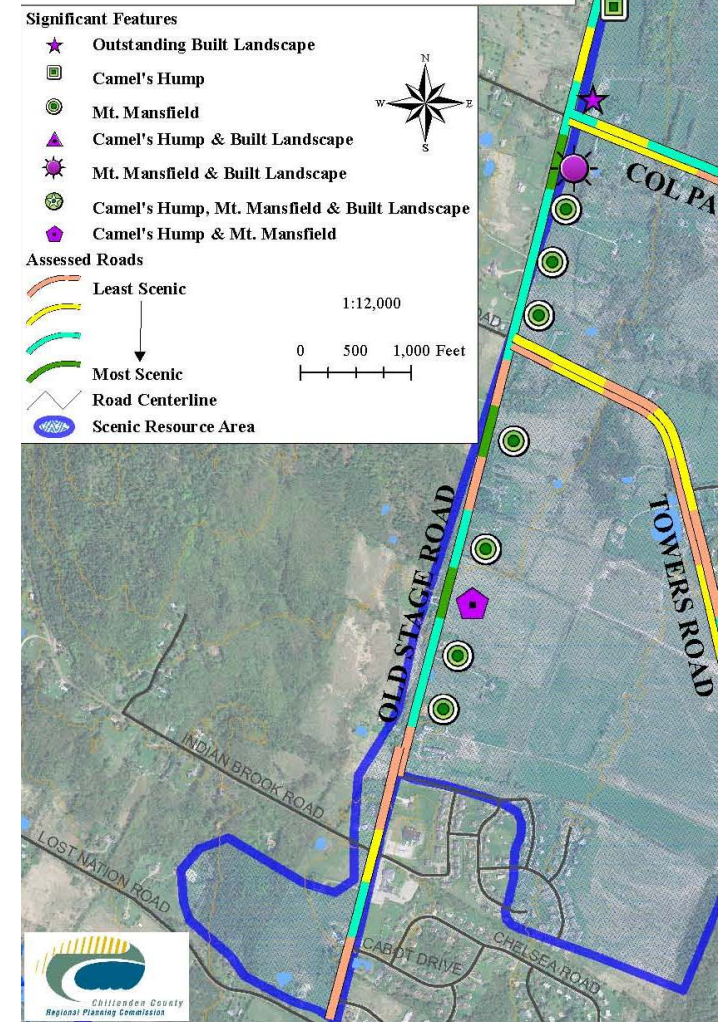


*This driveway leads to a home tucked in the woods. Placement of houses outside the viewshed maintains the rural character.*



*Views to the Mountains*

## Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex





## PETTINGILL ROAD (PT-01)

Pettingill Road is in the heart of the Browns River Valley, heading west through farm fields and floodplains from Browns River Road and then turning north to the Westford line. A small, single-lane bridge crosses the river that winds through the valley, which is bounded by foothills at either end of the road. No mountain views are found, but foothills and traditional farmlands of good depth and extent of view are visible from most locations.

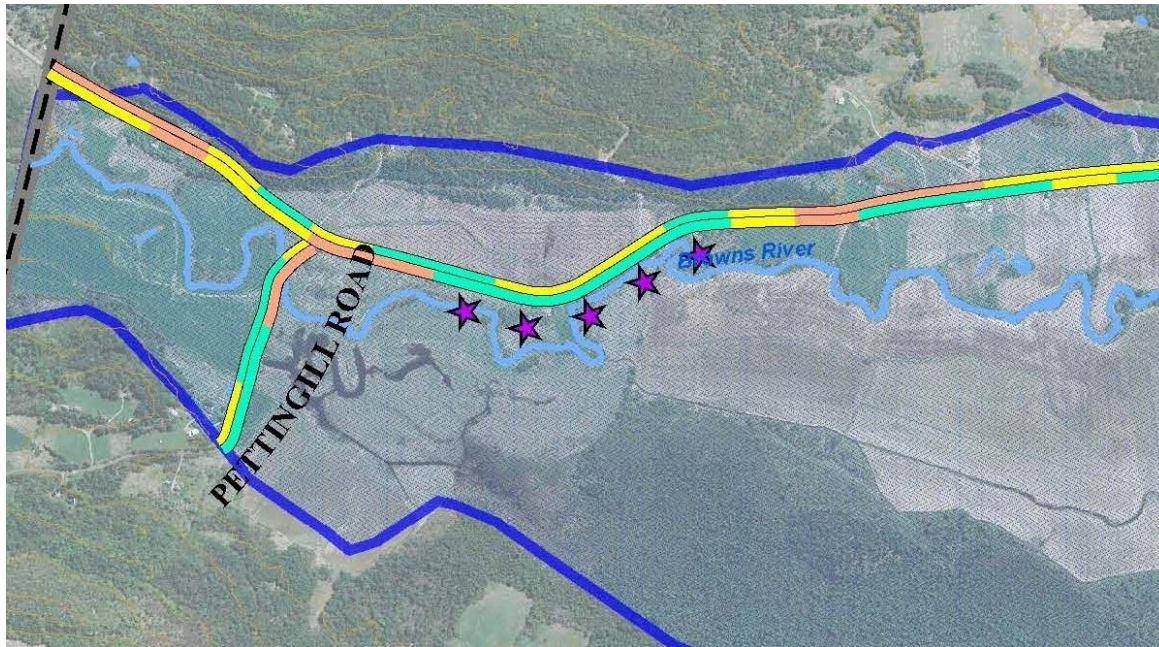
While Pettingill Road does not have the sweeping views, it does have strong examples of traditional working landscape. Conservation developments might be considered as they can provide a balance between allowing development and maintaining agricultural lands. When a conservation development is being proposed adjacent to existing development, integration and coordination is important. Contiguous open space is beneficial for wildlife habitat and agricultural use, so to the greatest extent feasible any planned open space should abut adjoining open space (if any exists). A determination will need to be made as to whether the existing pattern of development is desirable and should be continued onto the adjoining property or whether an alternative pattern would better achieve the town's land use objectives.



*Older trees and brush provide cover for many animals. By not carving up open tracks of land, wildlife habitat can also be preserved.*







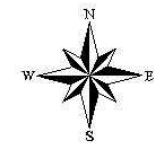
# **Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex**

## **Significant Features**

- ★ Outstanding Built Landscape
- Camel's Hump
- Mt. Mansfield
- ▲ Camel's Hump & Built Landscape
- ✱ Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- Camel's Hump, Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ✳ Camel's Hump & Mt. Mansfield

## **Assessed Roads**

- Least Scenic
- Moderate
- Most Scenic
- Road Centerline
- Scenic Resource Area



1:12,000

0 500 1,000 Feet





## RIVER ROAD (RV-02 TO RV-03)

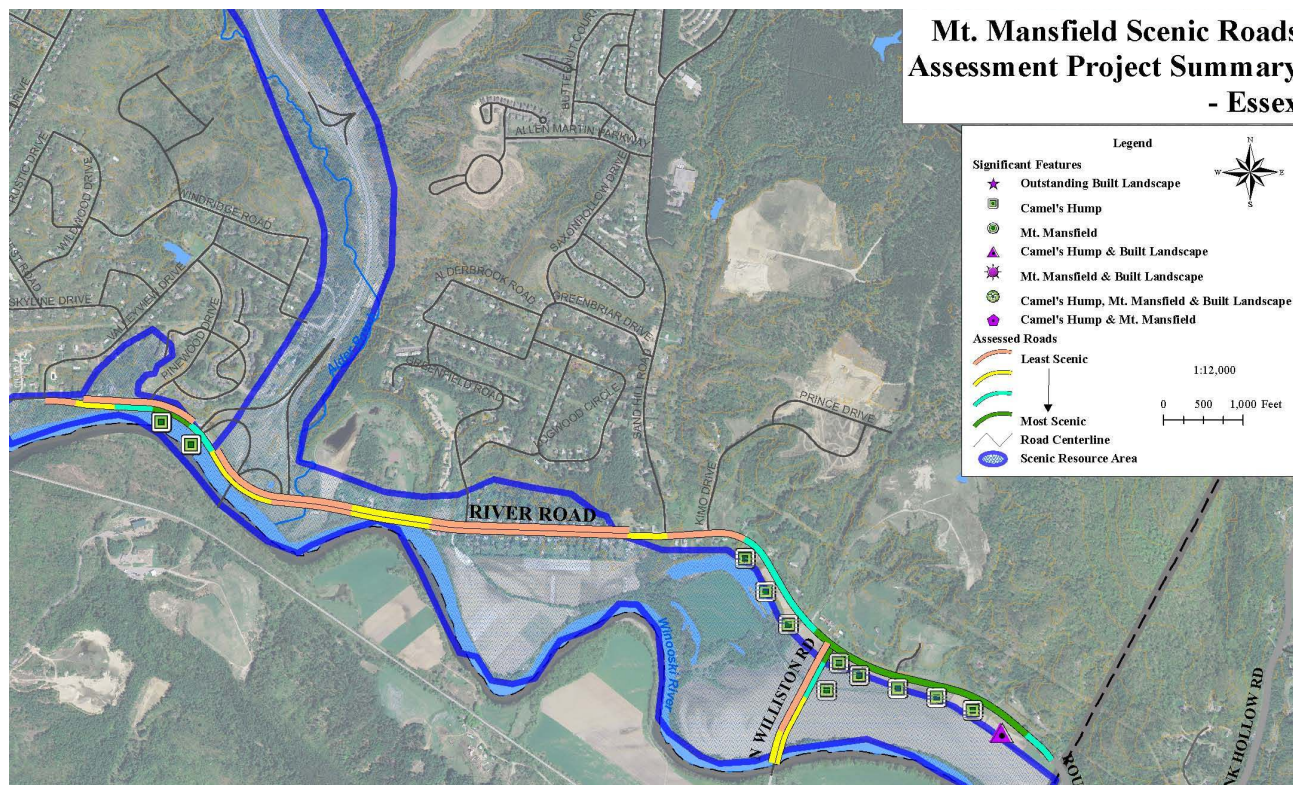
River Road, state Route 117, runs east from Essex Junction along the north side of the Winooski River on the town's southern boundary. Views are generally obscured by high riparian vegetation. The middle of the three segments is predominantly residential, with large yards and landscaping obscuring most views of the Green Mountains. The easternmost of the three segments, at North Williston Road, opens up to farm fields and river valley affording southeastern views of the Green Mountains including Camel's Hump.

Planning tools to consider on this road include scenic overlays that preserve views, conservation development, and access management. Ensuring updated riparian corridor and flood hazard protection are in place should also be considered given the presence of the Winooski River.





# **Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex**





## ROUTE 15 (RT-01)

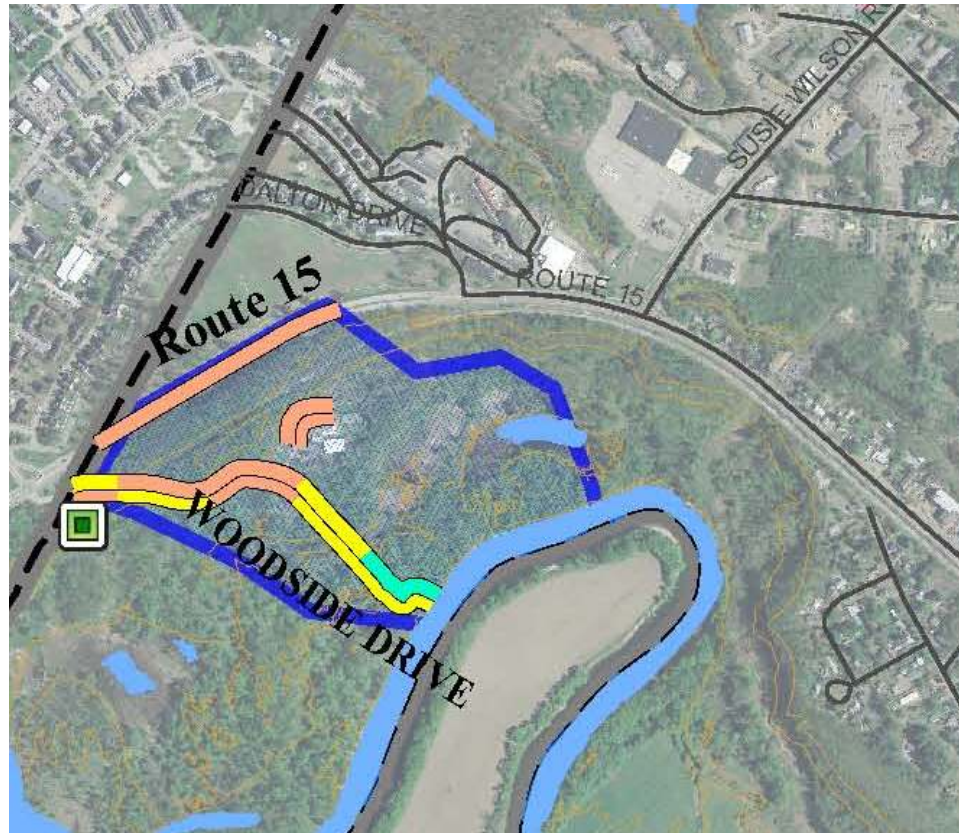
This single segment is at the border with Colchester. Fort Ethan Allen is on the north side of the road and the land falls away on the south in steep slopes in the Winooski Valley Park District. Any views across the Winooski Valley are completely obscured by dense relatively young vegetation.

Maintaining vegetative screens should be considered as new development occurs along this segment. The maintenance of roadside vegetation itself can create a scenic resource, particularly as the trees mature and create a frame along and above the road. In this setting, development should be set back with clearing limited to the minimum required for access.



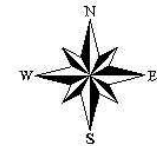


# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex



## Significant Features

- ★ Outstanding Built Landscape
- Camel's Hump
- Mt. Mansfield
- ▲ Camel's Hump & Built Landscape
- ⊛ Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⊗ Camel's Hump, Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⬢ Camel's Hump & Mt. Mansfield

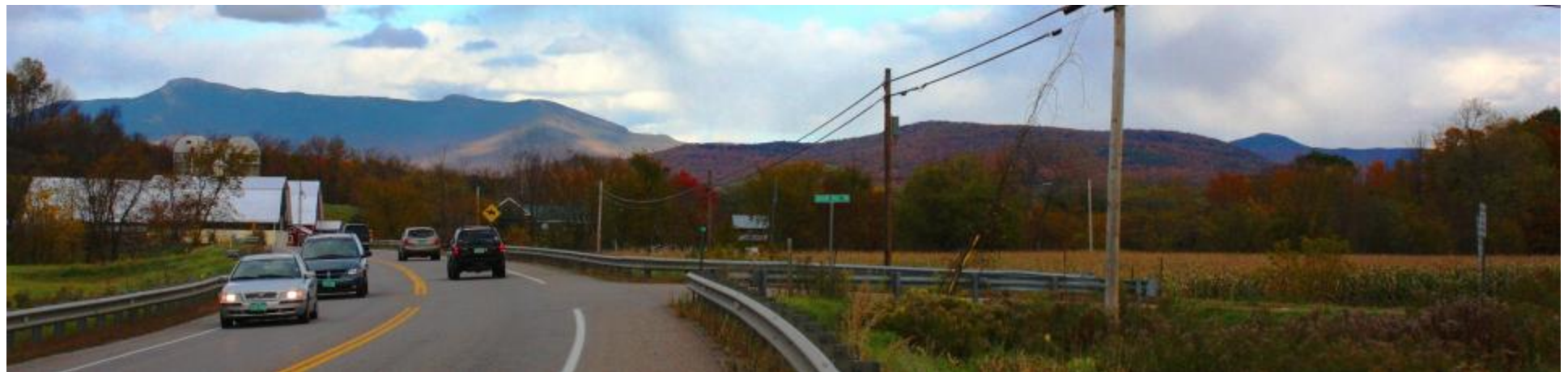


## Assessed Roads

- Least Scenic
- Moderately Scenic
- Most Scenic
- Road Centerline
- Scenic Resource Area

1:12,000

0 500 1,000 Feet





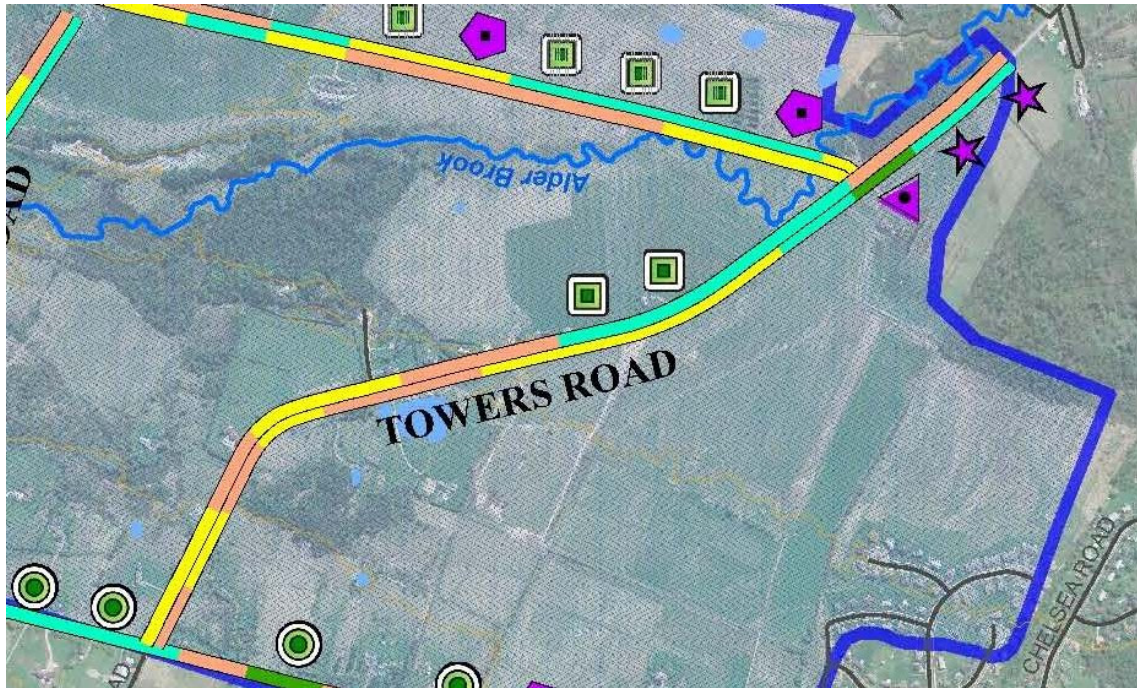
## TOWERS ROAD (TW-01 TO TW-02)

Towers Road runs from Old Stage Road to Essex Center. The two segments assessed are on the western end of the road from Chapin Road west to Old Stage Road. Open fields offer expansive views, including traditional agricultural lands backed by wooded foothills. At the east end of the road, a newer housing development of larger homes on 1/4- to 1-acre lots can be seen along the northeastern slopes. Though there are expanses of Green Mountains visible to the east, Mount Mansfield cannot be seen at all and Camel's Hump may only be glimpsed at two points along the road.

Similar planning techniques should be considered to maintain the rural landscape and any key views. Ensuring landscaping and buildings distinguish between the more developed Essex Center and rural lands will be key to maintaining the change from center to rural land uses.







# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex

## Significant Features

- ★ Outstanding Built Landscape
- Camel's Hump
- Mt. Mansfield
- ▲ Camel's Hump & Built Landscape
- ✱ Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- Camel's Hump, Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- Camel's Hump & Mt. Mansfield

## Assessed Roads

- Least Scenic
- Most Scenic
- Road Centerline
- Scenic Resource Area

1:12,000

0 500 1,000 Feet





## UPPER MAIN STREET (UP-01)

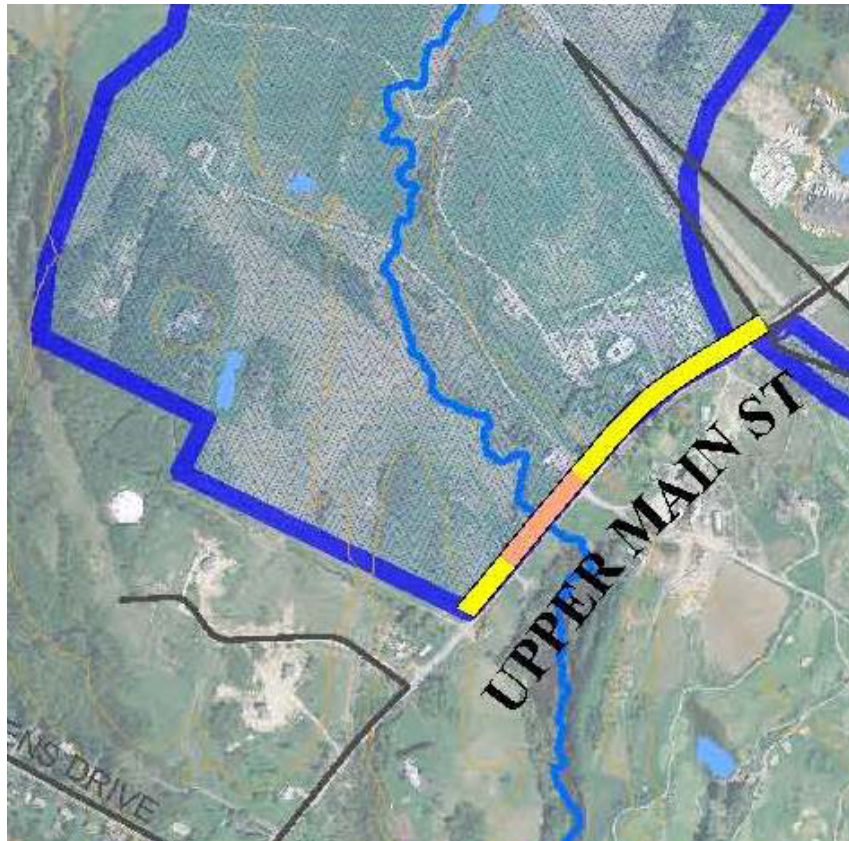
This single segment is just south of the entrance ramps to I-289 at Lang Farm. On one side of the road is Lang Farm Nursery and on the other, the Essex Family Fun Center. Even though this segment is bounded by a highway overpass and shopping center to the north and the entrance to Essex Junction to the south, the area offers views of traditional built and agricultural lands to the east, including the farmhouse, silo and outbuildings of Lang Farm.

Integrating new development in a “farmstead cluster” that mimics a rural pattern and utilizes existing historic buildings should be considered if a project is proposed in this area.



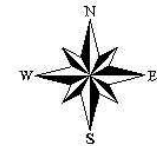


# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex



## Significant Features

- ★ Outstanding Built Landscape
- ◻ Camel's Hump
- ⊙ Mt. Mansfield
- ▲ Camel's Hump & Built Landscape
- ⊙ Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⊙ Camel's Hump, Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⬢ Camel's Hump & Mt. Mansfield



## Assessed Roads

- Least Scenic
- Most Scenic
- Road Centerline
- Scenic Resource Area

1:12,000

0 500 1,000 Feet





## WEED ROAD (WD-01 TO WD-02)

Weed Road is the northern leg of a triangle with Jericho Road (Route 15) to the south and Browns River Road (Route 128) to the west. As with both of these other roads, the area around Weed Road was historically farm country and is still home to several small farms. However, the road is now primarily bordered by large new homes on large lots. The best extent and depth of view is found at the eastern end of the road where it intersects with Jericho Road just west of Whitcomb Farm.

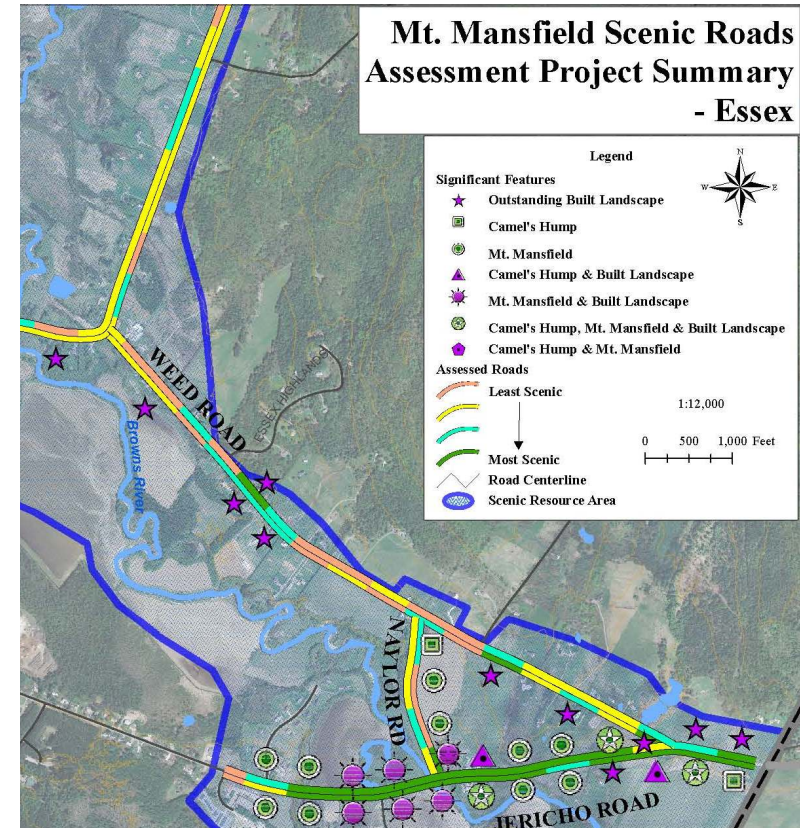
Landscaping features and architectural choices will be important to maintaining rural character as new development occurs on Weed Road.



*Weed road has striking contrasts between scenic old barns, sugar shacks, mountain views and new houses built in a strip along the road, breaking up the land and the scenic landscape.*









## NORTH WILLISTON ROAD (WL-01)

North Williston Road runs south from River Road (Route 117) into Williston across the Winooski River valley. At the intersection with River Road, Camel's Hump can be seen across cornfields within the River's floodplain. Large traditional farms bookmark the segment.

Planning tools to consider on this road include scenic overlays that preserve views, conservation development, and access management. Ensuring updated riparian corridor and flood hazard protection are in place should also be considered given the presence of the Winooski River.



*Buildings tucked into the tree line can allow for development, promote the continued use of the agricultural fields, and maintain these spectacular views.*







# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex

## Significant Features

- ★ Outstanding Built Landscape
- Camel's Hump
- Mt. Mansfield
- ▲ Camel's Hump & Built Landscape
- ✱ Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⊗ Camel's Hump, Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⬠ Camel's Hump & Mt. Mansfield

## Assessed Roads

- Least Scenic
- Most Scenic
- Road Centerline
- Scenic Resource Area



1:12,000

0 500 1,000 Feet





## WOODSIDE ROAD (WO-01)

Woodside Road runs down the hill toward the Winooski River from Route 15 at Fort Ethan Allen and ends at the Woodside Juvenile Detention Center. Wetlands and woodlands border the road on either side and limit the extent and depth of views.

Like Weed Road, the town should consider the landscaping features necessary to maintaining rural character as new development occurs on Woodside Road.

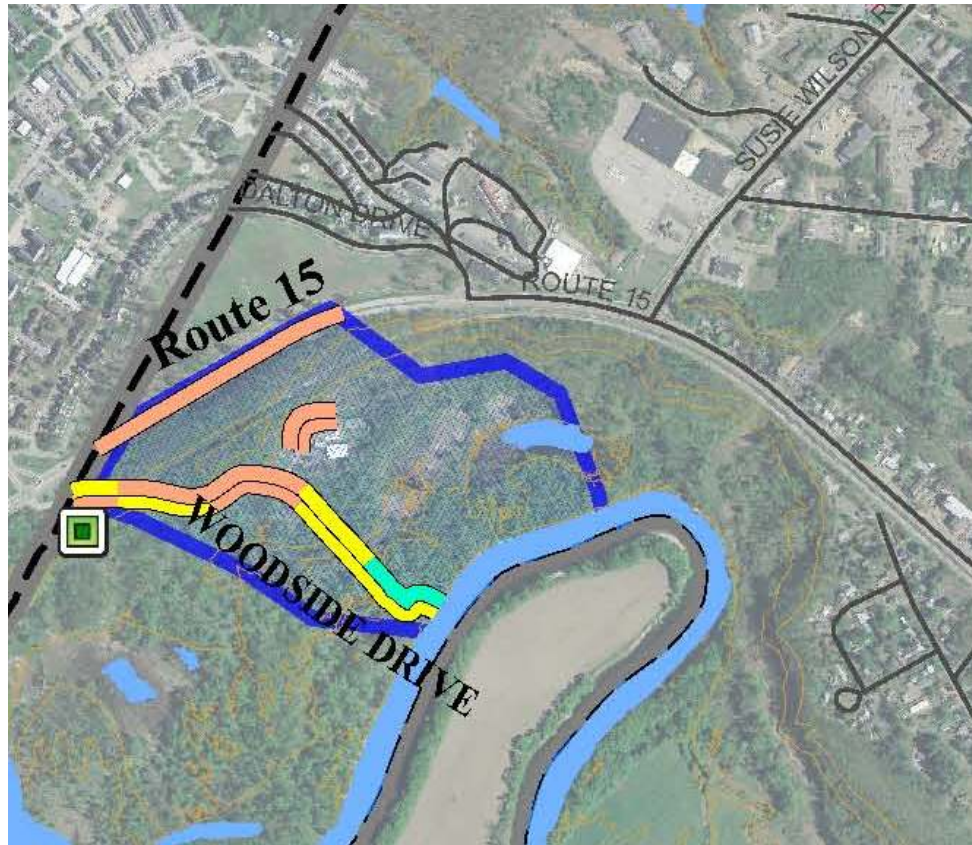


*Assets such as this hiking trail off of Woodside Road are important parts of the landscape.*





# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex

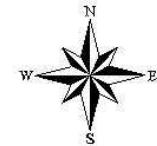


## Significant Features

- ★ Outstanding Built Landscape
- ◻ Camel's Hump
- ⊙ Mt. Mansfield
- ▲ Camel's Hump & Built Landscape
- ⊙ Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⊙ Camel's Hump, Mt. Mansfield & Built Landscape
- ⬢ Camel's Hump & Mt. Mansfield

## Assessed Roads

- Least Scenic
- Most Scenic
- Road Centerline
- Scenic Resource Area



1:12,000

0 500 1,000 Feet

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The Town of Essex offers spectacular views in many parts of the town despite being the second most populous municipal entity in the state and host to its largest employer. However, those views have already been impacted by development, and this assessment reflects a continual fraying of the town's scenic roadsides. The primary causes of that degradation are residential construction and the loss of open agricultural lands to development or obstruction of views by the re-growth of woody vegetation.

Two types of residential development have impacted the iconic views of the town. Clusters of newer development, such as is bounded by Chapin Road, Tower Road and Bixby Hill Road, may seem a more dramatic incursion than large, single home parcels along country roads, but both are detrimental to protecting scenic resources.

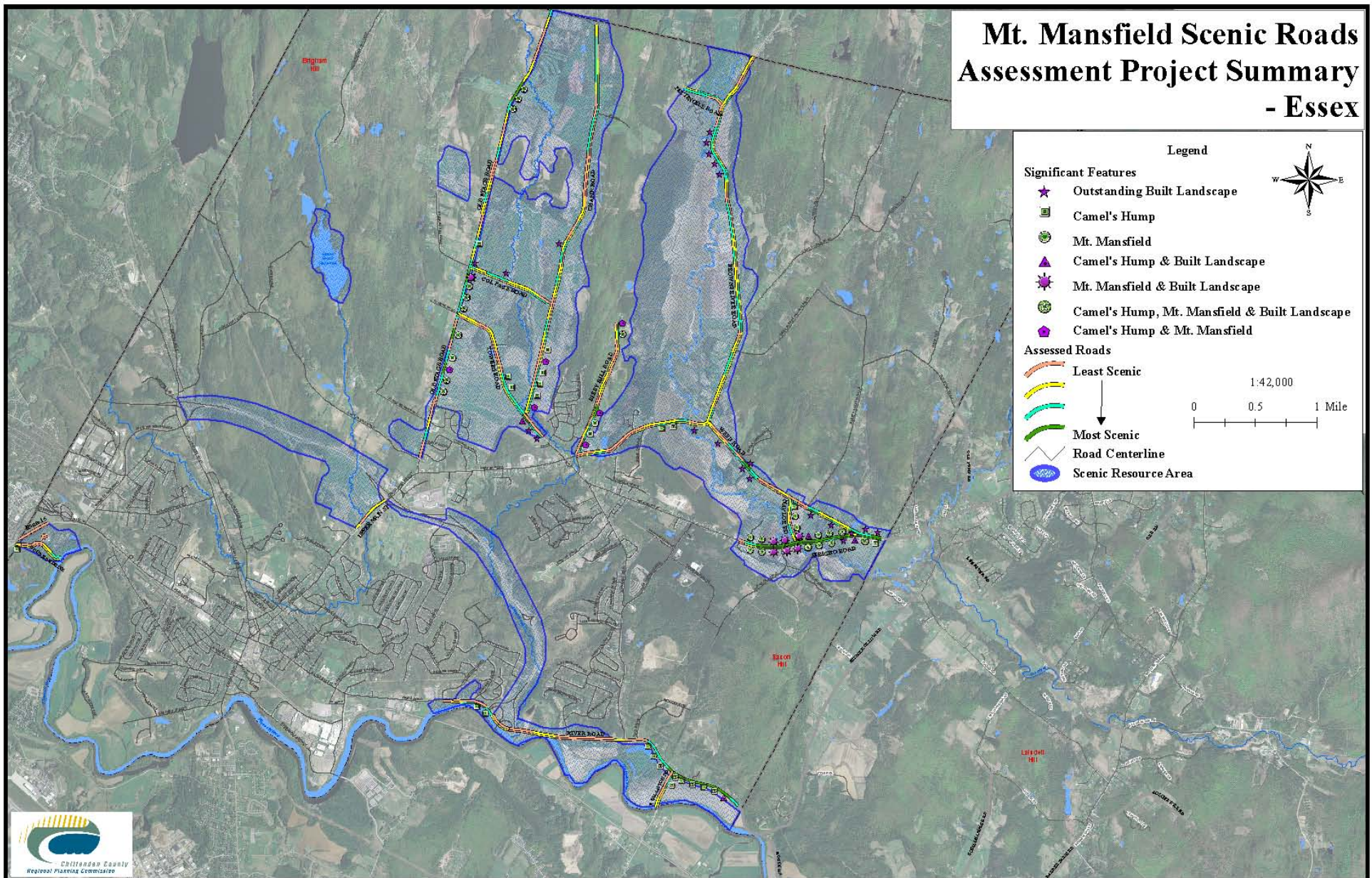
First, and most obviously, large, newly-constructed homes on large lots obliterate scenic lands at that site. Second, the homes and outbuildings such as large garages and sheds may be sited to block views or may be built high enough to do so. Third, the spread of such homes along a rural roadside breaks up large tracts of agricultural lands, rendering farming all but impossible. As a result, the land lies fallow and is reclaimed as young forest that obstructs views from the roadways. This last effect was visible at many of the assessed locations.

Vermont was nearly all forested before European colonization, and the amount of forest cover has varied over the centuries depending on the agricultural practices of a given era. When sheep farming predominated in the early 1800s, the state was 75 percent deforested. As dairy operations rose in prominence, the vast tracts of feed crops required a significant portion of lowlands, keeping those lands open. This is the traditional landscape associated with Vermont, farm fields opening to foothills and Green Mountains. But as those dairy farms vanish, the farms replacing them have much smaller footprints requiring much less open land.

These trends show no signs of abating, and all are converging to rob Essex and towns like it of the sweeping views long associated with Vermont. As a result, there are three main categories of scenic roadscapes assessed that face the greatest threat: (1) roads at the margin of existing suburban development like Old Stage Road, and Bixby Hill Road; (2) highway corridors like Jericho Road where new commercial and residential construction may obscure views; and (3) roads through farm valleys like Browns River Road and River Road where a linear pattern of single-family homes on large lots may disrupt historically open lands not just by the buildings on the site, but by aiding in the parcelization of surrounding farm land, and eventually to the devolution to brush and forest growth.



# **Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Essex**



## JERICHO ROADS

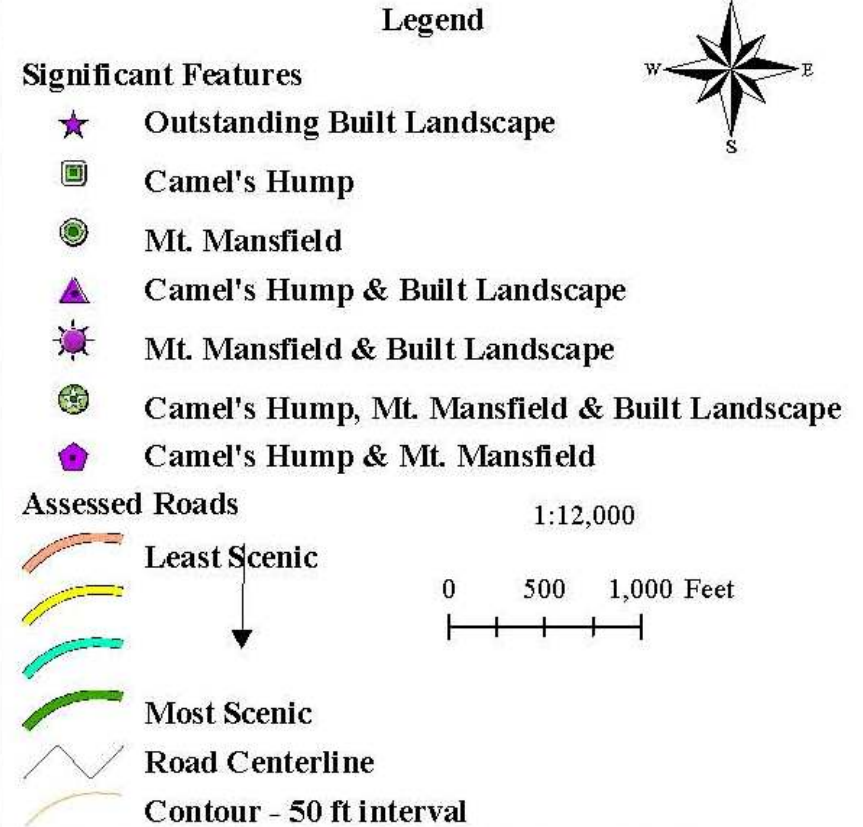
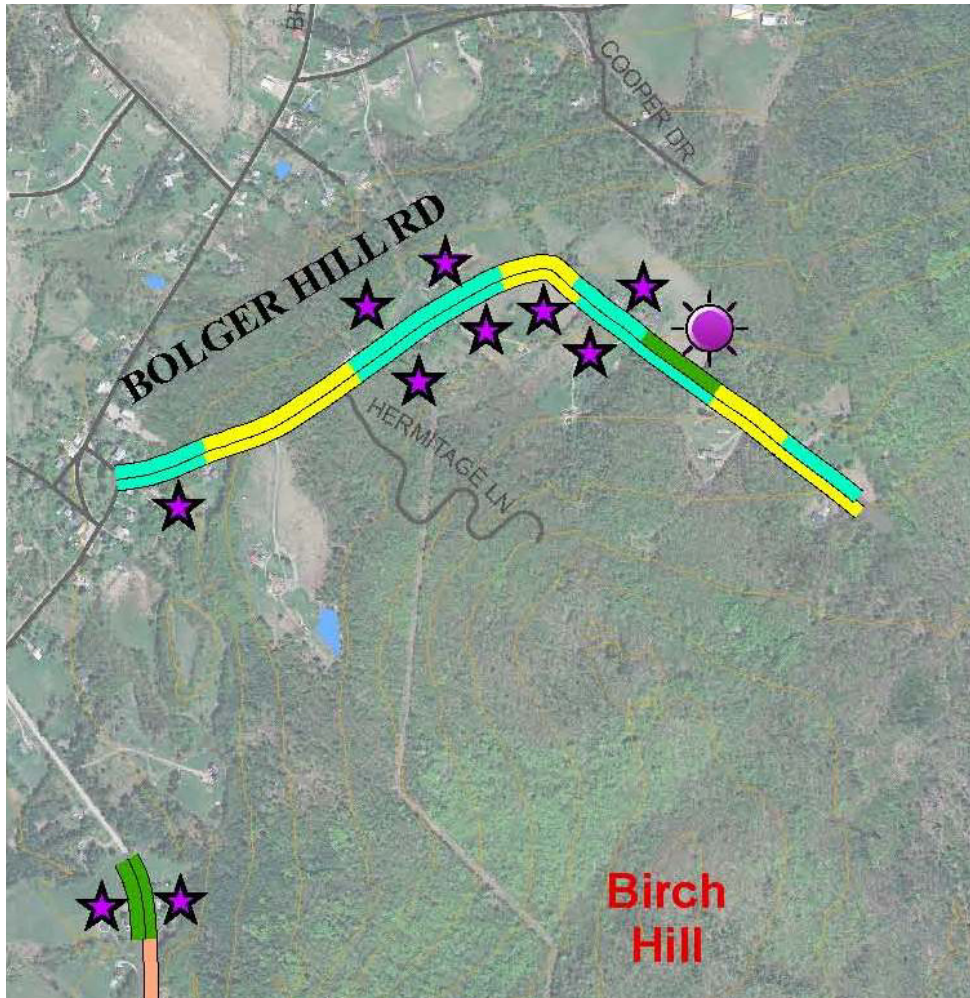
Only 13 of Jericho's 34 road segments were assessed in 2009, on seven roads.

### BOLGER HILL ROAD

Bolger Hill Road is a dead end road that runs uphill east from Jericho Center. Largely forested at the incline rising out of the Jericho Center Village, Bolger Hill Road opens to large open lawns with large homes in the middle of the segment. There are very limited views of Mount Mansfield in that area and no views of Camel's Hump.



# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Jericho



## BROWNS TRACE (BT-02)

There are three segments mapped for Browns Trace and only two were assessed in 2009. The southernmost segment from the Richmond border to the Jericho Highway Department was not assessed. From that point north to just shy of Barber Farm Road, the road opens from forested hills with homes screened from the road to open fields with larger modern homes on large lots and a traditional farm at Nashville Road. From that point north, larger homes on larger lots once again predominates with some traditional farm, field and forest interspersed. Along the way there are views of the Adirondacks to the west, but no views of the Green Mountains as the foothills rise just east of the road. At the most northern two assessment points, a large traditional farm, currently owned by the Underhill-Jericho Fire Department, offers 360-degree views of a classic agricultural landscape.

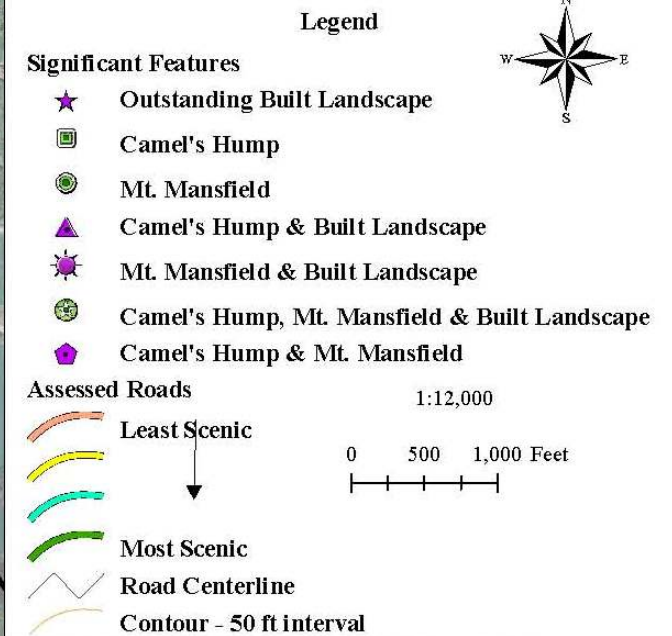
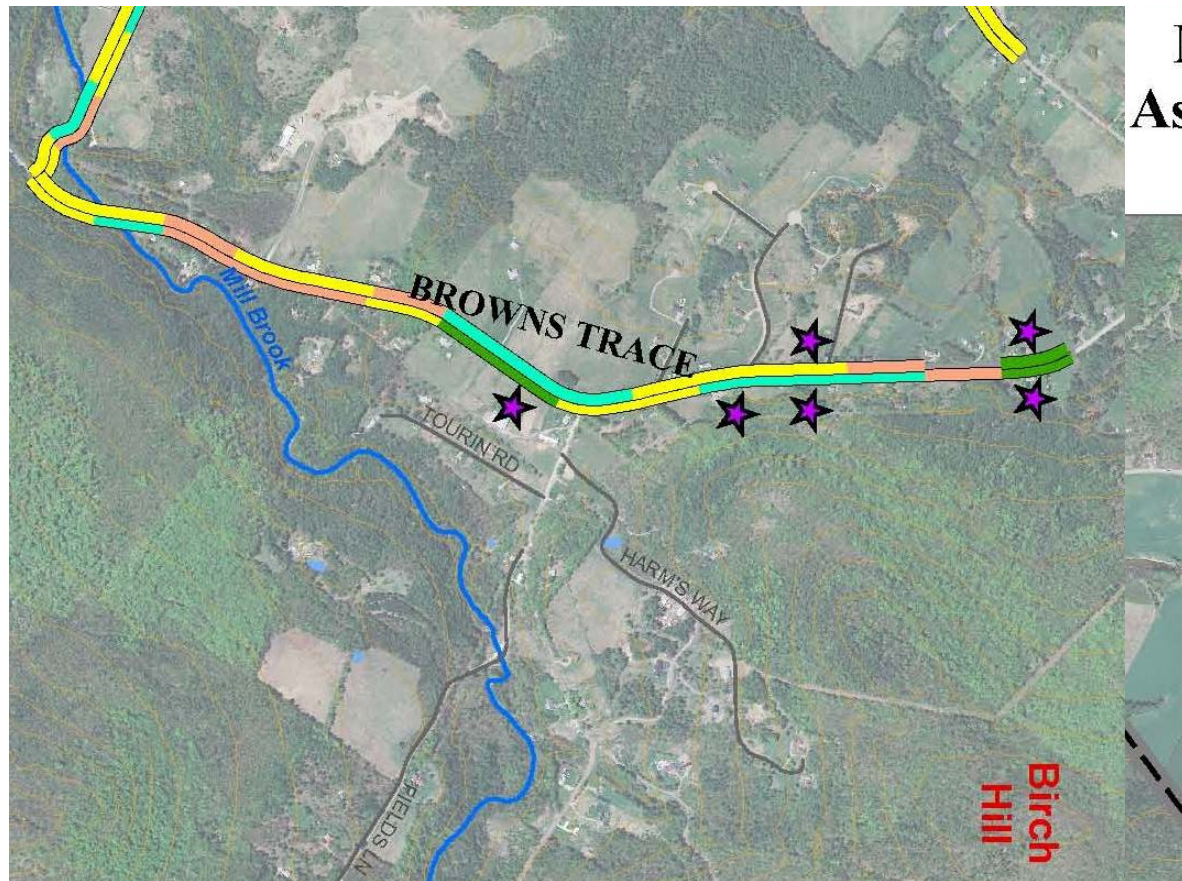
The scenic resources on this road are less about views of dramatic mountain peaks and more about a traditional working landscape. Open meadows, farm fields, and barns are the key scenic resources in this area. When siting homes on these lots, locating building envelopes along the tree lines or clustering buildings should be considered to maintain these resources. Conservation subdivisions might also be something to consider as they can provide a balance between allowing development and maintaining agricultural lands. If the Town elects to utilize conservation subdivision, it is important that development of adjoining properties is coordinated and integrated to ensure protection of the overall landscape pattern. Contiguous open space is beneficial for wildlife habitat and agricultural use, so to the greatest extent feasible any planned open space should abut adjoining open space (if any exists). A determination will need to be made as to whether the existing pattern of development is desirable and should be continued onto the adjoining property or whether an alternative pattern would better achieve the town's land use objectives.



*Notice how the homes at the right of the picture, tucked at the base of the hill, don't disrupt the scenic view of the hills and fields.*



# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Jericho





## FITZSIMONDS ROAD (FZ-01 TO FZ-02)

Fitzsimonds Road runs west from Browns Trace and turns north toward Barber Farm Road. Mill Brook runs across the road just west of Browns Trace, where the road is narrow and winding. The road opens up to where it turns north at the Mobb's farm trail access area, and becomes predominantly residential, with single-family homes on large lots. At the northern end of the road the landscape returns to a traditional agricultural landscape. There are no mountain views along this gravel road nestled in the foothills with the exception of glimpses of the Adirondacks.

The town should work with those wishing to develop this area and ensure that the rural character of the area remain intact. Vegetation along the roadway, open meadows and dirt roads all contribute to this character and should be maintained as the land uses in the area evolve.



*Open farmland leads to views of the mountains. Conservation subdivisions or careful placement of building lots should be considered if this farm is developed. This way, farmland remains available and views can be preserved.*

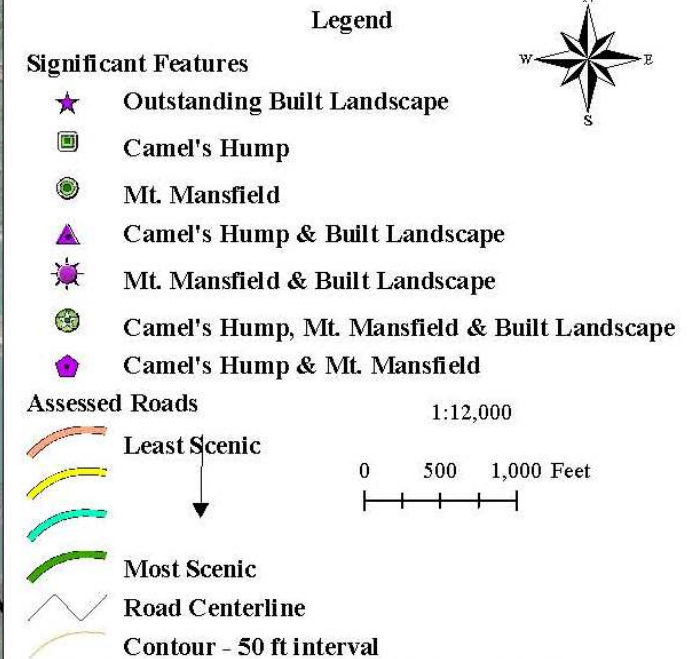
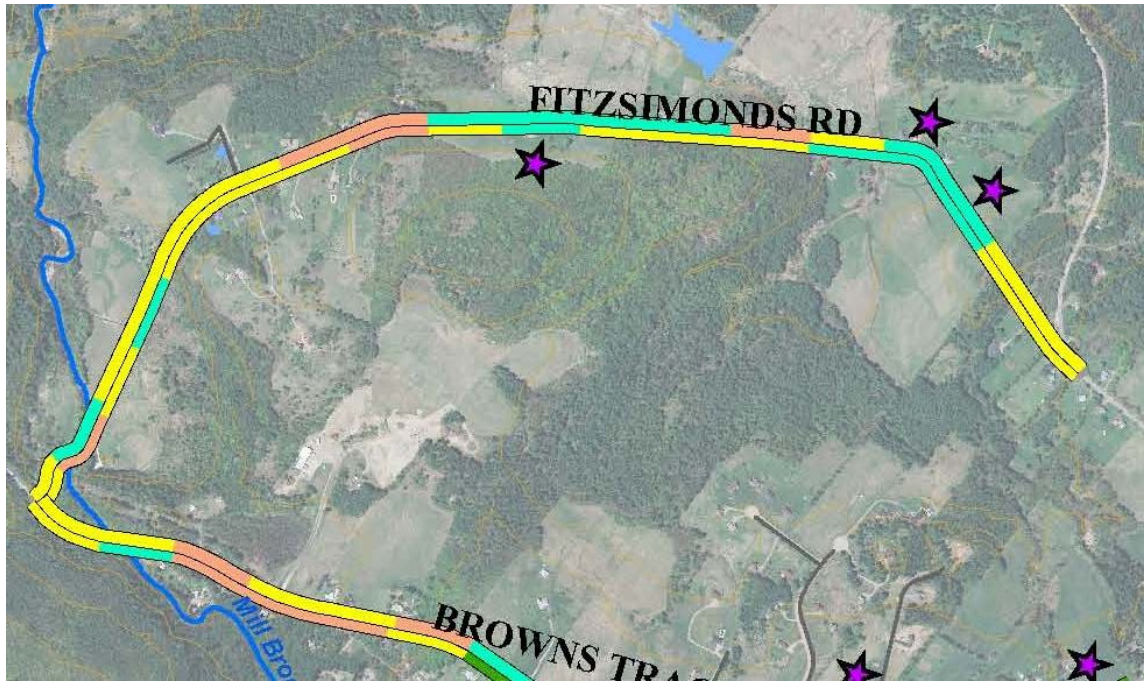


*Preserving the rural character of this area is important. Winding, narrow roads that pass hay bales, barns and fences, are iconic images of Vermont.*





# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Jericho





## NASHVILLE ROAD (NV-03 TO NV-04)

Two of the four Nashville Road segments remain to be assessed. Nashville Road runs east toward the border with Bolton, opening up near the intersection with Leary Road into a broad valley with large fields and farms and spectacular views of the Green Mountains. Open fields are found along the far east portion after the road cross a large wetland area and Mill Brook. Camel's Hump can be seen but there are no views of Mount Mansfield. Traveling across the valley to the east, a few single-family homes are interspersed with large classic farms. As the road approaches the Bolton line, it narrows and enters foothills.

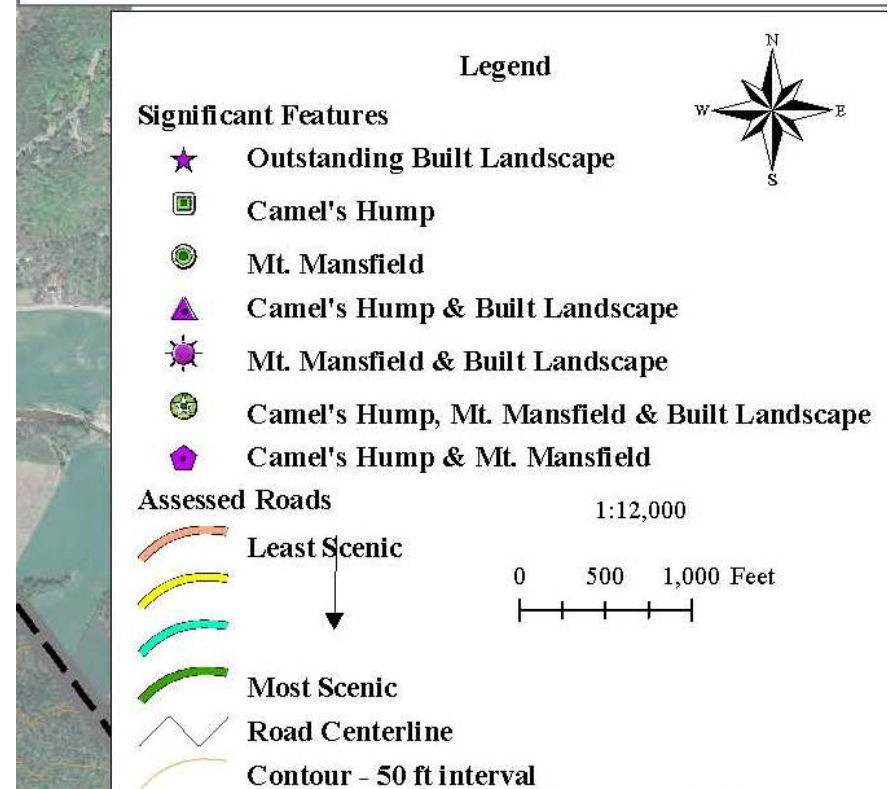
The scenic resources on this road are more a combination of a traditional agricultural landscape and open views to the mountains. Open meadows, farm fields, and barns are the key scenic resources in this area as well as select Camel's Hump vistas. When siting homes on these lots, locating building envelopes along the tree lines or clustering buildings should be considered to maintain these resources. In this type of rural setting, new buildings that are designed in vernacular New England styles will fit more harmoniously into the landscape than buildings that are designed in post-WWII and modern styles. Additionally, finding alternatives uses for agricultural buildings can provide opportunities for development while preserving the rural heritage and scenic value these buildings are contributing to.







# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Jericho



## SCHILLHAMMER ROAD (SC-01 TO SC-02)

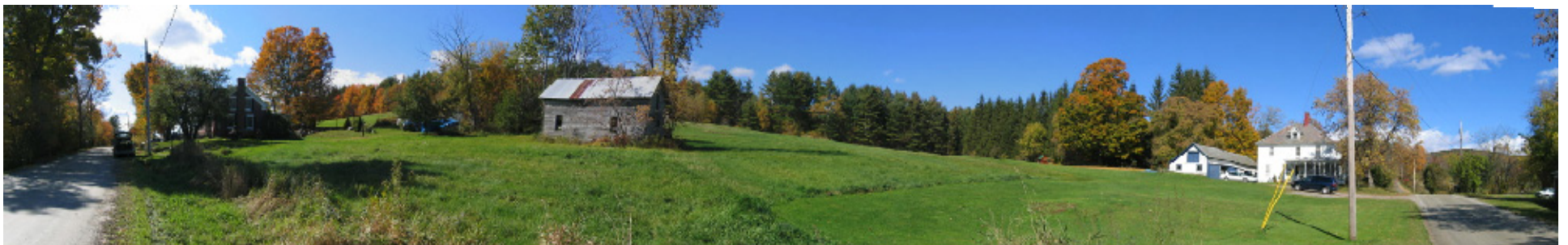
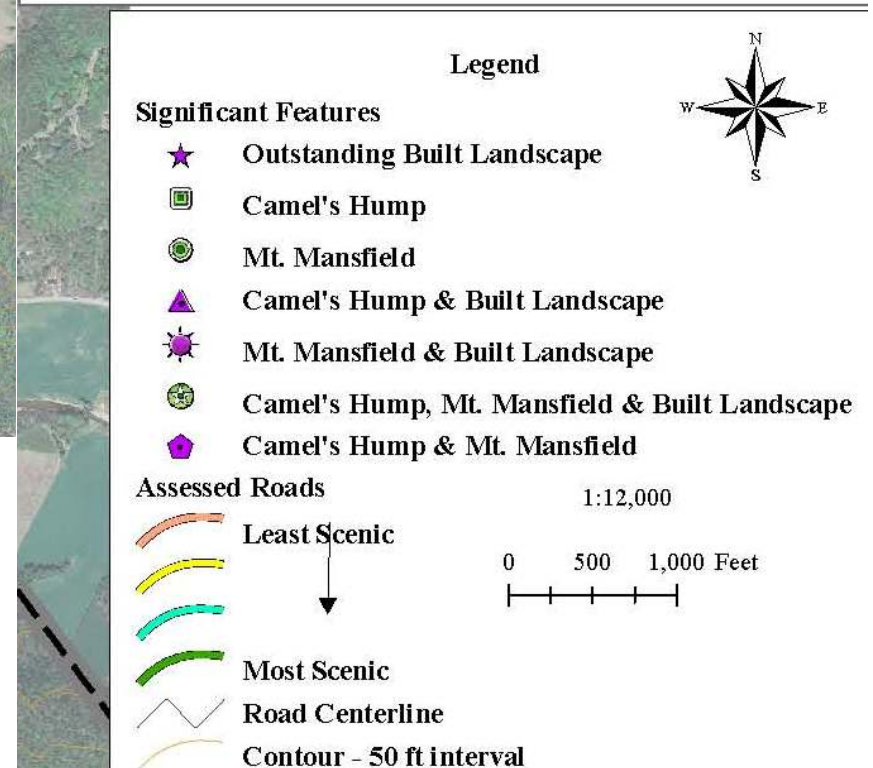
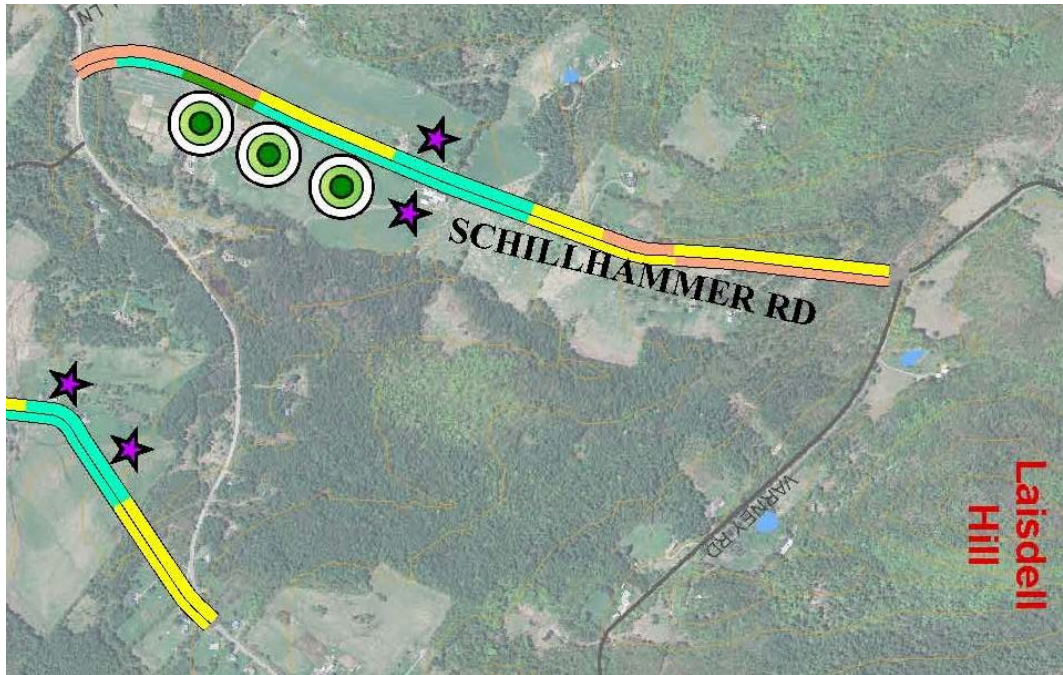
Schillhammer Road runs north through a lovely farm valley. At its southern end, the intersection with Barber Farm Road, Mount Mansfield can be seen over Arcana Farm. Open fields, working farms and scattered woods are found north along this road, with dense vegetation often closing in along roadsides and obscuring views. The northern segment of the road ending at Varney Road is entirely wooded with no views and no built features except power lines.

Like Browns Trace, the scenic resources on this road are less about views of dramatic mountain peaks and more about a traditional working landscape. Open meadows, farm fields, and barns are the key scenic resources in this area. When siting homes on these lots, locating building envelopes along the tree lines or clustering buildings should be considered to maintain these resources. Conservation subdivisions might also be something to consider as they can provide a balance between allowing development and maintaining agricultural lands. The town should ensure that if they decide to utilize conservation development, if adjoining properties are development, integration and coordination is important. Maintaining wooded tree lines as development occurs should also be considered to maintain the character of this area.





# Mt. Mansfield Scenic Roads Assessment Project Summary - Jericho



## SKUNK HOLLOW ROAD (SK-01 TO SK-03)

Skunk Hollow Road was assessed from River Road (Route 117) to the intersection with Plains Road. Skunk Hollow runs north from the Winooski River valley just east of the Essex town line. It rises through a narrow forested hollow, where traditional small homes are scattered throughout. One new residential development on the west side of the road is shielded by vegetation. As the road levels out, it opens up to farms, fields and newer homes on large lots. This pattern persists from Tyler Lane to Plains Road. The scattered residential development, which increases in density from south to north, detracts from but does not obscure views to the east of the Green Mountains including Mount Mansfield and Camel's Hump.

Maintaining the remaining views to Mount Mansfield and Camel's Hump should be considered a priority on this road.



*Positioning homes below the tree line and using building materials that blend with the surroundings are two ways to preserve the scenic viewshed.*