

TOWN OF NORTON

All-Hazards Mitigation Plan



Town of Norton
Box 148
Norton, VT 05907-0148
(802) 822-9935

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This Plan is not eligible for FEMA approval unless Norton becomes a member of the National Flood Insurance Program.

Prerequisites
Certificate of Local Adoption
Town of Norton

A Resolution Adopting the All-Hazards Mitigation Plan

WHEREAS, the Town of Norton has worked with the Northeastern Vermont Development Association to identify hazards, analyze past and potential future losses due to natural and human-caused disasters, and identify strategies for mitigating future losses; and

WHEREAS, the Norton All-Hazards Mitigation Plan contains recommendations, potential actions and future projects to mitigate damage from disasters in the Town of Norton; and

WHEREAS, a meeting was held by the Norton Selectboard to formally approve and adopt the Norton All-Hazards Mitigation Plan as an annex to the Northeastern Vermont Development Association's (NVDA) All-Hazards Mitigation Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Norton Selectboard adopts The Norton All-Hazards Mitigation Plan Annex as well as the associated NVDA All-Hazards Mitigation Plan.

Date

Selectboard Chair

Selectboard Member

Selectboard Member

Selectboard Member

Selectboard Member

Attested to by Town Clerk

Section One - Planning Process

1.1 Introduction and Purpose

This Annex, when used with the appropriate sections of the basic NVDA All-Hazards Plan, is an All-Hazards Mitigation Plan for the Town of Norton. The purpose of this plan is to assist the Town of Norton to identify all hazards facing the community and identify strategies to begin reducing risks from identified hazards. A Pre-Disaster Mitigation Planning Grant to the Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) assisted the Town of Norton in preparing this plan.

The impact of expected, but unpredictable natural and human-caused events can be reduced through community planning. The goal of this plan is to provide all-hazards local mitigation strategies that make the communities in northeastern Vermont more disaster resistant.

Hazard Mitigation is any sustained action that reduces or eliminates long-term risk to people and property from natural and human-caused hazards and their effects. Based on the results of previous efforts, FEMA and state agencies have come to recognize that it is less expensive to prevent disasters than to get caught in a repetitive repair cycle after disaster have struck. This plan recognizes that communities have opportunities to identify mitigation strategies and measures during all of the other phases of Emergency Management – Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. Hazards cannot be eliminated, but it is possible to determine what they are, where they might be most severe and identify local actions that can be taken to reduce the severity of the hazards.

Hazard mitigation strategies and measures alter the hazard by eliminating or reducing the frequency of occurrence, avert the hazard by redirecting the impact by means of a structure or land treatment, adapt the hazard by modifying structures or standards or avoid the hazard by stopping or limiting development and could include projects such as:

- Flood proofing structures
- Tying down propane/fuel tanks in flood prone areas
- Elevating structures
- Identifying high accident locations
- Monitor and protect drinking water supplies
- Enlarge or upgrade culverts and road standards
- Proactive local planning
- Ensuring that critical facilities are safely located
- Providing public information

1.2 About Norton¹

Population: 219
Median Housing Value: \$64,957
Essex County
Chartered: October 26, 1779 (Vermont Charter)
Area: 24,809 Acres / 38.76 Square Miles
Coordinates (Geographic Center): 71°48'W 45°01'N
Altitude ASL: 1,252 feet
Population Density (persons per square mile): 5.5
Tax Rate: \$2.057 ('03)
Equalized Value: \$19,392,807 ('03)

1.3 Community Background and History

The Town of Norton is located on the Canadian Border (Quebec) in northwestern Essex County and has total land area of 24,832 acres; 85% of which is now part of a large conservation program through the State of Vermont (Wildlife Management Areas). It is bordered on the east by Averill, on the north by Quebec, on the west by Holland, and on the south by Warner's Grant, Warren Gore & Avery's Gore. It is located approximately 15 miles north of Island Pond, and eight miles south of Coaticook, PQ. The northern tip of Norton Pond is in Norton.

The land in Norton is mostly hilly, forested and uninhabited. Farms and open areas border Route 114 and the Coaticook River where the resident population lives. The 2003 population was approximately 219. Most of the residents work and shop in the neighboring communities of Canaan, Colebrook and Island Pond. Forestry, agriculture, and service industries are the primary economic activities.

The Customs entry into Canada is located at the most northern section of Norton, where the school, store, and two gas stations are located. Norton does not have a fire department. Beecher Falls is north of Norton and Island Pond is south. Norton uses either Colebrook or Newport Hospital

Almost 80% of the land in Norton is forested, primarily hardwood with an occasional stand of softwood. The "paper companies" own most of the forested land not under control of the Vermont Department of Fish & Game (Wildlife Management Areas [10,292 acres approx]). Harvesting practices have been conducted in such a way as to allow multiple use of the forest for activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, and snowmobiling. Continued use of Norton's woodlands for commercial forestry purposes is in the best interest of the town. Some of this forested land is suitable for low density housing and recreational camps.

The greatest concentration of dwelling units is along Route 114 in the vicinity of the Norton Country Store/Norton Post Office, and bordering State Route 114 east of the Village School. The other dwelling units are scattered along town roads near Route 114. There are many camps

¹ Excerpts from the expired Norton Town Plan 1994

located near Norton Pond and Averill Lake and as much as three miles in along the Gadette Road, used for both summer and winter recreational purposes. Local businesses are of the service industry type with the exception of a logging/general contracting business. Most of the service type businesses deal with importation of commercial goods through the Port of Norton either as Customhouse brokerage firms or as distribution and transfer warehousing facilities.

In 2004 there were six elementary age school children attending school at the Norton Village School. High school students attend school at Canaan Memorial High School beginning in the 7th grade. In the past decade, local school attendance has hovered around the twenty-pupil mark, with just a handful of high school students each year.

There are 15.6 miles of public road in Norton, with mileages as follows:

- 10.7 miles of state roads
- 4.9 miles of Norton town roads, of which 4.2 miles are Class III gravel roads which are maintained and in generally good condition. The town provides winter snow plowing, sanding, and maintenance in the summer months of town roads. Due to long term maintenance costs, the town is not interested in assuming control over additional public roads unless such roads have been constructed to Vermont State Standards.

As might be expected in a small rural community, there is no central or public water supply and/or sewage disposal system in the town. Water supply and sewage disposal is the responsibility of each homeowner. Springs and wells are the source of water in this town and possibly some lakeside camp owners drawing their water from the lake. Residents dispose of their sewage by use of septic tanks and leachfields. All newly installed systems should meet Vermont State Health Department standards for water supply and sewage disposal.

Norton used to have a volunteer fire department, but most residents work outside the town so daytime protection was limited. Norton now has a formal arrangement with the Beecher Falls Fire Company and the Brighton Fire and Rescue to render assistance if needed. There is a dry hydrant within one eighth of a mile of the border crossing and the school for emergency use.

Law enforcement is provided by the Vermont State Police, the Federal law enforcement agencies, i.e. The US Border Patrol, US Customs and US Immigration & Naturalization Service, and the Essex County Sheriff department. It is believed that current level of policing will be adequate into the foreseeable future.

Critical Facilities in Norton

Border Crossing	Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Dams	Great Averill Pond
Dams	Norton Pond
Electric Utility	Vermont Electric Coop (VEC)
Emergency Shelter/EOC	Norton Town Office
Emergency EOC	Norton Rest/Chez Pidgeon
Emergency Shelter/EOC	Norton School
Emergency EOC	Averill Store
Emergency Shelter	Brighton American Legion

Hazardous Materials	Norton Gas Station+N1426
Hazardous Materials	Norton Country Store
Hazardous Materials	Verizon Central Office (4819-06)
Municipal Office	Norton Town Office located at school
Railway	St Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad
Schools	Norton Village School
State Highway	VT Route 114
Underground Tank (UST)	Norton Country Store
Underground Tank (UST)	Norton Gas

Section Two - Risk Assessment

2.1 Identifying Hazards

Meeting Date: 8/24/04

Meeting Attendees: Mark Lienau

A Norton local official has identified several hazards that are addressed in this annex. These were identified through interviewing the Selectboard Co-Chair. This individual has a thorough working knowledge of the community through many years of living in the town and being familiar with local issues.

Table 2-A Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

Possible Hazard	Likelihood	Impact	Community Vulnerability	Most Vulnerable
Tornado	Low	Low	Low	Structures
Flood	Low	Low	Low	Infrastructure.
Flash Flood	Low	Low	Low	Infrastructure
Hazardous Materials	High	High	High	Roads, school
Radiological Incident	Low	Low	Low	Residents
Structure Fire	Low	Low	Low	Downtown, residences
Power Failure	Low	Low	Low	Residences, businesses
Winter Storm/Ice	High	Low	Low	Residences, businesses
High Wind	Medium	Low	Low	Trees down, loss of power
Aircrash	Low	Low	Low	Site specific
Water Supply Contamination (Averill & Norton Lakes)	Medium	Low	Low	Rivers/lakes.
Hurricane	Low	Low	Low	Power lines, residences
Earthquake	Low	Low	Low	Site specific
Dam Failures	Low/Med	Low	Low	Residences, businesses, infrastructure.
Drought	Low	Low	Low	Water supply
Chemical or Biological Incident	Med/High	Med	Med	Site specific. Railroad/Rte. 114
Highway Incidents/VAST	Medium	Low	Low	Site specific. Rte. 114. Deaths on snow machines
Wildfire/Forest Fire	Low	Low	Low	Farms, sugarbushes, residences
Landslide	Low	Low	Low	Site specific
School Safety Issues	Med/High	Med/High	Med/High	Railroad crossing
Terrorism (spill over from border)	Medium	Med/High	Med/High	Residents, businesses, local officials
Border Crossing	Med/High	Medium	Med/High	

Norton is most vulnerable to: hazardous materials incidents, school safety issues, and terrorism associated with border crossings.

2.2 Profiling Hazards

Floods

There have been no declared disasters between 1989 and 2004 that have qualified for FEMA assistance. There are no properties that have been identified as repetitively damaged using

FEMA funds. There are some homes that could be hurt by flash flooding, but they are not in an identified flood plain.

Past FEMA Declarations and Funding

Town	NFIP	Past FEMA Funds
Norton	NO	NONE

Hazardous Materials

Norton does not have resources to deal with a chemical/HazMat or terrorism event but there is a high likelihood that a serious event could occur. There are concerns of an incident involving hazardous materials on Route 114 and on the train. Over the past few years there have been three train derailments in Norton or nearby. Many large 18-wheel trucks travel at high speeds along Route 114. The road in Canada behind Wallace Pond is closed to truck traffic heading north and south leaving the Norton border with high trucking activity with lumber, peat, and other commercial good. There is much industry north of the border. Local officials need to protect the school which is located across the road from the border crossing and across from the railroad crossing. Norton has several spots with heavy moose populations along Route 114 that contribute to concerns of potential accidents involving hazardous materials.

Structure Fires

Structure fires occur on average 1-2 times per year. Response time to Norton takes approximately 30-40 minutes and access to lakefront or seasonal camp properties take longer. First responder service is from Brighton and Canaan depending on the location of the fire.

Power Failure

Vermont Electric Coop is the utility provider for the area and service is reliable.

High Winds

High winds cause most damage to trees and power lines in Norton. There have been wind sheers and micro bursts in prior years.

Dams

There is one dam at end of Great Averill Lake controlled by Coaticook Power. There are no houses downstream. There is another dam on Norton Pond that is not a problem. Water flows to Canada and then to the St. Lawrence River.

School Safety Issues

The location of the school is a concern because it is located across the road from the border crossing and across from the railroad crossing. There are concerns regarding a hazardous materials incident on the road or the railroad tracks. The town feels a need to protect the school at the border with railroad crossing.

Terrorism

See the section on Hazardous Materials Incidents for some background on the area. There is a cluster of population near the potential danger area which is the school, the border crossing, the

railroad, and two gas stations. Norton is not a likely target for a terrorist event but there are many documented cases of illegal entry in the U.S. across the border near this area. A field exercise was carried out in May of 2005 at this location that involved a terrorist event with a train explosion as a diversion for a larger terrorist event at the Derby border crossing. Responders came from Beecher Falls, Brighton, and Coaticook, PQ.

2.3 Vulnerability: Overview

In terms of vulnerability, Norton rated these potential hazards as most likely: hazardous materials incidents, school safety issues, and terrorism associated with border crossings. Mitigation strategies are identified for the highest priority projects in Section Three. Only those hazards that were identified as a high risk to the town were profiled. While other types of hazards may cause smaller problems for the community, they pose a lower risk.

2.4 Identifying Structures

It is difficult to estimate the total number of structures in the 100-year limit of the FIRM identified floodplain as those maps do not accurately match up to the E911 maps that are based on the structures' geographical location (latitude and longitude). However, it can be estimated that there are approximately 10 structures in or near the flood areas depicted on the NFIP maps.

2.5 Estimating Potential Losses

Future losses should be lessened through mitigation of the repetitively flooded properties, most of which are roads, bridges and culverts. The FIRM maps are not compatible with the GIS maps containing contour, rivers, roads and structures and it is not possible to estimate the amount of potential loss at this time. It is recommended that the NFIP maps be redone using the Vermont Geographic Information System standards based on orthophoto mapping.

The Median Housing Value (MHV) for Norton in 2003 was \$64,957. The Equalized Value for all properties in Norton in 2003 was \$19,392,807. If one percent (1%) of all properties in Norton were damaged, the value would be assessed at \$19,393. There have been no past FEMA damages over the last 16 years, so future projected damage is not expected to be large unless an event occurred at the border involving a hazardous materials incident or terrorist event.

2.6 Analyzing Development Trends

Norton has become popular for recreational homes. There are seasonal lakefront camps and then hunting and winter recreation camps.

Norton is not considered a rapidly growing community. Many of the seasonal homes are developing into year-round residences. Norton is not a member of the National Flood Insurance Program.

Population Increase 2000 to 2004

Town	Estimated Pop 2003	Census Pop 2000	Increase
Norton	219	214	2.5%

Section Three - Mitigation Strategy

Hazard Mitigation Strategies and Measures **avoid** the hazard by stopping or limiting new exposures in known hazard areas, **alter** the hazard by eliminating or reducing the frequency of occurrence, **avert** the hazard by redirecting the impact by means of a structure or land treatment, **adapt** to the hazard by modifying structures or standards and could include tools or projects such as:

- **Town Plan** - this document contains goals and objectives for community growth, health, safety and welfare for public and private interests.
- **Zoning Status** – This is a snapshot of the current zoning tools in effect.
- **NFIP** – National Flood Hazard Insurance Program.
- **C & S = Highway Codes and Standards** – Most all Vermont communities have adopted the Vermont Transportation Agencies recommended Highway Codes and Standards. This is perhaps the one most beneficial mitigation program in Vermont and the NVDA region. By adopting these codes, all maintenance and new construction on roads, highways, bridges and culverts must be enhanced to meet the new standards to withstand large flood events.
- **VTRC** – Norton does not have a Vermont Red Cross Shelter Pre-Agreement. When a Pre-Agreement is in effect, local representatives are trained to open a shelter if needed. This will allow for a more efficient use of the VT Red Cross if and when needed.
- **Emergency Operation Plan (EOP)** – Norton is in the process of having its EOP updated to include all-hazards through a Homeland Security Grant to the NVDA. This plan will be substantially completed by July 2005 and will include this Plan as its risk assessment to all-hazards.
- **Rapid Response Plan (RRP)** – Norton has updated its RRP as of November 5, 2004.

Table 3-A Development Tools

Town	Town Plan	Zoning	NFIP	Flood Regs	Codes & Standards	Culvert Inv.	Vermont Red Cross	Maps FIRM
Norton	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES

3.1 Regional Hazard Mitigation Goals

- Reduce the loss of life and injury resulting from all hazards.
- Mitigate financial losses incurred by municipal, residential, industrial, agricultural and commercial establishments due to disasters.
- Reduce the damage to public infrastructure resulting from all hazards.
- Recognize the connections between land use, storm-water road design and maintenance and the effects from disasters.
- Ensure that mitigation measures are compatible with the natural features of community rivers, streams and other surface waters; historic resources; character of neighborhoods; and the capacity of the community to implement them.
- Encourage all-hazard mitigation planning as a part of the municipal planning process.

3.2 Community Preparedness Goals

Overall, Norton is working to decrease its risk to flooding, water supply contamination and hazardous material incidents through proactive planning, policies and mitigation actions. Other lesser risks are being addresses through the same procedures and policies.

- Review this plan with essential town government.
- Consider becoming a member of the National Flood Insurance Program.
- Continue to work with local responders in Brighton and Beecher Falls to be sure that Norton's emergency planning needs are met.

3.3 Existing Hazard Mitigation Programs

Norton has been proactive in planning its future as well as protecting its citizens from potential disasters.

3.3.1 Emergency Management Planning

Norton has recently updated their Rapid Response Plan.

3.3.2 Codes and Standards

Norton has adopted the recommended Highway Codes and Standards that require regular upgrades on bridges, highways, ditching and culverts to avoid flood damage. A number of culverts have already been upgraded.

3.3.3 Local Planning and Zoning, NFIP

Norton's town Plan has expired but their zoning is in effect. Norton is not a member of the National Flood Insurance Program. All development in or near the identified flood areas must conform to zoning standards.

3.3.4 Protection of Town Records

The town office has a vault to protect public records from fire, damage or theft/vandalism.

3.3.5 School Drills

The K-6 Norton School practices regular evacuation drills.

3.4 Preparedness Tools

Public Awareness, Training, Education

- Conduct Emergency Drills involving all elements of the community to practice procedures associated with a simulated varies incidents.
- Use this plan for Hazard Identification and Mapping.

Public Protection

- Designate shelters.
- Emergency communications and information systems (NOAA weather receivers, Emergency Alert System (EAS)) are at the Command Center.
- Update Hazard Vulnerability Assessments as needed.
- Review and modify evacuation and sheltering plans based on the results of drills and exercises or procedures implemented in an actual incident.
- American Red Cross chapter may be contacted to assist with community education programs.
- Maintain current Rapid Response Plans and the Emergency Management Operations Plans.
- Regularly scheduled maintenance programs are ongoing (culvert survey & replacement, ditching along roadways, cutting vegetation to allow visibility at intersections).
- The town is proactive in preparing for potential disasters.

Financial and Tax Incentives.

- Use State and Federal funding for mitigation projects and activities.

Hazard Control and Protective Works.

- Utilize regular maintenance programs (culvert survey & replacement, ditching along roadways, cutting vegetation to allow visibility at intersections).

Insurance Programs.

- Participate in NFIP.

Land Use Planning/Management: Flood.

- Norton has local zoning.

Protection/Retrofit of Infrastructure and Critical Facilities.

- A map of Critical Facilities is attached.

3.5 Analysis of Mitigation Actions

Priority Actions:

Local officials in Norton have identified several mitigation actions to be included in the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Table 3-B, Implementation Strategy contains these actions, along with the responsible agency, the funding source, and implementation timeframe.

The Norton local officials have prioritized the actions using the STAPLE+E criteria, a planning tool used to evaluate alternative actions. The following table explains the STAPLE+E criteria.

S – Social	Mitigation actions are acceptable to the community if they do not adversely affect a particular segment of the population, do not cause relocation of lower income people, and if they are compatible with the community’s social and cultural views.
T – Technical	Mitigation actions are technically most effective if they provide long-term reduction of losses and have minimal secondary adverse impacts.
A – Administrative	Mitigation actions are easier to implement if the jurisdiction has the necessary staffing and funding.
P – Political	Mitigation actions can truly be successful if all stakeholders have been offered an opportunity to participate in the planning process and if there is public support for the action.
L – Legal	It is critical that the jurisdiction or implementing agency have the legal authority to implement and enforce a mitigation action.
E – Economic	Budget constraints can significantly deter the implementation of mitigation actions. Hence, it is important to evaluate whether an action is cost-effective, as determined by a cost benefit review, and possible to fund.
E – Environmental	Sustainable mitigation actions that do not have an adverse effect on the environment, that comply with Federal, State, and local environmental regulations, and that are consistent with the community’s environmental goals, have mitigation benefits while being environmentally sound.

3.6 Implementation of Mitigation Actions

Flooding and the potential for hazardous material incidents are the two main threats to Norton. Local officials are proactive in preparing for the hazards for which they are most vulnerable. Their highest priority concern is the health safety and welfare of the local citizens and businesses. The mitigation action determined to have the highest priority was the most cost effective alternative to the community. Readiness and timeliness of projects was also important.

The evaluating of the STAPLEE criteria is takes into consideration the best available information, any engineering evaluations, and best judgment. The action listed in Table 3-B is important to community, cost effective and feasibility to the community.

Table 3-B Mitigation Projects by Priority

Project/Priority	Mitigation Action	Who is Responsible	Time Frame and Potential Funding	Initial Implementation Steps
Consider becoming a member if the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) HIGH	Will provide insurance protection for residents and businesses.	The Selectboard	2005/6 – No funds needed	Contact NVDA for assistance to begin the flood hazard planning process. 802-748-5181.
Red Cross Pre-Agreement	Will help with setting up shelters quickly and efficiently.	Selectboard and local emergency management coordinator.	2005/6 – No funds needed	Contact Vermont Red Cross - 800 - 660-9130
GIS mapping of NFIP areas	Identify flood areas with vulnerable structures consistent with Vermont GIS mapping effort.	Northeastern Vermont Development Association	2006/7 – FEMA FMA funds, HMGP or EMPG funds	Coordinated statewide NFIP mapping effort for all towns.

Section Four - Plan Maintenance Process

4.1 Initial Approval Process

In addition to public involvement in the initial development of the plan, opportunities for public comment will include a warned adoption to review the plan prior to final adoption. The fire chief has been instrumental in participating in the review of the document with the local officials.

After local review and comment, the draft local annex is presented to the State Hazard Mitigation Committee through the State Hazard Mitigation Officer (SHMO) for review and comment. The SHMO will issue a recommendation for forwarding the plan to the FEMA Region I. After receipt of comments from FEMA Region I staff, final changes will be made and the resulting document adopted by the Norton Selectboard. The final plan will be returned to FEMA Region I for formal approval.

4.2 Routine Plan Maintenance

The Hazard Mitigation Plan is dynamic and changing. To ensure that the plan remains current, it is important that it be updated periodically. The plan shall be updated every five years, pending ongoing financial resources, in accordance with the following procedure:

- 4.2.1 The Norton Selectboard will either act as the review committee or appoint a review committee.
- 4.2.2 The committee will discuss the process to determine if the evaluation criteria is still appropriate or modifications or additions are needed to the mitigation strategies based on changing conditions since the last update occurred. Data needs will be reviewed, data sources identified and responsibility for collecting information will be assigned to members.
- 4.2.3 A draft report will be prepared based on the evaluation criteria and in conformance with the FEMA Region I Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Crosswalk document.

- 4.2.4 The Selectboard will have the opportunity to review the draft report. Consensus will be reached on changes to the draft.
- 4.2.5 Changes will be incorporated into the document.
- 4.2.6 The plan will be reviewed by Vermont Emergency Management (SHMO) staff and then FEMA Region I staff.
- 4.2.7 VEM and FEMA comments will be incorporated into the plan.
- 4.2.8 The Selectboard will warn the plan for approval at its regular meeting.
- 4.2.9 The Selectboard will incorporate any community comments into the plan.
- 4.2.10 The Selectboard will finalize and adopt the plan and distribute to interested persons.

4.3 Programs, Initiatives and Project Review

Although the plan will be reviewed, pending ongoing financial resources, in its entirety every five years the town may review and update its programs, initiatives and projects more often based on the above procedure as changing needs and priorities arise.

4.4 Post-Disaster Review Procedures

Should a declared disaster occur, a special review will occur in accordance with the following procedures:

1. Within six (6) months of a declared emergency event, the town will initiate a post-disaster review and assessment.
2. This post-disaster review and assessment will document the facts of the event and assess whether existing Hazard Modification Plans effectively addressed the hazard.
3. A draft report After Action Report of the assessment will be distributed to the Review/ Update Committee.
4. A meeting of the committee will be convened by the Selectboard to make a determination whether the plan needs to be amended. If the committee determines that NO modification of the plan is needed. Then the report is distributed to interested parties.
5. If the committee determines that modification of the plan IS needed, then the committee drafts an amended plan based on the recommendations and forwards it to the Selectboard for public input.
6. The Selectboard adopts the amended plan.

Section 5 - Maps

- A. Essential Facilities Map and Areas of Local Concern

