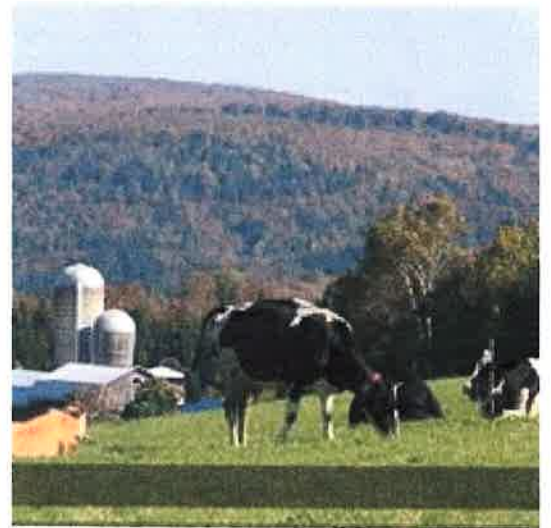


# CABOT

## Town Plan 2017



**Draft**

**Prepared by the Town of Cabot  
Planning Commission:**

Charles Marion, Commission Chair  
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Thanks to all Cabot residents who participated in the Planning Commission's surveys and the Visioning meeting, and who provided valuable input at public work sessions.

Special thanks to these Cabot residents who assisted in the content of this draft:

Cabot Selectboard

Cabot Library

Cabot Recreation Committee

Cabot Community Association

Cabot Historical Society

Cabot School

Cabot Fire Department

Cabot Ambulance

Cabot Cemetery

Cabot Community Investment Fund

Michael Socks

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission

# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. Purpose of the Plan

A Town Plan identifies goals and strategies for maintaining, improving, and developing a livable community. An approved Town Plan enables the citizens of Cabot to have a legal say over both private and State land use decisions in the Town. State statutes grant the plan great weight in determining whether development projects subject to Act 250 are approved, and the conditions applied to approval.

If a town chooses to plan, it must do so within the framework established by State legislation, which sets standards for the way municipal plans are to be developed, reviewed and adopted. An up-to-date plan is required as a basis for any local land use regulations and to be eligible for a variety of grant funds. Cabot's last Town Plan was adopted in 2012.

The 2012 Town Plan, which includes elements on housing, energy, land use, natural and historic resources, community facilities, transportation, and economic development, will be the basis for updating the town's land use regulations and provide a reference in the review of projects before the local Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Adjustment, and projects subject to Act 250 Review.

This plan describes both existing conditions in Cabot (people, resources, challenges) and aspirations for the future of the community. The aspirations are expressed as **goals** and found at the end of every section, along with **implementation strategies** which articulate the policies and action steps designed to help reach those goals. A "measure of progress" is also identified, which will help chart progress made in relation to stated policies or tasks.

## B. Public participation

The Planning Commission recognizes the importance of public participation in the planning process. Planning commission has distributed various sections of the Town Plan to the groups and organizations within the Town. These organizations have providing revisions and feedback regarding the various sections. Draft copies of the various chapters are posted at the Town Hall and on the Town web page for public review and comment.

Progress is also being reported through articles in the monthly *Cabot Chronicle*.

The following vision statement was developed with input from the citizens of Cabot, and has served as a guide for the Planning Commission as it developed the various sections included in this updated Town Plan. The Plan will guide Cabot in a direction that will help the community realize its vision, and accommodate future growth in a way that does not compromise the irreplaceable features and qualities that its citizens want to preserve.

## **VISION**

*The Town of Cabot envisions a future that continues our history and identity as a rural community, with an emphasis on stewarding the features that make us a unique and special place to live: a vibrant, compact village center surrounded by acres of open farmland and forest that contain ample recreational resources, majestic scenery, clean and bountiful waters, and historic features. In this future, Cabot residents will meet their needs for food, material, shelter, and transportation using resources managed in a sustainable manner. The thoughtful placement of housing, commercial, civic, and recreational spaces in Cabot will strengthen and preserve an active village center, maintain a healthy working landscape, and best steward our natural resources. The many historic features of the village center serve as a focus point for Cabot's identity, and include our school, library, church, and "main street" district.*

### **C. Historic Overview**

Much of what we see in Cabot village today has evolved from a rich agricultural tradition that has its roots in the latter part of the 18th Century. This architectural, cultural and topographical record informs an important part of Cabot's identity today.

The earliest settlement in Cabot occurred on Cabot Plain in 1779, where the Bayley-Hazen Military Road cut a swath through the northeastern part of what is now Cabot Town. The Bayley-Hazen Road was named for Colonel Jacob Bayley, who began construction of the road in Wells River in 1776, and General Moses Hazen, who continued the road to its ending point at Hazen's Notch in 1779, in what is now the Town of Westfield.

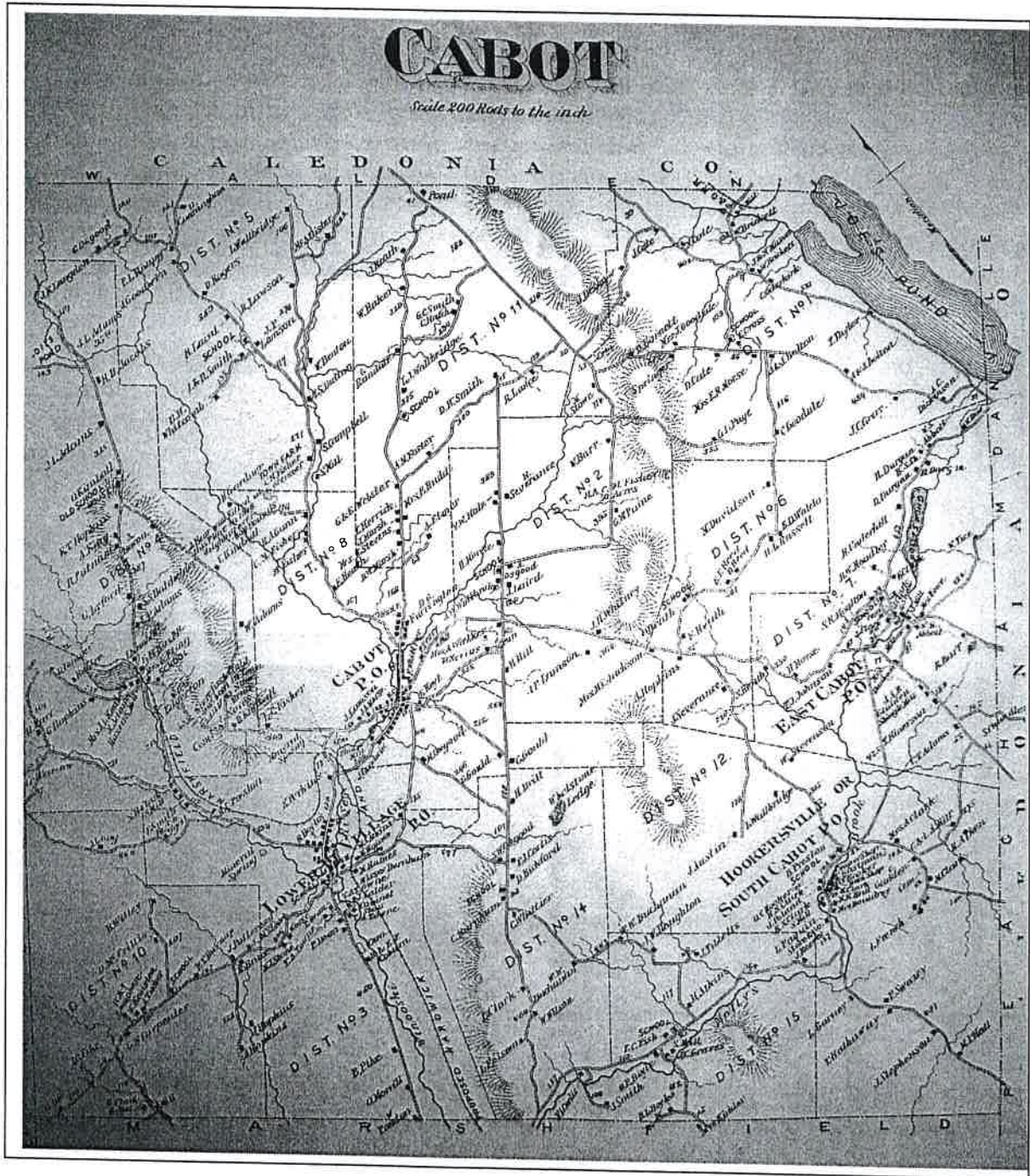
The Town of Cabot was chartered August 17, 1781, and surveyed and lotted in 1786. Historical accounts note that Cabot was named by Lyman Hitchcock, one of the original Town proprietors, in honor of his bride-to-be, a Miss Cabot of Connecticut. In 1789, saw mills and grist mills were built on the Winooski River in what later became Cabot Village, and by the 1790s, settlement began to spread south, east and west. In 1796, the seat of government was moved to the geographic center of Town. This "Centre", as it was called, was a promising village with a church, school, store, a number of houses, livestock pound, a four-acre common, and cemetery. In 1800 the town population had reached 349 persons.

By 1820, little settlement remained on the high plain, as new settlements grew around the productive mills along the river. From 1800 to 1820 the population had almost tripled to 1,032 residents. In about 1825 the seat of government moved to the present village. That year, the church that had been built in the Center in 1806 was disassembled and moved to Cabot Village.

Farm crops at that time included wheat, flax, hay and apple cider. Sheep were among the livestock raised on the newly cleared land in Town, and a large woolen mill was built about

1825 in Lower Cabot. In 1833 a woolen carding mill was built in the upper village which continued in business for 44 years. Other early industries included a tannery, several blacksmith shops, starch factories, wagon factory, sleigh shop, numerous sawmills, and foundry.

F.W. Beers Atlas of Washington County, 1873

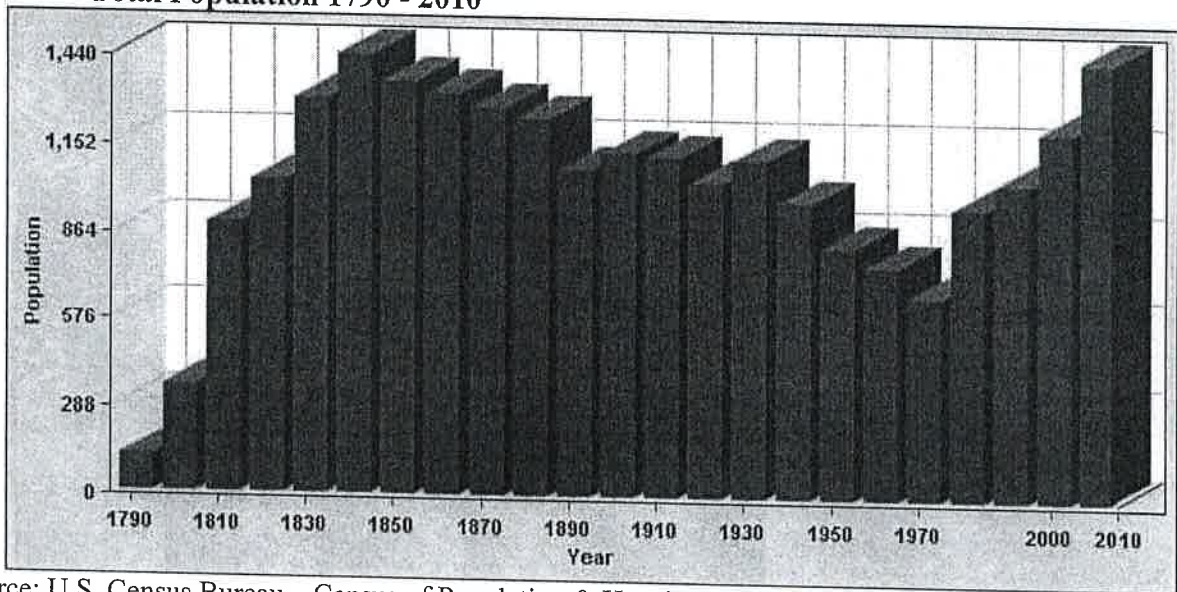


The demand for lumber to build houses for the growing population led to the building of water-powered lumber mills throughout town, including in Cabot Village, Lower Cabot Village, Hookerville, East Cabot, West Hill Pond, and Peterville (now submerged in the Molly's Falls reservoir). The county road connecting the Caledonia County Seat at Danville with Montpelier passed through Cabot, bringing travelers and spurring the construction of the Winooski Hotel in 1833. (In 1914 the hotel burned -- the Willey Memorial Building is now located on the site.) By 1840 the population in Cabot reached the highest point in the Town's history, with 1,440 residents.

Between 1850 and 1880 the demand for wool declined, while the construction of railroads opened up new markets for dairy products and lumber. Apples and maple sugar were also important crops in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Butter production increased rapidly during this period, to nearly 160,000 pounds in 1880, and cows began to outnumber sheep on most Cabot farms. Agricultural statistics published at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century indicate that Cabot had 675 horses and colts, 3,500 cows, 2,000 other cattle, and 500 sheep. There were also four lumber mills, and about equal amounts of land were described as "tillable" and "in forestry."

Inevitably, the railroads that first opened markets to Cabot farmers also brought competition from farms in New York, Pennsylvania and the Midwest. From the peak in 1840, Cabot's population decreased more or less steadily until 1970, when it reached a low of 663 people.

**CABOT – Total Population 1790 - 2010**



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau – Census of Population & Housing, 2000 Summary File 1 Table P1)

Despite the decline in farming, which occurred throughout the northeast, a probable factor in the persistence of dairy farming as a livelihood in Cabot was the formation of the Cabot Creamery, first in 1893 as a private enterprise, and then again in 1919, as Cabot Farmers' Cooperative Creamery (as a result of enabling legislation for cooperatives). The success of this enterprise, which managed to weather the Great Depression of the 1930s, has provided a

convenient outlet for Cabot dairy farmers and a place of employment for many other residents to this day.

Sources:

Beers, F.W. *Atlas of Washington County, VT 1873*. Reprint, Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc, Rutland, VT 1971

Bell, C.J. *Vermont 1903 , Its Opportunities for Investment in Agriculture, Manufacture, Minerals, Its attractions for Summer Homes*, East Hardwick, VT: Board of Agriculture, 1903

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Hemenway, Abigail Maria, ed. *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, Volumes I-V (1868-1891).

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#### **D. Community Snapshot**

Cabot's population in 2010 was 1,433. This represents an increase of about 18% since 2000. Although the population in Cabot has more than doubled since 1970, it has only just about reached the population in town in the year 1840, when Cabot's population peaked at 1,440 residents.

The 2009 census indicated that Cabot's population had a higher percentage of school-aged children (aged 5 – 19), at 20.4% of the population, than was typical in Vermont as a whole, where 8.5% of the population was in this age bracket. The average household size in Cabot in 2000 was 2.5 persons, higher than the statewide average of 2.4. In 2000, 37.7% of Cabot residents were not Vermont natives, having arrived from different states and outside the U.S.

Residents 65 years and older comprised 17.5% of Cabot residents in 2009, whereas statewide, 13.8% were 65 and older. The median age in Cabot in 2009 was 47.0, vs. 40.6 statewide. Of the total Cabot population 25 years and older, 20.1% had some college, and 32.1% had a Bachelor's degree or higher. These figures on educational attainment in Cabot track closely with the figures statewide.

The median household income in Cabot for the five year period 2005-2009 was estimated at \$46,989, as compared to \$54,227 for all of Washington County and \$51,284 for all of Vermont. Median family income in Cabot for that period was estimated at \$53,750 as compared to \$67,885 countywide and \$63,482 statewide.

**Table I-1  
Employment Status in Cabot, 2009**

<b>INDUSTRY</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	48	7.2%
Construction	95	14.2%
Manufacturing	69	10.3%
Wholesale Trade	10	1.5%
Retail Trade	49	7.3%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	17	2.5%
Information	23	3.4%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	13	1.9%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	63	9.4%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	204	30.4%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	22	3.3%
Other services, except public administration	21	3.1%
Public administration	37	5.5%
<b>Employed civilian population 16 years and over</b>	<b>671</b>	

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates)

Although these statistics point to the fact that most residents in Cabot earn their primary income in occupations and industries other than agriculture or forestry, Cabot is nonetheless characterized by its rural and forested areas, and has a population density of only 32.53 persons per square mile (as compared to an overall population density in Vermont of 65.82 persons per square mile). An important indicator of the way land is used in Cabot is the “Current Use” program. In 2016, a total of 13,139.23 acres of land in Cabot was in this program, representing about 53% of the total land area in town. In addition, 2,109 acres of farmland and open space are permanently conserved through easements and public ownership. So, while only a small percentage of residents are officially classified in the federal census as having farming or forestry occupations, farming and forest management is a pervasive use that defines the character of the Town.

### **E. Sustainability**

Sustainability was a common refrain at the Town-wide visioning session held in Cabot in September 2010. Residents are looking for ways to move forward on the issues of land use, energy production and consumption, and economic development that will be environmentally and economically sustainable well into the future



Planning for a sustainable future in a time of global climate change is a daunting task: competition, volatility, and uncertainty are factors likely to make long-term planning difficult and costly.

The 2017 Town Plan acknowledges global climate change as a factor that will impact the cost and quality of life for Cabot residents, recognize our responsibility to consider community, environmental and economic sustainability in the plan, and to clarify local opportunities – goals and plans of action – to mitigate the causes and effects of climate change, through the plan.

#### **F. Compatibility with the Region**

According to Vermont statute, a municipal plan is considered to be “compatible” with the plans of its neighboring towns and the region if it “will not significantly reduce the desired effect” of those plans. Cabot, located in Washington County, is served by the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, which has developed and adopted the *Central Vermont Regional Plan* in 2016.

Towns that border Cabot are: to the northeast, Walden, in Caledonia County; to the northwest, Woodbury, Washington Co.; at the northern corner, Hardwick, Caledonia Co.; to the southwest, Marshfield, Washington Co.; to the southeast, Peacham and Danville, Caledonia Co. Of the Towns that border Cabot, the only town that does not have an adopted Town Plan is Walden.

The proposals contained in the 2017 Cabot Town Plan will not reduce the desired effect of the plans of the region or of neighboring Towns.

## II. NATURAL HERITAGE

### A. Introduction

*Natural heritage* refers to all the natural resources Cabot residents and visitors value; including forests, clean waters, clean air, healthy wildlife populations, rare species, significant natural communities<sup>1</sup>, scenic vistas, and a working landscape – all of which provide us the opportunity to hike, fish, hunt, bird watch, and work the land in a sustainable manner.

To sustain our rural character, fish, wildlife and overall natural heritage for future generations, it is imperative that conservation be one of our priorities in town planning. This means protecting our fish, wildlife, plants, natural communities, prime agricultural soils and the ecological processes and landscapes that allow them to co-exist with our human activities.

Understanding and planning for the protection and sustainable use of Cabot's natural resources requires understanding the physical landscape. The configuration of its mountains, valleys, wetlands, lakes, and rivers is crucial in determining the distribution of natural communities, habitats, and native species.

The following broad environmental factors influence the distribution of species, habitats and natural communities: climate, bedrock and surficial geology, topography, hydrology, and land use history.

### B. Existing Conditions

#### Geology – Topography

Except for the irregular boundary at Joe's Pond, Cabot is square in shape, six miles on each side, a total of 22,325 acres. Cabot lies in the geographic region known as the Piedmont, in the foothills of the Green Mountains.

There are three distinct rock types in Cabot: (1) metamorphosed limestones of the Waits River formation (northwest and southeast); (2) mica-rich quartzites of the Gile Mountain Formation (central); and (3) New Hampshire Series Granites (southeast). The Waits River and Gile Mountain Formation rocks were originally deposited as sediments in an ancient sea and were later transformed into rock, folded, and uplifted into mountains during the continent-continent collision of the Acadian Orogeny (mountain building event) that occurred 350-400 million years ago.

The highest point in Cabot is Danville Hill (2,246 feet), followed by Joe's Hill (2,198 feet), Burbank Hill (1,980 feet) and Thistle Hill (1,909 feet). The lowest part of town is 880 feet at the point where the Winooski River exits the town at the Marshfield border.

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<sup>1</sup> Natural communities can be defined as the interacting assemblages of organisms, their physical environment, and the natural processes that affect them.

Most of Cabot lies within the Winooski River drainage basin, and Coits Pond is considered to be the headwaters of the Winooski. A small portion of the eastern section of town drains to Joe's Pond, a part of the Connecticut River drainage basin.

Soil is the layer of earth that lies directly over the bedrock. It is the layer through which rain and nutrients filter, upon which crops and trees grow, and where wildlife and humans create their lives and homes. The type of soil that develops in an area is dependent on its parent material (bedrock and glacial deposits), vegetation, topography, climate, and time. Understanding the characteristics and capabilities of these soils is important for planning the types, locations, and intensities of future land uses. Soils information can be an important guide for reviewing individual development proposals.

Because of Cabot's location in the upland drainage region, it lacks the abundance of rich bottomland soils found in towns that are lower in the drainage basins of the Winooski and Connecticut Rivers. Nevertheless, Cabot has significant areas of prime agricultural soils which have been mapped (See Map 2b: Natural Resources).

The Natural Resources Conservation Service of the US Dept. of Agriculture has mapped the soils in Cabot. A soils interpretation sheet is available for each soil type which describes the soil and evaluates its capability for certain uses. Information on slope, texture, density, permeability, depth to bedrock, flood hazard, seasonal high water table, and other characteristics is available. Soils are evaluated for their suitability for construction, septic systems, water supply, recreation, farming, woodland management, and wildlife and resource material uses. In general, unfavorable soil types for development typically contain excessive slopes, shallow depth to bedrock, wet soils, excessively drained soils, unstable soils, and erodible soils.

NRCS has classified Vermont's soils into twelve categories, called Agricultural Value Groups, according to their limitations, management requirements, and potential for crop production. Soil map units in Group 1 have the most potential for crop production, while units in Groups 11 and 12 have the least potential. Soils in Groups 1 and 3 are rated prime, and those in Groups 2 and 4-7 are rated as statewide important. Designations of prime and statewide important soils are used both in a regulatory context (i.e., as a potential trigger for Vermont's statewide land use law, Act 250, criterion 9(b), and as a key criteria in determining which farmland should be permanently protected. There are 725 acres of prime agricultural soils and 6,757 acres of statewide soils in Cabot, representing about 30% of the town's total land area.

NRCS has rated most soils in Cabot for their forest productivity. Given the desire of the Town to conserve forest land, soils with good forestry potential should be considered in development proposals. However, NRCS ratings only reflect physical and chemical compositions of the soils and do not consider location, current land use, parcel size or other relevant factors. A geographic information system (GIS) study could include other criteria for determining the conservation potential of important forest land in the Town such as potential natural community and erosion potential. When prime forest lands are thus identified, the Town could take steps to ensure the land remains productive. If large