

Johnnycake Mountain Park

Master Plan - Site Analysis

March 2017



Prepared For:





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Johnnycake Mountain Farm - Proto Credit: Johnnycake Mountain Assoc.

Introduction and Overview

Introduction

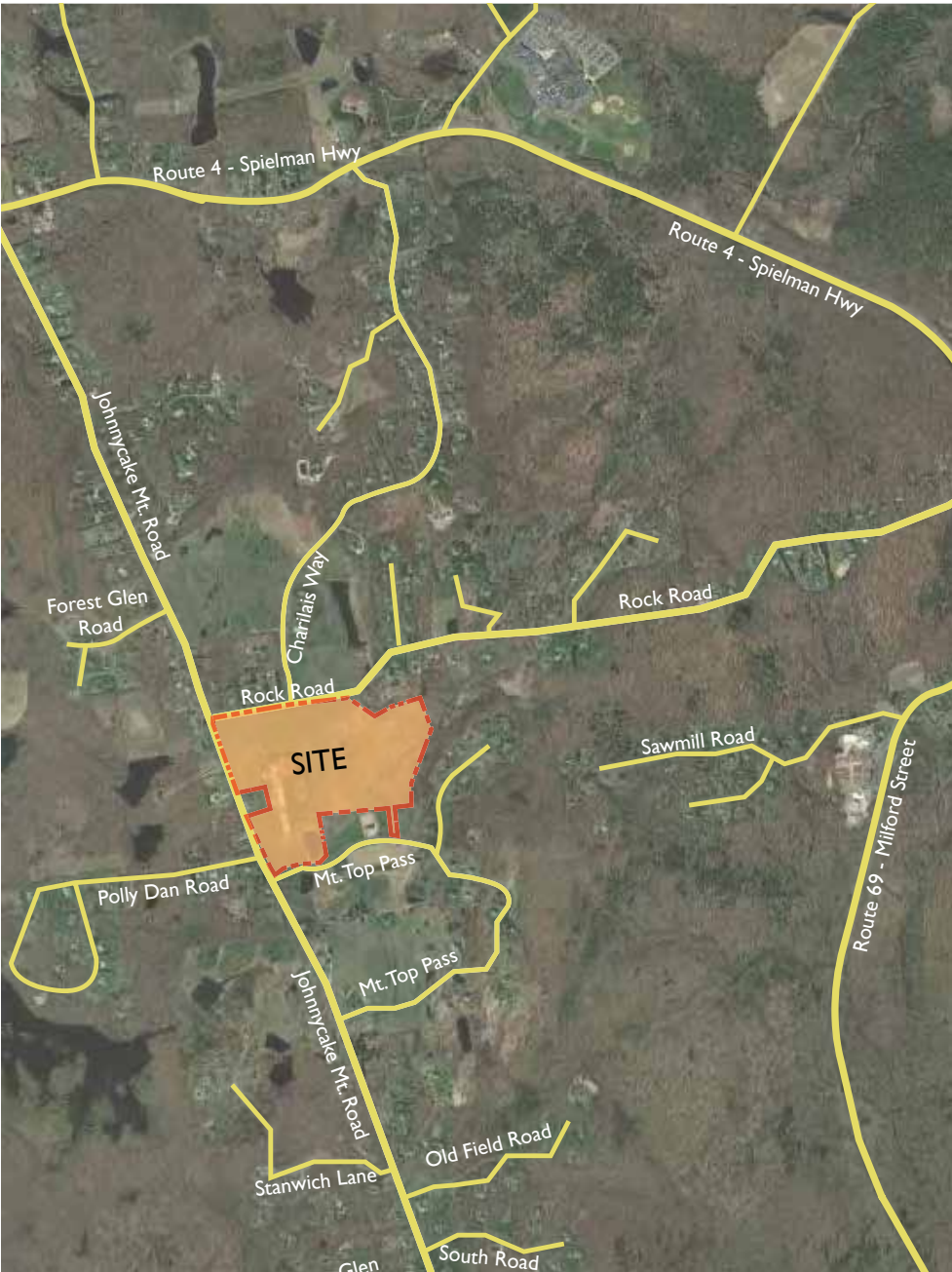
The Town purchase of the property known as Johnny Cake Mountain Farm comes after a long process which began in 2008. The Town of Burlington has had an long standing interesting in purchasing the farm in order to add park space to the town inventory and formalize the town’s historic use of the property for public events such such as concerts, fireworks and ice skating. In 2008, the Town first sought to purchase the property, yet plans were abandoned due to budget constraints. The town formally purchased the property in 2016 and is now pursuing a master planning process in order to identify the best uses of the park and begin modifying it to meet the needs of a public park space.

The property at Johnnycake Mountain Farm has been described as a unique piece of the mountain, with its rolling fields, vital habitat, and historic use as farmland and community open space. A master planning process will create a process for gathering community input on what the park should be, a plan for development, and a list of action items that the town can use for implementing improvements in a deliberate manner. This ‘action plan’ is not intended to be implemented all at once, but is intended to provide the Town of Burlington with a firm action plan for improvments for the next five to ten years.

At the beginning of 2017, the Town of Burlington engaged the BSC Group, Inc. to develop the master plan for ‘Johnnycake Mountain Park’. The initial vision of town staff is that the park will become a mix of active and passive recreational uses, while preserving the current rural working farm appearance of the property.



Horses at Johnnycake Mountain Farm - Proto Credit: Johnnycake Mountain Assoc.



Site Location

Master Planning Schedule and Process

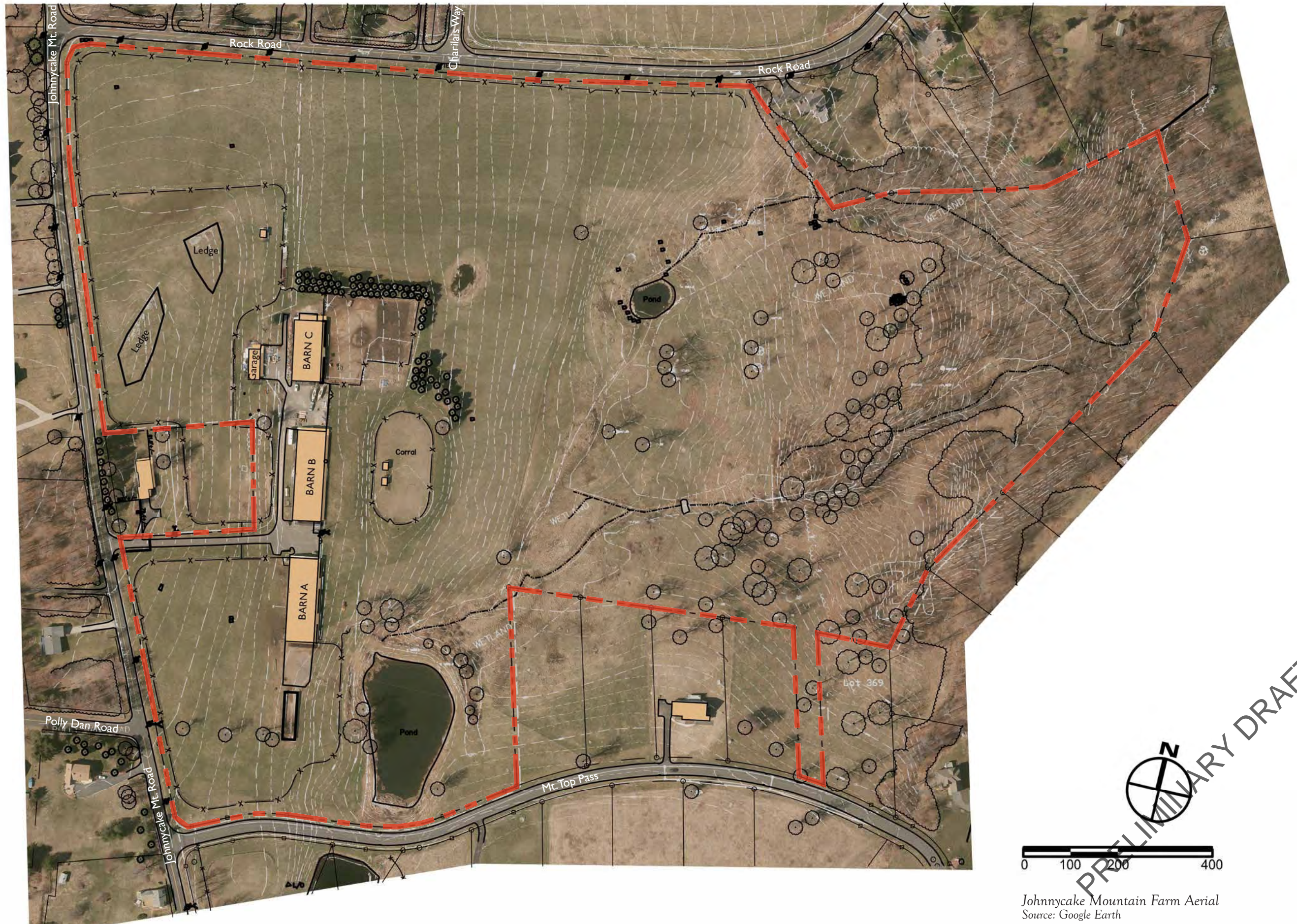
The Master Planning Process consists of three distinct parts: Site Evaluation and Inventory, Community Input and the Master Plan for site development. The Steering committee and consultant coordinated the work, in conjunction with public input meetings and a on-line public survey in 2017. The first public meeting occurred on April 20, 2017, The second meeting on June 14, 2017 and the final master plan was presented at the third meeting in September 2017. Meetings were spaced far enough apart intentionally to allow time for community input and avoid the summer vacation season.

General Site Description

Johnnycake Mountain Farm is located about two miles South West from the town center, nearly a half-mile from the Town of Harwinton. The 57.9 acre property is on the east face of JohnnyCake mountain sloping steeply from west to east. The property is a mix of open grass farm field (with scattered boulders) and hardwood forest. Farmland makes up most of the northern and western parts of the property. The property includes three large metal industrial type buildings and 3 smaller wood or metal sheds. Roads enclose the farm on three sides; Rock Road, Johnnycake Mountain Road, and Mountain Top Pass. The east side of the property is hardwood forest. Five house lots project into the property, one on the west side, and 4 on the south side. There are three man-made ponds on the property that are generally located in the wetland areas that bisect the site from south to north. Most of the fields are enclosed with wooden rail fencing. From the high point of the property there are long distance views of hills to the east toward nieghboring towns of Avon and Canton.



Johnnycake Mountain Farm



History

Before early English settlers arrived in 1636, the area west of the Farmington River was referred to as ‘Tunxis Sepus’, or ‘Bend in the little river’ by the Tunxis Tribe which included a large area of the State west of the Connecticut River. A part of this land was negotiated for in 1640 by John Haynes, who renamed the area the Tunxis Plantation (later Farmington) from this parcel the towns of Burlington, Farmington, Southington, Berlin, Bristol, Avon, New Britain and Plainville were incorporated. Most early residents of Burlington were farmers, or loggers and farmed areas such as Johnnycake Mountain. Several small industrial operations also developed in early Burlington, due to the high availability of natural resources such as copper, granite, wood, and even ice in the winter months.

As the surrounding area industries developed, Reservoirs required by surrounding mills and towns were created in Burlington because of the abundance of water resources, (and high elevation). Today water bodies in town equal over a quarter of the land area when combined. This also helped to preserve much of Burlington’s forest area, providing large areas of protected open space.

Settlement of the Burlington area was slow, as people found the terrain rough and difficult to develop. Johnnycake Mountain was named after settlers who survived long, harsh winters solely on corn meal ‘Johnnycakes’. Electricity was brought to the mountain in 1906, and a small schoolhouse was built to serve the House District 6.



House District 6 Schoolhouse - Source: Burlington Room, Burlington Public Library

The third owner, Paul S. Ney, purchased 300 acres and built a shanty on the mountain. (Hartford Courant, Aug 5, 1917). ‘Johnnycake Mountain Farm’ was eventually purchased in 1949 by John and Jane Martin, who built their house there as it reminded Mr. Miller of his English countryside home. John Martin worked for the Heublein company in the 1930’s. and is known for purchasing the failing Smirnoff distillery in 1939. He managed to remarket the company’s product by creating cocktails such as the ‘Moscow Mule’, and selling it in California. He met his wife while in California; Jane Weeks, an

actress known for several movies in the 1940’s. (Burlington Post, March, 1995) By 1950, the couple started a game farm on the 300 acre parcel. The game farm raised peacocks, partridge, pheasants, and quail. Blueberries were also grown and harvested on the mountain. (Burlington Post, March, 1995). By 1963 The Martin’s owned 500 acres on Johnnycake Mountain, and the farm included



Can Label - Source: Burlington Room, Burlington Public Library

250 Charolais cows. Mr. Martin was a large promoter of this French breed of cow, which he found was lean, and had the most edible meat. (Hartford Times Aug 19, 1963) The farm grew to 900 acres by the 1970’s, when the aging John Martin was thinking of the future prospects for the land. Daniel Flynn, the Martin’s representative, cautioned Burlington residents of the farm being subdivided and expanding the Town’s population. (Bristol Press, May 26, 1976) Consultants including Sasaki Associates agreed that unit planning with the maximum amount of open space should be considered for development of the farmland, unless the Town was to develop an alternative plan for the land. (Hartford Courant, Feb 12, 1976)

In 1986 Dwight Harris purchased Johnnycake Mountain Farm from the Martins; by which time the farm totaled nearly 1000 acres and 250 cows.



Johnnycake Charolais Cows - Source: Burlington Room, Burlington Public Library

(Hartford Courant, May 12, 1991) Eventually he hoped to build a “Hilltop Inn” at the farm, following the Martin’s desire to preserve the rural character of the mountain, and avoid further subdividing the land. (Hartford Courant, Jan 26, 2005).

Since the 1990’s Johnnycake Mountain Farm has been an important place for the Burlington community as the Harris’s have offered the property for use by the town for various community events. Events take place at the farm all year long; including Youth Fishing Derby in April, summer festivals such as the Johnnycake Music Fest, and other fall festivals. The festivals at the farm started in 1989, when Liz Harris created a hot air balloon event after seeing two balloonists land in their fields the previous summer. (Hartford Courant, July 9, 1989) Town residents regularly visit the farm animals even when a festival is not scheduled, and skate on the pond in the winter.



Summer Balloon Festival - Source: Burlington Room, Burlington Public Library

1935

Farmland covers much of the top of Johnnycake Mountain. Simple growing areas have been cut into the existing forest, and a few rural roads have been built, providing necessary connections through Burlington.

1965

Not much has changed in thirty years. Much of the land is forested, and fields have become more formalized. The Martin estate includes a game farm, and 250 Charolais cows.

1992

Over the past thirty years, a house has been built on top of the hill, along with several accessory buildings. Wetland areas have been cleared and modified to address the farm’s needs. The stream has been dammed to create several ponds. Dwight and Liz Harris own the farm, and surrounding land has been subdivided. Festivals are held at the farm.

2017

The past twenty-five years have minimally changed the farm itself, yet the surrounding neighborhood population has exploded with new development. Each side of the farm has been subdivided, and is currently in the process of development.



1935 Historical Map
Source: UConn Magic



1965 Historical Map
Source: CT State Library



1992 Historical Map
Source: Google Earth



2017 Aerial
Source: Google Earth

Existing Conditions Analysis

Context and Circulation

Points of Interest in Burlington

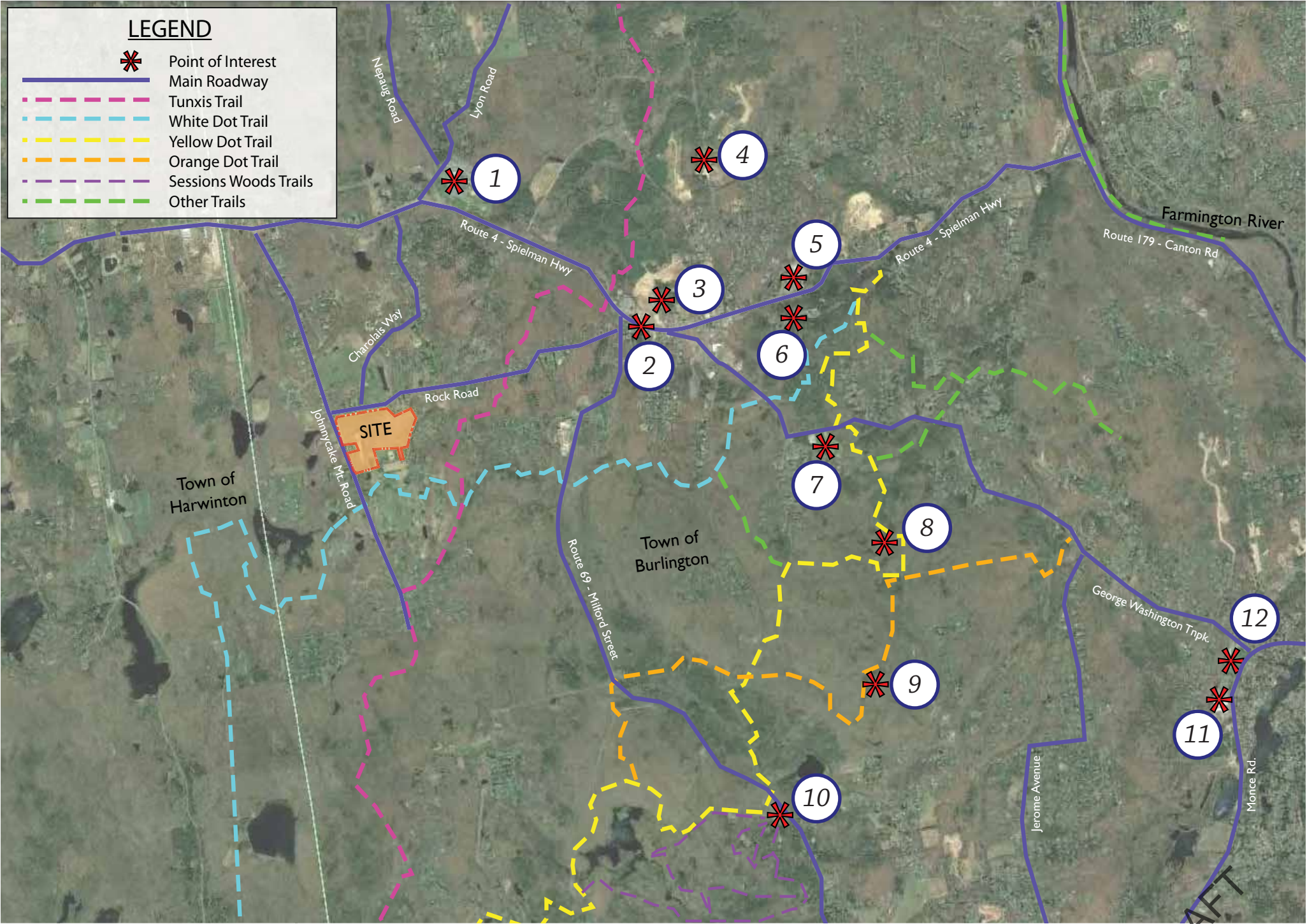
- 1. Regional School District 10/Lewis S. Mills High School /Har-Bur Middle School
- 2. Center of Town
- 3. Library Park Field
- 4. Foote Road Recreational Area
- 5. Town Hall and Recreation Center
- 6. State Fish Hatchery
- 7. Nassahegan Recreational Center
- 8. Nassahegan State Forest
- 9. Devil’s Kitchen (Natural Rock Formation)
- 10. Sessions Woods Wildlife Management
- 11. Lake Garda Elementary School
- 12. Malerbo Field

Context

Johnnycake Mountain Farm is located within 2 miles of the center of Burlington, and can be easily accessed from Harwinton along Route 4 (eastbound), to Johnnycake Mountain Road; from Lewis Mills High School along Route 4 (westbound), to Charolais Way and Rock Road; or from the center of Burlington along Route 4 (westbound), to Route 69 and Rock Road. The surrounding neighborhood is low-density residential, providing expansive views between houses. The area is within a 45 minute commute to Hartford and many of the larger homes on the mountain have been recently constructed, by residents who work in other municipalities to the East and South. Access to hiking trails such as the Tunxis Trail and the White Dot Trail are within easy walking distance to Johnnycake Mountain Farm. It’s possible to hike from these trails to many points of interest within Burlington, including the Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Center, where visitors may interact with educational presentations and find simple walking trails.

Vehicular Circulation

The local roads surrounding Johnnycake Mountain Road are Rock Road, Johnnycake Mountain Road, and Mountain Top Pass. Vehicular access to the site must approach from either Route 4 to the North, Route 69 to the east. No access is available directly from the west or south. Secondary roads approach the site through adjacent residential streets to the north and serve the newer subdivisions south and west of the new park. Traffic in the area of the park only serves these surrounding residences, and the park itself.



Context Map

Johnnycake Mountain Road and Rock Road both have a speed limit of 35 mph. Mountain Top Pass and Polly Dan Road are posted at 25mph. There are stop sign controlled stops at each intersection, although traffic along Johnnycake Mountain Road is not stop controlled. The road surface is generally in good condition for all roads. Drainage along all roads is provided by grass swales, with exception to Mountain Top Pass, where catch basins have been provided. There are currently no shoulders or walkways for bicyclists or pedestrians.

Pedestrian Connections

Pedestrian circulation for the area is limited to road shoulders and surrounding hiking trails. Since new subdivisions have been developed, it has become more difficult for hikers to determine exactly where the White Dot Trail picks up through the area. Additional pedestrian provisions were not observed in the area, and fences across the farm currently restrict pedestrian travel across the property itself.



LEGEND

- PROPERTY LINE
- MAJOR VEHICULAR
- PAVED FARM PATHWAY
- UNPAVED FARM PATHWAY
- INTERSECTION
- SIGN CONTROLLED STOP
- 35 POSTED SPEED LIMIT

PRELIMINARY DRAFT

Existing Circulation Map
Source: Google Earth

Views

Maintaining the rural ‘working farm’ character of the site has been stated as a key goal for the future of the farm. Though not as functionally important as other site considerations, an evaluation of views and general appeal of the area provides insight on how the site should be developed.

The easiest way to preserve the rural perception is to preserve the existing views into the site, and to provide necessary screening that will not obstruct desired views. Currently, open views are available into the site from Rock Road and Mountain Top Pass. The view into the site from Johnnycake Mountain Road is obstructed by topography changes, one-story buildings, and a few trees in front of the farmhouse. Evergreen trees planted by Barn ‘C’ obstruct views of the barns from Rock Road. The only real ‘bad’ views are of the farm buildings themselves...and some may argue that they are part of the appeal of the ‘working farm’ landscape. It is important to note the undeveloped residential lots to the south of the property along Mountain Top Pass. Although these lots are currently empty, it can be expected that houses may be constructed there, and manipulating the views to and from these is a consideration. It is unknown what may be built there, but is reasonable to suggest future screening may further obstruct views into the site along this roadway.



View into Farm - Looking East



View from Rock Road - Looking South



View from Johnnycake Mountain Road - Looking Northeast



View from Johnnycake Mountain Road - Looking East



View from Mountain Top Pass - Looking North



Regulatory

Zoning and Land Use

Zoning and Land Use regulations provide a real constraint to proposed developement and must be analyzed as part of any planning process to determine if proposed improvements conflict with local regulations. Johnnycake Mountain Farm is located in a R-44 Zone; a low density residential district. Permitted uses include single family housing, and farming, as well as accessory uses like garages (less than 36’x40’ and 1.5 stories tall), recreational use, keeping livestock, and solar energy. The site has historically been under the farming use, conforming to the R-44 zone requirements. Farming uses are typically allowed much leeway in zoning codes, however as the town has acquired the property as a park, the use would typically convert to a ‘Municipal’ use, which is more restrictive. See the property card and zoning table for additional information.

Wetlands and Hydrology

Previous site surveys indicate a relatively large area of wetlands that bisects the site from south to north. Though the value of these wetlands appears to be severely degraded by farming activities, it remains a regulated area per town and state Inland Wetland and Watercourses regulations. Wetlands are defined in the town regulations as land consisting of poorly drained soils, very poorly drained soils, alluvial soils, or floodplain area. Upland Review Area is described as the area within 100’ of the boundary of any wetland or watercourse. The man-made ponds on the property are all located within wetland areas. As water courses they now fall under the definition of a ‘watercourse’ regardless of thier man-made nature. Any work within regulated buffer area, wetlands or watercourses is considered a regulated activity, and will require a permitting review process. Larger impacts would also include a public hearing process. Any work within the wetland itself will require an even more stringent review process which may require creating new wetland areas elsewhere on site. Wetland areas toward the bottom of the slopes to the East and North are less impacted by farm activities, and contain more typical native vegetation. Canada Geese were observed in the field areas and in the wetter, (disturbed) grassland areas. Other birds, such as bluebirds, martins and red-tailed hawks are typically found in similar open-feild wetland habitats.

Zoning Bulk and Dimensional Requirements	
	Zone R-44 Residential
Minimum Frontage	60’
Front Yard Set Back	35’
Side Yard Setback	25’
Rear Yard Setback	60’
Min. Lot Width	150’
Max. Building Height	35’ or 2.5 Stories
Max. FAR	
Min. Lot Area	43,560 sq. ft.
Max. Building Coverage	20%

Property Card	
Location	130 Johnnycake Mountain Road
Owner	Town of Burlington
Mailing Adress	200 Spielman Highway
Map Block	6/9/2025
Zone Use	R44
Land Use	Municipal
Acreage	58
Available Utilities	Well / Septic
Buildings	\$0
Improvements	
Appraised	\$67,400
Assessed	\$47,180
Outbuildings	Shelter A - 10,620sf Shelter B - 11,520sf Shelter C - 7,680sf
Appraised	\$67,400
Assessed	\$47,180
Land	
Appraised	\$494,200
Assessed	\$345,940
Total	
Appraised	\$561,600
Assessed	\$393,120



Garage Building



Barn A Building



Barn B Building



Barn C Building

Outbuildings

There are four outbuildings and a small garage on the property. All buildings are constructed of steel framing, with corrugated metal roofing and siding, and are serviced by electric and water.

Maintenance Garage

The garage seems to be in poor condition, and is currently used for storage.

Building A

Building A is currently used to house livestock, and is open on two sides. The walls have been damaged by the animals.

Building B

Building B is fully enclosed, and is in the best condition of all buildings on site. It houses some livestock, and is the location of heated restroom and office space.

Building C

Building C is open on one side, and is used primarily for storage. It seems to be in fair condition.

LEGEND

- PROPERTY LINE
- SETBACK LINE
- SETBACK BUFFER
- LIMIT OF UPLAND REVIEW AREA
- UPLAND REVIEW AREA
- WETLAND AREA



Vegetation

Johnnycake Mountain Farm is part of an established ecosystem, and the types and ages of existing vegetation found onsite reflect the historical use. Nearly two-thirds of the sixty-acre property has been kept clear for farm activities. Besides a hedge of large evergreen trees found northeast of Building C, there are a handful of weathered trees found in the southern portion of the farmland area. The farmland area includes fields of grasses for animals to graze, as well as fields where hay is cultivated. There are few areas of the farm that include machine manicured lawn, although a corral area found to the east of Building B is about an acre of manicured lawn. This corral is mainly used for farm animals and community events.

Wetland plants were observed along the edges of the large pond. Mature oak, maple, and ash trees are scattered along the upland review area, however much of the central land is regularly cut back. This is evident by the observed stems and twigs among the dormant stands of grasses.

Natural habitat has remained through the eastern portion of the property, and can be described as a mature forest. The hardwood trees provide excellent shade for the understory, which is not densely vegetated.

Soils

Soils control many aspects of future development for many sites. Determining the types of soils found on a site can control vegetation type, whether an area is considered a ‘wetland’, if an area is suitable for building on; even what type of organisms can inhabit the area!

Much of the farmland is considered to be moderately well drained soil, with a high organic composition. The wetland area is comprised of poorly drained soils, with high groundwater. The forested area to the east of the site is well draining soils. These distinctions are confirmed by noting what is going on in each of these areas. There is puddling and goose activity for much of the farmland areas, suggesting that the soils here are moderately well drained, yet can be inundated. The wetland areas were observed as being quite wet, with a stream running through portions of the site. The forested areas were comparatively dry, with upland plants established under the shade trees.



1
Grass / Pasture Area



4
Stream Through Woods



2
Large Pond



5
Forest Area



3
Lowland Forest Area



6
Wetland Area

LEGEND

- PROPERTY LINE
- SPECIMEN TREE IN GOOD CONDITION
- SPECIMEN TREE IN POOR CONDITION
- FOREST AREA
- LOWLAND FOREST AREA
- WETLAND AREA
- GRASS / PASTURE AREA



PRELIMINARY DRAFT

0 100 200 400

Vegetation Map
Source: Town of Burlington, Google Earth

Developable Area

This is an analysis of the existing land with regards to ease of the development of buildings or desires site features for the park. Ledge rock, existing development, depth to groundwater, subsoil, slope and regulated areas all work into the consideration of ‘developable areas’ on a property. For Johnny Cake Mountain Farm, the existing landform of the site has generally remained the same over the years. Man made changes to the landform have occurred in order to create the level area the buildings are located on, the corral and the existing ponds.

Historically Significant Features

The historically significant areas are areas defined by important features which give the property its character. These areas may be important for renovation consideration to maintain the desired rural character. They include the existing drive into the farm, the farm buildings, the corral, the three rail fence that surrounds the farm and the farm ponds. As a farming use, with livestock it can be expected that there are areas on site where rocks, debris and sick livestock were buried that may be found during development. Further investigation should determine what is structurally stable and feasible to remain.



Johnnycake Mountain Farm - Burlington Public Library
Johnnycake Mountain Farm - Source: Burlington Room, Burlington Public Library



Most Developable Land

Most Developable Land

Developable areas are areas characterized by moderate to flat topography, with minimal constraints. These areas are most suitable to build large grass fields, as they will require the least earthwork. They are also over the soils that are more freely draining, allowing new development to have better drainage.



Restricted Land

Restricted Land

These areas are defined by moderate to steep slopes, which are less feasible for building grass fields, but may be able to be developed for more passive recreation. These areas also are restricted by town regulations, as much of the land falls under the Upland Review Area. There are pockets of more developable land within this area, although it should be noted that more active recreation may not be practical.



Least Developable Land

Least Developable Land

Highly regulated areas most likely should be considered undevelopable. These areas include actual wetlands areas located on the property, and topography which is not feasible for earthwork. Though engineering could resolve any issues with developing these areas, regulatory restrictions against developing large areas of wetlands would take time and would likely prove costly. An outcropping of ledge at the highest point of the site should also be considered as least developable, due to the costs associated with rock removal, however development options that work over the rock could be considered.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT

Least Developable Land

These areas are most costly to develop. Wetland areas, ledge outcroppings, and extremely steep slopes would require costly solutions to accommodate many types of development.

Restricted Land

These areas are characterized by steep slopes and regulated land. Development will be more costly in these areas.







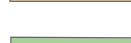

Most Developable Land

These areas are least costly to develop. Slight to moderate slopes and drier soils are more easily manipulated.

Historically Significant Area

These areas are visually significant and provide the rural characteristic of the site. The farm buildings and activities have been a part of the community for more than thirty years.

LEGEND

	PROPERTY LINE
	SETBACK LINE
	LIMIT OF UPLAND REVIEW AREA
	SETBACK BUFFER
	LEAST DEVELOPABLE LAND
	RESTRICTED LAND
	MOST DEVELOPABLE LAND
	HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT AREA



Developable Area Map
Source: Town of Burlington, Google Earth