

Property Tax Grievance: Neighborhood Factor Reclassification

59 Union Village Road, Norwich, Vermont

Reframed analysis of the 2025–2026 reappraisal methodology and subsequent lister changes

Core grievance

The issue is not that Norwich conducted a town-wide reappraisal or that our property value increased. The issue is that, after the professional reappraisal methodology had already assigned our road a neighborhood factor consistent with the prior system, the listers appear to have overlaid a different Fire District / “walk to village” boundary and changed the treatment of selected properties. That second step materially increased our value and, in my view, broke the consistency and repeatability of the original methodology.

This document is intended to explain that distinction visually and methodically. The maps matter because they show that the original reappraisal was not simply a set of blanket polygons. It used road corridors and neighborhood factors that radiated outward from the village center. The later change appears to have taken a different, older geographic concept—the Fire District—and placed it on top of that new methodology.

1. What the professional reappraisal appears to have done

Being a mapping person, I needed to translate the consultant's materials into something I could understand spatially. The consultant provided more than 20 map pages depicting neighborhood assignments along road corridors. Those maps suggest a linear, road-based approach rather than a simple town-wide polygon overlay.

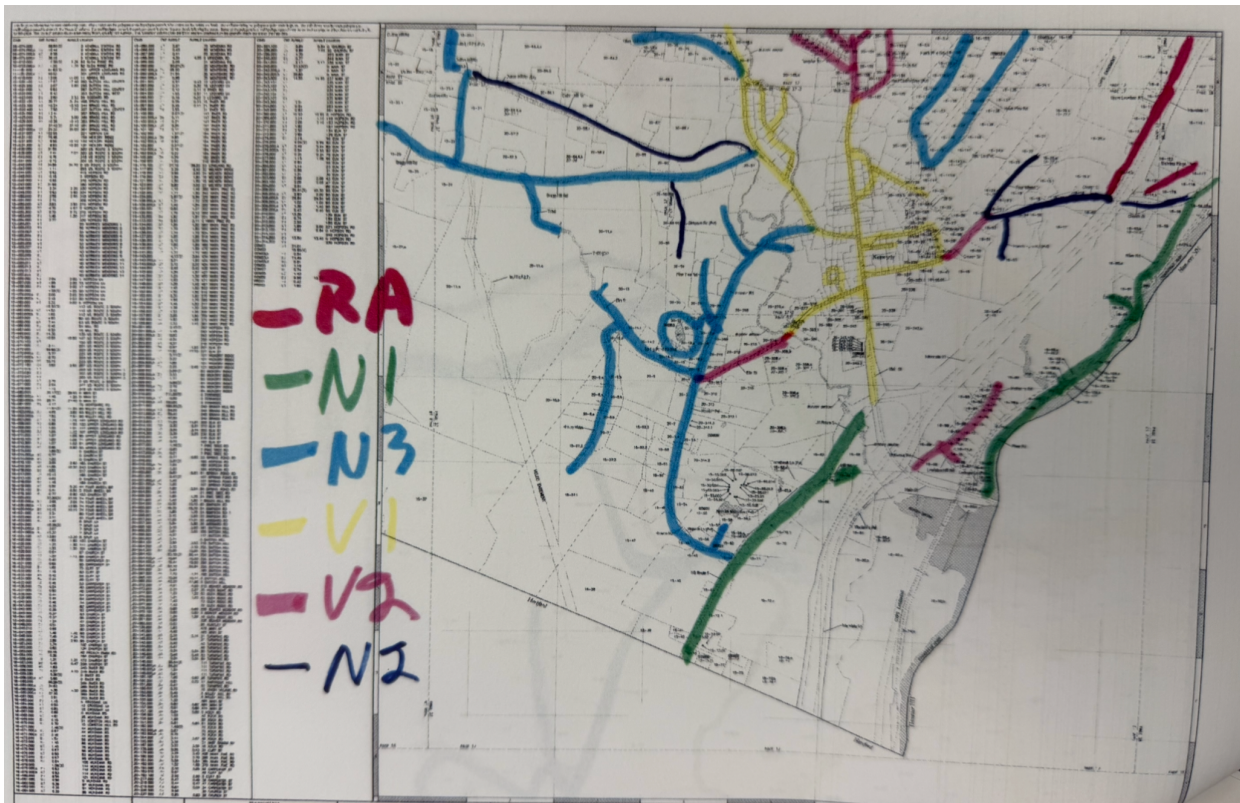


Figure 1. Example of the consultant's neighborhood mapping. The source materials assign neighborhood categories along road corridors rather than treating every parcel inside a broad district boundary the same way.

The consultant effectively consolidated the prior neighborhood structure into seven residential categories:

- Rural Average
- Rural Good
- Norwich Main Road
- Norwich Average
- Norwich Good
- Village
- Village Outlier

That consolidation necessarily required some merging of the roughly 15 neighborhood zones used in 2023. The important question, however, is not simply whether the labels changed. The more important question is whether the underlying neighborhood factor—the valuation effect attached to location—was carried forward consistently when the new categories were created.

2. The neighborhood did not change simply because the labels changed

Our property did not move. Union Village Road did not become a different road. The broader Norwich market changed, and our assessed value appropriately moved with that market. But a town-wide increase in value is different from a separate change in the neighborhood factor applied to one group of properties.

My review of the consultant's maps suggests that the professional reappraisal preserved that distinction. For the area north of Partridge / Willey Hill, the consultant did not simply treat every parcel inside the historical Fire District as "village" or "walk to village." Instead, the mapping followed the road network and maintained different factors as the roads moved away from the village center.

That is why I do not believe the core problem was that the consultant "mis-labeled" our property. The consultant appears to have applied a factor appropriate to the road-based neighborhood it was trying to model.

3. The Fire District is a different geographic concept

The historical Fire District is a polygon. The reappraisal neighborhoods, by contrast, appear to have been created through a road-based valuation methodology. Those are not the same thing, and one cannot automatically be substituted for the other without changing the model.



Figure 2. Polygon representation of the Fire District. The boundary itself does not mirror the road-based neighborhood pattern used in the consultant's reappraisal.

The map also shows that the later treatment was not even a simple application of the full Fire District boundary. Some parcels that appear within or adjacent to that historic geography were treated differently. That matters because it raises the question of what objective rule was used to determine which parcels were moved into the higher factor and which were left under the consultant's original classification.

4. The consultant's maps show a repeatable pattern

When all of the streets are viewed together, the consultant's methodology becomes easier to see. There is a general pattern radiating outward from the village center. While individual boundaries can always be debated, the overall model is coherent: the categories change as roads and neighborhoods move farther from the core.

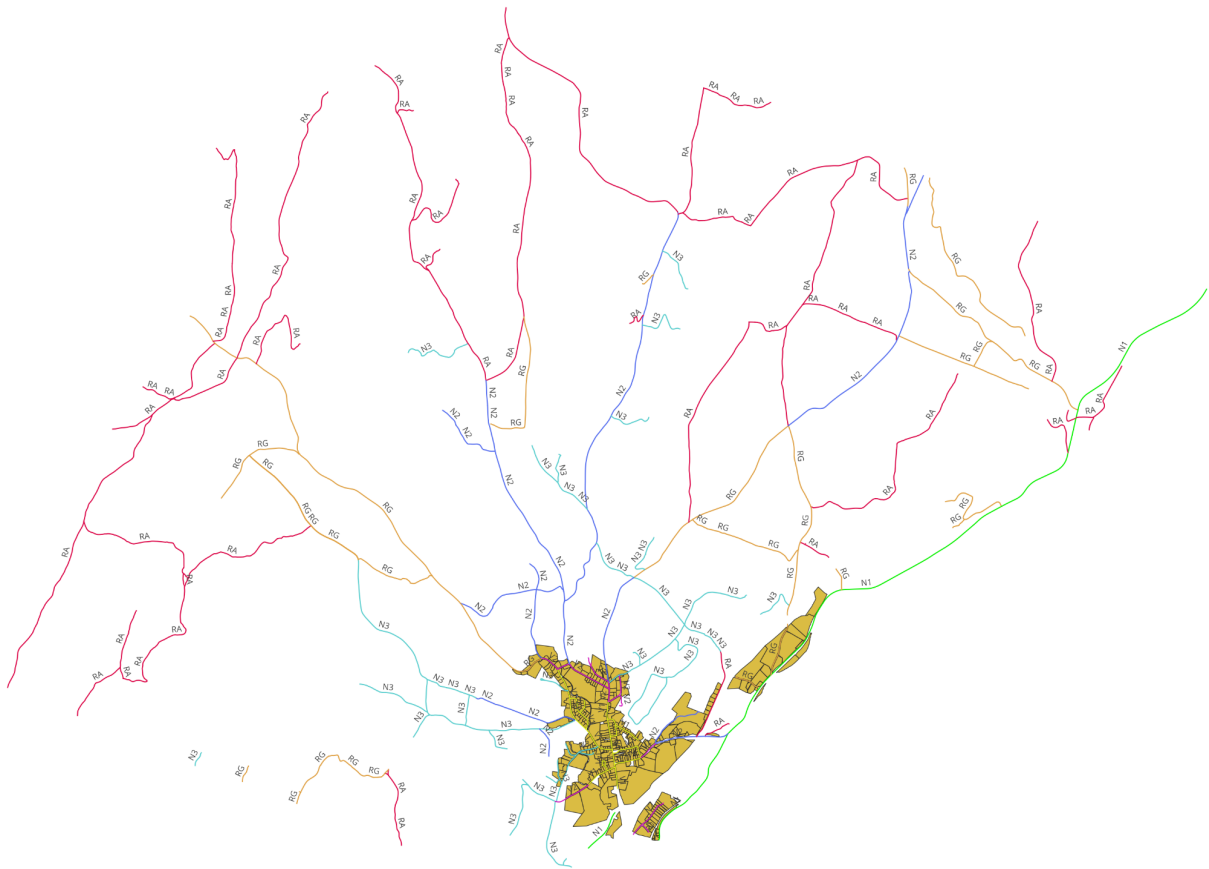


Figure 3. Street-level neighborhood assignments with the Fire District geography visible. The road categories form a broader radial pattern rather than simply following one polygon.

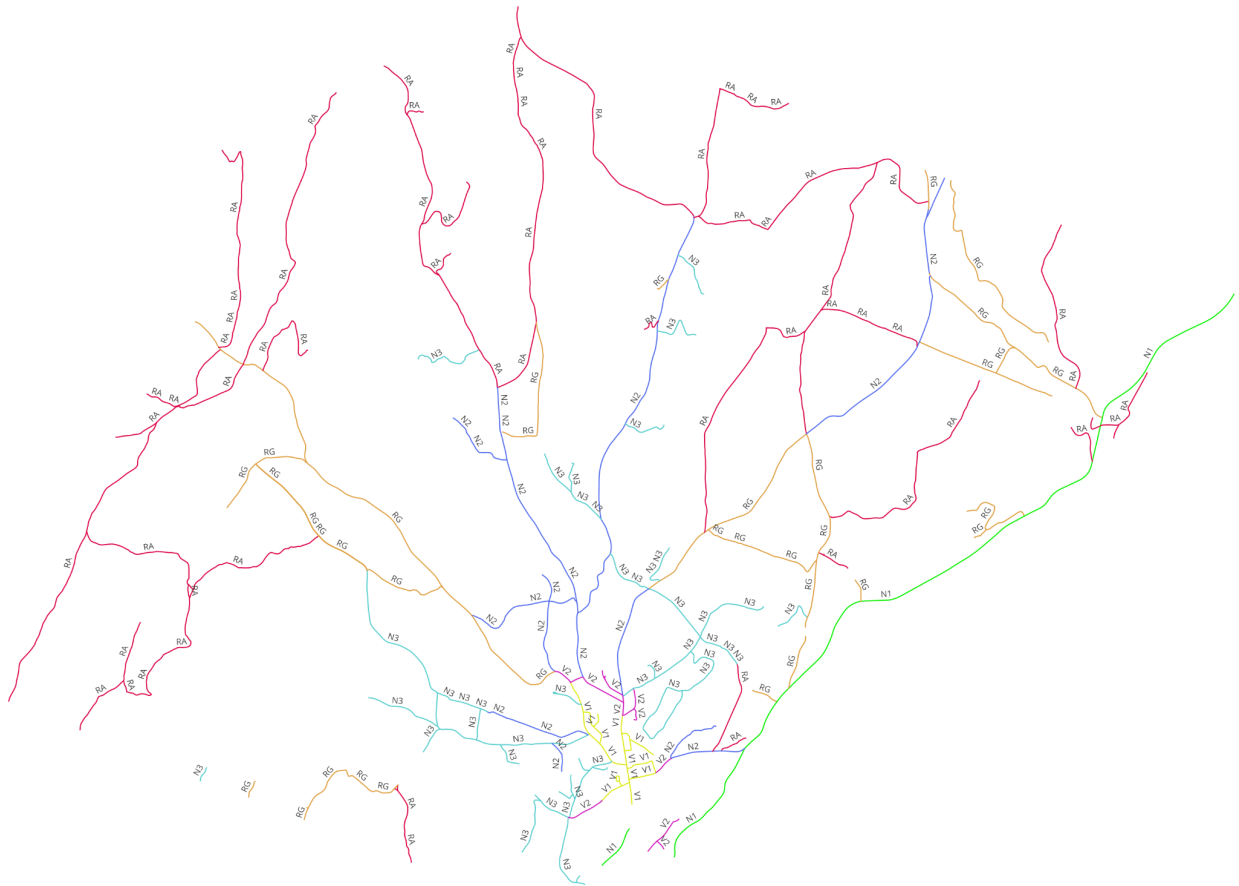


Figure 4. The same road-based neighborhood pattern without the Fire District overlay. The transition from the village center outward is easier to see here.

This is important because it demonstrates that there was a methodology behind the professional reappraisal. The resulting factors were not random. They were tied to a town-wide system that could be mapped, explained, and applied consistently.

5. What happened at 59 Union Village Road

The zoomed-in view is where the grievance becomes concrete. The consultant assigned the relevant portion of Union Village Road an “in” designation with a neighborhood factor of 1.10. Critically, that was the same factor applied to our location under the 2023 neighborhood structure, even though the new system used different category names and boundaries.

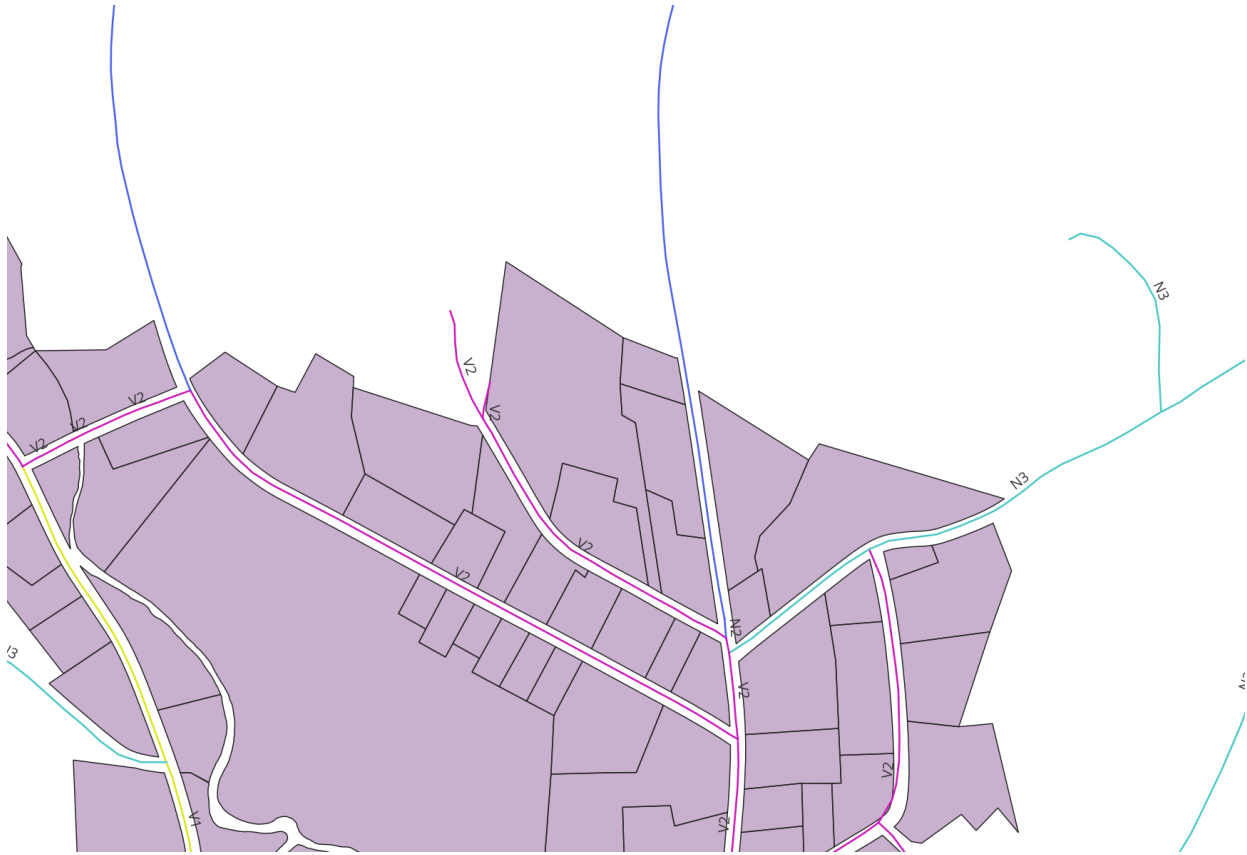


Figure 5. Zoomed view around 59 Union Village Road. The consultant's road-based classification preserved the 1.10 neighborhood factor for this location.

In other words, the professional reappraisal increased the value of our land and property as part of the town-wide process, but it did not conclude that our location had suddenly become a materially different neighborhood. The factor remained consistent.

6. The later lister change appears to have overlaid a second methodology

The problem arose after the reappraisal, when the listers appear to have taken terminology such as “walk to village” and applied a broader polygonal treatment associated with the Fire District. That pushed the higher V2 treatment outward to streets and parcels that the consultant’s road-based model had treated differently.

For our property, the practical effect was approximately a \$100,000 increase in value beyond the result of the professional reappraisal. The issue is therefore not merely semantic. A change in neighborhood coding produced a substantial financial consequence.

The central question for the grievance is: what objective, written, repeatable rule justified overriding the consultant’s completed neighborhood-factor methodology for this property and for the other affected properties?

7. “Walk to village” is weak as a substitute valuation rule

I do not believe the grievance needs to depend on a philosophical debate about walkability. The methodology problem above is stronger. But if “walk to village” is being used as the rationale for the higher factor, then the actual conditions on Union Village Road matter.

There is no continuous sidewalk from our property to the village. There is no dedicated pedestrian infrastructure carrying a resident safely down Union Village Road and through the Turnpike / Main Street

intersection. The route includes steep grades, traffic, and crossings that are materially different from walking on Hazen Street or on the sidewalks within the village core.

The practical distinction is easy to understand: young children routinely walk on the sidewalks of Main Street. I would not consider the route from our house to town equivalent to that environment. An elderly neighbor above us likewise does not regard the road as a safe pedestrian route.

Again, this is secondary evidence. The primary point is that “walk to village” appears to have been used to replace an already-established professional neighborhood methodology without a clear showing of how that new standard was defined, measured, and applied consistently across similarly situated properties.

8. The core grievance

The professional assessing group created a new set of neighborhood categories through a town-wide process. That process changed labels and boundaries, but for 59 Union Village Road it preserved the neighborhood factor that had applied under the prior system. Our assessment increased as part of the reappraisal. We are not challenging those facts simply because the numbers went up.

What we are challenging is the later decision to place a different polygonal concept on top of that road-based methodology and use it to change our neighborhood factor after the fact. Doing so appears to combine two incompatible systems: the old Fire District geography and the new consultant-created road hierarchy. Once those are mixed selectively, the result is no longer readily reproducible from the consultant’s maps or from a single clearly stated town-wide rule.

That is the fairness issue. If a professional methodology is overridden, the replacement methodology should be capable of being stated clearly, replicated by another reviewer, and applied uniformly to all similarly situated properties. Otherwise, the resulting neighborhood adjustments become difficult to distinguish from discretionary parcel-by-parcel changes.

9. Requested resolution

The requested resolution is straightforward:

- Restore the neighborhood factor and resulting valuation produced by the professional reappraisal for 59 Union Village Road; or
- Provide the written criteria, mapping methodology, and supporting market evidence used to override that factor, together with a demonstration that the same criteria were applied uniformly to all similarly situated properties.
- Identify the properties whose neighborhood codes were changed after the professional reappraisal and explain the objective rule used for each change, so the treatment can be evaluated for consistency and equity.

This is not an argument against reappraisal. It is an argument for preserving a coherent and defensible valuation methodology—or, if that methodology is changed, for showing clearly how and why the replacement rule was created and consistently applied.