

DRAFT Regional Planning Report

Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies

November 2, 2023 - DRAFT

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1. Introduction and Background

The HOME Act (Act 47 of 2023, Section 15) required the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA) to report on statutory recommendations to better integrate and implement municipal, regional, and State plans, policies, and investments by focusing on regional future land use maps and policies by December 15, 2023. The VAPDA is the statewide association of regional planning commissions.

The below sections describe the goals under which VAPDA proceeded with this study, findings, approach in carrying out this work, recommendations for consistent regional planning, recommendations related to integration with other State policy initiatives, recommendations for equitable engagement, and finally, how we addressed comments from stakeholders.

2. Legislative Charge

S.100 Sec. 15. REGIONAL PLANNING REPORT

(a) On or before December 15, 2023, the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies shall report on statutory recommendations to better integrate and implement municipal, regional, and State plans, policies, and investments by focusing on regional future land use maps and policies. In the

process of creating the Regional Planning Report, the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies shall consider possible new methods of public engagement that promote equity and expand opportunity for meaningful participation by impacted communities in the decisions affecting their physical and social environment.

(b) The recommendations shall address how to accomplish the following:

(1) Aligning policies and implementation between municipalities, regional planning commissions, and State entities to better address climate change, climate resiliency, natural resources, housing, transportation, economic development, other social determinants of health, and other place-based issues.

(2) Building upon municipal and regional enhanced energy plans and their implementation.

(3) Evaluating place-based policy and project decisions by the State, regional planning commissions, and municipalities related to implementing regional future land use maps and policies and recommending changes to which of those governmental levels those decisions should occur, if necessary.

(4) Ensuring that State agency investment and policy decisions that relate to land development are consistent with regional and local plans. The investments assessed should include, at a minimum:

(A) drinking water;

(B) wastewater;

(C) stormwater;

(D) transportation;

(E) community and economic development;

(F) housing;

(G) energy; and

(H) telecommunications.

(5) Achieving statewide consistency of future land use maps and policies to better support Act 250 and 30 V.S.A. § 248.

(6) How Act 250 and 30 V.S.A. § 248 could better support implementation of regional future land use maps and policies.

(7) Better support implementation of regional future land use maps and policies in the State designation program under 24 V.S.A. chapter 76A.

(8) Improving the quality and effectiveness of future land use maps in regional and municipal plans through changes to 24 V.S.A. chapter 117 including:

(A) future land use map area delineations, definitions, statements, and policies;

(B) existing settlement definitions and their relationship to future land use maps;

(C) the role of regional plans in the review and approval of municipal plans and planning processes; and

(D) a review mechanism to ensure bylaws are consistent with municipal plans.

(c) The report should also discuss how best to implement the recommendations, including the following:

(1) how best to phase in the recommendations;

(2) how to establish a mechanism for the independent review of regional plans to ensure

consistency with statutory requirements;

(3) what guidance and training will be needed to implement the recommendations; and

(4) what incentives and accountability mechanisms are necessary to accomplish these changes at all levels of government.

(d) The Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies shall consult with the Agency of Transportation, the Agency of Natural Resources, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Department of Public Service, Vermont Emergency Management, the Natural Resources Board, the regional development corporations, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, statewide environmental organizations, and other interested parties in developing the report and shall summarize comments.

(e) On or before December 15, 2023, the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies shall submit the report to the following committees: the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, on Government Operations, on Natural Resources and Energy, and on Transportation and the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development, on Environment and Energy, on General and Housing, on Government Operations and Military Affairs, and on Transportation.

(f) The Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies shall be funded in fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024 for this study through the regional planning grant established in 24 V.S.A. § 4306

3. VAPDA's Goals

VAPDA supports a consistent framework for regional land use planning that:

- More consistently defines areas planned for growth through collaborative coordination of municipal and regional plans;
- Supports shifting the mapping and delineation of areas for the purpose of achieving State Designations from the State to the RPCs while leaving the decision to approve a State Designation at the State level.;
- Strengthens the weight of regional plans in State capital investment decisions; and,
- Defines areas that should be exempt from Act 250 on the basis of established regional and municipal planning for compact development and provision of infrastructure.

Why is this important? There are a number of broader benefits to Vermont in having consistent land use plans supporting both municipal and state policy decisions including investments. These benefits include:

- Better implementing the first State planning goal: To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside. (24 V.S.A. § 4302).
- Providing clarity about the planned scale of development in different parts of the State to achieve the planning goal above.
- Advancing the State, regional, and municipal housing targets that will be developed as part of the State's Housing Needs Assessment in the spring of 2024.
- Addressing the housing shortage through policy change such as updating municipal and state regulations as we know that we can't publicly fund our way to a healthy housing market. The

lack of housing is exacerbating the mental health, substance misuse, and homelessness issues throughout the State.

- Achieving the State’s climate goals including reducing greenhouse gas emissions through smart, planned growth that reduces the overall vehicle miles of travel.
- Reducing development pressure on our farms and forests by increasing opportunities for housing in our existing and planned growth areas.
- Improving public health by increasing physical activity and reducing social isolation with more walkable communities.
- Benefits our transit system by concentrating growth and having more riders closer to our transit routes.
- Supporting economic growth in all areas of the State consistent with municipal and regional plans.
- Maximizing the impact of State and Federal infrastructure investments.
- Other?

4. Findings

VAPDA find the following after review of the future land use elements of all eleven regional plans:

- There are several common elements (including land use categories) within regional plans and maps, but there is not always consistency in terms or how they are used.
 - While each region has areas clearly defined as having little to no development, there is less consistency in defining whether these areas are grouped together or further divided into rural residential, working lands (agriculture and forestry), or conservation areas.
 - Each region identifies development centers, but the terms used (or the scales of development) do not always translate among regions (and are not necessarily consistent with state planning area designations). Examples include Regional Center, Center, Town Center, Village Center, Service Center, and Hamlet.
 - All regional plans create distinctions between developed and undeveloped areas, often using a spectrum of urban to rural development patterns.
- There is variation in the level of detail future land use designations are addressed in regional plans.
 - Variation in how closely land use plan language is tied to maps
 - Specificity of desired future conditions
 - The degree to which regional plans contain regulatory provisions for use in Act 250
 - Mapping detail (ranging from simple point data, approximate areas, and specific geographic designations or districts)
- Several regions are using unique land use areas that showcase the variation in planning issues across the state. Examples include:
 - CCRPC’s Transit-Oriented Development Overlay
 - LCPC’s State Forest and Shoreland Regional Areas
 - TRORC’s Interstate Interchange Areas
 - Resort Center Areas in CVRPC, MARC, and WRC

5. Approach to Developing Recommendations

The following describes the process undertaken by VAPDA to arrive at this report and its recommendations.

1. From July 1 to October 20, VAPDA developed and refined the following recommendations:

- a. Use polygon data to denote planning areas.
- b. Identify common features or elements of planning area descriptions.
- c. Identify criteria by which to define land use designations. VAPDA reviewed the criteria by which these land use areas might be defined based on review of current regional plans. This data helped VAPDA understand the different RPC FLU areas to make better recommendations about statewide consistency.
 - Intent for Future Land Use.
 - Residential density and/or e911 point density.
 - Scale & type of development.
 - Infrastructure available, or planned, to support development.
 - Natural and Historic/Cultural Resources.

VAPDA reviewed the results of this analysis in August, September, and October to reach a consensus on the common future land use areas.

2. From October 1 to December 15, VAPDA refined recommendations on the following:

How future land use areas interface with statewide policy. VAPDA discussed recommendations on how the new core regional land use areas and their associated criteria will be used in the following contexts:

- **State planning designations.**
- **Act 250.**
- **Updates to Chapter 117.**
- **State capital investment planning.**

3. From October – December VAPDA sought stakeholder feedback:

On November 3, 2023, VAPDA sent the draft FLU areas and criteria to the following organizations and offered meetings to review and discuss. One meeting for state agencies: Agency of Transportation, the Agency of Natural Resources, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Department of Public Service, Vermont Emergency Management, and the Natural Resources Board; one meeting for regional development corporations; one meeting for the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and Vermont Planners Association; and one meeting for Vermont Natural Resources Council. Comments were requested by December 1, 2023.

4. From October 1-December 1, 2023, RPC Boards and Committees reviewed and commented on the draft recommendations.

5. Final Report Submission: VAPDA completed edits and submitted this report by December 15 to the following committees: the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, on Government Operations, on Natural Resources and Energy, and on Transportation and the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development, on Environment and Energy, on General and Housing, on Government Operations and Military Affairs, and on Transportation.

6. Recommendations for Consistent Future Land Use Plans

VAPDA has determined that all regional plans should use a core set of land use designations that represent a spectrum of development patterns and intensities. It is noted that regions should retain the ability to define special land use categories or overlays to address their unique circumstances, but which may not be treated equivalently at a statewide level. More details can be found in Appendix 1.

a. Proposed future land use planning area descriptions.

This initial list of land use areas were used for discussion purposes as the RPCs developed agreement on these definitions. Initial regional land use areas included:

- **Planned Growth Areas:** Includes the densest existing settlement and future growth areas with the highest concentrations of population, housing, and employment in each town. They include a mix of commercial, residential, and civic or cultural sites with active streetscapes, supported by land development regulations, public water and/or wastewater and multi-modal transportation systems. These areas typically surround historic or new commercial downtowns and village centers.
- **Village Areas:** Includes the traditional settlement area or a proposed new settlement area, typically comprised of a cohesive mix of residential, civic, religious, commercial, and mixed-use buildings, arranged along a main street and intersecting streets that are within walking distance for residents who live within and surrounding the core. Village Areas may not have one of the following: water, sewer, or land development regulations. They provide some opportunity for infill development or new development areas where the village can grow and be flood resilient. These areas may typically include existing village center designations or plan to seek this designation (this area is not limited to the designation).
- **Transition/infill area (optional):** Includes areas of existing or planned commercial, office, mixed-use development, or residential uses either adjacent to a Planned Growth or Village Area or a new Transition Area and served by, or planned for, water and/or wastewater. The intent of this land use category is to transform these areas into higher-density, mixed use settlements, or residential neighborhoods through infill and redevelopment or new development. New commercial strip auto-oriented development is not allowed as to prevent negatively impacting the economic vitality of commercial areas in the adjacent or nearby Planned Growth or Village Area. This area could also include adjacent greenfields safer from flooding.
- **Resort-based Recreation Areas:** Includes large-scale resource-based, recreational facilities, often concentrated around ski resorts, lakeshores, or concentrated trail networks, which provide infrastructure, jobs, and housing to support recreational activities.
- **Enterprise:** Includes locations of high economic activity and employment which are not adjacent to Planned Growth Areas. These include industrial parks, areas of natural resource extraction, or

other commercial uses which involve larger land areas. Enterprise areas typically have ready access to water supply, sewage disposal, electricity, and freight transportation networks.

- **Hamlet:** Small historic clusters of homes and perhaps a school, church, store, or other public buildings not planned for significant growth; no public water supply or wastewater systems, and mostly focused along 1-2 roads. These may be depicted as points on the FLU map.
- **Rural - General:** Include areas that promote the preservation of Vermont's traditional working landscape and natural area features. They allow for low-density residential and sometimes limited commercial development that is compatible with productive lands and natural areas. This area could also include an area that a municipality is planning to make more rural than it is currently.
- **Rural - Agricultural and Forestry:** Include blocks of forest or farmland that sustain resource industries, provide critical wildlife habitat and movement, outdoor recreation, flood storage, aquifer recharge, and scenic beauty, and contribute to economic well-being and quality of life. Development in these areas should be carefully managed to promote the working landscape and rural economy, and address regional goals, while protecting the agricultural and forest resource value. Consistent with Act 171 requirements.
- **Rural - Conservation:** Include areas intended to be conserved often with regulations or property rights limiting development, fragmentation, and conversion in order to maintain ecological health and scenic beauty. These lands have significant economic value, and require special protection due to their uniqueness, fragility, or ecological importance. They may include protected lands, areas with specific features like steep slopes or endangered species, wetlands, flood hazard areas, and shoreline protection areas, and are intended to remain largely undeveloped for the benefit of future generations. Consistent with Act 171 requirements.

b. Use polygon data to denote planning areas. VAPDA agreed that the regions that use point data for land use designations will convert these to polygon areas to support clearer application of state-level policy. There may be exceptions, if necessary, potentially for small crossroads or hamlet settlement areas or site-specific industrial parks. Decisions on these delineations will be led by the municipalities and the regional planning commission, and should not be associated with specific zoning requirements, but rather an overall goal for development patterns.

7. Recommendations for Regional Plan Review and Approval Process

Below is a proposed process for reviewing and approving Regional Plans to maintain long term consistency:

1. Draft Plan Development and Regional Approval – The RPC will develop the Draft Regional Plan in consultation with their member municipalities and seek review by State agencies and other stakeholders. As part of the plan development process, the RPC should document efforts to engage marginalized communities. Equitable engagement best practices are included in Section 9 below.. The RPC will hold two public hearings consistent with current statute in their region to obtain any comments from their municipalities and other stakeholders. prior to approval of the draft regional plan by the RPC. State agencies will be asked to provide comments and a determination as to compliance with state statutory requirements in advance of the first public hearing. After consideration of the comments received, the RPC will adopt their regional plan.

2. State Approval – If the legislature determines that an additional process is needed for review and approval of a regional plan, VAPDA suggests that could be done by either a peer review by other RPCs, the Downtown Board, an enhanced NRB, or some other existing or new body. If this additional process is added, one major criterion in the review and approval should be how well the Regional Plan addresses fair housing and documents the ability to meet regional housing targets.
3. Accountability: There should be consequences of not following statute. If an RPC does not bring their plan into compliance, they should be provided a reasonable amount of time (up to 12 months depending upon what needs to be revised) to correct before any RPC member municipalities lose benefits related to Designations, Act 250, or State infrastructure investments.

8. Recommendations related to integration with other State policy initiatives

Describe how future land use areas interface with statewide policy. VAPDA provides the following recommendations on how the updated regional future land use areas and their associated criteria will be used in the following contexts:

- **State Designation Program.** VAPDA envisions the State requiring RPCs to delineate the areas *that will be used in an updated State Designation Program. [Placeholder: The State Designation Study is underway, and this section will be updated to consider those recommendations to the extent possible.]*
 - a. **Planned Growth Areas – In order to obtain a State Designation and benefits a recommendation letter** from RPC should be required. Designation should require identification in regional plan future land use element and regionally approved municipal plan. Benefits such as Act 250 exemptions and investment priority should apply to an area potentially as large as the entire Planned Growth Area while tax benefits, etc. would apply to properties in the mapped center and/or meeting certain criteria – historic preservation predominantly. Likely need State review for river corridors/floodplains and multi-modal transportation.
 - b. **Transition Areas-** Transition areas planned for increased development should be able to be included in a designation that encourages the redevelopment of auto-oriented strip development or the development into greenfields adjacent to a Planned Growth or Village Area. These areas may also be outside of any state designation.
 - c. **Village Areas** –Existing and any future Village Center designations (not included as Planned Growth Areas) will be included within the Village Areas. General benefits such as state grants and infrastructure investments should apply to the entire Village, while tax benefits should apply to properties meeting certain criteria – historic preservation predominantly.
 - d. **Resource-based Recreation Areas** – These are likely outside of any State designation.
 - e. **Enterprise Areas** – These are likely outside of any State designation.
 - f. **Hamlet** - Hamlets are outside of any State designation. Any currently designated village centers should be identified in a Village Area in regional plans' FLU element.
 - g. **Rural – General** – These are outside of any State designation.

- h. **Rural - Agricultural and Forestry** - These are outside of any State designation.
 - i. **Rural- Conservation** - These are outside of any State designation.
- **Act 250.** All or portions of Planned Growth Areas may meet criteria and be reviewed by the State to achieve exemption from Act 250 review or specific criteria.
 - a. **Planned Growth Areas** - Planned Growth Areas should be exempt from Act 250 jurisdiction when the municipality receives approval from the State through whatever process is adopted after the Act 250 and Designation studies' recommendations are implemented by the legislature. If exempt from future Act 250 jurisdiction, need a process for a property owner to transition any remaining Act 250 conditions to municipal jurisdiction when seeking a new permit. This process could include existing Act 250 permits in areas exempted to be superseded by, or relevant conditions get included in, a subsequent municipal permit. Need state review for river corridors/floodplains, historic preservation, and transportation – 60 days for review, include DEC permits before town issues final permit (could trails/paths be exempted?). Maybe different standards in the planned growth areas. (4449e)
 - b. **Transition** - Transition areas could be exempt from Act 250 jurisdiction when the community demonstrates planning and regulation that requires all new development to adhere to Vermont's land use goals (similar to current NDA requirements?).
 - c. **Village Areas** – Villages could be exempt from Act 250 jurisdiction or held to a different jurisdictional threshold than Rural areas. Planning and regulations that require new development to adhere to Vermont's land use goals should be required for reductions in, or exemptions from, Act 250 jurisdiction. Consider removing the 5-year, 5-mile jurisdictional trigger. Consider treating all Act 250 applications in these areas as minors. Consider reducing jurisdictional thresholds for commercial but not residential.
 - d. **Resource-based Recreation Areas** – These areas should be under Act 250 jurisdiction due to their potential impact on natural resources.
 - e. **Enterprise Areas** – These areas should be under Act 250 jurisdiction. Different Act 250 criteria could be considered. Nuisance type impacts should be reviewed at edge of area, rather than individual lots. Enable offsite ag soil mitigation.
 - f. **Hamlet** - These areas should be under Act 250 jurisdiction.
 - g. **Rural – General** – These areas should be under Act 250 jurisdiction.
 - h. **Rural - Agricultural and Forestry** - These areas should be under Act 250 jurisdiction. This area may be defined by constraint mapping done as part of Act 174 for Enhanced Energy Plans.
 - i. **Rural- Conservation** - These areas should be under Act 250 jurisdiction and may have a lower jurisdictional threshold and/or a higher standard of review. This area may be defined by constraint mapping done as part of Act 174 for Enhanced Energy Plans.
- **State capital investment planning.** For each FLU Area, we offer the following types of State investment that should be prioritized. These lists are not intended to be all inclusive.
 - a. **Planned Growth Areas** - Water, wastewater, stormwater, sidewalks, paths, complete streets, transit, EVSE, urban trees, state offices, schools, housing, historic preservation and adaptive re-use. Consideration of climate resilience is critical.

- b. **Transition Areas** - Water, wastewater, stormwater, sidewalks, paths, complete streets, transit, EVSE, urban trees, housing, historic preservation. Consideration of climate resilience is critical.
 - c. **Village Areas** – Water, wastewater, stormwater, sidewalks, paths, complete streets, transit, EVSE, urban trees, state offices, schools, housing, historic preservation and adaptive re-use. Consideration of climate resilience is critical.
 - d. **Resource-based Recreation Areas** – Water, wastewater, stormwater, sidewalks, paths, complete streets, transit, EVSE. Consideration of climate resilience is critical.
 - e. **Enterprise Areas** – Water, wastewater, stormwater, sidewalks, paths, complete streets, transit, EVSE.
 - f. **Hamlet** - Sidewalks, paths, EVSE.
 - g. **Rural – General** – Clean water, working lands, conservation easements, recreational trails.
 - h. **Rural - Agricultural and Forestry** - Clean water, working lands, conservation easements, recreational trails.
 - i. **Rural- Conservation** - Clean water, working lands, conservation easements, recreational trails.
- **Updates to Chapter 117.** Specifically, the required elements of regional plans in 24 V.S.A. § 4348a and consistency of municipal plans with regional plans as required in 24 V.S.A. §4382(a). See Appendix 2 [not yet drafted] for detailed suggestions regarding statutory changes.
 - **Other State Policy.** See Appendix 3 [not yet drafted] for detailed suggestions regarding statutory changes.
 - a. **Speed Limits** - In Planned Growth and Village Areas, consider allowing municipalities with these areas to adopt speed limits less than 25 mph.

9. Recommendations related to equitable engagement

RPCs should consider methods of public engagement that promote equity and expand opportunity for meaningful participation by impacted communities in the decisions affecting their physical and social environment.

When drafting regional plans that guide land use, inclusive community participation is important to eliminate racism and discrimination and achieve better outcomes.ⁱ Effective public education on what land use policies is, and what land use planning has the potential to do for a community can be a crucial element in encouraging participation from broader and more representative groups of citizens. However, inviting underrepresented and marginalized groups to attend events and meetings is not enough, pro-active recruitment, education, relationship building, and empowerment is needed for effective engagement around critical decisions about land use.ⁱⁱ

Additionally, the following recommendations from the American Planners Association should apply to updating land use policies:

- Drafting should allow for multiple opportunities for review of potential impacts on marginalized communities.
- Overly complicated language and regulations should be avoided. Planners should speak to the community in the language(s) they understand and use clear and objective, equity-based standards and review criteria.ⁱⁱⁱ

Although there are nearly always capacity constraints, thoughtful selection of a community engagement process should not overburden the community members who already face barriers to engaging with decision-making, while also allowing those same community members to have a voice in how Future Land Use Maps are developed. Achieving this will require that any engagement effort or activity is made accessible through providing services such as transportation, translation, and childcare. Food should be provided, and stipends whenever possible. Venue locations should be carefully selected while considering what spaces may or may not be inviting depending on lived experiences or generational trauma.

10. Recommendations related to implementation

Here are initial recommendations for the sequencing and scheduling of activities needed to properly implement the proposed changes described above. These recommendations assume that Act 250 and the State Designation Program have been updated consistent with the recommendations included in this report and the statute generally becomes effective July 1, 2024.

Action – Responsible Party	Timeframe or deadline
Training and Education – The RPCs, NRB, and DHCD should collaborate on a training presentation for municipalities, RPCs, NRB, District Environmental Commissions, State agency staff, developers, and other interested parties.	7/24-6/25
Updated State Designation Guidance - DHCD	12/31/24
Updated Act 250 Rulemaking as required - NRB	12/31/25
<i>If Act 250 and/or Designation reforms are adopted by the Legislature:</i>	
RPCs refine future land use criteria guidance	7/25
RPCs update regional plan future land use elements including equitable engagement process.	to be completed within three years after guidance

11. Comments from State Agencies and other stakeholders with responses

To be added after they review in November...

Appendix 1 – Draft Future Land Use Areas

Appendix 2 Future Land Use Element Statutory Recommendations

Appendix 3 – Other Statutory Recommendations Related to Act 250, Designations, State Investments

DRAFT

APPENDIX 1 DRAFT FUTURE LAND USE AREAS

PLANNED GROWTH AREA	
Description	Includes the densest existing settlement and future growth areas with the highest concentrations of population, housing, and employment in each town. They include a mix of commercial, residential, and civic or cultural sites with active streetscapes, supported by land development regulations, public water and/or wastewater and multi-modal transportation systems. These areas typically surround historic or new commercial downtowns and village centers.
Key Criteria description	
Residential Density	Among highest in town or region; per Act 47 at least 5 du/ac net densities should be allowed in zoning. If zoning is not yet updated in compliance with Act 47, delineate the PGA anyway.
Housing Target	They are planned to accommodate most, if not all, of the municipal housing target through a diversity of residential building types when considered in combination with adjacent Transition Areas.
Types of Appropriate Development	Redevelopment, renovation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings, infill, adjacent greenfield development where needed to meet housing targets, serve civic and commercial needs and be flood resilient.
Zoning/Subdivision	land development regulations required
Community Water	Existing or planned water service area required (if needed to meet Act 47 minimum densities) (still PGA even if limited)
Community Sewer	Existing or planned sewer service area required (if needed to meet Act 47 minimum densities) (still PGA even if limited)
Transportation	Varied options emphasizing walking, biking, and transit.

VILLAGE AREA	
Description	Includes the traditional settlement area or a proposed new settlement area, typically comprised of a cohesive mix of residential, civic, religious, commercial, and mixed-use buildings, arranged along a main street and intersecting streets that are within walking distance for residents who live within and surrounding the core. Village Areas may not have one of the following: water, sewer, or land development regulations . They provide some opportunity for infill development or new development areas where the village can grow and be flood resilient. These areas may typically include existing village center designations or plan to seek this designation (this area is not limited to the designation).
Key Criteria description	
Residential Density	Relatively denser and more diverse housing types than surrounding rural areas in that town but does not achieve Act 47 required densities.
Housing Target	Demonstrate ability to accommodate some portion of municipal housing target within this area.
Types of Appropriate Development	Redevelopment, renovation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings, infill, adjacent greenfield development where needed to meet housing targets and be flood resilient.

Zoning/Subdivision	land development regulations optional
Community Water	Possible without having either sewer or zoning
Community Sewer	Possible without having either water or zoning
Transportation	Pedestrian-oriented including at least some existing or planned sidewalks or walking opportunities(?)

TRANSITION/INFILL AREA (OPTIONAL)	
Description	Includes areas of existing or planned commercial, office, mixed-use development, or residential uses either adjacent to a Planned Growth or Village Area or a new Transition Area and served by, or planned for, water and/or wastewater. The intent of this land use category is to transform these areas into higher-density, mixed use settlements, or residential neighborhoods through infill and redevelopment or new development. New commercial strip auto-oriented development is not allowed as to prevent negatively impacting the economic vitality of commercial areas in the adjacent or nearby Planned Growth or Village Area. This area could also include adjacent greenfields safer from flooding.
Key Criteria description	
Residential Density	Per Act 47, at least 5 du/ac net densities allowed in zoning. Intent to add housing to these strip commercial corridors or in adjacent greenfields safe from flooding.
Housing Target	Demonstrate ability to accommodate some significant portion of municipal housing target within this area.
Land Uses	Should be planned (and zoned) for a mix of uses
Zoning/Subdivision	land development regulations optional
Community Water	Existing or planned water service area required
Community Sewer	Existing or planned water service area required
Transportation	Varied options emphasizing walking, biking, and transit.

RESOURCE-BASED RECREATION AREA (OPTIONAL)	
Description	Includes large-scale resource-based, recreational facilities, often concentrated around ski resorts, lakeshores, or concentrated trail networks, which provide infrastructure, jobs, and housing to support recreational activities.
Key Criteria description	
Housing Density	High but less overall than Planned Growth Areas, often seasonal housing
Land Uses	Recreation, accessory and/or seasonal residential & commercial
Community Water	Often present but limited capacity
Community Sewer	Often present but limited capacity
Transportation	Road access and transit may be seasonal

ENTERPRISE (OPTIONAL)	
Description	Includes locations of high economic activity and employment which are not adjacent to Planned Growth Areas. These include industrial parks, areas of natural resource extraction, or other commercial uses which involve larger land areas. Enterprise areas typically have ready access to water supply, sewage disposal, electricity, and freight transportation networks.
Key Criteria description	
Housing Density	None or low (from existing homes)
Employment	High employment
Land Uses	Industrial, Office, Limited retail, resource extraction not adjacent to a Planned Growth Area
Community Water	May be present
Community Sewer	May be present
Transportation	Driven by freight transportation (large truck, rail, air, and/or boat)

HAMLET	
Description	Small historic clusters of homes and perhaps a school, church, store, or other public buildings not planned for significant growth; no public water supply or wastewater systems, and mostly focused along 1-2 roads. These may be depicted as points on the FLU map.
Key Criteria description	
Housing Density	low density residential
Land Uses	Hamlets may become Village Centers and/or Areas when they meet either the designation or future land use criteria.
Community Water	None required
Community Sewer	None required

RURAL AREAS	
Description	Rural – General: Include areas that promote the preservation of Vermont's traditional working landscape and natural area features. They allow for low-density residential and sometimes limited commercial development that is compatible with productive lands and natural areas. This area could also include an area that a municipality is planning to make more rural than it is currently.
	Rural - Agricultural and Forestry: Include blocks of forest or farmland that sustain resource industries, provide critical wildlife habitat and movement, outdoor recreation, flood storage, aquifer recharge, and scenic beauty, and contribute to economic well-being and quality of life. Development in these areas should be carefully managed to promote the working landscape and rural economy, and address regional goals, while protecting the agricultural and forest resource value. Consistent with Act 171 requirements.
	Rural – Conservation: Include areas intended to be conserved often with regulations or property rights limiting development, fragmentation, and conversion in order to maintain ecological health and scenic beauty. These lands have significant economic value, and require special protection due to their uniqueness, fragility, or ecological importance. They may include protected lands, areas with specific features like steep slopes or endangered species, wetlands, flood hazard areas, and shoreline protection areas, and are intended to remain largely undeveloped for the benefit of future generations. Consistent with Act 171 requirements.
Key Criteria description	
Housing Density	Very low
Employment	Resource-based employers and scattered sites
Land Uses	Predominantly farms, forests, and very low density residential

We should keep in mind that RPCs may call out special land use areas beyond this list and include some statutory language providing the ability and parameters.

ⁱ American Planners Association (2022). Equity in Zoning Policy Guide. [Equity in Zoning Policy Guide \(planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com)
ⁱⁱ American Planners Association (2022). Equity in Zoning Policy Guide. [Equity in Zoning Policy Guide \(planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com)
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