



From: [Callie Fishburn](#)
To: [Callie Fishburn](#)
Cc: [Bill Colvin](#); [Samantha Page](#); [Nick Zaiac](#)
Subject: Draft Bennington County Regional Plan Public Hearing 30-Day Notice
Date: Thursday, June 11, 2026 12:36:48 PM
Attachments: [Notice of Public Hearing_07162026.pdf](#)
[BC_Regional Plan Review Checklist - v.4.0.pdf](#)

EXTERNAL SENDER: Do not open attachments or click on links unless you recognize and trust the sender.

To: Abutting Regional Planning Commissions and State Agencies
From: BCRC Staff
Date: June 11, 2026
Subject: Draft Bennington County Regional Plan Public Hearing 30-Day Notice

BCRC has updated the Bennington County Regional Plan to reflect new state law from 2024. The purpose of this memo is to provide notice to stakeholders that BCRC is beginning the adoption process. This memo provides 30 days' advance notice of BCRC's first required public hearing on the draft regional plan in accordance with state law. After this hearing, BCRC anticipates making changes to the plan to reflect additional feedback and comments from the state's Land Use Review Board. Enclosed with this memo is a hearing notice, request for comments, information on how to access the plan, and a report documenting conformance to the goals and elements established by state law.

BCRC PUBLIC HEARING AND REPORT ON DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN

Thursday, July 16, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Zoom video link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81781411632?pwd=q4CTOW11bV6T0jed3F1LOF8lrfvkHM.1>

Zoom by Phone: 1-305-224-1968

Meeting ID 817 8141 1632 Passcode: 191182

Physical Location: Merck Forest & Farmland, 3270 Route 315, Rupert, Vermont 05768

See enclosed official hearing notice.

Copies of the draft plan and report documenting conformance to Vermont Statute per Title 24 VSA Section 4348(d)(1) are available at the BCRC office, 210 South Street, Suite 6, in Bennington, VT and online at: <http://www.bcrcvt.org/regional-plan.html>.

CHANGES TO FUTURE LAND USE AREAS

The regional Future Land Use Map in the draft regional plan constitutes a new map for the entire region, with updated land use categories that comply with Act 181. The map was developed in line with statewide guidance on mapping methodology, review of local planning documents, and discussions with municipal planning commissions.

Callie Fishburn (she/her)

Regional Planner

[Bennington County Regional Commission](#)

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**BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

**FIRST PUBLIC HEARING FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE
BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL PLAN**

The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) will conduct a first hybrid public hearing to gather public comment on the 2026 Bennington County Regional Plan. This meeting will take place on Thursday, July 16, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at Merck Forest & Farmland, 3270 Route 315, Rupert, Vermont 05768.

To attend remotely:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81781411632?pwd=q4CTOW11bV6T0jed3F1LOF8lrfvkHM.1>

Meeting ID: 817 8141 1632 Passcode: 191182

One tap mobile: +13052241968,,81781411632#,,, *191182# US

A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

These hearings are being held pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4348 and §4352. This notice is provided pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4444. Per Vermont Statute, BCRC seeks general comments and specific comments with respect to the extent to which the plan is consistent with the goals established in 24 VSA § 4302, and whether the enhanced energy portion of the plan complies with the requirements of 24 V.S.A. §4348(a)(3), §4352, and the enhanced energy planning standards.

The Bennington County Regional Plan celebrates the unique places and people that make up the Bennington region and offers a guide for its development, growth, and preservation in the coming years. This plan addresses issues across a range of topics to create a comprehensive tool for policies, programs, and development throughout the region. The plan also will also be used as regulatory review criteria in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings.

In addition, the draft regional plan incorporates revisions required by state legislation enacted in 2024, including the following elements:

- A regional Future Land Use Map identifying Act 181-compliant future land use areas
- A map of areas eligible for the State Designation Program, which can provide tax credits and other incentives to support revitalization and development
- A map of areas opting into Tier 1B Act 250 Jurisdiction
- Municipal Housing Targets, specifying the number of new housing units needed by 2030 and 2050, as determined by the state's Regional Housing Needs Assessment.

B. AREA COVERED

The proposed regional plan affects the entire BCRC service area, which includes fourteen towns and three villages in Bennington County.

C. TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **Introduction**
- **Natural Systems**

- Natural Resources
- Climate Resilience
- Landscape and Character (Rural)
- **Living and Growing**
 - Landscape and Character (Growth)
 - Housing
 - Local Economy
- **Supporting Infrastructure**
 - Mobility and Transportation
 - Energy
 - Utilities, Facilities, and Infrastructure Services
- **People and Community**
 - Wellbeing and Recreation
 - Community Life
 - Education
- **Coordination and Implementation**
 - Governance and Coordination
 - Implementation Matrix

D. WHERE THE FULL PLAN MAY BE EXAMINED:

Copies of the proposed plan are available at the BCRC offices at 210 South Street, Suite 6, in Bennington, Vermont and online at: <http://www.bcrcvt.org/regional-plan.html>. For further information, please contact Bill Colvin at (802) 442-0713 or bcolvin@bcrcvt.org.

Bill Colvin, Bennington County Regional Commission Executive Director

SUMMARY: REGIONAL PLAN APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION

This summary and the pages that follow document how the Bennington County Regional Commission plan dated April 30, 2026 meets the requirements for approval by the Land Use Review Board. Per 24 V.S.A. § 4348(h)(4), the Land Use Review Board (LURB) will approve the regional plan upon finding that the regional plan meets the following requirements:

- (A) Consistency with the **State planning goals** as described in Section 4302 of Chapter 117 with consistency determined in the manner described under subdivision 4302(f)(1) of this chapter.
- (B) Consistency with the **purposes of the regional plan** established in section 4347 of chapter.
- (C) Consistency with the **regional plan elements** as described in section 4348a of this chapter, except that the requirements of section 4352 of this chapter related to enhanced energy planning shall be the under the sole authority of the Department of Public Service.
- (D) Compatibility with **adjacent regional planning areas** in the manner described under subdivision 4302(f)(2) of this chapter.

In addition, the LURB conducts **regional plan map review** following the requirements of 10 V.S.A. § 6033. This approval may happen separately from regional plan approval.

Plan Consistency & Compatibility

As used in Chapter 117, *“consistent with the goals” requires substantial progress toward attainment of the goals established in this section, unless the planning body determines that a particular goal is not relevant or attainable. If such a determination is made, the planning body shall identify the goal in the plan and describe the situation, explain why the goal is not relevant or attainable, and indicate what measures should be taken to mitigate any adverse effects of not making substantial progress toward that goal. The determination of relevance or attainability shall be subject to review as part of a consistency determination under this chapter.*”
24 V.S.A. § 4302(f)(1).

“...for one plan to be “compatible with” another, the plan in question, as implemented, will not significantly reduce the desired effect of the implementation of the other plan. If a plan, as implemented, will significantly reduce the desired effect of the other plan, the plan may be considered compatible if” it meets certain criteria listed in 24 V.S.A. § 4302(f)(2).

The following checklists summarize how the BCRC’s plan meets the requirements above. Further details regarding how the plan and map meet the various requirements are on the following pages.

A. Consistency - State Planning Goals: § 4302		Met	Not Met
1	Development Pattern	☒	☐
2	Economy	☒	☐
3	Education	☒	☐
4	Transportation	☒	☐
5	Natural and Historic Resources	☒	☐
6	Quality of Resources	☒	☐
7	Energy	☒	☐
8	Recreation	☒	☐
9	Agriculture and Forest Industries	☒	☐

10	Use of Resources	☒	☐
11	Housing	☒	☐
12	Public Facilities	☒	☐
13	Child Care	☒	☐
14	Flood Resilience	☒	☐
15	Environmental Benefits and Burdens	☒	☐

B. Consistency – Regional Plan Purposes § 4347

Met Not Met

Is the plan consistent with the purposes of the Regional Plan?

☒ ☐

C. Consistency - Required Elements § 4348a

Met Not Met

1	Statement of Policies to Guide Development	☒	☐
2	Natural Resources and Working Lands	☒	☐
3	Energy	☒	☐
4	Transportation	☒	☐
5	Utility and Facility	☒	☐
6	Implementation Program	☒	☐
7	Development Trends	☒	☐
8	Housing Element	☒	☐
9	Economic Development	☒	☐
10	Flood Resilience	☒	☐
11	Future Land Use	☒	☐

D. Compatibility – Adjacent Regional Planning Areas § 4302(f)(2)

Met Not Met

Is the plan consistent with the plans of adjacent regional planning areas?

☒ ☐

Mapping – Future Land Use Areas

Met Not Met

Does the plan's Future Land Use Map delineate areas following the required mapping process and standards?

☒ ☐

PLAN AND PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

OUTREACH AND NOTIFICATION

The following summarizes outreach and notice as required by 24 V.S.A. § 4348, Adoption of a Regional Plan.

Outreach and Notification Timelines	Complete	Actual or anticipated date(s)
Throughout the planning process, the RPC has solicited the input of member municipalities, local residents, and organizations (24 V.S.A. § 4348(a))	☒	January 2025 – January 2026
60 days before first RPC hearing: Send draft regional plan to LURB (24 V.S.A. § 4348(b))	☒	5/6/2026
At least 30 days before first RPC hearing, plan and accompanying documentation sent to state and regional partners ((24 V.S.A. § 4348(d)(1))	☒	6/2/2026
At least 30 days before first RPC hearing, RPC provides member municipalities with description of map changes, Tier 1B info, designation info (24 V.S.A. § 4348(d)(2))	☒	6/2/2026
RPC holds at least two public hearings (24 V.S.A. § 4348(c))	☒	7/16/2026 + 9/17/2026
Regional Plan adoption by regional planning commission (24 V.S.A. § 4348(g))	☒	9/17/2026
Within 15 days following adoption, RPC submits regionally adopted plan to LURB for determination compliance (24 V.S.A. § 4348(h)(1))	☒	9/30/2026
	☐	

See 24 V.S.A. § 4348(f) for information on amendments to the plan during this process.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN PLAN DEVELOPMENT

24 V.S.A. § 4348 calls on Regional Planning Commissions to “allow for meaningful participation” in the adoption and amendment of a regional plan. Meaningful participation is defined in 3 V.S.A. § 6002. This section reports on the community outreach efforts undertaken for this plan’s development that advance meaningful participation, including information about engagement of Environmental Justice Focus populations, also defined in 3 V.S.A. § 6002. Document outreach efforts in this section. Please include information about the outreach strategy, how the RPC sought to reach Environmental Justice Focus populations, and the results of these efforts. This section may include a list or table summarizing outreach activities undertaken in the development of this plan.

The BCRC used a variety of methods to engage with municipalities and community members about the Regional Plan throughout 2025 which are summarized in the table below. Information about the community engagement process is available in Appendix C of the Regional Plan and on the BCRC website: [Regional Plan - BCRC](#)

Regional Plan Engagement Strategies

OUTREACH METHOD & TIMELINE	TYPE OF ENGAGEMENT	WHERE	WHO	ELIMINATE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION	PARTNERS
Planning Commission Meetings (2025)	BCRC staff visits individual Planning Commission meetings to discuss FLU maps and housing targets	Town offices/virtual	Municipal planning commission members, town staff, members of the public	Presentation and materials distributed to planning commissions were designed to be clear and understandable by people from a variety of background	Municipalities
Tabling at Public Events (May-October 2025)	Quick, interactive opportunities for engagement at a variety of regional events	Stamford Resilience Fair, Sheldon Store Coffee Hour, Manchester Street Fest, Celebrate Pownal Day, Norman's Attic (Arlington), North Bennington Village Block Party, Harvest Fest (Bennington)	General public, Environmental Justice Focus Populations	Outreach materials were written in plain language and translated into Dari and Spanish; variety of methods to provide input including verbal feedback transcribed by staff, written feedback on idea boards, drawing activity for youth, and tactile exploration of the region via a 3D printed topographical map of the region	
Community Centers Outreach (August - October 2025)	Engage community members on questions of how they envision the region in the future through installations/idea posters at libraries, schools, and community centers around the region	Local libraries, community centers	General public, Environmental Justice Focus Populations	Idea poster questions were written in plain language and translated into Dari and Spanish	JG McCullough Free Library, Martha Canfield Memorial Library, Solomon Wright Public Library, Bennington County Multicultural Community Center (BCMCC)

Focus Groups (September 2025)	Engage specific populations on their experiences in the region and how they envision the future through casual, small-group conversations	Local schools, community centers	New Americans/people with limited English proficiency, youth	Focus group questions were posed in plain language, interpretation was provided at the event with BCMCC, food provided at both events	BCMCC, Southwest Tech
Survey (June - October 2025)	Solicit detailed input on a variety of topics covered in the regional plan	Virtual/paper surveys available at tabling events, and idea poster locations	General public, Environmental Justice Focus Populations	Survey was available online, in several physical locations, and mailed upon request. The survey was translated into Dari and Spanish	

Information about the public engagement process was shared through a variety of methods including, [the BCRC website](#), Facebook and Front Porch Forum, local email listservs, a [local TV announcement](#) produced by Greater Northshire Access Television (GNAT), and a [Bennington Banner article](#). Updates on the regional plan process were provided in the BCRC's bi-monthly newsletter.

BCRC engaged directly with 349 regional residents at events and focus groups, as well as municipal officials from all 17 member municipalities at over 30 public meetings. Additionally, the Bennington Regional Plan survey received 101 responses.

Several aspects of BCRC's community engagement process specifically addressed meaningful participation to ensure all individuals had the opportunity to participate including environmental justice focus populations:

1) Outreach materials were written in plain language and designed to be understandable to those without planning knowledge. Outreach materials included:

- A general flyer explaining the purpose of a regional plan which included a development timeline for BCRC's Regional Plan.
- An flyer summarizing the provisions of Act 181 that relate to regional and municipal planning, which included explanations of the Designation steps, Act 250 jurisdiction tiers, and future land use mapping categories
- An interactive web version of BCRC's draft Future Land Use map with the ability to provide comments on specific locations.
- Idea posters that posed specific questions related to topics in the Regional Plan
- A survey

2) BCRC worked with the Bennington County Multicultural Community Center (BCMCC) to have several of its outreach materials translated into Dari and Spanish, the predominant languages of New Americans in the region. The general flyer, survey, and idea posters were translated. Additionally, BCRC worked with BCMCC to hold a focus group conversation for people with limited English proficiency. This event was held at the BCMCC in downtown Bennington, and interpretation was provided by BCMCC staff.

3) BCRC had an information table at seven events across the region where residents already gather. This included events in most areas identified as environmental justice focus populations through BCRC's regional analysis.

Summary of Public Input

Land Use

Over 60% of survey respondents felt that the best places for growth were in downtowns and village centers which is consistent with BCRC's regional FLU map and policies in the Landscape & Character (Growth) chapter. Additionally, both the survey responses, and conversations at events indicated that people value the region's natural resources, and scenic, rural landscapes. These priorities are reflected in BCRC's FLU map, which directs the majority of future growth away from sensitive areas, and in the Natural Resources and Landscape and Character (Rural) chapters which establish policies to protect important natural resources and carefully guide development in rural areas.

Housing

The availability and affordability of housing was consistently mentioned by residents across all engagements methods. Nearly 70% of survey respondents said that affordable housing was the type of housing most needed in the region, and 65% said that a lack of low and middle income housing was the biggest housing challenge facing the region. Although, housing was not the most common topic mentioned in event conversations, when it was mentioned, it was universally described as a challenge rather than a value/asset of the region. The Regional Plan is responsive to this feedback with the establishment of ambitious housing targets for each municipality, and policies and action items throughout the Plan that are intended to promote housing growth and reduce regulatory barriers to housing development.

Infrastructure & Services

Over 60% of survey respondents said that lack of adequate sidewalks, bike lanes, and shared use paths was their biggest transportation safety concern, and the ability to get around without a car was frequently mentioned in event conversations. The issue of transportation access was a major topic of discussion at the focus group held with BCMCC. Most of the participants were New Americans who arrived in the region without the ability to drive and/or access to a personal vehicle and the limited availability of public transit has made getting around difficult. The Regional Plan is responsive to this feedback with an emphasis on increasing public transit and active transportation infrastructure in several chapters. The Mobility and Transportation chapter includes an extensive list of priority biking and pedestrian projects in the region.

Community Life

Aspects of community life in the region were frequently mentioned during event conversations with residents, and sense of community was all brought up by several survey respondents in the open-ended questions on the survey. Community life was also the only topic that was overwhelmingly mentioned in a positive light. In response to this feedback, BCRC added a new chapter to the Regional Plan which is intended to convey the richness of community life that people value.

NEW TIER 1B REQUESTS

With this application, BCRC is requesting Tier 1B area approvals for portions of the following municipalities: Arlington, Bennington, Manchester, North Bennington, and Shaftsbury. These Tier 1B area requests are documented in the attached memo.

PART A – CONSISTENCY WITH STATE PLANNING GOALS

Per 24 V.S.A. § 4348(h)(4), for the Land Use Review Board to issue a determination of plan compliance, it must find that the plan is consistent with the State planning goals as established in 24 V.S.A. § 4302. Describe plan compliance below.

In this section, please provide detailed information about how the plan meets the general and specific goals outlined in 24 V.S.A. § 4302(b) and § 4302(c).

4302(b) – GENERAL GOALS

- (1) To establish a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions by municipalities, regional planning commissions, and State agencies.
- (2) To encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process, and to assure that decisions shall be made at the most local level possible commensurate with their impact.
- (3) To consider the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development for the region and the State, as well as the community in which it takes place.
- (4) To encourage and assist municipalities to work creatively together to develop and implement plans.

Page numbers: pp. 10-11, 21-29, 92-95, 118-121, 344-355

Narrative:

- Planning process and policy framework described throughout the Introduction (in Purpose, Vision, How to Read This Plan, and Putting This Plan Into Action)
- Coordination further described in final chapter on Governance and Coordination
- Citizen participation encouraged through celebration of community engagement process (By and For the Community in the Introduction) and in Governance and Coordination chapter
- Discussion of smart use of resources, strategic growth, and regional development impacts in Landscape and Character sections and discussion of regional project review processes in Governance and Coordination
- Governance and Coordination chapter also applies to municipal officials; “How Can BCRC Help?” sections throughout the plan highlight ways that the organization supports municipalities and community groups to develop and implement local level planning projects on these topics

4302(c) – SPECIFIC GOALS

Goal 1: To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.

- (A) Intensive residential development should be encouraged primarily in downtown centers, village centers, planned growth areas, and village areas as described in section 4348a of this title, and strip development along highways should be avoided. These areas should be planned so as to accommodate a substantial majority of housing needed to reach the housing targets developed for each region pursuant to subdivision 4348a(a)(9) of this title.
- (B) Economic growth should be encouraged in locally and regionally designated growth areas, employed to revitalize existing village and urban centers, or both.
- (C) Public investments, including the construction or expansion of infrastructure, should reinforce the planned growth patterns of the area.
- (D) Development should be undertaken in accordance with smart growth principles as defined in subdivision 2791(13) of this title.

Page numbers: 92-150

Narrative:

Themes of Goal 1 are woven cohesively into much of the plan. Goals in the Natural Systems, Rural Land Use, Growth Oriented Land Use, Housing, and Energy sections speak to compact development, with further policies and actions included. The Growth Oriented Land Use section in particular discusses the topic of compact centers surrounded by rural countryside in detail, while the Rural General section of the Rural Land Use section addresses what is to be done regarding existing development outside of compact centers. Growth Oriented Land Use policies and actions include strong “shall support” language on matters relating to promotion of compact development patterns, including commitments to provide technical assistance for municipal zoning amendments and rezoning efforts that support this goal. Actions in the Rural Land Use section provide the converse, encouraging protection of rural lands through direction of growth to compact centers, and encourages rural growth that happens to be in areas with preexisting development. The Facilities, Utilities, and Infrastructure Services section addresses utilities as required in subgoal C.

Goal 2: To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.

Page numbers: 183-204, 92-150

Narrative:

The plan’s Local Economy section supports this goal. The section explains the existing diverse economy, which includes jobs that prove satisfying and rewarding to those with diverse approaches to what constitutes satisfaction and reward in work. While the plan touts the region’s economy which includes a balance of service, manufacturing, retail and other (including remote) jobs, it does not place outsize promotion of pollution-heavy industries that do not support the region’s environmental standards. Through its support for a diversified economy with many types of jobs, the plan supports expansion of opportunities in areas with (relatively) high unemployment and particularly for those with low per capita incomes. Outside the Local Economy section, the plan’s Rural and Growth Oriented Land Use sections speak to concepts of a diverse economy, supporting municipal efforts to refocus land use regulations in ways that lower barriers to entry for new businesses in locations where business activity is appropriate, particularly small, home-based, or entrepreneur-led companies.

Goal 3: To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.

Page numbers: 327-343, 183-204

Narrative:

Education chapter discusses K-12 and post-secondary education resources and regional policies to promote them. The Economic Development chapter also addresses workforce development needs and strategies.

Goal 4: To provide for safe, convenient, economic, and energy efficient transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.

A) Highways, air, rail, and other means of transportation should be mutually supportive, balanced, and integrated.

Page numbers: 206-238

Narrative:

The plan's Transportation section, supported by language in other sections including Growth Oriented Land Use and Energy thoroughly addresses the need to provide for a transportation system that meet requirements outlined in Goal 4. The plan places outsize emphasis on the need for a transportation system where modes are integrated, supportive, and balanced. It discusses the need for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to support non-car local trips within designated centers and between nearby centers. The plan includes a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure map which includes conceptual projects that support an increase in non-car mode-share. Air and rail are addressed, noting that air and rail travel for transportation require travel outside of the region, but also the benefits of promoting the local airport for economic development and rail to substitute truck freight movements into and through the region. Regarding transit, the plan includes implementation actions supporting expansion of transit, integration with park and rides, and placing transit stops in Planned Growth Areas, and opposing municipal application of conditional use review and aesthetic regulations to transit stops.

Goal 5: To identify, protect, and preserve important natural and historic features of the Vermont landscape, including:

A) significant natural and fragile areas;

B) outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands, and wetlands;

C) significant scenic roads, waterways, and views;

D) important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites, and archaeologically sensitive areas.

Page numbers: pp. 31-64, 125-129, 215-216

Narrative:

The Natural Resources chapter discusses all of the points listed above. Significant scenic roads are further discussed in the Transportation and Mobility chapter. Important historic resources are further discussed in the Landscape and Character (Growth) chapter.

Goal 6: To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, forests, and other land resources.

A) Vermont's air, water, wildlife, mineral, and land resources should be planned for use and development according to the principles set forth in 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a).

B) Vermont's water quality should be maintained and improved according to the policies and actions developed in the basin plans established by the Secretary of Natural Resources under 10 V.S.A. § 1253.

C) Vermont's forestlands should be managed so as to maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors.

Page numbers: pp. 31-51, 71-75, 99-106

Narrative:

- Air, water, wildlife, earth, and land resources are discussed in Natural Resources chapter, followed by specific policies and actions to protect these resources from adverse development impacts. Clean air is further discussed in the Climate Resilience chapter, with particular attention to the environmental justice implications of air pollution.
- Water quality is discussed in the Natural Resources chapter, followed by specific policies and actions to maintain and improve water quality.
- Forest lands are discussed in both the Natural Resources and Landscape and Character (Rural) chapters to highlight their natural significance and the role they play as productive lands. Both chapters discuss habitat blocks or forest blocks/habitat connectors and include strategies to protect and enhance forested lands.

Goal 7: To make efficient use of energy, provide for the development of renewable energy resources, and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

- A) **General strategies for achieving these goals include increasing the energy efficiency of new and existing buildings; identifying areas suitable for renewable energy generation; encouraging the use and development of renewable or lower emission energy sources for electricity, heat, and transportation; and reducing transportation energy demand and single occupancy vehicle use.**
- B) **Specific strategies and recommendations for achieving these goals are identified in the State energy plans prepared under 30 V.S.A. §§ 202 and 202b.**

Page numbers: 239-284, 382-387

Narrative:

Goal 7 is addressed in the energy chapter and associated goals and policies, with supplementary material provided in Appendix B. Areas suitable for renewable energy generation are identified in the wind and solar resource maps and general site types are referenced in the body of the chapter.

Goal 8: To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors.

- A) **Growth should not significantly diminish the value and availability of outdoor recreational activities.**
- B) **Public access to noncommercial outdoor recreational opportunities, such as lakes and hiking trails, should be identified, provided, and protected wherever appropriate.**

Page numbers: 60-64, 315-319

Narrative:

Outdoor recreational resources, and the protection of and public access to these resources is discussed in the Natural Resources chapter. This chapter briefly describes hiking trails, shared-use paths, and water-based recreational resources, including the Region's state parks. The Environmental Justice considerations section discusses financial and physical access to these resources. The goals, policies, and action items in this chapter encourage the protection of natural and recreational resources from incompatible development activities, and the preservation of public access to recreational sites. The Wellbeing and Recreation chapter discusses the importance of public parks and recreational facilities to public health and community life and includes goals, policies, and actions to preserve and expand access to recreational opportunities. The Environmental Justice considerations section in this chapter discusses the distribution of recreational facilities in the region and barriers to access.

Goal 9: To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries.

- A) Strategies to protect long-term viability of agricultural and forestlands should be encouraged and should include maintaining low overall density.
- B) The manufacture and marketing of value-added agricultural and forest products should be encouraged.
- C) The use of locally-grown food products should be encouraged.
- D) Sound forest and agricultural management practices should be encouraged.
- E) Public investment should be planned so as to minimize development pressure on agricultural and forest land.

Page numbers: pp. 92-106, 114-115, 46-50, 63-64, 191-192, 200-202

Narrative:

Discussions on forested and agricultural lands as productive lands and sites for industry primarily take place in two chapters: Natural Resources and Landscape and Character (Rural).

- Policies / actions to protect long-term viability of agricultural and forestlands appear in both aforementioned chapters: these promote compact development to avoid fragmentation, the consideration of important soils, regulating density levels, and other innovative land use practices to support agricultural and forestry uses. Supports a pattern of compact development to discourage the loss or fragmentation of important agricultural and forest lands.
- Both chapters also identify ways the BCRC can advocate for support of locally produced agricultural and forest products by sharing applicable funding opportunities, fostering connections, and facilitating local and regional markets. Support for local food production and distribution is also discussed in the Economic Development chapter.
- Forest management practices and programs are discussed in the Natural Resources chapter and the Landscape and Character (Rural) chapter. That chapter also discusses accepted agricultural management practices. "Shall support adherence to agricultural and forestry best management practices to minimize degradation of water quality."
- Public investment in forest and agricultural lands is also raised throughout both of these chapters. Policies and action items in the Housing and Utilities chapters reinforce the planning goals to minimize development pressure on ag / forest land.

Goal 10: To provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.

Page numbers: pp. 49-51, 58-64, 105

Narrative:

Policies and actions in the Natural Resources chapter address this goal. These include: preservation of the region's natural characteristics, supporting state regulations that ensure the extraction and processing of earth resources do not have an unduly harmful impact on the environment or surrounding land uses, and supporting municipal regulation along scenic areas.

Goal 11: To ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters.

- (A) Housing should be encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in each Vermont community, particularly for those citizens of low and moderate income, and consistent with housing targets provided for in subdivision 4348a(a)(9) of this title.
- (B) New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.
- (C) Sites for multi-family and manufactured housing should be readily available in locations similar to those generally used for single-family dwellings.
- (D) Accessory dwelling units within or attached to single-family residences that provide affordable housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives, elders, or persons who have a disability should be allowed.

Page numbers: 151-182, 118-150

Narrative:

The Housing chapter addresses the need for safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters. Its implementation section includes actions that seek to address the needs of low- and moderate-income Vermonters. These include commitments to assist municipalities to adopt plans and zoning bylaws to provide for adequate housing supply of various sizes and types, including implementation of recommendations in the Zoning for Great Neighborhoods handbook. Its policies include for development in designated centers, density bonuses for housing types beyond those required in state law, opposition to design rules which increase construction costs in areas outside of designated design review areas, and support for legislative efforts to make the state building code, labor regulations, and permitting process more conducive to housing construction pursuant to housing targets. The Growth Oriented Land Use section also includes further implementation actions and language in support of housing growth in locations pursuant to this goal. The Rural Land Use Section speaks to the use of accessory dwelling units to address housing needs in rural areas, as well as part (D) of this goal being addressed in the housing chapter.

Goal 12: To plan for, finance, and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.

- (A) Public facilities and services should include fire and police protection, emergency medical services, schools, water supply, and sewage and solid waste disposal.
- (B) The rate of growth should not exceed the ability of the community and the area to provide facilities and services.

Page numbers: 285-307

Narrative:

The Facilities, Utilities, and Infrastructure Services section addresses Goal 12, supported by the Education section which addresses schools. The sections combine to discuss all types of facilities required under part (A), as well as other common public buildings such as town halls and garages. The plan does not foresee a scenario where the rate of growth would overstretch public facilities and services. That noted, the plan discusses the need for regional coordination of provision of public services, particularly to address sudden increases in need such as those covered by mutual aid agreements for fire services. Implementation items in this section support public investments in centrally located facilities including water and wastewater. It also notes the need to improve capital planning, supports expansion of cellular and data services pursuant to public safety needs, and encourages intermunicipal cooperation in the provision of public safety services.

Goal 13: To ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and to integrate child care issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development.

Page numbers: 333-335, 344-343

Narrative:

Current conditions and childcare needs in the Region are discussed in the Education chapter. The Plan supports lowering barriers to the expansion of childcare facilities which is reinforced by specific policies and action items that encourage municipalities to allow childcare facilities without site plan approval, and monitor the state of the childcare industry to identify capacity and workforce constraints.

*** Goal 14: (14) To encourage flood resilient communities.**

- (A) New development in identified flood hazard and river corridor protection areas should be avoided. If new development is to be built in such areas, it should not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.**
- (B) The protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion should be encouraged.**
- (C) Flood emergency preparedness and response planning should be encouraged.**

**This goal is effective until 1/1/28, after which it is replaced with updated language accounting for the forthcoming statewide minimum flood hazard area standards established by rule by the Agency of Natural Resources*

Page numbers: 41-43, 75-80, 86-91

Narrative:

Flood risks and preventative measures and coordination of emergency response are discussed extensively in the Climate Resilience chapter. Municipalities are encouraged to adopt river corridor and flood hazard regulations that limit development in these areas and protect natural vegetation buffers around rivers and streams. The goals, policies and actions in this chapter also encourage municipalities to maintain up to date Hazard Mitigation Plans, Local Emergency Management Plans, and participate in the Community Rating System, Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund, and the Regional Emergency Management Committee.

Goal 15: To equitably distribute environmental benefits and burdens as described in 3 V.S.A. chapter 72

Page numbers: 23-25, 377-381

Narrative: BCRC's approach to the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens in the region is initially discussed in the Introduction of the plan. A detailed methodology and results of the quantitative/spatial analysis can be found in Appendix A. A narrative analysis of environmental benefits and burdens in the region is included in nearly every chapter of the plan in a special "Environmental Justice Considerations" section. Each of these subsections begins with a brief description of the relevant environmental benefits/burdens from the list of examples in 3 V.S.A. § 6002, followed by a discussion of the regional context supplemented with data when available. The subsection then directs readers to the implementation matrix where policies and actions that mitigate environmental burdens are indicated.

PART B – CONSISTENCY WITH THE PURPOSES OF A REGIONAL PLAN

Per 24 V.S.A. § 4348(h)(4), for the Land Use Review Board to issue a determination of plan compliance, it must find that the plan is consistent with the purposes of a regional plan as established in 24 V.S.A. § 4347. “Consistency” is defined in 24 V.S.A. § 4302(f)(1), and above.

Please provide detailed information describing how the plan is consistent with the purposes of a regional plan.

24 V.S.A. § 4347 – PURPOSES OF A REGIONAL PLAN

A regional plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, efficient, equitable, and economic development of the region that will, in accordance with the present and future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, order, convenience, prosperity, and welfare of current and future inhabitants as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development. This general purpose includes recommending a distribution of population and of the uses of the land for urbanization, trade, industry, habitation, recreation, agriculture, forestry, and other uses as will tend to:

- (1) create conditions favorable to transportation, health, safety, civic activities, and educational and cultural opportunities;
- (2) reduce the wastes of financial, energy, and human resources that result from either excessive congestion or excessive scattering of population;
- (3) promote an efficient and economic utilization of drainage, energy, sanitary, and other facilities and resources;
- (4) promote the conservation of the supply of food, water, energy, and minerals;
- (5) promote the production of food and fiber resources and the reasonable use of mineral, water, and renewable energy resources;
- (6) promote the development of housing suitable to the needs of the region and its communities; and
- (7) help communities equitably build resilience to address the effects of climate change through mitigation and adaptation consistent with the Vermont Climate Action Plan adopted pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 592 and 3 V.S.A. chapter 72.

Page numbers: Plan as a whole

Narrative:

The plan is consistent with the purposes of a regional plan as outlined in 24 V.S.A. 4347, with the intent of both guiding and implementing coordinated, efficient, equitable development in the region. Specifically, it recommends a distribution of population and land uses based on compact centers surrounded by conserved and working lands. Collectively, the statements and actions outlined in the plan create favorable conditions as required in (1) through recommendations support multi-modal transportation, health (via sustainable and available outdoor recreation and management of pollution), safety (via coordinated and sustainable police, fire, and EMS governance and facilities planning), civic activities (via concentration of housing near town offices in designated centers and neighborhoods), educational (via accurate and sustainable educational facilities planning) and cultural opportunities (via the area’s diverse cultural offerings). The plan also tends to support reduction in waste as required in (2) through encouragement of compact, cheaper-to-serve development, acknowledging that public services congestion in the region remains limited. This focus on compact centers likewise works toward requirement (3), including promotion of infill development to increase the efficiency of area drainage, energy, sanitary, water service, and similar facilities. General support for housing development would also

increase the usage of existing road facilities which remain broadly below design capacity. The plan's Natural Resources, Land Use, Energy, and Utilities, Facilities, and Infrastructure Services sections work toward requirement (4) through emphasis on making efficient use of existing facilities and maximally using the area's largest designated centers. Future Land Use map Enterprise areas were mapped to protect and conserve areas of earth resource extraction. Overall, more than 60% of the region was mapped into the Rural Conservation future land use category. Pursuant to requirement (5), the plan's future land use map designates more than 27% of the region in the Rural Ag. And Forestry category, and actions in the Natural Resources, Rural Land Use, and Local Economy sections speak to the promotion of food and fiber as well as reasonable use of other resources. The plan's Housing chapter, supported by the Growth-Oriented Land Use chapter promote development of housing suitable for the region's needs pursuant to requirement (6). These same chapters, supported by other chapters including Climate Resilience, likewise support requirements outlined in (7).

PART C – REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF A REGIONAL PLAN

Per 24 V.S.A. § 4348(h)(4), for the Land Use Review Board to issue a determination of plan compliance, it must find that the plan is consistent with the regional plan elements as described in 24 V.S.A. § 4348a, except that the requirements of 24 V.S.A. § 4352 related to enhanced energy planning are under the sole authority of the Department of Public Service.

Please provide details about how the regional plan is consistent with the regional plan elements listed below.

(1) A statement of basic policies of the region to guide the future growth and development of land and of public services and facilities, and to protect the environment

Page numbers: pp. 10-11, 21-289, 357-375

Narrative:

The plan's purpose and visions are stated in the introduction on p. 10-11. Goals, policies, and action items are listed at the end of each chapter and summarized in the Implementation Matrix starting on p. 357

(2) A natural resources and working lands element, which shall consist of a map or maps and policies, based on ecosystem function, consistent with Vermont Conservation Design, support compact centers surrounded by rural and working lands, and that:

- (A) Indicates those areas of significant natural resources, including existing and proposed for forests, wetlands, vernal pools, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, floodplains, river corridors, recreation, agriculture using the agricultural lands identification process established in 6 V.S.A. § 8, residence, commerce, industry, public, and semipublic uses, open spaces, areas reserved for flood plain, forest blocks, habitat connectors, recreation areas and recreational trails, and areas identified by the State, regional planning commissions, or municipalities that require special consideration for aquifer protection; for wetland protection; for the maintenance of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectors; or for other conservation purposes.
- (B) Indicates those areas that have the potential to sustain agriculture and recommendations for maintaining them that may include transfer of development rights, acquisition of development rights, or farmer assistance programs.
- (C) Indicates those areas that are important as forest blocks and habitat connectors and plans for land development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation and promote the health, viability, and ecological function of forests. A plan may include specific policies to encourage the active management of those areas for wildlife habitat, water quality, timber production, recreation, or other values or functions identified by the regional planning commission.
- (D) Encourages preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources.
- (E) Encourages protection and improvement of the quality of waters of the State to be used in the development and furtherance of the applicable basin plans established by the Secretary of Natural Resources under 10 V.S.A. § 1253.

Page numbers: pp. 31-64, 95-106, 114-116, 127-129, 315-318

Narrative: In the narrative, please describe how the plan’s policies, actions, and future land use areas support the intent of 10 VSA 2802 (i.e., 30x30 and 50x50 conservation goals).

The plan’s Natural Resources chapter, supported by the remainder of the broader Natural Resources section including the Climate Resilience and Rural Land Use chapters, addresses this required element. The section, including associated maps and maps elsewhere in the plan, indicates areas of natural significance as outlined in (A). The future land use maps indicate areas of potential for agriculture via the Rural Ag. And Forestry mapped area, and policies in the Rural Ag. And Forestry section support transfer of development rights as indicated in (B). A map depicts forest blocks and habitat connectors, while mapping of the Rural Ag. and Forestry and Rural Conservation areas, which collectively cover 88% of the region indicate an intent to promote development that avoids forest fragmentation and promotes healthy forests. Policies across the broader Natural Resources section include those that support wildlife habitat, timber production, water quality, and recreation. The plan includes language in support of preservation of scenic and natural resources in the Rural Land Use chapter, while the Growth-Oriented Land Use chapter addresses historic resources in more detail as required in (D). Aspects of element (E) are covered in the language and policies of the Natural Resources chapter.

- A) Areas of significant natural resources are mapped in the Natural Resources chapter in Map 9: Critical Wildlife Habitat Areas, Map 7: Habitat Blocks, Map 5. Surface Waters, Map 6. Basins and Watersheds, Map. 10. Unique Natural Features, and Map 13. Flood Hazard Areas. Maps in the Landscape and Character (Rural) chapter also include Map 16: Prime Agricultural Soils, Map 18: Conserved Lands, and Map 17: Interior Forest + Connectivity. The chapter discusses all of these resources in detail. In the Land Use chapter, the Rural Conservation Future Land Use Area includes “significant natural resources that require special consideration for water quality and wetland protection, maintenance of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectors and for other conservation purposes”. Other Future Land Use Areas address residence, commerce, industry, public, and semipublic uses. Trails and Recreation facilities are discussed in the Wellbeing and Recreation chapter and mapped on Map 41.
- B) Agricultural soils are mapped on Map 16 in the Landscape and Character (Rural) chapter. The Rural Agricultural and Forestry Future Land Use Area indicates areas planned to remain predominantly agricultural. The policies and actions specific to that FLUA include support for municipal regulations that “permit those uses, density levels, and development patterns that will not detract from rural character or substantially reduce the viability of current and future agricultural use,” as well as programmatic support for farm business support and farmland preservation.
- C) Forest blocks and habitat connectors are mapped in Map 17; the text of the plan urges municipalities to “embrace best practices in limiting and/or prohibiting development that could lead to forest fragmentation.” The Natural Resources chapter also includes discussion of Habitat Blocks and includes policies and actions to avoid fragmentation.
- D) The Natural Resources chapter identifies important natural areas, unique natural features (Map 10), and scenic and recreational resources, and includes policies to preserve them.
- E) The Water Resources sub-section of the Natural Resources chapter addresses the protection and improvement of waters in the region.

Existing lands in permanent conservation are recognized in the plan and mapped on Map 18 in the Natural Resources chapter. The goals, policies, and actions for the Rural Conservation FLUA identify specific strategies for identifying and protecting natural resource areas throughout the region, including through municipal plans and collaborations with conservation organizations. BCRC’s policies support land conservation and will not reduce the desired effect of the state’s conservation goals.

(3) An energy element, including an analysis of resources, needs, scarcities, costs, and problems within the region across all energy sectors, including electric, thermal, and transportation; a statement of policy on the conservation and efficient use of energy and the development and siting of renewable energy resources; a statement of policy on patterns and densities of land use likely to result in conservation of energy; and an identification of potential areas for the development and siting of renewable energy resources and areas that are unsuitable for siting those resources or particular categories or sizes of those resources.

Page numbers: 239-284, 382-387

Narrative:

All points above are addressed in the energy chapter which serves as BCRC's enhanced energy plan. Supplemental information can be found in Appendix B. A separate checklist addressing the specific Act 174 enhanced energy planning standards was completed and submitted to the Department of Public Service for review along with the draft plan.

(4) A transportation element consisting of a statement of present and prospective transportation and circulation facilities, and a map showing existing and proposed highways, including limited access highways, and streets by type and character of improvement, and where pertinent, anticipated points of congestion, parking facilities, transit routes, terminals, bicycle paths and trails, scenic roads, airports, railroads and port facilities, and other similar facilities or uses, and recommendations to meet future needs for such facilities, with indications of priorities of need, costs, and method of financing.

Page numbers: 206-238

Narrative:

The plan's Transportation chapter includes all elements required in this item, including the required map. A separate map includes current and proposed bicycle and pedestrian improvements including recommendations to meet future needs. The text of the transportation chapter addresses transportation needs more broadly, with specific project lists and descriptions.

(5) A utility and facility element, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective local and regional community facilities and public utilities, whether publicly or privately owned, showing existing and proposed educational, recreational and other public sites, buildings and facilities, including public schools, State office buildings, hospitals, libraries, power generating plants and transmission lines, wireless telecommunications facilities and ancillary improvements, water supply, sewage disposal, refuse disposal, storm drainage, and other similar facilities and activities, and recommendations to meet future needs for those facilities, with indications of priority of need.

Page numbers: 285-307, 327-343

Narrative: The Utilities, Facilities, and Infrastructure Services chapter, supported by the Education and Childcare chapter for relevant facilities, addresses Element (5). The related map shows the location of existing facilities, and the region faces limited demonstrated need for new public facilities whose planning has reached the point where they can be depicted on a map or prioritized in a unified list. The plan includes updated, comprehensive maps of water and sewer infrastructure, both to support this element and future land use/Tier 1B mapping.

(7) A program for the implementation of the regional plan’s objectives, including a recommended investment strategy for regional facilities and services based on a capacity study of the elements in this section.

Page numbers: 357-375

Narrative:

The plan includes a comprehensive implementation matrix which includes all goals, policies, and actions throughout the plan. The plan recommends improvements to the comprehensiveness of local capital planning to improve the long-term financial resilience and fairness of the region’s infrastructure finance. Included are recommendations for coordination of municipal and school capital planning, and support for municipal efforts toward regionalization of public services in pursuit of lower overall capital costs.

(8) A statement indicating how the regional plan relates to development trends, needs, and plans and regional plans for adjacent municipalities and regions.

Page numbers: 345-356

Narrative:

The plan’s Governance and Coordination chapter addresses items outlined in element (8), including trends, needs, municipal and regional plans. The 2026 iteration of the plan includes a much-enhanced treatment of this element, including analysis of trends in local governance and local technical assistance needs. Plans for adjacent areas were reviewed in the drafting of this element and points of compatibility noted, despite the substantially different planning environment in adjacent states.

(9) A housing element that identifies the regional and community-level need for housing that will result in an adequate supply of building code and energy code compliant homes where most households spend not more than 30 percent of their income on housing and not more than 15 percent on transportation. To establish housing needs, the Department of Housing and Community Development shall publish statewide and regional housing targets or ranges as part of the Statewide Housing Needs Assessment. The regional planning commission shall consult the Statewide Housing Needs Assessment; current and expected demographic data; the current location, quality, types, and cost of housing; other local studies related to housing needs; and data gathered pursuant to subsection 4382(c) of this title. If no such data has been gathered, the regional planning commission shall gather it. The regional planning commission’s assessment shall estimate the total needed housing investments in terms of price, quality, unit size or type, and zoning district as applicable and shall disaggregate regional housing targets or ranges by municipality. The housing element shall include a set of recommended actions to satisfy the established needs.

Page numbers: 351-382

Narrative:

The plan’s housing chapter addresses requirement in (9). The plan includes a target based on quantities set forth in the Statewide Housing Needs Assessment, both for “low” and “high” scenarios, with town-by-town targets grounded in the future land use map’s quantitative spatial data. The plan notes previous assessments of housing needs in the region to recommend an emphasis on smaller units with fewer bedrooms clustered in future land use areas with existing infrastructure or, in limited cases, suitable soils. The element includes a list of both actions and policies in support of housing creation pursuant to established targets. Actions include “shall assist” commitments to provide technical assistance to member municipalities to support their efforts to make progress toward established targets. Policies include stances in support of municipal efforts to improve local bylaws to make progress toward established targets, as well as policies which outline policy changes which require or benefit from state legislative adjustments to rules that stymie housing production including permitting process, building code, and labor market regulations.

(10) An economic development element that describes present economic conditions and the location, type, and scale of desired economic development, and identifies policies, projects, and programs necessary to foster economic growth.

Page numbers: 183-204

Narrative:

The Local Economy chapter describes current the current economic conditions in the region, including GDP, wages, income and employment. That chapter also describes the present and likely future of several major industries in the region, including the current and desired locations of these industries. The chapter goes on to discuss workforce challenges and opportunities, as well as the importance of Brownfields revitalization to regional economic development. Present economic conditions are also examined through the lens of poverty and food access in the Bennington Region. Policies, projects, and programs for fostering economic growth are listed in the goals and actions section at the end of the chapter.

(11)(A) A flood resilience element that:

- (i) identifies flood hazard and fluvial erosion hazard areas, based on river corridor maps provided by the Secretary of Natural Resources pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 1428(a) or maps recommended by the Secretary, and designates those areas to be protected, including floodplains, river corridors, land adjacent to streams, wetlands, and upland forests, to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and improved property; and
- (ii) recommends policies and strategies to protect the areas identified and designated under this subdivision (A) and to mitigate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and public investments.

(B) A flood resilience element may reference an existing regional hazard mitigation plan approved under 44 C.F.R. § 201.6.

Page numbers: 41-43, 75-80

Narrative:

The flood resilience element is addressed in the “Particular Flood Related Risks” section of the Climate Resilience chapter. This section discusses the different types of flooding, potential risks to infrastructure, mitigation actions, and includes a map of flood hazard areas and river corridors in the region. The Natural Resources section also contains information regarding river, stream, and wetland management to protect water quality and public safety. Recommended policies and strategies are listed under Actions and Policies in the Climate Resilience and Natural Resource sections.

(12) A future land use element, based upon the elements in this section, that sets forth the present and prospective location, amount, intensity, and character of such land uses in relation to the provision of necessary community facilities and services and that consists of a map delineating future land use area boundaries for the land uses in subdivisions (A)–(J) of this subdivision (12) as appropriate and any other special land use category the regional planning commission deems necessary; descriptions of intended future land uses; and policies intended to support the implementation of the future land use element using the land use categories as defined by 24 V.S.A. § 4348a(a)(12)

Use the following mapping checklist to demonstrate conformance with this required element of the regional plan. In the General Narrative, please describe the process by which the RPC determined how the areas proposed for growth (Downtown and Village Centers, Planned Growth Areas, and Village Areas) can accommodate a substantial majority of the region’s housing targets.

In future plan reviews, the “Boundary Note” column below will allow the Land Use Review Board to easily compare changes between Future Land Use Areas on maps completed using the Act 181 land use categories.

For this review, where this comparison is not possible, the boundary note is optional. In this column, note each center or neighborhood as “contraction,” “expansion,” “no change,” or “n/a – new center/neighborhood.”

Definitions for each land use category can be found in [24 V.S.A. § 4348a\(a\)\(12\)](#). In addition, [Mapping Process and Standards v 3.0](#) summarizes the methodology and planning considerations followed by RPCs in developing the future land use map.

Page numbers: 92-150, map on 93

General Narrative:

The Future Land Use Map shows all land use areas listed above. This plan discusses land use across two chapters: Landscape and Character (Rural) and Landscape and Character (Growth). Both chapters contain descriptions of each future land use area, along with goals, policies, and actions to implement the land use plan.

A substantial majority (75%) of the region’s housing target is proposed for centers (downtown and village), planned growth areas, and village areas. This breaks down to 20% of housing targets in the region’s one downtown center, 10% in village centers, 30% in two planned growth areas, and 15% in village areas. Outside of areas subject to the substantial majority requirement, a weighting of 14% was assigned to Rural General, 3% to Rural Ag. And Forestry, and 1% to Rural Conservation. No weight was assigned to either Enterprise due to its incompatibility with housing and Resource-Based

Recreation due to exhausted development potential in the single area in which it is mapped.

All areas were mapped consistently with the mapping process and standards, with minor exceptions being to add fractions of parcels in wetlands over 5 acres to designated centers, particularly in areas that were previously in designated centers. These modifications totaled 11 instances, each limited to a small area. The lack of substantial modification has resulted in a number of isolated “islands” of RC areas within growth-oriented FLU areas, including proposed Tier 1B areas.

BCRC’s Future Land Use areas have been mapped to ensure that areas planned for growth are large enough to accommodate a substantial majority of the housing target at the municipal and regional levels in concept. Generally, the BCRC mapped growth-oriented areas to the maximal extent allowed by infrastructure in the methodology, with limited exceptions. These include areas with utilities service distant from designated centers, including areas of the Town of Bennington served by the North Bennington Water Department south of the Walloomsac River, portions of Manchester Village south of its traditional “gateway” at River Road, portions of Pownal along its long-distance sewer lines between existing designated centers, portions of Shaftsbury on the North Bennington Water Department system with marginal existing water pressure, and areas of rural Village Centers with suitable soils but limited adjacent development.

Only one Village Area, Peru, was based solely on suitable soils, owing to a combination of lack of suitable development areas elsewhere in the town adjacent to the Bromley Mountain water/wastewater system. While the plan adds 5 centers lacking previous designation, only South Dorset Center (which hosts a town office, multiple

recreation facilities, a large proposed housing project and other mixed use areas) lies in a town with one or more previously-designated areas.

Downtown Center		
Municipality	Downtown Center Name	Boundary Note (optional)
Town of Bennington	Bennington Downtown	Expansion (+411 acres / +480%)
☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards. ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:		

Village Center		
Municipality	Village Center Name	Boundary Note (optional)
Town of Arlington	Arlington Village Center	Expansion (+62 acres / +120%)
Town of Arlington	East Arlington Village Center	Expansion (+38 acres / +203%)
Town of Dorset	Dorset Village Center	Expansion (+113 acres / +372%)
Town of Dorset	South Dorset Village Center	New center (374 acres)
Town of Dorset	East Dorset Village Center	Expansion (+70 acres / +917%)
Town of Landgrove	Landgrove Village Center	New center (70 acres)
Village of Manchester	Manchester Village Center	Expansion (+144 acres / +385%)
Town of Manchester	Manchester Center Village Center	Expansion (+178 acres / +592%)
Village of North Bennington	North Bennington Village Center	Expansion (+45 acres / +290%)
Village of Old Bennington	Old Bennington Village Center	New center (86 acres)
Town of Peru	Peru Village Center	Expansion (+95 acres / +460%)
Town of Pownal	Pownal Village Village Center	Expansion (+28 acres / +69%)
Town of Pownal	North Pownal Village Center	Expansion (+51 acres / +94%)
Town of Pownal	Pownal Center Village Center	Expansion (+21 acres / +27%)
Town of Rupert	West Rupert Village Center	Expansion (+36 acres / +218%)
Town of Rupert	Rupert Village Center	Expansion (+83 acres / +315%)
Town of Sandgate	Sandgate Village Center	New center (15 acres)
Town of Shaftsbury	South Shaftsbury Village Center	Expansion (+77 acres / +62%)
Town of Shaftsbury	Shaftsbury Center Village Center	Expansion (+11 acres / +10%)
Town of Stamford	Stamford Village Center	No change

Town of Sunderland	Sunderland Village Center	Expansion (+65 acres / +216%)
Town of Woodford	Woodford Village Center	New center (35 acres)
☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards. ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:		

Planned Growth Area		
Municipality	PGA Name/Description	Boundary Note (optional)
Town of Bennington	Bennington Planned Growth Area	Expansion (+147 acres / +6%) (Legacy Bennington Growth Center)
Town of Manchester	Manchester Planned Growth Area	Expansion (+604 acres / +225%) (Legacy Manchester Neighborhood Development Area)
☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards. ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:		

Village Area		
Municipality	Village Area Name/Description	Boundary Note (optional)
Town of Arlington	Arlington Village Area	New (281 acres)
Town of Arlington	East Arlington Village Area	New (94 acres)
Town of Dorset	Dorset Village Area	New (189 acres)
Town of Dorset	South Dorset Village Area	New (33 acres)
Town of Dorset	East Dorset Village Area	New (19 acres)
Village of North Bennington	North Bennington Village Area	New (719 acres)
Town of Pownal	Pownal Village Village Area	New (263 acres)
Town of Pownal	North Pownal Village Area	New (180 acres)
Town of Pownal	Pownal Center Village Area	New (363 acres)
Town of Peru	Peru Village Area	New (168 acres)
Town of Shaftsbury	South Shaftsbury Village Area	New (91 acres)
Town of Shaftsbury	North Bennington Village Area	New (262 acres)
Town of Sunderland	East Arlington Village Area	New (88 acres)
Village of Manchester	Manchester Village Area	New (314 acres)
☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards. ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:		

Enterprise Areas

- ☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

Transition Areas

- ☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

Resource-based Recreation Areas

- ☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

Hamlets

- ☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

Rural Areas: General

- ☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

Rural Areas: Agriculture and Forestry

- ☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

Rural Areas: Conservation

- ☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

PART D – COMPATIBILITY WITH ADJACENT REGIONAL PLANNING AREAS

Per 24 V.S.A. § 4348(h)(4), for the Land Use Review Board to issue a determination of plan compliance, it must find that the plan is compatible with adjacent regional planning areas. 24 V.S.A. § 4302(f)(2) defines “compatibility” as follows:

(2) As used in this chapter, for one plan to be “compatible with” another, the plan in question, as implemented, will not significantly reduce the desired effect of the implementation of the other plan. If a plan, as implemented, will significantly reduce the desired effect of the other plan, the plan may be considered compatible if it includes the following:

- (A) a statement that identifies the ways that it will significantly reduce the desired effect of the other plan;
- (B) an explanation of why any incompatible portion of the plan in question is essential to the desired effect of the plan as a whole;
- (C) an explanation of why, with respect to any incompatible portion of the plan in question, there is no reasonable alternative way to achieve the desired effect of the plan; and
- (D) an explanation of how any incompatible portion of the plan in question has been structured to mitigate its detrimental effects on the implementation of the other plan.

Page numbers:

Narrative:

The plan’s Governance and Coordination chapter includes consideration of compatibility with adjacent regional planning areas. The plan does not fine any areas where the plan as implemented would significantly reduce the desired effects of plans in these areas. During the Future Land Use mapping process, the BCRC met with both Rutland and Windham county’s regional commissions and found no points where the maps proved incompatible. There is limited development and development potential on the northern and eastern borders of the region, and the plan does not advocate for changes to this circumstance. Likewise, while there is some need to coordinate planning with adjacent areas of Massachusetts and New York, most joint concerns relate to environmental quality matters on which plans are compatible.

Version log

- Version 1 – original draft
- Version 2 – incorporating LURB feedback to ask more specifically about how the process promoted “meaningful engagement.”
- Version 3 – Corrected typos. Changed “comments – optional” to “narrative.” Added text prompting explanation of how each section’s requirements were met. Finalized text about describing how meaningful engagement was undertaken.
- Version 3.1 – Corrected typos, edited all statutory references to ensure consistent format, corrected one inaccurate statutory reference on page 15; made very minor wording changes to “New Tier 1B Requests” and “Part B” headings. Added instructions to address Act 59 goals and how areas planned for growth can accommodate housing targets.
- Version 4 – Expanded Future Land Use Element table with additional columns to describe specific downtown centers, village centers, etc. by municipality.