

Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

2026 REGIONAL PLAN

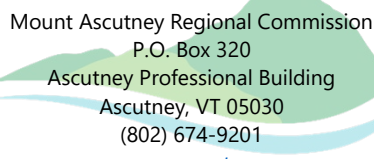
Adopted October 14, 2022

VT LURB Pre-Application Submission: February 24, 2026

Anticipated Public Hearing Schedule

First Hearing: 05/25/2026

Second Hearing: 07/27/2026

The logo for the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission is a stylized green mountain range with a blue wave at the base. The text is centered over the logo.

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Acknowledgements

The Mount Ascutney Regional Commission wishes to thank all of the individuals who contributed their time and expertise to the revision of the 2026 Regional Plan.

Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

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CH 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Commission

The Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC) was established in 1966, as the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning and Development Commission, through the action of its constituent towns. The original eight member towns were not contiguous, and it wasn't until 1970 that the Commission began receiving state and federal funds and operated as the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission (SWCRPC) for many years. In 2021, the SWCRPC changed its name to Mount Ascutney Regional Commission.

Currently, the MARC's activities and programs are governed by a ten-person Board of Commissioners; each appointed by the legislative body of his or her member town, with assistance from up to three "at-large" Commissioners as appointed by the Board of Commissioners. In addition, the Board has the responsibility of hiring staff to carry out the goals and policies of the Regional Planning Commission.

The MARC also has the authority to establish advisory committees to address specific regional issues. Currently, the Commission has two such committees, the Brownfields Steering Committee and Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). Representation on the Transportation Advisory Committee consists of one representative from each community, an ex-officio representative of the Agency of Transportation and provision for four "at-large" members. The primary mission of the Transportation Advisory Committee is to develop and evaluate transportation policy and recommendations as they relate to the Regional Transportation Plan and the Regional Plan.

The primary intent of the MARC and its advisory committees has always been to assist with and advocate for the planning and development activities of its member towns. The MARC exists primarily to provide technical assistance to its member towns; assist in mediating inter-jurisdictional planning and development issues that arise between member communities; facilitate discussion and understanding between local and state entities; develop plans, policies, strategies, and procedures for addressing issues that are regional in scope; assist communities with downtown revitalization and community development projects; annually compile, review, and prioritize regional transportation improvement projects for submission to the Agency of Transportation; and to serve as an information resource for member towns and residents.

B. Statutory Authority

The MARC is authorized pursuant to the duties and optional powers listed in the Vermont Municipal Planning and Development Act (herein referred to as “the Act”) [[24 V.S.A. §§ 4345](#) and [4345a](#)]. The MARC is required to adopt a regional plan in accordance with the Act [[24 V.S.A § 4348](#)]. The requirements and implications of the Regional Plan expanded significantly with Act 181 (H.687) of 2024. The 2026 Regional Plan was updated to meet the resulting new requirements in [24 V.S.A. § 4348a](#).

The MARC conducted a significant level of public engagement and outreach between 2024 and 2026 to inform this regional planning process. See Appendix A for a summary of that outreach and engagement process.

Volumes 1, 2 and 3 of the Regional Plan are adopted together as one document.

C. The Regional Plan

The purpose of the Regional Plan, in accordance with the Act [24 V.S.A §4347], is to create a vision for coordinated growth and development in the Region in accordance with existing and future needs and resources. The Regional Plan is advisory in nature, purpose, and effect. However, there are a limited number of areas where the Plan can have regulatory implications as discussed below. The Regional Plan is also used to support a host of grant applications including Community Development Block Grants and housing or farmland conservation applications to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund.

The Regional Plan guides the MARC in evaluating public and private actions affecting the Region’s communities and is the foundation for the MARC’s annual work program. The Regional Plan also serves as the Region’s basic planning manual and should be used as a guide by the Region’s towns in the local planning process.

Because of the inherent interrelationship of all aspects of the Regional Plan, the policies in any section are not to be considered in isolation, but rather in conjunction with all other sections and chapters of the Regional Plan. Each section of the Regional Plan includes statements designed to guide the growth and development of the Region. These guiding statements are defined later in this chapter to help the reader understand the context in which they are used.

The format of the Regional Plan is intended to include all plan elements as required by law (24 VSA § 4348a). Volume 2 of the Regional Plan consists of the Regional Transportation Plan, which serves as both the statutorily required transportation element and the requirements of the MARC’s Transportation Planning Initiative with the Vermont Agency of Transportation. Volume 3 of the Regional Plan consists of the Enhanced Energy Plan for the Region, which serves as the energy element under § 4348a as well as the enhanced energy plan under § 4352. Volume 1 includes all other required elements of the Regional Plan. Each chapter in Volume 1 focuses on

particular issue areas of regional or statewide interest. Background issues, goals, policies, and recommendations are contained in each chapter. The final chapter of the Plan discusses implementation of the Regional Plan.

D. Use of the Plan in Regulatory Proceedings

The Regional Plan has a regulatory role under three state review processes:

- Act 250/District Environmental Commission Hearings (10 V.S.A., Chapter 151);
- Public Good Determination Hearings for electric generation or transmission facilities (30 V.S.A. §248, or “Section 248”)
- Solid waste facility certification (10 V.S.A. §6605).

Major developments are reviewed for conformance with any duly adopted local or regional plan under Act 250 or Section 248. If, however, a conflict exists between the local and regional plans, the regional plan will be given effect over the municipal plan if a proposed development has a “substantial regional impact.” See the Implementation Chapter for a definition of substantial regional impact.

The MARC works closely with its member towns in order to ensure that municipal plans are not in conflict with the regional plan. This synergistic relationship attempts to recognize potential concerns with Act 250 and Section 248 applications prior to their submission. In addition, the Land Use Panel of the Natural Resources Board that oversees the Act 250 process narrowly interprets “conflict” as only existing when one plan allows the project, but the other does not. In addition, state statutes require compatibility between regional and municipal plans.

1. Act 250

In the spring of 1970, the Vermont Legislature passed the Land Use and Development Act (Act 250) in order to address growth in the 1960s resulting from the opening of I-89 and I-91, development of the IBM facility in Essex Junction, and expansion of ski tourism in Vermont. Act 250 (10 V.S.A., Chapter 151) establishes a state land use permitting process in order to protect the environment.

The law created nine District Environmental Commissions, consisting of three members appointed by the Governor, to review large-scale development projects and subdivisions using 10 criteria that address environment, aesthetic and community impacts. The District Environmental Commissions have jurisdiction over any project that encompasses more than 10 acres, or more than 1 acre for towns that do not have permanent zoning and subdivision bylaws. (See **Table 1.1** for a listing of one- and ten-acre towns.) The law also applies to any development

project with more than 10 housing units or housing lots; and may also apply for construction proposed above 2,500 feet of elevation.

Table 1.1 – One- and Ten-Acre Towns for Act 250 Jurisdiction	
1-Acre Towns:	10-Acre Towns:
Cavendish	Andover
Reading	Baltimore
	Chester
	Ludlow
	Springfield
	Weathersfield
	West Windsor
	Windsor

Source: VT Land Use Review Board (March 28, 2025).

The Act 250 process allows for the review and comment on all eligible applications by municipal governments, local and regional planning commissions, the state of Vermont, along with other interested parties. Before a proposed development receives approval it must meet the ten criteria set forth in 10 V.S.A. §6086, which are detailed on the [Vermont Land Use Review Board website](#) and summarized below:

Criterion 1: Air and water pollution

- 1(A): Headwaters
- 1(B): Waste disposal
- 1(C): Water conservation
- 1(D): Flood hazard areas
- 1(E): Streams
- 1(F): Shorelines
- 1(G): Wetlands

Criterion 2: Water supply

Criterion 3: Impact on water supply

Criterion 4: Erosion and capacity of soil to hold water

Criterion 5: Transportation

5(A): Congestion or unsafe conditions

5(B): Transportation demand management

Criterion 6: Educational services

Criterion 7: Municipal services

Criterion 8¹: Aesthetics, scenic and natural beauty

Historic sites

Historic sites - archeology

Rare and irreplaceable natural areas

8(A): Necessary wildlife habitat

Criterion 9

9(A): Impact of growth

9(B): Primary agricultural soils

9(C): Productive forest soils

9(D): Earth resources

9(E): Extraction of earth resources

9(F): Energy conservation

9(G): Private utility services

9(H): Costs of scattered development

9(J): Public utility services

9(K): Public investments

9(L): Settlement patterns

Criterion 10: Local and regional plans

In accordance with Act 181 (H.687) of 2024, upon approval by the Vermont Land Use Review Board, the Tier 1B areas identified in the Land Use Chapter and described in more detail in Appendix B will provide Act 250 exemptions for eligible housing projects.

2. Section 248

The development and construction of electrical generation facilities, electrical transmission facilities, and some gas pipelines are regulated by the Public Service Board created by the Vermont Legislature under (30 V.S.A. §248). The Public Service Board has been granted partial judicial power to conduct hearings and issue decisions. The Board consists of three members, appointed by the Governor, serving staggered terms. Prior to undertaking a proposed project, an involved party must receive a "Certificate of Public Good" from the Board.

Under the Section 248 review process, projects are evaluated to determine if they serve the general public good. Pursuant to 30 V.S.A. §248(b), criteria to receive a Certificate of Public Good include:

¹ Note Criterion 8 will change to "ecosystem protection; scenic beauty; historic sites" effective Dec. 31, 2026

- Orderly development of the Region with due consideration of Town and Regional Plans;
- Need for present and future demand;
- System stability and reliability;
- Economic benefit;
- Undue adverse impacts on aesthetics, historic sites, air and water purity, natural environment, public health and safety, and Act 250 Criteria 1-8 and 9(K);
- Consistent with company's approved least cost integrated plan;
- Consistent with the VT Department of Public Service's electric energy plan; and
- Does not affect designated outstanding resources waters.

Projects subject to Section 248 review, including net-metered private wind turbines, are exempt from local regulations. However, the impacted municipality and regional planning commission may participate as interveners in the proceedings.

3. Solid Waste Facility Certification

All towns, whether in a solid waste district or not, must adopt a Solid Waste Implementation Plan, which must be in conformance with the Regional Plan in accordance with 24 V.S.A., Chapter 61, §2202(a). The certification process for solid waste facilities will consider if the SWIP is in conformance with the town and regional plans (10 V.S.A., Chapter 159, §6605).

E. Goals, Policies, and Recommendations Defined

The needs of a growing population, the events and consequences that lead to a declining population, and the health of the environment and economy all require the attention of regional and local planning commissions. The goals and policies listed below are general overriding statements of the desired principles that should guide the growth and development of the Region and protect the natural and built environment. The goal and policy statements should be taken within the context of the information and analysis contained in the chapters which follow.

Goals - *Broad statements of what the Region ultimately wants to achieve. Goals reflect realistic intentions regarding a particular resource. They are not placed within a specific time frame. Specific goals are developed for each section of this Plan.*

Policies - *Agreed-upon courses of action to be followed to achieve the goals. Policies contain the principles or standards that guide the choices of implementation measures used to reach the Plan's goals.*

Recommendations - *Suggestions for specific actions to be carried out to reach the stated goals and policies.*

The following Regional Goals and Policies are consistent with the Vermont Planning Goals established by statute (24 V.S.A. §4302):

Regional Goals

1. To establish a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions by municipalities, MARC, and state agencies.
 2. To provide opportunity for citizen participation at all stages 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.
 5. To achieve a reasonable balance between protection of natural resources and growth in a way that maximizes the potential for both.
 6. To assist all member communities in developing effective town plans and implementation documents.
 7. To foster a spirit of communication and cooperation between all member communities, and with other governmental entities, and to act as a mediator when disputes arise.
 8. To support the efforts of local member governments and serve as a bridge between local and state planning efforts.
 9. To identify housing needs throughout the Region and to encourage the development and rehabilitation of housing that will meet the needs of all regional residents regardless of social characteristics or income.
 10. To preserve the historical settlement patterns and rural character of the Region and to maintain the integrity of its villages.
 11. To create and maintain efficient public facilities and services, including but not limited to child care, adequate to meet existing and foreseeable future needs.
 12. To provide educational and vocational opportunities that will allow all residents to make the most of their abilities.
 13. To develop an economic environment that will support the continuation of traditional land use activities, including sustainable agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, and commerce at scales consistent with the existing land use patterns of the Region.
 14. To develop a transportation system that balances the needs of safety, convenience, cost, energy efficiency, environmental protection, economic growth, and recreation.
 15. To further the Vermont Planning Goals found in (24 V.S.A. §4302).
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16. To welcome people of all backgrounds to southern Windsor County, to commit to the fair, equitable and inclusive treatment of everyone in the Region, and to be a place where individuals can live freely and safely express their opinions.
17. To plan for flood resilient communities.
18. To equitably distribute environmental benefits and burdens as described in 3 V.S.A. Chapter 72.

Regional Policies

1. All inhabitants and wildlife should be provided with a healthy living environment through improvement and maintenance of the air, water, and soil quality.
2. Natural resource use that ensures the protection of sufficient renewable resources for future generations and provides for reasonable economic return should be supported.
3. Irreplaceable natural and fragile areas, outstanding water resources, rare and endangered species and their habitats, and significant scenic features should be protected and preserved.
4. Regionally significant natural, cultural, and archeological features, and historic sites and buildings should be protected and preserved.
5. Cooperation and coordination among member towns is encouraged in planning for growth and development, to enable an evaluation of the potential for regional and inter-jurisdictional impacts.
6. All appropriate agencies should cooperate in the development and maintenance of a safe and efficient regional transportation system that meets the vehicular and pedestrian needs of all residents with minimum impact to the Region's environmental and aesthetic qualities.
7. Environmentally benign or beneficial economic development that will provide desirable jobs for regional residents, reduce unemployment, improve per capita income, enhance the local tax base, and maintain the character of the Region should be promoted.
8. Energy efficiency and conservation, the development of renewable resources, and the use of alternative energy sources are encouraged.
9. The manufacturing and marketing of local value-added agricultural and/or forest products is encouraged.
10. The provision and enhancement of recreational opportunities for all residents, and promotion of tourism-related economic development that furthers the goals of this Plan should be encouraged.

11. The protection of significant agricultural and forested land, through incentives and measures which discourage the subdivision or fragmentation of large parcels of such land is encouraged.
12. Efficient infrastructure adequate to support economic or other growth should be created prior to development.
13. Land use and development patterns that are consistent with the long- range goals and policies of local communities, the Region, and the adjoining towns in other regions should be promoted.
14. The region should be comprised of diverse, inclusive, and livable communities that meet the needs of people of all ages, incomes, and abilities.

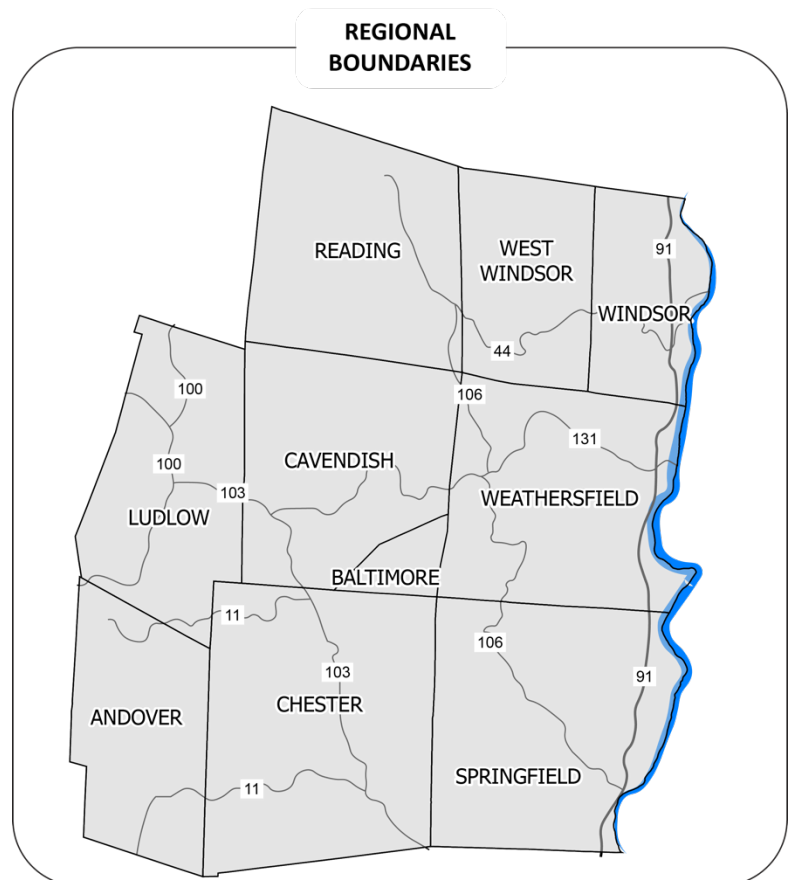
CH 2: REGIONAL PROFILE

This chapter provides a summary of the demographic, economic, and social factors that influence the region. This includes an overview of the region’s character, a brief historical summary, and preview of current conditions and challenges. It is not meant to be exhaustive but rather provide some of the context required to understand the region and its plan for the future.

Character of the Region

The Mount Ascutney Region is made up of ten municipalities in southern Windsor County, Vermont: Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Reading, Springfield, Weathersfield, West Windsor, and Windsor. The region’s geography is typical of Vermont, with steep hills and mountains, low river valleys, and forested hills between. Much of the region is rural and sparsely populated. Dense settlement is limited to relatively small village centers and downtown areas – even the most populated municipalities like Windsor and Springfield have significant open, natural areas within the town boundaries.

Agriculture and forestry remain important to this rural region – both through direct production and agrotourism. The area is rich with outdoor recreation opportunities, particularly surrounding Mount Ascutney and Okemo Mountain. However, there are fewer economic opportunities in the region than residents, leading many to commute out of the region for work.



History of the Region

Following the retreat of glaciers at the end of the last ice age, the Mount Ascutney region was populated by various indigenous peoples. When European colonizers arrived in Vermont, it was home to primarily indigenous, Abenaki-speaking people. Following indigenous displacement and European settlement, the region (like most of Vermont) was used for agricultural homesteading and timberlands, resulting in the clear-cutting of old growth forest in the area. In the 19th and 20th centuries, attracted by an ample supply of waterpower, many mills and factories operated along rivers in the Mount Ascutney region. These mills earned the area the nickname “Precision

Valley” and provided many manufacturing jobs to the region. Much of this industry collapsed in the 1970s, and the populations of manufacturing towns have yet to recover.

Physiographic Characteristics

Tectonic impact and glaciation have contributed to the physiographic diversity of the Region. The land is hilly and wooded with moderate to steep slopes. Southern Windsor County contains a broad range of landforms, from the rocky, acidic soils, spruce-fir forests and beech stands of the Green Mountains, to the fertile, sandy soils and white pines of the Connecticut River valley, and the hill farms, orchards, woodlots, and sugar bushes in between. The shallow upland soils tend to be dominated by bedrock, with small, dispersed sites containing “enriched” organic deposits. Soils along the Connecticut are deeper and more fertile, having been deposited by rivers of glacial melt, or by Lake Hitchcock, which covered a large part of the valley ten to twelve thousand years ago.

Much of the Region remains undeveloped or sparsely developed due to the physical constraints imposed by the terrain. Rivers and streams are interspersed throughout the Region, flowing south and east to the Connecticut River. The combination of mountains, streams, valleys, and rocky land has resulted in areas with outstanding geologic features such as Cavendish Gorge and various other peaks, gorges, cascades, and waterfalls. The three principal rivers are the Connecticut River, the Black River, and the Williams River. The broad Connecticut valley holds fertile agricultural land (discussed further in the Plan’s Land Use, Natural Resources, and Cultural and Aesthetic Resources chapters), while the narrower and steeper Black and Williams valleys have traditionally been home to sawmills, woolen mills, gristmills, and small hydroelectric power dams. Numerous lakes, ponds, and wetlands comprise the remainder of the Region’s surface water features.

Dominant physiographic land features in the Region include two mountains - Okemo Mountain (in Ludlow and Mount Holly) and Mt. Ascutney (shared by Windsor, West Windsor, and Weathersfield) - with elevations over 3,000 feet above sea level. Mt. Ascutney is an example of a monadnock, an isolated mountain of erosion-resistant rock rising above a surrounding area worn flat by water and ice. In addition, Terrible Mountain in Andover is over 2,800 feet in elevation and Hawks Mountain, shared by Cavendish, Baltimore, and Weathersfield, is nearly 2,100 feet above sea level.

Population and Demographics

The region’s population reached a local peak in 1980 at roughly 25,000 people and has remained stable in every census since. Conversely, Vermont’s state-wide population has grown by 25.4% since 1980 and the US grew by 45.9% in that same period. Many of the towns in the region have experienced considerable growth in the last 50 years, but this growth has been counteracted by significant population declines in the region’s most populous towns. The region’s population trends appear to have shifted during and since the COVID-19 pandemic. Annual American

Community Survey estimates have a large margin of error on the town level, however, ACS trends suggest that the region’s population grew by approximately 3% between 2019 and 2023.

The population of the region is less racially diverse than Vermont as a whole – in 2020, 92% of residents identified as “White” compared to 89% statewide (US Census 2020 Decennial Data).

In line with national trends, the region’s population is aging. Vermont’s population is aging faster than the US generally, with residents 65+ increasing statewide by 123% from 1980 to 2020 (US Census Decennial Data). Vermont’s population is among the oldest in the nation with a median age of 43 years old in 2020 – and *the Mount Ascutney region is older than the Vermont average*. In 2020, 25.1% of the region’s population was over 65 years old, compared to 19.4% statewide and 16.8% nationwide. A rapidly aging population has profound consequences for the region, increasing pressure on social and health care systems and decreasing the region’s household size and workforce population.

Population of the Mount Ascutney Region. Source: US Census Bureau Decennial Redistricting

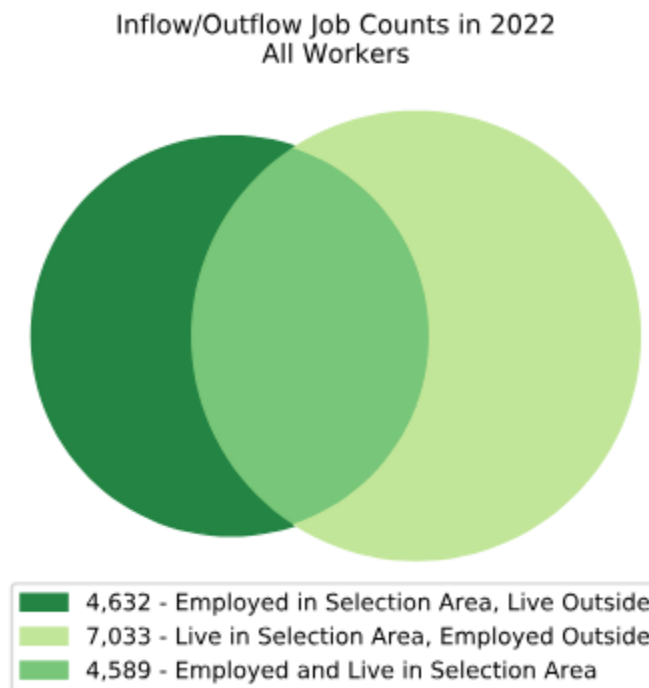
Town	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	1970-2020 % Change	2010-2020 % Change
Andover	239	350	373	496	467	568	137.7%	21.6%
Baltimore	170	181	190	250	244	229	34.7%	-6.2%
Cavendish	1,264	1,355	1,323	1,470	1,367	1,392	10.1%	1.8%
Chester	2,371	2,791	2,832	3,044	3,154	3,005	26.7%	-5.1%
Ludlow	2,463	2,414	2,301	2,499	1,963	2,172	-13.4%	10.6%
Reading	564	647	614	707	666	687	21.81%	3.1%
Springfield	10,063	10,190	9,579	9,078	9,373	9,062	-11.1%	-3.4%
Weathersfield	2,040	2,534	2,674	2,788	2,825	2,842	39.3%	0.6%
West Windsor	571	763	923	1,067	1,099	1,344	135.4%	22.3%
Windsor	4,158	4,084	3,714	3,756	3,553	3,559	-16.8%	0.0%
Region	23,908	25,309	24,524	25,105	24,711	24,860	4.0%	0.6%

Regional Economics

Commuting and Greater Regional Interactions

Much of MARC is within commuting distance of several economic hubs – Rutland, Brattleboro, the Upper Valley, and Keene are all within an hour’s drive. The regional economy and social services lag the economic growth of Vermont and the Upper Valley, encouraging residents to commute elsewhere. Residents may often leave the region for work, arts and cultural events, medical appointments, and other opportunities.

According to the US Census Bureau, the majority (61%) of workers in the Mount Ascutney region commute outside of the region for work. However, the remaining residents of the region make up only half of the workers employed in the region, meaning there are many commuters traveling into the region as well. See the Transportation chapters for more detailed information.



Estimated numbers of job commuters to/from/within the MARC region, 2022. Source: US Census "On The Map"

Wages and Poverty

Mean Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) in the region is \$72,729 which is 15% lower than the statewide mean of \$85,094 (2023 VT Income Tax Statistics). County wide, roughly 9% of households are below the poverty level, which is lower than the statewide rate of 10.5%. Poverty rate in Windsor County has increased from 5.6% to roughly 9% since 2010 (US Census ACS 2010, 2022).

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, like many places in rural Vermont, areas of the region have seen an increase in higher-income residents. In 2023, 13% of Windsor County tax filers reported an AGI of greater than \$150,000, compared to only 8.7% in 2019 (2023 and 2019 VT Income Tax Statistics).

Housing

Like Vermont as a whole, the Mount Ascutney region has a housing shortage, exasperated by an aging housing stock, shrinking household sizes, and a large percentage of unoccupied or second homes. Houses in the region are primarily single-family homes, with some multi-unit buildings,

mostly in the core of village centers and downtown areas. Accessory dwellings are becoming more common throughout the region, but there is a lack of accurate data at this time. Recent land-use regulations both at the state and local levels seek to increase dense development and multi-unit buildings in the region.

As a popular landscape and outdoor recreation tourism destination, the region has a high percentage of short-term rentals and second homes – 28% of houses in the region are not occupied more than half the year. In Ludlow, home to the Okemo ski area, 68% of homes were unoccupied in 2020. Between 2010 and 2020, the region saw a 6% decrease in underoccupied homes (US Census Decennial Data), likely due to conversions of second homes to primary residences. It is clear that, since 2020, many second homeowners have begun to use their second houses as their primary residence. However, there is limited reliable data on the extent of this pattern in the region.

See the “Housing” chapter for more detailed discussion.

Chapter 3: Land Use



IMAGE: View of Brownsville from the top of Mount Ascutney

Background

Settlement and land use patterns are among the most crucial aspects of how a region functions and grows. This plan places an emphasis on those patterns that characterize our region. The prevailing settlement pattern in the region is that of Compact Centers surrounded by Rural Countryside as outlined in the Development Standards in this Chapter. This quintessential Vermont landscape is found throughout southern Windsor County. It is the reason many people choose to live here and is the foundation of the Vermont brand, which benefits many of our region's businesses.

To maintain this settlement and land use pattern, most of our region's growth and development will need to occur in or near existing Village Centers and Downtowns, where there is already a built environment and infrastructure to accommodate it, or where traditional settlement patterns and infrastructure can be reasonably extended as needed to

accommodate growth over time. Water and wastewater solutions are needed in some existing Village Centers, such as Perkinsville and Felchville that presently rely on on-site systems, or system investments to expand capacity, such as with Ascutney and Cavendish's water systems.

As stated by the Vermont Climate Action Commission, changing weather patterns are a fundamental threat to Vermont, to our economy, environment, and way of life. The regional land use plan proposes policies to become more resilient in face of these anticipated impacts. These include making our community centers more resilient and attractive places to locate, promoting energy efficiency and energy conservation, and maintaining a rural working landscape that is connected, resilient and functioning. For more information and policies regarding this, refer to the Natural Resources (Chapter 6), Emergency Management (Chapter 5), and the Enhanced Energy Plan (Chapter 8) for the region.

Climate goals will be met primarily through our Member Town's Municipal Plans and local land use regulations. Towns will need to continue setting the stage for their own land use and development through responsible planning that considers existing settlement and land use patterns in the area and the needs of current and future residents. This regional land use plan is intended to provide a guiding framework for coordinated land use planning and regulation within and between our member towns. The Mount Ascutney Regional Commission¹ (MARC) consulted the towns' existing municipal land use plans while formulating this regional plan. The regional land use plan sets forth a policy framework, while also meeting the requirements intended to integrate the local plans into a vision for the region that is consistent with the smart growth goals of Act 181 provided by the State. When reviewing future town plans, the MARC will consider whether local land use plans are consistent with this regional land use plan. In most instances, the policies of this plan will bolster and supplement those found in the current land use plans and regulations of southern Windsor County towns. Only in the case of a conflict between local and regional policies with regard to a regionally significant project, will this regional land use plan take precedence over a town plan.

This 2026 Regional Plan will, however, take on a lot more significance with respect to the state Designation Program (Downtown and Village Centers, Neighborhoods) as well as Act 250 exemptions per Act 181. As such, this 2026 Plan will be developed with significant levels of community outreach.

¹ The Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission (SWCRPC) officially changed the organization's name to Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC) on January 1, 2021.

The regional land use plan also has a role in state planning and regulation. Development activities that are subject to certain state permits (Act 250, and Section 248) need to demonstrate conformance with this regional land use plan. For example:

- Criterion 10 of Act 250 requires that a proposed project be “in conformance with any duly adopted local or regional plan.”
- Under 30 V.S.A. §248 and 24 V.S.A. §4352, the Public Utility Commission must give “substantial deference” to the recommendations of municipal and regional plans that include an compliant enhance energy element.

ACT 181 of 2024

The intent of the Act is to facilitate increased housing production and other development consistent with the smart growth goals of the State, Regions, and municipalities while aligning public investment with the growth areas contained in regional plans and future land use maps, with the principal goal of retaining a “pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.”² Other housing goals of the Act include, “supporting equitable access to infrastructure, including housing” [10 V.S.A. 6001] and ensuring “the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters [24 V.S.A. 4302(11)].

All land use planning in Vermont takes place within the context of the state planning goals³. Regional planning commissions are required to produce regional plans consistent with these goals and to contain the required plan prescribed elements⁴, and municipalities that undertake planning must also do the same⁵. Act 181 of 2024 includes consistent future land use areas that all regional planning commissions (RPCs) must incorporate in their plans, in coordination with their towns.⁶

Act 181 also makes substantial changes to the State Designation Program. The existing five designations (Downtowns, Village Centers, New Town Centers, Growth Centers, and Neighborhood Development Areas) will be simplified into two (Downtown and Village Centers, and Neighborhoods). The Future Land Use Map will delineate Downtown and Village Centers and Neighborhood areas, which will receive automatic designation after approval by the Land Use Review Board [24 V.S.A. §§ 5803 and 5804].

² <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/24/117/04302>

³ <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/24/117/04302>

⁴ <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/24/117/04348a>

⁵ <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/24/117/04382>

⁶ https://www.vapda.org/uploads/1/3/1/8/131894470/act_181_statewide_flu_methodology_v_2.0.pdf

Act 181 also establishes Act 250 exemptions to better enable housing production. Tier 1a provides full Act 250 exemption. For communities that seek Tier 1a status, the area is generally within the Downtown Center or Village Center and the surrounding Planned Growth Area. Tier 1b provides partial Act 250 exemption. For eligible communities, Tier 1b includes Downtown or Village Centers and Planned Growth or Village Areas. Proposed Tier 1B areas include:

- Chester;
- Ludlow;
- Springfield;
- West Windsor; and,
- Windsor.

Vermont HOME Act of 2023, Act 47 (S.100)

Governor Phil Scott signed the Housing Opportunities Made for Everyone (HOME) Act on June 5, 2023. This Act amends the Planning & Development statute, Act 250, and other laws to enable new opportunities for housing development within state, regional, and local planning and development regulations. The Development Standards within this Land Use element are consistent with requirements related to housing densities in adherence to this Act.

Land Use Goals

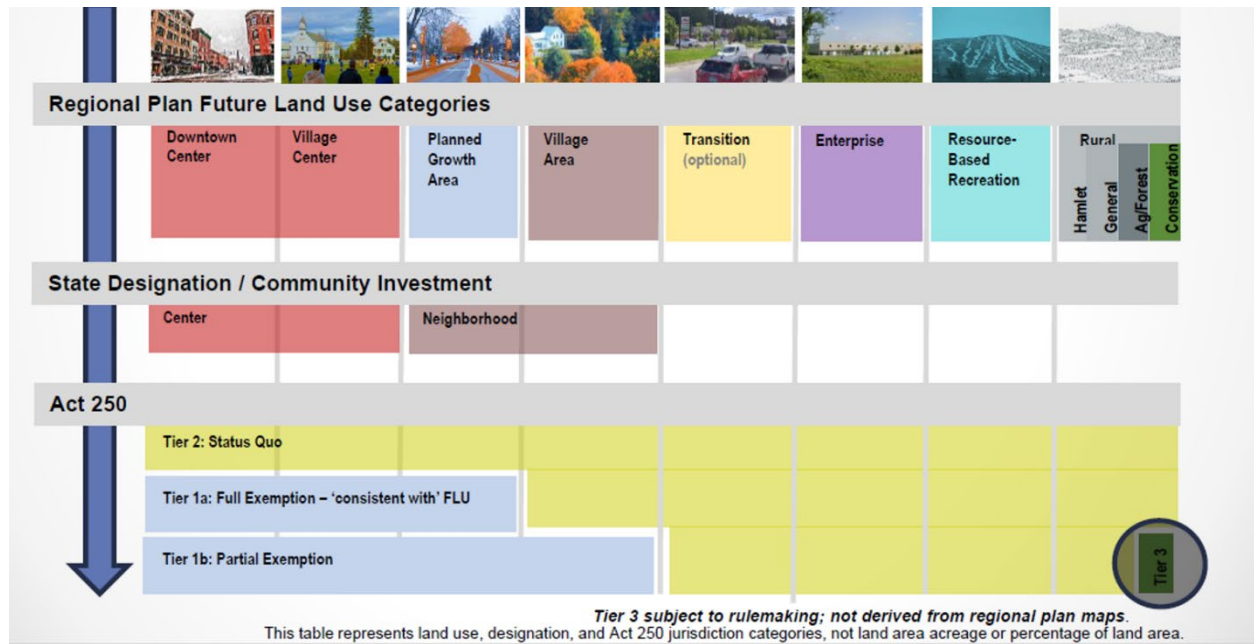
To maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact centers surrounded by rural countryside, and achieve desired future land use goals, development in the region shall:

1. Support a vibrant economy;
2. Avoid sprawl;
3. Maintain viable farms and forests;
4. Encourage energy conservation and climate adaptation;
5. Promote flood resiliency;
6. Protect sensitive ecological resources; and,
7. Provide the community infrastructure that supports the seven preceding goals.

Land Use Classifications

This land use chapter is formulated around eleven land use classifications that represent a progression from the most developed to the least developed areas in our region, as well as

other more specialized land use categories, as shown on the Future Land Use Map. See the descriptions of each land use classification on the following pages.



DOWNTOWN CENTERS

These areas are the larger mixed-use centers bringing together community economic activity and civic assets per 24 V.S.A. § 4348a(a)(12)(A). They include downtowns previously designated under chapter 76A. The Downtown Centers are the traditional and historic central business and civic centers within Planned Growth Areas, Village Areas, or may stand alone.

DESIGNATED DOWNTOWN CENTERS	
Designated Downtown Centers	
Windsor’s Designated Downtown – No Proposed Changes	Springfield’s Designated Downtown – Proposed expansions to include existing mixed-use buildings at 10 + 13 Clinton

	Street and the State Offices at 100 Mineral Street
--	--

This land use classification includes the downtowns and commercial areas in our region’s two larger centers – Springfield, and Windsor. These centers continue to serve – as they did historically – as employment and service centers for the surrounding towns. They feature traditional downtown business districts characterized by historic buildings and settlement patterns (multi-story buildings built at or close to the sidewalk), as well as commercial and mixed-use areas. These centers are served by municipal water and/or sewer infrastructure.

Local land use regulations should ensure that, in the downtown business districts, development will generally be in the form of mixed-use, multi-story buildings. These buildings should be built at or close to the edge of the sidewalk, typically with retail and service uses on the ground floor and office or residential uses above. Off-street surface parking is best located to the rear, side, or below buildings. Some existing single-use and single-story buildings that house retail, service, or light industrial uses, due to their scale or character, are not well-suited for their downtown location. As these single-use, single-story buildings redevelop, it is hoped that they will take measures to better fit the intent of the location (e.g. add greenspace or landscaping, modify the building articulation, or increase building height). All new structures within a Downtown Center must be built to last with quality materials and architectural details that are compatible with nearby historic structures.

The density in Downtown Centers is the highest in the region. For practical purposes, the density is unlimited in the Regional Plan, but must adhere to local policies and bylaws, and the requirements of Acts 47 and 181. Furthermore, any protected natural resources present in Downtown Centers will need to be field verified during any development review process consistent with municipal and state requirements.

VILLAGE CENTERS

These areas are the mixed-use centers bringing together community economic activity and civic assets per 24 V.S.A. § 4348a(a)(12)(A). They include Village Centers previously designated under chapter 76A and new Village Centers seeking benefits under the Community Investment Program under 24 V.S.A. Chapter 139. The Village Centers are the traditional and historic central business and civic centers within Planned Growth or Village Areas. They may also stand alone. Village Centers are not required to have public water, wastewater, zoning, or subdivision bylaws. The Village Centers have some level of commercial activity such as a general store or inn, and/or active civic functions such as a school, church, library, or grange hall.

Village Centers shown on the Future Land Use Map are generally consistent with the 2020 boundaries for the state-designated Village Centers as shown below. For those Villages that do not presently have designation, the Future Land Use Map approximates a boundary for each community center.



Many of these areas are suitable for infill development, more intensive use of existing buildings, and redevelopment of obsolete or abandoned structures or sites. The most suitable uses of Village Centers are housing, small-scale commercial and light industrial uses, civic uses, and similar low-impact uses. Village Centers may accommodate future growth and infill or redevelopment.

In addition, many Village Centers are located along streams or rivers and include lands, structures, and infrastructure that are at risk of flood-related damage. The Future Land Use map depicts flood zones as an overlay.

It is our vision that Village Centers will retain their historic role and character as focal points in the rural landscape and major contributors to the sense of place and identity of the region's rural towns. Our Village Centers will continue to be the hearts of their towns, hosting civic buildings and uses, and providing the gathering places that sustain a sense of community. The Village Centers will remain compact with distinct edges and will not sprawl into the surrounding countryside with scattered, low-density development along roadways. Historic buildings will be rehabilitated and/or adapted for new uses in a manner that maintains or restores their architectural integrity. New development will be designed and sited in a manner that is compatible with and reinforces the traditional built pattern. Where appropriate and feasible, infrastructure will be provided within Village Centers to support higher intensity use of existing buildings and new infill development and extended strategically to enable well-planned growth to meet our housing targets. The built environment in Village Centers will prioritize pedestrian facilities.

To achieve this, MARC will help towns enact effective land use plans and controls that encourage growth in and around Village Centers to the maximum extent feasible and appropriate given factors such as the availability of infrastructure and land suitable for development.

Village Centers will be of a very high density in accordance with the HOME Act (Act 47 of 2023). In areas that are not served by municipal water and sewer systems, development should be designed to the maximum densities permitted by Vermont's Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Rules. Any protected natural resources present in Village Centers will need to be field verified during any development review process consistent with municipal and state requirements.



PLANNED GROWTH AREA

This land use classification includes high-density existing settlements and future growth areas planned for high concentrations of population, housing, and employment. Planned Growth Areas include a mix of historic and non-historic residential, commercial, and civic or cultural sites with active streetscapes, supported by land development regulations; public water and wastewater, or public water and adequate soils; and multimodal transportation systems. These areas include new town centers, downtowns, Village Centers, growth centers, and neighborhood development areas previously designated under chapter 76A of this title. These areas should generally meet the smart growth principles definition in chapter 139 of this title and the following criteria:

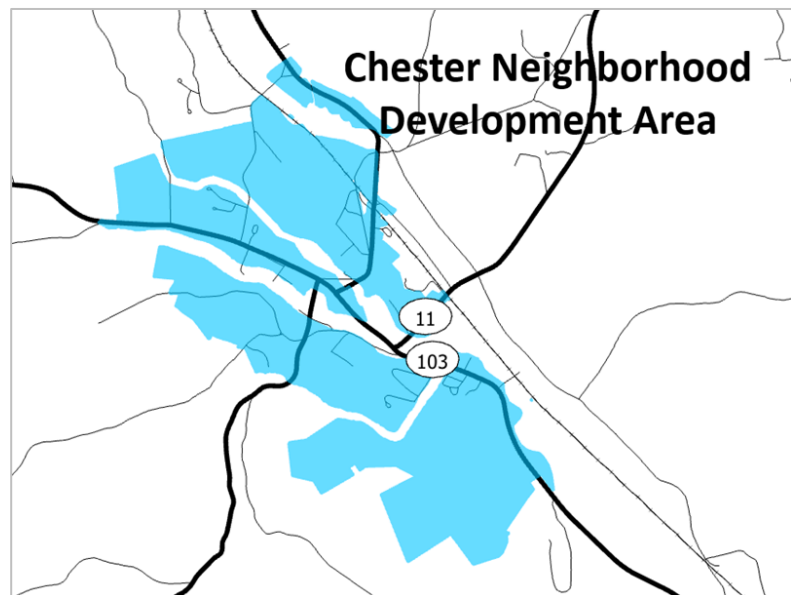
Planned Growth Area Statutory Criteria: 24 V.S.A. § 4348a(a)(12)(B)

- i. The municipality has a duly adopted and approved plan and a planning process that is confirmed in accordance with section 4350 of this title and has adopted bylaws and regulations in accordance with sections 4414, 4418, and 4442 of this title.
- ii. This area is served by public water or wastewater infrastructure.
- iii. The area is generally within walking distance from the municipality's or an adjacent municipality's downtown, village center, new town center, or growth center.
- iv. The area excludes identified flood hazard and river corridor areas, except those areas containing preexisting development in areas suitable for infill development as defined in section 29-201 of the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule.
- v. The municipal plan indicates that this area is intended for higher-density residential and mixed-use development.
- vi. The area provides for housing that meets the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in the community.
- vii. The area is served by planned or existing transportation infrastructure that conforms with "complete streets" principles as described under 19 V.S.A. chapter 24 and establishes pedestrian access directly to the downtown, village center, or new town center. Planned transportation infrastructure includes those investments included in the municipality's capital improvement program pursuant to section 4430 of this title.

This land use classification encompasses the traditional residential neighborhoods that extend out from our traditional downtowns and larger Village Centers. They feature primarily one-to four-unit dwellings on small lots, although closer to the downtowns, there is more diversity of housing types and larger multi-family dwellings. These neighborhood areas are served by municipal water and/or sewer infrastructure or are within a reasonable distance to extend that infrastructure to serve a new development. They are pedestrian-oriented, featuring low-traffic neighborhood streets (often with sidewalks), and offer convenient access to the services and amenities located in our Downtowns and nearby commercial areas. The cohesive and intact traditional development patterns create a strong sense of community in these neighborhoods.

It is the overall policy of this plan to guide much of the region’s residential growth into existing settlement areas in and around Planned Growth Areas. While these neighborhoods are largely developed, there remain opportunities for appropriately scaled infill and modest densification within most existing neighborhoods and for development of new neighborhoods within areas served or planned to be served by municipal infrastructure. There is also a need for ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation of the older housing stock in many of these neighborhoods, including energy-efficiency improvements.

It is our vision that the Planned Growth Areas throughout the region will continue to function as they have historically – as high-density, primarily residential neighborhoods. The housing stock shall be maintained and rehabilitated, as necessary. Infill development will occur that is compatible with these neighborhoods. Planned infrastructure expansions will allow for more land area to accommodate our housing targets. The most suitable uses of Planned Growth Areas are housing, small-scale service and retail businesses that cater primarily to area residents, civic uses, and similar low-impact uses.



The MARC region has one legacy Neighborhood Development Area in Chester as designated by the Community Investment Board in 2025. Chester’s NDA is included as a Planned Growth Area on our Future Land Use Map.

To achieve this, MARC will encourage and assist towns to enact effective land use plans and controls that accommodate infill and modest densification in a manner that will not dramatically alter the character of these neighborhoods. MARC will also assist towns with necessary capital planning and development review of traffic impact studies required to accommodate local housing targets within these areas. To maintain, and extend where appropriate, traditional neighborhood development patterns, local regulations and other policies or actions should seek to maintain and/or improve building quality and energy-efficiency, front yards and greenspace, and sidewalks and streetscapes that contribute to the quality of life and character of these neighborhoods. **The density of development allowed in Planned Growth Areas should be very high pending existing and planned water and sewer capacity.**

Protected natural resources present in this area will need to be field verified during any development review process consistent with municipal and state requirements. Special flood hazard areas and river corridors are excluded from this Planned Growth Area except for infill and redevelopment that is consistent with the Vermont Flood Hazard and River Corridor Rule.



VILLAGE AREAS

These areas include the traditional settlement areas, typically composed 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. These areas include the smaller existing Village

Village Area Statutory Criteria: 24 V.S.A. § 4348a(a)(12)(C)

- i. The municipality has a duly adopted and approved plan and a planning process that is confirmed in accordance with section 4350 of this title.
- ii. The municipality has adopted bylaws and subdivision regulations in accordance with sections 4414, 4418, and 4442 of this title.
- iii. Unless the municipality has adopted flood hazard and river corridor bylaws, applicable to the entire municipality, that are consistent with the standards established pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 755b (flood hazard) and 10 V.S.A. § 1428(b) (river corridor), the area excludes identified flood hazard and river corridors, except those areas containing preexisting development in areas suitable for infill development as defined in 29-201 of the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule.
- iv. The municipality has either municipal water or wastewater. If no public wastewater is available, the area must have soils that are adequate for wastewater disposal.
- v. The area has some opportunity for infill development or new development areas where the village can grow and be flood resilient.

Center designations and the surrounding mostly residential areas. Village Areas shall meet the following criteria:

The Village Areas have traditionally been and should continue to be a focus of growth and development in our region. They are suitable for infill development, more intensive use of existing buildings, and redevelopment of obsolete or abandoned structures or sites in a manner that is compatible with and reinforces the historic pattern, form, and character of the built environment. Revitalization of existing homes and new housing investment in these Village Areas are primary goals of this plan, so long as areas are outside of the floodplain and/or are compatible with river corridor regulations.

It is our vision that Village Areas will retain their historic role as centers of community activity, and will be the focus of economic, residential and community development. They will remain essential components of our region's sense of place and identity and will host the civic uses and gathering places that sustain a sense of community. Village Areas may be used for a mix of commercial, industrial, civic, and high-density residential uses. The Village Areas will remain compact with distinct edges and will not create new sprawl into the surrounding countryside with low-density and/or auto-oriented development along the highways that would undermine the economic viability of village businesses. Historic buildings will be rehabilitated and/or adapted for new uses in a manner that maintains or restores their architectural integrity. New development will be designed and sited to be compatible with and reinforce the traditional built pattern. Village Areas will be places where people can enjoyably and safely walk and bike – i.e., they will be designed for people rather than for cars.

To achieve this, MARC will encourage and assist towns to enact effective land use plans and controls that guide future growth and development in and around traditional centers. MARC will also assist towns with necessary capital planning and development review of traffic impact studies required to accommodate local housing targets within these areas. **To maintain the traditional settlement pattern and encourage infill development, the overall density of development allowed should be at least 5 dwelling units to the acre or higher where there is municipal water and sewer service. Where there is a lack of one or both of these infrastructure systems, the density will be moderate or as allowed by local zoning bylaws, state permitting rules, and site conditions.** Furthermore, protected natural resources may be present in this area and will need to be field verified during any development review process consistent with municipal and state requirements.

Investment in infrastructure that supports housing and other development is a priority in Village Areas.



TRANSITION/INFILL AREAS

These areas include existing or planned commercial, office, mixed-use, or residential development either adjacent to a Planned Growth or Village Area and served by, or planned for, public water or wastewater, or both. 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. To prevent negative impacts to the economic vitality of commercial areas in the adjacent or nearby Planned Growth or Village Area, new commercial linear strip development is not allowed.

This category also includes land around Interstate 91 Exits 7 and 8. These Transition Areas create opportunities as well as challenges with respect to land use and economic development. Interchanges attract development that, if not properly planned, can have adverse impacts on the economic viability of traditional centers, traffic safety and congestion, environmental quality and natural resources, and scenic character.

With good planning and land use regulation, Transition Areas can be attractive, efficient community assets that are developed in a manner that is integrated and compatible with the surrounding landscape, and that efficiently provides necessary services to travelers and residents.

The **overall density of development in Transition Areas should remain moderate or higher if served by municipal water and sewer and if consistent with Vermont’s smart growth principles.** Furthermore, protected natural resources may be present in this area and will need to be field verified during any development review process consistent with municipal and state requirements.



ENTERPRISE AREAS

These areas include locations of high economic activity and employment that are not adjacent to Planned Growth or Village Areas, such as industrial parks, areas of natural resource extraction, or other commercial uses that involve larger land areas. Enterprise areas

typically have ready access to water supply, sewage disposal, electricity, and freight transportation networks. To achieve this, MARC will encourage and assist towns to enact effective land use plans and controls to guide businesses of different types and scales to the appropriate location – downtown or village center vs. Enterprise Areas – and to promote high-quality site and building design. The most suitable uses of Enterprise Areas are larger-scale or land-intensive commercial and light industrial uses that are not compatible with the scale, settlement pattern, and pedestrian-orientation of our traditional downtowns and Village Centers and multi-unit housing located in proximity to employment, services, and transit.

The overall density of development in Enterprise Areas should remain moderate. Furthermore, protected natural resources may be included in this area and these resources may be present and will need to be field verified during any development review process consistent with municipal and state requirements.



RESOURCE BASED RECREATION AREA

These areas include large-scale resource-based recreational facilities, often concentrated around ski resorts, lakeshores, or concentrated trail networks, that may provide infrastructure, jobs, or housing to support recreational activities.

This category identifies locations that were intensively developed primarily for recreational or seasonal use, including the Okemo Mountain Resort and nearby seasonal homes in Ludlow, the public outdoor recreation areas on Mount Ascutney, and the densely developed summer home communities around Lake Rescue and Lake Pauline, also in Ludlow. These are areas with significant natural amenities that bring visitors and seasonal residents to our region, as well as enhance the quality of life for year-round residents. Careful planning is needed to balance the development of the facilities and amenities needed to support a four-season tourism industry with preservation of the features and natural settings that are essential to attracting visitors.

The most suitable uses of resort and recreation areas are recreational uses, particularly those that extend the season, diversify offerings, and/or connect recreational facilities. Other tourism- and recreation-supporting uses, such as dining, lodging, vacation homes, recreation equipment rentals, guide services, and transportation providers, are also suitable provided they remain within compact areas designated for residential and/or commercial

uses. However, MARC encourages, and will assist its resort communities to build strong, mutually beneficial ties between tourist destinations and nearby downtowns and Village Centers. One way to achieve that objective is to limit the amount of non-recreation, commercial development in resort and recreation areas and guide more of those uses to nearby downtowns or Village Centers.

It is our vision that the region's resort and recreation areas will support a tourism industry that will continue to attract visitors and seasonal residents by offering a variety of recreational opportunities throughout the year. These areas will continue to enhance the quality of life enjoyed by our region's residents and will remain essential components of the sense of place and identity in their host communities. Trail networks and other recreational amenities will be added, improved, expanded, and/or interconnected for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. Future commercial or residential development within resort and recreation areas will remain compact and will be thoughtfully sited and designed with a context sensitive approach to not degrade the scenic beauty, natural resource base and unique sense of place that our tourism industry depends upon.

The overall density of development in Resource-Based Recreation Areas should remain moderate. Furthermore, protected natural resources may be present in this area and will need to be field verified during any development review process consistent with municipal and state requirements.



HAMLET

Hamlets are small, historic clusters of homes which may include a school, place of worship, store, or other public buildings. Hamlets have no public water supply or wastewater systems, and are not planned for significant growth. They are mostly focused along one or two roads. These are depicted as points on the future land use map.

This land use classification recognizes the smaller traditional centers in our region that developed historically in locations with economic value such as sites with waterpower for mills, crossroads where travelers would stop, or railroad stations where agricultural products could be shipped to urban markets. They also served as the focus of community life with schoolhouses, churches, cemeteries, and other civic institutions that had to be located relatively close to where people lived prior to the advent of the automobile. Most of the hamlets have long since lost any economic activity or civic function and remain solely as small residential clusters.

Hamlets should remain in their current form and density without significant growth or change in the character or intensity of development. Furthermore, protected natural resources may be present in this area and will need to be field verified during any development review process consistent with municipal and state requirements.

RURAL - GENERAL



The Rural-General category includes areas that promote the preservation of Vermont's traditional working landscape and natural area features. They allow for low-density residential, home-based businesses and some limited commercial development that is compatible with productive lands and natural areas. This may also include an area that a municipality is planning to make more rural

than it is currently.

This land use classification encompasses rural areas where low-density residential development has displaced farming or forestry as the primary land use. These areas may share many physical characteristics with the region's working lands, but more of the land has been subdivided into residential lots and is no longer configured to support larger-scale

or intensive agriculture or forestry. These areas may include farm and forest lands, but agricultural or timber management activities are more likely to be secondary income sources, hobby farms, or homesteading operations.

Through context-sensitive approaches to siting and design, housing can be accommodated in these rural settings in a manner that protects the productive, ecological, and/or scenic value of these lands provided that the overall density of development in the area remains low. There should continue to be a mix of undeveloped lands, working lands, and residential lands in this classification. Most of the region's new housing should not be located in rural residential settings, but should be guided into existing settlement areas or adjoining areas designated for future growth. The most suitable uses of rural residential lands are agriculture and forestry, rural enterprises, renewable energy generation, outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing, environmental or agricultural education, wildlife habitat and nature preserves, flood storage, low-density housing, and similar low-impact uses.

It is our vision that the Rural-General areas throughout the region will continue to provide primarily single, detached housing in a rural setting that maintains open space between developed sites and offers views of the surrounding natural or agricultural landscape. Accessory dwellings, two-family housing and co-housing are also desirable for Rural-General areas. The development pattern will remain irregular (e.g., variation in lot sizes and building design) and will relate to the topography and other natural features of the land. Given the absence or limited capacity of the public infrastructure (i.e., roadways, water, sewer) serving these areas, large-scale, high-density or rapid development that would significantly increase the amount of housing in these areas is not appropriate.

To achieve this, MARC will encourage and assist towns to enact effective land use plans and controls intended to discourage further encroachment of rural residential development into areas designated as working lands or conservation areas.

Where the goal is to accommodate rural residential development, the overall density of residential development should be low, and local regulations should guide the siting and design of new homes in a manner that preserves rural character and open space. Furthermore, protected natural resources may be present in this area and will need to be field verified during any development review process consistent with municipal and state requirements.

RURAL – AGRICULTURAL & FORESTRY



value.

These areas include blocks of forest or farmland that sustain agricultural and forestry industries, provide critical wildlife habitat and scenic beauty, and contribute to economic well-being and quality of life. Development in these areas should be carefully managed to prioritize the working landscape and rural economy, and address regional goals, while protecting the agricultural and forest resource

This land use classification includes rural lands used for farming, forestry, resource extraction, renewable energy generation, and other resource-dependent land use activities. These lands generally remain in large tracts and large areas are actively managed for production. A significant portion of these lands have high quality soils that are necessary to support viable farming and forestry operations. This classification also includes undeveloped lands that are not readily accessible from year-round maintained roads or that may have physical constraints that make them poorly suited for development.

Farming and forestry are the foundation of our region's rural economy and maintain the working landscape that is valued by residents and visitors alike. Alongside conservation lands, working lands are an essential element of our region's character and are part of the rural countryside this plan seeks to preserve. Fragmentation and conversion of these lands to residential or other uses that are not resource-based weakens that foundation and our region's overall economic health. The proliferation of residential or other uses that are not resource-based also decreases the viability of traditional working land uses due to the potential for conflicts over off-site impacts of working lands such as odors, dust, noise, traffic, etc. The most suitable uses of working lands are agriculture and forestry, farm owner and labor housing, accessory on-farm businesses and other rural enterprises, renewable energy generation, outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing, environmental or agricultural education, wildlife habitat and nature preserves, flood attenuation, groundwater recharge, and similar land-based or resource-dependent uses.

It is our goal that the region's working lands will continue to be actively managed for rural production. To achieve this, MARC will encourage and assist towns to enact effective land use plans and controls intended to guide future residential development away from working lands and to limit the conversion and fragmentation of productive farm and forest land.

Where the goal is to maintain working lands, the overall density of residential development should be very low. Furthermore, protected natural resources may be present in this area and will need to be field verified during any development review process consistent with municipal and state requirements.



RURAL CONSERVATION

This land use classification includes areas of significant natural resources, identified by MARC or municipalities based upon existing Agency of Natural Resources mapping 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. The mapping of these areas and accompanying policies are intended to help meet requirements of 10 V.S.A. chapter 89.

This land use classification includes lands that are protected from development through public ownership or conservation easements, as well as large blocks of forest land that are largely undeveloped. Some of these lands have physical constraints such as high elevations, steep slopes, or shallow soils. Portions of the land are not readily accessible from year-round maintained roads. These factors combine to make these lands poorly suited for development.

Conservation lands are an essential element of our region's landscape and are part of the rural countryside this plan seeks to preserve. They provide ecological services – such as wildlife habitat, floodwater reduction, soil retention, carbon sequestration, recreation, and scenic beauty – that make them a valuable resource for our region. The recreational use of conservation lands contributes to the quality of life enjoyed by our region's residents and visitors and is a significant component of our region's tourism industry, which is the backbone of our regional economy.

The most suitable uses of conservation lands are wildlife habitat and nature preserves, , hunting and fishing, outdoor recreation, seasonal camps, environmental education, carbon sequestration, flood attenuation and groundwater recharge, and similar low-intensity uses that leave the land in a primarily undeveloped, natural state. Conservation lands are generally not appropriate for residential development or for extensions of infrastructure, including but not limited to roads and utilities, that would facilitate further development.

It is our vision that conservation lands will contribute to the environmental, social, and economic well-being of our region and will remain in a largely undeveloped state for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations. To achieve this, MARC will encourage and assist towns to enact effective land use plans and controls intended to guide future residential development away from conservation lands and to limit forest fragmentation and development on land with significant natural resource constraints. **On conservation lands, the overall density of residential development is very low.**

Development Standards

Development Standards are intended to direct how future development and redevelopment can occur in ways that will achieve the goals in this Regional Plan. (See the discussion on Substantial Regional Impact in Chapter 11 for more detail and implications for Act 250 proposals.) Unless otherwise specified, each standard applies to all future land use categories.

The term “**Compact Centers**,” used in the land use goal and development standards includes the more developed portions of the region; Downtown and Village Centers, Planned Growth Areas, and Village Areas. The term “**Rural Categories**” includes the least developed areas: Hamlets, Rural General, Rural Agriculture and Forestry, and Rural Conservation.

1. Per the HOME Act 47, 24 V.S.A. § 4412 (12) In any area served by municipal sewer and water infrastructure that allows residential development, bylaws shall establish lot and building dimensional standards that allow five or more dwelling units per acre for each allowed residential use, and density standards for multiunit dwellings shall not be more restrictive than those required for single-family dwellings.
2. Additionally, per HOME Act 47, 24 V.S.A. § 4412 (13) In any area served by municipal sewer and water infrastructure that allows residential development, bylaws shall permit any affordable housing development, as defined in subdivision 4303(2) of this title, including mixed use development, to exceed density limitations for residential developments by an additional 40 percent, which shall include exceeding maximum height limitations by one floor, provided that the structure complies with the Vermont Fire and Building Safety Code.
3. Land development will be consistent with the Future Land Use Map and the corresponding Land Use Classifications. Table 3.1 summarizes the future land use category descriptions, but the future land use map and full narrative descriptions should be referenced for the full meaning of the future land use plan for the MARC region.

TABLE 3.1: Summary of Future Land Use Categories		
Category	Density	Description
Downtown Center*	Highest: Unlimited	These areas are the larger mixed-use centers bringing together community economic activity and civic assets with housing. Development includes a mix of high-density commercial, civic and residential uses.
Village Center*	Very High	These areas are generally the smaller mixed-use centers bringing together community economic activity and civic assets with housing. Infrastructure is present or desired to support compact settlement patterns.
Planned Growth Area*	Very High	These areas include the high-density existing settlement and future growth areas with high concentrations of population, housing, and employment. Dense, walkable neighborhoods generally served by public water and wastewater infrastructure. Intended for higher-density residential and mixed-use development that generally meets smart growth principles.
Village Area*	Very High	These areas include the traditional settlement area or a proposed new settlement area, typically composed 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 to the core.
Transition/Infill Area	Moderate: Variable dependent on water & sewer availability	These areas include areas of existing or planned commercial, office, mixed-use development, or residential uses, served by, or planned for, public water or wastewater, or both. Intent is to transform these areas into higher-density, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly settlements through infill and redevelopment.
Enterprise	Moderate: Variable	These areas include locations of high economic activity and employment (i.e., industrial parks) and typically have access to water supply, sewage disposal, electricity and freight transportation networks.
Resource-Based Recreation	Moderate	These areas include large-scale resource-based recreational facilities, often concentrated around ski resorts, lakeshores, or concentrated trail networks, that may provide infrastructure, jobs, or housing to support recreational activities.
Hamlet	Moderate	Small historic clusters of homes and may include a school, place of worship, store, or other public buildings; not planned for significant growth; no public water supply or wastewater systems; and mostly focused along one or two roads.

Rural General	Low	These areas include areas that promote the preservation of Vermont’s traditional working landscape and natural area features while allowing for low density housing.
Rural Agricultural & Forestry	Very Low	These areas include blocks of forest or farmland that sustain resource industries. Development should be carefully managed to promote the working landscape and rural economy, while protecting the agricultural and forest resource value.
Rural Conservation	Very Low	These are areas of significant natural resources that require special consideration for conservation. Development is allowed but must minimize impacts and maintain functionality of identified significant natural resources.

4. It is desirable that Municipal and other government buildings are located within **Compact Centers** in order to maintain and encourage the vitality of downtown and village areas, unless they do not allow for public visitation (e.g., water and wastewater facilities) or by their nature they need to be elsewhere (e.g., a pavilion in the town forest).

5. Any land development occurring within **Compact Centers** must be compatible with the traditional settlement pattern, including the location, form, and scale of buildings in relation to the street and to each other.



NOT THIS: SUBURBAN PATTERN



THIS: TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD PATTERN

6. Subdivisions in **Compact Centers** should be designed to follow and extend traditional neighborhood development patterns. To achieve this, new or extended neighborhoods should feature small, generally narrow lots of varying size and frontage accessed by a network of interconnected streets. Houses should be located close to the street with shallow front yards. Porches, low fences, street trees and/or front yard landscaping should be used to create an attractive, walkable streetscape. Suburban-style subdivisions that feature a regular,



THIS: SHARED PARKING LOCATED TO THE REAR OR SIDE OF BUILDINGS WITH CROSS ACCESS BETWEEN LOTS

- consistent pattern of lots, a limited number of building designs, excessively wide streets or driveways, and/or cul-de-sacs are discouraged.
7. Off-street surface parking in **Compact Centers** must be located to the side or rear of buildings and not between the building and the street. Where lots are devoted entirely to parking or existing front parking cannot feasibly be eliminated or relocated, it should be separated and screened from the sidewalk and/or street with landscaping and/or decorative fencing.
 8. New or reconstructed streets within **Compact Centers** must be designed to safely accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists to the maximum extent feasible.
 9. As an element of any proposed land development, sidewalks within **Compact Centers** must be extended and repaired as necessary to safely accommodate pedestrians and to be accessible for all users.
 10. Sites in **Compact Centers** as well as in **Transition Areas** and **Enterprise Areas** must be designed to enhance the aesthetic character of the street or highway through well-designed signage, streetscaping and front yard landscaping, parking and service areas, and buildings.



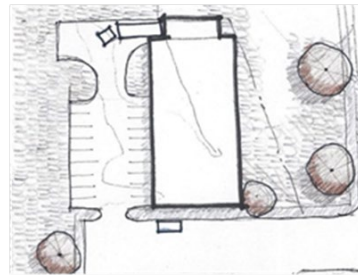
THIS: FRONT PARKING SCREENED TO ENHANCE THE STREETSCAPE

11. Expanses of asphalt must not dominate the view from the street or highway in **Compact Centers, Transition Areas** and **Enterprise Areas**. Large parking areas must be screened and landscaped, broken up into smaller units divided by landscaping, and/or located to the side or rear of buildings.
12. When any previously developed sites are modified substantially, access management and stormwater management must be upgraded as necessary to meet current standards.
13. Site plans within **Compact Centers, Transition Areas, Resource-Based Recreation,** and **Enterprise Areas** must implement access management techniques such as shared drives, cross access, parallel service drives to the

maximum extent feasible given physical conditions and existing development patterns on the site and adjacent lots.



Not This: Typical "Big Box" design



This: Building façade oriented to the street, parking to the rear of the building, sidewalk connections to the existing sidewalk, street trees.

14. New site plans within **Enterprise Areas**, **Transition Areas**, and **Resource-Based Recreation Areas** must include sidewalks and other facilities as appropriate to the location that accommodate multi-modal travel. Extension of sidewalks, multi-use paths and/or bike lanes along major corridors is strongly encouraged to facilitate connections between commercial sites and to nearby downtown / village center areas and residential neighborhoods.
15. New uses to be established in the **Enterprise Areas** and **Transition Areas** will be limited to those that do not compete with allowed businesses in a compact center unless they cater to visitor or traveler's services.
16. **Resource-Based Recreation Areas** will have transit service or multi-modal infrastructure linking them to nearby downtowns or Village Centers.
17. Land development in the **Rural Categories** must be sited and designed to minimize fragmentation of priority forest blocks and habitat connectors, and to minimize adverse impacts on natural resources and the ecological benefits they provide, including but not limited to, wetlands, floodplains, river corridors, rare, threatened and endangered species, significant natural communities, elevations above 2,500 feet, and slopes steeper than 25%.
18. In **Rural Conservation** and **Rural Agricultural & Forestry** areas, developments on slopes between 15-24% will be designed and located on the site to minimize adverse erosion and storm water impacts by incorporating Low Impact Development (LID) or other strategies, including:
 - a) Development of a lot or site shall require the least amount of site disturbance and reduce the lot coverage and building footprints as much as possible in order to maintain the natural hydrologic processes and

- reduce the volume and water quality impacts of the proposed development.
- b) Roads, driveways, buildings, and utilities are encouraged to be located on the flattest portions of the site.
 - c) Roads and driveways should be laid out to follow topographic contours and minimize soil and vegetation disturbance on steep slopes.
 - d) Minimize the length of driveways.
 - e) Reduce the total length of residential streets by examining alternative street layouts to determine the best option for increasing the number of homes per unit length.
 - f) The scale of development will not exceed the development capacity of the site.
19. Resource extraction operations must be designed and managed to avoid, minimize or mitigate (listed in preferential order) impacts to natural resources, transportation facilities and nearby land uses. Applications for new or expanded extraction operations must, at a minimum, include: an erosion control and stormwater management plan to ensure that the operation will not result in sedimentation of nearby surface waters and wetlands, or other impacts to water quality, adjoining property and public infrastructure downslope from the site; a landscaping plan that maintains existing mature vegetation or establishes naturalistic plantings to screen the operation as viewed from public vantage points and nearby property; and a reclamation plan to return the site to a condition suitable for other land uses allowed on the site.
20. Rural enterprises, such as accessory on-farm businesses, value-added processing and direct marketing of farm and forest products, that support the productive use and economic viability of farms and forest lands are encouraged. Rural enterprises must be similar in scale and intensity to traditional farming or forestry operations, and must not result in undue off-site impacts, such as noise or traffic, (that are not customary) in the immediate area. Rural enterprises must have a direct and significant connection to local farming and forestry operations, and should not be dependent on importing agricultural or forest products from outside the region.
21. Any residential development occurring in the **Rural Categories** must be sited and designed to minimize conversion and fragmentation of productive land, and to protect rural character. To achieve this, thoughtful site designs that cluster house lots (e.g., conservation subdivisions), locate homes off the land best suited for farming or forestry, and preserve open space are preferred, as is use of shared driveways and other infrastructure. Suburban-style subdivisions that feature a regular, consistent pattern of lots, a limited number of building designs,

excessively wide streets or driveways, and/or cul-de-sacs are not consistent with our region’s rural character.



NOT THIS: SUBURBAN CHARACTER



THIS: RURAL CHARACTER



NOT THIS :CONVENTIONAL SUBDIVISION



THIS: CONSERVATION/CLUSTER SUBDIVISION

22. Any new or expanded transportation facilities or utility infrastructure in the **Rural Categories** must be located within existing corridors to the maximum extent feasible. When a new corridor is the only feasible option, it must be sited and designed to follow the natural grade and existing contours to the maximum extent feasible, and to minimize the amount of soil disturbed, forest canopy opened (both during and after construction), land taken out of production, and impervious surface created.
23. Water and wastewater infrastructure provided along state highways and Class 2 town highways **outside of existing Compact Centers** should not encourage or facilitate sprawl.

24. New development must manage all run-off from developed areas through green stormwater management practices to the maximum extent feasible given the physical characteristics of the site, and previously developed sites must be retrofit as necessary and feasible to provide improved stormwater management.
25. Preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive re-use of historic buildings in a manner that preserves their architectural character is strongly encouraged.
26. Rehabilitation and re-use of structurally sound buildings listed in the national or state registers of historic places, or listed as a contributing structure within a historic district, are preferred whenever feasible and such buildings generally should not be demolished unless the property owner demonstrates that the demolition is part of a redevelopment plan for the property that will have significant community or economic development benefits.
27. To promote flood resilient communities:
 - a) New development in the floodway area is prohibited.
 - b) New development in river corridor areas within **Compact Centers** must not exacerbate or divert the flow of flood waters, increase the risk of fluvial erosion hazards, or endanger the health, safety and welfare of the public or of riparian property inhabitants during flooding. All other new development in river corridor areas will be avoided.
 - c) Any modifications to existing development in identified floodplains and river corridors will maintain the existing distance between the existing primary building and the top of bank⁷.
 - d) When rebuilt, substantially damaged structures in floodplains or river corridors shall relocate to a location on the lot that is outside of the floodway or river corridors. If no such location on that lot exists, the structure must be relocated as far away from the hazard area as possible.
 - e) New development in identified floodway fringe (i.e. floodplain) areas will locate on a portion of the lot that is outside of the floodway fringe hazard area. If no such location on that lot exists, the structure must be located as far away from the hazard area as possible.
 - f) Development in identified floodway fringe (i.e. floodplain) areas will not significantly increase the peak discharge of the river or stream within or downstream from the area of development and endanger the health, safety, or welfare of the public or riparian inhabitants during flooding.

⁷ “Top of bank” refers to the point along a stream bank where an abrupt change in slope is evident, and where the stream is generally able to overflow the banks and enter the adjacent floodplain during flows at or exceeding the average annual high water stage.

- g) The capacities of drainage channels and detention facilities will be maintained, and substantial reductions in flood storage through encroachment or wetland destruction must be avoided.
 - h) The protection and restoration of floodplains, and upland forested areas⁸ that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion should be encouraged.
 - i) New berms that restrict rivers and streams from accessing adjacent wetlands and floodplains are prohibited, unless warranted to protect public safety. Efforts to improve river and stream access to adjacent wetlands and floodplains shall be made as appropriate based upon hydrologic studies.
28. When any alternative exists, developments will not be sited on soils that are susceptible to flooding or on soils that are not suited for foundations and/or septic systems.

⁸ Upland forested areas are described in the Flood Resilience section of this Plan

CH 4: COMMUNITY UTILITIES AND FACILITIES

In the Mount Ascutney Region there are numerous infrastructure systems and other public services that are essential to the health and welfare of our citizens, the functioning of our communities, and the vitality of our economy. This includes such things as water and wastewater systems, communication technologies, electricity, solid waste management, health and human services, emergency services, and other civic facilities and services. Transportation facilities and services are addressed separately in Volume 2 of this Plan.

The purpose of this chapter is to document existing facilities and services; evaluate how they support or could better support local, regional, and state planning goals; and identify priority investments. Vermont's planning goals ([24 V.S.A. §4302](#)) seek "to maintain the historic pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside." A critical focus for this chapter is planning how the existing facilities and services should be changed to better serve community needs as well as to support this land use goal. For example, villages without adequate water or wastewater systems will continue to struggle to support village revitalization efforts and affordable housing developments. The rate of growth should not exceed the ability of the community and the area to provide facilities and services.

Utilities and Facilities Goals

To plan for and provide public facilities and services that meet the current and future needs of the Region and its individual towns and villages. To accomplish this in a manner that maintains the historic settlement pattern of compact centers surrounded by rural countryside and supports and promotes the economic vitality and development goals of the individual communities and those of the Region. To achieve this goal we will:

1. Promote public water and sewer infrastructure improvements in community centers and other areas designated for growth in the Regional Plan and municipal plans.
2. Facilitate and support broadband improvements so that every household in the Region has access to a fast, efficient, and affordable broadband connection at speeds of 100mbps (upload)/100mbps (download).
3. Provide other public facilities and services – such as solid waste, health and safety, communications, and educational services – to all inhabitants of the Region in a financially sustainable, energy efficient, and equitable manner.
4. Maintain, enhance, and promote recreational, entertainment, and cultural opportunities for all residents of and visitors to the region.
5. Promote and support efforts to meet the demand for quality, safe, and affordable child care across the Region. (See also Economic Development and Health Chapters goals and policies)

A. Electricity, Water, and Sewer

The efficient use of community water and sewer services, and electricity, is vital to the health and welfare of regional residents. The placement and use of these services (and of the transportation network) often determine the character and development patterns of a town. Therefore, towns should carefully plan the placement of service lines to correspond to the areas in which they would most like to see development occur.

1. ELECTRICAL TRANSMISSION

MARC Town	Green Mountain Power	Ludlow Electric
Andover	X	
Baltimore	X	
Cavendish	X	X
Chester	X	
Ludlow	X	X
Reading	X	
Springfield	X	
Weathersfield	X	
West Windsor	X	
Windsor	X	

Electric transmission service in the Region is provided by the Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO). Electric distribution service is provided by Green Mountain Power (GMP) and the Village of Ludlow Electric Light Department. (Electricity producers are discussed in the Energy Chapter.) Electricity, like water and sewer, is an important service for present and future development. The availability of electric utility services enables developers to build structures and develop land at significant cost reductions and increased efficiencies. It is therefore important to place transmission lines and substations in areas that have been designated as desirable for growth.

Transmission lines transport electricity from various generators to customers through switching stations and substations. The larger network of transmission lines and stations are referred to as “the grid.” Deficiencies in the Coolidge to Ascutney transmission line noted in an earlier regional plan were resolved with the completion of the Connecticut River Valley Project. VELCO’s 2024 Long Range Transmission Plan notes that the Ascutney transformer and several subtransmission lines could overload under certain modeled load scenarios. The transmission solution would be to rebuild the substation to a breaker-and-a-half configuration. However, the Green Mountain Power operator can take action to mitigate the situation, so it is not considered a high-priority upgrade.

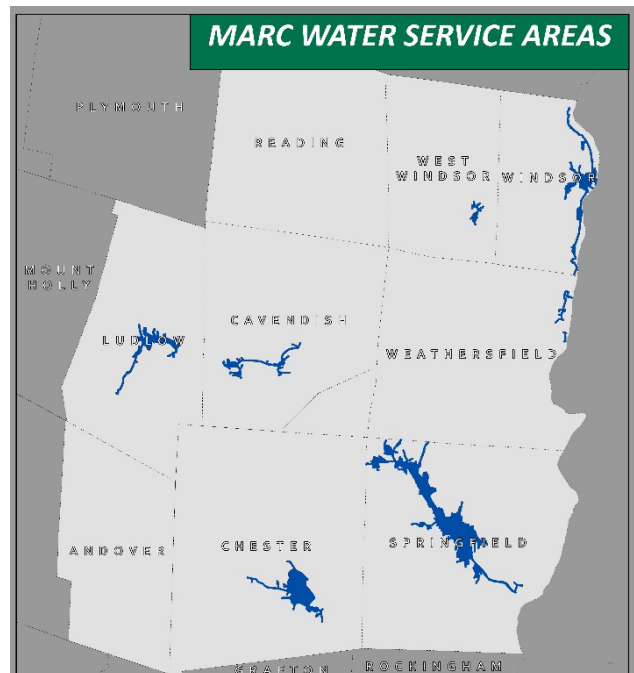
Customers can help defer costly transmission line upgrades and the construction of new power plant capacity through the use of energy efficient appliances and by taking measures to reduce their electricity use during peak demand periods. Other demand side management efforts include encouraging “green buildings,” siting new houses to maximize solar advantage, decentralized energy production such as generating electricity for individual residential or commercial buildings, or through energy conservation measures. (See the Regional Energy Plan, Volume 3 for conservation strategies.)

Power generating facilities and electrical transmission facilities are approved by the Public Utility Commission (PUC) under 30 V.S.A. §248 (Section 248). Projects subject to Section 248 review, including net-metered private wind turbines, are exempt from local regulations. However, the impacted municipality and regional planning commission may participate as interveners in the proceedings. Under Section 248 review process, projects are evaluated to determine if they serve the general public good and if they are consistent with the Regional Plan. MARC’s 2018 Energy Plan received a Certificate of Energy Compliance from the Vermont Public Service Department, granting the Plan “substantial deference” in Section 248 proceedings, and MARC will be seeking certification for its 2026 Enhanced Energy Plan as well. See the Regional Plan Volume 3: Enhanced Energy Plan for more information.

2. COMMUNITY WATER AND SEWER SERVICE

The availability of community water and wastewater service is essential to meet Vermont’s housing targets, while maintaining compact centers and rural countryside. Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas listed in the Land Use chapter of this Plan were chosen largely because of their proximity to existing services, or potential for the efficient expansion of existing systems. These centers represent the Region’s highest priorities for directing growth through the creation of additional municipal water and wastewater capacity. (See the Land Use chapter for more on smart growth, growth centers, and sprawl.)

Town/System Name	Population Served ¹
Cavendish & Proctorsville Villages	750
Chester Village	1490
Ludlow Village	2,818
Springfield	9,800
West Windsor	750
Windsor	2,350
Weathersfield/Ascutney Fire District #2	485



¹ Source: Vermont Water Supply Division; SDWIS Program, August January 2021.

Small communities are often limited in their ability to encourage dense, mixed-use development in villages not currently served by water and wastewater facilities. In April of 2025, the Town of Reading completed a feasibility study comparing wastewater alternatives for the Village of Felchville, and is now considering whether to proceed with one of the options recommended in the study. In December 2025, the Town of Weathersfield is completing feasibility studies for water and wastewater solutions in both villages of Ascutney and Perkinsville. Additional growth in the Village of Perkinsville is unlikely due to a lack of public water and wastewater services. While Ascutney Village does have a public water system, the system has limited capacity, and the lack of a public wastewater system also limits further growth.

Currently, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Springfield, West Windsor and Windsor have public water and wastewater facilities. The Windsor Wastewater Treatment Facility provides treatment for the wastewater collected from the former Ascutney Mountain Resort area and the Village of Brownsville in West Windsor. As shown in the table below, with the exception of the Chester Wastewater Treatment Facility, all wastewater facilities in the region operate at below 50% of their design capacities and have sufficient excess capacity to meet their needs for the foreseeable future.

	Total Capacity, gpd	Avg. Capacity Used, gpd	Percentage Capacity Used
Cavendish	150,000	69,000	46%
Chester	175,000	131,250	75%
Ludlow	1,050,000	262,500	25%
Springfield	2,200,000	968,000	44%
Windsor	1,000,000	300,000	30%
West Windsor	130,000	39,000	30%

Even facilities that have excess capacity can find it challenging to serve certain industries, such as breweries, that have high concentrations of nutrients in their effluence. In such situations, it may be necessary to condition local permit approvals on pre-treatment, project phasing, or capacity upgrades.

Improvements continue to be made to wastewater treatment facilities in the region to improve their operations and increase capacity. Cavendish upgraded its aeration system in 2019, and Ludlow completed a \$2.9 million upgrade to its facility in 2020. In the Spring of 2025, Chester voters approved bonding for a \$2.98 million wastewater project that includes the replacement of a force main, a gravity line, and a pump station. Construction will begin in 2026. Chester has also completed a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) for substantial upgrades to its treatment plant. Springfield voters recently (November 2025) passed a bond measure for wastewater system upgrades as well, approving \$2.5 million in improvements.

Springfield also used most of its ARPA funding to replace a water main on Clinton Street and has approved \$13.5 million in bonding to replace additional water mains on Clinton Street, Main Street, and River Street.

As illustrated in the table below, the actual average day demand (ADD) for two of the water systems in the region is at or near 80% of the system's permitted ADD. The actual ADD for four other systems is just above or below 50%. Windsor's water system is the only one that is operating well below its permitted ADD.

	Permitted ADD	Actual ADD	Percentage
Ascutney	37,000	29,635	80%
Cavendish	108,000	85,647	79%
Chester	324,000	172,191	53%
Ludlow	476,640	229,786	48%
Springfield	1,218,240	625,733	51%
West Windsor	57,450	26,817	47%
Windsor	1,228,000	158,595	13%

Towns are encouraged to engage in capital planning for their water and wastewater systems to meet requirements of state statute, maintain current levels of service, and support planned future growth. Carefully planned investments coupled with housing-friendly zoning amendments, consistent with Act 181 and the HOME Act, will enable smart growth in Tier 1A and Tier 1B centers and adjacent neighborhoods. The Town of Cavendish completed a capital plan in 2025 that includes recommended improvements to its water and wastewater infrastructure.

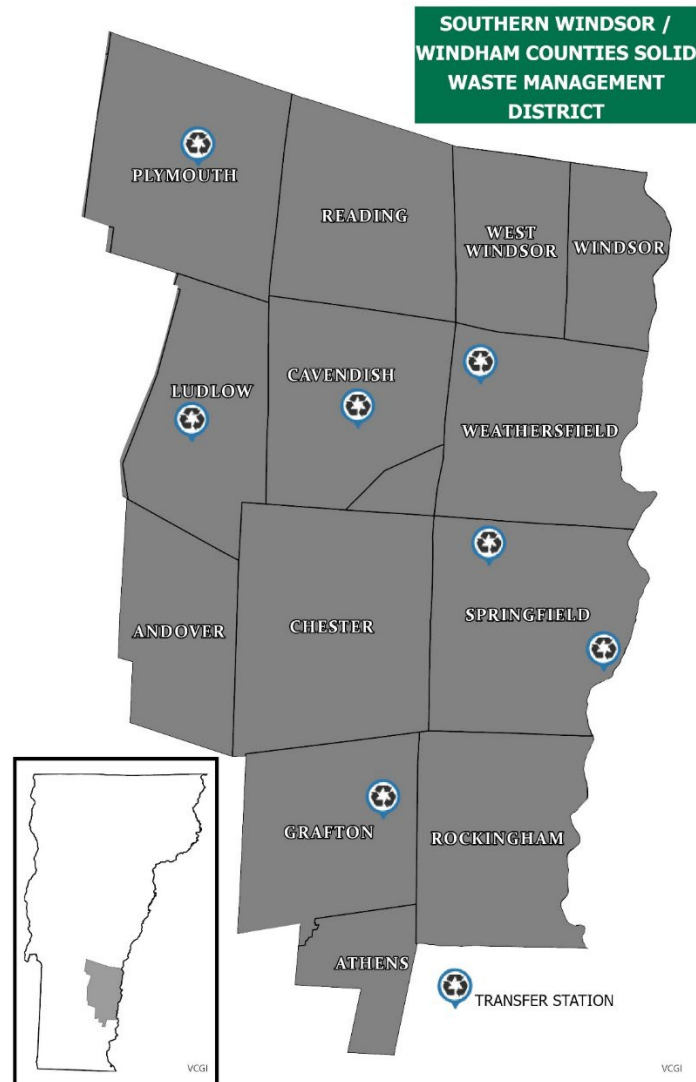
3. PRIVATE WATER AND SEWER SYSTEMS

In addition to municipal water and wastewater systems, the Region is served by privately owned wells and on-site septic systems. There are also a total of 50 non-municipal water systems in the Region.² Examples of non-municipal systems include those serving mobile home parks, condominiums, schools, industrial sites, and campgrounds.

De-centralized septic systems may allow for greater densities where municipal wastewater systems are not available. A decentralized system is where a cluster of structures share a common wastewater system for either on-site or off-site disposal. *Organizing Village Wastewater Solutions* (Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, August 2018) is a good general guidance document for solving community wastewater problems. In November 2025, MARC also sponsored a webinar on alternative wastewater systems that was well received by several communities in our region. In some cases, the establishment of a public or community water system serving village lots with on-site septic systems may facilitate increased densities. Monitoring to ensure the efficiency of these systems is important for the protection of the water supply, which is essential to the health and welfare of the Region.

² Source: Vermont Water Supply Division; SDWIS Program, August January 2021.

B. Solid Waste Facilities



Until its dissolution on June 30, 2007, the New Hampshire/Vermont Solid Waste Project was a bi-state agency, consisting of two districts and serving a total of 29 towns in New Hampshire and Vermont. The districts were formally organized in 1981. Two facilities were constructed in New Hampshire, including a waste-to-energy facility in 1987 and an ash monofill in 1988. At that time, the Project contracted with Wheelabrator Claremont, Inc., to incinerate solid waste from its member towns' residential, institutional, and commercial sources. All the towns in the Regional Commission are part of the Southern Windsor/Windham Counties Solid Waste Management District.

All Vermont municipalities, either individually or as part of a solid waste district or an intermunicipal association, are required by Vermont law to adopt a Solid Waste Implementation Plan (SWIP). The SWIP documents town or district waste management facilities and articulates

how solid waste will be managed over the subsequent five years and must be in compliance or consistent with State's goals, as well as in accordance with any municipal or regional plan, prepared and adopted pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117. The District's current SWIP may be read at www.vtsolidwastedistrict.org.

In 2012, the Vermont Legislature unanimously passed the Universal Recycling Law (Act 148), which bans three major categories of materials from Vermonters' trash bins:

- ["blue bin" recyclables](#)
- [leaf and yard debris; clean wood](#)
- [food scraps \(organics; compostable kitchen wastes\)](#)

Household Hazardous Waste

In 2021, the District constructed a permanent, seasonal HHW Depot at the Alva Waste Transfer Station in Springfield. The facility is open from May through September, two mornings a week by appointment for District residents and small businesses (Very Small Quantity Generators).

To ensure that solid waste management in the Region protects the environment, is economically efficient, and safeguards the health of the Region's residents, the goals, policies, and recommendations at the end of this chapter are adopted.

C. Community Health and Safety Resources

1. HOSPITALS AND OTHER HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

The Mount Ascutney Region is served by a variety of healthcare facilities. There are two hospitals in the region: Mt Ascutney Hospital in Windsor and Springfield Hospital in Springfield, both of which provide emergency and primary care services to residents. There are several smaller clinics and six assisted-living / nursing home facilities throughout the region. Residents also commonly receive care at other facilities outside the region, such as in Rutland or Lebanon, NH.

A more detailed discussion of the region's health resources can be found in Chapter 11, Health.

2. CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Southern State Correctional Facility in Springfield is the only correctional facility located in the region following the closure of the Southeast State Correctional Facility in Windsor in 2017. According to a May 2020 report from the Vermont Department of Corrections, the Springfield facility currently houses 337 male inmates, occupying approximately 89% of the facility's 377 available beds. A committee made up of state, regional, and local stakeholders, including MARC, developed an adaptive reuse plan for the Windsor facility. The decision about next steps - selling it for a mixed use or housing development or maintaining ownership for a state facility - rests with the state. Land adjacent to the Southern State Correctional Facility is available for redevelopment for industrial or civic uses.

See the Emergency Management chapter for emergency services in the Region.

D. Communications Facilities

Communications facilities are an essential service for most Vermont residents and businesses. Countless economic, social, and cultural benefits are available to communities that possess free and open access to people and ideas in other parts of the world. Developing the necessary communications infrastructure and access to these services, such as broadband, is an integral component of economic development and land use planning. The COVID-19 public health emergency emphasized the importance of broadband access when in-person economic and educational activities are restricted.

1. TELECOMMUNICATIONS

a. Land-Line Telephone Services

Over ninety percent (90%) of Vermont residents had one landline telephone in their household, according to the 2018 Vermont Telecommunications Plan prepared by the Vermont Department of Public Service. Anecdotally, that is changing as more Vermonters unplug their landlines and rely instead on cellular telephones or Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services. Cell phone and VoIP service users should be aware that critical functions, including 911 emergency services, may not be as reliable without a landline. In the Region, land-line telephone services are provided by VTel, TDS, and Consolidated Communications.

b. Wireless Communication Facilities

Between 2017 and 2024, under 30 V.S.A. § 248a, the Vermont Public Utility Commission granted 43 Certificates of Public Good for telecommunications facilities or facility improvements in 23 locations in Chester, Ludlow, Springfield, Weathersfield and Windsor³. A 2024 Wireless Drive Test conducted by the Department of Public Service collected wireless service data along State Highways, for each of Vermont's six facility based operating providers: AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, US Cellular, Verizon Wireless and VTel Wireless. In the Region, cellular data speeds were generally worse along state routes in the center of the region, especially in Reading, Cavendish, and Chester⁴, however, service speeds across the region have increased significantly since 2018. Improving wireless service in the region is vital not only for convenience but to improve public safety. Public safety agencies, such as emergency medical services, fire, and police departments, rely on wireless communications and telecommunications to provide essential services, disseminate vital information, and respond to emergencies.

Network infrastructure must be developed in an efficient, safe, and thoughtful manner. Possible impacts upon scenic and cultural resources, aesthetics, and public health should all be considered during the planning process.

³ Source: ePUC database.

⁴ More information can be found here: <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/telecommunications-and-connectivity/mobile-wireless-drive-test>

(1) Telecommunications Act of 1996

Congress enacted the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which called for the rapid deployment of advanced telecommunications and information technologies and services. The Act significantly limited communities' traditional zoning and health authorities over the siting of towers, giving the FCC almost sole power to regulate a variety of environmental siting issues including public health concerns.

Wireless telecommunication facilities require near "line of sight" access from the user to a tower to avoid disconnected calls. In addition, the new technology, PCS and SMRS in particular, operate at a low frequency with a range of only one and a half to two miles. Our Region's topography dictates that these facilities are located at close intervals, resulting in more locations.

(2) Local and Regional Planning

Thoughtful local and regional planning, which includes watershed analysis, should be done for the inevitable siting and development of future wireless communications facilities. The MARC can assist towns in understanding the limitations of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and how state vs. local regulations apply (e.g., Section 248). 24 V.S.A. § 4412(9) authorizes local administrative review for telecommunication facilities with no or de minimis impacts.

2. TELEVISION, AND OTHER MEDIA

While television and radio are largely used for entertainment purposes, they are also a key part of the communications system in the Region. Both play a role in accessing information and emergency broadcasting. Cable television is available through Comcast (xfinity) in at least a portion of nine towns in the Region, all except Baltimore, and is widely available in Ludlow, Springfield and Windsor. Where cable TV is not available, there are two satellite television providers, DISH and Direct-TV, that can serve almost any location. Vermonters also use various online streaming platforms as an alternative to cable or satellite television. Local public access television channels include Springfield Area Public Access television (SAPA TV), which serves Springfield, Weathersfield and Chester; Okemo Valley TV, which serves Andover, Cavendish, Ludlow and Reading; and Windsor On-Air, which serves Windsor and West Windsor.

Numerous commercial radio stations serve this area, but only one station broadcasts from this region. Vermont Public Radio broadcasts on eight stations statewide, one of which – 89.5 WVPR – broadcasts from the summit of Mount Ascutney in Windsor.

Newspapers that serve this Region include The Vermont Journal, The Shopper, Vermont Standard, Springfield Reporter (online only), The Valley Marketplace, Valley News, Chester Telegraph (online only), and Rutland Herald.

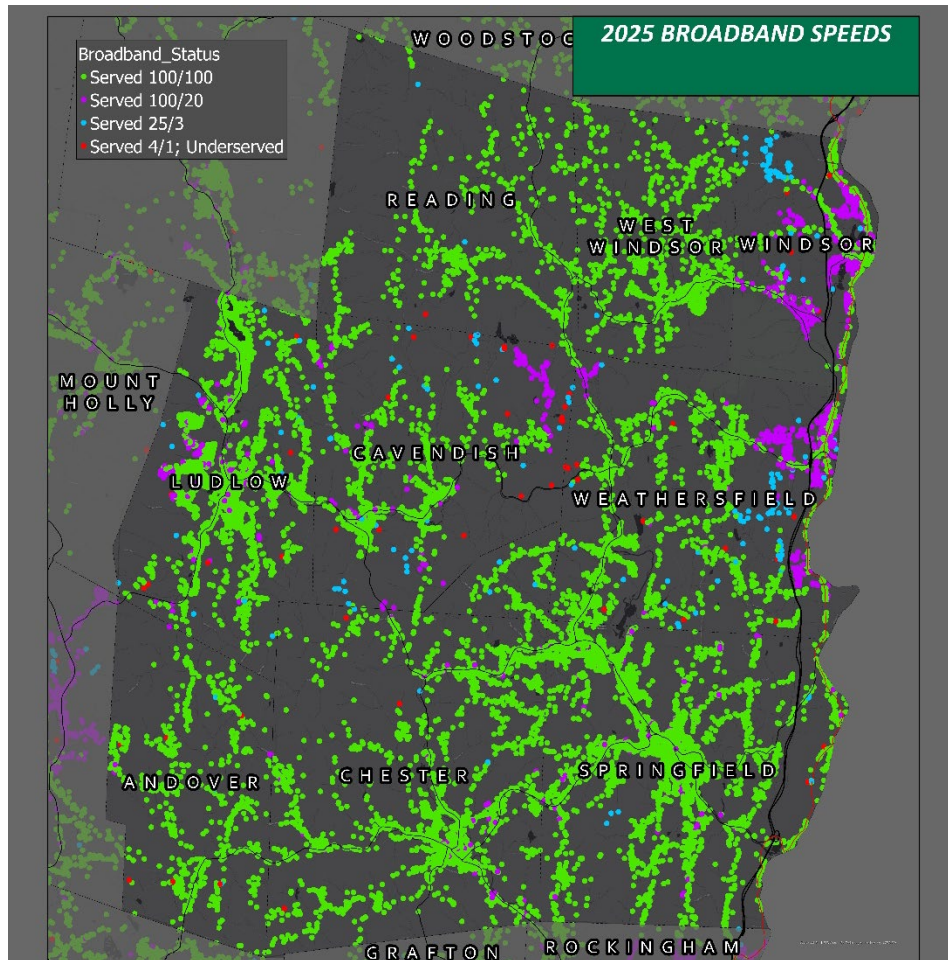
3. BROADBAND AND PUBLIC WI-FI**a. Broadband**

Broadband service is a necessary means for businesses and residents to perform day-to-day tasks. “In 2018, through Acts and Resolves No. 169, the General Assembly found that broadband is essential for supporting economic and educational opportunities, strengthening health and public safety networks, and reinforcing freedom of expression and democratic, social, and civic engagement.” During the COVID-19 pandemic, this proved to be especially true. People rely heavily on efficient broadband service for schools, workforce training programs, distance learning programs, remote work, and telehealth visits, amongst other tasks. Many of the “temporary” lifestyle and work changes that began or increased during the pandemic have become commonplace in 2025.

Table 4.6 Broadband Internet Access Speeds										
Speed Tiers (download/upload)										
TOWN	Served 100/100		Served 100/20		Served 25/3		Served 4/1		Under- served	Grand Total
ANDOVER	507	97.31%	5	0.96%	3	0.58%	2	0.38%	4	521
BALTIMORE	110	97.35%		0.00%	3	2.65%		0.00%		113
CAVENDISH	833	82.56%	125	12.39%	32	3.17%	19	1.88%		1009
CHESTER	1736	96.28%	61	3.38%	3	0.17%		0.00%	3	1803
LUDLOW	2269	89.83%	229	9.07%	18	0.71%	7	0.28%	3	2526
READING	517	99.42%		0.00%	2	0.38%	1	0.19%		520
SPRINGFIELD	3789	95.56%	168	4.24%	6	0.15%	1	0.03%	1	3965
WEATHERSFIELD	1149	71.23%	393	24.36%	59	3.66%	7	0.43%	5	1613
WEST WINDSOR	764	99.74%		0.00%	2	0.26%		0.00%		766
WINDSOR	799	53.84%	635	42.79%	45	3.03%	5	0.34%		1484
Total (region)	12473	87.10%	1616	11.28%	173	1.21%	42	0.29%	16	14320
Total (state)	230,631	72.62%	55,440	17.46%	22,935	7.22%	7,838	2.47%	741	317,585

Source: VT Department of Public Service

It is imperative to the success of the Region that every household has access to a fast and efficient broadband connection. According to the VT Department of Public Service, in 2025, 72.62% of Vermont locations have internet access at speeds of 100/100 Mbps or better. In our region, only Windsor (53.84%) and Weathersfield (71.23%) have access percentages lower than the state-wide average. . Broadband service providers in the region include Comcast (Xfinity), TDS, Consolidated Communications, HughesNet, ECFiber, Viasat, Wavecomm and VTel.



Broadband – High-speed Internet and communication networks provided by a wide band of frequencies that enables many messages to be communicated simultaneously

Fiber Optics – Fiber optic cable is a high-speed data transmission medium containing tiny glass or plastic filaments.

Cable – Cable broadband connects your home to a fiber cabinet in your area using coaxial cables, which provide a much faster internet connection than traditional copper phone lines.

Digital Subscriber Line (“DSL”) – Technologies that extends the ability of copper telephone lines to carry data and communications, this technology is becoming increasingly outdated and sometimes fails to reach speeds over 4 (download)/ 1 (upload) Mbps, which is considered “underserved” according to federal standards.

Satellite – High-speed satellite internet services are not as fast as fiber optic cable or cable broadband; however, they are available on any site with a clear view of the southern sky.

Communication Union Districts – According to the Department of Public Service, “A Communications Union District (CUD) is an organization of two or more towns that join together as a municipal entity to build communication infrastructure together.” Three of the towns in the

MARC region – Windsor, West Windsor, and Reading - belong to the ECFiber CUD. The remaining towns in our region do not belong to a CUD.

PUBLIC WI-FI LOCATIONS

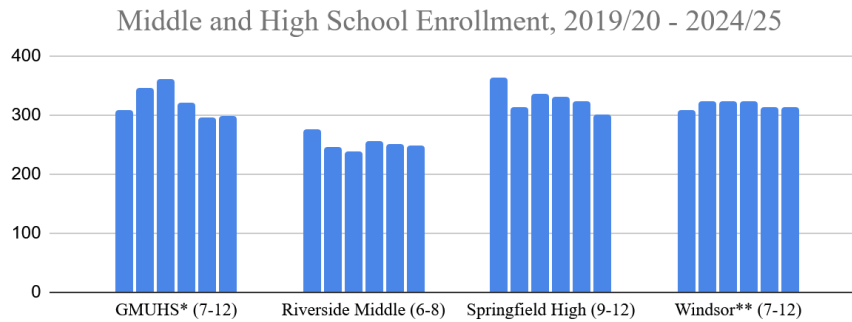
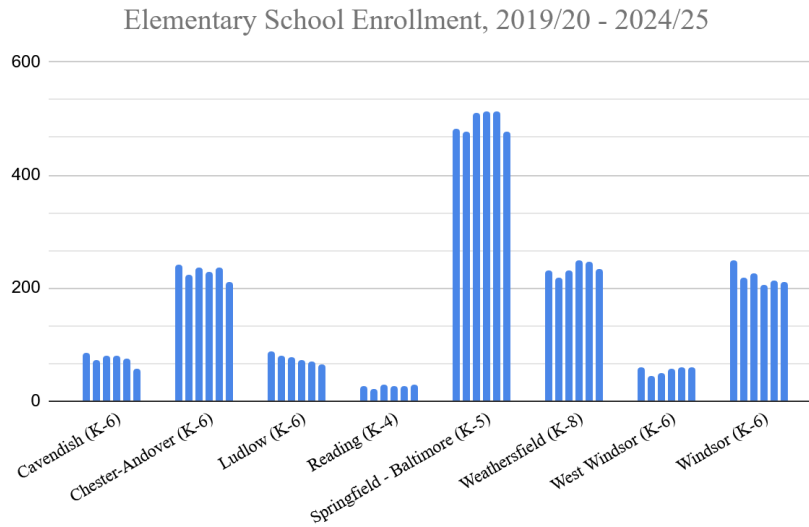
Public wi-fi is available at most town offices, schools and libraries in the region, and some area businesses also offer wi-fi to their customers.

E. Educational Resources

Educational opportunities available in the Region include childcare facilities; elementary, middle, and high schools; vocational and technical schools, colleges and universities; continuing education programs, museums and historical societies; and libraries and cultural opportunities (**Appendix A – Map 4**). Many factors should be considered in the analysis of schools and their ability to serve as adequate facilities for providing educational opportunities to area residents. Program and policy issues for public schools are generally addressed by local school or school district boards.

The Region is currently served by four supervisory unions: Springfield School District (SSD), Two Rivers Supervisory Union (TRSU), Mountain Views Supervisory Union (MVSU) and Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union (WSESU). Springfield, Chester and Windsor are now the only towns in the Region with public high school facilities. The student population in the Region has remained relatively stagnant in recent years. Many smaller schools have closed or consolidated with larger schools under Act 46. Act 46 was enacted in 2015 to create a more sustainable student population and educational experience. These mergers occurred throughout the Region, leading to the closure of a number of schools, including Black River High School in Ludlow. The independent Expeditionary School at Black River has since opened in the former Black River High School building in Ludlow.

The River Valley Technical Center (RVTC) is in the Howard Dean Education Center in Springfield. In 2025, it served 310 high school students for at least one period of course work per day. RVTC also provides services for adults. Also located in the Howard Dean Education Center is the Community College of Vermont’s Springfield Office. The Technical Center provides a very important function training students to fill much needed positions in the building trades, health sciences and other fields.



*GMUHS serves Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester & Ludlow, but also Mt. Holly, which is outside the MARC region.

**Windsor Schools serve Windsor, West Windsor, and Weathersfield, but also Hartland, which is outside the MARC region.

Reading Elementary School students attend Mountain Views Union High School, which is outside the MARC region.
 Data Source: VT Agency of Education’s EnrollmentDashboard

The Vermont Legislature has enacted several educational funding programs seeking to provide all students with an equal opportunity for education regardless of municipal tax base. The current program, Act 68, sets statewide residential and non-residential tax rates providing base level funding per pupil in all school districts. Each district may then request additional funding from local taxpayers. This program remains controversial as overall costs and tax rates continue to rise.

With the passage of Act 73 in 2025, the Vermont Legislature has begun a three-year process of reforming the state’s public education system. Among other things, Act 73 calls for a reduction in the number of school districts and an increase in the number of students and the geographic area that each district serves. As of December 2025, the new school district boundaries are unknown so no conclusions can be drawn regarding the impact on area schools. The new district boundaries should be approved in 2026, and the reconfigured districts are scheduled to begin operating for the 2028-29 school year.

F. Child Care

The availability of affordable, high-quality childcare is vital to the health and economic development of the Region and its inhabitants. Quality childcare contributes to early childhood development, enables parents of young children to enter or remain in the workforce, enhances the productivity of working parents, and contributes to the expansion of the local and regional economies. In addition, facilities that are located near residential clusters, schools, the workplace, or public transportation may reduce automobile trips and congestion. Public facilities such as schools, town offices, and libraries are often located in convenient locations and should consider providing childcare or space for childcare services as should private businesses. For more on the role of childcare in the region's health and economic stability and the potential role of businesses in providing childcare, see the Health and Economic Development Chapters.

The State of Vermont Child Development Division maintains a list of all formal, registered home care providers and licensed childcare centers in the State. The State regulates childcare providers, requiring they meet the basic standards for children's health and safety. Many programs achieve a higher standard through accreditation by a national program.

In our Region the availability of childcare varies greatly by town. There are currently no listed state-licensed facilities in the towns of West Windsor, Andover and Baltimore. Andover and Baltimore are the two smallest towns in the area. The existing lack of access to childcare was exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. The Springfield Area Working Communities Challenge (SAWCC), a Federal Reserve funded initiative to increase workforce participation in the region, estimates that current capacity can only meet approximately half of the demand for childcare. SAWCC has developed a childcare resource guide for employers in the southern Windsor County area. For a listing of licensed providers and registered homes by town, visit www.brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us, which currently lists 47 state registered facilities in the Region.

Childcare expenses can deter some families from seeking safe and convenient services. The Child Care Financial Assistance Program, established by the Vermont Agency of Human Services, which is based on gross monthly income and family size can assist eligible families with the cost of childcare. There are also some tax credits available for both businesses and employees, and employer childcare subsidies, but many are underutilized.

Springfield Area Parent Child Center (SAPCC) (SAPCC) programs include child care, pre-school, playgroups, parent education, a diaper bank and a community closet. For families in need, SAPCC also offers assistance with living expenses including food, shelter, heat and transportation.

G. Recreation

1. INTRODUCTION

The Mount Ascutney Region offers many recreational opportunities to residents and visitors alike. Some of these opportunities include hiking, biking, camping, downhill skiing, backcountry skiing, cross-country skiing, hunting, horseback riding, ATV riding, paddling, and fishing. The abundance and variety of opportunities within the region are not only a reason to live within or visit the region (outdoor recreation is commonly associated with the Vermont 'way of life'), but also an important sector of the economy.



Recreation Photograph 1 - Town of Ludlow with Okemo Ski Area in the Backround. Source: SWCRPC

2. RECREATION RESOURCES

The region is home to many areas devoted to indoor and outdoor recreation, ranging from public opportunities on state and municipal lands to those available on private lands. Ludlow is home to the Okemo State Forest and the Okemo Ski Resort, West Windsor is home to Ascutney Outdoors (including a small community ski area and a multi-use trail system) and Ascutney Mountain which is one of the Northeast's premier hang-gliding spots, Windsor is home to the Mt. Ascutney State Park which offers several hiking trails, Springfield is home to the Toonerville multi-use path; and Reading is home to a large portion of the Green Mountain Horse Association's trail network. Furthermore, VAST (Vermont Association of Snow Travelers) maintains an expansive network of snowmobile trails in the region. Indoor recreation opportunities include craft fairs, contra dances, indoor concerts, and recreation centers.

Public and private entities work continuously to improve and expand recreational opportunities in the region. Of particular note is the multi-jurisdictional Mount Ascutney Outdoor Recreation Plan, a multi-town initiative to improve the trail network on and around Mount Ascutney.

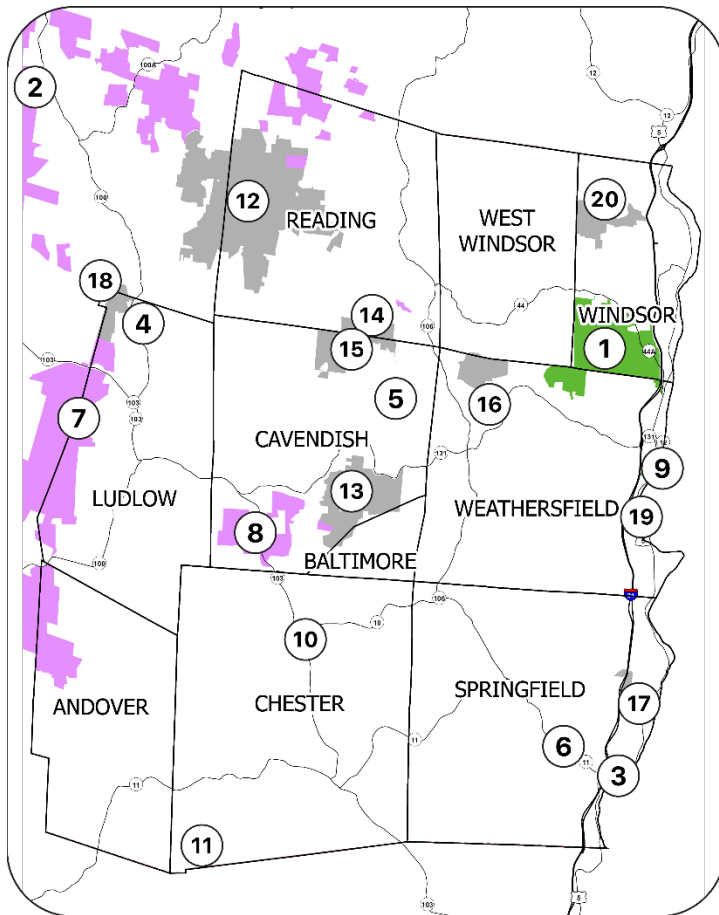
A more comprehensive list of the Region's recreational resources is included below.



Recreation Photograph 2 - Trailhead at the North Springfield Reservoir, Source: USACE

a. Federal Lands

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers owns and operates a dam along the Black River in Springfield. The associated land and impoundment, covering 1,361 acres of fields, forests, wetlands, and lakes is available to the public. Summer activities include swimming, sunbathing, picnicking, fishing, boating, kayaking, canoeing, and wildlife viewing. A shelter is available to rent for daytime use at the Stoughton Pond Recreation Area. In the winter, the land is available for cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and snowshoeing. For more information, visit: <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation/NorthSpringfieldLake.aspx>.



#	NAME	TYPE
1	ASCUTNEY STATE PARK	STATE PARKS
2	COOLIDGE STATE FOREST	STATE FORESTS
3	HOYT LANDING ACCESS	STATE OWNED ACCESSES
4	LAKE RESCUE ACCESS	STATE OWNED ACCESSES
5	LORD STATE FOREST	STATE FORESTS
6	MUCKCROSS	STATE PARKS
7	OKEMO STATE FOREST	STATE FORESTS
8	PROCTOR PIPER STATE FOREST	STATE FORESTS
9	WILGUS STATE PARK	STATE PARKS
10	WILLIAMS RIVER ACCESS	STATE OWNED ACCESSES
11	WILLIAMS RIVER STATE FOREST	STATE FORESTS
12	ARTHUR DAVIS WMA	WMA
13	HAWKS MOUNTAIN WMA	WMA
14	KNAPP BROOK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA	WMA
15	KNAPP BROOK WMA	WMA
16	LITTLE ASCUTNEY WMA	WMA
17	SKITCHEWAUG WMA	WMA
18	TINY POND WMA	WMA
19	WEATHERSFIELD WMA	WMA
20	WINDSOR PRISON WMA	WMA

STATE-OWNED RECREATION LAND

b. Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)

WMAs are owned by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and are managed primarily for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and their habitat, but the areas also provide opportunities for outdoor recreation. There are nine WMAs in the southern Windsor County Region of varying size.

c. State Parks

There are three State Parks in the Mount Ascutney Region: Wilgus, Mount Ascutney and Muckross.

Wilgus State Park sits along Route 5 in Weathersfield and offers a campground with shelters, access to the Connecticut River, and hiking with great views of the Connecticut River Valley. For more information about Wilgus State Park please visit the following webpage: <https://vtstateparks.com/wilgus.html>.

Ascutney State Park is located along Route 44 in Windsor and offers camping and hiking opportunities. The Park includes a “Summit Road” ending approximately ½ mile from the summit of Mt. Ascutney. The summit can also be reached using a network of hiking trails. The summit of Mt. Ascutney is home to a viewing tower and several other vantage points offering spectacular views of the surrounding countryside. The West Peak area is used as a hang-gliding launch platform. For more information on the Ascutney State Park including a recreational guide, please see the following website: <https://vtstateparks.com/ascutney.html>.

Muckross State Park is located off of Route 11 in Springfield, a short walk from the park and ride. The Park is the region’s newest, established in 2016. The Park offers areas for picnicking and a network of informal trails for visitors to hike and explore. Since it is a new park, Muckross has no established facilities, but the State has commissioned a Master Plan outlining potential future uses and facilities for the Park. For more information about Muckross State Park, please visit the following website: <https://vtstateparks.com/muckross.html>.



Recreation Photograph 3 - Mt. Ascutney over Lake Runnemedede, Source: MARC

d. State Forests

There are four different State Forests in the Mount Ascutney Region, the Albert C. Lord, Proctor Piper, Williams River, and Okemo State Forests. These lands are owned by the State of Vermont and are managed by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation. The Department's mission includes stewardship of these lands for the health, integrity, and diversity of important species, natural communities, and ecological processes, as well as management of the forests for sustainable use including compatible outdoor recreation activities, such as multi-use trail systems. The Okemo State Forest is the only one in the region with its own informational document, which can be found here: https://vtstateparks.com/assets/pdf/okemo_sf_trails.pdf.

e. Other State-Owned Lands

Hoyt's Landing in Springfield offers fishing and boating access to the Connecticut River and picnic areas in the summer and ice fishing access in the winter.

f. Town Forests and Town Parks**f. Town-Owned Landes**

In addition to the State-owned lands, most towns in the Mount Ascutney Region maintain land that is used for recreational purposes. These lands range from undeveloped woodlot parcels to pocket parks in village center and types between.

g. Road Network

Roads are a vital recreational, as well as transportation resource. Roads are used for walking, jogging, bicycling, equestrian and other uses. With the advent of fat bikes and electric bicycles, bicycling is becoming a year-round recreational activity and more difficult routes are accessible to a greater number of people. The region's scenic gravel roads make it well situated to take advantage of these developments. MARC has published maps and descriptions of bicycling routes in the region on the Ride Windsor County webpage at <https://ridewindsorcountyyt.weebly.com/>.

Variable widths of the existing roadway shoulders on paved routes may limit recreational uses. Many Class 4 town highways and legal trails are used for snowmobiling, snow shoeing, and cross-country skiing; however, their use is subject to local rules and restrictions. In accordance with Vermont's Complete Streets Law (Act 34, 2011), accommodation for all modes of travel (i.e. walking and bicycling) is to be considered in all state and municipally managed transportation projects on paved roads.

h. Water Access

The Connecticut River forms the eastern boundary of the area, providing the towns of Springfield, Weathersfield, and Windsor with ample river-based recreational activities such as canoeing, kayaking, fishing, and swimming. In addition to the Connecticut River, the region is home to two other major rivers, the Black River and Williams River, and various streams and ponds that contribute to water-based recreation. Many informal swimming holes also exist along the network of streams and rivers in the region. According to the Basin 10 Management Plan, the Black River hosts Twenty-Foot Hole on the North Branch in Reading, and Buttermilk Falls in

Ludlow, on Branch Brook. Also on the Black River are Tolles Hill Dam, a USACE recreational area in Perkinsville, and Flat Rock, opposite Mill Road just north of the Route 106 river crossing in Perkinsville.

For more information on water based recreation, please see the [Connecticut River Joint Commission's Recreation Plan](#), the [Basin 10 Water Quality Management Plan](#), and the [Connecticut River Paddlers' Trail Guide](#).

i. Events

In addition to the resources listed above, the region is host to several events devoted to outdoor recreation. The Vermont 100 and Vermont 50 are two popular long distance races that are a boon to the local economy. The Vermont 100 is the last ultra-marathon in the country to host both humans and horses on the same track. The Toonerville trail hosts several marathons and is being actively promoted to become a venue for the marathon circuits. There are many smaller events held in towns throughout the region such as Old Home Days, July 4th firework shows, outdoor concerts, ducky derbies, and many more.

3. KEY PRIORITIES

Move Forward Together Vermont is Vermont's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, or SCORP, for 2025 through 2030. The plan is organized around three themes, Stewardship, Wellness, and Economic Development, and includes nineteen priorities, as listed below. Towns and regions should be aware of these priorities when conducting planning for recreational opportunities.

Stewardship

- Invest in stewarding and upgrading existing recreational infrastructure
- Strengthen guidance and education about climate resilient strategies that help communities interact with their rivers and water bodies
- Cultivate and promote a stewardship ethic among Vermonters and visitors
- Identify and support regional outdoor recreation planning and partnerships
- Create and promote a suite of technical assistance resources to strengthen the skills and expertise of non-profits, municipalities and businesses who manage recreation
- Reinforce and sustain public recreation on private lands



Black River, Source: MARC

Wellness

- Create and enhance in-community outdoor recreation opportunities that directly connect to where people live, learn and work
- Develop recreational opportunities and conserve open spaces that strategically fill gaps in experiences and distribution across the state
- Create safe, welcoming, and environmentally sustainable entry spaces into the outdoors
- Centralize, improve, and make more accessible informational resources about outdoor recreation opportunities and events
- Support programs that reduce the costs of outdoor recreation
- Strengthen connections between people working in health and wellness, people working in education, and people working in outdoor recreation
- Strengthen community awareness about improved health and wellness outcomes through outdoor recreation

Economic Development

- Develop information and resources to demonstrate how outdoor recreation resources and vibrant local economies are connected
- Strengthen the capacity of municipalities to engage in Vermont's outdoor recreation economy
- Strengthen workforce opportunities in Vermont's outdoor sector
- Foster resilience and flexibility in outdoor recreation communities, organizations, and businesses to withstand major weather events and a variable climate
- Invest in organizations and businesses led by marginalized communities
- Support innovation in Vermont's outdoor sector by supporting entrepreneurship, providing resources to businesses, and seeking solutions to challenges

For additional information regarding the priorities, please see [Move Forward Together Vermont](#).

H. Policies

Water, Sewer, and Electricity Policies

1. Extensions of service infrastructure should take place in areas proposed for development by town plans and local bylaws and should not lead to sprawl or strip development or service use that exceeds existing or planned system capacity.
2. Water conservation techniques should be used in new development, and in the rehabilitation of existing development, to lengthen the life of wastewater treatment facilities and slow the depletion of groundwater resources.
3. Careful facility siting, landscaping and other mitigation techniques should be employed to minimize aesthetic impacts of transmission line projects.

Solid Waste Facilities Policies

1. Promote efforts within or among the Region’s towns to reduce waste production, reuse, recycle, and compost. The hierarchy, as described in the Vermont Solid Waste Management Plan, of “reduce, reuse, recycle” should form the basis for all solid waste planning in the Region.
2. When measuring the economic viability of solid waste reduction or recycling programs, avoided costs of solid waste production and disposal, and of environmental cleanup, shall be considered as economic benefits.

Community Health and Safety Resources Policies

1. Expansion or creation of health and safety facilities is encouraged in locations selected for the efficient delivery of services and as necessary to meet the current and future demand.
2. Existing or proposed correctional facilities should be sited, maintained, and managed in a manner which ensures the safety and security of local residents.
3. The impact of existing and potential development on public health and safety facilities and services should be evaluated prior to new development.
4. New nursing homes and assisted living facilities should be located in close proximity to services or along public transportation routes in order to provide efficient access to services for residents.

Communication Facilities Policies

1. Support the development of broadband communication networks Region-wide, but especially in Windsor and Weathersfield, where the percentage of properties with access to high-speed internet is below the state average.
2. New or expanded wireless communications services must collocate on existing facilities or be sited on existing structures, where feasible, and shall minimize negative visual impacts.
3. New communications facilities must minimize impacts on wildlife habitat and corridors, forest blocks, wetlands, rivers, streams, ridgelines, and other natural, scenic, and aesthetic resources, and should comply with the following standards
 - a. Protecting view corridors from highways, residential areas, historic districts, public use areas, and outdoor recreation areas such as hiking trails, rivers, lakes, and ponds should be paramount in the design and siting permitted.

- b. All new wireless communications facilities sited on a ridge should be located below the ridge so that the tops of any such facility are below the sight lines of persons using the highways or in the residential areas and historic districts. At a minimum, the tops of such facilities must not exceed the elevation of the immediate ridge.
 - c. New access roads should be designed for minimal ground disturbance and clearing, follow the land contours, and avoid open land to minimize visual and ecological impact.
 - d. If new wireless communications facilities are added to existing wireless communications facilities on peaks or ridges, such existing facilities should be retrofitted or maintained in a manner to minimize any negative visual impact.
 - e. At the site of wireless communications facilities, the existing vegetation and tree cover should be maintained to the maximum extent possible.
 - f. Prior to the application hearing, a demonstration of the visual impact of the tower must take place to inform the public (by simulating the silhouette of the facility by raising a dark colored balloon to the height of the top of the proposed facility, or other reasonable simulation).
4. Decommissioned wireless communications facilities or portions of facilities must be removed and the site restored and reclaimed to its original condition. All roads and accesses to the site which are no longer needed should be reclaimed and restored.
 5. Permits for communications facilities should require a performance bond or other financial security ensuring the reclamation and restoration of the site should the facility be abandoned or rendered obsolete by technological advances. The performance bond should take inflation into account as many years may elapse between construction and removal of the facility.
 6. The development and use of alternative technologies to serve the industry is encouraged. These include, but are not limited to, “stealth” designs for wireless communications facilities or complete coverage of such facilities within existing buildings and structures, and satellite technology, which would reduce the need for new, and allow for the removal of existing, wireless communications facilities.

Educational Resources Policies

1. Expansion or restructuring of academic, vocational, recreational, and cultural education facilities and resources to meet the needs of all residents will be supported, where communities show need and/or where existing facilities are inadequate.

Child Care Policies

1. Town plans should assess current and future local needs and supplies of child care services, including whether local barriers exist for the provision of these services.
2. Member towns should periodically review land use regulations to identify unnecessary barriers to childcare facilities and mechanisms to promote the development of childcare services in appropriate locations convenient to other local services and densely populated areas.

Recreation Policies

1. High impact recreational activities such as horseback and ATV riding shall be located outside of ecologically sensitive areas, which are defined as natural features that contribute to the survival and/or reproduction of wildlife or are more susceptible to damage from human activities. For the purposes of this chapter those areas include: wetlands and vernal pools; concentrated black bear feeding habitat (mast stands); rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat; significant natural communities; riparian areas and surface waters; prime agricultural soils; slopes greater than 25%; ledge, talus, and cliff habitat; land in excess of 2,500' in elevation; and habitat as identified by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife as either significant wildlife habitat or necessary wildlife habitat in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(8)(A).
 2. Multi-use and multi-season trails are preferred over single-use and single-season trails, provided that the various uses can be accommodated without undue risks to health and safety.
 3. Public access to major water bodies and watercourses should be maintained and expanded in accordance with local goals and the area's capability to handle increased traffic without undue adverse impact on the natural or cultural features of the area.
 4. Expansion of public access to ecologically sensitive areas is generally not encouraged. Where it is demonstrated that increased public access to ecologically sensitive areas is important for educational or experiential needs, a management plan that addresses preservation and protection of the sensitive area should be prepared.
 5. Development that could threaten the quality of recreational waters should be discouraged and alternatives sought.
 6. Planning and construction of recreational opportunities on sites of public utilities or public works facilities (e.g. incorporation of trail networks into public utility corridor planning) is encouraged as it will help to achieve more efficient and productive use of these lands.
-

7. The development of multi-purpose trails using abandoned railroad beds, Class 4 roads, and other public rights-of-way is supported.

CH 5: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Emergency Management Goals

To build disaster-resistant communities in the Region through sound emergency and land use planning by:

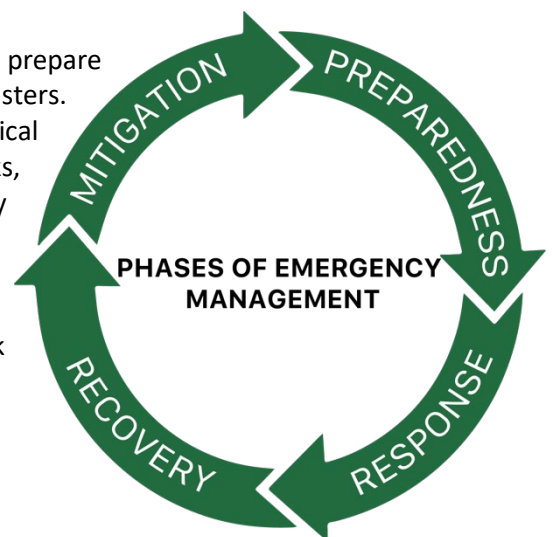
1. Developing community resilience and resistance by connecting municipalities with a variety of resources, tools, and Information to respond to various disasters and emergency situations.
2. Assisting in the preparation, development, and implementation of local emergency operations plans, local hazard mitigation plans, mapping of vulnerable areas, etc.
3. Minimizing the loss of life, physical and emotional Injury, financial loss, property damage
4. Organizing and encouraging emergency training for local emergency personnel and elected municipal officials..
5. Participating in and supporting the Regional Emergency Management Committee to facilitate cooperation and coordination among fire and rescue services, law enforcement, and other emergency management service providers.
6. Identifying and securing funding to reduce emergency planning and management costs within the Region.
7. Facilitating key stakeholder engagement and planning, to include training, recruitment, and retention for emergency management volunteers.

1. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

1A. Emergency Planning

Emergency planning provides a framework for communities to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and reduce the impacts of disasters. Effective emergency planning helps protect lives, property, critical infrastructure, and essential services by identifying risks, coordinating local resources, and strengthening community resilience.

Emergency planning in Vermont and nationally is grounded in four core components that guide how communities reduce risk and manage emergencies.



The Four Core Components of Emergency Planning

Emergency planning in Vermont and the MARC Region is organized around four core components:

- **Mitigation** – reducing or eliminating long-term risk.
- **Preparedness** – planning, coordination, and readiness activities.
- **Response** – immediate actions to save lives and protect property.
- **Recovery** – restoring infrastructure, services, and community function after an event.

These four components provide the structure for how communities identify hazards, reduce vulnerabilities, and manage emergencies before, during, and after they occur.

Many emergency management systems in the Region rely heavily on volunteers and face growing challenges related to recruitment, retention, and an aging workforce. Strengthening these four components helps towns compensate for current and future capacity limitations.

Mitigation Connections

Land Use and Mitigation

Land use planning is one of the most effective long-term mitigation strategies. Land use planning plays a significant role in reducing emergency risks. When considering future development, towns should evaluate predictable disaster impacts, such as flooding, steep slopes, and inadequate road access, to minimize loss of life, property damage, and disruption of essential services. Integrating hazard awareness into land use decisions strengthens long-term community resilience.

Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMPs)

Each town in the Region currently has adopted, or is in the process of adopting, a **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP)** (Table 5.1), which identifies long-term *mitigation* actions intended to reduce or eliminate risk from natural and human-caused hazards.

Membership in the **National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)** further supports mitigation and makes towns eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) programs such as Hazard Mitigation, Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC), Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM), and Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA).

Table 5.1 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Schedule by Town			
Town	Date Adopted	Duration	Expiration
Andover	09/20/2024	2024-2029	2029
Baltimore	05/20/2024	2024-2029	2029
Cavendish	04/02/2024	2024-2029	2029
Chester	10/29/2021	2021-2026	2026
Ludlow	01/07/2025	2025-2030	2030
Reading	12/23/2022	2022-2027	2027
Springfield	07/03/2024	2024-2029	2029
Weathersfield	12/04/2024	2024-2029	2029
West Windsor	02/16/2024	2024-2029	2029
Windsor	12/03/2021	2021-2026	2026
SOURCE: ERAF Summary Report Accessed on 11/25/2025			

Preparedness Connections

Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMPs)

Towns may choose to also adopt a Local Emergency Management Plan, which is a core preparedness tool, that outlines the specific procedures and locations for shelters, hazardous materials, and other emergency services. If a town does not adopt or keep current mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery measures, eligibility for state [Emergency Relief Assistance Funds \(ERAF\)](#) drops significantly.

Response and Recovery Connections

ERAF and Disaster Cost Share

After federally-declared disasters, local communities receive reimbursement through the federal Public Assistance Program, covering **75%** of eligible response and recovery costs. In addition, the State’s Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) provides additional reimbursement at **7.5%, 12.5%, or 17.5%**, depending on a town’s level of *mitigation* and *preparedness* activities. These higher ERAF rates are designed to reduce the financial burden on municipalities during disaster response and recovery.

Table 5.2 Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund Cost-Sharing assuming \$1million of reimbursable costs.

	7.5% ERAF Rate	12.5% ERAF Rate	17.5% ERAF Rate
Federal Share	\$750,000	\$750,000	\$750,000
State Share	\$75,000	\$125,000	\$175,000
Municipal (Town Taxpayer) Share	\$175,000	\$125,000	\$75,000
Total Cost	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000

Current ERAF Standing

Towns can check their current ERAF standing through the State of Vermont’s Community Reports. As of 2025, ERAF eligibility levels for MARC towns are shown in Table 5.3. The state funding match is contingent upon local actions to improve flood resilience, such as adopting river corridor regulations, which may increase eligibility for the higher reimbursement rates.

Flood Safety Act and ERAF: Anticipated Changes

The relationship between the Vermont Flood Safety Act (Act 121) and ERAF eligibility is evolving. Under the Act, which was passed in 2024, the state is increasing its regulatory authority over river corridors, requiring municipalities to adopt new floodplain and river corridor management standards. Historically, municipalities could qualify for the 17.5% ERAF rate by adopting river corridor protection for mapped areas. With the upcoming implementation of statewide river corridor regulations in 2028, the criteria for qualifying for the highest ERAF reimbursement rate are expected to change.

As of now, municipalities can still increase their eligibility for higher ERAF rates by adopting flood mitigation measures, such as local river corridor regulations. However, there is uncertainty whether future ERAF triggers will be based on additional floodplain or river corridor actions, or whether the state’s broader regulatory framework will alter the eligibility criteria. Municipalities should anticipate further guidance as implementation continues.

Table 5.3 ERAF Rates in the Region

(Source: [State of Vermont's Community Reports, January 2026](#))

Community	ERAF Rate	(1) National Flood Insurance Program	(2) Road and Bridge Standards	(3) Local Emergency Management Plan	(4) Local Hazard Mitigation Plan	(5) River Corridors	NFIP Enrolled	Road and Bridge Standards	LEMP (Current)	LHMP (Approved)	RC Bylaw
Andover	7.5%	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	1985	2019	2024	2024	
Baltimore	7.5%	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	2012	2019	2024	2024	Interim
Cavendish	7.5%	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	1981	2019	2024	2024	2016
Chester	12.5%	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	1980	2019	2025	2021	
Ludlow	7.5%	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	1978	2019	2024	2025	
Ludlow Village	7.5%	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	1978	2019	2024	2025	
Reading	7.5%	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	1989	2019	2024	2022	2019
Springfield	7.5%	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	1979	2019	2024	2024	
Weathersfield	12.5%	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	1985	2019	2025	2024	
West Windsor	17.5%	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1991	2019	2025	2024	2024
Windsor	12.5%	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	1979	2019	2025	2021	

1B. Mitigation

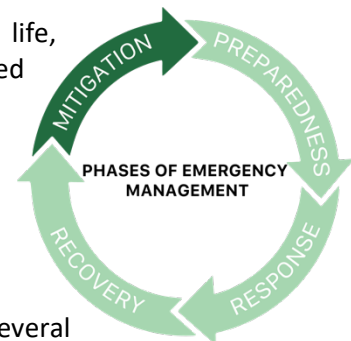
Mitigation refers to actions that reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life, property, infrastructure, and natural resources from natural or human-caused hazards.

Many mitigation efforts are included in compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) flood hazard regulations. All towns in the MARC Region participate in the NFIP program.

FEMA, through Vermont Emergency Management (VEM), provides several programs that help towns identify hazards, prioritize mitigation actions, and implement long-term risk-reduction projects.

The [FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance \(HMA\)](#) programs include:

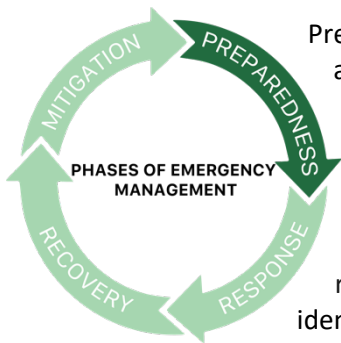
1. [Hazard Mitigation Grant Program](#) - Assists in implementing long-term mitigation measures after a major disaster. The program can also fund the cost of preparing a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.
2. Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) – A competitive nationwide program that funds mitigation planning and large-scale mitigation projects intended to reduce risk and enhance resilience before disasters occur.
3. [Flood Mitigation Assistance \(FMA\)](#) – Provides funding to reduce the threat or eliminate the risk of flood damage to buildings insured under the National Flood Insurance Program.



A 2025 list of high priority mitigation projects in the Region is provided in the Appendix. Common **regional mitigation priorities** include:

- Culvert work: Inventory, Assessment, Upgrade, Replacement
- Updates to annexes as needed: Local Emergency Management Plan
- Flood resiliency projects
- Annually review mitigation plan and projects
- Seek appropriate funding for eligible mitigation projects

1C. Preparedness

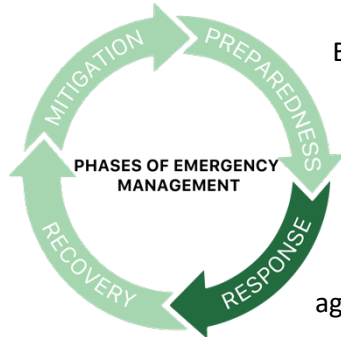


Preparedness refers to the planning, training, coordination, and readiness activities that ensure a community can effectively respond to and recover from emergencies. It includes identifying resources, establishing procedures, and maintaining the capability to act quickly when a hazard occurs. The first step in preparedness is the town's Local Emergency Management Plan, which is a guide for use in the early stages of disaster response. A current local emergency plan is required for municipalities to receive increased state reimbursement through the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF). It identifies key emergency personnel, an Emergency Operations Center, contact information, sheltering locations, tasks, and an evacuation plan.

Preparedness projects for MARC towns include:

- Update and maintain Local Emergency Management Plan
- Annually updating and maintaining the Local Emergency Management Plan
- Conducting emergency response training and exercises
- Maintaining and updating emergency contact lists and resource inventories
- Ensuring public information and communication systems are functional and up to date
- Engage in public outreach and education on emergency readiness

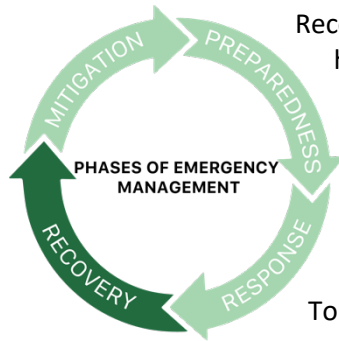
1D. Response



Emergency response includes the immediate, time-sensitive actions taken to save lives, protect property, and stabilize an incident. Emergency response may include public warning, evacuation, rescue operations, sheltering, provision of medical care, and distribution of timely and accurate public information. A town's response is often dependent on mutual aid, an agreement among neighboring towns in the Region to assist or standby with equipment and personnel during an emergency. Though few formal agreements have been made, many ad hoc mutual aid agreements exist

throughout the Region. The need may arise for additional assistance when an emergency is greater than what can be reasonably handled by the responding department. Large-scale or complex incidents may require coordinated support from neighboring towns, regional partners, and state or federal agencies. For example, in 2011, response to floodwaters from Tropical Storm Irene included assistance between towns within the region as well as State aid and the National Guard.

1E. Recovery



Recovery includes the short- and long-term efforts to restore infrastructure, housing, public services, and the social and economic life of a community following a disaster. It often incorporates mitigation and preparedness strategies to reduce future risk and strengthen overall community resilience.

FEMA provides recovery assistance to individuals and communities following federally designated disasters.

To aid in Recovery, the following funding programs are available to towns:

1. The [Emergency Aid and Assistance Fund](#) (ERAF)- uses state funding to match federal public assistance after a federally declared disaster (see section 1A).
2. **Federal Public Assistance (PA)** – Provides funding to repair or replace eligible public infrastructure, utilities, buildings, and other community facilities damaged in a disaster.
 - **Individual Assistance (IA)** – Provides support to households affected by a disaster, including housing assistance, repairs, and other needs, when authorized.
 - **Other Recovery Resources** – Depending on the event and federal declarations, additional sources such as the Small Business Administration (SBA) Disaster Loan Program or Community Development Block Grant–Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds may also be available.

1F. Emergency Services

I. AMBULANCE

An ambulance is staffed by Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel (volunteer or paid) who provide pre-hospital medical care and transport to appropriate medical facilities.. In the MARC region, Springfield, Chester and Windsor maintain professional ambulance services, –other towns (Andover, Baltimore, Reading, Weathersfield, and West Windsor) contract with other municipalities and private firms. Cavendish, and Ludlow rely on volunteer EMS, but several factors including the Region’s aging population, challenging work hours, and stringent training requirements have made it difficult for volunteer services to attract and retain staff.

II. FIRE

All the Region’s towns currently utilize municipal or independent fire departments. Andover contracts with the Town of Chester, and Baltimore contracts with Springfield for fire services. Capabilities of existing fire service facilities are generally considered adequate by the towns to address current and projected

needs, although as with ambulance services, volunteer and career fire services also face recruitment challenges. Weathersfield is expanding its fire protection infrastructure through the creation and installation of fire ponds and dry hydrants.

Fires in the Region are categorized as either structural, vehicle or wildland. Structural fires involve residential, commercial, or industrial buildings and can be caused by cooking, heating, electrical equipment, arson, and/or smoking materials. Wildland fires are any fires that are not considered structural. Many wildland fires are human caused, resulting from un-attended campfires, burning debris, negligent discard of smoking material, and arson. Roughly two thirds of fires in Windsor County are structural.

III. POLICE

Law enforcement in the Region is provided by local, county, state, and federal police offices. The towns of Springfield, Ludlow, and Windsor offer full-time 24-hour police service while Chester has a full-time local police department supplemented by the Vermont State Police during off hours. West Windsor has full-time 24-hour police coverage under contract with Windsor Police Department. All towns have a town constable, as required by state statute,. The Windsor County Sheriff's Office provides contractual patrol service to the towns of Andover, Cavendish, Reading, and Weathersfield. State Police are mandated by Vermont law to provide service for any town that does not employ a full-time police department. State Police service for the Region is provided through the Rockingham and Royalton barracks.

The Region experiences both overlap and gaps in law enforcement coverage. In some towns, responsibilities between local departments, the Windsor County Sheriff's Office, and the Vermont State Police intersect, leading to overlapping jurisdictions. In other areas, particularly towns without full-time police departments, coverage may be limited or delayed, especially during nighttime or off-hours.

A regional assessment of service areas, staffing capacity, and coordination among agencies would help towns plan for more efficient service delivery and address both current redundancies and potential service gaps.

Difficulty in recruiting officers has led many towns to reduce full-time police coverage and limits the ability of State Police to provide coverage in the region.

IV. Emergency Communications Systems

Every town in the Region is participating in the Enhanced 911 system (E911). E911 relies on locatable physical addresses linked to telephone numbers, a system that provides the name of the telephone subscriber, the location from which the call originated, and the names of all emergency service providers for the location for every E911 call. The call can then be forwarded to the proper dispatch center(s) to dispatch emergency service providers to the scene, even if the caller is unable to describe their location or the nature of the emergency. It is extremely important for towns to make the E911 Board immediately aware of any road changes to keep the master lists accurate and up to date.

V. FirstNet Authority

[FirstNet](#), also known as the First Responder Network Authority, is an independent agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

In 2017, Vermont opted into FirstNet, the nationwide public safety broadband network for emergency responders. Participation provides towns and local emergency services with improved communication capabilities and more reliable broadband coverage during both routine operations and emergency incidents.

1G. Hazard Assessment

The MARC Region is exposed to a variety of natural hazards, including flooding, severe storms, and landslides, that pose ongoing risks to public safety, infrastructure, and the built environment. All towns within the Region maintain Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMPs) to identify their most significant risks and set priorities for reducing vulnerability.

According to the most recent Vermont State Hazard Mitigation Plan (2023), riverine and fluvial (erosion) flooding remains the most significant statewide hazard. While not all data in prior regional assessments directly map to current local conditions, these state-level findings help guide regional priorities for mitigation and resilience.

A detailed hazard analysis, including assessments of probability and potential consequences, is maintained in each town's LHMP. This Regional Plan highlights the following key risk trends and their implications:

- **Flooding Risk:** Many river corridors in the Region remain highly vulnerable to both fluvial erosion and inundation during extreme precipitation events.
- **Storm Events:** Severe storms (e.g., lightning, wind, hail) are frequent, causing property damage, erosion, and localized flooding.
- **Infrastructure Vulnerability:** Older bridges, undersized culverts, and aging roadways are recurring concerns in LHMPs, particularly in areas with steep terrain or constrained corridors.
- **Erosion and Land Instability:** Streambank erosion, especially in high-slope areas, has been flagged as a moderate-to-high risk in several towns' LHMPs.

Implications for the Region:

- The Region should prioritize mitigation projects that address flood resilience, such as culvert upsizing, floodplain restoration, and erosion control.
- Coordination across towns is critical since hazards like river flooding don't stop at municipal boundaries, regional collaboration can improve project cost-effectiveness.
- As climate patterns shift, LHMPs should be periodically revisited and updated, especially for high-risk areas.
- Towns should leverage available state and federal grant programs (e.g., BRIC, HMGP) and, when appropriate, consider applying jointly for multi-town mitigation initiatives.

In addition to natural hazards, the Region also experiences human-caused emergencies, most commonly vehicular crashes.

1H. Regional Emergency Management Committees (REMC)

Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC)

In 2021, Vermont replaced regional Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) with one statewide LEPC and created Regional Emergency Management Committees (REMCs). The statewide LEPC now manages chemical reporting requirements, while the REMCs coordinate regional emergency preparedness and planning.

REMCs are regionally based, locally led committees that bring municipalities and emergency service partners together to coordinate all-hazards planning, preparedness activities, and resource sharing. They serve as the primary forum for local emergency management coordination within each region.

The Mount Ascutney REMC includes Emergency Management Directors from each municipality and a second voting representative designated by the town, typically drawn from fire, EMS, police, or another emergency service. Additional regional partners—such as hospitals, the Department of Health, transportation agencies, service organizations, and others—may participate as non-voting members.

The REMC works closely with Vermont Emergency Management (VEM), the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC), and the statewide LEPC to support planning, training, and information sharing. Facilities that store hazardous materials now submit Tier II reports directly to the state, with the REMC serving as a communication and coordination hub for local awareness.

The REMC prepares and annually updates a Regional Emergency Management Plan, which includes:

- Regional contact information
- Regional emergency resources
- Regional mutual aid agreements
- Regional emergency services information

The REMC also participates in statewide planning efforts, including representation on the statewide LEPC, the Integrated Preparedness Planning Workshop (IPPW), and the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment / Stakeholder Preparedness Review (THIRA/SPR). Vermont Emergency Management *provides administrative support and funding for REMC operations.*

Chapter 6: NATURAL RESOURCES



Class II Wetland in Ascutney

Background

The landscape of our Region is composed primarily of forests, fields, surface waters, and developed lands. The rural landscape and abundance of natural resources contribute to individual's decision to live, work, and play in the Region.

Changing land use patterns have resulted in ecosystem shifts and changes. Throughout the region, the landscape has undergone transitions from a landscape of forested land, to agricultural lands in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and now back to primarily forestland. The re-establishment of forest cover has improved surface water quality. However, the loss of agricultural land has made communities less self-sufficient, requiring many agricultural products to be imported from other regions and states.

Poor land use planning decisions often lead to piecemeal development that can fragment forest blocks, habitat connectivity corridors, and other wildlife habitat areas. Land use regulations that require minimum lot sizes, but do not permit dense development patterns, may have negative impacts on ecosystems. Furthermore, allowing development to impede natural functions of crucial natural resource areas, such as floodplains, river corridors, and wetlands, is not only detrimental to habitat, but may jeopardize private investments, public infrastructure, housing stability, economic and community development, and public safety.

This chapter outlines the natural resource assets throughout the Region and articulates various policies and goals that strive to balance community and economic development with protection of natural resources and their critical functions.

Natural Resources Goal

Ensure the continued protection and/or restoration of the Region's significant natural resources, including forestlands, wildlife, wildlife habitat, surface water and groundwater resources, earth resources, and air quality. In order to achieve this goal, we will:

1. Promote biodiversity by minimizing development impacts on large, contiguous forest blocks and habitat connectors;
2. Protect ecosystems within which rare, threatened or endangered (RTE) species are found;
3. Promote reclassification of pristine water resources to afford further protection;
4. Protect groundwater as a public trust;
5. Maintain and improve water quality in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a);
6. Encourage well managed extraction of mineral resources; and,
7. Ensure that drinking water supplies are safe and sufficient to meet current needs as well as the needs of future growth and development.

Agricultural Resources

The Region and Vermont are net importers of food supplies. However, changes in the future may require increasing local food production as transportation costs rise, the costs of petroleum and petroleum-based farm supplies increase, the western United States experiences increasingly severe water shortages, among other factors.

Some of the benefits of productive agricultural lands include:

- A more self-sufficient region;
- A local, stable and reliable supply of food products;

- Preservation of regional heritage and open space; and,
- Support for the tourism economy.

Prime agricultural soils should be maintained to support existing and future agricultural productivity to encourage local farming and food production operations and reduce dependency on imported food products in the Region.

Classification of Agricultural Soils

Prime agricultural soils have been identified throughout the Region (**Map 7**). As defined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), prime agricultural soils are available for use and have a combination of the best characteristics for food production, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. The most suitable land uses for prime agricultural soils include forests, cropland, pasture, or other similar uses; but once developed, these soils lose their agricultural characteristics. Prime agricultural soils are valuable for their current and potential future farming uses.



There are also areas of agricultural soils of statewide importance throughout the Region. These soils exhibit many of the same characteristics of prime agricultural soils, but are constrained by one or more of the following: slope, erosion potential, depth to bedrock, and/or location within a mapped floodplain. Agricultural soils of statewide importance may also be valuable for their current and potential future farming uses.

Protection of Prime Agricultural Soils

Agricultural soils are a finite resource. Regenerative agricultural practices should be encouraged to the extent practicable as a means of resource preservation. Prime agricultural soil use for non-agricultural purposes is strongly discouraged. Protecting important agricultural soils, while also encouraging smart growth, can be challenging. Many designated growth areas are in a river valley and are surrounded by areas of prime agricultural soils and/or agricultural soils of statewide significance, which constrain future growth and development in those areas. A balance is necessary to protect agricultural soils, while allowing the flexibility to promote new growth within or adjacent to growth centers in accordance with the State Planning Goals in 24 V.S.A. §4302(c)(1). (**Map 7**.)

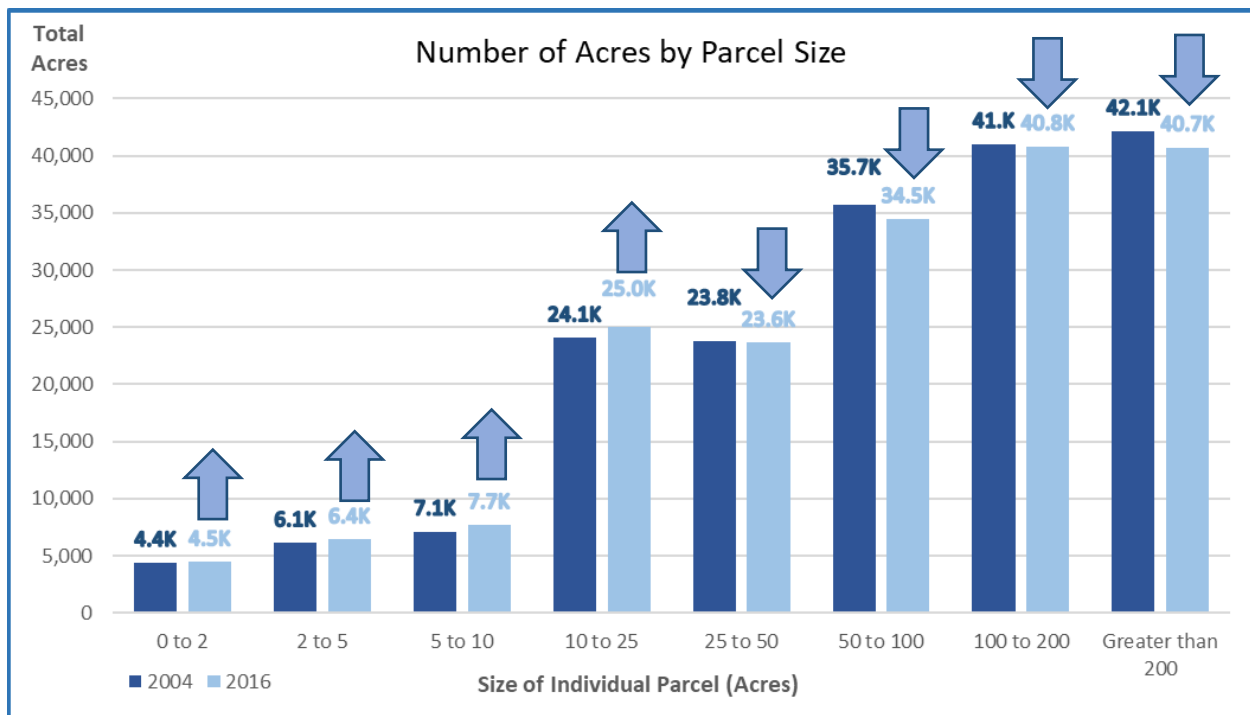
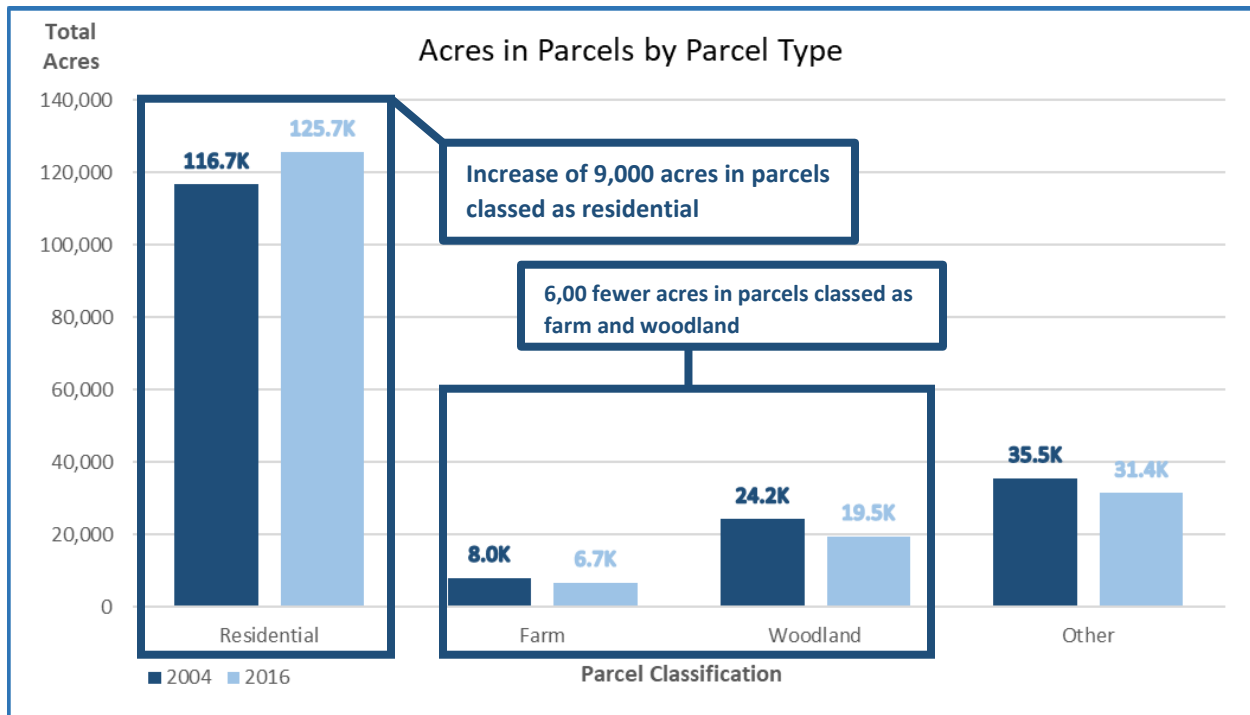
Forest Resources

Forested land, including forest blocks and habitat connectors (**Map 6**), serve as a major asset to the Region. These forestlands provide a natural system of surface and groundwater filtration, stormwater retention, air purification, soil stabilization, carbon sequestration, flood protection, and critical habitat for many species of native wildlife. Vermont forests serve as habitat to a diversity of significant natural communities, Species of Greatest Conservation Need and uncommon species, along with many rare, threatened, and endangered (RTE) species. They also serve as an important economic resource for the Region. The harvest and manufacturing of forest products contributes substantially to Vermont's economy and employment. Forestlands serve as the foundation for numerous outdoor recreational activities, such as hiking, skiing, hunting, and camping; serve as a renewable energy resource through heat and power production; and provide the scenic qualities of an attractive natural setting. Sound management of forested land accounts for all of these environmental and economic benefits.

Forest Fragmentation

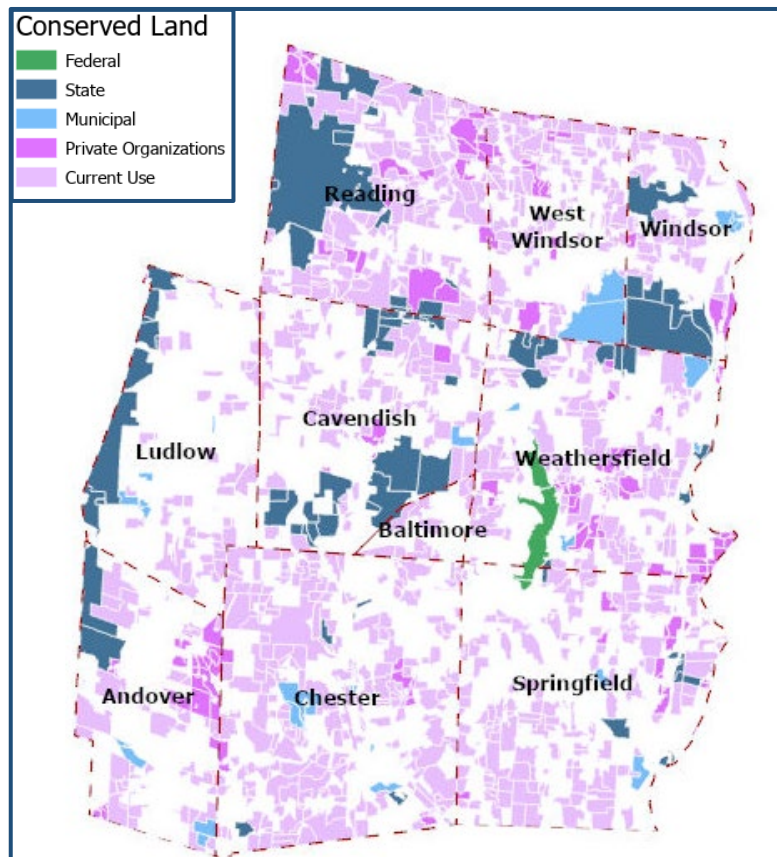
Forest fragmentation presents an increasing threat to the economic and ecological stability of forest land in the Region. As discussed in the Wildlife Section of this chapter, many of the species that drive tourism, wildlife viewing, hunting and fishing require larger, contiguous blocks of forest and a connected network of forest blocks. Even as overall forest cover remains relatively stable over time, large, contiguous forest blocks are becoming fragmented and isolated in the Region. Forest fragmentation occurs through two processes: increased residential and public infrastructure development (such as roads and power transmission lines), and parcelization. Parcelization occurs when large parcels are subdivided into smaller lots. Even if left forested, small lots in multiple ownerships can be difficult to effectively manage; recreation access can be reduced due to differing objectives of landowners; and timber production is less economically feasible. The charts below track parcelization in the Region through two metrics, parcel size and parcel classification. Both show the same trend: fewer large parcels dedicated to forestry and farming and more, smaller residential lots.

Connectivity between forest blocks (**Map 6**) is also of vital importance. The ability for wildlife to readily move across the landscape preserves genetic diversity through the exchange of genes between populations, allows species to better adapt to climate change impacts, among other benefits. The Mount Ascutney corridor represents a particularly important habitat connector as one of only a handful of crossings between Vermont and New Hampshire and should therefore be a focus of conservation efforts. Other important regional corridors include the Connecticut River Corridor and the foothills of the Green Mountains which run north to south along the central and western parts of the Region (see **Map 6**).



Conserved Forestland

In addition to several town forests and land owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a large amount of forestland in the Region is owned by the State of Vermont and managed in a variety of ways. Vermont State Parks focus equally on recreation and conservation, while Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are managed primarily to benefit wildlife. Some state land is leased to private companies for use as alpine ski trails. Most of the state forestland in the Region is managed for multiple uses, including hiking, snowmobiling, hunting, fishing, and skiing. Much state forest land in the Region is managed for timber production through controlled harvests as part of long-term forest management plans.



Most of the forested land in the Region is in private ownership. Vermont’s Use Value Appraisal (or Current Use) Program requires landowners to implement land management plans and has been successful in facilitating sound management of a large portion of private forest and farmland in the Region.

Exotic Invasive Species

Exotic invasive species are non-native plants and animals that invade and alter both natural and managed areas. When they are free from natural predators, exotic invasives persist and proliferate to the detriment of native plants and animals. Not all non-native plants are invasive and not all invasive plants are non-native.

Exotic invasive species have come to the Region through a variety of sources, including ornamental plant trade, conservation plantings, and agricultural operations. The threat of exotic invasive species to forest, open land, and riparian areas in the Region is ongoing.

For additional information regarding invasive species, please visit <https://www.vtinvasives.org/>.

Wildlife Habitat Resources

Planning for the preservation of wildlife habitat is critically important for the continued survival of wildlife species in the Region. In addition to providing habitat and creating economic opportunities, lands that are left undeveloped contribute to the rural character of the Region.

Habitat

A diversity of habitat types are necessary to support various fish and wildlife species. Irresponsible development can be detrimental to those habitats and the survival and proliferation of the wildlife that depend on them. Although most land development in the Region is done on a relatively small scale, it can have a significant cumulative impact on wildlife habitat. Development of new single-family homes outside of growth centers is increasing. This growth pressure is detrimental to large, contiguous blocks of wildlife habitat, including forest and connectivity blocks, fields and other open spaces. Scattered, small-scale development causes fragmentation of these habitat areas, potentially degrading or eliminating the land needed to support certain wildlife species. A diversity of healthy populations can only be achieved through maintaining variety in the types of wildlife habitat available. Conservation of a diverse mix of natural areas and attention to connections between large tracts of wildlife habitat is necessary for a diverse and healthy wildlife population. The following sections describe some important habitat types that may be found in the Region.

Mast Production Areas

Mast is high-energy food, including seeds, nuts, and berries, produced by certain trees and shrubs, such as beech and oak. Mast production areas provide critical fall feeding areas for a variety of wildlife species, such as bear, deer and grouse. Mature oak and beech stands are the most important mast production areas for wildlife and shall be preserved whenever possible.

Deer Wintering Areas

During winter months, deer tend to congregate in coniferous forests along westerly and southerly slopes where they are protected from wind and cold temperatures. The greatest limitation to the size of the deer herd in the state is the quality and availability of wintering habitat. Identified deer wintering areas should be afforded protection to the extent feasible.

Aquatic Habitat

A variety of aquatic habitats are necessary to sustain different aquatic species. Many aquatic species in Vermont have lost habitat due to increased development along rivers, streams and lakes. One of the greatest threats to fish habitat is nonpoint source sediment pollution, caused by channel/bank erosion and mismanaged highway runoff, among other sources. Riparian buffers of natural vegetation along waterways, green stormwater infrastructure/low impact development practices, and proper highway maintenance (such as armoring drainage ditches and proper highway crowning) can help mitigate some of these impacts.

Development adjacent to water courses sometimes results in loss of buffer vegetation, which can result in thermal stress (increased water temperatures), among other issues. Certain fish species, such as trout and salmon, require cold-water habitat and well oxygenated, free-flowing streams with few blockages, as well as gravel streambeds for spawning. Small, cold headwater streams serve as the most productive habitat for wild trout. These streams remain cool throughout the summer season and generally have been minimally altered by land and water development activities. Headwater streams throughout the Region should be considered for reclassification to Class A(1) where supporting data exists to afford them further regulatory protection.

Hydroelectric facilities (hydro-dams) inhibit aquatic organism passage (AOP) and often restrict migratory fish species from accessing critical spawning habitat. Mitigation measures often include installation of fish ladders or elevators to allow upstream passage to spawning habitat. Provision and maintenance of this passage infrastructure is generally a condition of the facilities' operating license.

Smaller barriers to AOP are far more common. Stream crossing culverts often outlet above the water surface elevation at the downstream end, preventing upstream passage for some or all species and life-stages. Replacing these culverts with structures of adequate size and appropriate grade allow aquatic species to access the upstream portion of the habitat. In addition, removing small, dated dams that serve no functional purpose along smaller rivers and streams is a common and effective means to restore aquatic passage, and should be encouraged when feasible.

Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species; and Significant Communities

Rare, threatened, and endangered (RTE) plant and animal species and significant communities are identified throughout the Region. The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife Nongame and Natural Heritage Program has identified and mapped RTE species, and significant natural communities throughout the State. These habitat areas/natural communities have been identified by points on the map, but do not reveal which species reside there (as a protective measure) (**Map 6**). Development should not negatively impact these areas. The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife should be consulted to determine if these areas have practical conservation value for the community based on potential, continued or historical presence and/or regular recurrence at a given location.

Water Resources

Lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, wetlands, and clean drinking water sources are all important elements of a healthy ecosystem. Surface waters provide habitat for fish and other aquatic species and serve as recreational resources for swimming, paddling sports, and fishing. Naturally vegetated buffers along rivers and streams provide natural greenway corridors that connect networks of wildlife across the Region. Wetlands are important for wildlife habitat, natural water pollution abatement, flood control, and recharge of surface and ground water.

Groundwater is the primary source for most residential and municipal water supply systems in the Region and has many points of exchange both to and from surface waters. Water resources can easily be degraded if not properly managed. Development and other human activity can adversely affect surface water, groundwater, and wetlands through direct and indirect pollution discharges caused by a variety of land use activities.

Basins, Watersheds and Tactical Basin Planning

The Region is situated within the Connecticut River watershed, and sits within two basins, as defined by the State: The Black River (Basin 10), the Williams River (Basin 11). Each of the major drainage basins in the Region are depicted in the map to the left. Basins also include a number of sub-basins (i.e., Mill Brook in Basin 10).

Tactical Basin Plans must be developed by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation for each basin and must be updated every five years, pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 1253. Statutory partners such as Regional Planning Commissions, Conservation Districts, and watershed organizations assist in the development of Basin Plans. Regional Planning Commissions are responsible for certifying conformance between Basin Plans and Regional Plans. Tactical Basin Plans provide an overall view of the health of the waters in the Basin and define ongoing and future actions to address high-priority stressors. The Department also prepares biological assessment reports for each basin roughly every five years. These assessment reports summarize chemical, physical and biological monitoring data and help inform the development of Basin Plans.

In September 2023, the Basin 10 Plan was adopted by ANR and remains in effect until 2028. The Basin 11 Plan was adopted in December 2021 and remains in effect through 2026. The new Basin 11 Plan is under development as of the adoption date of this Regional Plan.

Surface Waters and Water Quality

The Region's surface water resources consist of ponds, lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands which offer a variety of uses, such as recreation; wildlife habitat; food supply; commercial, industrial, and domestic use; aesthetic value, and public drinking water supply. The major lakes and ponds in the Region include Lake Rescue, Stoughton Pond, Mill Pond, Knapp Pond, North Springfield Reservoir, and Lake Runnemed. The largest rivers in the Region include the Connecticut (serving as the border between New Hampshire and Vermont), Black, and Williams Rivers. Major streams in the Region include Mill Brook, Twentymile Stream, Jewell Brook, and Tracer Brook.

The State is required by the USEPA to list impaired waters on the 303(d) List of Impaired Waters. Impairment is defined by the Vermont Water Quality Standards (VWQS). The State is required to address impaired waters through issuance of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan, which specifies the maximum allowable daily amount of a given pollutant the impaired water can receive to achieve compliance with the VWQS. The 303(d) list was most recently

updated by VT DEC in 2024. As of the adoption date of this Regional Plan, there are no water resources within the Region included on the 303(d) List. However, the Connecticut River, which flows north to south along the eastern border of the Region, is listed by the State of Vermont as altered due to flow alteration as a result of hydroelectric facility operations. Agreements on operation of the Wilder and Bellows Falls hydroelectric dams were reached in 2020 that will meet VWQS; the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licenses and 401 Water Quality Certifications (WQC) are still pending as of the adoption date of this Regional Plan.

Most point-source discharge pollution problems in the state have been addressed through the construction of municipally owned and operated wastewater treatment facilities, as well as regulation of industrial discharges. However, non-point source pollution continues to be an issue throughout the Region and State. The most common sources of non-point source pollution include agricultural runoff, channel and streambank erosion, removal of riparian vegetation, flow modification, developed land runoff, and state and local highway runoff. These various stressors result in thermal modification, organic enrichment or low dissolved oxygen concentrations, and excess sediment and nutrient loading.

Highway runoff is a significant contributor to water quality impacts throughout the Region. If proper highway maintenance practices are not in place, stormwater runoff can erode the road surface and drainage network, particularly along gravel roads, which can lead to sediment and nutrient pollution. This also contributes to road failure events and increased highway maintenance costs. To address town highway runoff impacts on water quality, the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation issued the Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) as an element of the 2015 passage of Act 64 (Vermont Clean Water Act). The MRGP regulates stormwater discharges from town highways to surface waters. For a more in-depth discussion of the MRGP and its associated requirements, please see the Regional Transportation Plan.

Wastewater treatment facilities can also degrade water quality if effluent treatment is insufficient, or if adequate infrastructure is not in place to treat certain nutrients, such as phosphorus. The ability of rivers and streams to dilute effluent from treatment facilities is predicated on in-stream flow and depth. For this and many other reasons, water withdrawal from rivers and streams can have a negative impact on water quality and associated habitat and must be evaluated before a water withdrawal permit can be issued.

Pollutants can also be carried into rivers and streams via precipitation. For years, there have been statewide fish consumption advisories for mercury content because of atmospheric deposition.¹ The advisory guidelines are more stringent for the consumption of lake trout and walleye, especially for women of childbearing age, but suggest limits on consumption of all fish

¹ Atmospheric deposition is the process, long recognized by scientists, whereby precipitation (rain, snow, fog), particles, aerosols, and gases move from the atmosphere to the earth's surface. Source: [Atmospheric Deposition \(maryland.gov\)](https://www.maryland.gov)

for all segments of the population. Atmospheric deposition cannot be effectively controlled at the local, regional, or state level.

Major flooding events have become of greater concern in recent years. Surface water quality is significantly impacted by flooding events. Flood waters often carry large woody and solid debris, soil and farm runoff, and other pollutants. A lack of floodplain access due to channel incision and construction of berms is a major catalyst for fluvial erosion and associated sediment and nutrient pollution. Please see the Flood Resilience Section below for a more in-depth discussion of flooding and its impacts on water quality, public safety, and public and private investments.

Flood Resilience

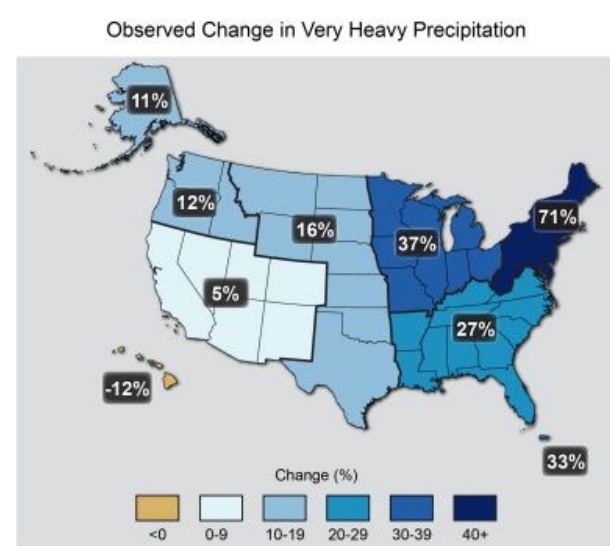
The purpose of this section is to further the State Planning Goal of encouraging flood resilient communities and to address the requirements of [24 V.S.A. §4348a\(a\)\(11\)](#). Flood hazard areas and river corridors, as described in this section, are shown on the Water Resources Map **(Map X)**.

Increased Risk of Flooding:

Flooding is one of the most prevalent natural disasters in Vermont. Accordingly, flooding is identified as one of the most significant natural hazard concerns in all ten of the MARC member towns' *Local Hazard Mitigation Plans*. In addition, weather patterns are changing and predicted future climate conditions include increasing average temperatures, an overall increase in precipitation, less snowpack and shorter/more intense rainfall events. As a result, it is imperative that communities evaluate their flood readiness as a significant amount of the built environment is within or near flood or fluvial erosion hazard areas, and municipal culvert and stormwater networks may not be adequately sized for these future conditions.

Vermont Flood Safety Act of 2024 (Act 121):

In 2024, the Vermont Legislature enacted Act 121, also known as the Vermont Flood Safety Act. Act 121 (the Act) mandates significant changes to regulating and permitting floodplain and river corridor development in Vermont. Over the course of the past decade plus, Vermont communities were given the option to adopt local river corridor regulations. Localities were



Source: [globalexchange.gov](#), 2014

responsible for administering and enforcing river corridor bylaws. A number of Vermont communities chose to regulate river corridor development, while most did not. The Act transfers regulatory jurisdiction of river corridors from municipalities to the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VT DEC) beginning in 2028. At that point, river corridors will be regulated throughout the entire state. Permitting and enforcement will be administered by the VT DEC Rivers Program. However, Vermont communities will continue to be given the option to regulate river corridors along small streams with a drainage area of less than two square miles. Administration and enforcement of river corridor bylaws along small streams will continue to be the responsibility of towns.

Additionally, the Act establishes higher standards for development in FEMA Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA). Presently, Vermont communities enrolled in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) are required to regulate floodplain development to at least the federal minimum standards. The Act will require NFIP-enrolled communities in Vermont to regulate floodplain development in a manner that is more protective than federal minimum standards. The higher standards have not been established yet. It is expected that the higher standards will involve additional elevation requirements for new or substantially improved structures in SFHA that require those structures to be elevated well above the base flood elevation (BFE), as well as requirements that restrict floodplain development from adversely impacting floodplain functions and storage volume. The new statewide minimum standards will be set through the legislative rulemaking process but are not established as of the adoption date of this Regional Plan.

Major changes to the structure of the Vermont Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) are also anticipated as a result of the passage of Act 121. Please see the Regional Emergency Management Chapter for additional discussion regarding Act 121 and its anticipated impacts on the ERAF program.

Types of Flooding:

Inundation Flooding, or overbank flooding, occurs when a stream channel or waterbody receives a significant amount of rain or snow melt from its watershed, or when the stream channel is blocked by a debris or ice jam. The excess water spills out onto or inundates the floodplain. This type of flooding can occur slowly or in a short duration; flood waters can cover a small area or a large area.

Fluvial Erosion is when a river, stream, or brook shifts laterally during a high flow event by



Figure 6.1: River Corridor. Source: floodready.vermont.gov.

eroding its banks. This type of flood hazard is not recognized on the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) discussed below. In 2011, the region experienced significant, widespread damage from Tropical Storm Irene. Much of the damage was a result of fluvial erosion rather than inundation flooding. As a result, the Vermont legislature established statewide “River Corridors,” which include the anticipated meander belt of a river and a fifty-foot buffer as shown in Figure 6.1 above. River Corridor is defined in Vermont statute as follows:

"River Corridor" means the land area adjacent to a river that is required to accommodate the dimensions, slope, planform, and buffer of the naturally stable channel and that is necessary for the natural maintenance or natural restoration of a dynamic equilibrium condition, as that term is defined in section 1422 of this title, and for minimization of fluvial erosion hazards, as delineated by the Agency of Natural Resources in accordance with river corridor protection procedures. [10 V.S.A. Chapter 32 § 752.](#)

In Vermont, most flood-related damage occurs outside of Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA). Much of the damage is due to the erosive power of water causing damage to critical public infrastructure such as roads and stream-crossings. Homes, businesses, and community buildings have also been damaged by fluvial erosion. Where stream meanders are confined by human activity, streams fall out of equilibrium condition and become steepened, straighter and more erosive. The more powerful the stream-flow, the higher the risk for damage.

Today, most streams in Vermont are not in an equilibrium condition, because riparian development, channelization practices, and other historic land uses have prevented the river from assuming its most stable natural shape (meander pattern, slope, channel width and depth, sediment bars, etc.).

Regulation of river corridors can help streams dissipate erosive energy in undeveloped areas and help prevent flood damage to existing riparian development from progressing. It is important to note

that while the river corridor protects the stream’s ability to establish and maintain equilibrium, the boundaries of the river corridor do not predict where the stream will actually go. The river corridor is not a predictive model, and in response to existing encroachments and recent channelization practices, most streams in Vermont are not in a dynamic equilibrium condition.

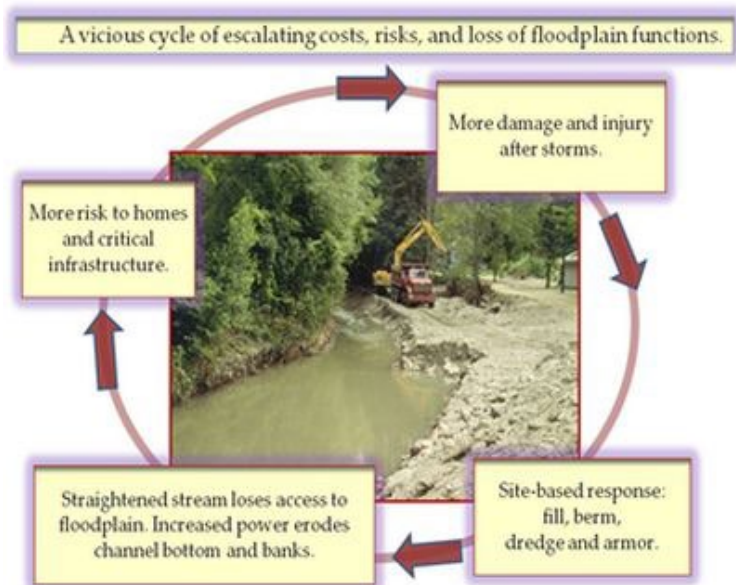


Figure 6.2

Source: Flood Ready VT

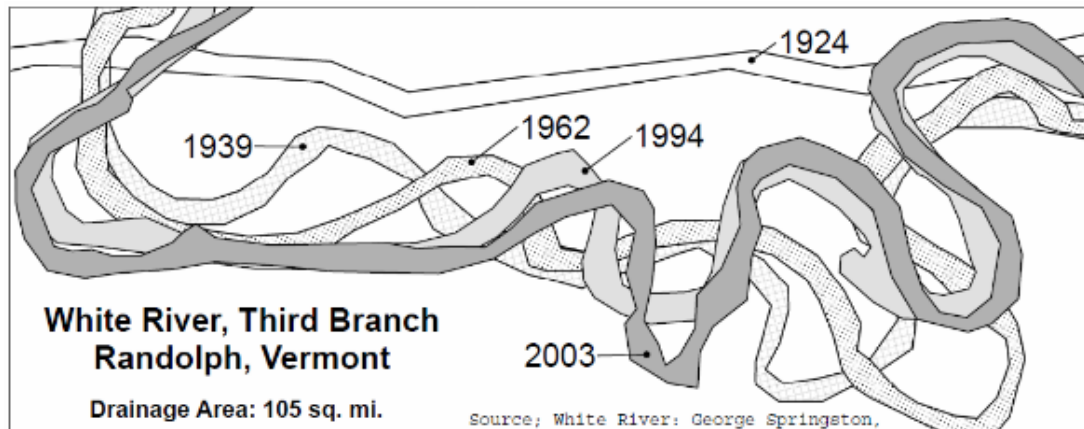


Figure 6.3 Source: Flood Ready VT

The river corridor includes both the channel and the adjacent land. The purpose of the zone is to identify the space a river needs to re-establish and maintain stable “equilibrium” conditions. In other words, if the river has access to floodplain and meander area within this corridor, the dangers of fluvial erosion can be reduced over time. River corridor maps are delineated based on scientific, location-specific assessment of the geomorphic (or physical) condition of a river.

The Vermont Rivers Program has designed protocols to evaluate river conditions throughout the state. The resulting data are used to map meander belt widths. One can think of this belt width as the particular “wiggle room” a river needs to find its most stable path down the valley, while efficiently moving and storing its sediment load. The shape and width of the meander belt varies with valley shape, surficial geology (e.g., bedrock, glacial lake sand), and the natural channel length, slope, and width. The lower the slope and the broader the valley, the more sinuous a river will likely be, in a natural setting. Rivers that have been historically straightened or encroached upon lose their natural stability when they lose their meanders and floodplain access. Given an appropriate amount of lateral space, an unstable river can eventually develop a stable meander pattern. Meanders may shift within the corridor over time, but the river will be less susceptible to dramatic channel adjustments and accelerated erosion.

Ice jams are common in the Region and occur during winter and spring months when river ice begins to break up and flow downstream. Ice flows can build up against bridge abutments or other obstructions and create a temporary dam impounding large volumes of water which have the potential to flood the surrounding areas and damage infrastructure. The most devastating winter floods have been associated with a combination of heavy rainfall, warming temperatures, rapid snowmelt, and the resulting ice jams. Winter weather with less than average snowfall can result in greater ice build-up on streams and rivers, potentially resulting in greater ice jam damage. Ice jams threaten many of the same properties as inundation flooding and the damage can be expected to be similar.

Flash flooding events are rapid onset events which, according to Vermont State Climatologist Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux “often result from stagnant or slow-moving thunderstorms as well

as from the passage of a series of thunderstorms over the same geographic area. Such high intensity and often long duration events produce large amounts of precipitation in a short period of time. These precipitation amounts can quickly exceed bank-full widths along rivers and streams, trigger mass movements (such as landslides and mudslides), sweep away unattached structures (e.g., mobile homes), and carve new river channels into unstable riverbanks.” High intensity rain events that result in flood and erosion damages are becoming much more common with changing climate patterns.

Hazard Areas and Areas to be Protected:

Areas in the region that are particularly at risk of flooding and fluvial erosion are discussed below and are shown on the accompanying Water Resources Map. These hazard areas are based on mapping data from FEMA and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

Flood Hazard Areas are the areas in the region that are at higher risk of inundation flooding (i.e., Special Flood Hazard Areas) and are shown on FEMA’s Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), as most recently amended. The maps are available through FEMA’s online [Flood Map Service Center](#). Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map data can also be accessed through the [Natural Resource Atlas](#) or the [Flood Ready Vermont](#) website.

The Flood Hazard Map depicts the Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA). The Special Flood Hazard Area depicted is based on the digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps.

Figure 6.4 below summarizes the land areas that are within these identified special flood hazard areas. Note that “floodway fringe” is also known as the “floodplain.”

Hazard Zone	Area in Region	
	Acres	%
Floodway	9,017	4%
Floodway Fringe (Floodplain)	21,667	9%
Total Land Area	220,132	100%

Figure 6.4: Flood Hazard Zones by Land Area

Note that the figures presented in Figure 6.4 are based on GIS calculations of land area, which may vary slightly from data presented by the U.S. Census Bureau or other sources. While other portions of the region may be at risk of flooding, they are not mapped at this time. It is important to note that FEMA is undertaking major updates to the FIRMs throughout all of Vermont. The updated FIRMs have not taken effect as of the adoption date of this Regional Plan.

River Corridors (RC) include both the channel and the adjacent land. Rivers are dynamic and, as a result, development that is located too close to river/stream banks is at risk of potential bank erosion and/or planform adjustment (channel migration). The River Corridor, which is shown on the River Corridor Map, depicts the portions of the region that are at risk of this type of fluvial erosion damage. This mapping data can also be found on the [ANR Atlas](#) and [Flood Ready Vermont](#) websites referenced above.

Figure 6.5 below summarizes the land areas that are within these identified river corridors:

Hazard Zone	Area in Region	
	Acres	%
River Corridor	6,818	3%

Figure 6.5: River Corridor by Land Area

Wetlands fulfill a variety of functions, including flood storage, erosion control, removal of pollutants, and wildlife habitat. The State recognizes the importance of these functions in 10 V.S.A. §905. In January 2020, ANR issued the amended Vermont Wetlands Rules, which classify wetlands according to their functions (i.e., Class 1, 2 or 3).

The major functional values of wetlands are:

- Storage of flood water and stormwater runoff;
- Protection of surface and groundwater through filtration of pollutants;
- Habitat for fish, wildlife, migratory birds, hydrophytic vegetation, and RTE species;
- Specialized, seasonal breeding habitat (such as vernal pools);
- Natural science education and research;
- Recreational value; open space; aesthetics; and
- Erosion control through binding and stabilizing of the soil.

Development activity in or near a Class 1 or 2 wetland requires a Conditional Use Determination from the Agency of Natural Resources to ensure no undue adverse impact on its protected functions. Zoning administrators in municipalities that have zoning regulations are required to notify the Wetlands Program of activities proposed within wetlands prior to the issuance of a local zoning permit. The Wetlands Program has 30 days to provide comments on the project to the zoning administrator. This review mechanism protects zoning administrators from issuing local permits that might violate state and/or federal regulations.

Vermont wetlands are also protected under Act 250. Federal protection is afforded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through administration of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Section 404 regulates the dredging or placement of fill in

waters of the United States, including wetlands. The Clean Water Act also requires regulated activities to be certified as compliant with applicable Vermont Water Quality Standards.

Communities in the Region should consider adoption of local zoning bylaws to afford further protection to wetlands that provide critical flood water and stormwater runoff storage, erosion control, and wildlife habitat benefit.

Upland forests are defined as those areas of the landscape that have moist to well drained soils or exposed bedrock and that support plants adapted to growing in moist to well drained soils. Adequate vegetative cover in rural upland areas and steep slope areas helps to maximize infiltration of water into the soil, and minimize or slow down stormwater runoff in ways that mitigate water quality impacts, erosion and flooding hazards to downstream locations. Efforts to minimize heavy cutting in forestry activities, limiting the extent and densities of developments, and properly managing stormwater in these upland areas will help contribute toward flood resilience.

Riparian buffers and other land areas adjacent to waters provide a variety of flood control functions. Riparian buffers help facilitate a resilient river corridor by attenuating flood waters, providing streambank stability, reducing flood and ice damage, and helping slow and infiltrate stormwater runoff.

Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are temporary bodies of water which usually occur in woodland depressions, meadows, sand flats, or floodplains and serve as critical breeding habitat for a variety of amphibian and insect populations as well as rare, threatened and endangered species. Most vernal pools in Vermont are filled by spring rains and snow melt. They typically dry up during summer months. Vernal pools are shallow and may range in size from a few feet to 150 feet in width. Vernal pools are protected as Class II wetlands under the 2020 Vermont Wetland Rules.

Riparian Buffers

A riparian buffer is a strip of vegetation located adjacent to a body of water. Maintaining vegetative buffers of native trees and shrubs is among the easiest and most cost-effective ways to improve and protect water quality in streams, rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands. Buffers filter runoff from roads, lawns, farms, developed land and construction operations that may carry fine sediment, nutrients, oils, fertilizers or other pollutants. The roots of buffers systems help stabilize stream banks to prevent erosion and associated pollution. Buffers also help facilitate soil infiltration and therefore reduce stormwater runoff volumes. In addition, riparian buffers help shade the stream channel, reducing thermal stress. This improves aquatic habitat for cold-water fish species such as eastern brook trout.

Riparian buffers offer clear-cut habitat, water quality, and flood/fluviial erosion hazard mitigation benefit. However, some flexibility in buffer type and width should be considered for

projects that provide significant public benefit (such as bike paths, parks, and other recreational uses) within designated Downtowns and Village Centers.

Stormwater

Significant changes have been made in recent years to federal and state stormwater regulations. In 2017, the Agency of Natural Resources adopted new stormwater regulations via the 2017 Vermont Stormwater Management Manual (VSMM) Rule. These regulations were updated in response to recent significant advances in the design and range of best management practices (BMPs) and site design approaches available to meet Vermont's water quality goals.

A major change associated with adoption of the 2017 VSMM is the regulation of all existing parcels containing three or more acres of impervious surface. These parcels will be regulated under the Developed Lands General Permit (commonly referred to as the "3-acre rule"). The permit is currently in effect in the Lake Champlain and Memphremagog watersheds, as well as stormwater impaired watersheds state-wide. The permit is not expected to take broad jurisdiction in the Connecticut River watershed for a number of years. The 2017 VSMM serves as the design standard for the General Permit. The 2017 VSMM also serves as the design standard for the operational stormwater permit program.

Under the VSMM Rule, permittees are required to provide site/development plans that have been stamped and certified by a licensed professional engineer (PE) as compliant with the VSMM standards. Communities may also elect to adopt local zoning bylaws or subdivision regulations in an effort to regulate development which is not otherwise jurisdictional under Act 250 or the 2017 VSMM.

The VSMM standards often feature low impact development and green stormwater infrastructure practices, which are techniques used to control stormwater runoff from developed lands. Techniques can range from utilization of constructed wetlands and subsurface stormwater infiltration to collection of rooftop runoff for domestic reuse. The goal of green stormwater infrastructure and low impact development is to mimic pre-development hydrologic conditions through use of practices that infiltrate and/or detain runoff.

In addition, the Agency of Natural Resources established a town highway stormwater permitting authority by way of the Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) in 2015. The MRGP regulates stormwater discharges from "hydrologically connected" town highways and mandates a suite of drainage standards along those portions of town highway to mitigate erosion and associated sediment and nutrient pollution. For a more in-depth discussion of the MRGP and its associated requirements, please see the Regional Transportation Plan.

The [*Vermont Standards and Specifications for Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control \(2019\)*](#) and the [*Low-Risk Site Handbook for Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control*](#) provide guidelines for sediment control and erosion prevention during construction. Many of the guidelines and

standards outlined in these resources apply under the Construction General Permit (CGP), which regulates construction activities that disturb greater than one acre of soil. It is anticipated that the CGP may regulate construction activities that disturb as little as half an acre of soil in the future.

Several measures can be taken to mitigate stormwater impacts on water quality during construction, including:

- Laying gravel on the construction entrance to prevent soil from being transported from the site onto the pavement;
- Properly installing and maintaining silt fencing;
- Diverting and slowing the rate at which stormwater runoff from any surrounding hillsides passes through the site; and/or,
- Exposing only the soil on the area which will be worked on and then stabilizing the soil when finished with approved methods.

Groundwater

Groundwater is the Region's primary source of drinking water. Groundwater migrates through aquifers, which are water-bearing strata of permeable rock, sand, or gravel. Potential groundwater pollutants include septage from improperly designed or malfunctioning septic tanks and leach fields, leakage from underground storage tanks, improperly discarded chemical or radioactive material and leaching animal waste from pasturing farm animals. Groundwater contamination/pollution abatement is difficult and costly. Therefore, pollution prevention through proper regulation of source protection areas (SPAs) is key to maintaining clean and safe groundwater supplies.

The Vermont Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division has developed a groundwater protection strategy, including the identification and mapping of source protection areas for all communities in the Region. Vermont's Water Supply Rule (*Environmental Protection Rule, Chapter 21; revised March 17, 2020*) defines a Source Protection Area/Public Water Source Protection Area as:

“...a surface and subsurface area from or through which contaminants are reasonably likely to reach a Public water system source.”

Source protection areas must be delineated to support installation of new public water supply systems, or for increases in approved yield of an existing source. Groundwater sources require delineation of Wellhead Protection Areas, which are delineated using geologic, hydrogeologic, and pumping test data.

Soils

Soil is composed of disintegrated rock, water, air, decaying organic matter, and microorganisms. Soils vary greatly in composition, and play an important role in water

impoundment locations, vegetation species and density, and development suitability. Common soil uses in the Region include agriculture, forestry, earth resource and mineral extraction, and recreational and building site development.

Figure 6.6: Slope Classifications	
% Slope	Classification
0-3%	Generally suitable for most types of development, may require drainage
3-8%	Most desirable for development, having least restrictions
11-15%	Suitable for low density development with particular attention given to erosion control, runoff, and septic design
15-25%	Unsuitable for most types of development and septic systems, construction costly, erosion and runoff problems likely
>25%	All types of construction should be avoided, careful land management for other uses needed

Source: *Natural Resources Conservation Service*

Erosion poses a threat to soil. Soil erosion is a naturally occurring process but can be accelerated by development activities. Soil is often protected from wind and stormwater runoff by vegetation in undeveloped settings. When vegetation is removed, fertile topsoil often quickly erodes. Topsoil generally has more capacity than the subsoil to hold moisture, supply nutrients, and allow plants to establish root systems. Erosion, development, mining, logging, and other activities can destroy protective vegetation.

Soil slope is one of a few important factors in determining development suitability. Figure 6.6 above identifies Natural Resource Conservation Service slope classifications and associated development constraints. **Map 3** shows slopes over 25 percent.

In Vermont, land in excess of 2,500 feet in elevation is considered fragile environment and development should be strongly discouraged. Land at these elevations tend to be predominantly steep with an extremely shallow soil depth to bedrock, and a high susceptibility to erosion. These highland areas are largely forested and facilitate infiltration of stormwater runoff and groundwater recharge.

Ski areas may require development in areas greater than 2,500 feet in elevation, and with slopes greater than 25%. However, careful consideration must be given to any negative impact development may have on the environment, such as degradation of water quality, erosion of topsoil, and encroachment on wildlife habitat.

Mineral Resources

Mineral resources such as sand, gravel, crushed rock and stone, talc, soapstone, granite and marble, are necessary resources for road improvement, building construction, drainage, septic systems, and for exportation. Sand and gravel for domestic use, and talc for exportation are the

predominant mineral resources extracted from the Region today. Sand and gravel deposits occur in abundance along the Connecticut River and its tributaries. However, many town-owned pits are experiencing diminished sand and gravel supplies for town highway maintenance use. Talc is currently mined and processed in Ludlow. That mine is expected to remain stable well into the future.

Excessive resource extraction can permanently damage natural and aesthetic resources with broad implications for water quality and availability, as well as the potential for destruction of archaeological sites. Sand and gravel deposits serve as areas for aquifer recharge and filtration, vital for high quality sources of drinking water. Disturbance of these areas can reduce stormwater infiltration, resulting in degraded water quality. Maintenance of wide buffers of native vegetation around extraction pits is strongly encouraged. On-site storage and disposal of materials at extraction sites can contaminate groundwater through leaching of hazardous materials. On-site material storage and disposal shall not be permitted.

Air Quality

Residents of the Region are fortunate to live in an area that has relatively clean air. However, threats to air quality do exist and may either be locally generated or transported from outside the State's borders. Local air quality problems may be generated through auto emissions, especially in congested areas; local industrial and manufacturing facilities, including mineral extraction; trash incineration; smoke from wood heating; and illegal burning of garbage. Transported air pollution comes across state and international boundaries, as evidenced by acid rain and increasingly severe wildfire smoke in the summer.

Air quality standards are established at the federal level through the EPA. The Clean Air Act, which was last amended in 1990, requires EPA to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) (40 C.F.R. part 50) for pollutants considered harmful to public health and the environment. The Clean Air Act also established two types of national air quality standards: Primary standards (to protect public health) and Secondary standards (to protect public welfare, including protection against decreased visibility, damage to animals, crops, vegetation, and buildings.) The EPA Office of Air Quality and Standards set NAAQS standards for six principal or "criteria" pollutants: particulates, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, lead, and ozone. Currently, Vermont is compliant with all standards set under NAAQS, however it is bordered by other states that are non-compliant for some pollutants. It is important that development of new industrial or manufacturing facilities include approved emission control systems to stay in attainment with standards. In addition, dust from mining operations and construction can cause local air quality problems if not properly controlled.

For additional discussion on air quality issues and climate change, please refer to the Regional Enhanced Energy Plan.

Natural Resources Policies

Development Definition: For the purposes of this Chapter, the term “development” is defined as any development activity that requires approval through either Act 250 or Section 248 review procedures.

1. Where an alternative exists, development is prohibited in large tracts of Prime Agricultural Soils located outside of designated downtowns, villages, and other locally designated growth areas.
2. Development within downtowns, villages, and other locally designated growth areas should be allowed on areas of Primary and/or Secondary Agricultural Soils, if supported in the town plan, but shall use innovative site designs such as clustered development on the periphery (for examples, see *Conservation Design for Subdivisions: A Practical Guide to Creating Open Space Networks* (1996) by Randall Arendt) to minimize negative impacts and prevent fragmentation. Additionally, such developments shall be required to maintain a small tract for future small-scale agricultural use or community garden.
3. Agricultural and forestry activities shall minimize point and non-point source pollution through use of the Vermont Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) and Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs) for forestry activities.
4. Invasive species that threaten forestry, agriculture and aquatic resources and habitat should be closely monitored by state and federal governments, and education and prevention methods shared with landowners.
5. All developments must show the following information on site plans, based on the most currently available data through the Vermont Center for Geographic Information, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department’s Biofinder, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resource’s Natural Resource Atlas, local natural resources inventories, or detailed site review:
 - a) Rare, threatened and endangered species (see **Map 6**);
 - b) Priority forest blocks and habitat connectors (see **Map 6**);
 - c) Areas over 2,500 feet in elevation;
 - d) Cliff areas or rock outcroppings identified as habitat for peregrine falcons, bobcats, or other wildlife;²
 - e) Other identified significant wildlife habitat areas available through other sources, such as local natural resource inventories.
6. Development must avoid negative impacts to the following critical wildlife habitats as identified by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department:
 - a) Rare, threatened and endangered species;
 - b) Cliff areas or rock outcroppings identified as habitat for peregrine falcons, bobcats or other wildlife.
7. Development must minimize negative impacts to and fragmentation of the following critical resources as identified by the Agency of Natural Resources to maintain their important

² Not currently available through online resources. This data would have to come from a local natural resource inventory or detailed site review.

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- ecological and economic functions. Such development must be designed and sited in a manner to minimize encroachments to and preserve continuous priority forest blocks and habitat connectors by locating structures and roads to the periphery of these areas:
- a) Priority forest blocks and habitat connectors (see **Map 6**).
 - b) Other identified significant wildlife habitat areas available through other sources, such as local natural resource inventories.
8. Maintain undisturbed buffers of vegetation along watercourses, lakes, ponds and wetlands in order to protect shorelines, provide shading to prevent undue increase in stream temperatures, minimize effects of erosion, sedimentation and other sources of pollution, and maintain scenic, recreational, and habitat values in accordance with [ANR Riparian Buffer and Corridor Technical Guidance \(2005\)](#). In order to further development goals of this plan, reduced buffer width requirements should be considered to accommodate the development of public recreation paths, sidewalks, and utility or road crossings, within designated Downtowns and Village Centers, but efforts shall be made to minimize undue adverse impacts.
 9. Headwater streams³, gorges, waterfalls, and cascades and the land around these important resources must be protected. Outstanding Resource Water (ORW) designations for these areas should be considered where deemed appropriate.
 10. Development must not result in undue degradation of any surface water resource.
 11. It is state policy to achieve no net loss of significant wetlands as defined in the [Vermont Wetland Rules](#). In order to achieve this:
 - a) Destruction of wetlands and construction in wetlands will be avoided when any reasonable alternative exists.
 - b) Development will minimize negative impacts to significant wetlands and their associated values and functionality.
 12. Groundwater withdrawals must not adversely impact the quality or quantity of groundwater or surface water resources, such as municipal water sources, adjacent wells, wetlands, streams, rivers and lakes.
 13. Minimize areas of earth disturbance, grading and vegetation clearing on slopes over 15%.
 14. In working land and conservation future land use areas, development on slopes between 15-24% must be designed to minimize adverse stormwater and erosion impacts by incorporating low impact development and green stormwater infrastructure principles, including:
 - a) Development of a lot or site shall require the least amount of site disturbance and reduce the lot coverage and building footprints as much as possible in order to maintain the natural hydrologic processes and reduce the volume and water quality impacts of the proposed development.
 - b) Roads, driveways, buildings and utilities must be located on the flattest portions of the site.

³ A stream that has few or no tributaries, and typically has a steep, incised channel that is often associated with active erosion, seeps, or springs. Headwater streams are referred to as first order streams.

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- c) Minimize crossing steep slopes with roads and driveways and lay them out to follow topographic contours in order to minimize soil and vegetation disturbance.
 - d) Minimize the length of driveways.
 - e) Reduce the total length of residential streets by examining alternative street layouts to determine the best option for increasing the number of homes per unit length.
 - f) The scale of development will not exceed the development capacity of the site.
15. Development is prohibited in areas predominated by slopes exceeding 25% or above 2,500 feet in elevation (other than appropriately designed recreational trails, ski lifts, zip lines, lookouts, and other similar recreational uses). Appropriately designed recreational uses above 2,500 feet in elevation are those that do not result in undue adverse impacts on the environment and are consistent with the future land use goals in this Regional Plan.
16. When any alternative exists, developments shall not be sited on soils that are:
- a) Susceptible to flooding;
 - b) Located in identified river corridor areas; and
 - c) Not suited for foundations and/or septic systems.
17. Development proposals for shallow soils shall provide and conform to an erosion control plan for construction activities and a site drainage plan.
18. Support mineral resource extraction as an important component of the working landscape economy, provided that such operations minimize impacts to the environment and neighboring properties.
19. Mineral extraction activity that is determined to have undue adverse impacts on neighboring properties is prohibited.
20. Mineral extraction activity that may destroy or significantly imperil wildlife habitat or other critical natural resources is prohibited.
21. Where mineral extraction is determined to be appropriate, adequate measures to minimize adverse effects (e.g., visual, noise, groundwater, surface water, and air pollution) on the environment and its wildlife shall be taken.
22. Effective site reclamation and re-vegetation plans shall be provided and implemented.
23. Mineral extraction and processing facilities must be planned, constructed, and managed:
- a) to provide direct access to Class III or better highways;
 - b) to not interfere with the function and safety of existing road systems serving the project site. Factors to be considered in determining impacts include, but are not limited to:
 - (i) Extent of increase in heavy vehicular traffic;
 - (ii) Effects of weight loads on roadbeds and bridges;
 - (iii) Conflicts with pedestrians or bike users; and,
 - (iv) Numbers and frequency of heavy vehicles traveling through dense residential areas.
24. Prohibit development or activities that significantly degrade air quality.
25. Support efforts to reduce locally and regionally generated air pollutants by encouraging the use of energy conservation guidelines as developed by the Vermont Department of Public Service.

Ch 7: CULTURAL & AESTHETIC RESOURCES

Long before European settlement, Abenaki people inhabited and were stewards to the land. Because of cultural and historic genocide perpetrated by European settlers throughout history, there are few Abenaki people left. Because of the history of violence towards this group, it is important that we, as a Region, commit to equitable policies and acknowledgements that benefit future generations of Abenaki descendants and vow to omit future harm.

Abenaki History

While the exact dates of Abenaki and indigenous settlement cannot be traced back exactly, Abenaki oral history and archaeology point to people being in Vermont and New Hampshire as far back as 12,000 years ago, and data indicates that as far back as 3,000 years ago indigenous people were propagating plants and using agricultural practices in the Northeast.¹ Abenaki people did and still do plant corn, beans, squash, and sunflowers to sustain their families. In addition, Abenaki people hunted, fished, and gathered resources both as a form of sustenance and as a part of a long-standing culture. The Abenaki people have played a large part in reforestation and conservation efforts throughout the state.

From the arrival of the first European colonizers in the 1600's to the present day, Abenaki people have seen thousands of their burial goods and sacred items stolen. Early European foray into Abenaki land included "searches" for gold and treasure that included looting sacred burial sites, and murdering Abenaki people. In addition to pillaging villages, and murdering the indigenous people, European colonizers introduced smallpox and other diseases that devastated the Indigenous communities. More acts of harm have been enacted over the history of European colonization through harmful policies, treaties, and unequal distribution of punishment.

Since then, there have been some preservation efforts by the State of Vermont to recognize harm done and acknowledge and preserve indigenous resources and recognize indigenous Abenaki people and stewards of the land.

In 2006, the Vermont Legislature formally recognized the Abenaki. Tribes currently recognized by the State of Vermont include the Elnu Abenaki Tribe, the Nulhegan Abenaki Tribe, the Abenaki Nation at Missisquoi, and the Koasek Band of the Koas Abenaki.

In 2019, the State replaced "Columbus Day" with "Indigenous People's Day".

¹ <https://vermonthistory.org/freedom-unity-first-people>.

In 2020, hunting and fishing rights were recognized by the State of Vermont.

While hundreds of years of harm cannot be undone overnight, the Region can take steps to enact goals and policies that recognize significant historical and archaeological indigenous sites and recognize the contribution of knowledge the Abenaki people have understanding scenic lands.

For more information on the Sokoki Abenaki people, [click here](#).

A. 1. Cultural and Historic Resources

Cultural and Historic Resources Goals

Ensure the protection, promotion, and restoration of culturally and historically significant resources by

1. Promoting equitable acknowledgements of indigenous populations throughout the Region through cultural and historic preservation methods as defined by the Abenaki and indigenous people themselves;
2. Ensuring the preservation, maintenance, and enhancement of significant cultural and historic resources throughout the Region;
3. Promoting the historical and cultural heritage of the Region.

Cultural, natural, economic, and political history has shaped the character of the Region. This character is reflected in the buildings, archaeological sites, structures, events, landscapes, and traditions established by residents throughout the Region's history. The importance of these cultural and historic resources is reflected in their ability to provide a sense of continuity to the Region's cultural fabric. A shared sense of history and cultural pride creates stronger communities and encourages the appreciation of other cultures. Historic and cultural sites, buildings, and events can also provide economic benefits because they draw visitors from around and outside of the region to enjoy the rich cultural fabric these resources provide. Cultural and historic resources can also serve dual purposes as unique community gathering places for the enjoyment of music, theater, and other cultural performances. In all, it is important to protect significant cultural and historic resources from destruction or inappropriate alteration to avoid losing the sense of place that has been developed over thousands of years.

The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (DHP) keeps track of national and state historic designation documentation, which can be found [here](#). The National Park Service also maintains databases of National Register of Historic Places designated places and districts.² All towns in

² <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm>

the Region contain some combination of National or State designated historic Districts and Places (See Map X). Districts and structures that end up on the national or state register are eligible for certain incentives for rehabilitation projects and are subject to restrictions on projects using federal or state funds to preserve their historic value. Both Registers are the best and most comprehensive sources of information on significant historic Districts and Places in the Region. There are nomination processes for adding to the National and State Registers if known significant historic places are not currently listed. The structures, sites, markers, and districts listed in these registries all have regional significance.

As opposed to locations included in the State or National Registers, the locations of known archaeological sites in Vermont are restricted information to protect the integrity of irreplaceable archaeological resources. Nevertheless, archaeologically sensitive areas, or areas with a higher likelihood of containing archaeological sites, can be identified based on site characteristics. Particular care should be taken when working in these areas to avoid potential impacts to archaeological resources and it is best practice to conduct an Archaeological Resource Assessment³ prior to any ground disturbance. For state and federally funded projects some form of historic and archaeological review will be required unless the project qualifies for an exemption, often due to limited ground disturbance or the project's location within an already disturbed area.

Characteristics of archaeologically sensitive areas include:⁴

- 200 feet or less from a river, stream, lake, pond, wetland, spring, or relict (i.e. now dry) drainage
- adjacent to a confluence of rivers or streams
- adjacent to falls or rapids
- on a floodplain or on a river terrace
- on an elevated knoll within a floodplain or wetland
- on a level area at the head of a drainage
- on a natural portage route between two watersheds or through a mountain divide
- adjacent to chert, quartz or quartzite outcrops and/or
- on a postglacial (or "paleo") land form such as a former shoreline of the Champlain Sea

Notable Historic Features

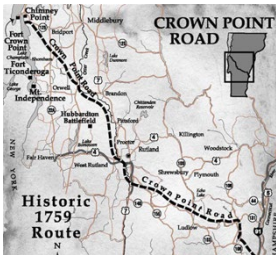
The following is a collection of some of the notable historical people, places, and features of the Mount

³ See the overview of the Consultation Process for Historic Resources in Vermont here:

<https://fpr.vermont.gov/consultation-process-historic-resources-vermont#Archaeological%20Resource%20Assessment>

⁴https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/HP/Resources_Rules/Digging_Into_Archaeology/Stewardship_Guide_Forest_Lands.pdf

Ascutney region. This is not nor is it intended to be a comprehensive list but is included to give a sense for the rich history of the region.



Crown Point Military Road

The Crown Point Road originally served as a military supply route for the British army, and later for American forces during the Revolutionary War. Started in 1759, The Crown Point Military Road connected Fort No. 4 in New Hampshire with other military fortifications at Crown Point and Mt. Independence on Lake Champlain. The road was built through Springfield, Weathersfield, Cavendish, and Ludlow and sections of the road are still in use for transportation and recreation.



U.S. Congressman and General Lewis Morris

Morris was clerk of the [Vermont House of Representatives](#) in 1790 and 1791, and was a member of the convention to ratify the United States Constitution. The General Lewis R. Morris House property lies in eastern Springfield. The house and related outbuildings constitute a cluster next to the west side of the historic valley road (now called Old Connecticut River Road).



U.S. Consul William Jarvis

Jarvis came to Weathersfield, Vermont in 1812. Jarvis played an integral part in introducing Merino sheep to the United States and subsequently in the development of the sheep herds in this country. The successful introduction of the Merino herds in Vermont resulted in "merino mania" and the growing demand for wool by the textile industry of New England led to a change in farming practices.



U.S. Secretary of State William Evarts

Evarts was an American lawyer and statesman. He was involved in three of the most important political cases in his day. He was buried at Ascutney Cemetery in Windsor. Evarts owned numerous properties in Windsor, including Evarts Pond and Evarts Estate. The homes included 26 Main Street in Windsor that was later restored and reopened as the Snapdragon Inn.



President Calvin Coolidge

Coolidge was educated at the Black River Academy in Ludlow. Black River Academy operated as a school, serving as the Town of Ludlow's public high school until 1938, when a new school was built. The original academy building burned early in the school's history, and the school operated in a church for 44 years until this building was built in 1888



American Precision Museum

The Region is home to the development of the American machine tool industry. The Robbins and Lawrence Armory was an early manufacturer of rifles for the United States government and produced 50,000 rifles during the Civil War for use by Union troops. Today, it houses the American Precision Museum. Out of the armory came industries like Jones and Lamson (J&L) Company, Fellows Gear Shaper, Bryant Grinder, and Lovejoy Tool - none of which operate today. In Windsor, the industry continued after the demise of the armory, with the evolution of the Cone-Blanchard Company, which closed in the late 1990s. The building is now occupied by Seldon Technologies, which specializes in nanotechnology.

The Woolen Mill



The Mill was also an important part of Vermont’s history and economy in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Although the mills no longer operate, some of them can still be seen across the Region. The Woolen Mill complex in Ludlow and the Mack Molding building in Cavendish are both excellent examples of how historic buildings can be reused while preserving their historic character. The old mill in Proctorsville serves as an example of how important historical development patterns are to Vermont communities.

Covered Bridges



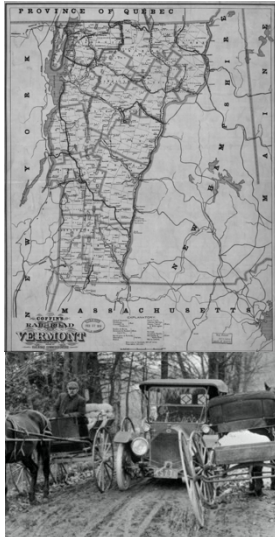
The Region is home to several covered bridges built in the 19th century including: Upper Falls in Weathersfield, Bests and Bowers in West Windsor, Baltimore in Springfield, Titcomb in Cavendish. Built in 1866, the Cornish-Windsor Bridge is 465 feet long and is the second longest covered wooden bridge in the United States.

Architectural Styles



There are distinct architectural styles common to the Region. The most obvious example is the “Snecked Ashlar” which were built in the 1830’s and 1840’s with stone from the nearby hills. Making up Chester’s Stone Village are the original ten snecked ashlar buildings built on North Street. These buildings can also be seen in homes, schoolhouses, and churches across the Region. In Vermont, this type of construction is found almost exclusively in southern Windsor County. Another distinct architectural feature found more often in the Region than in other parts of New England is the recessed balcony, which can be seen in Ascutney, Perkinsville, and Ludlow.

The Region also has many individual buildings that are notable historic resources. Two examples are the NAMCO block apartment building and the Windsor House. The NAMCO block was built to house employees of the National Acme Manufacturing Co., which occupied the Lawrence and Robbins Armory building after the turn of the century. It is noteworthy because of its symmetry and efficient use of space, air circulation, and light. It was designed to provide the most comfortable living quarters possible within available space. The Rockingham Area Community Land Trust and Housing Vermont have rehabilitated the building into 58 affordable housing apartments. The Windsor House, according to the National Register of Historic Places, “served as a prominent hostelry for almost 150 years and had many important personages.” In the 1970s, the Windsor House was rescued from destruction by a local group calling itself Historic Windsor. This group saved the building, established it as a newly thriving commercial and cultural center.



Transportation Systems

Like most places in the United States, Vermont was transformed by the train and then by the automobile. The construction of the railroad system in the 1800s was instrumental in developing industries such as mining and manufacturing. The passenger rail system accelerated the westward migration by Vermonters in the latter half of the century. The ease of rail travel first brought vacationers to the state and the Region in large numbers. Tourists were attracted by the pastoral scenery, mineral springs, and mountaintop hotels. By 1950, Vermont was aggressively marketing itself across the country as a tourist destination, and the interstate system played a vital role in maintaining this status. The boom of the automobile industry and interstate took over for the passenger rail system in the 60s.



The Vermont Constitution

In 1777, the Vermont Constitution was drafted and signed in Windsor. The Vermont Constitution was the first in North America to abolish slavery and was ahead of its time in expanding voting rights. The Old Constitution House still stands in Windsor and is now open to the public as a state historic site.

Source: RPC; this is not a comprehensive list of all historic resources for each town, but only a preliminary survey to determine what the towns consider as their most important historic resources.

A. 2 Tools and Requirements for Historic Preservation

The following are some of the most commonly used tools for protecting historic resources in Vermont.

State and National Registers - Listing on the State or National Register identifies a resource as having historical or cultural significance. While listing does not place any restrictions on property owners, it can foster a sense of pride and responsibility in individuals and communities. Listing on the National Register provides protection against the use of federal funds to negatively affect the

historic character of a site; it can also provide communities and individual property owners with federal funding for rehabilitation projects, and with investment tax credits.

Downtowns and Village Centers – The Downtown and Village Center Designation programs are administered by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. Areas receiving these designations are eligible for a number of benefits. See the Land Use Chapter for more on the programs and lists of designated downtowns and village centers in the MARC region.

Certified Local Governments (CLGs) - A 1980 amendment to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires that at least 10% of states' Historic Preservation Funds be given to "Certified Local Governments" (CLGs). A local government becomes eligible for this program when the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) certifies that the local government has established its own historic preservation commission and a program that meets state and federal standards. In addition to being eligible for matching survey and planning grants, CLGs review nominations of National Historic Register properties within their jurisdictions and provide local perspective to the plans and programs of the VT Division of Historic Preservation. Windsor is the only town in the Region that is a CLG.

Local Zoning - Under Vermont law, towns may include Design Review Districts and Historic Districts in their zoning bylaws. Design Review Districts offer communities, after public hearing and preparation of a design plan, the opportunity to review and approve the construction, demolition, substantial alteration, movement, or change in use of a building within the district. Historic Districts offer a more specific set of guidelines for reviewing projects in the district based on historical and architectural significance and a predetermined set of criteria. Springfield and Windsor have adopted downtown design review districts in their zoning bylaws. Towns may also include review of historic impacts under conditional use and site plan approval guidelines in their zoning bylaws.

Act 250 - Some development may be subject to review of potential impact on historic resources under criteria 8 and 10 of Act 250. Under criterion 8, applicants must show that a project will "not have an undue adverse effect on the scenic or natural beauty of the area, aesthetics, historic sites or rare and irreplaceable natural areas". Under Criterion 10, a project must be shown to be in conformance with "any duly adopted local or regional plan or capital program".

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 – Federal agencies consult with The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation to review projects when a federal agency/funding is involved. Reviews identify any adverse impacts a project may have on historic resources and resolves those impacts by developing alternatives that avoid, minimize, or mitigate them.

Vermont Historic Preservation Act – In accordance with 22 V.S.A. §14, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation reviews projects under state jurisdiction for potential impacts to historic buildings and structures, historic districts, historic landscapes and settings, and known or potential archaeological resources.

The most important tools for historic preservation in any town are a sense of pride and a strong stewardship ethic in its residents. Education and cooperation between local planning and development bodies, historical societies, residents, visitors, the business community, and property owners should be fostered throughout the Region. Recognizing and protecting cultural and historic resources can foster civic pride; stimulate improvements in education; encourage environmental protection and sound land use planning; help attract businesses and expand tourism; and support the agricultural and forestry economies through the preservation of farms and maintenance of historical settlement patterns.

B. Aesthetics: Scenic Lands and Open Space

Scenic Lands and Open Space Goals

Achieve a balance between scenic or open land uses and other land uses in the best interest of the environment and the Region's residents through:

- 1. Maintaining and/or enhancing the diversity of ecosystems throughout the Region by promoting connectivity between significant habitat wherever possible;**
- 2. Protecting the environmental character and integrity of significant natural and scenic resources as identified by member towns.**
- 3. Integrating indigenous knowledge of conservation into policies and practices.**

The harmonious mix of open space – as defined on page 14 below –, villages, farms, country roads, mountainous terrain, historic architecture, and surface waters in the Region provides for scenic vistas and an attractive landscape. This landscape is also an economic asset and has a tangible economic value to the Region. The rural lifestyle and scenic landscapes attract many tourists. Tourism is a significant industry in the Region. The preservation of these aesthetic and scenic resources has become increasingly difficult due to economic and development pressures. Over the past several decades, highway strip development has emerged between town and village centers and the countryside thus threatening the Region's traditional land use pattern. Agricultural fields and working forestlands juxtaposed to dense villages combine to create the traditional Vermont landscape that residents and tourists cherish. Development can occur in ways that do not adversely impact this traditional landscape, such as innovative site plans, clustering around already established villages and town centers. Future development needs to be cognizant of the landscape's heritage and work towards mitigating any adverse impacts to the land's historic legacy.

Scenic Resources

Scenic resources are public or publicly accessible areas, features, landscape patterns, or sites that are easily recognized by the Region and contribute to Region's distinct character. Efforts to mitigate any negative effects of development are necessary to protect, preserve, and improve the significant aesthetic resources within the Region. Aesthetic resources are protected by Criterion 8 of Vermont's Act 250, which does not relegate scenic beauty to pristine areas alone, but to settled areas and farmlands as well. There is also a significant role for municipal planning and zoning for the preservation of scenic resources. Such efforts should include a continued emphasis on and restructuring of municipal planning and zoning administration, which protects and preserves the landscape heritage in the Region. Identifying key scenic resources is imperative to protecting the rural landscape and value of the Region. While scenic resources can be hard to identify, they can be sorted into four main categories; Highlands, Lowlands; Centers; and Countryside.



Highlands:

Mountainous areas made up of scenic ridgelines with significant changes of topography, bedrock and soil conditions that also host woodlands containing native plant and wildlife habitat. The Region has prominent ridgelines and mountain tops that are inherently and especially sensitive, e.g. the Alps and Little Ascutney Mountain. Development in these areas is strongly discouraged. Such proposed development should work towards design plans that retain the prominent natural appearance by locating in less visible areas and away from highly visible ridgelines, blending and or hiding structures within existing wooded hillsides, and where possible, avoid excessive use of reflective glass.



Lowlands:

Characterized by riparian corridors, wetlands, waterways, and floodplains, lowlands can provide ecological benefits as well as recreational opportunities. Lowland areas, like those around the Connecticut River, are good examples of resources that should be preserved. Covered Bridges that go over waterways are of particular interest to this region and help create a unique aesthetic experience for visitors and community members alike.

Centers:

Dense central places like a village center that are characterized by significant or historic buildings like public offices, monuments, a commercial core, and a more urbanized residential area.

Countryside:

Woodland or agricultural areas outside of an urban center with limited residential development. Countryside can be characterized by open fields, managed crop fields, orchards, and undeveloped areas such as forests and wetlands.

Scenic Roadways:

The Scenic Roads Law was passed in 1977, initiating the state Scenic Roads Program. The purpose of the Scenic Roads Program was to protect the physical character and condition of the roadway right-of-way.

National Scenic Byways Program: The purpose of the Byway program is to foster cooperative ventures or public-private partnerships, and to protect, enhance, and/or promote the natural, cultural, historic, archeological, recreational, and scenic qualities. The Connecticut River Byway was awarded national designation by the Federal Highway Administration. The segment of the Byway in this Region includes the US Route 5 corridor through Windsor, Weathersfield and Springfield. The two spurs including VT Route 44 to Brownsville and VT Route 11 to downtown Springfield,

continue to be part of the originally designated Connecticut River Scenic Byway.

State scenic roads may be established by recommendation of the Scenery Preservation Council per 19 V.S.A. §2501. Any construction or maintenance work on designated state scenic roads must be consistent with the standards established by VTrans pursuant to 10 V.S.A. §425. The segment of VT Route 131 in Cavendish is the only designated State Scenic Highway in this Region. Towns in Vermont are enabled to designate municipally maintained roads as “scenic roads,” as established by 19 V.S.A. §2502. Town scenic roads are also subject to the standards established by the State Transportation Board. Those standards for scenic roads address appropriate minimum roadway widths, alignment, landscaping, and traffic control methods, pursuant to 10 VSA §425. There are no town designated scenic roads in this Region currently.

In addition to officially designated scenic roads, the Region’s roadways are a draw for the picturesque views of the Connecticut River countryside and of prominent landmarks such as Mount Ascutney. The dirt roads that crisscross the Region are especially valued for recreation and site seeing.

Covered Bridges:

Covered bridges are a staple of New England, and the character of many of the scenic resource elements listed above are amplified by covered bridges in the region. For example, the iconic Cornish-Windsor covered bridge from multiple angles frames a view of Mount Ascutney and the Connecticut River.

for many of the reasons described throughout this chapter and the Natural Resources chapter. Open space that is publicly owned or permanently protected through the sale or donation of development rights may ensure the long-term productive capacity of forest or agricultural land; preserve wildlife habitat; protect groundwater resources; provide recreational land; and preserve important historic, scenic and cultural resources.

The Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT) is located in Hanover, New Hampshire, and provides conservation leadership, tools and expertise to permanently protect the working farms, forested ridges, wildlife habitat, water resources, trails and scenic landscapes that surround residential areas and commercial centers. The UVLT focuses its mission in 45 Vermont and New Hampshire towns (including Springfield, Weathersfield, Windsor, West Windsor, and Reading) in the upper Connecticut River valley. UVLT is a sponsor member of the [Land Trust Alliance](#), an organization that promotes land conservation by providing advocacy and professional resources to over 1,600 land trusts nationwide.

To ensure that open lands that provide the greatest public benefit are protected for present and future generations, towns should develop open space plans.

For more information: [Open Space & Resource Protection Programs](#)

Policies

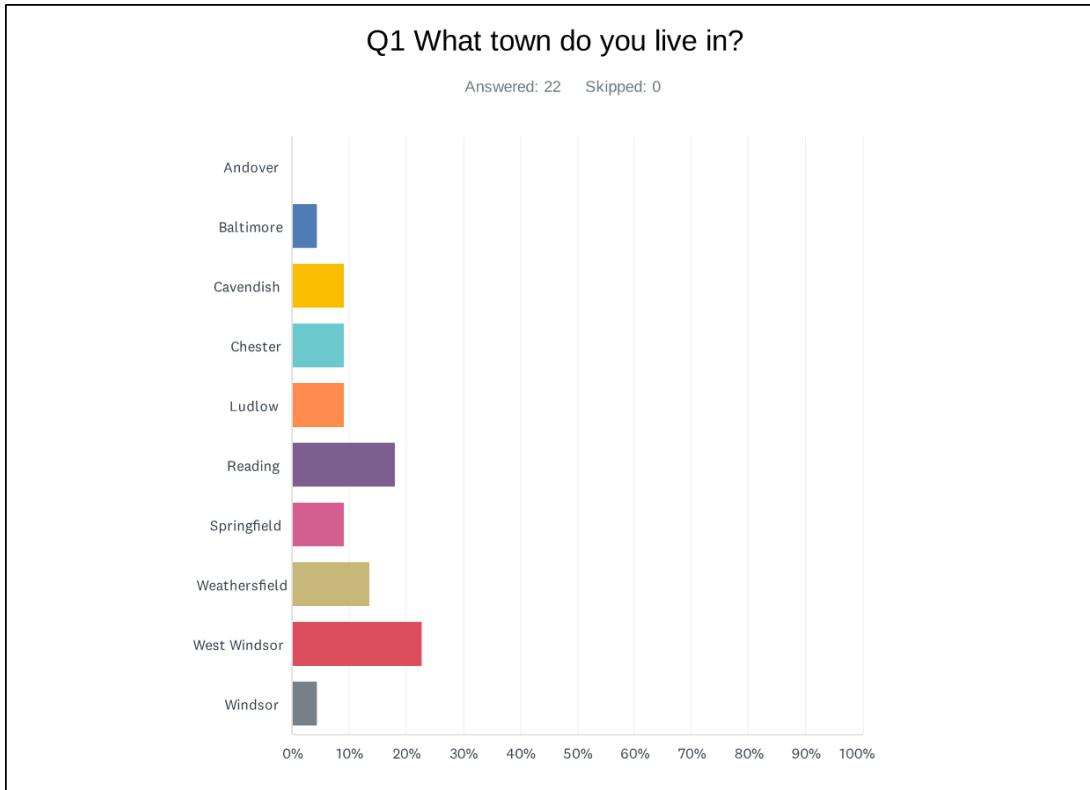
A. Cultural and Historic Resources Policies

1. Acknowledge the presence and role of indigenous people in the stewardship of cultural and historical resources in the region.
2. Proposed development adjacent to or within historic or cultural sites should adhere to similar massing, size, scale, and overall design of the site. Development must enhance historical or cultural value and appreciation.
3. Increase awareness of community, regional, state, and federal programs which sponsor or provide financial or technical assistance for cultural and historic preservation and education.
4. Adaptive reuse of historically significant buildings and sites is desired as long as the project is consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and any local historic or design review guidelines.
5. Regionally significant archaeological sites and historic buildings and sites should be preserved unless existing conditions make it unreasonably cost prohibitive. If preservation is not feasible, the site or structure should be documented prior to a project taking place. Necessary renovations should reflect the historic character of the resource. In the case of private homes, owners are encouraged to consider the site's historic, cultural, and economic value to themselves and the community when deciding how best to maintain and manage them.
6. Promote the education and increased awareness of significant cultural/aesthetic resources, such as cellar holes and stonework.
7. Acknowledge, protect, respect, and memorialize Abenaki and indigenous burial sites, archeology, ethnohistory, and traditional knowledge.

B. Scenic Lands and Open Space Policies (See also Natural Resources Chapter)

1. Support local, state, or federal programs and legislative efforts which protect and enhance the economic, cultural, environmental, and aesthetic values of forested and scenic resources.
2. Support and promote the continuation of programs that provide incentives for landowners to conserve farmland, forestland, and open space (e.g., Forest Legacy Program, Use Value Appraisal Program).
3. Conservation easements of important, open, scenic, and ecologically and historically significant lands are supported.
4. The sites highlighted in the Scenic Resources section of this chapter are inherently and especially sensitive. Development around the Region must not result in undue adverse impacts on these scenic resources.
5. Structures and exterior areas shall be illuminated only at levels necessary to ensure the safety and security of persons and property. Any lighting that will disturb the natural or aesthetic value of a scenic resource shall not be used.
6. Exterior lighting must be fully shielded and minimize the amount of blue light in the nighttime environment (i.e., Dark Sky Friendly).

APPENDIX: Scenic Resources Survey



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Andover	0.00%	0
Baltimore	4.55%	1
Cavendish	9.09%	2
Chester	9.09%	2
Ludlow	9.09%	2
Reading	18.18%	4
Springfield	9.09%	2
Weathersfield	13.64%	3
West Windsor	22.73%	5
Windsor	4.55%	1
TOTAL		22

Q2 What would you say are the outstanding scenic mountains or highlands in your town or region? Highlands: Hillsides and ridgelines, that because of topography, bedrock, and soil conditions prominent mountains, forest cover, and other elements, are outstanding scenic resources. (ex. View of Mt. Ascutney from Paradise Park in Windsor)

Answered: 22 Skipped: 0

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Springfield is not really a mountain or highland place, it however has been attracting glamping sites and a rural retreat. The development of these resources has been impeded by ANR and Acr 250 restrictions that sometimes make little sense.	2/1/2022 10:59 PM
2	Mt. Ascutney, Skitchewaung Mt., Mt. Ephraim, Hawk's Mt. (see this link about plane crash on Hawk's Mt. http://www.gendisasters.com/vermont/11490/hawk039s-mountain-vt-bomber-crashes-june-1947)	2/1/2022 12:19 PM
3	Keyes Mountain, Mt Moses	12/6/2021 5:38 PM
4	Mount Ascutney as seen from various points in W. Windsor. one is along Bible Hill Road but there are many more	11/29/2021 7:54 PM
5	hawkes MT Keyes MT	11/29/2021 7:38 PM
6	Steadman Fro the East Side	11/22/2021 8:37 AM
7	View from the height of S. Reading Rd. looking south south east. Hawks mountain.	11/22/2021 7:08 AM
8	Hawks Mountain Little Ascutney	11/18/2021 3:01 PM
9	Views of ascutney, view of Cornish hills and ridges across the river from Jarvis St, view from the beach of Kennedy Pond, covered bridge, windsor town forest, prison property	11/18/2021 12:46 PM
10	Views of: The Alps, Mt. Ascutney, Little Ascutney In Reading. Region: Okemo Mtn, Skitchewaung Mtn, Terrible Mtn	11/18/2021 12:04 PM
11	View from the top of Okemo View from the top of North Hill View from the top of the Ford Farm/Burns residence View from the top of the cemetery View from the top of East Hill View from the dams on Route 100 South/Andover Road View of the lakes from parts of Okemo	11/18/2021 10:57 AM
12	View of Okemo as you drive into town from the south. Views of the Lakes on VT Rt. 100 North. New England style architecture in the village.	11/18/2021 8:07 AM
13	Mt Ascutney, Little Ascutney and the valley between. View of Hawks Mtn from the Weathersfield Center Rd.	11/18/2021 7:08 AM
14	Jenne Rd., Town Hill, Grasshopper Rd. Ridgeline views, Pastures, Available trails	11/18/2021 5:57 AM
15	The land on both sides of Birmingham Road before Chaos; outcropping on one side with an amazing assortment of spring wildflowers and the ledge on the other with lady slippers and below, wetlands.	11/17/2021 8:01 PM
16	Mt. Ascutney, Rt. 44, and the Brownsville/Hartland ridgeline.	11/17/2021 5:04 PM
17	hawk mt.	11/17/2021 4:04 PM
18	View of Ascutney from the end of High Street, Smokeshire valley,	11/17/2021 3:55 PM
19	Mount Ascutney and Little Mount Ascutney not to mention every ridgeline in town	11/17/2021 3:53 PM
20	Mt. Ascutney--view from every angle.	11/17/2021 3:50 PM
21	Mt Ascutney, Little Ascutney Mtn, Hawks Mtn, Ludlow Mtn, Terrible Mtn	11/4/2021 4:13 PM

Q3 What would you say are outstanding scenic lowland features in your town or region? Lowlands: Characterized by riparian corridors, wetlands, waterways, and floodplains, areas like this can provide ecological benefits as well as recreational opportunities. (ex. The Connecticut River)

Answered: 20 Skipped: 2

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	The Black River could be a major asset of the Town, however its ability to serve as such has been destroyed by buffer zone requirements which have surrounded it with poison ivy, tree debris, dying trees, and other obstructions which impede it visibility, accessibility, and use. The Town is protected from flooding by a large flood control dam, yet it is still subjected to unnecessary restrictions, against the wishes of the Town	2/1/2022 10:59 PM
2	Black River, Connecticut River and Hoyt's Landing, North Springfield Bog	2/1/2022 12:19 PM
3	Land around the Black River as it flows through Felchville. Land around the Mill Brook in and north of Hammondsville.	12/6/2021 5:38 PM
4	Mill Brook as it runs through West Windsor. In the region, the Connecticut River is very scenic, especially with the Windsor/Cornish Covered Bridge. In Taftsville, the river, dam, and River Road	11/29/2021 7:54 PM
5	Beaver meadows along 106Reading. Beaver meadows upper Black R for flood resilience and habitata	11/29/2021 7:38 PM
6	The North Branch Williams River Valley North of Chester	11/22/2021 8:37 AM
7	20 mile stream road as a parallels the alps. Route 131 corridor. Davis Road	11/22/2021 7:08 AM
8	Black River and Valley	11/18/2021 3:01 PM
9	Paradise park, CT river (duh), old mill brook	11/18/2021 12:46 PM
10	Mill Brook, North Branch Black River, wetlands along Tyson Rd in Arthur Davis WMA, Niagara Falls, Twentyfoot Hole in Reading. Region: CT River and valley, Black River along RT 131, Goulds Mill & Comtu Falls (Springfield), Paradise Park wetlands and Lake Runnemedede, west Windsor flats along Rt 44, Hoyts Landing and setback	11/18/2021 12:04 PM
11	Black River watershed Lake Pauline and Lake Rescue Flood Control Dams (includes our recreation pond)	11/18/2021 10:57 AM
12	See above. Scenic drive along VT Rt 100, North and South. (Maybe that's why it's a 'scenic corridor')	11/18/2021 8:07 AM
13	Protected areas along the Black River (Army Corps), Black River North Branch fields following Rte 106	11/18/2021 7:08 AM
14	Mill Brook	11/18/2021 5:57 AM
15	Twenty Mile Stream as it flows along Heald Road.	11/17/2021 8:01 PM
16	Mill Brook, West Windsor Rt. 44 valley corridor.	11/17/2021 5:04 PM
17	Connecticut River and every stream in the area	11/17/2021 3:53 PM
18	The Mill Brook water way, including the low land area along Rt. 44	11/17/2021 3:50 PM
19	Covered bridges, Connecticut River, Black River along Scenic Route 131, Ludlow lakes region, Black River through downtown Springfield, Knapp Ponds, Lake Runnemedede, Mill Pond, Chester Reservoir	11/4/2021 4:13 PM
20	Mill Brook	11/4/2021 10:06 AM

Q4 What would you say are outstanding scenic community centers in your town or region?Centers: Dense central places like a village center that is characterized by significant buildings or historic architecture like public offices, monuments, a commercial core, and a more urbanized residential area. (ex. Main Street in Downtown Windsor)

Answered: 21 Skipped: 1

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	The potential scenic center for Springfield is the Black River, however, because of buffer zone restrictions it cannot be easily seen, accessed, or used. Muckross State Park could also be a major scenic center but its structures are being neglected and falling into decay by the State. And the State has not improved its access or trail system. It needs more funding and local control.	2/1/2022 10:59 PM
2	Downtown Springfield	2/1/2022 12:19 PM
3	Felchville; Hammondsville; land around Bailey's Mills	12/6/2021 5:38 PM
4	In the region, the Town of Woodstock - Main Street, Billings Farm.	11/29/2021 7:54 PM
5	Old barns. Stone walls along roads... which are often pushed over for the sake of "road drainage". The better back roads program by the way destroys scenic roads with the armoring that we see at times a useless need	11/29/2021 7:38 PM
6	The Green In Chester	11/22/2021 8:37 AM
7	Proctorsville village center. Cavendish historical society building	11/22/2021 7:08 AM
8	None	11/18/2021 3:01 PM
9	Main st downtown windsor, Waterfront area in downtown windsor, Juniper Hill Inn, Snapdragon Inn	11/18/2021 12:46 PM
10	Reading: Fletchville, Indian Stone marker. Region: Chester Stone village, Weathersfield Bow, Windsor main St old buildings	11/18/2021 12:04 PM
11	Historic Preservation area Village Center Black River Academy Museum Ludlow Town Office Building Veteran's Park and Minipark (Daniel Kesman Park) Historic Churches: Baptist, Catholic and United Church Dorsey Park and Town Recreation Area The Armory that includes our TV station, Good Neighbors and Recreation areas	11/18/2021 10:57 AM
12	See #2 above. Main St. Ludlow. No billboards. No "big box" stores.	11/18/2021 8:07 AM
13	I suppose Perkinsville although additional infill development would make it more attractive	11/18/2021 7:08 AM
14	The village green in Proctorsville	11/17/2021 8:01 PM
15	Mt. Ascutney and associated ski area.	11/17/2021 5:04 PM
16	town office	11/17/2021 4:04 PM
17	The village green along Main Street (VT Route 11)	11/17/2021 3:55 PM
18	Main street, Windsor	11/17/2021 3:53 PM
19	Brownsville Village center, Ascutney Outdoors	11/17/2021 3:50 PM
20	Main Street in downtown Windsor, State Street Common Windsor, Proctorsville green, Chester Village Green, core Main Street in downtown Springfield, Stone Village, Brownsville, Weathersfield Center Church and Grove, Perkinsville Green, Ludlow Village Center, Felchville	11/4/2021 4:13 PM
21	Brownsville	11/4/2021 10:06 AM

Q5 What would you say are outstanding scenic countryside vistas in your town or region? Countryside: woodland and/or agricultural areas outside of an urban center with limited residential development. (ex. Jenne Farm in Reading)

Answered: 20 Skipped: 2

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	The complex being developed by Jim Veltrap	2/1/2022 10:59 PM
2	As you say - Jenne Farm; Lexington Farm in Felchville; New Hall Farm in S. reading; Springbrook Farm	12/6/2021 5:38 PM
3	Already mentioned - River Road in Woodstock/Taftsville, Bible Hill in West Windsor, Route 12A along the river with the Covered Bridge. Almost every road has beauty!	11/29/2021 7:54 PM
4	The visat from south reading stone schoolhouse of a scarred up MT ascutney. Let the whole darn thing grow back and leave it the sacred it once was. Ascutney Outdoors center is about to kill the solitude of the MT	11/29/2021 7:38 PM
5	Mount Ascutney and little Ascutney from the 131 west side	11/22/2021 8:37 AM
6	S. Reading Rd. 20 mile Stream Road. Sections of East Road	11/22/2021 7:08 AM
7	Views of Mountain Ascutney from various high points. Views of the southern Green Mountains from Center Road and Skyline Drive. And Connecticut Valley from same. North Branch valley.	11/18/2021 3:01 PM
8	Great River Farm, Windsor prison property and windsor town forest, view from Kennedy Pond	11/18/2021 12:46 PM
9	Reading: Caper Hill Rd & farms, Jenne Farm, Baileys Mills Rd., Knapp ponds. Region: Twentymile Stream Rd fields, CT River valley	11/18/2021 12:04 PM
10	South Hill, East Hill and North Hill have beautiful woodlands, farms and meadows. Our zoning requires 3 acres in our agricultural, residential areas. The aquifer district (Terrible Mountain) requires 5 acre zoning. Parts of West Hill encompass several different zoning areas. Example: the Ghia Farm on West Hill has beautiful fields and scenery, but is surrounded by chalets and second homes.	11/18/2021 10:57 AM
11	Any area outside of the Village. Especially those areas with views of the valleys and opposing ridge lines.	11/18/2021 8:07 AM
12	Weathersfield Center meeting house and surrounding lands, open agriculture fields across from Crown Point GC, Wellwood Orchard	11/18/2021 7:08 AM
13	Jenne Farm / Rd, Baileys Mills Rd, Town Hill all in Reading	11/18/2021 5:57 AM
14	The western side of East Road	11/17/2021 8:01 PM
15	West Windsor Story Town Hall and Butcher & Pantry Store.	11/17/2021 5:04 PM
16	woodland and agricultural	11/17/2021 4:04 PM
17	view of farms along 103 North	11/17/2021 3:55 PM
18	Armstrong property, GMHA, mile long field, certainly tree lines roads such as Bryant Rd and Cowshed in W. Windsor	11/17/2021 3:53 PM
19	Views from Cemetery Road towards Bible Hill and beyond.	11/17/2021 3:50 PM
20	Paris Hill farm	11/4/2021 10:06 AM

Chapter 8 – Energy

See Volume 3 of 3, Regional Enhanced Energy Plan

Ch 9: HOUSING



Photo Credits: Braxton Freeman

Housing Goals

1. Ensure the availability of safe and sanitary housing for all residents, and their ability to acquire housing that is needed.
2. Maintain and sustain existing primary homes in good condition for year-round residents.
3. Make the process easier to build the types of homes that the region needs in the places we need them.
4. Create the types of homes that are necessary to address the region's identified needs.
5. Build homes that improve the region's economic health and are consistent with smart growth principles.
6. Increase public awareness of the region's housing needs and opportunities, and to build acceptance of efforts to address these needs.
7. Support the Goals, Policies, and Priorities of the Keys to the Valley Project.
8. Support interdisciplinary, interorganizational, and cross-section approaches to the housing issues in the region.
9. Provide assistance so that all communities in the region meet affordable housing goals.

Housing is a key element of any equitable and sustainable community. The supply of housing should be adequate to house those who live and work in the community and should expand at a rate that can accommodate economic growth. In addition, housing should be available to house the Region's aging population and to maintain a population of families that bring students to area schools, workers to local jobs, and remote workers.

In 2025, the State of Vermont is in a housing crisis.

To address the complex housing issues in the greater Upper Valley, including throughout our Region, the Keys to the Valley (KTTV) project was launched. Made up of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, Two Rivers-Ottaqueechee Regional Commission, and MARC, the KTTV initiative uses data to engage with and create goals and policies for a multi-pronged solution.

The [Keys to the Valley](#) initiative supplements this Housing Chapter with additional Information and analysis. It describes the housing crisis in more detail and identifies a few ways to help address the housing situation:

- **Spread knowledge of the region’s housing needs** to increase public awareness of the region’s housing needs and opportunities, and to build acceptance of efforts to address these needs. This involves community outreach and coordination, sharing information and relatable stories, and developing metrics for monitoring the region’s housing needs.
 - **Ensure access to a safe home** to ensure the availability of safe and sanitary housing for all residents, and their ability to get housing that is needed. This includes providing adequate emergency housing facilities; making sure that rental units meet all applicable codes for safe and sanitary habitation; reducing exposure to mold and lead hazards and improving the knowledge of and compliance with legal requirements, such as the Fair Housing Law. Housing conditions are known to have a significant impact on physical and mental health.
 - **Sustain existing primary homes** in good condition and for use by year-round residents. This includes maintaining or improving the conditions of existing homes; keeping existing owner-occupied and renter-occupied homes as primary residences; and discouraging conversion to secondary homes or short-term rentals.
 - **Make it easier to build homes.** Make the process easier to build the types of homes that the region needs in the places we need them. This involves eliminating unnecessary regulatory barriers, streamlining the local and state review processes, and building grassroots support for proactively addressing our housing needs.
 - **Create the types of homes the region needs** to produce the types of homes that are necessary to address the region’s identified needs. This means building homes for the incomes we have and for our population, prioritizing the creation of so-called “Missing Middle” and supportive housing types. This also involves building the capacity of local developers, building trades, and supportive housing providers.
- Build smart for economic health.** Build homes that improve the region’s economic health and are consistent with smart growth principles. This includes prioritizing housing developments that further village revitalization efforts, are served by water and sewer infrastructure, encourage walking, bicycling and public transit, and contribute to a stronger, more resilient community and stable tax base.

An additional way to help address the housing situation includes:

- **Build smart for the environment.** Build homes that meet energy efficiency standards and avoid negative environmental impacts. Ensure that locations and construction methods anticipate and respond to climate change.

A. Housing Characteristics

The population in the region increased less than 1% between 2010 (24,711 residents) and 2020 (24,860 residents), according to US Census Bureau decennial statistics. Likewise, the production of new homes has been modest in this region over the past decade. In 2022, there were 10,445 households in the region, 12% of which resided in rentals and the remainder owned their own homes.

Single-detached housing units make up the predominant type of ownership in the region (71%), with multi-family buildings (21%) and mobile homes (7%) following behind with significantly lower prominence. Rentals of various scales can be found throughout the region, but the larger apartment buildings are generally found in Springfield, Windsor and Ludlow. Data is not readily available for accessory dwelling units, but anecdotal evidence suggests there are only a small number of them in the region at this time.

Table 9.1 - Residential Building Types (2023)

	Single-Family (Detached)		Single-Family (Attached)		Multi-Family (2-9 units)		Multi-Family (10-50+ units)		Manufactured Home		Total #
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Vermont	179,698	67%	10,838	4%	44,364	16%	18,301	7%	16,175	6%	269,376
Windsor County	17,781	71%	724	3%	3,624	15%	1,144	5%	1,600	6%	24,873
Andover	195	89%	3	1%	12	5%	0	0%	10	5%	220
Baltimore	88	81%	1	1%	3	3%	0	0%	17	16%	109
Cavendish	335	72%	26	6%	44	9%	0	0%	59	13%	464
Chester	990	76%	0	0%	177	14%	55	4%	83	6%	1,305
Ludlow	834	65%	64	5%	260	20%	69	5%	62	5%	1,289
Reading	276	95%	11	4%	0	0%	0	0%	4	1%	291
Springfield	2,510	66%	10	0%	723	19%	349	9%	236	6%	3,828
Weathersfield	941	85%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	170	15%	1,111
West Windsor	464	95%	18	4%	5	1%	0	0%	4	1%	491
Windsor	991	59%	43	3%	391	23%	164	10%	91	5%	1,680
MARC Region	7,624	71%	176	2%	1,615	15%	637	6%	736	7%	10,788

SOURCE: <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/housing-stock/residential-building-type>

Table 9.2 - Housing Stock by Usage Type (2023)

	Owner Households		Renter Households		Seasonal Homes		Vacant Homes		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Vermont	196,162	58%	73,304	22%	50,742	15%	16,864	5%	337,072
Windsor County	18,618	54%	6,255	18%	7,781	22%	2,119	6%	34,773
Andover	182	48%	38	10%	151	40%	8	2%	379
Baltimore	92	79%	17	15%	2	2%	6	5%	117
Cavendish	385	42%	79	9%	414	45%	43	5%	921
Chester	1,041	56%	264	14%	415	22%	129	7%	1,849
Ludlow	649	19%	560	16%	2,164	62%	92	3%	3,465
Reading	254	61%	37	9%	117	28%	7	2%	415
Springfield	2,567	60%	1,261	29%	0	0%	482	11%	4,310
Weathersfield	1,039	76%	72	5%	189	14%	68	5%	1,368
West Windsor	481	60%	10	1%	296	37%	21	3%	808
Windsor	965	51%	715	38%	77	4%	149	8%	1,906
MARC Region	7,655	49%	3,053	20%	3,825	25%	1,005	6%	15,538

SOURCE: <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/housing-stock/housing-units>

Table 9.3 - Median Household Income (2023)

	All Households	Owner Households	Renter Households
Vermont	\$ 78,024	\$ 95,163	\$ 45,289
Windsor County	\$ 75,247	\$ 88,448	\$ 48,205
Andover	\$ 96,250	\$ 120,833	N/A
Baltimore	\$ 83,125	\$ 92,500	N/A
Cavendish	\$ 79,583	\$ 88,375	\$ 51,528
Chester	\$ 67,031	\$ 68,609	\$ 60,132
Ludlow	\$ 54,276	\$ 64,583	\$ 50,625
Reading	\$ 85,114	\$ 86,136	\$ 62,083
Springfield	\$ 65,116	\$ 71,576	\$ 24,350
Weathersfield	\$ 85,592	\$ 87,434	\$ 66,339
West Windsor	\$ 105,568	\$ 106,250	\$ 80,625
Windsor	\$ 51,267	\$ 75,707	\$ 43,125
MARC Region	\$ 81,354	\$ 86,785	\$ 55,830

SOURCE: <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/income-employment/median-household-income>

There were 15,538 total housing units in the region in 2023. Seasonal units accounted for about 25% (3,825 units) of the total units. Owner-occupied units were about 49% of the total (7,655 owner-occupied housing units) and 20% were renter-occupied (3,053 housing units). This proportion of housing units is substantially unchanged when compared to the previous Regional Plan. The average median household income for the region in 2023 was \$81,354 with West Windsor and Windsor being the towns in the region with the highest and lowest median household incomes, at \$105,568 and \$51,267 respectively.

Table 9.4 - Homes by Year Structure Built (2023)

	1939 or Earlier		1940-1949		1950-1959		1960-1969		1970-1979		1980-1989		1990-1999		2000-2009		2010-2019		2020 or Later		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Vermont	84,515	25%	10,145	3%	17,968	5%	27,514	8%	50,672	15%	52,858	16%	35,162	10%	35,391	10%	21,084	6%	1,763	1%	337,072
Windsor County	9,635	28%	1,395	4%	1,860	5%	2,535	7%	5,412	16%	5,905	17%	3,430	10%	3,114	9%	1,358	4%	129	0%	34,773
Andover	67	18%	-	0%	14	4%	22	6%	100	26%	42	11%	49	13%	76	20%	9	2%	-	0%	379
Baltimore	26	22%	-	0%	2	2%	25	21%	19	16%	14	12%	25	21%	6	5%	-	0%	-	0%	117
Cavendish	363	39%	33	4%	24	3%	40	4%	114	12%	90	10%	133	14%	92	10%	30	3%	2	0%	921
Chester	633	34%	26	1%	120	6%	76	4%	314	17%	329	18%	129	7%	120	6%	46	2%	56	3%	1,849
Ludlow	1,147	30%	97	3%	312	8%	206	5%	344	9%	768	20%	436	11%	337	9%	189	5%	-	0%	3,836
Reading	166	40%	3	1%	11	3%	43	10%	30	7%	34	8%	70	17%	31	7%	27	7%	-	0%	415
Springfield	1,205	28%	356	8%	516	12%	431	10%	579	13%	443	10%	441	10%	278	6%	61	1%	-	0%	4,310
Weathersfield	196	14%	49	4%	29	2%	107	8%	319	23%	187	14%	78	6%	258	19%	145	11%	-	0%	1,368
West Windsor	142	18%	12	1%	24	3%	71	9%	174	22%	219	27%	45	6%	121	15%	-	0%	-	0%	808
Windsor	896	47%	186	10%	167	9%	184	10%	146	8%	127	7%	15	1%	122	6%	63	3%	-	0%	1,906
MARC Region	4,841	30%	762	5%	1,219	8%	1,205	8%	2,139	13%	2,253	14%	1,421	9%	1,441	9%	570	4%	58	0%	15,909

SOURCE: <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/housing-stock/year-structure-built>

DESCRIPTION: This data set describes the year that the building in which the housing unit is located was originally constructed. Includes both occupied and vacant housing units. A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room intended for occupancy as separate living quarters. A housing unit is defined as owner occupied if the owner or co-owner lives in the unit, even if it is mortgaged or not fully paid for. All units which are not owner occupied, whether they are rented for cash rent or occupied without payment of cash rent, are classified as renter units.

The housing stock is old in this region, with 30% of homes being built in 1939 or earlier, and 87% of the housing stock being built before 2000.

Table 9.5 - Average Household Size (2023)

	All Households
Vermont	2.3
Windsor County	2.3
Andover	2.9
Baltimore	2.8
Cavendish	3.0
Chester	2.3
Ludlow	3.9
Reading	2.4
Springfield	2.3
Weathersfield	2.5
West Windsor	2.3
Windsor	2.1
MARC Region	2.65

SOURCE: <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/population-household/average-household-size>

DESCRIPTION: This table shows the average size of households living in occupied housing units. A housing unit is defined as owner occupied if the owner or co-owner lives in the unit, even if it is mortgaged or not fully paid for. All occupied units which are not owner occupied, whether they are rented for cash rent or occupied without payment of cash rent, are classified as renter occupied. The average household size is obtained by dividing the number of people living in occupied housing units by the total number of occupied housing units.

Additionally, the average household size is small and continues to get smaller, equating to an average size of 2.65 for our region. Many of the homes in the region are quite large and, given the average household size, have a lot of under-utilized capacity.

In terms of cost burden in the region, households who spend over 30% of their income on rent are considered cost-burdened, with the severity of the burden increasing as the percentage rises. In the region, the majority of owners with mortgages fall below the 30% mark and are not considered cost-burdened, however 1/3 of owners and the majority of renters (54%) fall within the cost-burdened bracket, with housing and rent payments that equate from 30-50+% of their household income. The town with the highest percentage of cost-burdened owners with mortgages is Ludlow, with 36% of owners paying over 30% of their income, while Reading has the highest percentage of cost-burdened renters at 75%. For the lowest percentages, Cavendish has the lowest percentage of cost-burdened owners at 13%, while Weathersfield has

the lowest percentage of cost-burdened renters at 0%. See a discussion of the cost burden of housing plus transportation in Section H of this Chapter.

Table 9.6 - Housing Cost Burden (2023)

Location	Paying Less than 30% of Income		Paying 30-49% of Income		Paying 50% of Income or more		% of Cost- Burdened	
	Owners	Renters	Owners	Renters	Owners	Renters	Owners	Renters
Vermont	147,226	33,904	28,334	17,503	19,614	17,127	25%	51%
Windsor County	14,254	3,208	2,597	1,334	1,596	1,160	23%	43%
Andover	135	12	25	11	22	8	26%	61%
Baltimore	76	5	11	0	5	8	17%	62%
Cavendish	330	36	31	11	21	25	13%	50%
Chester	760	205	218	54	63	5	27%	22%
Ludlow	412	144	117	88	115	19	36%	43%
Reading	175	6	45	7	31	11	30%	75%
Springfield	2,051	580	263	297	209	300	18%	50%
Weathersfield	883	14	80	0	65	11	14%	44%
West Windsor	385	6	40	0	47	-	18%	0%
Windsor	703	372	149	203	92	121	26%	46%

SOURCE: <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/income-employment/cost-burden>

DESCRIPTION: This table shows households by housing expenses as a percentage of monthly household income. This can include rent, mortgages, real estate taxes, various insurances, mobile home costs, and/or condominium fees as well as the estimated average monthly cost of utilities. 30% is the federal standard of housing affordability. When households spend more than 30% of their income on rent, it can be difficult to afford other basic necessities such as food, transportation, and healthcare. Households spending more than 30% are considered cost-burdened, and households spending more than 50% are considered severely cost-burdened.

According to the Keys to the Valley project and US Census data, populations of people aged 62 and up are increasing and projections are for continued increase of that age cohort into 2030, while most other age cohort populations decline. Many communities in the region are planning aging in place; in other words, how the aging population can successfully remain in their communities as they get older. Additional services may be needed to age in place, such as transportation services, help with maintenance, community nursing, or other programs. Production of new smaller homes or rentals, accessory dwellings, or home sharing in existing houses could also support aging in place.

B. Seasonal Housing

Recreation and tourism are important economic activities in parts of the region, especially in the vicinity of Okemo Mountain Resort, the Ludlow lakes area, and the former Ascutney Mountain Resort in Brownsville. As such, there is a higher number of seasonal units in these and surrounding areas (see Table 9.7).

Table 9.7 - Seasonal Homes (2022)

	Seasonal Homes #
Vermont	51,474
Windsor County	7,819
Andover	158
Baltimore	3
Cavendish	382
Chester	455
Ludlow	2,167
Reading	128
Springfield	0
Weathersfield	177
West Windsor	354
Windsor	78
MARC Region	3,902

SOURCE:
<https://www.housingdata.org/profile/housing-stock/vacation-homes>

DESCRIPTION: Under ACS classification, seasonal homes are classified as vacant (B25004). Seasonal, recreational, or occasional use units are used or intended for use only in certain seasons or for occasional use throughout the year. Interval ownership units, such as timesharing condominiums, are included in this category.

The construction and maintenance of seasonal housing units are important for local economies (e.g. construction trades, property management, tax revenues). However, the influx of second homeowners from larger metropolitan areas, can influence housing prices beyond what is easy to pay for given prevailing local wages.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some second homeowners moved into their second home, which had impacts on the local communities, such as with school enrollment. There is a lack of reliable data regarding this trend at this time. It is not clear if this will have lasting impacts, but it is conceivable that possible future climate migration could have similar influences.

C. Short Term Rentals

Short-term rentals are a relatively new occurrence, and the numbers of units listed on Airbnb, VRBO and similar websites has grown tremendously in recent years. For example, Ludlow had nearly [778 listings in December 2024](#), according to Housingdata.org. A short-term rental is defined as a furnished house, condominium, or other dwelling room or self-contained dwelling unit rented to the transient, traveling, or vacationing public for a period of fewer than 30 consecutive days and for more than 14 days per calendar year. Short term rentals are important travel accommodations for visitors and a source of

income for property owners. The growth of short-term rentals has reduced the numbers of long-term rentals for residents.

D. Subsidized Housing

A number of housing units in the Region are maintained for families with lower incomes. These properties are managed by State or local housing authorities or by organizations such as the Windham and Windsor Housing Trust whose mission is to develop and manage housing for low- and moderate-income families in their service area. See their [Homes Matter Here website](#).

Most of the existing subsidized housing units are located in higher density neighborhoods where residents have access to services and public transportation. The development of these projects is also benefited by public water and sewer Infrastructures. These connections are important in

order for residents who might not be able to afford automobiles to have access to employment, retail areas and health services. The majority of subsidized units in the Region are in Springfield and Windsor. Although these areas are ideal for providing higher density housing, outlying towns must also begin to make efforts to provide housing for those who work in their communities but cannot afford to live in them.

Table 9.8 Affordable Rental Housing Properties in the Region

Property Name and Location	Total Apartments	Apts restricted to elderly and/or tenants with disabilities
517 Depot Street	6	0
517 Depot Street, Chester		
Black River Overlook	22	0
146, 147 & 161 Rublee Lane, Ludlow		
Central and Main	25	0
133 Main Street, Windsor		
Chester Elderly Apartments	36	36
110 Senior Circle, Chester		
Cox House	7	7
38 Maxwell Perkins Lane, Windsor		
Edwin L. Huber Building	60	60
80 Main Street, Springfield		
Ellis Block	9	0
26 Main Street, Springfield		
Evergreen Heights	44	0
70 Seavers Brook Road, Springfield		
Gill Terrace Apartments II	36	36
9 Gill Terrace, Ludlow		
Gill Terrace Retirement Apartments	24	24
7 Gill Terrace, Ludlow		
Louis H. Whitcomb Building	72	72
1 Mineral Street, Springfield		
Maples - Springfield	28	28
201 South Street, Springfield		
Mountain View Apartments - Springfield	72	0
105 Mountain View Drive, Springfield		
Phelps Court	14	0
54 State Street and 8 & 10 Phelps Court, Windsor		
Pleasant Brook Apartments	24	0
82, 106 & 108 Pleasant Street, Chester		
Proctorsville Green Housing	16	6
6 Park Place; 20 Village Green and 7 Depot Street, Cavendish		
Red Maple - South Street Duplex	2	0
54 South Street, Springfield		
Southview Apartments	69	0
30 Stanley Road, Springfield		
Union Square Apartments	58	0
7 Union Street, Windsor		
Wall Street Apartments	13	0
1 - 3 Wall Street, Springfield		
Westview Terrace Apartments	58	0
59 Westview Terrace, Springfield		
Windsor Village Apartments	77	67
65 State Street, Windsor		
Total	772	336

Source: VHFA Directory of Affordable Rental Housing (DoARH)

E. Homelessness and Transitional Housing

Improving access to emergency housing begins with supporting providers in maintaining, communicating, and expanding their services. There are significant numbers of residents in the region who have difficulty finding a home. The demand for emergency housing increased significantly in 2020 and 2021, in part, as a result of the pandemic.

Access to safe housing for people experiencing sudden or chronic homelessness is essential to ensuring the health and dignity of people living in the Region. While this need may be most visible in the region's largest towns, it is also felt in rural and suburban communities.

At this time, there is no homeless shelter in the region. Springfield Supportive Housing Program has 22 scattered site shelters around the region, as well as a youth shelter in Proctorsville. For more information on homelessness and transitional housing please see the Health Chapter.

F. Fair Housing Laws

State and federal fair housing laws help protect against housing discrimination. Under the Federal Fair Housing Act and the 1988 amendments, individuals may file complaints alleging housing discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, gender, handicap, or familial status. Those individuals may also allege related acts of discrimination that are governed by other federal laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Vermont law (9 VSA §4503) prohibits any person from engaging in "unfair housing practices" such as the refusal to sell or rent and many other actions involved in the advertisement, financing, and brokering of a dwelling.

1. MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY IN FAIR HOUSING

Fair housing laws also protect homeowners and residents from being victimized by practices such as steering potential residents to only certain communities, neighborhoods, or developments. A municipality has fair housing responsibilities regardless of whether the federal or state government has funded the activity that is the basis for the complaint. A fair housing violation does not require a discriminatory intent: a violation can be found simply because municipal officials carried out regular activities in a routine way and failed to recognize their special fair housing responsibilities.

Municipalities carry out four broad categories of activities that affect housing. Each category can trigger municipal fair housing responsibilities:

- 1) **REGULATORY ACTIVITIES** - When a municipality enacts and administers regulations (e.g., zoning or building/housing codes) that affect existing or potential residential properties.
- 2) **PROVISION OF SERVICES** - When a municipality provides routine services in residential areas or to residents.

- 3) **PROVISION OF SUBSIDIES** - When a municipality offers financial incentives (e.g., grants, loans, or loan guarantees) or special services (e.g., special infrastructure projects or housing rehabilitation services) to residential property owners or to residents; and
- 4) **PROPRIETARY ACTIVITIES** - When a municipality buys or sells real property, particularly if the property was used or will be used as a residence.

Under the Fair Housing Act, a person who believes that he or she is a victim of housing discrimination may file either a complaint with HUD or a lawsuit in federal or state court. If a municipality must defend itself against a complaint based on the Fair Housing Act, or if it is found to have violated the Act, the costs can be considerable. Municipal officials who are considering a new ordinance, expenditure, or action, or reviewing an existing one can begin to avoid allegations of failing to meet its obligations by asking, “What are the fair housing implications in undertaking this action?”

2. FAIR SHARE HOUSING

One issue that has received recognition nationwide and has been addressed by planners at all levels of government is the inability of low- and moderate-income households to locate in desirable areas at affordable costs. Court decisions and legislation in many states have required that each town meet its share of the need for affordable housing. The towns of Springfield and Windsor carry a disproportionate number of housing units for low- and very low-income households, while the towns of Andover, Baltimore, Reading, and Weathersfield have no subsidized housing. The lack of subsidized housing units in some of our towns can be attributed to the lack of adequate water and wastewater infrastructure as well as the greater distances to jobs and services. In Weathersfield, 8.7% of total housing units were mobile homes in 2019, serving some affordable housing needs. Baltimore increased the number of mobile homes from 10.6% in 2000 to 14.3% in 2019. Cavendish has mobile homes accounting for 8.5% of total housing stock. More information can be found in Table 9.1, “Residential Building Type (2019)”.

G. Regional Housing Needs

The Vermont Housing and Finance Agency (VHFA) released the Statewide and Regional Housing Targets on January 14, 2025. The housing targets were calculated based on homes needed from 2025-2030 with “Lower” assuming VT year-round households increase at the 2016-2019 average annual rate of 1.02% and “Higher” assume the 2019-2022 rate of 1.77%. Furthermore, projected housing targets between 2025-2050 were calculated at a “Lower” based on population projection, and “Higher” assume VT year-round households increase at the long-term annual average rate of 1.4%. All targets include additional projected year-round households plus homes needed to normalize vacancy rates, eliminate homelessness, replace destroyed homes, and provide a margin to address Vermont’s 15% seasonal home rate.

Table 9.9. Targets for Additional Homes for 2025-2030 and 2025-2050

Town	2025-2030		2025-2050	
	Low	High	Low	High

Andover	13	19	39	78
Baltimore	4	6	13	26
Cavendish	41	61	128	252
Chester	132	195	411	810
Ludlow	115	169	357	703
Reading	17	25	53	105
Springfield	382	564	1,187	2,340
Weathersfield	78	116	244	480
West Windsor	45	67	141	278
Windsor	379	559	1,177	2,319
Total	1,207	1,781	3,750	7,391

Notes:

MARC targets are from the VT Housing Needs Assessment 2025-2029 Appendix 1: Statewide and Regional Housing Targets

Town housing targets are based on the MARC targets, determined based on population, infrastructure capacity, and future land use categories acreages.

To create the types of homes that are necessary to address the region’s identified needs. This means building homes for the incomes we have and for our population, prioritizing the creation of so-called “Missing Middle” and supportive housing types. This also involves building the capacity of local developers, building trades, and supportive housing providers.

According to the Keys to the Valley, **Missing Middle Housing** is a term to describe housing that can be built that is affordable to households (often above federal housing income limits) without subsidies and that are still lacking. See <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/homesforall> for more information.

These new homes are prioritized to be located within community centers served by Infrastructure and in walkable neighborhoods. To address the needs, many of these new homes should be smaller, lower-cost homes and "missing middle" type homes that enable aging in place, provide starter homes, and support business recruitment/workforce housing needs. They should be in a price range that is affordable (i.e. 30% of the household income) of our residents at all income levels. In addition, a concerted effort is also needed to address the nearly 1/3 of our residents that are cost burdened.

H. Recent Trends and Issues

There are numerous trends and issues that impact the housing situation in the region. Some of the notable ones are summarized below.

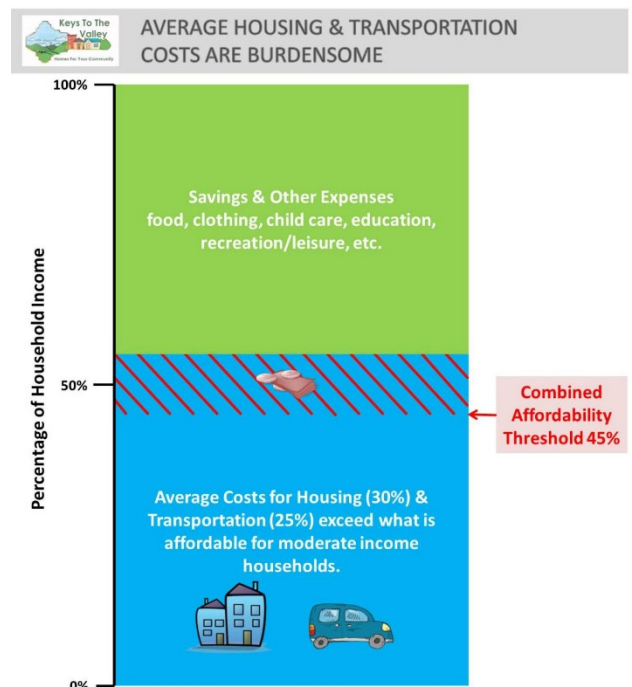
- The availability of homes on the market are at a record low and costs are very high. According to data provided by the Springfield Regional Development Corporation (SRDC) and the New England Association of Realtors, in 2024, a total of 388 homes were sold in the region; the average price

was \$444,707. Housing sales prices in 2024 are 88.8% higher than in 2014. To afford a home at this 2024 average price, a household would need an income of approximately \$142,912, according to VHFA's affordable home price calculator. A general lack of new home construction combined with increased demand during the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in a very challenging housing market.

- As discussed in the Keys to the Valley initiative, about 1/3 of the households in this area are cost burdened, meaning they spend 30% or more of their household income on housing (i.e. rent, mortgage, property taxes, utility costs). This 30% target is used as a proxy for housing being too expensive. Exceeding this target makes it harder to pay for transportation, food, health insurance, prescription medications and other costs. Those who are “severely cost burdened” spend more than 50%. Renters are much more likely to be cost burdened by housing. This can be a reflection of either a living wage issue or cost of housing problem, or both.

- Where people live directly impacts their transportation options and household costs. Accordingly, both housing and transportation costs affect people’s ability to afford a particular home. A common occurrence is for lower-income workers to find lower-cost housing in outer-lying areas, which requires greater transportation costs.

As discussed above, housing that costs less than 30% of a household's income is considered affordable. Transportation costs of 15% or less are similarly considered a target for affordability. In the greater Upper Valley region the average household pays 10% more of their income on housing and transportation than what is considered "affordable."



Description: According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), residents of the region, on average, spend about 55% of their total household incomes on housing and transportation. CNT recommends that combined costs should remain under 45% of total household income to be considered affordable. Find out more at www.keystothevalley.com

- Costs of building materials have increased dramatically since 2020, which makes new construction and renovations more expensive. According to the National Association of Home Builders, the cost of building materials has increased 33% since the start of the pandemic.
- There is a lack of contractors (e.g. carpenters, plumbers, electricians) to build new homes and renovate existing buildings to create new housing units. The costs of labor for housing construction have also increased by about 39% since the start of the pandemic, according to National Association of Home Builders.

- According to data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, the median size of a new single-family home completed in 2019 in the Northeast was 2,364 square feet, compared to 1,450 square feet in 1973. The same source indicates that, in the Northeast, the average contract price for a new single-family home started in 2019 was \$156 per square foot. In other words, the typical cost to build the median sized single-family house may cost about \$369,000 based on these figures. To build the median sized home in 1973 would reduce costs by about \$143,000.
- Development of multi-family dwellings also faces similar cost hurdles to single family, where per unit cost averages around \$325,000.
- Most older zoning bylaws do not account for other types of housing that are needed or desired (e.g., “the missing middle”). In fact, many bylaws only allow single-family dwellings and accessory dwelling units as permitted residential uses. Two-family dwellings, multi-family dwellings, and mobile home parks are often restricted as to where they can locate, and commonly require additional levels of review. In more dense areas, mixed-use structures that are part commercial and part residential may not be allowed or require additional levels of review and applicable standards. Zoning in suburban and rural areas throughout the U.S.A. has been used at times to exclude lower income individuals and renters by only allowing single-family residences, requiring large minimum lot sizes, and even mandating minimum home size.
- As discussed in the *Planning for Equity Guide*, an individual’s address can be a proxy for opportunity. A home’s location impacts the household’s access to good schools, jobs, services and transportation options. Homes are a social determinant of health. Home ownership, for many households, represents their largest financial investment and an important source of wealth that can be passed down to children or grandchildren.

Federal policy, local zoning rules and the mortgage industry historically denied access to home ownership for minority groups.

Restrictive zoning rules – notably large minimum lot sizes, low densities and not allowing multi-family dwellings in residential districts – can limit access to these opportunities for lower-income households. Too frequently, lower-income homes are forced to locate through pricing and other measures in higher-risk or undesirable areas, such as within flood hazard zones or close to railroads or industrial facilities.

An overarching goal of this plan is to provide good homes for everyone in this region. Promoting equity and inclusion is an integral part of a community’s success. Toward that end, we propose using an “equity in all policies” approach in regional and local planning efforts, which means employing an “equity lens” to ensure that proposed policies and regulations will serve and benefit all residents of a community in ways that reduce or eliminate inequity.

- Aging In Place: Individuals age 62 and up comprise a significant and growing portion of the Region’s population. A public opinion survey from the Keys to the Valley project found that most seniors would prefer to remain in their current homes, while more than a quarter want to move as they age. Seniors feel their needs are met to enable them to “age in place” (e.g., access to healthcare). However, over 20% of seniors said that current transportation options are not sufficient to meet their needs, and almost 15% do not have the assistance they need for daily chores and maintenance. Seniors who are looking to move primarily want smaller, single-story homes with low levels of maintenance. Locations in downtowns or villages and accessible design are also important home qualities. Remaining in their current community was less of a priority for seniors (25%) than having a safe, low-maintenance home and access to needed services. This indicates that both a local and regional strategy is needed for accessibility upgrades, service delivery, and new home options for those willing to move out of their current living space.

I. Housing Policies

1. The [Keys to the Valley](#) project serves as the foundation for MARC's housing policies and will guide our housing implementation actions.
2. Increasing the availability of homes (both rental and owned) that are affordable to residents at all income levels is an urgent, high regional priority.
3. Regulatory reform is needed to make it easier to build the missing middle types of homes that are needed to address our regional housing needs in locations that further smart growth principles. Missing middle types of homes within compact centers (per the Land Use Chapter) includes accessory dwelling units, duplexes, 3- and 4-unit rental buildings, smaller starter homes, townhouses, bungalow courts, live/work units, mixed use buildings, tiny houses and co-housing. In the rural countryside (per the Land Use Chapter), missing middle housing includes accessory dwelling units, mobile homes, tiny houses and converting existing houses or barns into duplexes.
4. To further land use goals and smart growth principles, a majority of new residential development is to be located along public transit routes and within compact centers, especially where served by public sewer and water infrastructure.
5. Multi-family housing, assisted living facilities and senior housing are prioritized along public transit routes and within compact centers, especially where served by public sewer and water infrastructure.

6. Housing developments and/or land use development patterns that result in concentrations of poverty, blighted residential areas and the segregation of various income groups is contrary to the goals of this Plan.
7. Housing projects of 10 or more market rate units should include an affordable component for mixed income levels. Affordable housing developments are encouraged to have a mix of units so that some are market rate.
8. Bolster programs for safe and sanitary homes, such as lead paint abatement in coordination with town and state officials and partner organizations.
9. Newly developed or rehabilitated housing that has been subsidized with public funds (such as grants, loans, or subsidies) should remain affordable for an extended period of time.
10. The use of innovative construction and design techniques that enhance the affordability, energy efficiency, and environmental suitability of housing for all residents is promoted.
11. To support efforts to end homelessness, creating low-barrier shelters along public transit routes and within village and downtown areas are prioritized.
12. Support and promote existing and proposed programs that provide incentives and financial or technical support for addressing our regional housing needs.
13. When reviewing housing elements in town plans, MARC will look for consideration of:
 - a) Consistency with future land use goals;
 - b) Aging in place;
 - c) Accessible, safe housing;
 - d) Low-income housing for all communities;
 - e) Workforce housing that is priced adequately for the region's workers;
 - f) Fair housing that advances diversity, equity and inclusion;
 - g) Energy efficiency; and,
 - h) Connection to public transit routes or safe bicycling or walking connections to services.

Ch 10: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development Goals

The Region's comparative advantage is in its quality of life, excellent work force and entrepreneurial spirit. Economic development activities need to strengthen and enhance these regional characteristics through:

1. Maintaining and enhancing the "quality of life" enjoyed by residents of the Region in order to retain current and attract new businesses and workers.
2. Diversifying the Region's economy and increase economic resiliency.
3. Prioritizing economic growth that revitalizes Regional and Town Centers, Village Centers and Hamlets.
4. Supporting economic development within designated growth centers and industrial parks.
5. Prioritizing investments in public services and facilities that further these economic development goals, including expanding and improving infrastructure such as broadband, wireless telecommunication, transportation, energy, sewer and water systems, energy efficiency and clean energy.
6. Supporting public health, and housing policies and programs that allow for residents in the Region to participate in the workforce and contribute to the local economy.
7. Using land use practices and regulations that foster economic development and growth.
8. Having a skilled and educated workforce.
9. Using collaborative efforts with local and state partners to implement coordinated economic development activities.

Introduction

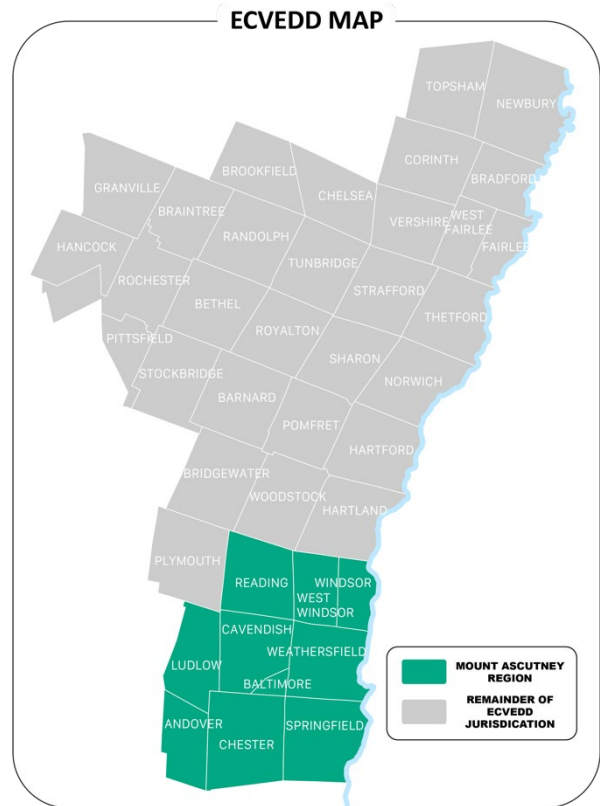
Sustainable economic development is vital to the prosperity of a Region. The survival of a healthy economy depends, not just on sustainable and resilient economic growth, but how wealth is distributed within the region. The purpose of this chapter is to define goals and recommendations based on information, data, and analyses of the Region that will improve the economy and, therefore, the quality of life for its residents.

This chapter is intended to work in conjunction with the goals of the East Central Vermont Economic Development District (ECVEDD) and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). An Economic Development District is a federally designated organization charged with the development, maintenance, and implementation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Although the ECVEDD and the CEDS guide the greater central Vermont area, our Region has specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) that make it unique.

When evaluating the Region’s economy, it is important to recognize that economic development is more than creating new jobs, building new roads, attracting new businesses, constructing new housing, and increasing the taxable grand list. Economic development also includes considerations of the quality of jobs and the sustainability of a high quality of life for all residents within the Region.

East Central Vermont Economic Development District’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The federally designated East Central Vermont Economic Development District (ECVEDD) consists of 40 towns across portions of Addison, Orange, Rutland, and Windsor Counties. ECVEDD’s mission is to access and provide resources and to facilitate and support quality decision-making for the benefit of entrepreneurs, businesses, and communities in East Central Vermont. This designation allows the region to access Economic Development Administration (EDA) Investment Assistance through a variety of grant programs, for which an approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is required. Any requests for EDA funding must align with the CEDS.



This Economic Development chapter is intentionally aligned with the 2025–2030 ECVEDD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which serves as the region’s primary, federally recognized economic development framework. The Regional Plan reinforces and advances the CEDS by integrating land use, transportation, housing, workforce, and infrastructure planning in a manner that supports economic resilience and implementation readiness, with the region’s economic priorities, providing the policy foundation and spatial context necessary to implement CEDS strategies at the local and regional level.

As of 2025, the CEDS identifies the following interrelated goals for the region:

1. A resilient region;
2. An innovative business environment;
3. A robust and ready workforce;
4. Infrastructure and homes for growth;
5. Quality of life and place; and

6. Healthy communities.

The 2025–2030 CEDS characterizes central Vermont’s economy as generally slow-growing, with continued reliance on tourism alongside emerging opportunities in creative and value-added sectors. The plan identifies persistent economic challenges including post-industrial brownfields, high property taxes, aging infrastructure, an aging and constrained workforce, and limited access to services such as public transit and job training. At the same time, the Region shows potential for economic diversification through innovation, entrepreneurship, and investment in workforce development and community infrastructure. Housing affordability challenges, in both rental and ownership markets, and disparities in educational attainment continue to influence workforce participation and regional competitiveness.

Regional Overview

Historically, the Region is known for machine-tool manufacturing. Although some remnants of machine-tool industry remain, the Region has shifted towards a more diversified economy. The Region is characterized as mostly rural, with the downtown areas retaining commercial centers, and agriculture and forested land making up the remainder of the Region. Like other small towns in Vermont, the Region is dealing with population loss and stagnation. The population continues to age, and the Region struggles to attract and retain young professionals and families. The Region continues work towards more affordable housing, adequate work options, childcare, and other factors that draw people to live in the Region. The Mount Ascutney Region tends to have a higher level of poverty, with close to 6% of the population in the Region living below the poverty level, slightly higher than the Windsor County average (5.2%).

Economic Overview of the MARC Region	
Population Over 16 Years Old	21,102 ¹
Population Without Health Insurance	632 ²
Per-Capita Income	\$41,797 ³
Families Below Poverty Level	370 ⁴
Unemployed People in the Labor Force	285 ⁵

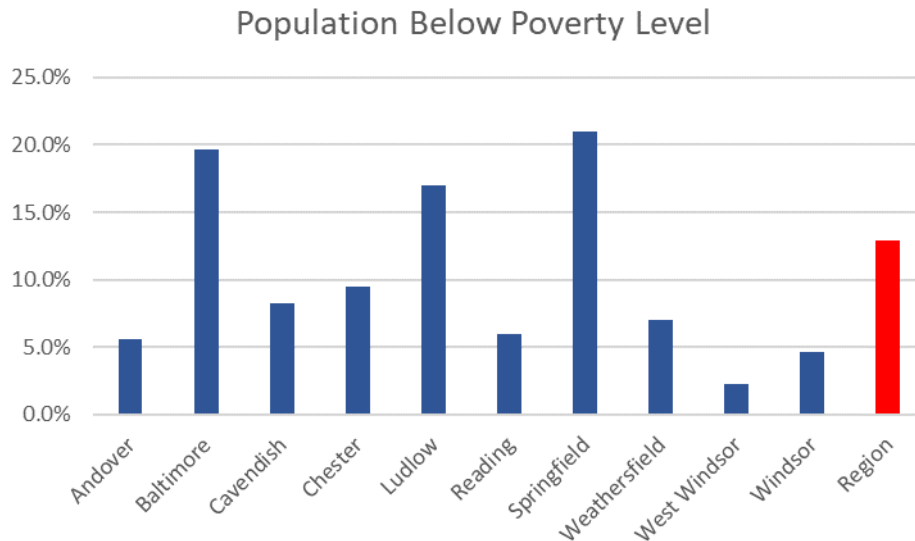
¹ 2020 Decennial Census

² 2024 American Community Survey

³ 2024 American Community Survey

⁴ 2024 5 Year Estimates American Community Survey

⁵ 2025, VT Dept of Labor, estimated from Windsor County totals.



Source: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

For more information about the Region, see Chapter 2: Regional Profile.

Town Overview

Each town in the Region contributes differently to the local economy. While larger towns like Windsor, Springfield, and Ludlow continue to function as regional employment and service centers, smaller towns increasingly support a mix of working landscapes, home-based businesses, and residents who participate in remote or hybrid work arrangements. Changes in workplace norms following the COVID-19 pandemic have expanded opportunities for telecommuting and self-employment across the Region, reinforcing the importance of broadband access, flexible work environments, and local services in communities of all sizes.

Employment Data and Characteristics

Employment data is important for the Region because it outlines regional business activity and shifts in economic trends, while also highlighting areas of economic strength, and areas of economic weaknesses. For this section, we use the number of businesses that have registered a trademark name in the Region, a summary chart of all the major employers in the Region, and the number of people who need public assistance. Together, these pieces show a snapshot of the economic condition in the Region.

EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT TRADE NAMES

Trade names statistics reflect the number of business name registrations over time, which provides a snapshot of new business activity in a town. When the economic atmosphere of a town allows for it, more people are willing to register and start new businesses. The atmosphere may change based on economic opportunities through local, state, or federal grant

opportunities, interest rates on new business lending, or growth in one economic realm that allows for growth in another economic realm. For example, growth in the housing market may lead to growth in the construction market.

Town	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2022	2023	2024	2014-2024 TOTAL
Andover	0	1	3	2	4	7	4	3	3	5	32
Baltimore	0	3	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	1	9
Cavendish	15	5	3	7	6	8	4	10	6	12	76
Chester	21	23	15	17	20	18	16	22	14	13	179
Ludlow	24	27	13	12	11	21	13	20	8	8	157
Reading	4	4	4	9	5	6	0	5	3	4	44
Springfield	41	39	26	27	32	39	32	39	22	35	332
Weathersfield	16	16	7	13	7	7	2	14	6	9	97
West Windsor	4	3	4	9	3	1	4	10	3	2	43
Windsor	40	23	13	20	15	23	2	15	10	16	177

Number of Trade Name Registrations (through 2020), Business Registrations (2022 - 2023) and Assumed Name (2024- Present). Multiple registrations from the same company at the same time were counted as one entry.
 Data Source - VT Secretary of State's Office/ACCD.

LARGEST EMPLOYERS

In addition to the largest employers highlighted in **Table 10.2** it is also important to consider that businesses that employ five or fewer individuals account for a large percentage of employment in the Region. The smaller, more diverse nature of these businesses allow for increased flexibility and adaptability for them to respond to changing global and local demand. While the largest employers are in healthcare facilities (Mount Ascutney Hospital and Springfield Hospital), may struggle to respond to change.

Table 10.2 Largest Regional Employers

EMPLOYER	PRODUCT/ SERVICE	TOWN	2003	2008	2021
			#OF EMPLOYEES	#OF EMPLOYEES	#OF EMPLOYEES
OKEMO MOUNTAIN INC.	SKI RESORT	LUDLOW	1200 WINTER 250 SUMMER	1500 WINTER 300 SUMMER	
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	SCHOOLS / MUNICIPAL	ALL	273	1349	
SPRINGFIELD HOSPITAL	HOSPITAL / MEDICAL	SPRINGFIELD			410
SPRINGFIELD MEDICAL CARE	HOSPITAL / MEDICAL	SPRINGFIELD	480	600	230
MT. ASCUTNEY HOSPITAL	HOSPITAL / MEDICAL	WEATHERSFIELD	320	475	
STATE GOVERNMENT	ALL SERVICES	ALL	224	405	
JELD- WEN	DOOR / WINDOW	LUDLOW SPRINGFIELD	97	250	250
NEWSBANK, INC.	ELECTRONIC PUB.	CHESTER	260	200	175
BLACK RIVER PRODUCE	WHOLESALE	SPRINGFIELD	130	152	250
MACK MOLDING	MOLDED PLASTIC	CAVENDISH	140	103	80
SHAW'S	SUPERMARKET	SPRINGFIELD LUDLOW		100	
SIMON PEARCE, US	GLASS / CERAMICS	WINDSOR	97	95	120
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	ALL SERVICES	ALL		93	
PRECISION VALLEY	UTILITY MAPPING	SPRINGFIELD	56	86	125
GILL ODD FELLOWS HOME	NURSING HOME	LUDLOW	80	80	
LBL FABRICATIONS	FABRICATION	SPRINGFIELD		80	35
VISITING NURSE ALLIANCE	NURSING	LUDLOW CHESTER SPRINGFIELD	75	80	
LOVEJOY TOOL COMPANY	MILLING CUTTERS	SPRINGFIELD	76	68	45
V-TEL	TELECOMMUNICATION	SPRINGFIELD	59	65	60
IVEK	DISPENSING	SPRINGFIELD		61	110
SPRINGFIELD PRINTING	PRINTING	SPRINGFIELD		50	45
VERMONT PACKINGHOUSE	FOOD	SPRINGFIELD			75
IMERY'S	MANUFACTURING	LUDLOW			35
IMAGE-TEK	MANUFACTURING	SPRINGFIELD			70
DREW'S ORGANICS	FOOD	CHESTER			85
HARPOON BREWERY	FOOD	WINDSOR			50

PEOPLE IN NEED OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

Public assistance supports households in affording food, healthcare, housing, and other basic needs that might otherwise be inaccessible. Public assistance may refer to either a social welfare and/or social insurance program. An increased reliance on public assistance may happen because of an income gap between the cost of living in the Region and wages, an unforeseen economic downturn, or closing of a large employer. In the MARC Region, reliance on public assistance remains elevated in several towns, reflecting ongoing socioeconomic challenges, including housing affordability, limited access to jobs and training, and workforce constraints. In 2025, Springfield had the highest share of households receiving cash assistance or SNAP benefits at 26%, followed by Windsor at 18% and Chester at 17.4%. These rates are above the regional and statewide averages, highlighting the importance of coordinated strategies that combine workforce development, housing, childcare, and social supports to ensure equitable access to economic opportunities across the Region.

Table 10.3 Households on Public Assistance

TOWN	Households Receiving Assistance, Jan 2025	Total Households	% Households Receiving Assistance
Andover	22	193	11.4%
Baltimore	7	128	5.5%
Cavendish	69	469	14.7%
Chester	241	1,268	19.0%
Ludlow	150	822	18.2%
Reading	33	230	14.3%
Springfield	1031	3955	26.1%
Weathersfield	0	1,101	0.0%
West Windsor	16	470	3.4%
Windsor	300	1,621	18.5%

This measures households on VT's current cash assistance programs, Reach Up and 3SquaresVT.

Data source - VT Agency of Human Services.

Figure 10.1 Households on Public Assistance

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people in need of public assistance increased, while workforce participation decreased. Hospitality, restaurants, and manufacturing amongst other sectors were impacted by the pandemic, the full impact will not be felt for some time.

Workforce Data and Characteristics

During and following the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of residents experiencing economic instability increased, and existing service gaps became more visible across the Region. Workforce disruptions, shifts to remote and hybrid work, childcare shortages, housing affordability challenges, and transportation constraints affected both workers and employers. While some sectors have rebounded, others continue to experience persistent labor shortages and barriers to participation in the workforce.

At the same time, the pandemic accelerated long-term changes in how and where people work. Increased telecommuting and self-employment have altered local economic patterns, placing greater importance on broadband access, flexible workspaces, and access to local services in communities of all sizes. These changes underscore the need for coordinated economic development, workforce support, and service delivery strategies that respond to evolving employment models and support economic resilience across the Region.

Analysis of the [2019 State of Vermont’s Regional Workforce Summit](#) indicates that Vermont struggles with a lower-than-average workforce participation rate – employers struggle to find labor. This is due to both an aging population and economic barriers for working-class residents (such as expensive housing and childcare).

As the region’s economy evolves, it is necessary to develop a skilled labor force to match regional demand. The River Valley Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the Howard Dean Education Center include a major starting point to achieving this goal. The Springfield area was awarded a [Working Communities Challenge](#) grant in 2021 from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston to increase workforce

Competitive Assessment

SWOT Analysis

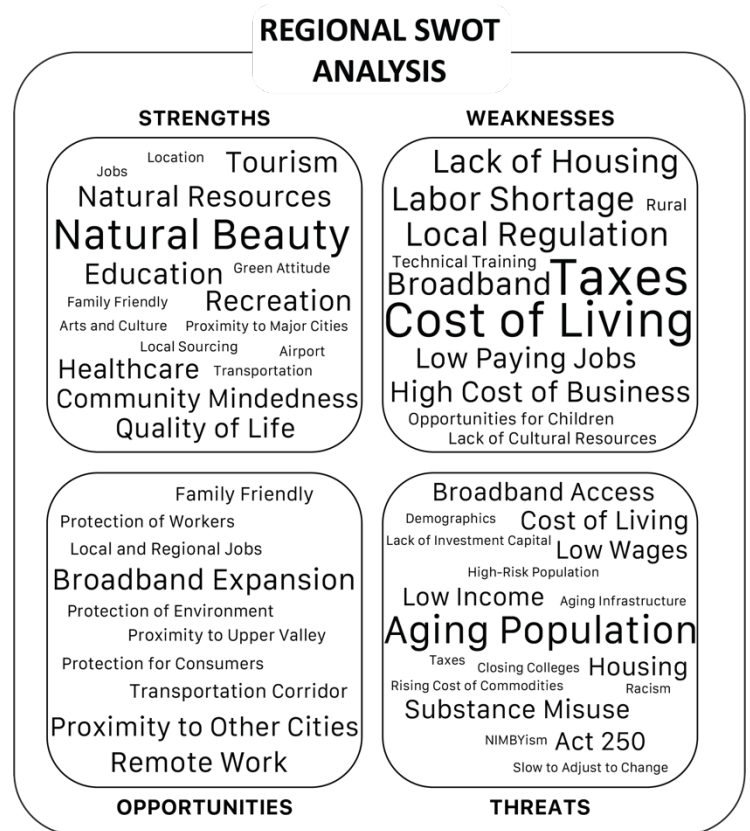
The purpose of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is to gauge the internal and external factors that play into the successes and challenges of a situation. The CEDS SWOT was conducted with the Strategy Committee and stakeholder input, including regional partners, businesses, and civic leaders. It explicitly identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats across multiple themes.

Weaknesses and Threats

The Region faces persistent economic and social challenges, including high living costs, limited housing availability, and a constrained workforce that is further affected by an aging population. Additional pressures come from low wages in certain sectors, workforce shortages, and public health and social issues such as substance use disorder. These factors affect residents’ ability to participate fully in the local economy and constrain businesses’ capacity to attract and retain workers. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated, multi-pronged strategies that integrate workforce, housing, childcare, and supportive services with broader economic development efforts.

Strengths and Opportunities

The Region also possesses significant assets to build upon. Natural beauty, working landscapes, and vibrant town and village centers provide a strong quality-of-life draw. Broadband expansion



and digital infrastructure improvements support remote and hybrid work, while innovation hubs, entrepreneurship programs, and emerging creative economy sectors offer opportunities for business diversification and regional growth. Collaborative regional initiatives and municipal engagement provide pathways to advance inclusive economic development, support workforce participation, and strengthen community resilience.

Regional Support and Implementation

The MARC plays a key role in coordinating efforts, facilitating stakeholder engagement, and implementing projects that leverage strengths, address weaknesses, and ensure that economic growth is equitable, sustainable, and resilient for all residents.

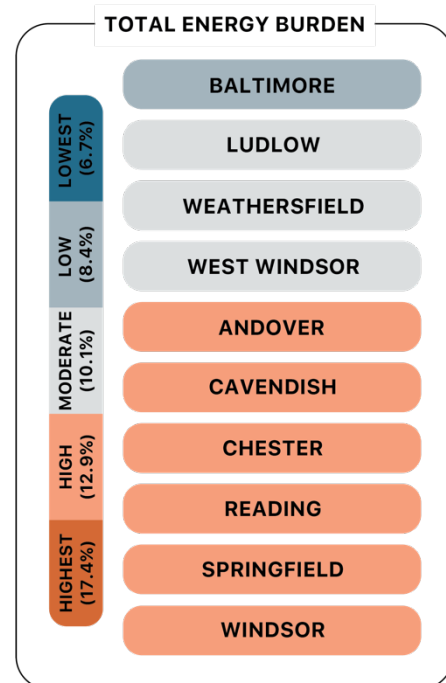
When asked about the implications of COVID-19 on the Region’s economy, respondents largely agree there are serious negative effects on the labor force, small businesses (especially those that rely on tourism), but also that the pandemic could bring opportunity for more remote work, and telehealth opportunities as well as an increase in a permanent tax base.

Climate Action and the Economy

Today’s world is experiencing an increased awareness of our individual and collective impact of our energy consumption on the environment. According to [Vermont’s Climate Action Plan](#), the state of Vermont has spent an estimated 2 billion dollars per year on fossil fuels (gasoline, diesel, fuel oil, propane, and natural gas) over the last ten years.

The economic burden of fuel often falls on lower income households, renters, and small businesses who cannot afford to upgrade their energy systems. Andover, Cavendish, Chester, Reading, Springfield, and Windsor all on average carry a high energy burden; Ludlow, Weathersfield, and West Windsor have a moderate energy burden, and only Baltimore has a low energy burden. Although initial costs of shifting to renewable energy can be costly, there are more concerted efforts and funding to help ease the cost and shift households and businesses into a less energy consuming, and overall, more cost-effective energy system.

More information can be found in the Regional Energy Plan.



Black River Innovation Campus

The Black River Innovation Campus (BRIC) in Springfield is a regional asset that supports entrepreneurship, workforce development, and innovation in alignment with the 2025–2030 ECVEDD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). BRIC provides flexible workspace, business incubation, and digital skills training that support technology-enabled businesses and remote work opportunities. The CEDS identifies BRIC as a key component of the region’s innovation ecosystem and notes its role in advancing entrepreneurship and professional development through EDA-supported programming. As workplace models continue to evolve, facilities such as BRIC contribute to economic diversification and implementation of regional economic development strategies.

Adaptive Re-Use and Brownfields

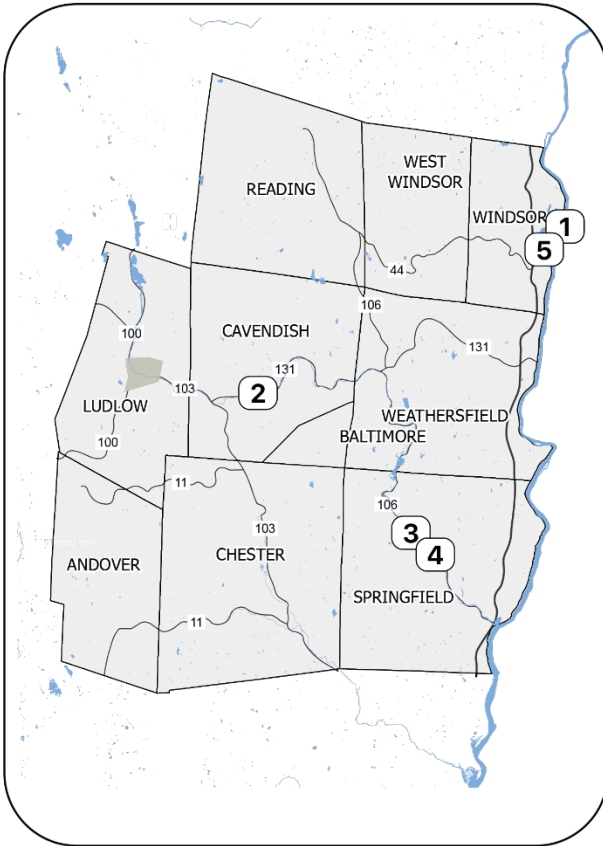
Adaptive re-use of Former industrial sites provides potential space for business, industry and housing near existing town centers. The RPC has partnered with many different organizations to help see this to fruition and has been successful in attracting new businesses to Springfield and Windsor.

Since 1999, the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission has been an active participant in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields Program, which provides federal funding for environmental assessment and cleaning up of brownfields. Redeveloped properties can generate tax revenues, jobs, stimulate sustainable and resilient economic growth, and can transform blighted sites into generators of renewable energy and green space that is productive, environmentally safe, and aesthetically appealing.

The Brownfields Program offers technical assistance and funding in the form of low interest loans and subgrants to assist property owners and prospective purchasers of brownfields properties in all phases of brownfields revitalization.

The MARC Brownfields Reuse Program has provided funding to facilitate various stages of assessment and cleanup at the following sites:

**COMPLETED BROWNFIELD
PROJECTS**



1

Windsor Welcome Center
A former home of Windsor Machine Products to community space in downtown Windsor.

2

Proctorsville Green
A prior textile mill to an affordable housing complex in Cavendish.

3

Old Fellows Gear Shaper Facility
Springfield Medical Heath Center in downtown Springfield.

4

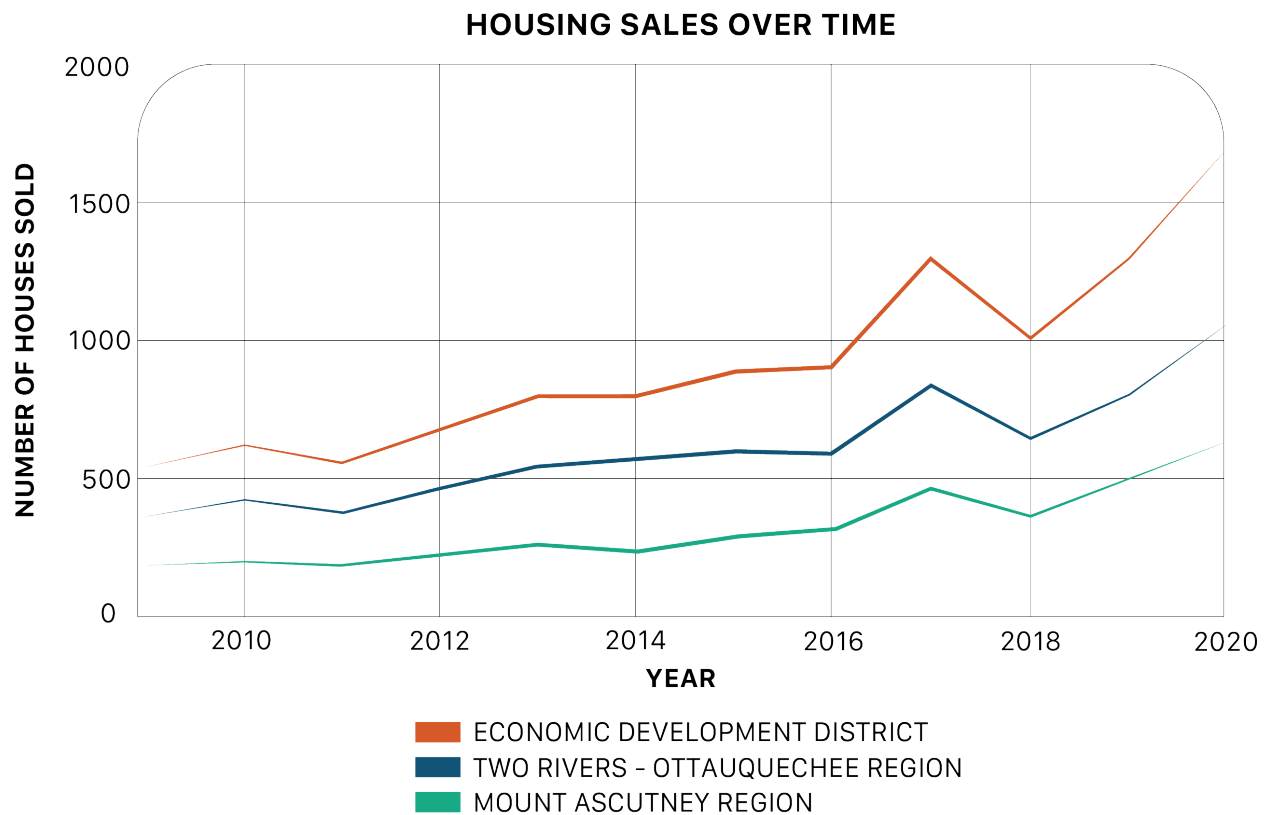
Jones Center
A former machine shop to light industrial space for three companies in Springfield.

5

Former Goodyear Site
A former tire manufacturing facility to a solar array providing 500 kilowatts of energy to the region.

Housing

Like much of the Northeast, the Region faces persistent shortages of housing units at price points affordable to a significant portion of the workforce, affecting both rental and ownership markets. Housing availability and affordability continue to influence labor force participation and employers' ability to attract and retain workers. Addressing workforce housing needs through a mix of housing types, locations, and price points, alongside efforts to support higher-wage employment, is essential to reducing economic pressure on households and supporting long-term regional competitiveness.



	# OF SALES	TOTAL VALUE OF SALES	AVERAGE SALES PRICE	% OF CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR
2009	184	\$33,449,447	\$181,790	-22.8%
2010	201	\$47,726,554	\$237,446	30.6%
2011	186	\$38,484,105	\$206,904	-12.9%
2012	221	\$45,797,903	\$207,230	0.2%
2013	263	\$59,748,576	\$227,181	9.6%
2014	237		\$235,505	3.7%
2015	290	\$62,553,766	\$215,703	-8.4%
2016	317	\$75,224,840	\$237,302	10.0%
2017	464	\$97,081,064	\$209,022	-11.9%
2018	364	\$84,425,148	\$231,938	11.0%
2019	498	\$143,842,342	\$288,840	25.0%
2020	637	\$210,467,451	\$330,404	14.4%
		10 YEAR CHANGE: 39.1%		

ASCUTNEY REGION

	# OF SALES	TOTAL VALUE OF SALES	AVERAGE SALES PRICE	% OF CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR
2009	365	\$99,915,823	\$273,742	-18.2%
2010	423	\$110,786,849	\$261,907	-4.3%
2011	376	\$130,188,950	\$346,247	32.2%
2012	467	\$116,755,537	\$250,012	-27.8%
2013	540	\$138,849,589	\$257,129	2.8%
2014	566	\$162,280,161	\$286,714	11.5%
2015	602	\$178,886,877	\$297,154	3.6%
2016	595	\$150,247,281	\$252,516	-15.0%
2017	843	\$243,690,354	\$289,188	14.5%
2018	651	\$212,097,890	\$325,803	12.7%
2019	807	\$241,414,123	\$299,150	-9.0%
2020	1065	\$405,808,315	\$381,041	27.4%
		10 YEAR CHANGE: 45.5%		

TRORC REGION

	# OF SALES	TOTAL VALUE OF SALES	AVERAGE SALES PRICE	% OF CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR
2009	549	\$133,365,270	\$242,924	-20.2%
2010	624	\$158,513,403	\$254,028	4.6%
2011	562	\$168,673,055	\$300,130	18.1%
2012	688	\$162,553,440	\$236,270	-21.2%
2013	803	\$198,598,165	\$247,320	4.7%
2014	803	\$162,280,161	\$202,092	9.8%
2015	892	\$241,440,643	\$270,673	-0.3%
2016	912	\$225,472,121	\$247,228	-8.7%
2017	1307	\$340,771,418	\$260,728	5.5%
2018	1015	\$296,523,038	\$292,141	12.0%
2019	1305	\$385,256,465	\$295,216	1.0%
2020	1702	\$616,275,766	\$362,089	22.7%
		10 YEAR CHANGE: 42.5%		

EDD REGION

KEYS TO THE VALLEY

Keys to the Valley is an inter-RPC housing collaboration to address the housing crisis in the Upper Valley and find state, regional, and local solutions that intersect these issues. More information on Key to the Valley can be found [here](#).

Workforce Training and Support

As the region’s economy evolves, it is necessary to develop a skilled labor force to match regional demand. The River Valley Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the Howard Dean Education

Center include a major starting point to achieving this goal. The Springfield area was awarded a Working Communities Challenge grant to increase workforce.

WORKING COMMUNITIES CHALLENGE

In the Region, a major program that promotes workforce development is the Springfield Area Working Communities Challenge. The mission of the Springfield WCC is to address systemic barriers that prevent low- and moderate- income earners from finding and maintaining employment. The program works to address specific issues that residents may have with transportation, childcare, housing, education, and recovery. This program includes our Region and beyond and works with community partners who have varying expertise in all realms of the different subject areas. For more information on the Working Communities Challenge [click here](#).

RECOVERY FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES/ WORKFORCE

Recovery friendly workforce programs specifically acknowledge and work intentionally with individuals in recovery. A recovery friendly workforce creates a safe space for those in recovery, engages employers and employees in substance use disorder and behavioral health education, creates health and safety-based programming, and becomes active partners in prevention and recovery with the Region and local communities. Recovery-friendly communities is a part of the [Working Communities Challenge](#). More information on the importance of the programs for people in recovery can be found in the Health Chapter.

CHILD CARE

Access to affordable, reliable childcare is a critical component of the regional economy and a key factor influencing labor force participation, employee retention, and household stability. Childcare availability affects the ability of parents and caregivers to enter or remain in the workforce and directly influences employers' capacity to recruit and retain workers across sectors.

Across Vermont and within the Region, the supply of licensed childcare has not kept pace with demand. Limited availability, high costs, workforce shortages within the childcare sector, and regulatory and facility constraints continue to pose challenges, particularly for families with young children and for workers in lower- and middle-income occupations. These conditions can limit economic participation, reduce household financial stability, and constrain regional economic growth.

The economic role of childcare extends beyond family support. Childcare providers are employers, service purchasers, and contributors to local economies, while access to childcare enables broader workforce engagement and supports business productivity. As work patterns evolve, including increased remote and hybrid employment, childcare remains a foundational support necessary for flexible and resilient labor markets.

Addressing childcare challenges will require coordinated strategies involving municipalities, employers, service providers, and regional partners. Approaches may include supporting childcare workforce development, enabling appropriate facilities through land use and infrastructure planning, encouraging employer-supported childcare and family-friendly workplace policies, and aligning economic development efforts with health and social service initiatives.

In the Region, multiple agencies are addressing this issue, including the [Working Communities Challenge](#) along with a Southeastern Childcare Counts Coalition that includes both the Springfield Human Services District and the Brattleboro District. The goal of this group is to help create a sustainable childcare system.

Policies and Recommendations

Economic Development Policies

1. Develop and enhance regional development activities that support the diversity of the Region's economic base by encouraging entrepreneurship, supporting the expansion of local businesses, and attracting new businesses that are consistent with the Regional Plan and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Town Plans.
2. Support economic development efforts that will promote building sustainable competitiveness in the highest return, value-added sectors of the economy.
3. Plan infrastructure investments that support town and village center revitalization, industrial parks, and redevelopment of underutilized sites, with attention to long-term service capacity and hazard exposure.
4. Integrate resilience planning into all economic development activities, including strategies to strengthen local businesses' capacity to withstand economic shocks, climate-related events, and other disruptions.
5. Promote digital infrastructure, broadband expansion, and flexible workspace development to support remote and hybrid work, telecommuting, and technology-enabled entrepreneurship.

Economic Development Recommendations

1. Support regional priority projects, detailed in the Implementation Matrix.
2. Assist municipalities in a review of their regulations and administrative procedures to ensure clarity in their permitting process.
3. Provide education forums and other types of technical assistance to educate municipalities on economic development and infrastructure planning.
4. Continue to provide staff assistance to local economic and downtown development groups.
5. Coordinate vocational and technical training opportunities to support statewide workforce programs.
6. Partner with educational institutions, workforce boards, and community organizations to connect residents with training and employment aligned with regional industry needs.
7. Coordinate with municipalities and regional partners to remove barriers to housing and service development that support workforce retention and business growth.

Local Resources

Vermont Department of Economic Development

www.thinkvermont.com

Vermont Economic Development Authority

www.veda.org

Vermont Small Business Development Center

www.vtsbdc.org

USDA Rural Development

www.rd.usda.gov/vt

Springfield Regional Chamber of Commerce

www.springfieldvt.com

Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce

www.yourplaceinvermont.com

Springfield On The Move

www.springfieldonthemove.net

East Central Vermont EDD:

<https://www.ecvedd.org>

25-30 ECVEDD CEDS:

<https://www.ecvedd.org/ceds/>

Vt Dept Labor(regional economy / employers / labor market info / workforce / unemployment / so many stats...etc)

<https://labor.vermont.gov/>

Springfield Regional Development Corp:

<https://www.springfielddevelopment.org/>

Black River Innovation Campus:

<https://bricvt.org/>

References

<http://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/2014-Annual-Report.pdf>

<https://publicassets.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/SWVT2020.pdf>

Ch 11: HEALTHY, INCLUSIVE, & LIVABLE REGION

Planning and public health are interrelated in many ways – and there are many components of a sustainable community which contribute to good health, both directly and indirectly. Improving the built environment in ways that promote active living, healthy eating, social and mental health, and safe environmental conditions, among others, benefits the health of an entire community. It is therefore imperative that our Region prioritizes planning for health in all policies and emphasizes health as a priority for a community’s overall success. There are four major contributors to public health in the Community Health Framework:

- Basic Needs
- Quality, Sustainable Environment
- Economic and Social Development
- Supportive Social Relationships

Many contributors to public health, such as safe, affordable housing and active transportation, fall into these categories, but are aspects of a well-planned community in their own right and are discussed in other chapters

Community Health Framework

This framework reflects widely recognized public health concepts, particularly the *social determinants of health*, which describe the economic, social, environmental, and service-related conditions that influence health outcomes and equity. It is based on national public health practice and is used here to guide the health equity discussion in this chapter.

COMMUNITY HEALTH FRAMEWORK



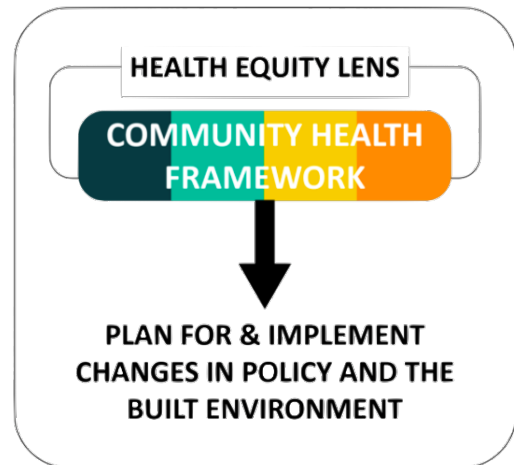
- BASIC NEEDS**
Core elements of an individual life that one needs to survive.
- QUALITY SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT**
A safe and clean place to live, work, and play.
- ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**
Access and opportunity for financial growth and stability.
- SUPPORTIVE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS**
Access to family and community networks that support a healthy lifestyle.

BASIC NEEDS	QUALITY SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTS	ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	SUPPORTIVE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS
HOUSING	CLEAN AIR AND WATER	SAFE COMMUNITY	DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION
FOOD	BROWNFIELD REMEDIATION	EDUCATION	MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
HEALTHCARE	ACCESS TO PUBLIC PARKS AND TRAILS	STEADY RELIABLE INCOME	ROBUST SOCIAL AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
TRANSPORTATION	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE	EMPLOYMENT	COMMUNITY MEETING PLACES
BROADBAND ACCESS	HEALTHY TREE CANOPY		RECOVERY FRIENDLY COMMUNITY
ARTS AND CULTURE			TRANSFORMATIVE IDEAS OF PLANNING

Health Equity

According to the [Vermont Department of Health](#), health equity is an understanding of health that recognizes that a people may not have equal access to elements of community health due to socioeconomic disadvantage, historical injustice, and other systemic inequalities associated with race, gender, ethnicity, social position, sexual orientation, or disability. Ensuring a high level of health for all involves removing these obstacles to health.

As a regional commission, our role is to view all projects through a health equity lens and work with our health and equity partners to achieve healthy vibrant communities. Through policies and project implementation centered around the Community Health Framework, the Region can be a healthier and more equitable place for all.



BASIC NEEDS

1. Basic Needs

Basic needs are the core elements of an individual life that one needs to survive. Basic needs are outlined in this chapter such as housing, food, healthcare, transportation, broadband, and arts and culture.



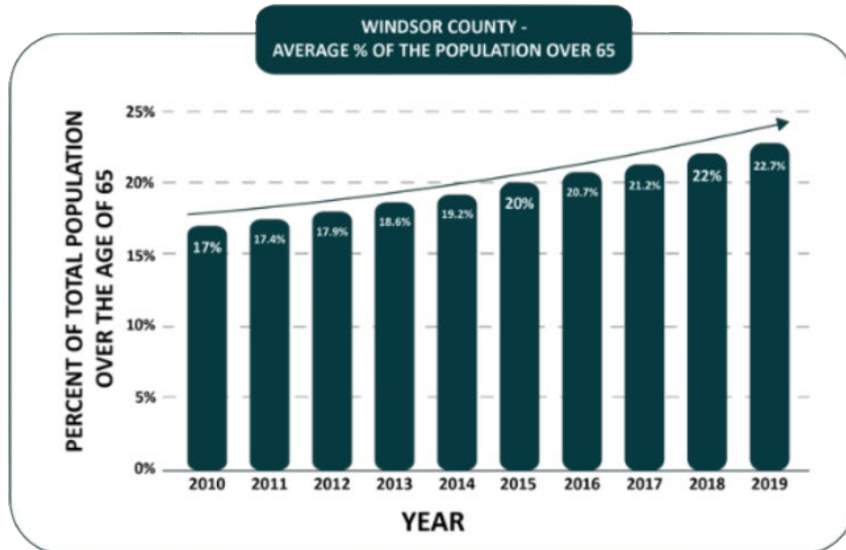
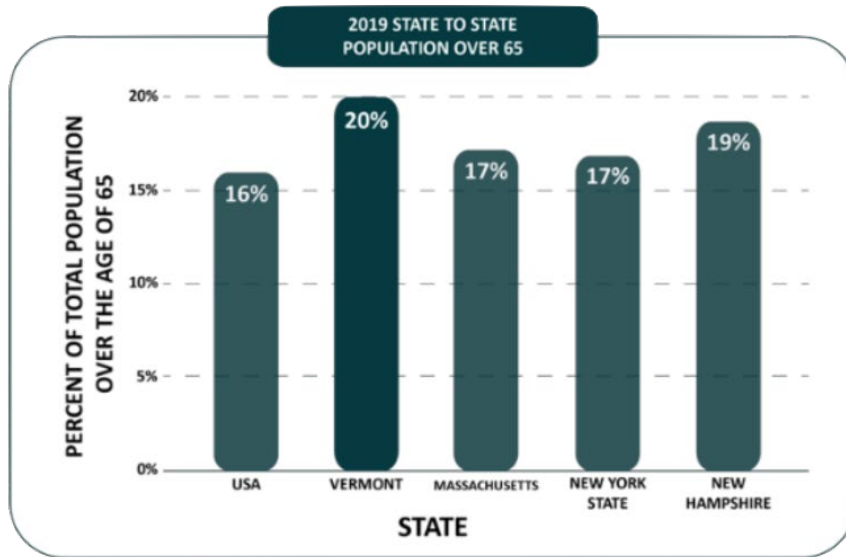
Health: Basic Needs Goals

1. Help the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board achieve their goals through outreach, education, and community engagement.
2. Support efforts to diversify housing stock through zoning review and innovative approaches to regulation.
3. Help increase food security and reduce hunger in the Region by completing a Regional food systems analysis, promoting local food production, and removing distance and transportation barriers to healthy and affordable food.
4. Promote multi-modal transportation programs and designs that encourage safer pedestrian and bike movement.
5. Encourage ride-sharing programs for food access, appointments, and Regional recreation.
6. Use Health Impact Assessments to anticipate the impacts of new development on community health.

HOUSING

According to the Population Reference Bureau, access to safe and affordable housing has a significant and lasting effect on a person's physical and mental health, especially for people over 65. Aging housing stock is more likely to expose residents to asbestos, mold, or lead, which can

lead to a variety of health issues, ranging from developmental issues to cancer. [Research](#) shows that poor and low-income housing is disproportionately likely to contain environmental hazards



such as mold, pests, radon, and lead, which are linked to increased respiratory illness, asthma, and other health risks compared with higher-quality housing.

The Region is facing unprecedented challenges to housing affordability, especially for renters and low-income community members – 38.8¹% of households in the region are housing cost burdened (>30% of income going to housing costs) Housing affordability is tied to health, as high housing costs can lead to struggle affording healthy and fresh food, medical care, and other basic needs. People who struggle with housing affordability are also more likely to have stress-related conditions.

Homelessness is generally defined as the lack of a permanent, stable place to live and may include staying in a vehicle, doubling up with friends or family, living outdoors, or residing in a shelter. People experiencing homelessness face substantially higher health risks than the general population, including elevated rates of chronic illness, exposure to environmental hazards, trauma, and limited access to consistent medical care. Research consistently shows that people who experience homelessness have significantly higher mortality rates and shorter life expectancy than housed

¹ American Community Survey 5-Year Summary, 2024.

individuals, underscoring the strong connection between housing instability and poor health outcomes. Rates of homelessness are similar in rural and urban areas. Homelessness is not uniform across the population – Rates of homelessness is higher among people who have a disability, are neurodivergent, are a part of the LGBTQ+ community, have mental health issues, or are a person of color.

Vermont’s Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) is a measure that examines community level social determinants of health to identify areas disproportionately vulnerable to societal challenge. Social vulnerabilities are “flagged” when a census tract is in the 90th percentile or above in Vermont in a category of social vulnerability.

In our Region, Springfield, Weathersfield, Ludlow, and Windsor all have SVI flags related to transportation and housing. According to the most recent American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2020–2024), these communities have housing characteristics that are significantly above typical state averages for mobile homes, large apartment structures, and group living environments. These characteristics do not reflect an over-concentration of housing, but rather housing types and resident populations that may face greater challenges during public health emergencies and extreme weather events, particularly related to evacuation, accessibility, infrastructure resilience, and service delivery.

MARC can support housing-related health outcomes by working with partners to address lead and asbestos exposure, providing data and technical support, and continuing to support zoning changes that allow for workforce housing and dense urban centers when accompanied by appropriate infrastructure, emergency preparedness, and health protections, while advancing projects that improve safety and housing security for all individuals in the Region.

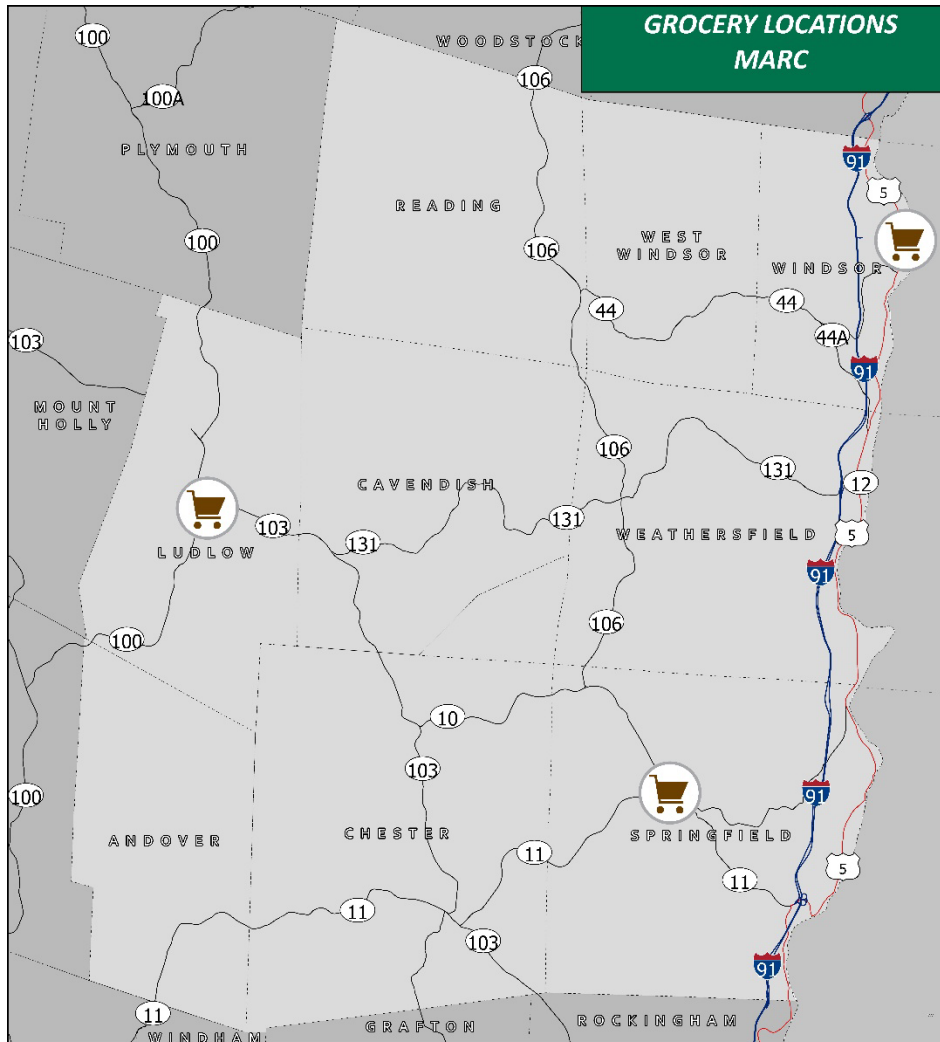
FOOD

Physical access to healthy food options is vital to a person’s ability to create and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Research shows that rural households are more likely to experience food insecurity than urban households, due in part to lower incomes, limited transportation options, and fewer food retailers in close proximity. National food security surveys consistently find higher rates of food insecurity in rural counties compared with metropolitan areas.

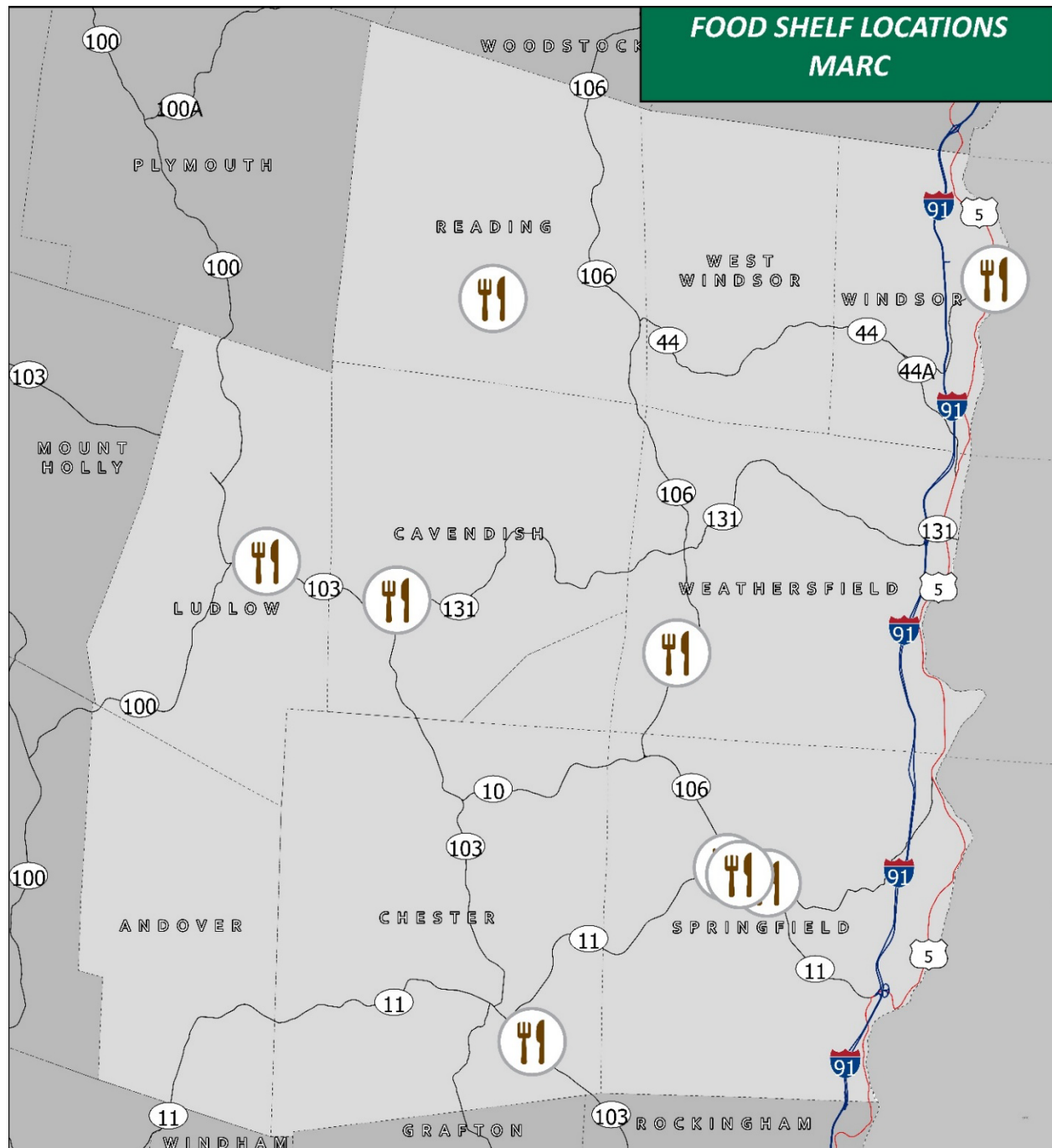
Reliable access to nutritious food is a key social determinant of health; when households lack access to healthy food, they face higher risks of diet-related chronic diseases and

compromised well-being. Across both rural and urban communities, food access is influenced by income, transportation, and proximity to services, rather than settlement pattern alone. Planning for food access and food infrastructure therefore plays a critical role in improving overall health outcomes across the region and supports regional goals related to rural vitality, equitable access to services, and healthy, resilient communities.

1. **Rural food access definition** – Rural residents more likely to travel further for groceries than people in (sub)urban areas. According to the USDA Economic Research Service, 13% of the Windsor County population lives more than 10 miles from a supermarket, making it difficult or impossible to access groceries without a personal vehicle.



Name	Town
Shaw's Supermarkets	Ludlow
Shaw's Supermarkets	Springfield
Price Chopper	Windsor



**FOOD SHELF LOCATIONS
 MARC**

Name	Town	Name	Town
Reading - West Windsor Food Shelf	Reading	Black River Good Neighbor Services	Ludlow
Trinity Evangelical Free Church	Windsor	Senior Solutions	Springfield
Weathersfield Food Shelf	Perkinsville	Springfield School All-4-One	Springfield
Mountainside House	Proctorsville	Springfield Family Center Inc	Springfield
Chester Andover Fmaily Center	Chester		

experience higher rates of food insecurity compared with urban areas, linked to transportation barriers, food costs, and economic instability. Recent statewide surveys indicate that food insecurity remains elevated compared with pre-pandemic levels, with behavioral risk surveillance suggesting that a meaningful share of adults reported difficulty affording or accessing enough food in 2022. Persistent food insecurity can force households to choose between other basic needs, such as housing, utilities, or medical care, and nutritious food, contributing to long-term health disparities. Children, low-income households, and adults with disabilities experience disproportionate impacts, with food insecurity linked to chronic disease risk, impaired academic outcomes, and increased healthcare utilization. As a result of these health effects, food insecurity also strains healthcare system and reduces the region’s economic productivity.

These data highlight where households are most at risk and provide a basis for targeted planning and investment to improve food access. Understanding patterns of food insecurity helps the Region identify opportunities to strengthen infrastructure, support local food programs, and advance overall health equity

To promote food security in the Region, the MARC can continue to work with local food security partners to collect data, disperse information, and look for areas in need of services or food infrastructure.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an elevated number of households experiencing food insecurity and hunger within the region. There has also been an increase in the number of places for community members and families to receive free or reduced-price meals and groceries.

HEALTHCARE

Having access to healthcare has been shown to prevent premature death, increase the overall quality of a person’s life, and detect and prevent illness and disease. About 2% of Windsor County is uninsured, less than the state average, according to the 2025 Vermont Household Health Insurance Survey. People who lack healthcare may lack it because they are unable or ineligible to receive affordable insurance through their work or through government programs.

In addition to access, healthcare affordability is a key contributor to health and security – healthcare costs are one of the top reasons for bankruptcy in the US, and health care costs may restrict necessary household spending in other areas, such as housing, food, or transportation.

As the region’s population ages (and therefore requires more medical care), access and affordability of health care will only increase in importance.

Healthcare in the region is generally provided through the region’s two hospitals – Mt. Ascutney hospital in Windsor and Springfield Hospital in Springfield. Residents may also travel outside of the region for care, in particular to Dartmouth Hitchcock Hospital in Lebanon, NH, or access care online through telehealth programs.

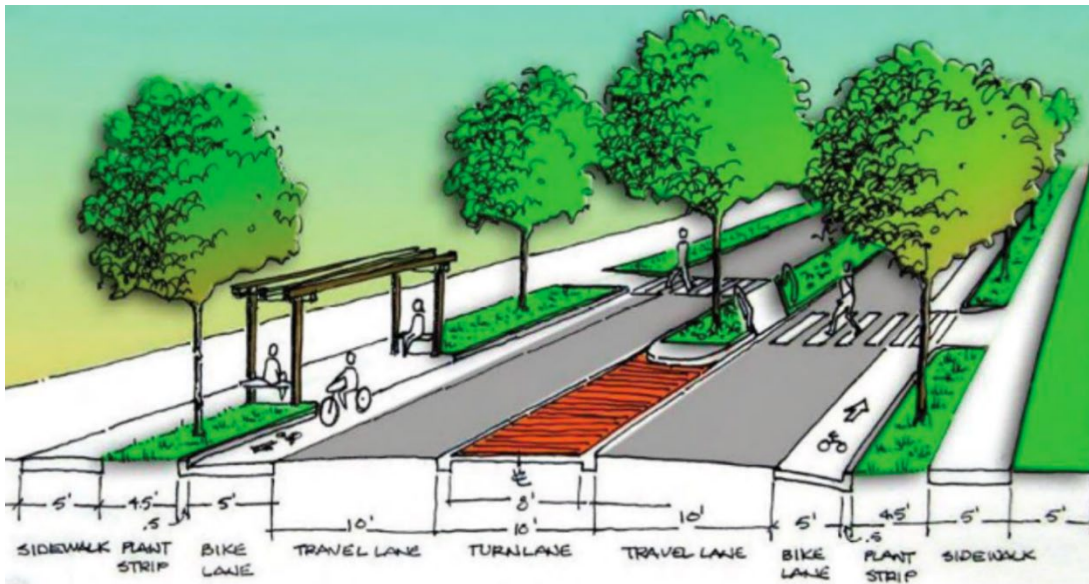
LOCAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS AND SOLUTIONS

Recent Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNA)s for the Region’s primary hospitals show persistent and evolving gaps in health care access and community well-being. The 2025 Springfield Hospital & North Star Health CHNA identifies affordability of health care and health insurance, availability of primary care and specialty services, access to mental health services, socio-economic conditions affecting health (including housing and healthy foods), substance use prevention and treatment, and dental care affordability and availability as priority needs. These findings underscore ongoing challenges in accessing comprehensive medical, behavioral, and oral health services locally. In the Mt. Ascutney Hospital & Health Center 2021 CHNA, the top community needs included the availability and affordability of mental health services, alcohol and drug use prevention and recovery, socio-economic conditions that influence health outcomes (such as healthy eating and nutrition), and improved access to dental care. Across both assessments, behavioral health services, substance misuse resources, dental care access, and broader socio-economic drivers of health remain high priorities for the Region.

MARC can support health care efforts through continued partnership with the Region’s hospitals, community health centers, and care facilities; by advocating for health-supportive policies in municipal plans; and by coordinating regional outreach, education, and resource navigation to improve awareness and availability of services throughout the Region.

TRANSPORTATION

Reliable transportation services are fundamental to a well-functioning community, and improvements to transportation infrastructure can positively impact individual and community health. Transportation in the region is heavily car dependent, with most people relying on their personal vehicles to access groceries, doctors’ appointments, etc. But transportation infrastructure is more than just being able to access a car.



According to [Smart Growth America](#), sidewalks and bike lanes that make people feel safe can increase active transportation and reduce vehicle-pedestrian crashes, especially for people who use a wheelchair or have limited mobility. Programs like [Complete Streets](#) use sidewalk and bikeway design to connect people to parks, public transportation, schools and other destinations to promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage active transportation for all users.

See the Regional Transportation plan for more in-depth discussion of transportation.

BROADBAND ACCESS

As discussed in the Utilities and Facilities chapter, access to sufficient broadband has become critical to the success of a community. Reliable broadband is vital to running businesses, working from home, accessing telehealth services, civil engagement, and supporting social relationships.

Accessing healthcare increasingly relies on internet access maintaining medical records, managing appointments, , ordering prescriptions, etc. People over the age of 65 may face challenges accessing reliable broadband at home while also typically needing more health services than younger populations.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Access to arts and culture have been proven, according to the World Health Organization, to contribute to childhood development, can help those dealing with mental health problems express themselves and alleviate depression and anxiety, and improve memory and cognitive function for an aging population. Community and educational art programs are important pillars

for people of all ages and income levels and can lead to an overall happier and healthier community. It is especially important for marginalized groups to have equitable access to community-based activities and programming. Schools and libraries in the Region facilitate some programs, but within the Region, there is limited opportunity for community-based arts and cultural expression.

QUALITY SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTS

2. Quality Sustainable Environments

Quality sustainable environments are a safe place to live, work and play. Quality sustainable environments are outlined in this chapter as they pertain to clean air and water, brownfield remediation, green infrastructure, a healthy tree canopy, access to public parks and trails, noise pollution, and the built environment.



Health: Quality Sustainable Environments Goals

1. Create a built and natural environment that supports healthy and active choices, including a deliberate focus on the built environment's influence on physical activity, mobility choices, access to food and the natural environment throughout the Region.
2. Help eradicate housing contaminants through supporting state and local partners with data, marketing, and program support and creation.
3. Support goals and policies stated in the Natural Resources Chapter.

CLEAN AIR AND WATER

Conserving clean air and water is essential for the health, well-being, and economic vitality of the Region. Access to clean air and water supports overall physical and cognitive health. Contaminated water can contribute to gastrointestinal or liver problems, respiratory difficulties, and other health concerns depending on the pollutants present. Poor air quality can worsen asthma and other respiratory conditions. More information on water quality issues can be found in the Natural Resources Chapter.

BROWNFIELDS

While brownfields are discussed in the Economic Development Chapter, they have a significant impact on community health due to contamination from former industrial or commercial land uses. Brownfield contamination poses environmental health risks.

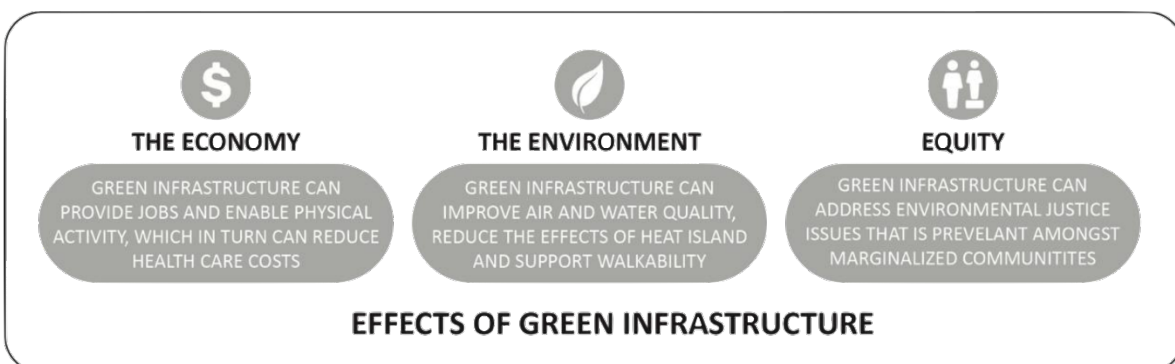
ACCESS TO PUBLIC PARKS/TRAILS

Access to green spaces, including parks, trails, and natural landscapes, is an important component of community health. Communities with lower incomes, limited resources, or other historic disadvantages often have less access to environmental amenities such as tree canopy, clean air, and recreational spaces. Ensuring equitable access to high-quality, sustainable outdoor areas is a critical part of promoting overall community well-being and should be a consideration in local planning and development decisions.

Parks and trails, in particular, provide opportunities for recreation, encourage physical activity, and support social and psychological well-being for residents. In areas like Vermont, where landscape and tourism play a central role, parks and trails can also contribute to the local economy while providing employment opportunities. Spaces for children to play and recreate are especially important for healthy development. By prioritizing green space access and integrating it into municipal plans, the Region can promote health, equity, and resilience across communities.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Green infrastructure is natural and semi-natural landscape elements that have a variety of ecological benefits, such as clean water and air, carbon sequestration, flood control, and climate change mitigation. Green infrastructure can help with clean air, stormwater management, and public health. Not only does green infrastructure reduce physical risks posed by climate change, but spending time in or around natural areas can also support mental well-being.



HEALTHY TREE CANOPY

While there is no shortage of trees in our Region general, a continuous tree canopy is important in environments humans frequent, such as town and village centers. Street trees calm traffic and shade sidewalks and pavement, making streets safer and more inviting to pedestrians and bicyclists. The [Vermont Urban and Community Forestry](#) organization helps communities with analysis, education, and funding to create and improve current tree canopies. In our region, Chester, Springfield, and Windsor, are all engaged with this organization.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

3. Economic and Social Development

Economic and social development is access and opportunity for financial growth and stability. Economic and social development are outlined in this chapter as they pertain to safe communities free of crime and violence, steady and reliable income, education, and employment. Maintaining a strong economy with consistent, safe employment is vital to the health of the region.



Health: Economic and Social Development Goals

1. The Region is a safe place full of economic, educational, and employment opportunity for all current and future residents.
2. Support economic development projects, ideas, and goals that build equity within the Region.

SAFE COMMUNITIES

Living in a community that not only is safe, but also feels safe and trusting important for community health and wellbeing. Reliable Emergency Medical Services, Fire and Police service; safe infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists; and safe, reliable paths to and from schools all help contribute to the real and perceived safety of a community. (See Emergency Management and Transportation chapters for more information.)

While many assume that violent crime is primarily an urban problem, crime occurs across all community types. Historically, violent crime rates have been higher in urban areas than in rural

ones, and long-term data show declines in crime overall even as patterns of change vary across places.

EDUCATION



Education and health are intertwined. Educational success can lead to higher economic security (correlated to good health), and good health can lead to better educational outcomes.

Health issues can also be addressed as a part of the educational experience. Providing healthy food options, mental health resources, substance misuse education, and health education throughout all hierarchies of education is vital for a person to live a healthy lifestyle.

STEADY, RELIABLE INCOME

Steady and reliable income is a foundational driver of health and wellbeing. Predictable earnings allow individuals and families to consistently meet basic needs such as housing, food, transportation, childcare, and healthcare. Income instability—caused by low wages, irregular hours, seasonal employment, or job insecurity—can lead to chronic stress, delayed medical care, food insecurity, and housing instability. Communities that support living wages, stable work schedules, and access to income supports help reduce health disparities and improve long-term physical and mental health outcomes.

EMPLOYMENT

Having access to a consistent job and safe working conditions is essential for a person’s ability to maintain their health. There is a direct correlation between income and health disparities -- higher incomes allow a person to access healthcare, childcare, nutritious food, and housing in safe, walkable areas. Conversely, under or un-employed households are more likely to struggle to access basic health needs and care, and are more likely to develop stress-related illnesses, anxiety or depression. Supporting access to employment opportunities and related services, like childcare, can therefore have broad benefits for physical and mental health across the community. This includes employment practices that support individuals facing barriers to work, such as those in recovery from substance use disorder, by promoting stable income, retention, and long-term economic participation.

[Studies](#) estimate that employers may save between \$3 and \$6 for every dollar invested in wellness programs, through reduced medical and absentee-related costs. Recovery friendly

employment approaches connect employers, workers, and job seekers with resources and supports to create better outcomes for everyone.

Employers may participate in workshops to become “Recovery Friendly,” building empathy and understanding of substance use disorder as a treatable disease and learning tools to support workers seeking recovery, such as connection to recovery coaching, education on the science of addiction, and referral to state and local initiatives.

Recovery Coaches may host educational and support groups, and/or confidential 1:1 meeting with employees and job seekers, helping workers connect with the resources they need to find and maintain recovery and to identify workplaces that are a good fit. In 2026, recovery friendly employment initiatives in the Region are sponsored by Regional Partners like the Springfield Regional Development Corporation, Project Action, Turning Point of Springfield, serve as a method of education and awareness that is valuable for Regional businesses and partners.

SUPPORTIVE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

4. Supportive Social Relationships

Supportive social relationships are defined as access to family and community networks that support a healthy lifestyle.

This concept is based on the understanding that an entire community is accountable for public health. Engaged people benefit from strong social networks with friends, family, and coworkers. They are involved in the civic life of their communities, and are empowered to help create and promote belonging, inclusion, and meaningful connection. Planners play a role in helping communities create and sustain healthy environments and infrastructure, while also providing a platform for public engagement, participation, and collaboration.



Health: Supportive Social Relationships

1. Create connections and support efforts of non-traditional regional partners that promote supportive social relationships, like for example recovery partnerships, Regional food resources, etc.
2. Support the building and expansion of Regional community assets.
3. Use the Healthy Communities page on MARC's website as a health landing page to guide community members and partners to agencies that can help them.
4. Point people within the Region to supportive services via mapping, marketing, and other avenues.
5. Introduce DEI internally into MARC's policies and procedures, and provide consultation to towns.

SOCIALLY COHESIVE AND SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS, FAMILIES, HOMES, AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Building a socially cohesive community can be a challenge, given the rural nature of the Region. Social cohesion can be found in community meeting places (“third spaces”), like a movie theater, bowling alley, park, library or after school program. In families where parents or guardians are ill-equipped to handle bringing up a child, community resources can help. Given the expanding nature and influence of the digital world, community can be cultivated through online meetings and activities. Online community groups can also make up for a lack of local people with shared experiences or identities.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training focuses on educating people on implicit biases, and structures of inequity in workplaces, societal structures etc. The purpose of DEI training is to enhance people’s knowledge of other groups by both building awareness about biases and skills for interaction.

In planning, DEI training can be used to understand the history of policies and procedures that have excluded certain groups. For example, in the 1930’s, the federal government began redlining real estate in “risky” neighborhoods for federal loans based on racial and ethnic demographics. This practice was a perfectly legal form of segregation and disenfranchisement, the ramifications of which can still be seen today. Education around how policy affects marginalized groups can help reduce and prevent further harm to these marginalized groups.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), mental health includes services around emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. Mental health is important for a person's overall health, the risks of poor mental health being an increased risk for diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Being a part of a marginalized socio-economic group increases the likelihood of poor mental health outcomes. For example, members of the LGBTQ+ youth community in Vermont are four times more likely to commit suicide than non-LGBTQ+ youth. Public health interventions and services are important ways to address these issues by creating an understanding and supportive community free of bias and discrimination. Mental health, mental illness, and mental disability are issues that are slowly gaining the attention they need. Land use planning can play a supporting role in mental health by shaping the physical and regulatory environment in which services are located and accessed. Zoning and development policies that allow mental health and behavioral health facilities, encourage co-location of services, support walkable community centers, and improve access to transportation can reduce barriers to care. Planning decisions that support affordable and supportive housing, as well as access to parks, libraries, and other community gathering spaces, can also help reduce isolation and stress and promote overall mental wellbeing.

While land use planning helps create the conditions for access, mental health services are delivered through a range of institutions and providers. School Districts in the Region address mental health for students by having:

1. School Social Workers
2. Behavioral Interventionist Programs
3. Behavioral Specialists
4. Board Certified Behavior Analysts
5. Student Assistance Program Counselors
6. Autism Services

[In 2017, the State of Vermont](#) implemented a text crisis line that offers 24/7 support. In 2019, of the young people who used this support service, 19% were under 13, and 81% were ages 14-17. 91% of respondents identified as female, 9% male, and 3% transgender. 61% of respondents identified as being members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Statewide assessment processes and local hospital CHNAs have consistently identified access to behavioral health supports and crisis services, such as mental health counseling, substance use support, and crisis response, as high priorities in the Region.

ROBUST SOCIAL AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement includes everything from planning, to access to local government processes, access to voting, in both political and non-political realms to protect public values and/or make changes in the community. Traditionally, the role of a planner includes community engagement,

and partnership with stakeholders. With a movement for more virtual engagement tools, there is an opportunity for community participation outside of the traditional meetings. Trying a multi-faceted and non-traditional approach to community engagement can aim to reach more marginalized communities.

RECOVERY FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The goal for a recovery friendly community is for the community's programs and policies to make it easier for its members with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) to achieve and maintain recovery.

This can be accomplished through:

1. Access to treatment facilities
2. Programming drug/ alcohol-free entertainment
3. Discouraging & educating around stigma
4. Recovery-friendly housing
5. Recovery-friendly workplaces
6. Healthy community relationships and environment

MARC can support these efforts through our partnership with Project Action and the [Green Peak Alliance](#) to provide Regional informational services on recovery programs and efforts, collaborating on creative solutions, and supporting Regional partnerships and community assets that help reduce substance use harm in the Region.

TRANSFORMATIVE IDEAS OF PLANNING

Planning for public health is a newer concept that pivots on the idea that internal and external structures of our society do not work without one another. As stated throughout the chapter, a lot of the places and people that need improvements in the public health realm have been systematically marginalized by society through policy, infrastructure, and planning. While planning for change and supporting existing programs are important, for equitable change, we must also plan with and for communities and people who typically get left out. This may mean for example supporting indigenous people through a structure that is atypical for the RPC or participating in internal education on the history and issues of racial injustice, and generational poverty in the Region. Planning for public health cannot and will not happen without the input of marginalized communities.



Ch 12: IMPLEMENTATION

Background

Implementation of the goals and policies outlined in this document depends upon the cooperative efforts of the Region's member communities, along with the efforts of the numerous local, regional, state and federal agencies, and private interests involved in land use planning activities. The MARC must work with all these groups to successfully implement this Plan, and the Plan has been written with collaboration as its foundation.

The Regional Plan can be used to justify and prioritize the use of state and federal funds for community development, transportation improvements, natural resource protection and management, and other investments. Careful planning and clear statements of regional goals and priorities help to ensure that state and federal money is spent usefully and fairly.

State funding can be secured through the same process, and state government can use the Regional Plan in several other ways, as well. One of the goals of Act 250 is to include local and regional planning concerns in the state regulatory process. These concerns are addressed by requiring developers to show that projects will conform to local and regional plans. Regional plans are used in the certification of solid waste facilities and in the granting of certificates of public good for electric generation and transmission facilities; they may also have an effect on state policy through the statutory requirement for review of state agency plans (24 V.S.A. §4305(d)).

In accordance with Act 181, the 2026 Regional Plan delineates on the Future Land Use Map the designation areas for Centers (i.e., Downtown Center and Village Centers) and Neighborhoods (i.e., Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas) per [24 V.S.A. Chapter 139](#). Additionally, the regional Future Land Use Map will delineate areas for Act 250 exemptions for Tier 1A or Tier 1B. Once the Tier 3 rulemaking is finalized by the state, a future amended Regional Plan will also show the Tier 3 areas as an overlay on the Future Land Use Map.

At the local and regional levels, the Regional Plan interacts with plans of surrounding regions, municipal plans adopted by member towns, and with the activities of developers and other private groups. Implementation of this plan can only proceed if its goals and policies are compatible with those of adjoining regions and member towns. It is the responsibility of the MARC to assist its member town in the development of their town plans and to ensure that those plans are in the best interest of not only an individual town, but for all towns in the Region. This Plan guides local governments toward effective implementations of their plans. This plan guides MARC in advising towns and developers in support of orderly, efficient and healthy growth in the region.

A. Determination of Substantial Regional Impact

The MARC should act as a review agency for any proposed development of substantial regional impact. The MARC is required under Vermont law (24 VSA §4345a(17)) to define “substantial regional impact, as that term may be used with respect to its region.” As such, the MARC defines “substantial regional impact” as:

Any proposed development of such size, scale, character or intensity of use that it has a sustained influence upon: the growth and development in adjacent towns; the regional economy; affordable housing stock; or regionally important cultural and natural resources or infrastructure; and meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. It may affect the Region’s economy by:

- a) Generating new employment equal to or greater than 1 percent (1%) of the Region’s existing employment as measured by the Vermont Department of Employment and Training; or
- b) Increasing the cost or availability of affordable housing in the town in which the project is located or in adjacent towns;

2. It may affect the infrastructure capacity by:

- a) Substantially affecting the safety of the traveling public on highways and other transportation facilities within other towns;
- b) Generating peak hour traffic equal to or greater than five percent (5%) of the peak hour capacity of the transportation network serving the project site;
- c) Contributing to a reduction in the peak hour Level of Service (LOS) from D to E or from E to F on roadways in the region;
- d) Substantially changing the service area or capacity of utility services, including but not limited to, public water and sewer systems, demand for energy, and/or solid waste services;
- e) Generating student populations that will adversely affect school capacities in one or more neighboring communities and/or union high school districts; or,
- f) Creating capital improvements such as the extension, upgrading or enlargement of electrical transmission lines.

3. It may change the existing settlement patterns in the Region by:

- a) Requiring the alteration, degradation or destruction of designated regionally significant historic, cultural, natural, aesthetic or scenic features; or,
- b) Locating in geographic areas that have not supported the type, scale or intensity of proposed development in the past, and is not supported by local or regional Future Land Use Maps.

4. It may affect the natural resources of the Region by:

- a) Producing excessive pollutants or substantially degrading air or water quality;
- b) Altering, degrading or destroying the animal and/or plant habitat as identified in this Plan as worthy of protection; or,
- c) Substantially fragmenting or reducing the area or productive capacity of regionally significant forested and agricultural lands;

The definition of substantial regional impact shall include both individual project proposals as well as cumulative impacts of multi-phased projects as described in this Chapter. Proposed developments that have substantial regional impacts may have positive as well as negative impacts.

An impact analysis should be provided for any project of substantial regional impact. The analysis should include such effects as population growth in other towns, impact on infrastructure capacity (roads, traffic congestion, public water and wastewater facilities, schools, emergency services, etc.), and impacts on cultural and natural resources (critical wildlife habitat, water quality, scenic resources, etc.).

1. CUMULATIVE DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS

When certain developments occur incrementally, there is concern for the impacts resulting from that cumulative growth. Development or a series of developments, when located within a limited geographic area, under the control of a single applicant, and planned incrementally over a relatively short period of time, can produce environmental, social, and economic impacts that are contrary to sound and coordinated comprehensive planning, which is the goal of this Plan and Vermont law. Incremental development review methods have the potential of failing to adequately evaluate the cumulative impacts of growth within an area. (Examples of this kind of development could include a large multi-phased subdivision or recreational area such as a ski resort.)

In these situations, the MARC may request cumulative impact review by requesting, coordinating, and reviewing cumulative impact studies. The scope of each cumulative impact study or master plan should address impacts to both the natural and human environment and offer measures to avoid and/or mitigate adverse impacts. The costs of such studies shall be borne by the applicant.

B. Implementation

The Regional Plan will be implemented in several ways. Most implementation measures rely on coordination with municipal planning and regulation efforts, as well as collaborating with the efforts of other municipal, regional, state, federal and private entities. Implementation of the Regional Plan consists of the following measures:

MUNICIPAL PLANNING. The MARC's efforts to assist with local planning and implementation will include the following activities:

- The MARC shall consult with its municipalities before town plans are set to expire or at other times as needed or requested. In accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4350(a), this consultation will involve ascertaining the municipality's planning needs and identifying assistance that the MARC can provide. This consultation process will also involve a review of the town plan with respect to the required elements under §4382 and consistency with State planning goals under §4302.
- After adoption of a town plan, the MARC will evaluate and confirm local planning efforts and approve town plans per 24 V.S.A. §4350. In January 2026, nine of ten towns had plans approved and planning processes confirmed by the MARC – making them eligible for the state municipal planning grant program. Weathersfield's town plan is currently expired.
- The MARC will maintain an on-going status list of municipal planning and regulatory documents and annually report the findings to municipalities and the Department of Housing and Community Development.
- The MARC will offer technical assistance to municipalities as they prepare new or updated plans, bylaws, ordinances, and other implementation tools. MARC staff will help local planning commissions assemble and analyze data, conduct research and surveys, and prepare text and maps.

The MARC will also help municipal governments review and address development impacts no longer reviewed by the state in areas with Tier 1A or Tier 1B status by:

- Providing capital planning assistance for the necessary infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, sidewalks, roadways, parking, etc.) to support the local and regional future land use plans. This may include an adopted Capital Budget and Program [24 V.S.A. §§ 4430, 4443] or an informal capital improvement plan.
- Helping towns prepare and adopt an Impact Fee Ordinance [24 V.S.A. Chapter 131] that requires new developments to pay their proportionate share of the costs of school and municipal capital projects that benefit them, as well as any

infrastructure improvements needed to address the impacts of housing developments within Tier 1A and Tier 1B areas.

- Providing local technical assistance to mitigate traffic impacts, especially in Tier 1A and Tier 1B areas, by:
 - Helping towns establish requirements in municipal land use bylaws (e.g., require traffic impact studies for projects that generate 50 or more peak hour vehicle trips);
 - Reviewing traffic impact studies submitted for proposed developments; and,
 - Coordinating the review of traffic impact studies with VTrans staff or a traffic engineer consultant, as warranted.

TRAINING. The MARC will organize, sponsor, and conduct workshops and training seminars for local officials, and will host workshops with state agencies and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. MARC staff frequently meet with local boards to address specific issues and/or concerns, which is often the most effective means of outreach to member towns. The GIS Planner often assists towns with specific mapping needs and by training local officials.

SPECIAL PROJECTS. Member towns often want to undertake special planning studies to address particular issues in their communities, e.g. resource mapping, transportation studies, or emergency response plans. The MARC is available to assist towns either as a principal consultant or with technical and data support services.

MAPPING. Every effort will be made to ensure that GIS activities are supported and accessible to municipalities in the Region. MARC employs a GIS planner to support state, regional, and local mapping projects. The MARC has undertaken many mapping projects for its towns in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

GRANT ASSISTANCE. The MARC will continue to assist municipalities in the preparation of applications for grants to support planning initiatives, housing or economic development projects, and other programs of public benefit (e.g. Municipal Planning Grants, Municipal Education Grants, EPA Brownfields Grants, and Town Highway Structures Program). The MARC will also continue to assist towns and agencies with project management services.

COLLABORATION. MARC's goals can also be achieved by close collaboration with other state, private and/or public organizations as well as other regional planning commissions. Combining resources can be an effective means of achieving a common

interest and reinforce the commission's goals and programs. It also provides an opportunity to aggregate resources that might not otherwise be available.

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS. The MARC established special focus committees to address issues of importance to the Region. These committees include: Executive, Budget, Permit Review, and Town Plan Review Committees. The MARC also appoints members and staff to serve on the boards or committees of other organizations, such as the Connecticut River Joint Commission's Vermont Watershed Advisory Commission. The MARC also established two advisory committees to guide two of the organization's bigger programs: the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Brownfields Steering Committee. The MARC staffs the Regional Emergency Management Committee. The MARC will evaluate the work of its committees and assignments annually.

REVIEWS OF STATE AGENCY PLANS. It is important for the MARC to coordinate with state agencies and evaluate the impacts of state agency plans, rules and programs on municipalities and the region, and to provide responses accordingly.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS. Under state law, the MARC is enabled to participate in various regulatory and non-regulatory proceedings. The MARC takes a very active role in reviewing every Act 250 application that it receives to determine conformance with the Regional Plan. The MARC is also active in other proceedings that have a bearing on the Region, such as: Public Utility Commission (Section 248 applications), Clean Water Board, and state agency Rulemaking efforts.

RECOMMENDED INFRASTRUCTURE. In accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4348a, the Regional Plan includes recommendations for infrastructure needed to meet future demands or to facilitate desired future land use conditions:

- Volume 2 of the Regional Plan includes programmed transportation projects and identifies strategies to address the future needs of the regional transportation system.
- The following implementation matrix includes identified priority investments in public facilities and utilities to further the goals of this Regional Plan. However, this list is not all inclusive. Recommendations from each chapter are also intended to implement this Regional Plan. In addition, the MARC will assist municipal efforts to address town plan implementation strategies, and local efforts to develop capital budgets and programs, and other implementation tools.

Additional implementation measures rely on coordination with municipal planning and regulation efforts, as well as the efforts of other municipal, regional, state, federal and private entities.

Table 12.1 Implementation Matrix for the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission Regional Plan

Recommendation	Municipality	Responsible Party	Expected Timing				Priority of Need (Low, Medium, High)	Generalized Cost Estimate	Method of Financing
			Ongoing	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	5-10+ Years			
Seek funding to upgrade water and sewer lines needed to further goals of regional and town plans.	All	Selectboards/ Fire Districts	X				High	High	Grant/Loan/ Bond/CHIP
Assist towns in the development or update of capital budget and improvement programs	All	MARC, Selectboards			X		Medium	Low	Grants
Acquire equipment/invest in solid waste collection facilities to implement requirements of Act 148	All	Selectboards		X			High	Unknown	Unknown
Replace water storage tank and increase capacity	Cavendish	Selectboard			X		High	High	Grant/Loan

Seek funding to implement wastewater system improvements (Cavendish Capital Budget & Program)	Cavendish	Selectboard			X		High (See CBP)	Variable	Grant/Loan/ Bond
Repairs or removal of water supply dam in Town Forest	Chester	Water Dept.				X	Low	\$500,000	Grant/Loan
Assist town officials to implement recommendations in the Village Center Master Plan	Chester	Town Manager, Selectboard, Planning Commission	X				High	Variable	Grant/Loan
Seek funding to implement water and sewer system projects identified in Chester's system improvements plan.	Chester	Water Dept. / Sewer Dept.			X		High	High	Grant/Loan/Bond
Seek funding to construct the planned sidewalk extension to connect the village with the High School and adjacent housing development sites	Chester	Town Manager, Highway Dept., MARC		X			High	High	Grant/Loan/Bond

Apply for funding to implement the Water/Wastewater Feasibility Study for Felchville	Reading	Selectboard		X			High	High	Grant/Loan/ Bond
Extend sewer service to Hartness State Airport	Springfield	Public Works				X	Medium	High	Grant/Loan/ Bond
Seek funding to implement priority needs listed in Springfield's Water and Wastewater Capital Plan as most recently amended.	Springfield	Public Works	X				High	High	Grant/Loan/ Bond
Seek funding to implement the Weathersfield Reservoir dam removal.	Springfield	Selectboard, Public Works, MARC	X				High	\$800,000	Grant
Implement water system improvements noted in the Ascutney Fire District #2 Water System Feasibility Study	Weathersfield	Ascutney Fire District #2		X			High	High	Vermont Bond Bank
Develop regional outdoor recreation plans	All	Consortium, MARC to facilitate		X			High	Low-Medium	Grants

Work with towns and partners to continue developing a trail around Mt. Ascutney and implement other recommendations from the Mt Ascutney Outdoor Recreation Plan	West Windsor, Windsor, Weathersfield	Consortium, MARC to facilitate	X				Medium	Variable	Grants
Coordinate with Chambers of Commerce, SRDC, towns and other partners to explore marketing the region for outdoor recreation through app development, websites, and other promotional materials.	All	MARC, Conservation Commissions, Recreation groups, SRDC, Chambers of Commerce, Towns, Springfield 802		X			High	Medium	Grants
Maintain an up-to-date Ride Windsor County bike route map and guide, and make printed maps available in bike shops and other locations	All	MARC	X				Medium	Low	Transportation Planning Initiative

throughout the region.									
Assist Weathersfield to seek funding to implement the wastewater/water feasibility study for Perkinsville	Weathersfield	Selectboard		X			Medium	High	Grant/Loan/ Bond
Assist Weathersfield to seek funding to implement the ongoing Ascutney water/wastewater feasibility study	Weathersfield	Selectboard		X			Medium	High	Grant/Loan/ Bond
Continue to assist Springfield with implementation of the recommendations from the Main Street Master Plan	Springfield	MARC, Selectboard	X				High	Variable	Grants/ financing
Explore options to provide regional or intermunicipal services, such as a	All	MARC, Selectboards			X		Medium	Variable	Municipal capital budgets

regional floodplain and/or zoning administrator, or intermunicipal fire or ambulance services.									
Support local energy committees and assist towns to implement energy goals set out in town plans.	All	MARC, Selectboards, Energy Committees	X				Medium	Variable	Grants, municipal capital budgets, bonding
Provide guidance and assistance to establish and support local or regional housing committees.	All	MARC, Selectboards, Planning Commissions, Advocacy Groups	X				High	Low	N/A
Seek funding to implement the regional housing utility business plan developed in partnership with TRORC, UVLSRPC and Vital Communities	All	MARC	X				High	Variable	Grant/ Intermunicipal Services
Expand broadband access to all households in all communities.	All	MARC, Selectboards, CUD, Providers	X				High	High	Grants/ Financing

Assist Ludlow with the ongoing Better Connections project and future implementation efforts.	Ludlow	MARC, Selectboard, Village Trustees	X				Medium	Variable	Grants/ Financing
Implement recommendations from the Active Transportation Plan.	All	MARC, Selectboards, VTrans	X				Medium-High	Variable	Grants/Financing/ VTrans capital program/municipal capital budgets
Promote complete streets by implementing recommendations in the Regional Active Transportation Plan.	All	MARC, TAC, Selectboards, VTrans			X		High	Variable	Grants/Loans/CHIP
Coordination to maintain Springfield and Windsor Microtransit services	Springfield, Windsor	SEVT, VTrans, SRDC	X				Medium	High	Grants/Public Transit funding from VTrans
Develop a regional forest fragmentation study.	All	MARC		X			High	Medium	Grants, ACCD funding
Assist the town to implement recommendations in the West	West Windsor	Selectboard, Planning Commission		X			High	Variable	Grants/Loans/Bonding

Windsor Better Connections master plan.									
Shift away from the use of fossil fuels by developing the infrastructure of electric charging stations and other fuels that help to reduce or avoid greenhouse gas emissions.	All	Towns, MARC, VTrans, PSD, ACCD	X				Medium	Variable	Grants
Assist Reading with their Town Highway Garage project.	Reading	Selectboard, Highway Dept.			X		High	High	Grants/Lons/Bonding
Help the Reading Village Trust Initiative to complete priority projects.	Reading	Selectboard, Village Trust			X		Medium	Variable	G r a n t s / L o n s / B o n d

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C. Plan Relationship

1. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

In accordance with 24 V.S.A. §§ 4345a(5) and 4348a(8), the purpose of this section is to indicate how this Regional Plan relates to:

1. Development trends and needs;
2. Plans for adjacent municipalities and regions;
3. Compatibility with approved municipal plans; and,
4. Consistency with State Planning Goals under 24 V.S.A. §4302.

2. REGIONAL PLAN IN CONTEXT

For this Plan to be effective, the plans of adjacent regions and member towns must be considered, and efforts made to ensure that all plans are coordinated and consistent with one another. It is therefore advisable to review the appropriate plans to determine if conflicts exist and resolve any differences cooperatively. As of February 2026, nine of the ten towns in the Region have duly adopted municipal plans approved by the MARC pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4350. Upon request, the MARC works with local planning commissions to draft or amend municipal plans. If a town wishes to have a MARC-approved plan, this process includes helping the local planning commission incorporate required elements and planning goals into their plan. It is equally important to respect the wishes and planning goals of towns without approved plans. The MARC strives to include the perspectives of these towns in its deliberations through local representation on the Board of Commissioners.

Should conflicts between the Regional Plan and plans of adjacent regions or member towns arise, the MARC will attempt to resolve them to the benefit of all affected parties, so that the future visions of all affected parties can be realized. MARC staff can assist municipal planning commissions in updating town plans at their request. In doing so, the update process will strive to: encourage compatibility with neighboring town plans, lead to more effective management of the Region's lands, and attain both the state planning goals and the goals and policies of the Regional Plan.

3. HOW THE REGIONAL PLAN RELATES TO DEVELOPMENT TRENDS & NEEDS

Between 2000 and 2020, the Region experienced a population change of -4.7%, with a change of -6.2% from 2010 to 2020. Between 2010 and 2020, 80% of member towns experienced a decline in their respective populations, with just Baltimore and West Windsor experiencing population growth.

An overarching trend for the region and beyond is our current housing crisis. In 2020-2024, housing sales increased dramatically (i.e., both seasonal and year-round homes), which significantly decreased the availability of homes and increased home prices. Due to data limitations, it is not clear how many of those sales during that period were to new year-round residents or second home owners. A potential scenario is that the region may experience

significant future growth as a result of climate migration, such as what we experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A few communities, especially Ludlow, have experienced significant levels of growth in housing units over the last 20 years; most of that growth represents the production of additional seasonal housing units related to the Okemo Mountain Resort. The Region has experienced a shift from a once vibrant local manufacturing sector to a significant proportion of workers commuting to work locations outside of the Region. However, the Region is experiencing modest levels of investment in recent years, such as energy generation facilities, broadband/communications infrastructure, small-scale businesses in village centers and industrial parks, and incremental residential development.

Residential development in the last two decades has occurred primarily in rural locations outside of the village centers. The new Act 181-based framework hopes to reverse that trend. This Plan anticipates significant future housing development in and around our community centers. Significant housing growth is needed where municipal water and sewer infrastructure is available or planned to address our housing targets and to maintain a healthy regional economy.

This Plan acknowledges the need for new or improved water and sewer infrastructure, complete streets investments, and village revitalization initiatives to accomplish this focused development in and around villages. This Plan also strives to implement economic development strategies identified in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the East Central Vermont Economic Development District, which includes the MARC Region.

4. COMPATIBILITY WITH PLANS OF MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES

None of the region's municipal plans have been updated yet with the Act 181 framework in mind. As such, each municipal plan uses different land use category names and definitions. The region's municipal plans call for areas of dense development in the centers surrounded by rural areas, and thus are compatible with the Regional Plan. Municipalities were consulted significantly during 2025 and 2026 to help shape the Regional Plan and, specifically, the Future Land Use Map. As these municipal plans are updated over the next few years, MARC staff will encourage regional use of standard land-use categories and frameworks. Future municipal plans will include housing development targets.

ANDOVER TOWN PLAN: This Plan was adopted on September 10, 2018, and will expire in 2026. The Town is beginning a process to readopt their Town Plan in 2026.

Andover is a rural community with two small historic hamlets (i.e., Peaseville and Simonsville). There are currently no village centers, and the entire Town functions as the "rural countryside" per the first State Planning Goal [24 V.S.A. §4302(c)(1)]. The Town Plan generally calls for future growth to maintain this rural character in low-density development patterns, which is compatible with the Regional Plan.

BALTIMORE TOWN PLAN: This Plan was adopted on July 9, 2024, and expires in 2032.

Baltimore is a very small rural town with 312 residents. Similar to Andover, the entire Town functions as the “rural countryside.” The plan calls for preservation of natural resources and the environment through careful implementation of utilities and land use, as well as a focus on encouraging residential use of renewable energy. Additionally, the plan encourages the development of quality housing that meets the needs of residents of various income levels, as well as encouraging more economic opportunities within the town, such as small home businesses to reduce need for commuting and businesses that promote Baltimore’s rural character, such as agricultural and forestry services. This is compatible with the Regional Plan.

CAVENDISH TOWN PLAN: This plan was adopted on March 3, 2020, and amended with an enhanced energy plan on July 22, 2024. The plan expires in 2028. In the winter of 2026, the Planning Commission is hoping to soon update their town plan.

Both the Regional Plan and Cavendish Town Plan call for dense, mixed-uses to be concentrated in the two villages of Cavendish and Proctorsville, surrounded by a low-density, rural working landscape. Because of the Act 181 framework and without the local adoption of zoning or subdivision, the Regional Plan designated the areas surrounding the Village Centers as Transition/Infill. These Transition/Infill areas are intended to allow for housing developments in areas served by municipal water and sewer systems.

CHESTER TOWN PLAN: This plan was adopted on May 6, 2020, and expires in 2028. The town was awarded a FY26 Municipal Planning Grant to update their Town Plan. That process is beginning during the winter of 2026.

The historic village of Chester is largely surrounded by rural areas, which it aims to preserve and maintain through careful implementation of various aspects of the town plan. Chester promotes environmentally-friendly business practices and discourages development and land use patterns which negatively impact the town’s natural resources. The 2020 Town Plan calls for the development and maintenance of quality housing that is affordable and accessible encourages multi-modal transportation. . The Chester Town Plan is compatible with the Regional Plan in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4302(f)(2).

LUDLOW MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: This Plan serves both the Town and Village of Ludlow. This plan was adopted on October 7 and 8 in 2019, by the Selectboard and the Village Trustees respectively. The plan expires in 2027. The Town and Village are considering merging in 2026. The Planning Commission has begun a process to update their municipal plan in 2026.

This Plan serves both the Town and Village of Ludlow. The plan includes key themes for improvement, including growth and maintenance of a diverse population of residents of different ages, income levels, etc., with a focus on attracting more year-round residents, particularly families with children. Additionally, the plan calls for improvements to the streetscape of Ludlow, such as filling empty storefronts, bringing in more high-tech businesses, and better traffic control to ensure safety and enjoyment for those walking around town, improving the experience of both those visiting and permanent residents of Ludlow to increase tourism and satisfaction of those living there. Ludlow's plan is compatible with the Regional Plan as both call for intensive development to be concentrated in and around the Village, and in the resort areas and industrial park/areas.

READING TOWN PLAN 2022: This Plan was adopted on February 14, 2022, and expires in 2030.

A large portion of Reading's land area is limited from future development by public ownership, conservation easement or enrollment in the Current Use program. Intensive development is encouraged in the village and hamlet areas to the extent it is appropriate without water or sewer infrastructure. Reading implemented an important recommendation in their 2020 Plan by completing a water and wastewater feasibility study for the village of Felchville. The Regional Future Land Use Map shows a Village Area, where there are presently adequate soils, but also where a wastewater solution is proposed in the study. Reading's plan also articulates a desire for a rural landscape in the remainder of town. This town plan is compatible with the Regional Plan.

SPRINGFIELD TOWN PLAN: This Plan was adopted on August 12, 2024, and expires in 2032.

As the largest town in the Region, Springfield maintains a large network of infrastructure and is a center of economic activity for much of the Region. The Town Plan encourages the revitalization of the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. The Plan also calls for working landscape activities, outdoor recreation, and other appropriate low-intensity uses in the more rural countryside. The Town Plan is compatible with the Regional Plan.

WEATHERSFIELD TOWN PLAN: Adopted on May 1, 2017, Weathersfield's Town Plan is currently expired. The Planning Commission has a draft Town Plan that they are currently preparing for the adoption process in 2026.

In their 2017 Plan, Weathersfield calls for intensive development focused in the villages of Ascutney and Perkinsville, with smaller concentrations at Downer's Corners, and rural character elsewhere. The Plan includes detailed information on environmental conservation and historic and scenic resource protections. The draft 2026 Plan is more focused on the rural parts of town, generally. Neither of the villages of Ascutney or Perkinsville have wastewater infrastructure at present. The municipal water system in Ascutney has capacity

limitations, but they are actively working on system improvements within the Country Estates mobile home park. This plan is compatible with the Regional Plan.

WEST WINDSOR TOWN PLAN: The town of West Windsor adopted their town plan in September 14, 2020, and it expires in 2028. The Town intends to update their plan over the next couple of years.

The 2020 Town Plan includes an overarching list of Strategic Goals for 2020 and future years with a range of improvements suggested.. These goals include aims to revitalize vacant and underused buildings, emphasis on fighting climate change through the creation of a Sustainability Committee, more development of Ascutney Outdoors and other recreational opportunities, further development of aging in place programs and an overall goal to bring more families into West Windsor to increase school attendance in the newly formed Mt. Ascutney School District. The plan calls for concentrating intensive development within the village/primary growth and resort base areas. A residential/secondary growth area is identified to allow moderately dense housing to locate around the village. A small commercial/light industrial area is located where there is a small, existing cluster of non-residential uses (i.e. veterinary services, humane society and wood pellet facility). The remainder of Town is designated for rural, low-density uses. The 2020 town plan is compatible with the Regional Plan.

WINDSOR TOWN PLAN: The Town adopted their Plan on November 12, 2019, and it expires in 2027. The town was awarded a FY26 Municipal Planning Grant to update their Town Plan. That process is beginning during the winter of 2026.

Windsor exhibits a dense downtown that is surrounded by rural areas. The community was once a manufacturing center but now functions largely as a bedroom community for the Upper Valley. The 2019 Town Plan encourages a vibrant downtown surrounded by rural countryside. It calls for maintenance of existing infrastructure and systems as well as improvements to revitalize Windsor’s downtown and attract more business and employment opportunities. The Plan is compatible with the Regional Plan.

5. COMPATIBILITY WITH PLANS OF ADJOINING REGIONS

The three Vermont regional planning commissions that adjoin Mount Ascutney Regional Commission are Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission, Windham Regional Commission, and Rutland Regional Planning Commission. All of these draft plans follow the requirements of Act 181 and the future land use methodology last revised in April 18, 2025, and as such are generally consistent and compatible. A fourth adjoins the Region to the east in New Hampshire: the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission. Each has adopted a regional plan. The MARC has reviewed each of them, and taken care to ensure that the goals, policies, and recommendations of the Regional Plan are compatible with those of plans adopted by adjacent commissions. A review of plans for each adjoining region is summarized below:

RUTLAND REGIONAL PLAN: Rutland Regional Planning Commission’s (RRPC) proposed 2026 Regional Plan was reviewed as a pre-application during the fall of 2025 by the Vermont Land Use Review Board. Towns in this region include Benson, Brandon, Castleton, Chittenden, Clarendon, Danby, Fair Haven, Hubbardton, Ira, Killington, Middletown Springs, Mendon, Mount Holly, Mount Tabor, Pawlet, Pittsford, Poultney, Proctor, Rutland City, Rutland Town, Shrewsbury, Sudbury, Tinmouth, Wallingford, Wells, West Haven, and West Rutland.

The Mount Holly/Ludlow town line is where the two regions adjoin. The Future Land Use designations along this boundary align perfectly. Most of the area is proposed as Rural-Conservation, which largely mirrors the Okemo State Forest and Tiny Pond Wildlife Management Areas. The remainder is Resource-Based Recreation Area for Okemo Mountain Resort. The RRPC plan is compatible with the adjacent designations in the MARC Regional Plan.

TWO RIVERS-OTTAUQUECHEE REGIONAL PLAN: The Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission last updated their Regional Plan in February 2025. They are updating it in 2026 per Act 181. Towns in this region include Barnard, Bethel, Bradford, Braintree, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Chelsea, Corinth, Fairlee, Granville, Hancock, Hartford, Hartland, Newbury, Norwich, Pittsfield, Plymouth, Pomfret, Randolph, Rochester, Royalton, Sharon, Stockbridge, Strafford, Thetford, Topsham, Tunbridge, Vershire, West Fairlee, and Woodstock.

Much of the areas surrounding this boundary between the two regions are rural in existing character and desired future conditions. The draft 2026 TRORC Regional Plan calls for a patchwork of Rural-Conservation, Rural- Agriculture and Forestry, and Rural-General, which are generally consistent on both sides of the regional boundary. Tyson’s legacy Village Center is located in Plymouth, but in very close proximity to Ludlow. The Rural-General on the Ludlow side of Tyson anticipates “spill over” development of a modest density, surrounding the adjacent Village Center. In Windsor, an Enterprise Area just south of the Hartland Town Line reflects the existing Artisan’s Park and adjacent businesses. In Hartland, the TRORC designation of Rural-General is intended to transition into a rural countryside setting and to protect the I-91 Exit 9 interchange area’s transportation functionality. Overall, the plan presents a multi-faceted approach to maintaining and improving a wide variety of issues and areas in the TRORC Region, many of these goals directly overlapping with those of the MARC Regional and town plans. The TRORC plan is compatible with the adjacent designations in the MARC Regional Plan.

WINDHAM REGIONAL PLAN: The Windham Regional Commission (WRPC) last updated their regional plan in 2025. WRC is in the process of updating it to comply with the Act 181 legislation passed in 2024. Towns in this region include Athens, Brattleboro, Brookline, Dover, Dummerston, Grafton, Guilford, Halifax, Jamaica, Londonderry, Marlboro, Newfane, Putney,

Readsboro, Rockingham, Searsburg, Somerset, Stratton, Townshend, Vernon, Wardsboro, Westminster, Weston, Whitingham, Wilmington, Windham, and Winhall.

Windham's draft 2026 Future Land Use Maps are not all available at this time in 2026. The 2025 WRC plan for the area that borders the MARC region is primarily a rural area in both existing conditions and desired future conditions. Along this boundary are primarily WRC's Resource or Productive Rural areas very much consistent with MARC's Rural-Conservation and Rural-Agricultural and Forestry Areas. There is a small Commercial Node and Rural Residential Areas along the VT Route 103 corridor in Bartonsville, while there are Rural designations on the Chester side in MARC's Future Land Use Map. These designations are general consistent with the old VT 103 Corridor Management Plan developed together by both regions in 2009. The WRC plan is compatible with the adjacent designations in the MARC Regional Plan.

2015 UPPER VALLEY LAKE SUNAPEE REGIONAL PLAN: The Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC) is in New Hampshire. Towns in this region include Acworth, Charlestown, Claremont, Cornish, Croydon, Dorchester, Enfield, Goshen, Grantham, Hanover, Lebanon, Lempster, Lyme, New London, Newbury, Newport, Orange, Orford, Piermont, Plainfield, Springfield, Sunapee, Unity, Washington, and Wilmot.

The Connecticut River forms the boundary between their region and southern Windsor County. The UVLSRPC Regional Plan was last updated in 2015, outlining three major themes composing the vision for the Region: 1) Opportunity, 2) Resiliency, and 3) Resources. The first theme, Opportunity, outlines access to a wide variety of resources (housing, health, education, economic development, etc.) and how those resources impact the region's current and future success. The second theme, Resiliency, discusses more about the Region's preparedness for different events and their ability to bounce back to maintain the Region's strengths despite adversity and better benefit the community in the long run. The third and final overarching theme, Resources, encompasses the UVLSRPC's wide variety of natural, economic and cultural resources and explains the importance of preservation and sustainable use of these resources to foster and maintain continued success in the Region. The UVLSRPC plan is compatible with the adjacent designations in the MARC Regional Plan.

Due to the developmental nature of the local, regional, and state agency plans, the MARC provides elements of its plan for review and continually reviews elements of adjoining regions and member communities for consistency. The MARC is working with the various local, private and state entities to ensure planning consistency at all levels. As such, the MARC has provided each town in the Region; the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs; the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources; the Southern Windsor/Windham Solid Waste Management District; Conservation Commissions; Chambers of Commerce; regional development corporations; and abutting towns and regional commissions with copies of the draft of the Regional Plan and an invitation to comment.

6. CONSISTENCY WITH STATE PLANNING GOALS

The Regional Plan was reviewed for consistency with the State planning goals under 24 V.S.A. §4303. Under state law, "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" [24 V.S.A. § 4302]. The proposed plan was found to be consistent with the State planning goals which are summarized below.

24 V.S.A. § 4302(b) Engage in a continuing planning process that will further the following 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.

24 V.S.A. § 4302 (c) To further the following specific goals:

- (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 discouraged. 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 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 general character and 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.
- (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.
- (3) To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.
- (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.

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- (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.
 - (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.
 - (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.
 - (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.
 - (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.
 - (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.
-

- (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 apartments within or attached to single-family residences which provide affordable housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives, elders, or persons who have a disability should be allowed.
- (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.
- (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.
- (14) To encourage flood resilient communities.
- (A) New development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, 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.
- (15) To equitably distribute environmental benefits and burdens as described in 3 V.S.A. chapter 72.

Regional Plan Maps

[Map 1 - Water Resources](#)

[Map 2 - Utilities](#)

[Map 3 - Topographic Constraints](#)

[Map 4 - Septic Suitability](#)

[Map 5 - Recreation and Conservation](#)

[Map 6 - Forest Blocks and Habitat](#)

[Map 7 - Agriculturally Important Soils](#)

[Map 8 - Current Land Use](#)

[Map 9 - Future Land Use](#)

[Map 10 - Historic Districts](#)

Appendix A:

Public Outreach and Engagement Summary

The process to update the 2026 Regional Plan involved the most public outreach and engagement the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC) has ever done.

The previous 2022 Regional Plan involved significant levels of engagement, especially with an ad hoc committee to inform the comprehensive rewrite of the Land Use Chapter at that time. During 2024 through 2026, the MARC attended more than 110 public meetings among other outreach activities to inform the region about the proposed changes, to collect input, and to review drafts with municipal boards, partner organizations, individuals and agencies that are engaged with under-represented communities, and the general public.

Statutory Framework

Our outreach efforts in 2024 through 2026 were enhanced due to the enhanced importance of the Regional Plan regarding the state designation programs and Act 250 Tiers 1A and 1B, in accordance with Act 181 (H.687) of 2024. These outreach efforts were also consistent with statutory requirements, including the following excerpts, and allowing for “meaningful participation” under the Vermont Environmental Justice Act.

24 V.S.A. § 4302. Purpose; goals

(b) It is also the intent of the Legislature that municipalities, regional planning commissions, and State agencies shall engage in a continuing planning process that will further the following 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.*

3 V.S.A. § 6003. Environmental Justice State Policy

It is the policy of the State of Vermont that no segment of the population of the State should, because of its racial, cultural, or economic makeup, bear a disproportionate share of environmental burdens or be denied an equitable share of environmental benefits. It is further the policy of the State of Vermont to provide the opportunity for the meaningful participation of all individuals, with particular attention to environmental justice focus populations, in the development, implementation, or enforcement of any law, regulation, or policy.

Project Websites

Initiated in 2023 before the Regional Plan update process began, the MARC developed a housing suitability study, which proved to be a valuable basis for the subsequent Regional Plan Future Land Use mapping updates related to Act 181 (see Figure 1). That study identified better suited areas for housing developments based on the availability of infrastructure, sidewalks, transit services, and other features, and avoiding sensitive environmental resources. There was a lot of outreach to local planning commissions and housing commissions to educate them about the tool and how to incorporate the information into local planning efforts.

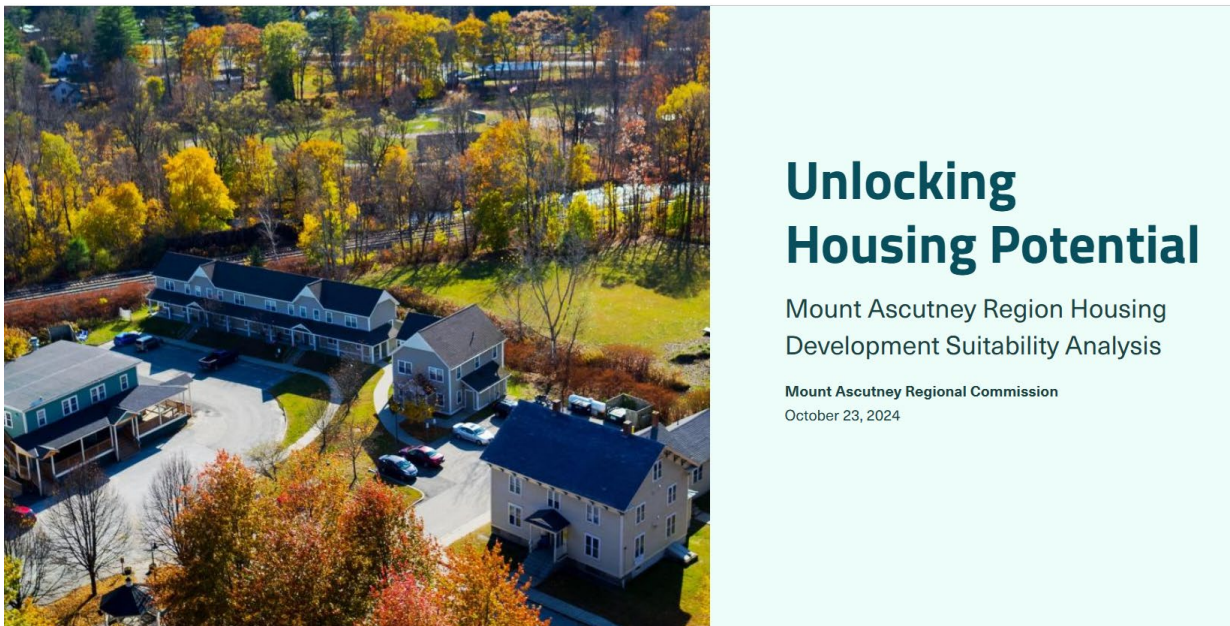


Figure 1: See MARC's Housing Suitability Study. See the [Story Map](#) for more detail about the project or go to the [Interactive Map](#) to check out the tool.

In 2025, MARC staff developed an online story map to inform people about the Act 181-related Regional Plan update process. It also included an interactive online mapping tool and survey to collect input from municipal officials and the general public to inform our Future Land Use Map updates (see Figure 2). Staff reviewed the tool during local planning commission meetings. It was not very successful in generating input.

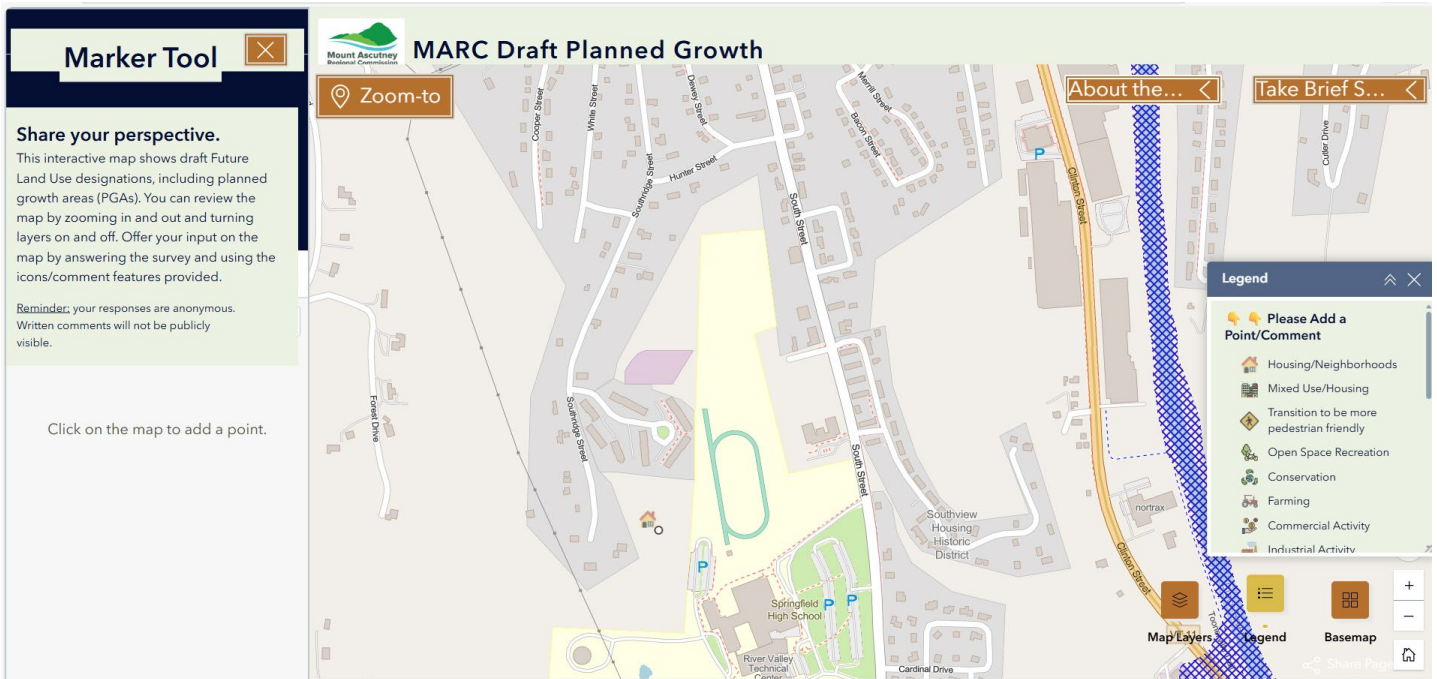


Figure 2: MARC developed an online map that collected input about where future growth should be encouraged through a mapping marker tool and survey.

Public Meetings

As of February 2026, the MARC spent a considerable amount of time attending approximately 65 meetings of municipal boards, generally selectboard, planning commission and housing commission meetings (see Figure 3 for a generalized schedule). An additional 30 meetings with municipal staff were held to collect input and help to develop a Future Land Use Map that is consistent with the Act 181 framework as well as town plans.

To date, the Regional Plan updates have been discussed at 11 Board of Commissioner meetings, 8 Regional Plan Committee meetings, and 3 Transportation Advisory Committee meetings.

Two open house meetings are scheduled for February and March 2026 to educate and get additional input on the Regional Plan.

Additional outreach was also conducted in various forms, including:

- ✓ MARC Quarterly Newsletters
- ✓ Regular updates on MARC’s website
- ✓ Regular updates on MARC’s Facebook page
- ✓ Disseminating information through email and Constant Contact
- ✓ Collaboration with partner organizations
 - Springfield Regional Development Corporation
 - Windham and Windsor Housing Trust
 - Springfield Housing Authority
 - Springfield Area Housing Coalition
 - Springfield Area Working Communities Challenge
 - Springfield on the Move
 - Springfield Supportive Housing Program

- Southeast Vermont Transit
- ✓ Email correspondence with local energy committees and conservation commissions
- ✓ Met with Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development staff to get input on Future Land Uses, especially about eligibility concerns with respect to expanding or proposed new designated centers and neighborhoods
- ✓ Met with VNRC to review the draft Future Land Use Map and to answer questions
- ✓ Outreach with local media, including two interviews and resulting articles in the Chester Telegraph

Collaboration with some of our partner organizations helped us to get input from under-represented communities.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES & TIMELINE

- 
PHASE 1 | MARC Internal Planning & Coordination (August 2024-Ongoing)
 - Develop initial draft FLU maps and housing target disaggregation methodology.
 - Create educational materials, including summaries and municipality-specific two-pagers.
 - Develop municipal engagement templates and materials.
- 
PHASE 2 | Inform and Educate about Act 181 & Engagement Process (Fall 2024)
 - Hold educational meetings with Select Boards to introduce the project, explain Act 181, and outline the engagement process.
 - Distribute informational materials to municipalities; relevant regional and state agencies, and Planning Commissions.
 - Develop customized engagement plans for each municipality based on their input.
- 
PHASE 3 | Assess Environmental Benefits & Burdens (Fall 2024-Spring 2025; Ongoing)
 - Map environmental justice focus populations within the MARC region.
 - Define and visualize environmental benefits and burdens.
 - Assess how the proposed map changes affect environmental justice populations.
- 
PHASE 4 | Engagement to review draft FLU map (Spring 2025)
 - Conduct municipal and regional meetings to review and amend the draft FLU map.
 - Hold discussion groups and community meetings as per the municipal engagement plans.
 - Distribute an interactive map to gather public feedback.
- 
PHASE 5 | Review final FLU map draft and discuss housing targets (Summer 2025)
 - Conduct review meetings with all IAPs to reflect their input and reach consensus.
 - Discuss housing target methodology and implications.
 - Hold Select Board and Planning Commission meetings to review the final draft and housing targets.
- 
PHASE 6 | Finalize map and housing targets, prepare for formal approval (Winter 2025)
 - Present final map and housing targets to MARC's Regional Plan Committee, MARC Board, and the State Land Use Review Board for approval.

Figure 3: MARC Regional Plan outreach steps are summarized above with approximate timelines. Phase 5 and 6 continued later into Winter 2026.

Appendix C: Housing Targets

The 2026 Regional Plan includes the housing targets for member towns pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4348a(a)(9). The purpose of this Appendix is to provide additional context about the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission housing targets. Municipal Plan housing elements now must include a recommended program to address housing needs and targets in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4382(a)(10).

Statewide Housing Needs Assessment

The Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) hired the Vermont Housing Financing Agency (VHFA) to complete a [2025-2029 Statewide Housing Needs Assessment](#). It is a 5-year document that evaluates the current and expected need for housing development in the state by 2029. Chapter 24 for Windsor County is attached for reference.

Per Act 181 (H.687) of 2024, an *Appendix 1 - Statewide and Regional Housing Targets* was also developed by VHFA for DHCD. It was last updated on March 10, 2025. The resulting housing targets by regional planning commission are shown below.

Total additional home targets, 2025-2030 and 2025-2050

Region	2025-2030		2025-2050	
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Addison County	1,296	1,978	4,103	8,088
Bennington County	1,453	2,188	4,483	8,836
Central Vermont	2,540	3,864	8,045	15,856
Chittenden County	7,301	10,537	15,783	47,407
Lamoille County	1,387	1,959	3,359	6,621
Mount Ascutney	1,207	1,781	3,750	7,391
Northeastern Vermont	2,836	4,193	9,014	17,768
Northwest Vermont	2,144	3,249	6,755	13,315
Rutland Regional	2,707	4,065	8,100	15,965
Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee	2,424	3,640	7,692	15,162
Windham Regional	2,571	3,730	7,933	15,635
Vermont	27,867	41,185	79,018	172,044

2025-2030: "Lower" assume VT year-round households increase at the 2016-2019 average annual rate of 1.02%. "Higher" assume the 2019-2022 rate of 1.77%.
 2025-2050: "Lower" based on population projection. "Higher" assume VT year-round households increase at the long-term annual average rate of 1.4%.
 All targets include additional projected year-round households plus homes needed to normalize vacancy rates, eliminate homelessness, replace destroyed homes, and provide a margin to address Vermont's 15% seasonal home rate.

As described in VHFA’s Appendix 1, Vermont’s housing deficit is defined by the following gaps, which are described in more detail in their report:

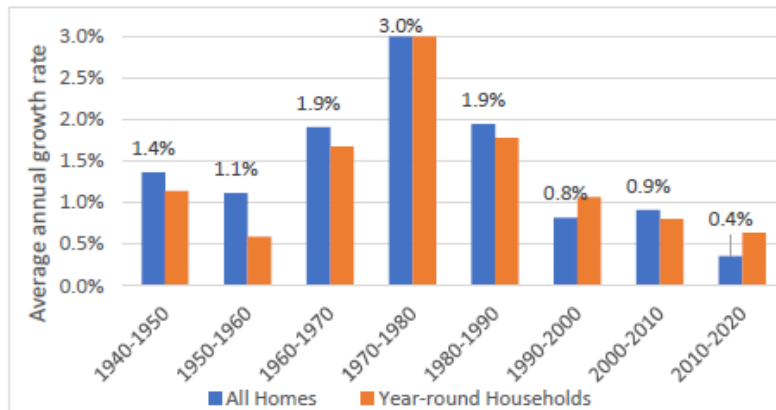
1. The rate of home development has not kept pace with demand.
2. High prevalence of seasonal and other secondary use homes.
3. Vermont’s population is the third oldest in the nation. Those who are “aging in place” have kept many homes out of the market for younger potential buyers.
4. Vermont’s in-migration increased substantially during 2021 and 2022, resulting in home prices and rents increasing at a higher rate.

Vermont's current housing deficit, 2024

Region	Homes needed to normalize vacancy rate	Homes needed to house the homeless	Year-round homes needed
Addison County	196	165	361
Bennington County	214	180	394
Central Vermont	384	323	707
Chittenden County	936	758	1,694
Lamoille County	161	135	296
Mount Ascutney	179	150	329
Northeastern Vermont	431	362	793
Northwest Vermont	323	271	594
Rutland Regional	386	325	711
Two Rivers-Ottauquechee	368	309	677
Windham Regional	379	318	697
Vermont	3,957	3,295	7,252

Estimates of homelessness are from the 2023 Vermont Point-In-Time count which was the most recent available when this report was prepared. Estimates of vacancy rates and estimates of the housing stock dedicated to seasonal homes are from the U.S. Census Bureau for 2022, the most recent available when this report was prepared.

Historic average annual home and household growth rates, 1940-2020



Decade	Average annual new households	Average annual new total homes
1940-1950	1,202	1,555
1950-1960	681	1,440
1960-1970	2,161	2,876
1970-1980	4,918	5,813
1980-1990	3,685	4,802
1990-2000	2,551	2,317
2000-2010	2,107	2,816
2010-2020	1,545	1,178

Municipal Housing Targets

The Mount Ascutney Regional Commission broke the regional housing target down based on a few key factors, each weighted about 33%:

1. Population (2020 Decennial Population, US Census Bureau);
2. Infrastructure capacity (municipal water and sewer system capacities); and,
3. Future land use category acreages (see below).

Regional Future Land Use Category	Housing Target
Downtown Center	15%
Village Center	10%
Planned Growth Area	45%
Village Area	10%
Enterprise Area	0%
Transition/Infill Area	10%
Rural-General	5%
Rural- Agriculture and Forestry	5%
Rural-Conservation	0%

As included in Chapter 9 (Housing) of the Regional Plan, the following are the municipal housing targets developed based on the above methodology.

Targets for Additional Homes for 2025-2030 and 2025-2050

Town	2025-2030		2025-2050	
	Low	High	Low	High
Andover	13	19	39	78
Baltimore	4	6	13	26
Cavendish	41	61	128	252
Chester	132	195	411	810
Ludlow	115	169	357	703
Reading	17	25	53	105
Springfield	382	564	1,187	2,340
Weathersfield	78	116	244	480
West Windsor	45	67	141	278
Windsor	379	559	1,177	2,319
Total	1,207	1,781	3,750	7,391

Notes:

MARC targets are from the VT Housing Needs Assessment 2025-2029 Appendix 1: Statewide and Regional Housing Targets

Town housing targets are based on the MARC targets, determined based on population, infrastructure capacity, and future land use category acreages.