

SUMMARY: REGIONAL PLAN APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR [MARC]

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

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

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

Plan Consistency & Compatibility

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

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

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

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

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8	Recreation	☒	☐
9	Agriculture and Forest Industries	☒	☐
10	Use of Resources	☒	☐
11	Housing	☒	☐
12	Public Facilities	☒	☐
13	Child Care	☒	☐
14	Flood Resilience	☒	☐
15	Environmental Benefits and Burdens	☒	☐

B. Consistency – Regional Plan Purposes § 4347 Met Not Met

Is the plan consistent with the purposes of the Regional Plan?	☒	☐
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C. Consistency - Required Elements § 4348a Met Not Met

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

D. Compatibility – Adjacent Regional Planning Areas § 4302(f)(2) Met Not Met

Is the plan consistent with the plans of adjacent regional planning areas?	☒	☐
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Mapping – Future Land Use Areas Met Not Met

Does the plan's Future Land Use Map delineate areas following the required mapping process and standards?	☒	☐
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PLAN AND PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

OUTREACH AND NOTIFICATION

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

Outreach and Notification Timelines	Complete	Actual or anticipated date(s)
Throughout the planning process, the RPC has solicited the input of member municipalities, local residents, and organizations (24 V.S.A. § 4348(a))	☒	
60 days before first RPC hearing: Send draft regional plan to LURB (24 V.S.A. § 4348(b))	☒	02/24/2026
At least 30 days before first RPC hearing, plan and accompanying documentation sent to state and regional partners ((24 V.S.A. § 4348(d)(1))	☒	04/24/2026
At least 30 days before first RPC hearing, RPC provides member municipalities with description of map changes, Tier 1B info, designation info (24 V.S.A. § 4348(d)(2))	☒	04/24/2026
RPC holds at least two public hearings (24 V.S.A. § 4348(c))	☒	05/25/2026 & 07/27/2026
Regional Plan adoption by regional planning commission (24 V.S.A. § 4348(g))	☒	07/27/2026
Within 15 days following adoption, RPC submits regionally adopted plan to LURB for determination compliance (24 V.S.A. § 4348(h)(1))	☒	08/11/2026
	☐	

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

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN PLAN DEVELOPMENT

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

The process to update the 2026 Regional Plan involved the most public outreach and engagement the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC) has ever done.

During 2024 through 2026, the MARC attended more than 130 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.

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, housing commissions, Windham and Windsor Housing Trust, Springfield Development Corporation, Springfield Housing Authority, and Springfield Supportive Housing Program to educate them about the tool and how to incorporate the information into local planning efforts.

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. Staff reviewed the tool during local planning commission meetings. It was not very successful in generating input.

Public Meetings and Engagement: The MARC spent a considerable amount of time attending approximately 97 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 13 Board of Commissioner meetings, 2 public hearings, 10 Regional Plan Committee meetings, and 4 Transportation Advisory Committee meetings.

Two open house meetings were held in February and March 2026 to educate and get additional input on the Regional Plan.

A project steering committee was established to guide MARC's highway safety planning effort. Outcomes of that plan are incorporated into Volume 2, the Regional Transportation Plan, and provides sound guidance on improving transportation safety for all users. Additional input was also gathered through outreach with Southeast Vermont Transit, the Regional Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities (O&D) Committee, and Springfield Airport Commission.

Outreach to local conservation commissions helped to inform updates, especially with the Natural Resources Chapter.

Numerous presentations and other outreach to local housing commissions informed updates to the Housing and Land Use Chapters, notably with the proposed housing targets and Tier 1b areas.

An ad hoc citizens group in Windsor engaged with MARC staff and Windsor town officials to provide input which helped to inform the future land use plans for the former Windsor prison site.

To inform updates to Volume 3, the Enhanced Energy Plan for the region, MARC staff tabled at Reading's Energy Fair on September 16, 2025, held a listening session at the Windsor Welcome Center on September 28, 2025, and maintained regular communications and solicited comments from local energy committees over the past year.

MARC staff met and coordinated regularly with social service providers to help inform our planning effort as it relates to housing, land use, and environmental justice specifically to reach people who have not historically been involved. Presentations were held at numerous Springfield Housing Coalition meetings, including on April 1, 2025, October 6, 2025, and April 7, 2026. In June 2026, we reached out to members of the Springfield Housing Coalition and Springfield Supportive Housing Program to review and collect input on a draft environmental benefits and burdens analysis. We will be presenting it at a July 2026 Springfield Housing Coalition meeting to collect additional input from their membership. Additionally, we are holding another open house in early July 2026.

Input from the Springfield Area Working Communities Challenge was particularly helpful with respect to increasing workforce participation through addressing systemic barriers associated with transportation, childcare, housing, education, and recovery.

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.

Feedback received from these various outreach activities are generally summarized below:

- The region and state have a tremendous need for housing.
- Growth in this region has been stagnant for two decades.
- Municipalities have not yet updated their municipal plans based on the Act 181 future land use framework, but a few are just beginning that process.
- It takes a long time to plan and implement water, sewer and sidewalk infrastructure projects.
- Federal funding opportunities for complete streets and other transportation projects are not sufficient to meet the demand.
- Workforce training and daycare are significant needs for the region.
- There is no permanent homeless shelter in the region, but the Springfield Supportive Housing Program provides essential services.
- Redeveloping buildings in the downtown and village centers for mixed use and housing is critical for the region, but those projects are generally more expensive and complicated due to brownfield contamination, historic preservation, fire and safety code, and flood hazard related issues.
- Rural needs: there is a recognition that a majority of the housing targets should be met within the centers, planned growth areas, and village areas, but that a significant amount is also needed in rural areas (e.g.,

duplexes, accessory dwellings, mobile homes) while also protecting rural character and rural economic activities (e.g., farming, forestry, outdoor recreation).

- Significant concerns were expressed in a few communities about how these regional planning efforts affect rural areas. There was relief that Tier 3 and the Road Rule were repealed. However, concern remains about how to promote housing production and economic development in our most rural areas, and concern specifically about the Rural Agricultural and Forestry category.

NEW TIER 1B REQUESTS

With this application, the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission is requesting Tier 1B area approvals for portions of the following municipalities: Chester, Ludlow, Reading, Springfield, West Windsor and Windsor. These Tier 1B area requests are documented in the attached memo.

PART A – CONSISTENCY WITH STATE PLANNING GOALS

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

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

4302(b) – GENERAL GOALS

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

Page numbers: Chapter 1, page 7

Narrative:

Those 4 goals are incorporated specifically in our regional plan, and the Regional Plan is consistent with those general goals. The enhanced levels of engagement and outreach conducted for this 2026 Regional Plan update were intended to ensure local input into this update, especially with respect to our housing targets and future land use mapping process. Our implementation actions are also intended to help further our land use policies and seek to address our housing targets – which will likely involve municipalities working creatively together, for which MARC is poised to assist.

4302(c) – SPECIFIC GOALS

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

- (A) Intensive residential development should be encouraged primarily in downtown centers, village centers, planned growth areas, and village areas as described in section 4348a of this title, and strip development along highways should be avoided. These areas should be planned so as to accommodate a substantial majority of housing needed to reach the housing targets developed for each region pursuant to subdivision 4348a(a)(9) of this title.
- (B) Economic growth should be encouraged in locally and regionally designated growth areas, employed to revitalize existing village and urban centers, or both.

- (C) Public investments, including the construction or expansion of infrastructure, should reinforce the planned growth patterns of the area.
- (D) Development should be undertaken in accordance with smart growth principles as defined in subdivision 2791(13) of this title.

Page numbers: Volume 1: Ch. 3, pages 1-31 and Ch. 4, pages 3-5. Volume 2, pages 19-28.

Narrative:

The Land Use Chapter is consistent with this Goal. The Utilities and Facilities Chapter adds additional detail with respect to public investments. The Regional Transportation Plan (Volume 2) discussed the desired transportation infrastructure for each future land use category.

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

Page numbers: Ch. 10, pages 1-16

Narrative:

The Economic Development Chapter is consistent with this goal. It was developed in partnership with the Springfield Regional Development Corporation, and it incorporates the recently amended Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of the East Central Vermont Economic Development District.

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

Page numbers: Ch. 10, pages 3, 6, 10, 13-14, 16; and Ch. 4, pages 12-13, 22.

Narrative:

The Education section in the Utilities and Facilities Chapter on pages 12-13, and pages 10 and 13-14 the Economic Development Chapter address these themes and are consistent with this goal. Note that pages 8 and 14 in Chapter 10 discusses the important work of the Springfield Area Working Communities Challenge as it relates to this goal.

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

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

Page numbers: Volume 2, Regional Transportation Plan, pages 1-63

Narrative:

This Chapter (Volume 2) of the Regional Plan is consistent with this goal. This Chapter also incorporates the Regional Active Transportation Plan by reference. The update was informed by bicycle/pedestrian at-large members of our Transportation Advisory Committee, and in coordination with Southeast Vermont Transit staff. Specifically, see the Transportation Goals and Policies on pages 4-9, and the Transportation Needs section starting on page 49. Revisions have addressed the LURB's advisory recommendations.

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

- A) significant natural and fragile areas;**
- B) outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands, and wetlands;**
- C) significant scenic roads, waterways, and views;**
- D) important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites, and archaeologically sensitive areas.**

Page numbers: Ch. 6, pages 8-18, and Ch. 7, pages 1-12.

Narrative:

Sections of the Natural Resources Chapter and Cultural and Aesthetic Resources address these issues and are consistent with this goal. See the Wildlife Habitat and Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species on pages 7-8 in Chapter 6, Water Resources section on pages 8-18 in Chapter 6, Scenic Resources section on pages 9-12 in Chapter 7, and Cultural Resources on pages 1-9 in Chapter 7. Revisions have addressed the LURB's advisory recommendations.

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

- A) Vermont's air, water, wildlife, mineral, and land resources should be planned for use and development according to the principles set forth in 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a).**
- B) Vermont's water quality should be maintained and improved according to the policies and actions developed in the basin plans established by the Secretary of Natural Resources under 10 V.S.A. § 1253.**
- C) Vermont's forestlands should be managed so as to maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors.**

Page numbers: Ch. 6, pages 1-24, Ch. 3, pages 19-21

Narrative:

The Natural Resources Chapter is consistent with this goal, with subsections for each section in Goal 6A. See the Water Quality section on pages 9-11. See the Forest Fragmentation section on page 4. The Rural-Conservation and Rural-Agriculture and Forestry future land use categories are also consistent with this goal.

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

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

Page numbers: Volume 3 (Regional Enhanced Energy Plan), pages 1-57

Narrative:

The Enhanced Energy Plan (Volume 3) of the Regional Plan is consistent with this goal. Specifically, see the Energy Conservation section on page 39, Transportation section on pages 40-41, Thermal Efficiency section on pages 41-42, and the Renewable Energy Generation section starting on page 43.

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

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

Page numbers: Ch. 4, pages 15-20, 23-24

Narrative:

The Recreation Section in the Utilities and Facilities Chapter is consistent with this goal. Recreation Policy #5 addresses Goal 8A. The Recreation Section on pages 15-20 in Chapter 4 addresses Goal 8B.

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

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

Page numbers: Ch. 6, pages 2-6, 22

Narrative:

The Agricultural and Forest Resources sections in Chapter 6 address A-E above and are consistent with this goal. Revisions have addressed the LURB's advisory recommendations.

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

Page numbers: Ch. 6, pages 2, 20-21, 24

Narrative:

See the discussion of Mineral Resources on pages 20-21 in Chapter 6, as well as Goal 6 on page 2, and Policies 18-23 on page 24. Revisions have addressed the LURB's advisory recommendations.

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

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

Page numbers: Ch. 9, pages 1-15

Narrative:

The Housing Chapter addresses Goal 11 A-D. The Keys to the Valley Initiative, while based on older data, is incorporated by reference and provides important context for addressing our region's housing needs. Revisions have addressed the LURB's advisory recommendations.

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

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

Page numbers: Ch. 4, pages 1-24

Narrative:

A major theme in the 2026 Regional Plan is the existing and planned water and sewer infrastructure needed to support the housing targets and village revitalization initiatives in the region. Please see page 1 in Chapter 4 regarding the rate of growth. Revisions have addressed the LURB's advisory recommendations.

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

Page numbers: Ch. 4, pages 14, 23, and Ch. 10, pages 14-15

Narrative:

The Economic Development Chapter discusses how childcare availability and cost influences labor force participation. The Utilities and Facilities Chapter speaks to the need to reduce local regulatory barriers for childcare facilities.

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

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

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

Page numbers: Ch. 6, pages 11-17, Ch. 3, pages 30-31

Narrative:

The Natural Resources Chapter includes a detailed description of community flood resilience in the region, see pages 11-17 in Chapter 6. See also Land Use Policies 27 and 28 on pages 30-31.

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

Page numbers: Ch. 1, page 8

Narrative:

This goal is included as Goal #18 on page 8 in Chapter 1. The concept of environmental justice is integrated throughout many policies in this Regional Plan (e.g., Transportation Goals 2 and 4 on page 4 in Volume 2, Housing Policy #2 on page 14 in Chapter 9, and Utilities and Facilities Goals 3 and 4 on page 1 of Chapter 4. We have also added a new Chapter 8 and a revised discussion of our outreach and engagement efforts (e.g., Section E on page 1-6 and Appendix A) to address this Goal and the LURB's required revisions.

PART B – CONSISTENCY WITH THE PURPOSES OF A REGIONAL PLAN

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

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

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

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

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

Page numbers: Ch. 1, pages 6-9

Narrative:

The Regional Plan as a whole addresses and reinforces these purposes. Chapter 1 includes overriding statements of the desired principles that should guide the growth and development of the Region and protect the natural and built environment. Revisions have addressed the LURB’s request for more detail about outreach to environmental justice populations.

PART C – REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF A REGIONAL PLAN

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

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

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

Page numbers: Ch. 1, pages 6-9, and various (see the goals in the beginning of most chapters, and policies at the end of most chapters)

Narrative:

Chapter 1 includes broad goals and policies intended to guide future development in the region. Each subsequent chapter, with a few exceptions, includes more specific goals and policies regarding applicable resources, utilities or facilities. The Land Use Chapter includes standards to guide developments specific to each future lands use category.

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

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

Page numbers: Ch. 3, pages 17-21, and Ch. 6, pages 1-24

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

The Natural Resources Chapter (Ch. 6) generally describes the existing natural resources and working lands elements, and includes goals and policies for their conservation and continued ecosystem functions. The corresponding maps help to identify these features (i.e., Map 1 Water Resources, Map 3 Topographic Constraints, Map 4 Septic Suitability, Map 5 Recreation and Conservation, Map 6 Forest Blocks and Habitat, Map 7 Agriculturally Important Soils). In the Land Use Chapter (Ch. 3), the Rural-Conservation Area includes significant natural resources, including areas for aquifer protection, wetland, forest blocks, wildlife habitat and habitat connectors, or for other conservation purposes. The Utilities and Facilities Chapter (Ch. 4) discusses recreational facilities.

As discussed in the paragraph above, Chapter 6 and Map 7 address agricultural resources. The Rural-Agriculture and Forestry Area on the Future Land Use Map is intended to identify areas that include blocks of forest or farmland that sustain resource industries. Development Standard #20 on page 28 in Chapter 3 is intended to support the productive use and economic viability of farms and forest lands.

Map 6 depicts forest blocks and habitat connectors. The MARC region is an important area to connect larger forest blocks along the spine of the Green Mountains with New Hampshire, largely through the network of conserved lands surrounding Mount Ascutney.

The Natural Resources Chapter (Ch. 6) and Cultural and Aesthetic Resources Chapter (Ch. 7) discuss rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources.

The Natural Resources Chapter includes a Water Quality section intended to address E above by properly managing stormwater and to support state basin planning efforts.

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

Page numbers: Volume 3, Regional Enhanced Energy Plan, pages 1-48

Narrative:

The Enhanced Energy Plan is comprehensive and addresses all points above within the text, the accompanying maps, and the associated energy strategies.

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

Page numbers: Volume 2, Regional Transportation Plan, pages 1-63

Narrative:

The Regional Transportation Plan is comprehensive and addresses all the points above in the text, maps, and associated goals, policies and transportation needs identified within. The transportation needs section include recommendations to meet future transportation needs, and the Future Transportation-Land Use Network starting on page 19 is intended to identify desired transportation conditions to support our future land use goals. The later section is intended to inform the interpretation of VTrans' yet to be finalized Vermont Multimodal Roadway Guide, which will ultimately replace the Vermont State Design Standards. The Region's Active Transportation Plan, incorporated by reference, is also intended to inform that interpretation.

Please also note MARC's intent to help Tier 1B communities address potential transportation impacts of Act 250 exempt housing project applications (see pages 4-5 in Chapter 12).

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

Page numbers: Ch. 4, pages 1-24

Narrative:

The Utility and Facilities Chapter and Map 2 address these points above. The "roads without fiber" on the map are suggestive of the parts of the region where broadband investment is still needed. Municipal water and sewer are incredibly important to support our regional plan goals. The text in Chapter 4 on pages 3-5 identify more detail about water and sewer (e.g., Reading is looking to implement their Felchville wastewater feasibility study, and Weathersfield is working on feasibility studies for their two villages). The Implementation Matrix in Chapter 12 on pages 7-14 lists many of the priority infrastructure needs we are currently aware of.

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

Page numbers: Ch. 12, pages 4-14

Narrative:

The Implementation Chapter (Ch. 12) includes measures through which MARC wishes to coordinate with our municipalities to further goals and implement recommendations in this plan.

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

Page numbers: Ch. 12, pages 16-

Narrative:

The section on pages 16-17 discusses how the Regional Plan relates to recent trends and needs. The following sections on pages 17-22 discuss town plans and adjacent regional plans.

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

Page numbers: Ch. 9, pages 1-15

Narrative:

The Housing Chapter identifies the regional housing trends and needs with relevant supporting data, including housing plus transportation costs. The Chapter includes references to the 2025 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment and provides municipal housing targets based on the RPC targets developed by VHFA for DHCD (see Table 9.9 on page 10). It also includes references to our previous, but still helpful Keys to the Valley Initiative for context and additional implementation ideas. Housing Goals are shown on page 1 and Housing Policies on pages 14-15. Revisions have addressed the LURB's advisory recommendations.

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

Page numbers: Ch. 10, pages 1-16

Narrative:

The Economic Development Chapter addresses the above elements. It was updated in close coordination with Springfield Regional Development Corporation. It also incorporates the recently updated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the East Central Vermont Economic Development District.

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

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

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

Page numbers: Ch. 6, pages 11-17, Ch. 3, pages 30-31

Narrative:

The Natural Resources Chapter includes a detailed description of community flood resilience in the region, see pages 11-17 in Chapter 6. See also Land Use Policies 27 and 28 on pages 30-31.

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

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

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

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

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

Page numbers: Ch. 3, pages 1-31

General Narrative:

The Land Use Chapter contains all of the elements described above. A majority of the housing targets are proposed for the combined Downtown Center, Village Center, Planned Growth Area and Village Areas. They were mapped based on infrastructure, soil types, development patterns and densities, and significant levels of local input. The Tier 1B areas account for only 2% of the total land area in the region, but in theory they should be able to accommodate a majority of our housing targets.

The existing municipal water and sewer infrastructure and system capacities were considered. A few towns are actively planning for increased capacity (see the Implementation Matrix in Chapter 12). We were generally assuming a reasonable extension of a few hundred feet to serve for housing projects. Adequate soils were also considered as part of this mapping process.

For towns that do not have Planned Growth Areas or Village Areas, more modest housing growth is anticipated – primarily within any Village Centers and to a much lesser extent in Transition/Infill and rural areas.

Revisions have addressed the LURB’s advisory recommendations.

Downtown Center		
Municipality	Downtown Center Name	Boundary Note (optional)
Springfield	Springfield	Small expansion to include 10 and 13 Clinton Street and 100 Mineral Street
Windsor	Windsor	No Change
☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards. ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:		

Village Center		
Municipality	Village Center Name	Boundary Note (optional)
Cavendish	Cavendish	No Change
Cavendish	Proctorsville	Snapped to parcel lines
Chester	Chester	No Change
Ludlow	Ludlow	No Change
Reading	Felchville	No Change
Springfield	North Springfield	New Center
Weathersfield	Ascutney	No Change
Weathersfield	Perkinsville	No Change
West Windsor	Brownsville	No Change
☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards. ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:		

Planned Growth Area		
Municipality	PGA Name/Description	Boundary Note (optional)
Chester	Chester	Expanded to include infill development areas
Springfield	Springfield	New Neighborhood
Windsor	Windsor	New Neighborhood
☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards. ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:		

Village Area		
Municipality	Village Area Name/Description	Boundary Note (optional)
Ludlow	Ludlow	New Neighborhood
Reading	Felchville	New Neighborhood
Springfield	North Springfield	New Neighborhood
☒ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards. ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:		

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Enterprise Areas

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

Transition Areas

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

Resource-based Recreation Areas

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

Hamlets

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

Rural Areas: General

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

Rural Areas: Agriculture and Forestry

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

Rural Areas: Conservation

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

PART D – COMPATIBILITY WITH ADJACENT REGIONAL PLANNING AREAS

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

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

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

Page numbers: Ch. 12, pages 20-22

Narrative:

This section in the Implementation Chapter evaluates compatibility with adjacent regional plans. The three adjacent Vermont regional planning commissions are also developing their plans at the same time we are. As such, compatibility is something of a moving target. Nonetheless, we found that MARC’s Regional Plan is compatible with RRPC’s plan and with the draft plans from TRORC and WRC. See the discussion in Chapter 12 on pages 20-22 for more detail.

Version log

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