

August 4, 2026

TO: Land Use Review Board (LURB)
FROM: Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC)
SUBJECT: Flood Hazard and River Corridor Area Mapping Methodology for Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas

This memorandum documents the methodology used to evaluate and map flood hazard areas and river corridors within the Planned Growth Areas (PGA) and Village Areas (VA) included in the 2026 MARC Regional Plan. The Planned Growth Areas include Chester, downtown Springfield, and Windsor. The Village Areas include Ludlow, Felchville (in Reading), North Springfield, and Brownsville (in West Windsor). This memo articulates our methodology in mapping these areas in response to LURB pre-application comments about how these areas were initially mapped.

Please note that for easier readability, we are using a simplified name for these areas. For example, "Springfield, North Springfield Village Area" we are referring to as "North Springfield VA."

Statutory Framework and Mapping Guidance

Planned Growth Area

In accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4348a(a)(12)(B)(iv) a Planned Growth 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."

"Infill development" means, for the purposes of designated centers, construction, installation, modification, renovation, or rehabilitation of land, interests in land, buildings, structures, facilities, or other improvements in an area that was not previously developed but is surrounded by existing development. For the purposes of farm production areas, infill development means construction on a vacant area within the farm production area [§29-201 of the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule].

The Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA) mapping guidance calls for flood hazard and river corridor areas to be excluded from PGAs except where pre-existing development suitable for infill or redevelopment is present, generally focusing such exceptions on the highest-density areas adjacent to a designated center. Where pre-existing development exists within a flood hazard or river corridor area and qualifies under Section 29-201, those areas may be retained within the PGA boundary.

Village Area

In accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4348a(a)(12)(C)(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.

VAPDA's mapping guidance directs RPCs to first establish if the municipality has adopted flood hazard and river corridor bylaws in accordance with the description in statute above [24 V.S.A. § 4348a(a)(12)(C)(iii)]. If no, exclude flood hazard and river corridor areas except pre-existing development suitable for infill by generally excluding flood hazards and river corridors outside of the highest density areas adjacent to the Center. See Section 29-201 of the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule.

Context

Language in the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule provides some important context in how to interpret its definition of “infill development.” In §29-102, it states that it is in the interest of the State to ***promote and encourage infill and redevelopment of designated centers*** and to ***discourage encroachments in undeveloped flood hazard areas and river corridors that provide for floodwater and sediment storage.***

As a practical interpretation of this, our future land use map used the following logic in which areas to exclude and which areas to include areas suitable for infill contain pre-existing development. This means the flood hazard or river corridor area itself must already contain some development, and the infill opportunity must be within that developed context, not simply a greenfield parcel adjacent to it. RPC mapping guidance reinforces this by directing that exclusions generally apply outside the highest-density areas immediately adjacent to the center.

Mapping Changes in the Adopted 2026 Regional Plan

To address the LURB's preapplication response comments regarding mapping flood hazard and river corridors within Planned Growth Areas (PGA) and Village Areas (VA), we modified our Future Land Use Map as generally described below.

Planned Growth Areas

Chester PGA:

1. Chester's PGA is a legacy Neighborhood Development Area (NDA). The previously designated NDA excluded the river corridor in its entirety at that time. We are proposing a modest expansion of that area in this PGA by adding infill development areas, consistent with the statutory framework and mapping guidance described above.
2. Chester's village is located at the confluence of the three branches of the Williams River and lesser tributaries. Chester's PGA largely follows the existing dense-development pattern within the municipal water and wastewater service area. The flood hazard areas and river corridors split the PGA in four distinct areas representing the three branches of the Williams River and Lovers Lane Brook, as well as the main stem of the Williams River generally between VT Route 103 and Green Mountain Turnpike.
3. Areas of preexisting development that are suitable for infill as defined by the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule are included within Chester's PGA. Those areas have the flood hazard and river corridor overlay hatch markings shown on the map.
4. All undeveloped areas and those parts of town that do not meet the "infill development" definition in the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule are excluded from the PGA. Those areas are shown as Rural Conservation.

Downtown Springfield PGA:

1. The flood hazard areas and river corridors split downtown Springfield's PGA roughly in half along the Black River, and includes two tributaries, one along Valley Street and the other along Chester Road.
2. Areas of preexisting development that are suitable for infill as defined by the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule are included within Springfield's PGA. Those areas have the flood hazard and river corridor overlay hatch markings shown on the map.
3. All undeveloped areas and those parts of town that do not meet the "infill development" definition in the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule are excluded from the PGA. Those areas are shown as Rural Conservation.

Windsor PGA:

1. There are substantial flood hazard areas along the Connecticut River in downtown Windsor. There are also flood hazard areas and river corridors along Hubbard Brook and Lake Runnemede as well as along Mill Brook and Kennedy Pond (aka Mill Pond). The PGA largely avoids these areas due to public or conserved lands, including Paradise Park, Windsor School playing fields, and the Kennedy Pond/swimming area. Exceptions to that are located along Union Street and Coolidge Court.
2. Areas of preexisting development that are suitable for infill as defined by the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule are included within Windsor's PGA. Those areas have the flood hazard and river corridor overlay hatch markings shown on the map.

3. All undeveloped areas and those parts of town that do not meet the “infill development” definition in the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule are excluded from the PGA. Those areas are shown as Rural Conservation.

Village Areas

Brownsville’s VA:

1. Brownsville is a small village located within the Town of West Windsor. West Windsor adopted flood hazard and river corridor bylaws in 2024. Their bylaws include an In-Fill Development provision from ANR’s model bylaws, which is very similar to the Rule in effect. As such, we mapped the flood hazard areas and river corridors in Brownsville’s VA similarly to how we mapped PGAs.
2. The flood hazard areas and river corridors are along the Mill Brook (west to east) and Beaver Brook (north to south), which meet together in the middle of the Village Center.
3. Areas of preexisting development that are suitable for infill as defined by the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule are included within Brownsville’s VA. Those areas have the flood hazard and river corridor overlay hatch markings shown on the map.
4. All undeveloped areas and those parts of town that do not meet the “infill development” definition in the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule are excluded from the VA. Those areas are shown as Rural Conservation.

Felchville’s VA:

1. Felchville is a small village located within the Town of Reading. Reading adopted flood hazard and river corridor bylaws.
2. The flood hazard areas and river corridors are along the North Branch of the Mill Brook and a tributary on the eastern side of the Village Center.
3. The VA avoids flood hazard areas and river corridors entirely.
4. There are no exclusions in the Felchville VA since there are no flood hazard areas or river corridors within the boundary.

Ludlow’s VA:

1. Both the Town and Village of Ludlow adopted flood hazard and river corridor bylaws – in 2025 for the Village and 2026 for the Town. Both of their bylaws include an In-Fill Development provision from ANR’s model bylaws, which is very similar to the Rule in effect. As such, we mapped the flood hazard areas and river corridors in Ludlow’s VA similarly to how we mapped PGAs.
2. The flood hazard areas and river corridors are along the Black River (along Main Street/VT Route 103), Jewell Brook (along Andover Street/VT Route 100 South) and a tributary on the eastern end of the village.
3. Areas of preexisting development that are suitable for infill as defined by the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule are included within Ludlow’s VA. Those areas have the flood hazard and river corridor overlay hatch markings shown on the map.
4. All undeveloped areas and those parts of town that do not meet the “infill development” definition in the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule are excluded from the VA. Those areas are shown as Rural Conservation.

North Springfield’s VA:

1. Springfield, which includes North Springfield, has a draft amendment to add river corridor bylaws to their existing flood hazard provisions. It has not yet been adopted.
2. The flood hazard areas and river corridors are along the Black River, Great Brook and two tributaries.
3. Areas of preexisting development that are suitable for infill as defined by the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule are included within North Springfield's VA. Those areas have the flood hazard and river corridor overlay hatch markings shown on the map.
4. All undeveloped areas and those parts of town that do not meet the "infill development" definition in the Vermont Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule are excluded from the VA. Those areas are shown as Rural Conservation.