

Comments on MARC Regional Plan (revised draft 6-18-2026) Redevelopment Area (Volume 1, page 3-15)

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MARC draft text is black.

Proposed Changes are in red. Deletions are ~~stricken~~. Additions are underlined. Explanatory text is shown in red after each paragraph for which changes are proposed.

REDEVELOPMENT AREA

The Redevelopment Area is established as a special future land use category in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4348a(a)(12). The purpose of this approximately 12-acre area is to allow for the redevelopment of the former Southeast State Correctional Facility in Windsor. It is served currently by municipal sewer service and the correction facility water system. It currently includes several buildings, surrounded by a razor wire-topped fence, that might be useful for future development. The site is accessed by State Farm Road via County Road, a Class 2 town highway. The MOOver provides townwide microtransit services in this area.

The Area lies within a couple hundred yards of the Windsor Grasslands Wildlife Management Area. The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife has proposed transferring much of the prison site to the WMA. If that property transfer were to occur, the Redevelopment Area would be adjacent to the WMA. The State of Vermont has a substantial interest in the maintenance of the WMA, and the WMA has significant potential for future contribution to tourism in the region.

EXPLANATION

The first paragraph describes the setting of the Redevelopment Area, which is appropriate. A more complete description of the setting would be useful.

First, the removal of reference, in an earlier draft plan, to the area as approximately 12 acres and the description of the Area as being within the existing fenceline was not appropriate. Many readers have a basic knowledge of the prison site, including that it is over 100 acres in area and that it includes a fenced area in which most of the existing buildings are located. It is important to make clear in the text what the map shows; namely that only 12 acres are proposed for redevelopment and that new development will go within the area that is currently fenced. Mentioning the fence as a point of reference says nothing about whether it will remain or be

removed. The fence is, however, an important bit of infrastructure, just as are the sewer system, the water system, and the existing buildings, which should be mentioned.

Second, a major feature of the Area is that it is near the Wildlife Management Area. One can hardly discuss the matter of redevelopment without acknowledging this as an important fact. It is certainly more pertinent than that the area is served by the MOOVer. The proximity to the WMA gives rise to important regional and state interests that may be affected by redevelopment.

Regional and state interests include:

- a) Traffic flow to and from the site through adjoining towns and on State highways;
- b) Regional economic development, specifically impacts on tourism associated with the WMA and the possible use of existing buildings on the site for small-scale enterprises;
- c) Regional housing goals, not just the goals of the Town of Windsor; and
- d) Protection of the State's interest and investment in the WMA.

In 2026, the site is owned by the State of Vermont and is underutilized. There have been ongoing conversations about the Legislature potentially making the land available for housing or mixed-use development. The Town has been planning for many years to enable easier adaptive reuse of this site through zoning bylaw amendments. There have been a few legislative studies over the past two decades that have identified the potential for redeveloping the site with mixed-uses including housing and non-residential uses, such as educational, agricultural, commercial, and state governmental or other civic uses.

Any redevelopment of this site must make efficient use of the land and infrastructure by clustering development in a way that does not excessively or unreasonably disrupt the rural character of the area and that minimizes the extent of new roads and infrastructure while minimizing or avoiding impacts to the important natural resources surrounding this area. Any development proposal may require environmental studies to ensure the project will not unduly impact those resources.

EXPLANATION

The maintenance of the “rural character” of Vermont is repeatedly mentioned in planning documents. “Rural Character” is a term with a specific meaning and should be used here because development could occur in an area that is surrounded by land mapped as Rural Conservation.

The Town of Windsor is encouraged to explore the feasibility of bicycle connections to downtown Windsor with MARC.

Redevelopment of this parcel will be complex. The Town Plan and zoning should be updated to better articulate what the community wants for future uses at the site, giving due consideration to regional and state interests including tourism, economic development, housing, and traffic impacts that may result from development. ~~The state will need to transfer control or ownership of the parcel.~~ Environmental site assessments and other evaluations should be completed to better understand residual contamination and the potential for adaptive reuse of existing infrastructure. This Redevelopment Area designation seeks to continue the conversation on how to use this underutilized legacy infrastructure in a town which needs space to grow.

EXPLANATION

There are substantial state and regional interests in how the Area is redeveloped. Those interests should be explicitly mentioned in this Regional Plan.

The State does not need to transfer ownership of control of the parcel. This matter was discussed at the first public hearing on the Draft Regional Plan. Currently, there is nothing that would prevent the State from leasing the site, operating the site through a contract with another party, or operating the site on its own. It is too early to make decisions about this.

The mention of environmental assessments is fine, but it needs to be expanded to include the need to assess the condition of the existing infrastructure. Any potential developer or future user would want to see a current professional assessment that updates past studies, many of which are over a decade old.