



Bethel; Image Credit: DuBois & King

Vermont Planning Manual

Module 3: Enabling Better Places Through Incremental Local Bylaw Reform

Agency of Commerce and Community Development

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About this module:

This is **Module 3** of the Vermont Planning and Land Use Series. Developed in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Sec. 4304, this series seeks to inform and empower municipal officials and citizen planners to promote vibrant communities through best planning and land use practices. These modules are updated periodically to reflect key statutory changes and best practices as they evolve.

Other modules in this series:

Module 1: *The Municipal Plan*. A step-by-step blueprint for citizen planners to create local plans that matter. Last updated June 2025.

Module 2: *State Designation Programs*. Guidance and case studies on state designation programs and how they help municipalities achieve more vibrant communities. Last updated June 2025.



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Chapter 1. Background

This Edition of the Vermont Planning Manual, Module 3:

- Discusses the benefits of local bylaw updates to improve housing access and affordability in your community;
- Provides examples of topics to update and sample bylaw language;
- Introduces subdivision standards for new developments.



1.1. Introduction



Brandon; Image Credit: DuBois & King

The unique physical character of Vermont—exemplified by beautiful rural landscapes and compact historic downtowns—makes it a desirable place to live as well as a year-round tourist destination. These picturesque and walkable Vermont villages and towns have the power to be economic and social engines that improve community health, equity, and resilience. Housing profoundly impacts Vermonters' quality of life, yet the availability of decent, affordable, and reasonably located homes has not kept pace with demand, creating a housing affordability crisis in the state. When housing production—including diverse types of homes in the right locations—doesn't keep up with demand, prices rise.

In Vermont and in communities across the country, many families cannot find homes they can afford. There is a dearth of housing at a price point that workforce residents -- such as teachers, firefighters, and nurses -- can afford. However, the problem is more complicated than an economic failure of supply not meeting demand.

Vermont villages and towns need a wider range of housing types to meet a changing population. While the total state-wide population has remained relatively steady in the past decade, household size has decreased. Single-person households now make up a quarter of all Vermont households, but while household sizes are shrinking, homes are not, and one-bedroom homes are rare in Vermont. Homes are often larger than needed and frequently beyond repair. To meet the growing needs of 21st-century families and individuals, municipalities must consider how to modify existing larger homes, and how to build a greater variety of home types and sizes.



A Statewide Housing Shortage

Faced with a statewide shortage of homes, the Vermont Legislature directed the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in the HOME Act (Act 47) to publish statewide and regional housing targets as part of the statewide housing needs assessment that is completed every 5 years. Act 47 requires regional planning commissions to break down the state's published regional housing targets, allocating them to individual member municipalities.

In light of this new requirement, the most recent *Vermont Housing Needs Assessment*, completed in 2025 includes a special appendix that provides a series of housing supply targets based on the information about housing demand and supply collected during the assessment.

The current housing targets are based on the number of homes and need to meet four goals:

- Normalize vacancy rates
- Eliminate homelessness
- Meet demand from new households
- Compensate for homes lost to disrepair and to vacation home buyers

The current statewide targets indicate 28,000- 41,000 additional homes are needed between 2025 and 2030, and 79,000- 172,000 additional homes are needed between 2025 and 2050.

This mismatch between housing needs and current housing stock is partly exacerbated by permitting rules that can inadvertently drive up development costs. Zoning and subdivision regulations in municipalities across Vermont often require large setbacks from the road, low dwelling unit densities, separations of land uses, excessive parking requirements, overly wide streets, and occasionally inappropriate design standards. Such provisions can restrict housing opportunities; increase costs for individuals and communities; perpetuate sprawling, auto-oriented development; and negatively affect Vermont's villages, farms, forests, and natural resources.

In many communities, local zoning rules do not reflect the statewide planning goal to “maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside” or the goals of their municipal plan.

A Guide for Vermont Municipalities

In 2020, Vermont DHCD partnered with the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), Vermont's 11 Regional Planning Commissions (VAPDA), AARP, the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, and the Vermont Association of Realtors to provide Vermont municipalities with a guide to simple changes to their bylaws to enable more attainable housing. This 2025 update, led by Northeastern Vermont Development Association (acting on



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behalf of VAPDA) and DHCD in partnership with the consulting firm DuBois & King, responds to the recent changes in state statute. It continues to focus on concrete steps municipalities can take to increase housing that is affordable at a range of incomes, and is located in walkable, inclusive, and age-friendly neighborhoods. These bylaw changes can begin to address the critical housing shortage and existing housing mismatch in the state, and help towns meet housing targets established by the Vermont Housing Needs Assessment.

Updating bylaws alone will not achieve universal housing accessibility and affordability. Additional factors impacting the cost of housing in Vermont include the high costs of labor, construction materials, and developable land. Additionally, the available capacity of community wastewater systems and a community's water supply can be limiting factors for new, affordable development.

Bylaw updates must respond to other important legal requirements and state mandates. In addition, updating bylaws can be overwhelming for volunteer planning commissions, even with consultant or staff support. Long and complex permitting processes, numerous opportunities for discretionary review, and neighborhood pressures may further complicate this process. Therefore, starting with small steps to tackle the most critical needs for bylaw reform can engage a town to move towards achieving community goals, such as more diverse housing options.



Huntington; Image Credit: DuBois & King



1.1.1. An Incremental Approach: The Biggest Little Change



Brandon; Image Credit: DuBois & King

Bylaw reform can be effective and efficient when addressed incrementally, through a series of short-term updates that can usually be implemented quickly. To achieve greater change, there are a number of mid-range updates that might take additional political will or development momentum in order to achieve. In some communities, such incremental reforms can make a significant difference. Incremental bylaw reform can enable communities to try new approaches and grow into them, advancing to additional changes in an organic way and at a pace that suits each particular place.

With so many Vermont towns needing to improve the local regulations governing housing development, it is inefficient for each town to independently research best practices. The incremental approach championed by this Module supports Vermont communities by enabling them to address one issue at a time. This is especially important, as most communities will only have so many opportunities to direct the investment that comes with new development. The approach also allows towns and villages to bring existing nonconforming structures into compliance with permitting rules, such as a large house divided into several apartments.

Finally, this Module does not advocate for or against a type of bylaw framework; its recommendations are neither explicitly form-based nor are they use-based. Rather, this Module advocates for bylaw reforms that can enable vibrant, livable, and sustainable conditions, laying the groundwork to allow a variety of housing and other appropriate use types in walkable communities of all scales. The model bylaw reforms presented within this Module are intended to be calibrated locally and integrated simply, without the need for outside consultants or an extensive process. When adjusted to a specific village or town context, they offer standards that may significantly improve the housing accessibility and affordability that Vermont communities are able to offer, as well as the overall public welfare.

CNU's [Project for Code Reform](#) provides an approach that can enable (but does not guarantee) a great place, even where resources for revising bylaws are limited. This approach focuses on the most essential techniques to support vibrant, livable places and helps local governments identify and implement the smallest bylaw changes needed to achieve the biggest impact. Amendments can be adopted quickly as interim bylaws, especially in situations where new development that is in keeping with town goals is anticipated. Often, this will involve simplifying or removing requirements as opposed to adding or overhauling them completely.



1.1.2. A Note on Terminology

The terminology used to describe local land use regulations is not consistent throughout the country. In Vermont, and therefore throughout this document, the term “bylaws” refers to the adopted land use and development regulations that a local municipality enacts in alignment with state statute to govern land use within that municipality, like zoning and subdivision bylaws. Sometimes referred to elsewhere as “zoning codes” or more generally “codes,” for these recommendations, the term “bylaws” will be used.

1.1.3. Municipal Authority Context

Local municipal authority for land use planning and regulation is enabled by state statute at 24 VSA Chapter 117, which offers broad powers to cities, towns, and villages to adopt municipal plans, bylaws, and other authorized planning tools. While Vermont municipalities have statutory authority to administer their bylaws, many face constraints, including limited board and staff capacity to understand and correctly interpret state laws that set boundaries for what towns can and cannot do. Many towns across the state rely heavily on their all-volunteer planning commissions and part-time staff to administer the planning functions that the state allows.

Municipalities cannot adopt (or maintain) bylaws that contradict state law. For example, if a town bylaw prohibits the conversion of a single-unit dwelling into a duplex, but state law requires towns to allow it (*spoiler alert*: it does), the town’s denial of a permit to divide a single-unit home into a duplex can be appealed in state court, and the property owner would likely prevail in court, over the town’s objection. Therefore, it’s in every municipality’s interest to review its bylaws when there have been major updates in state land use law and promptly update rules that are out of compliance. This new edition of the Module is driven by major changes to state land use planning laws enacted in the 2023 and 2024 sessions of the Vermont Legislature.

See the Appendix and Additional Resources for more information.



1.1.4. What's in this Guide to Local Bylaw Reform?



St. Albans; Image Credit: Richard Amore

This Module is structured to help local planning officials address the topics that have the most significant impact on housing affordability. The following recommendations target downtowns, village centers, and adjacent neighborhoods that can accommodate higher densities and a greater variety of housing types, but may be applicable in other parts of your community.

How is Local Zoning Related to State Law?

Statute allows a municipality to regulate development in accordance with its adopted plan and statewide planning goals. A municipality uses zoning and bylaws to guide how land is developed and how buildings are placed and used, following its local plan and protecting public health, safety, and welfare. These bylaws can allow or limit certain land uses, control building size and placement, manage growth and population density, and protect sensitive areas like river corridors. Zoning applies to all land within the community and uses maps to divide areas into districts with clear bylaws for each. These bylaws help communities grow in an

organized way and maintain a safe, healthy, and livable environment. This is described in [24 V.S.A. § 4411](#).

Key Topics for Incremental Bylaw Reform are organized into short- and mid-term bylaw update recommendations:

- Dimensional Requirements for Lots and Buildings
- Parking Standards
- Allowable Uses
- Street Standards
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)
- Development Review Process
- Climate Resilience

The **Templates for Reform** section provides model language and standards. These can be refined for use in local zoning and subdivision bylaws:

- Character Survey Instructions and Examples



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- Sample ADU Regulations
- Parking Standards
- Sample Use Table
- Dimensional Standards for Structures and Lots: Neighborhood, Village Center, Town Center, and Downtown District
- Sample Street Standards

The **Appendices** provide additional tools and information, including:

- Housing Market Dynamics and Vermont Data: An explanation for how housing markets work and how this dynamic relates to demographic and housing conditions in Vermont.
- State Environmental Permitting: A description of the common environmental permits that may be required for development.

Allowing Vermont communities to set their own pace for bylaw reform enables them to prioritize their efforts, respond to their community's vision and needs, and foster greater community learning and understanding. At the same time, local bylaws may conflict with new state laws regarding density in service of creating more attainable housing. This creates an urgency to prioritize reform efforts, so there is clear understanding of permitted development.

Providing additional and diverse housing within historic settlement patterns to sustainably grow Vermont villages and towns is a process that should be done intentionally and thoughtfully. This Module supports Vermont communities to better meet the needs of current and future residents.



1.1.5. What Kind of Places Are We Talking About?



Grafton; Image Credit: Richard Amore

While every town and region is different, there are statewide similarities among the physical settings that support the kinds of centers and neighborhoods explored in this *Guide*.

With the passage of Act 181, there are ten regional land use categories defined by the State of Vermont and required in all regional future land use maps. This document focuses on four of those land use categories that provide significant opportunities to increase housing options through State designation and Act 250's tiered jurisdiction. These land use categories include designation areas described in Module 2. While all municipalities are unique, similar recommendations can be applied across the state and modified per specific location and physical features.

Downtown and Village Centers:

These are the traditional and historic central business or civic centers. They have more commercial uses, higher residential density, mixed-use, multi-story buildings, and more compact settlement patterns than other places in the municipality.

They may run along a single linear main street or stretch a few blocks along intersecting streets, with buildings typically located closer to the street or sidewalk than what would be found in more rural areas. Village centers may or may not have public water or wastewater systems.

Planned Growth Areas (PGA):

Within walking distance from a downtown or village center, PGAs are generally consistent with smart growth principles in areas that provide for housing. They are located outside flood hazard (FH) and river corridor (RC), unless suitable for infill development under State FH and RC rules. As defined, PGAs must meet a number of requirements, including being identified in an adopted and approved municipal plan that indicates high-density and mixed-use development in this area, local zoning and subdivision bylaws, public water or water/wastewater, and existing or planned complete-streets infrastructure.

Village Areas:

These are traditional or proposed new settlement areas. They are generally located outside flood hazard areas, and they are within walking distance of a downtown or village center. They are planned and zoned for higher density, and they either have public water or wastewater or the soils to support it.



Transition or Infill Areas:

This is a broadly defined category that may include a range of uses, including residential development. They can be either adjacent to a planned growth or village area or a new stand-alone transition or infill area. They are 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. New commercial linear strip development is not permitted. This area could also include adjacent greenfields that are safe from flooding and planned for future growth. Labeling an area “transition” indicates that these areas would benefit from additional planning to shape any future changes.

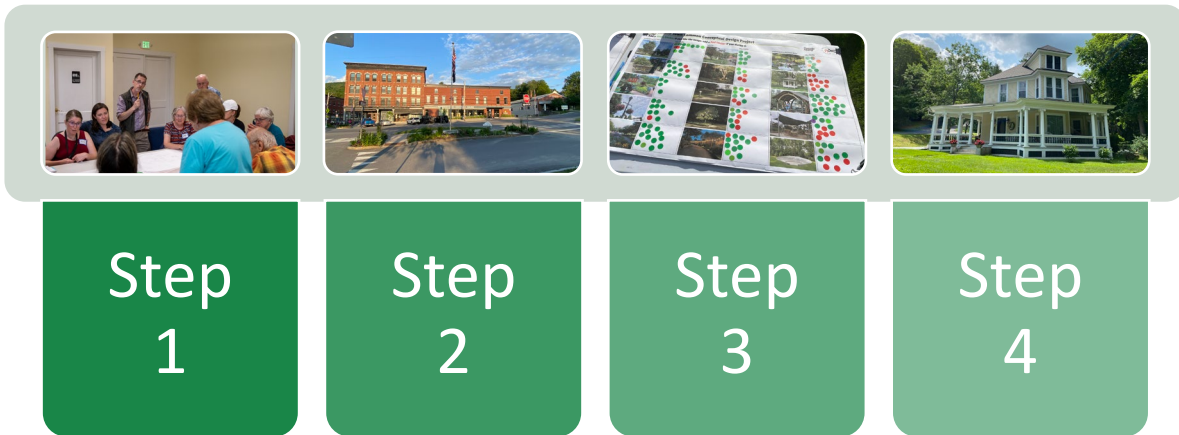
Often, existing conditions and historic patterns of lots, streets, and buildings would not be permitted in these neighborhood settings under current zoning and bylaws. This leads to new development patterns that are inconsistent with the existing character of towns and villages. This guide offers tools that can help reverse that trend and embrace a wider variety of homes.



Weston; Image Credit: Richard Amore



1.2. How to Use this Module



This Module is structured to help local planning officials address steps to improve housing access and affordability through incremental bylaw reform and bylaw changes. By understanding existing community resources, potential locations, and the desired scope of reform, municipalities can be prepared to enable their desired changes.

1. Understand Your Needs

Consider the housing market dynamics of your community. Examine whether your municipal plan recognizes the need to reform bylaws to achieve housing goals. If not, an updated Municipal Plan and/or Housing Needs Assessment may be necessary.

2. Determine the Physical Setting

Determine the physical setting where changes should be targeted. This Module provides tools and templates for adjusting zoning rules for downtown and village centers, planned growth areas, village areas, and transition or infill areas. Each setting requires a tailored approach.

3. Gauge Support and Capacity

Determine the municipality's desire for bylaw reform, level of political and community support, and staff or volunteer capacity. "Building Support" describes soliciting support and engaging all stakeholders.

4. Adjust for Local Conditions

While some updates are more urgent to align with major changes in state law, others can be achieved incrementally. Utilize the updates detailed in the "Topics of Reform" section to make small improvements to your local bylaws. Add new updates over time as you build more capacity and support and move from Stage 1 to Stage 2 updates. Model bylaw language is provided in the "Additional Resources" section, and can be adapted for local use.



Chapter 2. Primary Recommendations

- Principles of Bylaw Reform
- Building Support
- Terms and Definitions
- Housing Types
- Bylaw Topics for Updating



2.2. Principles of Bylaw Reform

This section of the Module provides incremental bylaw reform recommendations on specific topics that can have a significant effect on the affordability of housing in the State of Vermont. They have been developed specifically for village and town centers and nearby neighborhoods because these areas have the most potential for providing more housing options, and because communities benefit from having more people living within walking distance to services. Where a recommendation differs between a village or town center context and a neighborhood context, that distinction is noted.

Understand Community Capacity – What is Possible!

- Is there volunteer and staff capacity to develop and administer proposed regulatory changes?
- Is there political support to enact and enforce proposed regulatory changes?
- Propose changes that can reasonably be administered by volunteers and staff, are enforceable, and are right-sized for the local economy.

Localize Solutions

- Customize decisions about dimensional standards that fit the local context.
- Pay attention to the local market—ask what kind of homes are needed and how well they match what’s available.
- Assume “developed” land within existing settlements has at least some additional capacity to provide housing.

Focus on the Basics – A Little Change Can Go a Long Way!

- Focus on elements that are not already addressed by other environmental, health, and safety bylaws.
- Use dimensional requirements to place new, in-context buildings in locations that define the public spaces like streets and commons—and be less concerned with how those buildings are used. The uses within buildings can (and will) change over time.
- Allow on-street parking even in winter, and locate parking on the street or behind buildings.
- Design for people first, then accommodate cars.



Castleton; Image Credit: DuBois & King



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Change Can Be Difficult – Move Forward Together!

- Inform the community as to why bylaw reform is being undertaken.
- Start by asking what outcomes you want to achieve, then ask which rules should be changed.
- Business as usual will produce the usual results.
- Let go of regulations that are no longer relevant. These may include legacy standards that were part of prior regulations put in place to micromanage a specific use or to address a specific problem that no longer exists.
- Don't expect regulatory changes to fulfill every community aspiration or solve every community housing need.
- Extensive and multi-layered bylaw updates can be difficult to understand and digest as a single package. It may be preferable to present amendments in smaller bundles that elected officials and the public can understand and more easily support. Each incremental step can help build knowledge and confidence for all involved.

Start Small – This is Just the Beginning!

- Focus on key geographic areas—these tools may apply to specific areas of a city, town, or village.
- Important issues may arise during community outreach or municipal planning that are not covered here but may be important to consider now or in the future.

Link to the Municipal Plan – Review Local Documents

- Bylaw modifications should relate to and uphold the goals of the Municipal Plan.



2.3. Building Support



Craftsbury; Image Credit: DuBois & King

If you're reading this Module, you've likely recognized the need for bylaw reform in your community. But making that change happen requires support from a variety of stakeholders and decision makers. **How can you build support to accomplish change?**

The following tasks need not be thought of as sequential and may apply in total or only in part, when applied to your local community.

Target community needs that bylaw reform can help.

The regulatory reform in this Module is designed to enable context-appropriate housing. If you think your municipality can do more to make a wider variety of homes possible and result in attractive, livable, walkable, and vibrant neighborhoods for all ages and income levels, begin by ensuring the goals for bylaw reform are articulated in the Municipal Plan. If not, there should be a broad and inclusive discussion of these concepts. The Municipal Plan can be amended with simple language to reflect the intent of the

community. This provides the policy basis for needed bylaw updates. Assistance in identifying community and housing goals can be found through the [Vermont Housing Needs Assessment](#) and the [AARP Livable Communities Housing Initiative](#).

Link the regulatory reform potential to stakeholders' interests.

Residents know their community best. Determine what might interest key decision makers in making necessary changes in your bylaws. For example, your local and elected officials might be concerned with:

- Avoiding unnecessary variances and zoning conflicts due to historic buildings and nonconforming lots.
- Avoiding the “plans that sit on the shelf” syndrome: Your municipality may have invested a great deal of time and money in creating a plan or set of plans that have not advanced past adoption. Since zoning serves as the primary regulatory tool to bring these plans to life, simplifying and streamlining your bylaws increases your opportunities to make your plans a reality.
- Supporting the local economy by increasing opportunities for people to find the homes they need in walkable places, and provide homes for workers in local businesses.



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- Increasing opportunity for individuals and the community as a whole: This bylaw reform approach enables more land use flexibility while meeting larger community goals, such as inclusive, livable, age-friendly communities, providing homes that younger people want and can afford, and increasing community vitality.

Reinforcing the local tax base, increasing housing options, and improving property values by removing restrictions on potential uses, new units, and opportunities for redevelopment.

Be open to diverse ideas and perspectives.

You may encounter varying perspectives around some of the following issues:

- Public support: How does this bylaw process directly relate to community wants and needs?
- Flexible use: How do bylaw changes increase the flexibility for use of my property? How could it enable property use I don't want in my community?
- High costs: Public concerns regarding the cost of bylaw updates and the cost of changes in the community may arise. Where is the money coming from and will this increase my taxes and financial burdens?
- Perceived capacity limitations: Public resistance due to concerns with "overcrowding" and loss of character, questions regarding affordable housing, and capacity of local schools and water/wastewater in a community or neighborhood need to be considered respectfully. See [Housing Committee Toolkit](#) for suggested approaches on communicating about bylaw changes to help reduce public fears.



2.4. Terms and Concept Definitions

The following terms are used in this guide. The definitions provided here are not intended as legal definitions to be used in bylaws

➤ **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)**

A second independent dwelling unit that is subordinate to a single-household building. An ADU may be located within or attached to the same building or in a detached outbuilding on the same lot, such as above a garage.

➤ **Architectural Treatment Requirements**

Regulations or guidelines that may specify building materials, stylistic details, minimum facade or roof variations, etc.

➤ **Best Practices**

The approaches, strategies, and techniques that have been demonstrated to produce positive outcomes in various city, town, and village contexts, such as improving transportation, promoting sustainability, enhancing social equity, and fostering vibrant communities.

➤ **Blank Walls**

An expanse of wall facing a street that has few or no windows or doors.

➤ **Build-To Zone**

A zoning requirement that specifies a range of allowable distances between a front property line and the front of a building. Build-to zones may also be expressed as a minimum and a maximum front setback.

➤ **Building Coverage**

The percentage of a lot that can be covered by a building (sometimes referred to as maximum building footprint). Some municipalities also regulate lot coverage, which includes building coverage plus other impervious surfaces such as driveways and parking spaces.

➤ **Building Footprint**

The area covered by a building on the ground, defined by the perimeter of the building.



Waterbury; Image Credit: Richard Amore



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➤ **Character-Based Frontage Requirements**

Frontage requirements define how buildings should meet the street, such as requiring functional sidewalk-facing entries or requiring a minimum percentage of window coverage (transparent glass) on the street-facing facades of buildings.

➤ **Housing Types**

Categories of residences—defined by their physical aspects—which may include floor area, placement on the lot, and number of dwellings per building or lot. Housing types include buildings that accommodate a single household or multiple households.

➤ **Live-Work Unit**

A dwelling unit on its own lot that contains, to a varying extent, both a residence and a workplace component. *See next page.*

➤ **Infill**

Development within a downtown, town center, or neighborhood through adding structures to existing lots, or promoting redevelopment of vacant or underutilized properties.

➤ **Massing**

The general shape, form, and size of a building or groups of buildings.

➤ **Planned Unit Development (PUD)**

A locally defined development review process, that allows flexibility in combining uses or lots, or clusters buildings in order to retain most of the lot as open space.

➤ **Public Realm**

Areas that are available for public or common use without charge, including streets, sidewalks, parks, public spaces, and public buildings.



2.5. Housing Types

In the contemporary Vermont landscape, new housing is most often provided in new subdivisions of single-family homes or in new multi-family, multi-story apartment buildings. Yet, historic towns and villages included a wider variety of housing that was more responsive to age in life, income, and proximity to services and jobs.

This summary describes types of housing that fill the gap between the single-family residence and the apartment building, often referred to as “Missing Middle Housing,” whether built in new greenfield development or in infill locations in existing villages or towns. The types illustrated here are not meant to be a complete selection of potential housing options, but rather an introduction to additional housing types that could fit well and help enable affordable and accessible housing in walkable towns and villages in Vermont.

Accessory Dwelling Units



Randolph; Image Credit: DuBois & King

Vermont examples of accessory dwellings include secondary units within or attached to the principal residence, as well as residences within detached ancillary buildings. A common type is the carriage house flat, where the accessory dwelling is located over the garage. Specific recommendations for accessory dwellings are included within the Resources Section.

Live-Work



Barnet; Image Credit: DuBois & King

Structures that include both residential and non-residential uses in commercial or residential zones are considered live-work units. These can include a range of sizes and types and include artist studios and lofts, in-home businesses, or apartments over businesses. While common in the first half of the 20th century, these may not be permitted in many municipalities.



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Duplex



Bennington; Image Credit: Callie Fishburn

Many examples exist of large homes built as two-household dwellings. There are also many examples of single-family dwellings being converted to duplexes over time. Because this dwelling type easily fits the scale of most neighborhoods, permitting conversions (as now required under state law, as well as allowing for construction of new duplexes) is a logical choice for adding housing to a community seeking increased affordability.

Triplex and Four-plex



Randolph; Image Credit: DuBois & King

Vermont has a rich collection of historic mansions that have been subdivided to accommodate three or four households while maintaining the historic character of the neighborhood. Newly constructed structures can address smaller household size while reducing the footprint of multiple separate buildings. This housing type can add much-needed additional housing to a community with an abundance of homes larger than what the market is demanding.

Multi-plex



Rutland; Image Credit: DuBois & King

Buildings in the scale of larger residences may even be able to accommodate more than four individual households. Keeping the building height and massing complimentary or compatible with the municipality's historic or existing buildings maintains a character appropriate to the surrounding neighborhood while providing multiple smaller individual units.



Townhouse



Chester; Image Credit: DuBois & King

Small- to medium-sized dwellings, townhouses typically consist of two to eight (usually) attached single-family homes placed side by side. While not a common historic type in Vermont, the popularity of townhouses in new development underscores a market demand for this type of attached housing. With appropriate detailing in character with the materials of homes in surrounding neighborhoods, the type can provide multiple smaller units on smaller parcels of land.

Cottage Court



Burlington; Image Credit: Larry Lewack

A series of small, detached dwellings, cottage courts provide multiple units arranged around a shared green and/or parking area that is typically perpendicular to the street. Vermont towns often include small historic cottages scattered across neighborhoods, and introduction of this type would reflect the scale of those dwellings in a compact and concentrated way.



Burlington; Image Credit: DuBois & King

2.6. Bylaw Topics for Updating

This section focuses on seven topics that have the most significant impact on the affordability of housing in Vermont. Recommendations on these topics have been developed for villages, downtowns, and nearby neighborhoods, because these areas have the most potential for providing additional housing. These recommendations apply regardless of where individual regulations have been placed or formatted; they may be in zoning or subdivision regulations or in a unified development bylaw.

Bylaw recommendations are organized by these seven key topics; individual recommendations follow this summary of the topics.

Dimensional Standards

Dimensional Standards should be carefully crafted to reflect the existing historical built patterns and local goals, with modifications made as needed to support greater walkability, more diverse housing options, and conservation of natural features.

Parking Standards

Excessive parking requirements can have an adverse impact on housing availability and commercial viability, as well as conservation efforts, by increasing spatial needs, stormwater management requirements, and associated costs. Especially in areas that have transit and are walkable to school, jobs, and other



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daily needs, parking standards should be "right- sized" and minimized to support more flexible development opportunities that fit seamlessly into the town or village center or neighborhood.

Allowable Uses

Many Vermont municipalities have traditionally restricted housing in most districts other than single-family homes. However, recent state statutes (Act 47, a.k.a. the HOME Act, and Act 181) require that more diverse housing types and density be permitted in areas served by community water and sewer infrastructure. This will allow for smaller buildings containing two, three, or four dwellings to offer greater housing variety with minimal neighborhood impacts. Local bylaws must be updated to align with this recent legislation.

Street Standards

The capital and maintenance costs of overly wide streets can increase the cost of delivering housing, as well creating a long-term drain on municipal budgets. Wider streets are also shown to correspond with higher rates of speed by motorists. Disconnected street networks hinder walking, biking, and transit, increasing individual household transportation costs. Therefore, streets should be designed according to the type and intensity of activity through which the street passes, including with consideration for multi-modal travel.

Accessory Dwelling Unit

Vermont has ADU provisions at the state level that are applied through bylaws at the municipal level. Local regulations could be improved to align with the most recent state legislation, which encourages the creation of more ADUs, which has allowed for larger ADU sizes and owner-occupation of the ADU.

Development Review Process

Overly complex local development review requirements add uncertainty, time and cost to builders who are trying to build more housing, especially where it is most desired in village and town centers. Strategic streamlining can retain the important functions of the development review process, while eliminating unnecessary barriers to building needed housing. This is in keeping with action at the state level that aims to focus the state's role in the Act 250 review process on projects that may have the greatest impacts outside of centers and neighborhoods.

Climate Resilience

Climate change is no longer a distant threat—it's here. The [Vermont Climate Action Office](#) notes that temperatures in Vermont have risen about 3°F since the beginning of the 20th century with unprecedented warming since 2010 and winter thaws occurring earlier. Extreme weather events have led to record flooding, including the floods of July 10 in 2023, 2024 and 2025 respectively. This is putting



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lives, homes, and infrastructure at risk, with low-income communities facing the most severe consequences.

The seven key topics of reform are common to the four physical settings described on the previous pages (Downtown and Village Centers, Planned Growth Areas, Village Areas, Transition or Infill Areas). However, reform solutions may vary based upon the specific setting. More detailed standards are often useful in downtowns, where existing buildings could provide significant housing if the regulations provide clear standards and a predictable review process.

Each topic includes a series of recommendations, some or all of which may apply to your community, with the easiest short-term updates followed by more complicated mid-term updates. Some recommendations are noted as being most appropriate to neighborhoods, village centers, or downtown areas.



Chittenden; Image Credit: DuBois & King



St. Albans; Image Credit: Richard Amore

2.6.1. Dimensional Standards

Bylaws establish dimensional standards that place maximum and minimum measurements on the physical size and spacing of buildings and other structures. Sometimes these standards inadvertently block desirable types of new building in walkable places. For example, they may prevent the construction of new infill buildings to create housing in Village and Town Centers. Updates to dimensional standards can enable additional building opportunities while maintaining and strengthening neighborhood character.

Stage 1: Short-term updates

1. Match minimum lot size to local development patterns.

Many Vermont municipalities have adopted rural or suburban lot standards onto older village and town centers that traditionally have different characteristics, such as smaller lots. This can significantly limit the rights of property owners to improve or enlarge buildings, or to make changes that might add more housing to align with local and state initiatives to focus compact, walkable, development in centers and away from rural areas.

Bylaws should be amended to either eliminate or reduce minimum lot sizes, and reduce required frontage to ensure that existing lot sizes in a zoning district become the basis for the minimum lot sizes for that district.



2. Regulate coverage percentages carefully.

Coverage requirements, such as building coverage and lot or impervious coverage can be useful where used carefully and intentionally. “Building coverage” is the percentage of a lot that can be covered by a building (sometimes referred to as maximum building footprint). “Lot coverage” is similar, but adds the area covered by other impervious surfaces, such as driveways and parking spaces. However, these provisions can be counterproductive if the built outcomes are not based on traditional local building patterns. The proper percentage to be used for these caps should be determined by measuring the existing buildings and lot sizes in the surrounding neighborhood (see [Character Survey](#) section below) and calibrating coverage requirements accordingly, or by measuring other neighborhoods with the character you want for new development, then replicating those standards.

3. Remove density caps.

The dimensional standards provided by zoning (setbacks, building height, building at lot coverage) can be important to ensure that new buildings aren’t oversized or out of character. Density caps (maximum number of units per acre) may be appropriate on rural land. But in a walkable settlement where these standards limit the size of new buildings, a density cap unnecessarily limits opportunities for smaller homes that are needed and likely to be more affordable to a broader segment of the population. The size of a new building is already constrained by dimensional standards. Density caps can make it impossible for a new building to provide the smaller housing units that are needed. Therefore, whenever possible, eliminate density caps from bylaws.

4. Align other dimensional standards with the existing or desired pattern.

Verify that other dimensional standards, such as minimum front and side yard setbacks and maximum building heights, either match the existing built pattern or allow desirable evolution of that pattern. (See the Resources Section to learn how to conduct a Character Survey to determine revised dimensions.)

5. Remove requirements that forbid a second building on a lot.

Many bylaws allow only a single (‘principal’) building on a lot. Most lots are developed in this manner. However, there are many situations where more



than one building might be appropriately placed on a single lot: for instance, adding an accessory dwelling to a lot with a single unit dwelling (now allowed with a permit by statute), or two duplexes on a larger lot in a walkable neighborhood. Dimensional standards and fire separation requirements (when used) already regulate the size and placement of buildings, so there is no need to arbitrarily limit each lot to one building.

6. Remove unnecessary architectural treatment requirements.

Some Vermont municipalities have design requirements aimed at creating architectural interest in new buildings, or consistency with traditional design. These requirements sometimes include mandatory changes in the facade, among other things, which are expensive to construct, and often fail to deliver the desired character. Such requirements should be avoided. Municipalities can prevent large, blank buildings by limiting the width of buildings and requiring a minimum percentage of glass on the facade. Municipalities can also offer design guidance in the form of graphic examples (photographs, drawings) rather than establishing enforceable requirements, so that a builder understands what is preferred. .

Stage 2: Mid-term updates

1. Reexamine “nonconforming” provisions.

Municipalities with regulations that do not match the existing built pattern typically adopt “nonconforming” provisions to protect the rights of owners whose lots are in some way not currently in accordance with bylaws. However, zoning language for non-conformities often adds onerous review processes, or make upgrades and building expansion difficult or impossible. If the non-conformity exists only because the regulations are not aligned with existing building patterns, those penalties should not apply. A best practice is to align the dimensional standards in a zoning district with the historic lot and building patterns.

2. Consider supplementing minimum front setbacks with maximum front setbacks.

Dimensional standards generally include minimum setbacks (the distance between a building and the lot line). In village and town centers and nearby walkable neighborhoods, adding maximum front setbacks—essentially creating “build-to zones”—can be equally important, potentially maintaining historic settlement patterns, reducing the length of driveways, supporting



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multiple buildings on a lot, allowing for environmental preservation at the rear of the lot, etc.

For example, front setbacks could be expressed within a range, such as from 5 to 20 feet. Ensuring that building facades sit within a minimum distance from the street helps create the feeling of an “outdoor room” in the public realm, and provides more room to hide parking and private outdoor spaces behind buildings.

3. Add character-based frontage requirements.

When buildings are placed closer to the street and to each other, the way buildings relate to the street becomes more important. Standards can be defined to regulate how buildings should meet the street, including requiring functional sidewalk-facing entries and restricting blank walls on the front of buildings. A desirable further step can be to require a minimum percentage of glazing (transparent glass) on the front of non-residential buildings.



Newfane; Image Credit: DuBois & King



Barre; Image Credit: Richard Amore

2.6.2. Parking Standards

Parking spaces are expensive to build and maintain. Bylaws often require more parking spaces than are really needed, especially in more dense, walkable neighborhoods and downtowns where many people can walk or bike and tend to drive less. Excessive parking requirements drive up the cost of new housing and can even block it entirely. Simple changes to parking requirements can provide immediate benefits to communities.

Stage 1: Short-term updates

1. Reduce the number of on-site parking spaces required for specific uses.

Minimum parking requirements in bylaws are rarely determined by a study of actual need, or take into account existing nearby parking lots that could easily serve multiple uses. For newly constructed buildings, the required number of parking spaces is usually much greater than the actual need. Smaller multi-family dwellings can be nearly impossible to construct affordably when excessive parking is required. Minimum parking requirements for housing should rarely be higher than one on-site space per dwelling, especially housing built for elders, people with disabilities, and for housing located on public transit routes. If on-street or other sources of shared parking are available, even less parking can be required. Individual owners can choose to provide additional parking on their lots. But the municipality should not require any more parking than is absolutely necessary based on current data from similar locations.



2. Allow on-street parking spaces to count towards parking requirements.

Particularly in town and village centers, on-street parking spaces may be available. One way to provide flexibility for infill development and changes of use is to allow property owners to count adjacent on-street parking spaces (such as along their property frontage) toward meeting their on-site parking requirement.

3. Require that new parking spaces be placed behind buildings.

Walkable neighborhoods are characterized by highly visible entrances and other active areas of homes. New homes sometimes have large garages that visually dominate the facade of the house, and commercial building facades are often set far back from the street with large parking lots. While convenient for drivers, parking in front of buildings create barriers to a walkable, livable streetscape. Instead, bylaws can require that new parking areas be located completely behind buildings, or beside buildings, set back at least 10 feet beyond the front facade.

Stage 2: Mid-term updates

1. Eliminate parking minimums.

In recent years, many towns and cities have begun to accept that parking minimums have not been an effective tool, either in accurately predicting parking needs or in successfully producing great places. In most cases, lenders and tenants will demand a minimum number of parking spaces. Municipalities should focus on where that parking is located, not how much parking there should be. To address this, minimum parking requirements can be eliminated entirely or at least eliminated for smaller parcels.

2. Allow on-street parking in certain areas.

On-street parking spaces are shared among many users and have the additional benefit of separating pedestrians from moving vehicles. Some municipalities don't allow on-street parking, but may have adequate space within their rights-of-way to do so. These municipalities can identify those blocks where on-street parking would be a community asset, and can redesign road edges to designate vehicle parking spaces during street upgrade projects, as part of a 'Complete Streets' renovation.



Milton; Image Credit: DuBois & King

2.6.3. Allowable Uses

Zoning bylaws govern which types of housing and other uses of land can be provided in each zoning district. Downtowns, village centers, and adjoining walkable neighborhoods have historically contained a greater variety of uses and more types of housing than other parts of the community, and can be ideal locations for expanding housing opportunities. Over time, zoning permit rules have often restricted housing choices, such as not allowing additional housing in larger existing buildings, or prohibiting new multi-family buildings. Zoning bylaws can make it difficult, or even impossible to continue historic housing patterns, and to build mixed-use and multi-family homes where they are needed. Suggestions are provided here for several simple ways to reduce barriers to more housing.

Stage 1: Short-term updates

1. Eliminate restrictions on housing types.

Expanded housing choices are often inadvertently discouraged or even prohibited by zoning regulations that allow only a single-family home on a lot (**note:** such provisions are now illegal across Vermont), or that put multiple restrictions on any other type of housing, such as allowing them only as discretionary “conditional uses,” or requiring a complex review process designed for larger development projects. Unnecessary use restrictions are a major impediment to housing affordability and can run afoul of legal restrictions against regulating by type of ownership (rentals vs. condominiums vs. fee-simple ownership) or discriminating by source of income. All zoning regulations should be examined to determine which use



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restrictions are legal and important to a community, and which should be refined or eliminated.

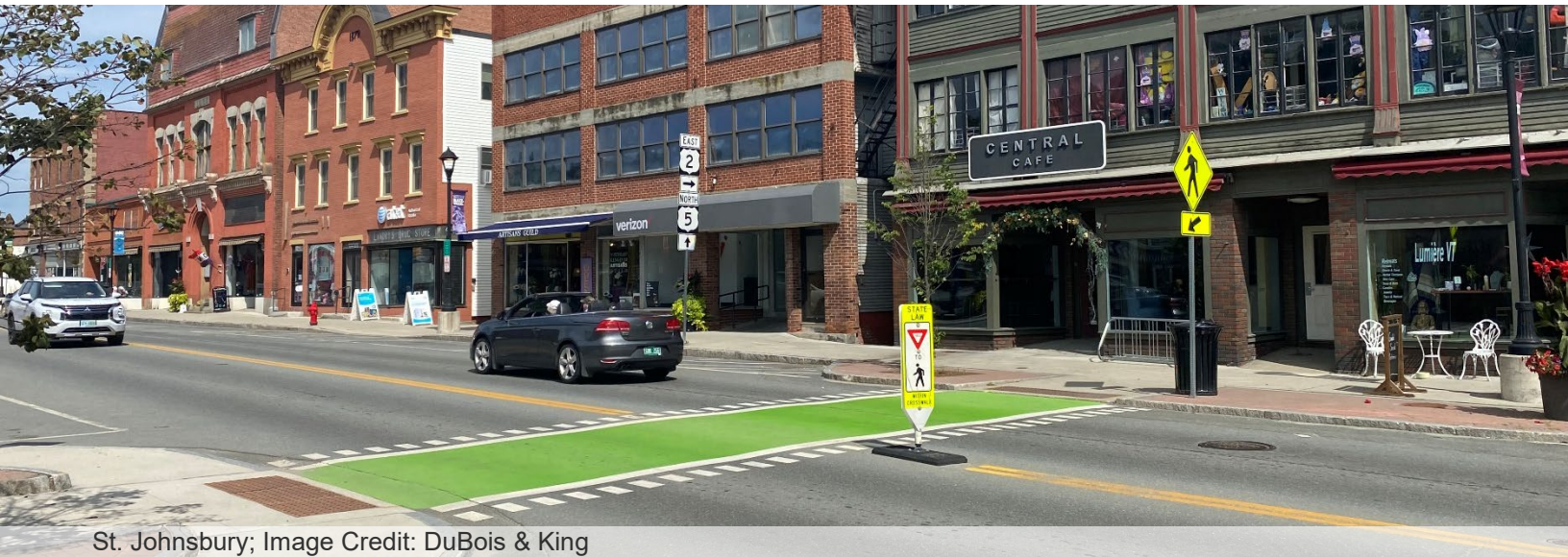
2. Avoid artificial determinations of acceptable family composition.

Zoning regulations sometimes establish artificial limits on how families are defined, such as allowing no more than four unrelated people to share one dwelling. These can run afoul of legal restrictions against discrimination by family status. Safe uses of housing should not be forbidden by zoning declarations about who can belong to a household; such declarations should be eliminated from zoning regulations.

Stage 2: Mid-term updates

1. Do not require unnecessary subdivision of land.

Home development can take place with various ownership structures, including detached homes on common land managed by a condominium or co-operative association. There is no need to require that the original tract be subdivided into a separate lot for each home, or to require Planned Unit Development (PUD) or Planned Residential Development (PRD) approval for such developments. Regulations should ensure that standards that regulate the subdivision of land are not inadvertently applied where they are not relevant or needed to guide the built form.



St. Johnsbury; Image Credit: DuBois & King

2.6.4. Street Standards

Streets should be designed according to the intensity of land use through which the street passes. The capital and maintenance costs of streets can increase the cost of housing, and create a long-term drain on municipal budgets. Disconnected street networks hinder walking, biking, and transit, increasing individual household transportation costs. A variety of departments and regulatory mechanisms impact street design; for guidance, please refer to [Complete Streets: A Guide for Vermont Communities](#) and the [VTrans Complete Streets Guidance](#).

Stage 1: Short-term updates

1. Add on-street parking wherever possible.

On-street parking provides a layer of physical separation for pedestrians while strongly supporting nearby businesses. On-street parking has also been shown to slow speeding motorists. In some cases, on-street parking has been reduced or removed in town and village centers to add or widen travel lanes, but hasn't been replaced even when the extra travel lanes are no longer needed. Wherever possible, on-street parking should be added (or replaced) in centers and added on nearby streets where the right-of-way can accommodate it.



Stage 2: Mid-term updates

1. Develop context-appropriate public realm standards.

High-quality sidewalks, furnishings such as benches, and plants in public spaces and along streets should support the comfortable pedestrian environment that is vital to the continuing success of downtowns. Town and city standards for the public realm can be established, such as locations for on-street parking, minimum sidewalk widths, type and spacing of street trees and streetlights, and potential use of the right-of-way for outdoor dining and the display of merchandise.

2. Stormwater management options.

Streets play a significant role in stormwater management. Ideally, stormwater is managed collectively over a large area. On small sites, such as a single residential lot, on-site stormwater retention should not be required or should be replaced by a simple requirement that each site make a meaningful contribution to limiting or cleansing surplus stormwater through techniques suited to small sites, such as pervious paving, French drains, or rain gardens. On larger sites, such as new subdivisions, stormwater management facilities should be designed as an open space asset, such as a retention pond, as well as necessary infrastructure.

3. Reduce travel lane widths.

Historic streets were shared by all users, unlike contemporary roads, which prioritize the automobile. In new subdivisions or town extensions, streets should be multi-modal to support pedestrian use and safety and should be no wider than necessary. As motorists approach a village center or downtown, or enter a residential neighborhood, the character of the street itself should change to reflect activities on adjoining land.

Town and village center streets benefit from slow-moving vehicles. From a safety standpoint, slowing cars is critical to saving lives. From a business standpoint, slowing cars increases business visibility, and makes the sidewalk a safer and more pleasant place for customers to walk. From an affordability standpoint, household budgets have more room when people feel safe and comfortable enough to walk or bike to many local destinations. While posting a lower speed limit is important, driver speed is directly influenced by the width and number of lanes, as well as the presence of human-scale features, such as sidewalks, benches, and street trees. Travel lanes should be no wider than 10 feet in town and village centers, with possible exceptions for truck, farm vehicle, or bus routes.



4. Right-size the number of travel lanes for village and town centers.

For the same reasons discussed in item 3, the number of travel lanes should be right-sized. The most vibrant pedestrian-oriented town and village centers consist of two travel lanes, one moving in each direction—these are easily crossed by pedestrians. Vibrant centers may also include three-lane sections where turn lanes are necessary. However, each additional travel lane detracts from the potential success of the center. Although reducing lanes on some heavily traveled streets may be controversial or even impractical, some downtown streets have more capacity than needed now or in the future.

5. Implement complete-streets principles.

A safe and comfortable walking and biking environment has the side benefit of increasing affordability for anyone who can reach their jobs and daily needs without a car. Many municipalities have adopted complete-streets principles to support pedestrians and cyclists but have yet to follow through with meaningful investments and street management. This step is as important as the regulatory changes recommended above.

6. Provide connections wherever possible.

New subdivisions and linear villages frequently lack an interconnected structure of streets. Development regulations can require that new access roads connect to existing streets, or that cul-de-sacs be constructed to the parcel boundary to allow future connections. Vehicular connectivity is highly desirable, and contributes to a resilient road network that can easily accommodate the occasional detour. Where impossible due to physical conditions such as the presence of wetlands, it is still critically important to provide pedestrian or bicycle paths to adjacent neighborhood services and employment where feasible.



Randolph; Image Credit: DuBois & King

2.6.5. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)

Accessory dwellings can reduce the cost of housing for the property owner as well as potential renters. An additional option for aging in place would be for the owner to move into the smaller dwelling over time. All of the suggestions below increase the effectiveness of existing ADU bylaws and are appropriate in village centers and neighborhoods adjacent to town and village centers.

Stage 1: Short-term updates

1. Allow the owner to occupy an accessory dwelling unit.

Some municipalities require the primary residence to be owner-occupied, although state law only requires that the owner live in either the primary residence or in the accessory dwelling unit. Otherwise, this requirement has no benefit to density, parking, or neighborhood character and can be removed through a very simple amendment to the regulations. Owners of accessory units would then be allowed to age in place while increasing income by renting the larger residence, should they desire to do so.

2. Increase the allowable size of accessory dwelling units.

State law allows for accessory dwelling units to be up to 900 square feet or 30% of the total habitable floor area of the house prior to creation of the ADU, whichever is greater. However, many municipalities have stricter limitations on the size or proportions of accessory dwellings, or limit them



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to an efficiency apartment or a single bedroom, while state law only states that accessory dwelling units cannot contain more than 2 bedrooms.

All other provisions should be eliminated with respect to accessory dwelling units, except those that would otherwise govern the principle use, such as for setbacks, building height, and overall building or lot coverage.

Stage 2: Mid-term updates

1. Minimize or eliminate parking requirements.

Many Vermont villages and towns require two on-site parking spaces for each new residence. Older lots often do not have room for four parking spaces, and even when they do, the loss of garden space and the additional impervious surface is not desirable. Since ADUs are typically very small residences, no extra parking needs to be required, or if it is, one additional space should be adequate, and interior garage spaces or stacked driveway spaces should be allowed toward this requirement. In some communities, parking shortages may be a significant problem, requiring a more complex solution for accessory dwelling units, but this determination should be made based on a study of actual parking need.



Colchester; Image Credit: DuBois & King

2.6.6. Development Review Process

The development review process often raises housing costs by increasing permitting fees, extending construction time, and creating uncertainty about project approval. This reduces the total housing supply, and discourages smaller or less experienced developers and landlords from adding units. Municipalities can streamline and shorten the review process and offer greater predictability while still regulating development and protecting public interests.

Stage 1: Short-term updates

1. Reduce requirements for conditional-use approval and discretionary site plan review.

Complicated review processes often unintentionally limit housing options. Excessive requirements, like conditional-use approvals or discretionary site plan reviews, frequently burden even small housing projects—procedures originally meant to block undesirable development. Municipalities should allow more uses “by right,” such as diverse housing types in walkable neighborhoods, and amenities like restaurants, shared workspaces, and shops in town centers. State law now requires communities to permit duplexes wherever single-unit homes are allowed, without additional regulatory review.



2. Simplify application requirements for small-scale development.

Regulations should eliminate unnecessary application requirements. For instance, an application to add an apartment or accessory dwelling on an existing lot should not require the same detailed engineering drawings as a new commercial building with a paved parking lot.

3. Consider limited deviations from certain zoning standards.

Bylaws can set standards that the Zoning Administrator or municipal staff may adjust to prevent desirable projects from being blocked by minor regulatory inconsistencies. For example, they might allow setbacks to deviate by up to 50% to address topographical constraints. The Development Review Board could approve larger deviations based on bylaw criteria. Unlike variances, which require strict hardship and are rarely granted, these adjustments offer practical flexibility.

Stage 2: Mid-term updates

1. Avoid over-reliance on complex PUD and PRD approval processes.

Many communities rely on complex approvals like PUDs or PRDs to work around outdated or ineffective bylaws, even for routine applications. Frequent use of these processes often signals deeper bylaw issues. Bylaws should allow flexible tools like PUDs to accommodate unanticipated but desirable projects through discretionary review, but routine reliance on them highlights the need to fix the underlying regulations.

2. Where practical, make staff responsible for site plan review.

Site plan review is generally a technical matter of assessing compliance with bylaws resulting in an administrative decision, within the allowances of [24 V.S.A. 4464](#) (c). If a qualified staff member is available to conduct a site plan review, the review can be completed more quickly, and an applicant can get clear direction about how deficiencies can be remedied. Assigning this responsibility to staff reduces the chances that subjective opinions will influence an administrative review process.



West Windsor; Image Credit: DuBois & King

2.6.7. Climate Resilience

Vermont must get ready for a changing climate and cut its climate pollution, such as carbon and methane emissions, in half by 2030 to meet the target in Vermont's [Global Warming Solutions Act](#) and prepare for extreme weather and other impacts caused by climate change. To do this, Vermont will need to prioritize helping the people who will be most affected by climate change. The State drafted its first [Climate Action Plan](#) in 2021 with a [second](#) published in 2025. The plan includes an implementation section for legislators and other state-level stakeholders to inform decision-making.

The land development and transportation sectors are among the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S.—and they are also key levers for reducing risk for the people who live in our communities. Sprawling development drives emissions, worsens climate impacts, and puts more people in harm's way. By encouraging compact, connected development near jobs, transit, and essential services, we can reduce emissions, protect green space, and make communities more resilient to extreme weather events. Climate resilience and adaptation—especially for communities on the frontlines—require land use and transportation decisions that plan for sustainability, inclusivity, and long-term well-being. Learn more at [Smart Growth America's Climate Resilience webpage](#).

The [Vermont Climate Council](#) and [Climate Action Office](#) will continue to develop best practices and build out the framework for measuring and assessing progress that government, nonprofit, private sector and municipal partners across the state can use to evaluate their impacts in achieving plan goals.



Dorset; Image Credit: DuBois & King

Chapter 3. Additional Resources

Templates for Bylaw Reform

The primary recommendations in the previous section of this Module presented regulatory changes that could allow more housing in town/village centers and adjoining neighborhoods across Vermont. To achieve the goal of additional housing, as well as a more streamlined development process, municipalities should consider amending specific parts of their existing land use regulations.

As further assistance, this section provides resources for implementing incremental bylaw reform, with samples of potential partial bylaw language on the subjects of accessory dwelling units and on-site parking standards. Sample language is also provided as a framework for four new zoning districts that could be applied to the physical settings described earlier in this Module. The templates can—and should—be adapted to fit the format and organization of your own community’s bylaws.

As a first step to bylaw reform, this section also provides a template for a “character survey” of portions of a town or village that the municipality may want to emulate, providing guidance for bylaw reforms that would enable these historic development patterns.



3.1 Character Survey

A character survey is a tool for measuring successful development patterns that already exist in your community. It allows you to identify existing patterns and uses as a guide to revise existing bylaws, to legalize the types and scale of development already in existence, and to modify those rules to the community's preferred vision for how those neighborhoods should evolve over time. Many Vermont towns and villages would benefit from a character survey to help them identify preferred development patterns and the regulatory challenges that most need reform.

3.1.1. Implementation Steps

Step 1: Define your districts and pick examples.

First decide what areas you want to adjust. Next, pick example blocks to measure, such as those that people love the most. This is an aspirational approach, and the new metrics in your bylaws will be set to guide development to match those best-loved blocks. Another approach is to pick blocks that show the full range of variation in the dimensions, including setbacks, lot size, and lot coverage. This is an approach that will help you put new dimensional standards in your bylaws that make as many existing lots as possible conform under the new regulations.



Randolph; Image Credit: DuBois & King

Step 2: Measure example blocks using a character survey form.

Print one copy of the character survey form (included on the following pages) to take into the field for each area or condition that you want to analyze. Take a walking tour and measure the elements shown on the form. Lot widths, building heights, setbacks, uses, parking location, and percent of window glazing are all important elements to measure. Photograph the Public Frontage (street section) and Private Frontage (views of the building facade). For the Public Frontage, it is usually best to stand on the sidewalk approximately where a planting strip would be and shoot at an angle to include some of the buildings and all of the sidewalk, and catch a bit of the far side of the street. For the Private Frontage, in the same area showing the same building(s), stand in the street and shoot the entire front yard including the facade. Include the entire lot width if possible; building height is less important.



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Step 3: Measure less visible elements using online maps or aerial photography.

In addition to measuring the elements you can access during a walking tour, use online maps or other aerial photography to measure elements over the whole area, such as lot coverage, the number and setback of outbuildings, and parking location.

Step 4: Analyze results and set new dimensional standards.

Once you have measured your selected blocks, sit down with:

- a. the completed character survey forms,
- b. maps or aerial photos of the area, and
- c. a new blank character survey form for each district you are adjusting.

Consider the metrics for your measured blocks and the conditions in the rest of the area, and decide what dimensions to set for your revised zone(s). Fill in the metrics you decide on the blank character survey form (one for each district you are revising), and these metrics will be the basis for your bylaw amendment.



3.1.2. Character Survey Example

T4 Waterbury



WINOOSKI ST @ MAIN ST

Average Lot Width	65' - 70'
Average Lot Coverage	25% - 90%
Outbuildings?	0 or 1



PRIVATE FRONTAGE

Principal Building Height	1.5 - 2 stories
Outbuilding Height	1 - 2 stories
Front Setback	9' - 15'
Side Setback	5'
Rear Setback	unknown
Outbuilding Setback (from front)	48' - 96'
Ground Level Function	residential
Upper Level Function	residential
Parking Location	side or rear of principal building
Percent Glazing	15%



PUBLIC FRONTAGE



Character Survey Form

Zone - Location

ADD AERIAL
PHOTO HERE

STREET @ STREET

Average Lot
Width

Average Lot
Coverage

Outbuildings?

ADD PRIVATE
FRONTAGE
PHOTO HERE

PRIVATE FRONTAGE

Principal Building Height

Outbuilding Height

Front Setback

Side Setback

Rear Setback

Outbuilding Setback
(from front)

Ground Level Function

Upper Level Function

Parking Location

Percent Glazing

ADD PUBLIC
FRONTAGE
PHOTO HERE

PUBLIC FRONTAGE



3.2. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

Adjust to Context

While this language recommends specific proportional percentages, these should be adjusted to the context using the Character Survey found below. Dimensional standards can be further modified by:

1. Allowing waivers or a range of proportional percentages for constrained circumstances, where the location of the principal dwelling or lot layout limits where an ADU can be added.
2. Allowing pre-existing buildings, such as carriage houses and garages, to be converted to an accessory dwelling, even if they do not meet setbacks and other dimensional standards.

3.2.1. Best Practices

Flexible Occupancy:

ADU rules should not require the owner to occupy the primary building on the same lot. This allows the owner to rent the ADU while they remain in the main house. Later, they can move to the ADU when they become "empty nesters," renting the main house to a growing family that needs a larger space.

Size Limits:

Municipalities may allow larger ADUs than the 900 sq. ft. statutory minimum. This may be particularly appropriate in low-density and rural districts, where some towns have set 1,200 or 1,500 sq. ft. size limits. In that vein, ADUs cannot be limited to a specific bedroom configuration; this is at the discretion of the owner.

Parking:

If the municipality has on-site parking rules for residences, consider allowing waivers for ADUs at the discretion of the zoning administrator. For example, for ADUs, you may allow on-street parking if available, stacked parking in driveways, or off-site parking with landowner permission.

Access:

In most situations, it's best to have ADUs share the same driveway as the principal residence. However, in rebuilds of detached nonresidential structures (such as garages or barns) that already have a separate driveway, allow that access to continue for the ADU conversion without requiring any additional permits.



3.2.2. Required Provisions (Per State Law)

One accessory dwelling must be allowed for each single-unit dwelling, provided that:

1. The unit does not exceed 30 percent of the total habitable floor area of the single-unit dwelling or 900 square feet, whichever is greater. However, municipalities may allow larger ADUs.
2. There is sufficient on-site septic capacity for the designed occupancy of the additional living unit (ADU).
 - The accessory dwelling is located on the same lot (or lots) as the single-unit dwelling.
 - As per statutory definition, the primary single-unit dwelling does not need to be owner-occupied.
3. The accessory dwelling may be located within the single-unit dwelling, may be attached to it, or may be in a detached structure, such as a garage or barn.
4. The criteria for permitting an ADU cannot be more restrictive than the criteria for permitting a single-unit dwelling.*

** For example, ADUs cannot be subject to additional or different minimum setbacks from property lines, size or height limits, density, lot coverage, or design review standards than single-unit dwellings.*



3.3. On-Site Parking Standards

State law does not set specific parking requirements but provides guidance under 24 V.S.A. § 4414(4), leaving details to local municipalities. As noted in "Topics of Reform," excessive parking requirements raise the cost of building new housing or reusing vacant buildings. The following standards offer ways to simplify parking rules, meet residents' needs, and prioritize people over cars.

On-Street Parking: On-street spaces should count for two off-street spaces because on-street spaces turn over, are available more frequently, and have higher overall occupancy rates.

Shared Parking: Parking may be provided off site within 300 feet through the use of a shared lot when the [review entity] finds that due to hours of operation, type of use, and/or size of lot, an agreement between the owners for such sharing exists.

Note: If on-site parking is required, simplify the parking table by defining uses broadly, as shown on Table 1, and reduce the number of parking spaces necessary for each use.

3.3.1. Best Practices

On-Site Parking and Loading

1. On-site parking spaces are not required. *[Alternative: "On-site parking spaces must be provided in accordance with Table 1. Each on-street parking space directly adjoining the site will replace two parking spaces otherwise required by Table 1.]*

Optional Table 1 – Required On-Site Parking Spaces	
Uses	Minimum Parking Spaces Required
All Residential Uses	1 space per household unit
All Lodging Uses	1 space per sleeping unit
All Assembly Uses	1 space per 4 installed seats
All Retail Uses	1 space per 300 sq. ft. of display floor area
Medical Offices	1 space per 400 sq. ft. of gross floor area
All Other Offices	1 space per 500 sq ft/ of gross floor area
Restaurants/Taverns	1 space per 4 indoor seats



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- Unless no reasonable alternative exists, on-site parking shall be located to the rear of the building. When no such reasonable alternative exists (including on-street or shared off-site parking), parking may be located to the side of the structure no closer to the street than the existing front building facade.
- Access to on-site parking and loading areas should be limited as follows:
- Access should be from a rear alley where available.
 - Access may be from a street adjoining the rear or side property line if a rear alley is not available.
 - If access is not possible from a rear alley or rear or side street, access may be provided from a driveway off the street.

3.3.2. Required Provisions (Per State Law*)

A municipality may adopt provisions setting forth standards for permitted and required facilities for off-street parking and loading, which may vary by district and by uses within each district.

- In any district that is served by municipal sewer and water infrastructure that allows residential uses, a municipality shall not require more than one parking space per dwelling unit.
- However, a municipality may require 1.5 parking spaces for duplexes and multiunit dwellings in areas not served by sewer and water, and in areas that are located more than one-quarter mile away from public parking.
- The number of parking spaces shall be rounded up to the nearest whole number when calculating the total number of spaces.
- Bylaws *may* also include provisions covering the location, size, design, access, landscaping, and screening of those facilities.
- In determining the number of parking spaces for nonresidential uses and size of parking spaces required under these regulations, the appropriate municipal panel may take into account the existence or availability of employer “transit pass” and rideshare programs, public transit routes, and public parking spaces in the vicinity of the development.

*Per 24 V.S.A. § 4414(4)



3.4. Allowable Use Tables

Recent state law changes require towns to allow duplexes on all lots zoned for single-unit homes, and permit densities of up to four units per acre where community water and septic are available. These rules apply statewide, even if local zoning has not yet been updated.

Household Defined: Safe uses of housing should not be forbidden by zoning language about use, and the term “household” should replace “family” in housing descriptions.

Simplify Development Review: Communities benefit from diverse housing options, which should not require conditional use review. In towns with planning staff, administrative site plan review can further streamline the process. Clear standards should address local concerns without relying on time-consuming discretionary reviews by Development Review Boards.

Sample Use Table for Neighborhoods and Town Centers

- Table 2 suggests permitted and conditional uses that can be allowed by Vermont municipalities in typical Neighborhood [N] and Village/Town Center & Downtown [TC, VC, D] zoning districts.
 1. **Mixed Uses:** Multiple permitted and conditional uses within a single building, and multiple buildings and permitted and conditional uses on a single lot, are allowable provided that the dimensional standards in Table 2 and other zoning regulations are met.
 2. Conditional uses may be permitted only upon approval by the Development Review Board. Site plan review will be performed simultaneously by the Development Review Board while considering the conditional-use application.

Table 2 – Allowable Uses		
Category	Neighborhoods [N]	Centers [TC, VC, D]
Residential Uses		
Single-household dwelling	Permitted Use	Not Permitted
Two-Four households dwelling	Permitted Use	Permitted Use
Five+ households dwelling	Conditional Use	Conditional Use
Licensed group homes, residential care homes and recovery residences serving up to 8 individuals (Note 1)	Permitted Use	Conditional Use
Lodging Uses		
Bed and Breakfast; Inn	Permitted Use	Conditional Use
Hotel, motel, other lodging	Not Permitted	Conditional Use



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Institutional Uses		
School or Child Care; <12 pupils	Permitted Use	Permitted Use
School or Child Care; 13+ pupils (Note 3)	Conditional Use	Permitted Use
Place of Worship; <10 parking spaces (Note 3)	Permitted Use	Permitted Use
Place of Worship; 11+ parking spaces (Note 3)	Conditional Use	Conditional Use
Public Facilities (municipal and regional services) (Note 3)	Conditional Use	Conditional Use
Commercial Uses		
Home Occupation	Permitted Use	Permitted Use
Offices/shops in Converted House (adaptive Re-Uses) (Note 4)	Conditional Use	Permitted Use
Main Street Commercial Uses	Not Permitted	Conditional Use
General Commercial Uses	Not Permitted	Conditional Use
Industrial Uses		
All Industrial Uses	Not Permitted	Conditional Use
Energy facilities and transmission lines (Note 3)	Conditional Use	Conditional Use

Best practices and fine points:

1. Vermont law ([24 V.S.A. §4412](#)) specifies several land uses allowed by right in all communities. These include forestry, agriculture, and home child care and group homes in residential districts. Thus, zoning bylaws cannot require a more restrictive process (such as conditional use review) to establish such uses.
2. Zoning bylaws often place regulatory barriers in the way of establishing small business and commercial activity, by requiring conditional use review to establish such uses, even in historic village centers and mixed-use districts. Consider simplifying bylaws for uses that are typical in downtowns and village centers (such as personal services, health clinics, daycare facilities, bed and breakfast inns and small retail shops) by switching them from conditional to permitted uses in these districts.
3. Schools, health care facilities, state facilities, emergency shelters, places of worship, power plants, and municipal facilities such as police stations and town garages qualify for special zoning restrictions under Vermont law ([24 VSA §4413\(a\)](#)). Zoning rules for such development may require conditional use and site plan review. But these uses may be exempt from some local standards if they would unduly restrict their function.



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4. Adaptive re-use of historic residential and commercial properties has helped revitalize many communities. It can be allowed in all downtowns and village centers. These may include mixed residential and commercial uses, including cafés, retail and co-working spaces at street level, with residences on the second and third floors.
5. Temporary uses (such as a pop-up store to fill a vacant storefront) can be regulated with a Special Use Permit. These are valid for 2 years, after which they may be renewed.

3.5. Neighborhood District [N]

Purpose

1. Neighborhood Districts (historically, and now in context of [Act 181](#)) include residential areas adjacent to village, town, and city centers. Neighborhood Districts encourage diverse housing types and compatible commercial uses.
2. The goal of this template is to increase the availability of housing by simplifying development standards, and reduce or eliminate unnecessary review processes for projects that are aligned with these purposes.

Note: These dimensional standards are tools to control the character and intensity of neighborhood-scale development. Density caps such as minimum lot sizes typically used in zoning bylaws can be removed to enable a wider range of housing options.

Measure First

The first step is measuring the existing dimensions of typical building and lot patterns in the neighborhood.

- If the goal is to maintain the existing neighborhood character, use the [Character Survey tool](#) to document these patterns. Then use that pattern to inform the standards in Table 3.
- If the goal is to change the form of a district, conduct the Character Survey in a neighborhood that exhibits the desired character, possibly in another town or city. Always verify dimensional standards in the real world, measuring places you want to replicate.

Table 3 – Dimensional Standards for Structures and Lots	
Lot Widths	50' min, 100' max
Setbacks:	
Front	8' min, 12' max
Side	5' min
Rear	3' min with rear lanes or 12' min



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Parking Setback from Building Front	20' min
Maximum Building Height	2.5 stories
Maximum Building Width	40' per building
Maximum Building Coverage	___% per site (35-50% typical, depending on whether suburban or urban)

Note: Dimensions should be tailored to reflect the character of the local context. Utilize your Character Survey to determine the appropriate dimensions.



3.6. Town Center [TC]

Purpose

1. The Town Center District encompasses mixed-use areas of small cities and larger towns located outside of downtowns. Under-utilized and vacant commercial and industrial buildings and shopping plazas present opportunities to plan and redevelop more vibrant and diverse mixed-use projects. Town Center Districts enable higher density and more compact settlement patterns than other places, with a compatible mix of appropriately scaled residential and business uses in a pedestrian-friendly setting.
2. The goal of these standards is to increase the availability of housing and encourage adaptive re-use of existing buildings by clarifying the requirements for housing and mixed-use development in these areas, in alignment with the existing patterns of downtowns and village centers.

Note: The Town Center, Village Center, and Downtown district languages all provide suggested standards for development in the mixed-use district, but each offers standards at a different scale and intensity that can range from a rural village to a bustling regional downtown. Select the standards that best fit with the mixed-use areas in your community, and use the Character Survey to determine the dimensional standards needed.

Table 4 – Dimensional Standards for Structures and Lots	
Lot Widths	30' min
Setbacks	
Front	0' min, 20' max
Side	0 or 5' min
Rear	3' min with rear lanes or 12' min
Parking Setback from Building Front	20' min
Maximum Building Height	3.5 stories
Maximum Building Width	120' per building
Maximum Building Coverage	100% per lot

Note: Dimensions should be tailored to reflect the character of the local context. Utilize your Character Survey to determine the appropriate dimensions



3.7. Village Center [VC]

Purpose

1. The Village Center District encompasses the central mixed-use areas of rural and small towns. Village Centers are a focal point for development in the community. They enable a variety of housing opportunities with a mix of small-scale commercial entities in a pedestrian-friendly setting.
2. The goal of these standards is to increase the availability of housing by clarifying the requirements for housing development in harmony with the traditional mixed uses already in place there.

Note: In rural villages, the dimensional differences between a Village Neighborhood and a Village Center may be subtle. Look for the details of what makes the placement and size of buildings used for a village store or post office different from those in the residential parts of the village. Measure the village center building patterns in other, similar villages to further refine the dimensional requirements.

Table 5 – Dimensional Standards for Structures and Lots	
Lot Widths	40' min
Setbacks	
Front	0' min, 20' max
Side	0 or 5' min
Rear	3' min with rear lanes or 12' min
Parking Setback from Building Front	20' min
Maximum Building Height	2.5 stories
Maximum Building Width	100' per building within the first 30' of frontage
Maximum Building Coverage	100% per site

Note: Dimensions should be tailored to reflect the character of your village. Utilize your Character Survey to determine the appropriate dimensions



3.8. Downtown District [D]

Purpose:

1. To promote economic opportunity/viability, consumer services, and housing options for the community and surrounding area.
2. To promote infill redevelopment that results in a walkable, vibrant, and diverse mixed-use district, including retail, office, institutional, and residential.
3. To provide for walkable streetscapes where active building frontages engage with sidewalks, and parking and loading are located behind buildings.
4. To promote small, incremental development, alongside larger developments.

Notes on Permitted Uses in Downtowns: (see also [Table 2](#) above)

1. Remove blanket restrictions on one principal use per parcel. Multiple uses within a single site or building should be allowed and encouraged.
2. Vermont law allows municipalities to provide density bonuses or additional height for housing developments that include a minimum percentage (e.g. 20%) of permanently affordable rental units, as defined by federal guidelines.
3. Many communities are re-purposing vacant commercial buildings into shared 'maker spaces' and co-working centers, as affordable business incubator spaces with shared facilities for emerging artisans, inventors and remote workers. Consider adding a 'cottage industry' or 'light industry' category as a conditional use in downtown.
4. New drive-through businesses such as banks and gasoline convenience stores require multiple curb cuts, which can be discouraged or banned in downtown street standards for a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape.

Table 6 – Dimensional Standards for Structures and Lots	
Lot Widths	25' min; 100' max
Setbacks	
Front	0' min, 20' max
Side	0' min
Rear	15' min with rear alleyways or 5' min
Parking Setback from Building Front	20' min
Maximum Building Height	5 stories
Maximum Building Coverage	100% per site

Note: Dimensions should be tailored to reflect the character of your downtown. Utilize your Character Survey to determine the appropriate dimensions.



3.9. Subdivision Standards

Zoning bylaws set the rules for **what** can be built and **where**— such as the type of use, size, and location of buildings. Many communities also adopt Subdivision bylaws, which focus on **how** development happens. These include rules for dividing land into separate building lots, and setting design standards for roads, parking, utilities, and other public improvements. Subdivision bylaws also outline the steps developers must follow to apply and get approval from the town or city.

In other words, zoning controls the **type** and **density** of development, while subdivision regulations guide how land is divided and how infrastructure is added to support that development. Although a community can have subdivision bylaws without zoning, they work best when combined with zoning regulations that set clear standards for lot size and building density.

Subdivision bylaws are described in state statute, at [24 V.S.A. §4418](#):

“A municipality may regulate the division of a lot or parcel of land into two or more lots...” and “Subdivision bylaws shall establish standards and procedures for approval, modification, or disapproval of plats of land.”

Like zoning, subdivision bylaws help put the Municipal Plan into action. They may be adopted on their own or combined with zoning in a “Unified Development Code” to simplify rules, provide clear guidance, and avoid conflicts between documents. In either format, a municipality must have subdivision bylaws—along with zoning—to qualify for certain benefits under Act 181 of 2024, which includes updates to Act 250 permitting and state designation programs.

The following table provides a general guide to the differences between Zoning and Subdivision bylaws.

Table 7 - Subdivision and Zoning Bylaws Comparison Table	
Subdivision Bylaws	Zoning Bylaws
Lot layout and design standards	Location of land uses, dimensional and density standards
Required infrastructure improvements	Density of uses at a site
Open space and recreation design	Requirements for the amount of open space
Approval process requirements, including waiver of standards by the municipality	Variances acted upon only by the governing body or zoning board
Financial guarantee for the construction of a project’s public improvements (“surety”)	Long-term oversight for ongoing regulatory compliance throughout the municipality



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If subdivision bylaws are adopted by a community, they must contain some elements in statute-- related to plan submission, the design of public facilities such as for transportation, and the protection of natural and cultural features. Subdivision bylaws also “may include” other elements, such as the ability of the local board to “waive” or modify requirements as appropriate, generate procedures for the local review process, and regarding energy conservation/renewable energy.

In practice, subdivision bylaws can ensure that:

- New lots are laid out according to local standards, including applicable zoning standards, to avoid the creation of nonconforming or oddly shaped lots and, where appropriate (for example, within designated Centers and Neighborhoods), to reflect traditional settlement patterns;
- Each lot has adequate access for its intended use and, where appropriate, for emergency vehicle access;
- New roads, sidewalks, and pedestrian paths effectively connect to existing and planned connections in the surrounding area;
- There is adequate provision for potable water supply, wastewater treatment/disposal and stormwater management systems, and public gathering or recreation areas, and that these and other improvements are provided in a timely and efficient manner; and
- Significant natural, cultural, and scenic features are protected.

With particular respect to transportation, Vermont’s Act 34 of 2011 plays a vital role in subdivision bylaws. Act 34 was enacted to ensure that the needs of all users of Vermont’s transportation system – including motorists, bicyclists, users of public transportation, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities – and “Complete Streets” principles are considered in all state and municipally managed projects.

The Complete Streets approach to planning, design, and maintenance promotes safety and accessibility for all users of all ages and abilities. More detail is included below, and is available in this 2023 [Complete Streets Guide](#) prepared by the Vermont Agency of Transportation.

Model Subdivision Bylaw

This section of Module 3 describes the Subdivision purposes, process requirements, and design standards in greater detail, particularly as they relate to public improvements around transportation, utilities, stormwater management and other features of the public realm.

To provide the best guidance, the format below includes aspects of a sample “model bylaw” of some of the elements to consider for public-process regulations and neighborhood development design standards. Several site features are described in greater detail, in order to provide a basis for these design standards as may be developed in your own community. However, each property and each community is



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different, so it is impossible for this Manual to offer a simple, standardized process. Therefore, this model is intended to be an example that may be modified to suit your vision and needs, as consistent with your Municipal Plan. Work with your Regional Planning Commission to work through the process of developing, adopting, and implementing these regulations.

Model “Purposes of Subdivision Bylaws”

The following Purposes are sample ideas that you may use in the Introduction to your subdivision bylaws.

- To enable coordinated development in accordance with the Municipal Plan.
- To ensure that all future development is well designed to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the community.
- To coordinate private development with public infrastructure development.
- To provide protection to a property owner or purchaser by ensuring the creation of developable lots and adequately designed developments.
- To enable a fair apportioning of public and private costs for infrastructure improvements.
- To establish uniform standards to ensure that public infrastructure and other community facilities are built properly, including a coordinated transportation system.
- To prevent the imposition of undue future cost burdens on the municipality.
- To establish a fair and efficient process for reviewing subdivisions and land developments.
- To establish minimum standards for the design and construction of improvements, which aid in the use and enjoyment of land, such as streets, sidewalks, adequate drainage and water and sewage facilities, and which would aid in precluding adverse environmental effects, such as sedimentation, erosion, flooding, deforestation and water pollution

Model “Applicability”

The following Applicability text is a sample idea that you may use in the Introduction to your subdivision bylaws. It is intended to indicate the types of proposals to which the Subdivision Bylaws would apply.

Note that the below elements shall be considered in concert with the governing Zoning bylaw provisions for the use, location, dimensions and density of development.

- Any construction, building development, grading, land clearing (excluding customary forestry, or agricultural or surveying activities) associated with the subdivision of land



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- Any sale, conveyance or lease of any subdivided lot
- The issuance of any permit for any land development involving land to be subdivided; or
- The filing of a subdivision plat with the Town Clerk
- Whenever any subdivision and/or land development is proposed, and before any permit for the erection of a structure shall be granted, the landowner or developer shall apply for and obtain approval of such proposed subdivision and/or land development in accordance with the procedures set forth herein

Model “Overall Design Intent”

The following Design Intent text is a sample idea that you may use in the Introduction to your Subdivision Bylaws. It is intended to reinforce the Vision, Goals and Strategies expressed in the Municipal Plan, as they may, in turn, govern the design of a particular site and specific site elements.

1. Build Healthy Neighborhoods and Vibrant Commercial Areas
2. Develop Safe and Functional Transportation Systems
3. Establish a Variety of Open Space and Recreation Areas
4. Cultivate Natural Landscapes
5. Manage Stormwater Effectively
6. Lay out Safe, Convenient and Efficient Parking Areas and Driveway Access
7. Install Sustainable and Appropriately Scaled Infrastructure
8. Promote Energy Conservation and Alternative Energy Development

Considerations About Expressing Design Standards

While it’s clear that new developments should be well designed, defining clear and consistent design standards can be challenging.

As with zoning, subdivision design standards should reflect the goals of the Municipal Plan and be informed by professional judgment, research, and experience. These standards must serve a public purpose—such as protecting health, safety, and general welfare—and should be clearly written and easy to interpret by both property owners and municipal boards. Measurable standards are easiest to enforce, though not all design issues can be reduced to simple numbers.

Standards should reflect typical situations but also account for unusual site conditions. For instance, requiring wide roads in low-density neighborhoods may seem helpful for traffic and parking, but often leads to higher maintenance costs, more stormwater runoff,



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and faster traffic—outcomes that may conflict with other community goals like walkability, energy conservation, or natural resource protection. Bigger isn't always better, and some standards may have unintended consequences that should be addressed.

To ensure consistent yet flexible review, local boards should understand when it's appropriate to grant a **waiver** from subdivision rules—while still supporting the Municipal Plan and public welfare. For example, if a property already has dense vegetation along its border, a board may waive additional landscaping requirements if that vegetation is permanently preserved. (Note: a **waiver** under subdivision bylaws is different from a **variance** under zoning, the latter having a much higher legal threshold, requiring proof of unusual “hardship” beyond financial concerns.)



3.9.1. Specific Design Standards

1. Road Types

For the purpose of this Manual, we are considering two types of roads: lower-traffic Local Roads and the somewhat higher-traffic connecting Neighborhood Roads (sometimes called Connector Roads). These are the two types of roads most typically found in the denser areas of your community on which this Module is focused. They should form a network of interconnected streets, accompanied by public improvements that promote safe, multi-modal transportation and the efficient and equitable distribution of public services.



For example, in this illustration of Stonecrop Meadows in Middlebury, Vermont, the hierarchy of roads is evident. The Local Roads internal to the subdivision (gray color) connect with Seminary Street Extension, a Neighborhood Road (white color). It is also useful to note the different types of parking configurations in this illustration, which includes driveway parking, on-street parallel parking along Barnes Brook Road, perpendicular parking to the left side of the development for the larger buildings, and a parking lot at the top of the illustration.

2. Travel Lane Width and Right-of-Way

Road safety is essential. Roads should be designed to help drivers travel safely with minimal traffic conflicts, especially at intersections and access points. This includes carefully planning lane widths within the full road right-of-way.

Roads must be wide enough to handle expected traffic, on-street parking, and bicycles. However, wider roads create more stormwater runoff, cost more to maintain, encourage faster driving, and are harder for pedestrians to cross. In most village or downtown areas, streets between 22 and 28 feet wide—with 9- to 11-foot lanes—can safely accommodate vehicles and some on-street parking.



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A right-of-way is a legal easement that allows public use of land for travel, utilities, and maintenance. It doesn't mean the town or utility company owns the land—only that they have the legal right to build and maintain certain features within it. The full width of a right-of-way includes vehicle lanes, bike lanes or shoulders, on-street parking, and areas for bus pull-offs. It may also include curbs, sidewalks (sometimes set back behind a buffer), utility poles, hydrants, streetlights, and street trees. Underground utilities—such as water, sewer, and stormwater pipes—are also commonly located and maintained within the right-of-way.

In Vermont, the right-of-way for a Local Road is often 49.5 feet wide, equal to three “rods”—a surveying unit used for centuries. A typical Neighborhood Road may be 66 feet wide (four rods) to allow space for on-street parking, sidewalks on both sides, and other features.

Your community can set right-of-way widths in its Subdivision bylaw. Doing so helps ensure new roads follow consistent standards and provides clarity for developers and review boards. However, unless there's a specific need—such as adding public infrastructure—it often makes sense to match the widths of existing roads. This approach supports predictability for both public and private entities working within the right-of-way.

Survey Measurements

The surveyor's chain was developed in the 1600s by an English astronomer, using a wooden rod for measuring land. While the rod itself hasn't been used in over 200 years, its length—16.5 feet—has had a lasting impact on surveying and land development. Folklore claims the rod's length came from adding up the left feet of the first 16 men to leave church one Sunday. However, records of a 16.5-foot measuring pole date back as far as the 1200s.

Table 8 - Model Travel Lane and Right-of-Way Widths Table

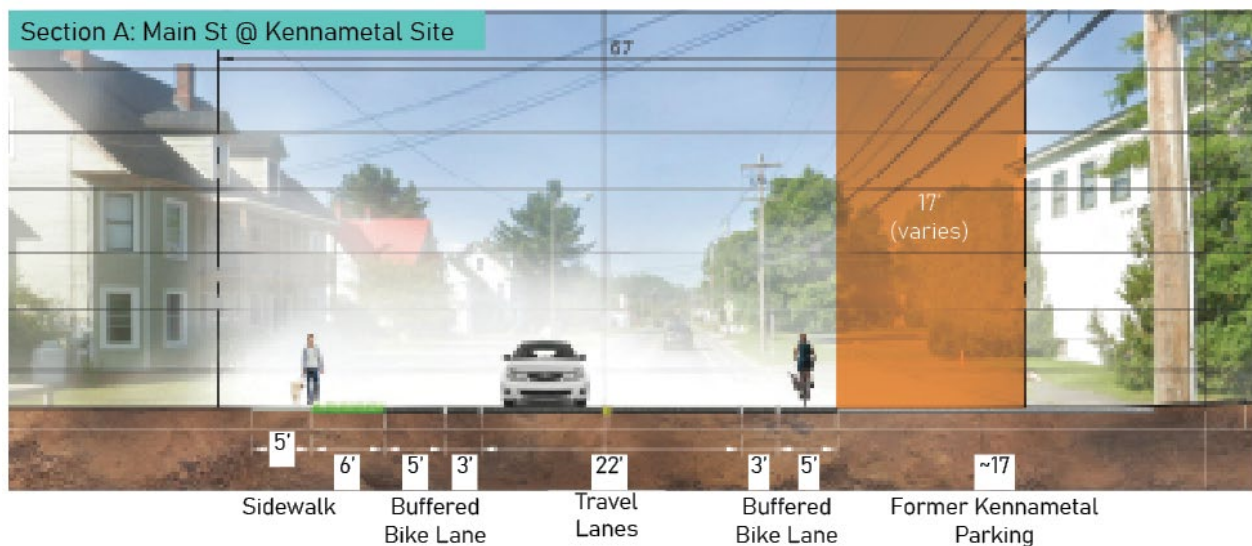
	Local Road	Neighborhood Road
Travel Lane Width	10 feet	11 feet
Right-of-Way Width	49.5 feet (3 rods)	66 feet (4 rods)



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Bristol illustration of a Local Road Right-of-Way; Image Credit: DuBois & King



Lyndonville illustration of a Neighborhood Road Right-of-Way; Image Credit: DuBois & King



3. On-Street Parking

Zoning bylaws typically govern how much “off-street” parking is required for a particular use type. Tables often include a long list of uses, various types of residences, offices, restaurants, retail uses, institutions and industries, with corresponding metrics for the number of required parking spaces.

Unless a community has municipally-owned off-street parking areas, public parking is located within the right-of-way. Your Subdivision bylaws can dictate which types of roads (e.g., Neighborhood) are required to have parking provided along the frontage of a newly developed or redeveloped property. This requirement will be implemented in conjunction with state laws governing the required horizontal offsets from intersections, driveways, crosswalks, fire hydrants, and other conflicts.

Accessible parking spaces should also be provided with public on-street parking. Consistent with Americans with Disabilities Act Standards, a minimum of 1 space per 25 should be designated and designed for those with accessibility needs, with accompanying access aisle(s) for angled or perpendicular parking configuration.

The following is a general description of the types of on-street parking spaces. Depending on space availability on each side of the road, a combination of these parking types can be utilized. For example, one side of the road may have on-street parking, while the other has angled parking, such as along Main Street in Poultney, Vermont. Or, whatever the type, width for parking may only be available on one side of the road.

Parallel Parking

In this type of design, vehicles park parallel to (in line with) the road’s curb or edge, with the front or rear bumpers aligned with those of adjacent vehicles. This type of parking is especially common where paved road width is less available, or space is being economized for bicycle lanes, green strip planting areas, and sidewalks. This configuration will also allow for the retention of more of the front yards of adjacent businesses and residences.

Parallel parking is one of the safest ways to park a vehicle, as it maintains driver visibility when exiting the space, and produces the fewest obstructions on the ongoing road, as it requires a minimum amount of road width. However, it requires a lot of vertical curb length relative to angled or perpendicular parking. Fitting a vehicle into a parallel parking place is often considered the most difficult task for any driver.





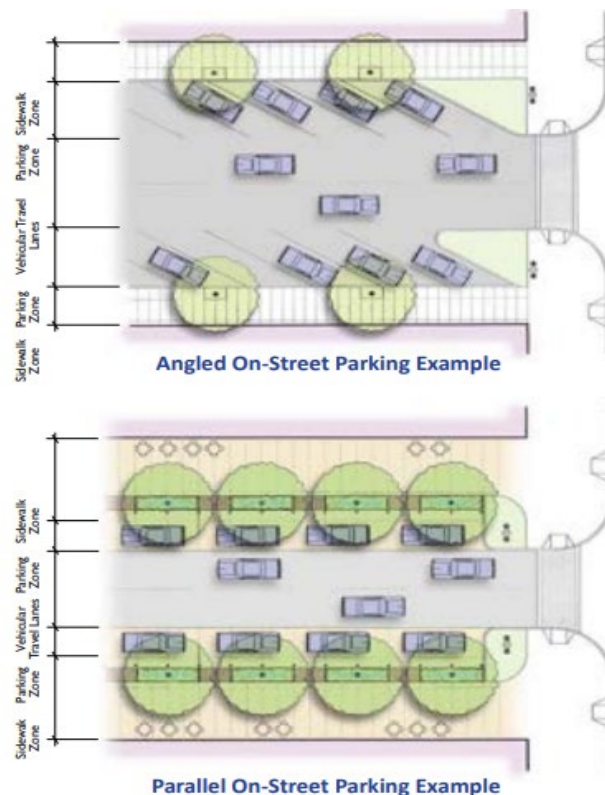
Angled Parking

If there is adequate space within the right-of-way, this type of parking can accommodate more parking than parallel parking; the angle at which cars are parked (often 30, 45 or 60 degrees) determines how efficiently the linear space can be used. It offers more convenience and ease to park the car this way.

The challenge with this type of parking can be in exiting “nose-in” parking spaces, as it can be difficult to see whether there are oncoming motorists or bicyclists while reversing back into traffic. (For this reason, while not yet common, some communities institute a back-in type of angled parking, so that the front of the vehicle is already facing forward in the direction of traffic when exiting.

Perpendicular Parking

In select locations, such as along the frontage of larger multi-unit and multi-use buildings, some of your roads may have the right-of-way width to accommodate perpendicular parking, which is essentially angled parking at 90 degrees. It is the most efficient in terms of linear space, but still has the same challenges of visibility when exiting from a “nose-in” configuration. Even more of the travel lane is needed when exiting a perpendicular parking space, so if lane width is also relatively narrow, this is not a viable option. That’s why perpendicular parking is most often seen in larger off-street parking areas, where motor vehicle speeds tend to be much slower and motorists are conditioned in this environment to be expecting reversing vehicles.



Illustrative examples of Angled and Parallel On-Street Parking; Image Credit: Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program's *Green Streets Guide*

Table 9 - Model On-Street Parking Space Dimensions Table

	Width	Length
Parallel Parking	7 feet	22 feet
30°Angled Parking	9 feet	18 feet (outer edge perpendicular to curb)
45°Angled Parking	9 feet	21 feet (outer edge perpendicular to curb)
60°Angled Parking	9 feet	23 feet (outer edge perpendicular to curb)
Perpendicular Parking	9 feet	18 feet (outer edge perpendicular to curb)



4. Sidewalks

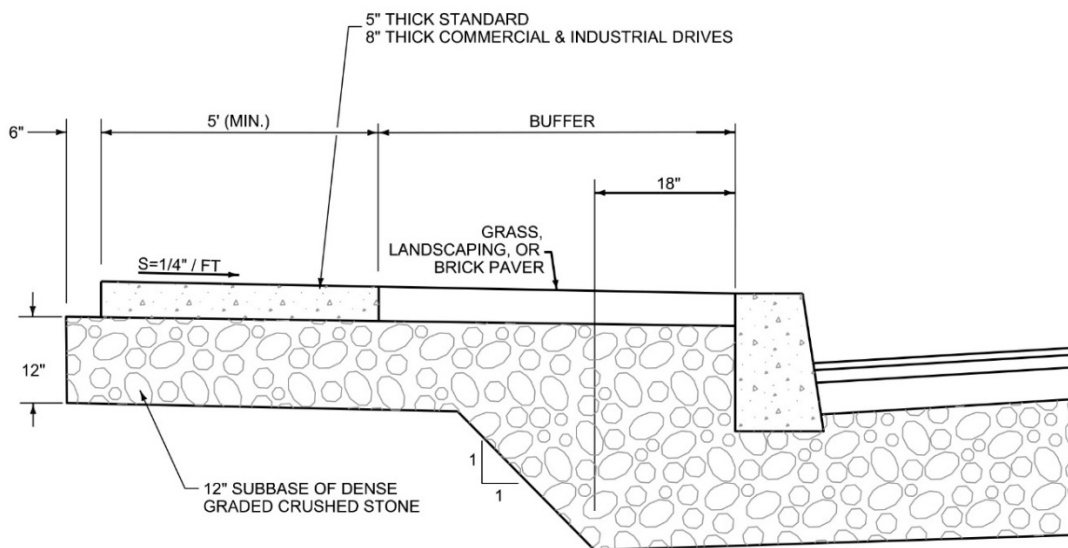
Sidewalks serve more than just foot traffic—they can also be places to gather, wait for transit, or support outdoor dining and retail. In neighborhoods, sidewalks are typically at least 5 feet wide for accessibility and may be placed on one or both sides of the street if safe crossings exist. In village centers or downtowns, sidewalks are often 8 to 10 feet wide to allow for more activity and may include amenities like benches, trash cans, and streetlights.

Standard sidewalks are usually made of concrete, 5 inches deep, set on a crushed gravel base, with joints for expansion and drainage. A slight cross-slope helps direct water runoff. Where sidewalks cross driveways, the concrete depth may increase to 7 or 8 inches to support vehicle weight.

A standard sidewalk detail can be included in your Subdivision bylaw appendix, though some communities also use separate Public Works Specifications for these improvements.

Multi-use Paths

If space is available within the right-of-way, or with the agreement of adjacent property owners, communities of all types can construct multi-use paths that are set well away from the roadway. These are ideally 10 to 12 feet in width in order to safely accommodate a variety of users. The State of Vermont has many grant programs to assist with the construction of these amenities. See the [Bike Ped Program](#) web page to get started.



Portland Cement Sidewalk detail included in 2024 Public Works Specifications from South Burlington, Vermont; Image Credit: City of South Burlington, Vermont



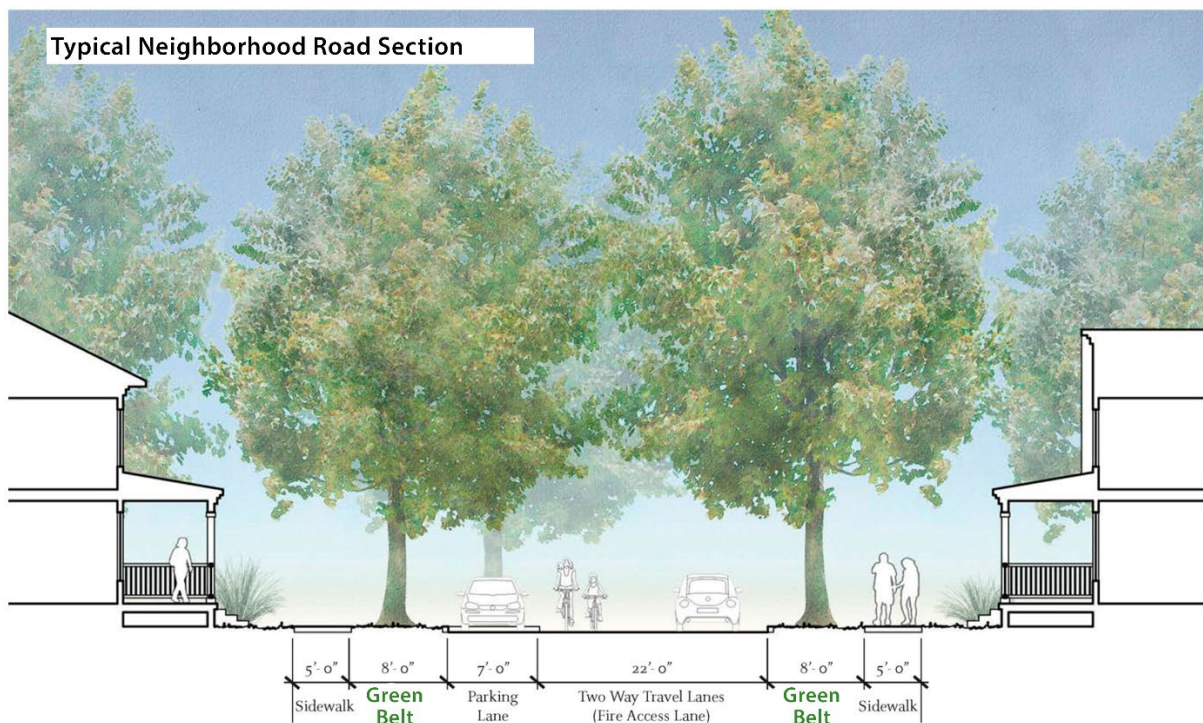
5. Green Belts That Can Support Street Trees

Whether or not a road is curbed, a “green belt” along it separates sidewalks, provides space for street trees, and accommodates utility poles, signs, hydrants, and snow piles. Without curbs, or with curb scuppers, the green belt also helps absorb runoff through rain gardens.

In neighborhoods, a minimum five-foot width supports healthy tree roots. Subdivision bylaws can regulate tree spacing and size; for example, requiring one deciduous shade tree (2½–3 inches caliper) every 40 feet, with adjustments for visibility, utilities, and driveways. Maintain at least 15 feet between trees and streetlights or hydrants. To boost resilience, bylaws should limit any single tree species to no more than 20%, avoiding past mistakes like widespread American Elm loss from Dutch Elm Disease.

Consult with [Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program](#) for a list of recommended street trees for your community – these “recommended” lists may be included in your Subdivision bylaws, with sections based on, for example mature height, which is an important consideration when planting under utility lines.

Below is a “typical” street section for a Neighborhood Road. It shows a generous Green Belt of 8 feet in width, along with sidewalks, on-street parking, and two 11-foot wide motor vehicle travel lanes (totaling 55 feet within what could be a wider right-of-way).



Typical Neighborhood Road Section; Image Credit: Union Studio Architecture & Community Design



6. Intersection Treatments Including Corner Radii and Crossings

The guidance below was adapted from information provided by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO).

The configuration of street intersections can be complex, but good design is vital to public safety and smooth travel for all types of transportation. Good intersection design also shapes how a place looks and feels, using materials and signs that add character while guiding people. A well-designed intersection supports safety and mobility goals and can also improve public spaces.

Visibility and Sight Distance

Good visibility and sight distance are vital for safe intersections. Design should encourage eye contact among drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, and transit users, making intersections feel like shared spaces.

Design strategies like intersection “daylighting” improve visibility by removing obstructions near crossings. For example, placing on-street parking far enough from corners allows for curb bump-outs that clear sight lines.

Proper lighting is also essential. Major intersections and safety islands should have pedestrian-scale lighting to ensure people and vehicles are visible. While signs or flashing beacons can help, they do not replace good design that slows cars, places crosswalks well, and makes crossings safer.

Corner Radii

Corner radii affect vehicle turning speeds and how far pedestrians must cross. Smaller corner radii help create compact intersections and keep turning speeds safe. While standard curb radii range from 10–15 feet, many communities use radii as small as 2 feet in neighborhoods without large trucks. In village or downtown areas, smaller radii are preferred, and corners larger than 15 feet should be rare. Smaller corners shorten crosswalks, reduce crossing time, and improve pedestrian safety.

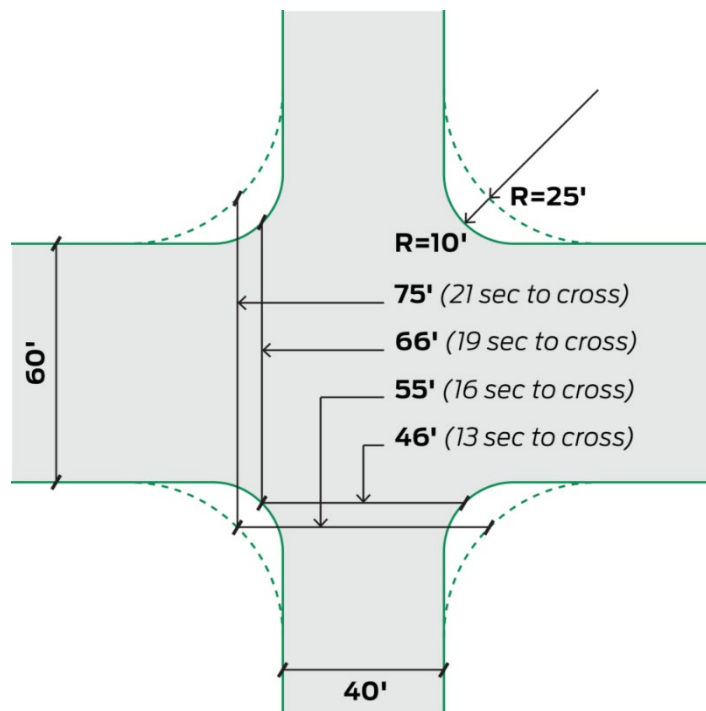


Diagram of corner radii and crossing time; Image Credit: NACTO



Crossings

Safe, frequent crosswalks make streets more walkable and help people cross roads safely. Crosswalks should be installed where pedestrian traffic is likely, but markings alone may not be enough. Additional features—like different pavement materials, raised crossings, flashing beacons, or daylighting—can help alert drivers to people crossing.

Decisions about crosswalks should consider land use, demand, pedestrian behavior, speed, safety, and crash history—not just traffic volumes. Subdivision bylaws should require crosswalks at intersections with sidewalks and at mid-block crossings where needed and visible. Local boards may waive this if safety or design factors make a crosswalk inappropriate. Crosswalks alone don't guarantee safety; depending on speed and road width, extra measures like safety islands, signals, or traffic calming may be needed.

Crosswalks

Crosswalk spacing should reflect the surrounding pedestrian network, built environment, and where people naturally choose to cross (known as desire lines).

If it takes more than three minutes to reach, wait at, and use a crosswalk, people may choose a quicker but unsafe route. Simply leaving crossings unmarked to discourage use is not an effective safety strategy—it can lead to risky behavior and discourage walking. Instead, communities should improve and highlight key crossing areas whenever possible.



7. Access management for driveways

Too many driveways close together can create traffic hazards and unsafe road access. Combining driveways on adjoining properties—known as access management—reduces the number of access points and helps place driveways in safer locations.

Access management often applies to businesses, helping prevent congestion that might drive customers away. Studies show that good access management usually does not hurt business revenue and often attracts more customers.

Your subdivision bylaws can set minimum distances between driveways, such as 150 feet, though exceptions may be needed for lot shape. Local bylaws can also encourage shared parking between neighboring properties to reduce parking needs and improve access, which may be addressed in the zoning bylaw.

VTrans

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) works with communities in the interest of making coordinated decisions that benefit the general public, property owners, and local governments. The Agency is working to improve that relationship and provide communities with ongoing information concerning access to properties and preserving a safe travel environment through access management. See the VTrans [Access Management](#) website for more information.



8. Utility placement, boxes, and necessary infrastructure

Utility companies or agencies—power, cable, water—often have their own needs and best practices guiding the placement utility infrastructure, whether poles, junction boxes, access holes, etc. However, your subdivision bylaws can also direct placement to be aligned with the safety and aesthetic objectives of your community. In addition, as noted earlier, a core purpose of the subdivision bylaw is to establish uniform standards to ensure that public infrastructure and other community facilities, including those that are within a property (i.e., outside of the right-of-way) are built properly, including water and sewer systems. Therefore, it is appropriate that the subdivision bylaws include regulatory language to this effect.

With this in mind, every new development must ensure access to essential utilities before construction begins:

Water Supply & Sewer Systems

Each lot must have access to clean water and a proper wastewater disposal system. This usually means connecting to a municipal system, but in rural areas, private wells and septic systems may be required.

Electrical Infrastructure

Utility providers must approve and install electricity lines before homes or businesses can be built. Developers often work closely with power companies to determine the best placement for lines, poles, and transformers, and your community can be included in this process at the regulatory and plan review level. For example, your community decide that all new electrical infrastructure will be buried. While more expensive up-front, there are public safety as well as aesthetic benefits of this.

Stormwater Drainage & Roads

Proper stormwater management is a must (see below), and developers must submit drainage plans that meet local regulations. Driveways must also be designed for emergency access and long-term maintenance.

For those improvements that are within the right-of-way, the public safety imperative will dictate that pedestrians access and motorist visibility is maintained, and travel of emergency vehicles is not impeded. Your subdivision bylaws may state, for example, that no new public infrastructure is permitted within the “clear site triangle” at intersections.



9. Surety and inspection processes

In case a project developer is unable to finish their work, the local community should be in the position to pick up the ball in run with it. This is where “surety” comes in. Surety is a type of performance bond, letter of credit from a bank, or cash placed in escrow, for the full cost of installing public improvements, whether roads, sidewalks, street lights, street tree, stormwater improvements, public-access open space, and more. Essentially, this is a completion guarantee, and your subdivision bylaw may include legal language governing this process. If you are writing a new subdivision bylaw, or adding this type of guarantee to an existing bylaw, it would be good to work with a land use attorney. However, to get idea of what is typical, here is an example from Rutland City:

24 V.S.A §6056 Performance Bonds.

(a) Before final approval of a subdivision plat, subdivider shall furnish the city with a performance bond with appropriate surety or security, approved by the Board of Aldermen, in an amount to cover the full costs of all new streets and required improvements, and their maintenance for a period of two years after completion, the cost of which shall be borne by the subdivider. The amount of such bond shall be determined by the City Engineer and the form and execution of such bond shall be approved by the City Attorney. The performance bond shall run for a term determined by the Planning Commission; however, the term may be extended for an additional period not to exceed three years.

(b) As-built construction drawings and plans shall be submitted to and approved by the City Engineer prior to the release of any bonds or portions thereof, for installation of required improvements.

Once a certain amount of the public improvements are installed, the developer will then request of your community that an amount of the surety—bond or escrow, by “released.” This requires your community to send a member of staff, such as a zoning officer, or another qualified consulting professional, to determine whether the improvements have been installed property and in accordance with the approved development plan.

Based on these inspections, the municipality may release some or all of the surety. Again, these release requests may be made incrementally by a developer, even if a given project is not phased, because it is out of this surety that the developer will pay contractors, or repay a bank loan.



10. Stormwater considerations

Stormwater facilities collect, convey, and manage surface runoff from a developed site. Collection and conveyance facilities include general site grading, inlets, pipes, and swales or channels that are designed to move water to stormwater management facilities on the property, or to discharge points at the property boundary.

All land disturbance activities affect the magnitude and characteristics of stormwater discharged from a site. These changes can be positive or negative. Activities that reduce impervious area and the overall intensity of development can have a positive impact on the environment by reducing the volume and rate of runoff and improving the quality of runoff leaving the site. However, activities that increase impervious area and/or compact pervious area increase the volume and rate of runoff, and reduce the overall quality of water leaving the site. These changes often result in flooding, surface erosion, stream bank erosion, and environmental degradation of habitat within receiving waters.

Effective stormwater management should reduce the quantity of runoff while improving its quality. It should also provide for the safe conveyance of surface flows to downstream receiving waters. Natural hydrologic (surface water) systems, such as floodplains, wetlands, and drainage swales, provide many valuable stormwater management functions. Therefore, good stormwater management design starts with understanding these natural systems on a given property in order to integrate them into an overall stormwater management strategy.

Stormwater techniques have diversified in recent years, with a better understanding of how natural systems can be replicated to promote better drainage. The 2018 [Vermont Green Streets Guide](#) prepared by the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program is a great resource.



11. Common Open Space

Areas for recreation, exercise and social gathering are vital to the public health and welfare. In this way, common open space is a vital part of community infrastructure, whether incorporated into larger neighborhood development or facilitated by a recreation fee-in-lieu tool.

In larger projects, such as planned unit development or a commercial center, a subdivision bylaw may require that a certain area of land—indoor or outdoor—be set aside for open space. These can be small greens or plazas, or simply open areas for “passive” recreation like walking or birdwatching. A smaller subset of the common open space, such as 5%, may be required to be specifically designed for “active” recreation: courts, fitness clusters, exercise rooms, swimming pools.

The amount of common open space that is required would be based on, for example, the quantity of residential units, or the amount of retail/office square footage. For example, 1 residential unit or 1,000 square feet of retail area may require 1,000 square feet of dedicated common open space, to be maintained as such in perpetuity and available to the general public for its use.

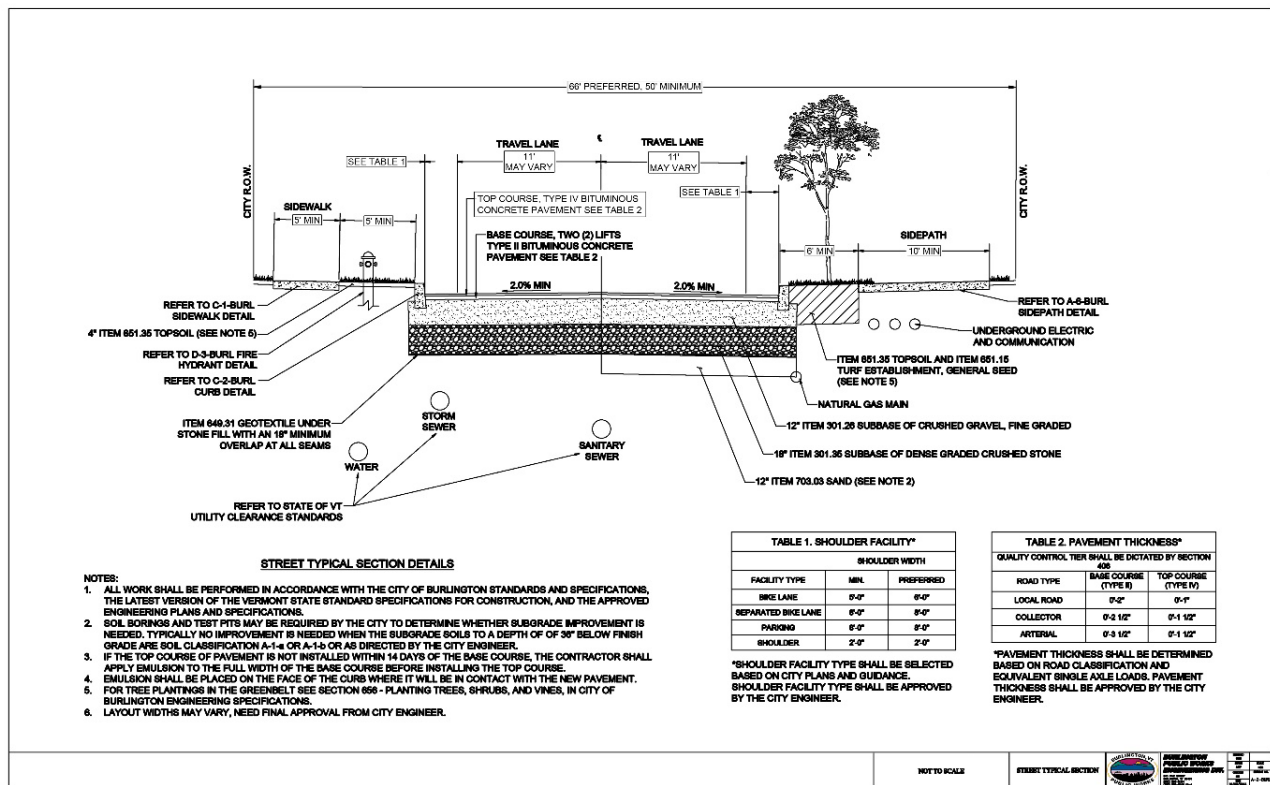
On smaller projects where it may not be appropriate to include common open space—such as where public access is not feasible, a recreation fee-in-lieu provision may be added to your bylaws. Using the same metrics, such as residential units or 1,000 feet of retail/office, your community can adopt a fee that the developer can pay instead of providing the common open space onsite. The fee can increase incrementally each year to account for inflation, and be re-adopted every 5 or 10 years. The resolution establishing this fee must require that the community put this money in a special account, to be used for defined public recreation purposes, such as the purchase of land for public access, or the installation and maintenance of courts, fields, benches, landscaping, etc.



12. Surfacing and Curbs

When it comes to the literal foundation of public realm design, surfacing and curb standards are fundamental. Your subdivision bylaws can include explicit reference to materials, dimensions, and physical shape, all of which are directly related to functionality, safety, and longevity. Your community's website may also have available AutoCAD and/or PDF versions of the current preferred sample.

Below are the street typical section and curb design standards from the City of Burlington, Vermont, which are available online on their [Construction Permits & Standards](#) web page along with many others. For the street typical section, specifications include pavement thickness for different types of roads (such as local and collector), lane widths, and the downward slope from the central crown (for drainage). The curb standard includes materials (including references to VTrans standards), and precise dimensions, which are necessary for proper functioning.



Street Typical Section Detail; Image Credit: City of Burlington, Vermont



13. Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy

Energy use considerations should be part of any design, and your community may (per Vermont state statute) establish standards in the subdivision bylaws for encouraging renewable energy resources and energy conserving design.

The location of buildings may be important in minimizing adverse temperature and weather conditions. The placement of landscaping can block cold winter winds from the northwest while providing cool summer shade on buildings and in parking lots.

The location and orientation of buildings and other structures may also be important in expanding opportunities to develop renewable, or alternative, energy sources, such as solar and wind. Other design features already discussed, such as roadway design, help to lessen fuel consumption. Also, by incorporating facilities, such as bike racks into a design, individuals can be encouraged to bike instead of drive.



Charlotte; Image Credit: DuBois & King

Appendix 1

The recommendations and resources in the previous sections of this Module are provided with the goal of helping towns and villages in Vermont navigate an incremental bylaw reform process in order to improve housing access and affordability in their communities. Not all tools offered will be useful to all municipalities; however, with the necessary local calibration of the included recommendations and resources, communities can address those opportunities where incremental bylaw reform can give the most return on invested effort.

The Appendix offers additional information relevant to the contents of this Module. To contextualize the reform tools, the particular governance and housing conditions unique to Vermont are described. Explanations of housing market dynamics and stormwater strategies, as well as further resources on bylaw reform and housing affordability, are also included for reference.



A.1.1. Methodology

Enabling Better Places Through Incremental Local Bylaw Reform is focused on incremental bylaw reform. This deliberate process enables a community to create regulatory change in a single neighborhood or district before moving to the next update, building political will and community support throughout the process. Bylaw reform is designed to reduce costs for development. For example, reduced parking requirements lower the market barriers to entry and support small-scale developers, which can enable an incremental, responsive approach to neighborhood and downtown revitalization.

This Module brings cost-effective and accessible Vermont-specific regulatory tools to financially challenged communities, enabling them to take a thoughtful, nuanced approach to creating places for their residents. This incremental approach and responsiveness to local conditions embraces the existing culture and helps prepare for change so that residents have a stake in that change.

The initial guide, developed in 2020, a multi-step process to ensure Vermont-specific conditions were reflected. Congress for the New Urbanism worked with Vermont's 11 Regional Planning Commissions as well as conducted workshops with six Vermont municipalities.

This 2025 update builds upon that work, responding to recent developments in housing, climate change, and more.



A1.2. Vermont Government Context

The governance context of the State of Vermont creates a condition where there are some constraints on the extent of reform that can be accomplished at a local level.

As a Dillon's Rule state, Vermont is one of nine states operating under narrow local government authority, based on the 1868 ruling by Iowa Supreme Court Justice John Forest Dillon. Local governments operate only within the range of what enabling legislation of the state allows, thereby imposing limits on local powers, compared with states operating under a broad local government authority or "home rule" system. That's why it's imperative for local officials to be mindful of the scope (and limits) of their land use planning authority under [24 VSA Chapter 117](#). (Also see [Municipal Authority Context](#), in the Introduction on p. 13 above.)

Within state statutes governing land use, the quasi-judicial statewide development review process adopted in 1970 and generally referred to as Act 250 is aimed at larger developments and subdivisions. The statute is not tied to local development review, and therefore requires additional time and effort in order to receive project approval. The original statute was aimed at natural and cultural resource protection. But in walkable places, and where there is effective local land use regulation, it may be more efficient to waive Act 250 regulation. This is especially the case when Act 250 review is triggered for small increments of new housing within downtowns and adjacent neighborhoods, unintentionally driving up housing costs.

Under Act 181, enacted by the Vermont Legislature in 2024, towns can apply for waivers from Act 250 jurisdiction for local permitting for projects up to a certain size and, in some cases, total Act 250 exemption. This would eliminate parallel review processes for many projects. The regional planning commissions are currently developing future land use maps to identify areas where partial or total Act 250 exemption may be possible, but the decision to seek exemption will ultimately reside with the community.

Additional Resources:

[Planning Resources](#): website hosted by VAPDA with detailed guidance for municipalities, templates and training resources for members of Planning Commissions, Development Review Boards, and municipal staff.

[Essentials of Local Land Use Planning & Regulation](#): This 2007 publication spells out the basic roles and responsibilities of municipal planning and permitting.

[Vermont's Regional Planning Commissions](#): support municipal planning with staff expertise, resources, and technical assistance. Contact information for your region can be found in the link.

Vermont's Department of Housing & Community Development offers a [Downtown and Village Center funding guide](#) with contact info and eligibility for grants and tax credits to finance public and private improvements that can accelerate local redevelopment efforts.



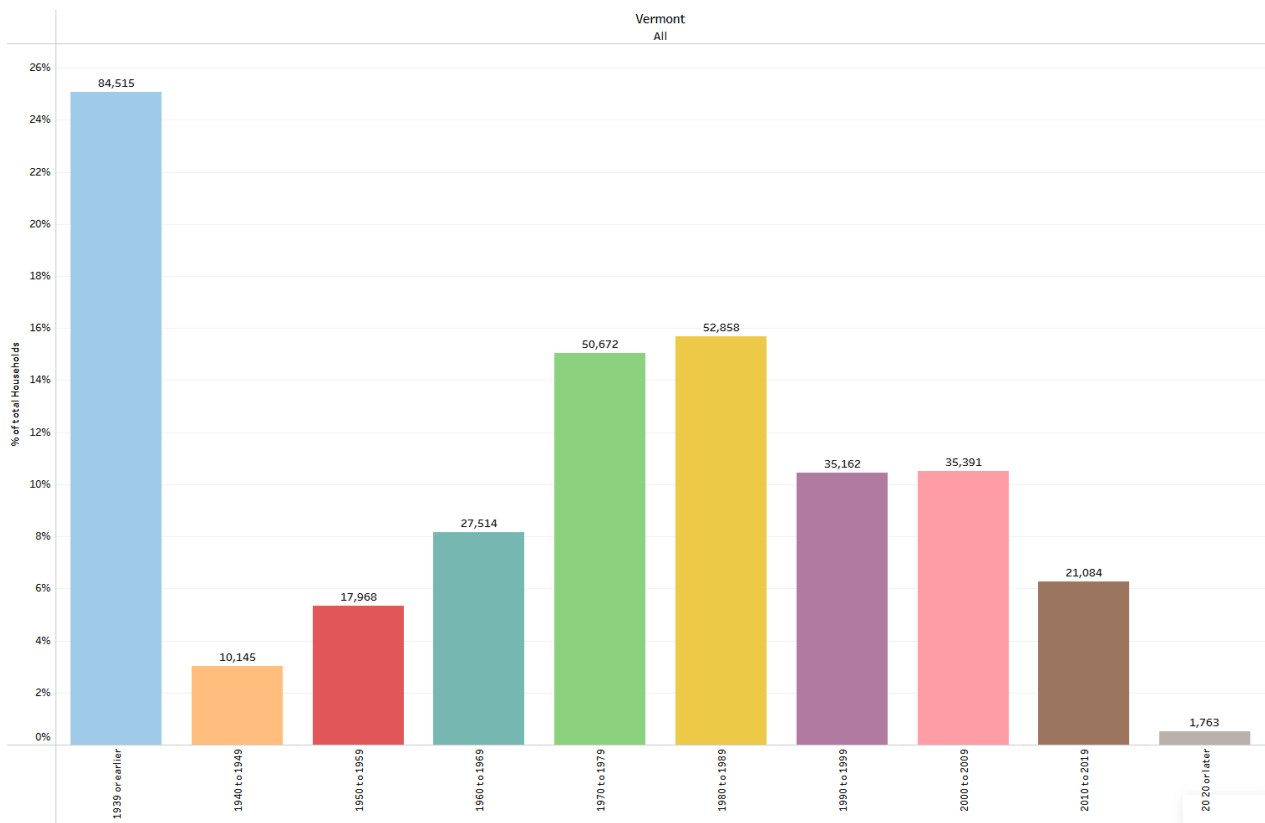
A1.3. Vermont Housing Market Context

The housing market in the State of Vermont provides a unique context where demographic and economic trends coincide to produce an increased demand not being met by existing housing stock.

Like much of the rest of the country, two age cohorts dominate the housing trends in Vermont: millennials and baby boomers. Nationally, only one-third of millennials own homes, and another third are living in their parents' homes (AARP Livable Communities Slideshow: Housing a Change America. February 7, 2019). These two large cohorts are competing for the same small, low-maintenance units in convenient and affordable places, driving up demand for a limited stock of housing for purchase or rent across the state. Even in places where houses are affordable, housing supply is often mismatched with market demands. The following graphs illustrate various data related to housing trends in the state.

Housing by Year Built

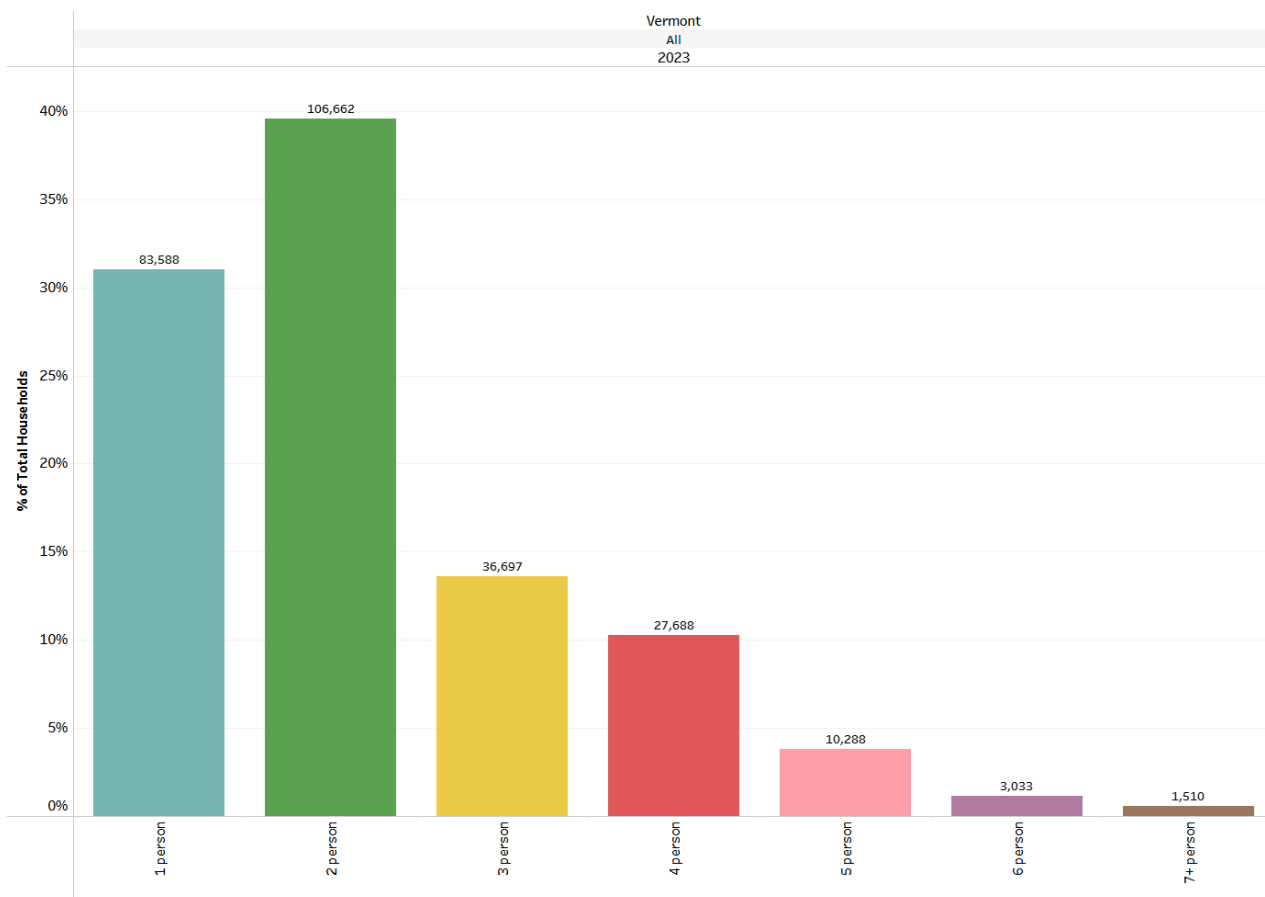
As this [graph illustrates](#), Vermont has a significant proportion of housing built nearly a century ago or more, in an era when households were typically substantially larger than they are today. As a result, much of the existing housing in the state may not match current market demands.





Household Size

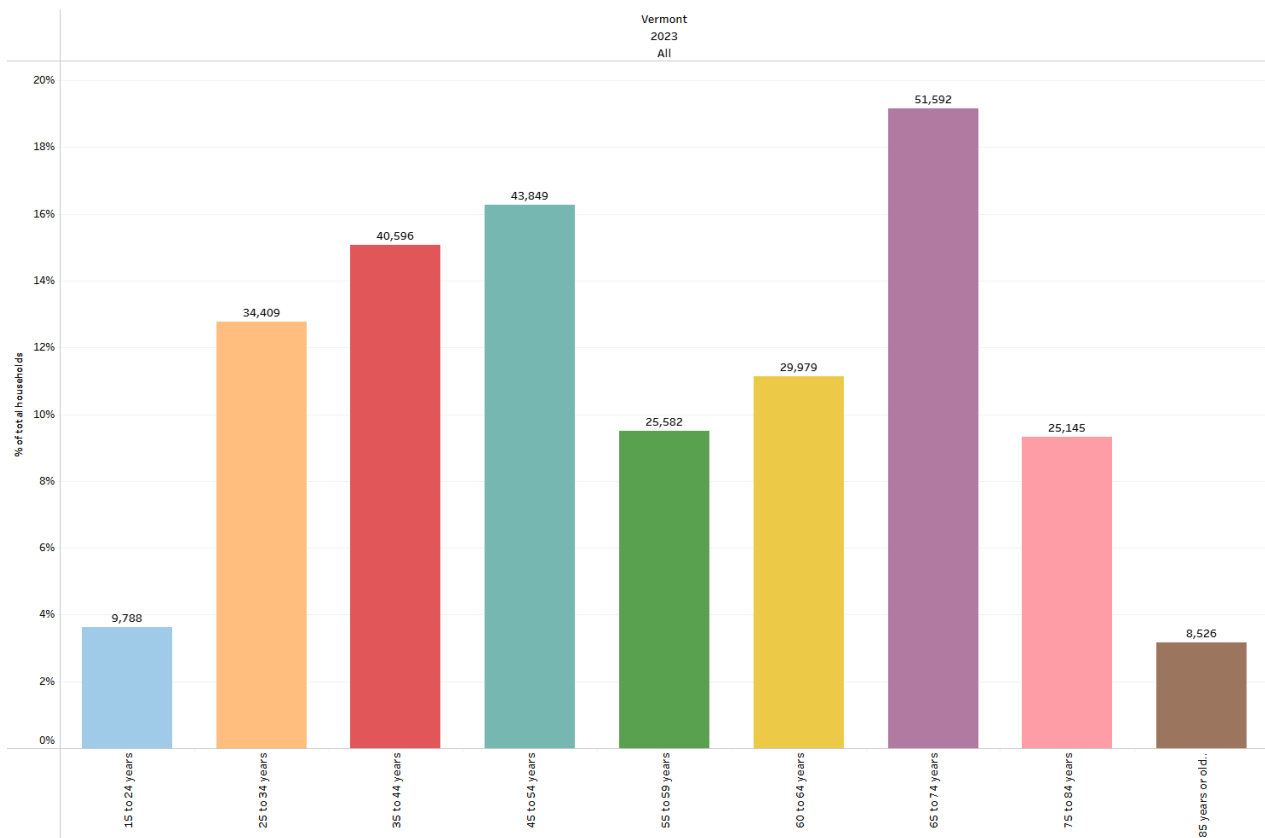
Because the size of home needed by the average current Vermont household is very different from what it was nearly a century ago, when more than 25% of Vermont's housing was constructed, the existing stock of housing in any given municipality is often out of sync with the current demographics of the area. As this [graph illustrates](#), the vast majority of households have only one or two members.





Households by Age of Householder

The combination of a surplus of larger housing and an abundance of smaller household sizes has led to a deficit of the right housing in the right places for many municipalities. In addition, younger householders seeking entry-level housing from a scarce supply are competing against older householders seeking to downsize from now-unneeded larger homes. [This graph](#) shows the variation in ownership by age.





A1.4. Vermont Housing Markets Dynamics

If housing production doesn't keep up with demand, prices rise. When vacancy rates fall below 10%, rents and housing values increase. Available housing needs to be suited to prospective users and in the right location.

Changing demographics and changing locational preferences mean that we have a supply problem even in places with little population growth. In increasing share of US households do not have children, and numerous surveys show that about half of the US population would now prefer to live in a walkable community. These changing location preferences mean that centrally located housing has a higher premium than any time in more than 30 years. These forces mean that the US is now facing a shortage of 35 million housing units in small lot and attached housing.

Housing is a durable good that is around for a long time, so it's important to understand how housing moves through various markets. We have existing housing stock in different cost ranges. Let's say an area is attracting new population. Bob wants to live here, and he has money to spare. If there is a new luxury unit available, he'll buy that house, and there is little impact on the price of existing houses. And if we build enough houses on the high end, some people move up from the houses just below them, and then those houses are available for people further down the scale to move up. Eventually the worst units fall out of the market entirely. That's the process called housing filtering.

But if there's no new house for Bob to buy, he'll buy the nicest existing house he can find, and he'll pay whatever it takes because he wants to live here so much, bidding up the price of that house. Alternatively, a speculator may buy a house in disrepair that Bob wouldn't want to buy and fix it up to the point that Bob will want to buy it. Someone who used to compete for houses in that range now can't afford it, but they still want to live here, so they bid up the prices on houses that aren't quite as nice. And so on.

But houses aren't widgets, so more supply isn't enough. Housing markets don't operate the same way that markets for other consumer goods operate because land has particular characteristics that make it different than coffee cups or computers. Land exists in a fixed location, so every piece of land is unique. Urban land is valuable because of the amenities it has access to—because of what's around it. That's why you normally see land values highest at the urban core or other centers with lots of density.

As more people move into an area, there's more purchasing power that attracts stores, and there are more workers that attract employers, and there's more tax base to support better public services, like schools and parks. In conditions where new infrastructure may be necessary in order to accommodate the added housing development, such as new streets or storm/wastewater infrastructure, municipalities may have passed those costs to developers who, in turn, pass them on to buyers. Now, even if the area has added new housing units to keep up with the new demand, the underlying land is more valuable because it has access to more amenities or cost more to develop in the first place. In the long term, market supply is not enough to retain mixed incomes in a very desirable neighborhood. To do that, you need additional tools, including shielding units from



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market pressures through land trusts or co-ops, and providing subsidies for development and rehabilitation.

But producing enough housing units to keep up with demand is essential for affordability, and that means lowering the cost of production and increasing the variety of housing types. Key changes to zoning bylaws to lower the cost of production and increase variety include:

- Remove/reduce minimum lot/unit sizes.
- Remove/reduce parking requirements.
- Enable predictable approvals—more by-right permits instead of discretionary processes (such as conditional use and subdivision reviews)
- Timely approval (state law requires DRB decisions within 45 days of closing a public hearing on a project; most towns can do better)
- Upzone to allow redevelopment at higher densities.
- Scale impact fees to square footage instead of number of units.



A1.5. State Environmental Permitting

There are many permitting requirements that may impact housing development that municipalities should be aware of and familiar with to guide landowners and developers.

On March 15, 2019, new state stormwater rules went into effect. Currently, all new development and redevelopment of one acre or more must meet stormwater permit requirements and, starting in 2022, the impact size was reduced to a half-acre. See Vermont Stormwater Permitting Rule, page 10:

(b) A permit is required under this Rule for the following:

(1) To commence the development or redevelopment of one or more acres of impervious surface;

(2) Effective July 1, 2022, to commence the development or redevelopment of one-half acre or more acres of impervious surface;

(3) To commence the expansion of existing impervious surface by more than 5,000 square feet, such that the total resulting impervious surface is equal to or greater than one acre. (p. 10)

The unintentional outcome of this treatment is incentivizing greenfield and low-density development. Clearly, the environmental impact of removing one acre of forest for new development is quite different from the environmental impact of redeveloping a one-acre parking lot, yet Vermont regulations treat both development scenarios the same. The best way to mitigate this unintentional consequence is to develop stormwater regulations that align with the amount of stormwater runoff generated.

The following is a list of potential required state permits for development:

- Act 250
- NEPA
- State Highway Access (1111)
- FHARC
- Construction Stormwater Permit
- Stormwater Operational Permit
- Vermont Wetland Permit
- Wastewater Systems and Potable Water Supplies Permit

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources offers a [Permit Navigator](#) tool on the web that can help property owners and developers quickly identify which state environmental permits may be required for a specific project, producing a print record with contact information. Permits for other agencies (such as the VT Agency of Transportation) require additional research.



A1.6. Additional Resources:

A1.6.1. Pro-Housing Bylaw Reform

The following resources offer a broader context and additional help on the topic of bylaw reform to accelerate housing supply. A variety of model ordinances and guidance tools for reforming development regulations are available from various sources. These examples suggest a range of possible expanded bylaw reform efforts, and may be useful in envisioning future initiatives in your community.

- Produced by the American Planning Association and National League of Cities, the [Housing Supply Accelerator Playbook](#) is for local elected officials and community planners working to boost diverse, attainable, and equitable housing supply in communities nationwide. From removing regulatory barriers to housing to demystifying housing finance, this guide aims to inspire local innovation and supercharge efforts to meet communities where they are and close the nation's housing supply gap.
- The Center for Zoning Solutions' guide to [Eliminating Zoning Barriers to Affordable Housing](#) provides practical and evidence-based solutions for practitioners seeking to address the housing supply and affordability crisis in their communities through zoning reform. The guidebook provides a series of actionable regulatory and policy interventions that municipalities can employ to mitigate zoning barriers and advance the amount and variety of local affordable housing produced for all income levels.
- In Vermont as elsewhere, the benefits of growth have not been equitably distributed across cities and towns. The [Congress for the New Urbanism's](#) study [Building Local Strength](#) provides practical guidance for local governments, practitioners, and community leaders highlighting municipalities, developers, and organizations to consider new approaches to ensuring more equitable development outcomes and detailing a critical cross-section of the tools and strategies emerging from this work.
- The State of Vermont [Agency of Commerce and Community Development](#) offers a variety of tools and resources for municipalities seeking to address their local housing affordability challenges. In particular, the [Neighborhood Development Areas](#) program offers support and incentives to communities wanting to provide new infill housing in a walkable context to existing town and village centers. Additional tools addressing municipal plans, ADUs, and federal and state housing regulations can be found on the Agency website.
- Vermonters need better housing options and more affordable homes. Meeting that need requires changing the ways homes are built in Vermont, especially the location and types of new homes. The Vermont [Homes for All Toolkit](#) is a comprehensive manual featuring small-scale gentle infill and incremental development as a strategy to address Vermont's housing and affordability crisis.
- The Vermont Housing Finance Agency provides a substantial set of data and analysis related to housing affordability in the state of Vermont, including an [expanded set of the data graphics](#) included in this document.
- AARP's [Livable Communities initiative](#) provides a variety of perspectives and resources, including [seven megatrends](#) affecting housing supply and demand, and suggests paths



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towards the goal of ensuring appropriate housing for people of all ages. Reports and policy briefs provide perspectives on many issues, and the importance of protecting affordability and accessibility of housing in walkable, livable communities.

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research offers the [Regulatory Barriers Clearinghouse](#), providing toolkits and a [searchable database](#) of case studies and regulatory solutions affecting the creation and maintenance of affordable housing.
- The Brookings Institute has led extensive reporting on housing affordability including research and policy briefs on “[gentle density](#).” As a comprehensive resource, their 2003 report [Rethinking Local Affordable Housing Strategies: Lessons from 70 Years of Policy and Practice](#) examines the effectiveness of the breadth of strategies used to address housing affordability over the past many decades and delivering policy conclusions relevant to state and local governments.
- The [Joint Center for Housing Study](#) at Harvard University provides research, education, and outreach on housing policy. The center’s [webpage](#) compiling research on housing affordability provides a wealth of perspectives and resources on best practices including reports on the design, development, construction, tenure, legalities, and economic implications of affordable housing.
- Focusing on the relationship between public health and stable, affordable housing, [ChangeLab Solutions](#) has produced [Preserving, Protecting, and Expanding Affordable Housing: A Policy Toolkit for Public Health](#), which provides a policy toolkit for protecting existing housing affordability as well as encouraging affordability in new housing development.
- In addition to zoning bylaws, other regulations may need to be considered when implementing incremental code reform. The [Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program](#) has developed the [Vermont Green Streets Guide](#), to guide municipalities in designing and building green streets within their communities. Process considerations, appropriate application, effective management strategies, and case studies of successful implementation are included.
- [Smart Growth America](#) champions solutions to suburban and rural sprawl. Their [Center for Zoning Solutions](#) helps communities to tackle barriers to smart growth and advance policies to encourage mixed-use development and diverse housing options.
- Maine Place Code offers an [open source library](#) of zoning tools intended to help rural areas, villages, towns, and cities create the places they want, based on the best-loved places they already have. It is a set of instructions, which emphasize the physical form of buildings and building groupings, and how buildings relate to the natural environment.

A1.6.2. Local Barriers to Affordable Housing

As part of an inquiry into what Vermont municipalities can do to accelerate housing supply for those priced out of the market, key informant interviews were conducted with senior staff at several of Vermont’s most active nonprofit affordable housing development organizations, including the Champlain Housing Trust, Cathedral Square, EverNorth, and Rural Edge. The goal was to understand the key barriers they face to



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building more permanently affordable housing units today, that are actionable at the local level.* Here's what we learned Vermont communities can do:

- 1) **Rural communities that lack community water supply and wastewater capacity can actively pursue financing, design and construction of those essentials.** This infrastructure is essential to make affordable housing projects 'pencil out.' The state of Vermont has multiple grant and loan programs to help support this objective. CHIP, a new state program authorized by the Vermont legislature in 2025, will provide further help to finance the cost of infrastructure.
- 2) **As recommended above, simplify and remove redundant local permit reviews for multi-family housing.** Excessive requirements, like conditional-use approvals or discretionary site plan reviews, frequently burden even small housing projects. Bylaws should not require such projects to complete Planned Unit Development review if no subdivision is proposed.
- 3) **Repeal density restrictions that preclude infill development at scale.** Many rural towns and villages set low residential unit density limits in developed town centers. These have the effect of precluding small multi-family projects, even when the municipal plan calls for 'smart growth' in these centers.
- 4) **If the zoning bylaws don't already provide incentives for building affordable housing, consider adding density and/or height bonuses for these projects.** Burlington requires developers of multi-family housing to build and operate at least 20% of these units as permanently affordable per federal guidelines. Developers who exceed that 20% minimum can build additional market-rate units above its density limits. State law provides a height bonus to such projects, to add an additional floor above the height limit than what local zoning bylaws allow.
- 5) **Allow onsite parking minimums that exceed actual need for affordable housing projects to be waived.** Most affordable housing residents are one-car households, or don't own vehicles because they don't drive. Studies have shown that allowing less than one parking space per unit for this use works well.
- 6) **Promote community support for affordable housing by organizing a local Affordable Housing Committee.** Although many communities' municipal plans call for more affordable housing, projects to build it often encounter vociferous opposition from some residents. A local housing committee can help rally community support for such projects when proposed.
- 7) **Be open to partnerships with employers.** In Middlebury and South Burlington, large nonprofits donated land and subsidized construction costs to build 'missing middle' housing that enabled these organizations to house new hires that otherwise could not find affordable places to live nearby.

* At this writing, rapidly rising costs for construction materials, exacerbated by tariff uncertainty, a scarcity of skilled construction labor, and uncertainty around interest rates and low-income tax credits are important barriers as well—though none of these factors respond to local concerns.



A1.7. Contributors

This Module was initially created in 2020 through generous contributions from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) as well as the Vermont Housing Conservation Board (VHCB), AARP-Vermont (AARP-VT), and the Vermont Association of Realtors (VAR).

Representatives from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development and the Congress for the New Urbanism, with support from numerous Vermont Regional Planning Commissions, collaborated on the research and creation of the original.

The 2025 update to this guide was led by the Northeastern Vermont Development Association in association with the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and consulting team from DuBois & King.

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Appendix 2. Bylaw Update Checklists

The following summaries provide step-by-step guidance for municipalities in what's required by state law to update or adopt a new municipal plan. It's adopted from a checklist first developed by the Vermont Land Use Education and Training Collaborative.

Additional planning resources formerly hosted at the Vermont Planning Information Center are now available through the Vermont Association of Planning & Development Agencies (VAPDA) at their [website](#).



A2.1. Checklist: Bylaws

I PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING(S), SUBMITTALS

A) Transmittal of Proposed Bylaw/Amendment/Repeal:

➤ **Deadline for action:** 15 days prior to first hearing date

Mail by ***certified mail, return receipt requested***, or ***delivered with proof of receipt***, copies of each of the following:

- ☐ proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal; ☐ hearing notice; and
☐ report (outline at end of this checklist)

To:

- ☐ Planning commission chairs, of adjoining municipalities (or municipal clerk if no planning commission exists)
☐ Executive Director, (Name and address of Regional Planning Commission)
☐ DHCD, *electronic submissions only*. See instructions: <http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/town-future/plans-bylaws>

Statutory reference(s): 24 VSA §4441

Mailing Date: _____ **Initialed:** _____

On file: copy of proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal, hearing notice and report as mailed

B) Hearing Notice:

➤ **Deadline for action:** 15 days prior to first hearing date

The planning commission shall hold at least one public hearing on the proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal following 15 days notice. All hearings must be warned in accordance with the notice requirements under §§4441(d) and 4444. *Note: In calculating the warning/notice period, the first day shall not be counted, and the final day shall be counted.*

The planning commission has two options under §4444. Most use this option:

Publication in a newspaper of general circulation and posting a notice in three places in the municipality one of which must be in or near the clerk's office including date, time, place and purpose of the hearing, with either the full text of the material, **or** a summary, including a statement of purpose, geographic areas affected, table of contents/listing of section headings, and a description of the place within the municipality where the full text and/or maps may be examined.

Statutory reference(s): 24 VSA §4444

Posting Dates: _____ *Version Warned* _____

Municipality (2 locations minimum) _____



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Municipal Clerk's Office _____

Newspaper: _____ **Publication Date** _____

AND:

Post the full text or a summary including: ☐ a statement of purpose; ☐ geographic areas affected; ☐ table of contents/listing of section headings; and ☐ a description where the full text may be examined;

On file: copies of posted and published notices, dated copy of proposed plan/amendment/repeal as warned, copies of voter checklist and grand list, if applicable

C) Planning Commission Hearing:

➤ ***Deadline for action: 15 days after notice publication***

The planning commission must hold at least one public hearing, following public notice, on the proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal as warned. *Note: No changes may be made between the time the public notice is posted/published and the public hearing.*

Statutory reference(s): 24 VSA §4441 (d), §4444

Hearing Date: _____

Location: _____

On file: board minutes; comments submitted

D) Submittal of proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal to the legislative body and clerk.

The planning commission may make changes to the proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal and to any written report, and thereafter submit them to the legislative body. Simultaneous with its submissions, the planning commission shall file with the clerk of the municipality a copy of the proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal and written reports as submitted to the legislative body, for public review.

Statutory reference(s): 24 VSA §4441(g)

Filing Date: _____ **Initialed:** _____

On file: dated copy of proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal with revisions, reports as submitted by the planning commission to the legislative body and clerk following final planning commission hearing

II. LEGISLATIVE HEARING(s)

A.) Changes to proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal:



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➤ **Deadline for action:** 15 days prior to final hearing date

The legislative body may change the proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal, but shall not do so less than 14 days prior to the final public hearing. If substantial changes are made in the concept, meaning, or extent of the proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal, it shall warn a new public hearing(s). If any part of the proposal is changed, the change shall be filed at least 10 days prior to the public hearing with the municipal clerk and with the planning commission. The planning commission shall amend its report to reflect the changes made and submit it thereon to the legislative body prior to or at the public hearing.

Statutory reference(s): VSA §4442

Filing Date: _____ **Initialed:** _____

On file: copy of proposed changes as warned, and filed with clerk and planning commission. Planning commission report if submitted prior to hearing

B.) Hearing Notice:

➤ **Deadline for action:** 15 days prior to the first hearing date

Not less than 15 days nor more than 120 days after a proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal is submitted to the legislative body of the municipality, the legislative body shall hold one or more public hearings, following 15 days public notice, on the proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal. The legislative body must make copies of proposal and written report by PC available to the public upon request. *Note: In calculating the warning/notice period, the first day shall not be counted, and the final day shall be counted.*

The legislative body has two options under §4444. Most use this option:

Publication in a newspaper of general circulation and posting a notice in three places in the municipality one of which must be in or near the clerk's office including date, time, place and purpose of the hearing, with either the full text of the material, **or** a summary, including a statement of purpose, geographic areas affected, table of contents/listing of section headings, and a description of the place within the municipality where the full text and/or maps may be examined; *or*

Statutory reference(s): VSA §4442 and §4444

Posting Dates: _____ *Version Warned* _____

Municipality (2 locations minimum): _____

Municipal Clerk's Office _____

Newspaper: _____ **Publication Date** _____

WHAT TO INCLUDE:

The full text or a summary including: ☐ a statement of purpose; ☐ geographic areas affected; ☐ table of contents/listing of section headings; and ☐ a description where the full text may be examined;

OR

- 1) mail/deliver to each voter on the voter checklist and each landowner on the grand list:
 - ☐ the hearing notice; ☐ a copy of the full text; **or** ☐ summary



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Initialed: _____

On file: copies of posted and published notices, dates copy of proposed plan/amendment/repeal with planning commission report, as warned, copies of vote checklist and grand list, if applicable

A) Legislative Body Hearing(s):

- **Deadline for action:** *not less than 15 nor more than 120 days following submission by the planning commission (for the first hearing); as warned*

Not less than 15 days nor more than 120 days after a proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal is submitted to the legislative body, it shall hold the first of one or more public hearings, after public notice on the proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal. Also as noted above, if the legislative body makes any substantial changes, it shall warn a new public hearing or hearings and file the proposed changes with the clerk and planning commission at least 10 days prior to the final public hearing as warned. *Note: Failure to hold a hearing within 120 day period does not invalidate the adoption of the bylaw/amendment/repeal.*

Statutory reference(s): 24 VSA §4442 and §4444

Hearing Date(s): _____

Locations: _____

Initialed: _____

On file: record of proceedings, attendance, planning commission report as submitted

III. ADOPTION OF MUNICIPAL BYLAW/AMENDMENT/REPEAL

A) Legislative Body Adoption:

- **Deadline for action:** *Within one year of date of final planning commission hearing*

Bylaws, amendments, and/or repeals, unless otherwise noted under subsection III. B and C (Australian ballot options and exceptions to routine adoptions) shall be adopted or rejected by a majority of the members of the legislative body at a meeting which is held after final public hearing, and shall be effective 21 days after adoption, unless petitioned for popular vote (see below).

Statutory reference(s): §4442(c)

Date of Meeting/Vote: _____

Action: Adopted ☐ Rejected ☐

Initialed: _____

On file: meeting minutes, record of vote, dated copy of proposed bylaw/amendment/repeal as accepted or rejected by legislative body



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- (1) Petition for Popular Vote. A vote by the legislative body on a bylaw, amendment, or repeal shall not take effect if five percent of the voters of the municipality petition for a meeting of the municipality to consider the bylaw, amendment, or repeal, and the petition is filed within 20 days of the vote. In that case, a meeting of the municipality shall be duly warned for the purpose of acting by Australian ballot upon the bylaw, amendment, or repeal.

Statutory reference(s): 24 V.S.A. §4442(d)

- **Deadlines for action:** petition filed within 20 days of vote

Date petition filed: _____

Within 20 days: Yes ☐ No ☐

Validity confirmed by: _____ **Date:** _____

Date of Meeting/Vote: _____

Posting Date: _____ NA ☐

Publication Date: _____ NA ☐

Procedures for adoption by Australian Ballot have been certified and are included under separate attachment.

Action: Adopted _____ Rejected _____ **Initialed:** _____

On file: copy of petition; certification of action by Australian Ballot with attached documentation; dated copy of bylaw as adopted/rejected by voters

- B) Australian Ballot Options:** The legislative body may put the bylaw before the voters for adoption via Australian Ballot, or a rural municipality with a population of less than 2,500 that has previously elected at a special or regular town meeting to require bylaws/amendments/repeals be adopted by Australian ballot) A proposed bylaw, amendment or repeal for a municipality shall be adopted or rejected by the vote of the municipality by Australian Ballot (17 VSA, §2641) at the next regular or special town meeting duly warned and held after final public hearing. The adoption or rejection shall be effective immediately.

Vote by Australian Ballot. Questions voted on by Australian Ballot must be warned according to 17 VSA, §2641. The warning must be posted in **two** locations, and in or near the municipal clerk's office. The warning must also be distributed using one of the following methods:

- published in a newspaper designated by the legislative body; or
- published and distributed as a warned article in the municipal report; or
- otherwise distributed in written form to all town or city postal patrons at least 10 days before the meeting.

Note: A public informational hearing is not required for bylaws adopted via Australian ballot; however, if the town would like to hold a public informational hearing, it may.

Statutory reference(s): 17 VSA §2641 and §2642



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Deadlines for action: Posting: not less than 30 nor more than 40 days prior to vote; and
Publication, newspaper: at least 5 days prior to vote; or
Publication, report: distributed at least 10 days prior to meeting
Vote: within one year of date of final planning commission hearing.

Posting Dates:

Municipality (2 locations minimum) _____

Municipal Clerk's Office _____

Newspaper: _____ **Publication Date** _____

Meeting/Vote Date: _____

Action: Adopted ☐ Rejected ☐ **Initialed:** _____

On file: copy of notice as posted, published, meeting minutes, record of vote; dated copy of proposed plan/amendment/repeal as accepted or rejected by voters

C. Exceptions to routine adoption:

Petition for action past one-year deadline

As noted, if a bylaw, amendment or repeal is not approved or rejected by the municipality within one year of the date of the final planning commission hearing, it shall be considered disapproved unless 5 percent of the voters of the municipality petition for a meeting of the municipality to consider the bylaw, amendment or repeal, and the petition is filed within 60 days of the end of that year. In that case, a meeting of the municipality shall be duly warned for the purpose of acting upon the bylaw or amendment by Australian Ballot.

Statutory reference(s): 24 VSA §4442(g)

Deadline for action: filing within 60 days of end of year as defined

Date petition filed: _____

Within 60 days: Yes ☐ No ☐

Validity confirmed by: _____ **Date:** _____

Date of Meeting/Vote: _____

Posting Date: _____ NA ☐

Publication Date: _____ NA ☐

Procedures for adoption by Australian Ballot have been certified and are included under separate attachment.

Action: Adopted ☐ Rejected ☐ **Initialed:** _____

On file: copy of petition; certification of action by Australian Ballot with attached documentation; dated copy of bylaw/amendment/repeal as adopted/rejected by voters



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The following form is to be completed and recorded by the Town Clerk following bylaw amendment adoption/amendment/repeal:

CLERK'S CERTIFICATE OF MUNICIPAL BYLAW

___ADOPTION ___AMENDMENT ___REPEAL

I, _____, Clerk of the Town/Village/City of _____, in _____ County, State of Vermont, do hereby certify pursuant to 24 VSA, §§ 4441, 4442, 4444, and 4447 that the following actions were taken by the designated parties with the respect to the adoption/amendment/repeal of the proposed municipal bylaw for the Town of _____, of which the attached is a true copy.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Attach all documentation, tear sheets, notices, etc. resulting from and confirming this adoption process.

Planning Commission Reporting Form for Municipal Bylaw Amendments

This report is in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4441(c) which states:

“When considering an amendment to a bylaw, the planning commission shall prepare and approve a written report on the proposal. A single report may be prepared so as to satisfy the requirements of this subsection concerning bylaw amendments and subsection 4384(c) of this title concerning plan amendments. The report shall provide(:)

(A) brief explanation of the proposed bylaw, amendment, or repeal andinclude a statement of purpose as required for notice under §4444 of this title,

(A)nd shall include findings regarding how the proposal:

1. Conforms with or furthers the goals and policies contained in the municipal plan, including the effect of the proposal on the availability of safe and affordable housing;
2. Is compatible with the proposed future land uses and densities of the municipal plan;
3. Carries out, as applicable, any specific proposals for any planned community facilities.”

Please Note:

The planning commission may make revisions to the proposed bylaw, amendment, or repeal and to the written report, and shall then submit the proposed bylaw, amendment or repeal and the written report to the legislative body of the municipality. If requested by the legislative body or supported by petition the planning commission shall promptly submit the amendment with changes only to correct technical deficiencies, together with any recommendations.