

Municipal Climate Planning Guides & Pilot Program

December 16th, 12 pm EST - 1 pm EST



Introductions



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Objectives

- Overview of the purpose and process of the State of Vermont Municipal Climate Planning Guides
- Introduction to the draft Municipal Climate Planning Guides
- Overview of the pilot program



State of Vermont Municipal Climate Planning Guides

Two-year project to develop a set of guides for Vermont municipalities to support climate action in line with state requirements and opportunities.

Project Stakeholder Engagement

- **Vermont Municipal Climate Planning Advisory Group:** Regional Planning Commissions, representatives from municipal government, and community-based organizations.
- **State Agency Engagement:**

Agency of
Commerce and
Community
Development

Vermont Public
Service
Department

Vermont Bond
Bank

Department of
Environmental
Conservation -
Rivers Program

Vermont
Agency of
Transportation

Vermont
Emergency
Management

Vermont Fish
and Wildlife

Department of
Environmental
Conservation -
Tactical Basin
Planning

Urban and
Community
Forestry
Program

Agency of
Administration,
Flood Recovery

Guiding Principles for Guide

**Meet communities
where they are at**

**Equip communities
with the tools they
need for action**

**Focus on social
resilience**

**Support inclusive
community
decision-making**

**Facilitate coordination,
collaboration, and
mentorship**

Looking to existing precedents

Washington
State
Department of
Commerce
Climate
Element

C40 Climate
Action
Planning Guide

New York State
Climate Smart
Communities
Program

MVP 2.0 /
Guides for
Equitable and
Actionable
Resilience
(GEAR)

Rural
Resilience
Framework

Resilient Rhody
Municipal
Resilience
Program

Michigan
Redevelopment
Ready
Communities
Resilience
Toolkit

North Carolina
Resilience
Exchange /
Resilient
Communities
Planning Guide

Maine
Community
Resilience
Partnership

Massachusetts
Climate Leader
Communities /
Green
Communities
Programs

Matrix of Vermont Plans, Initiatives, and Legislation Related to Climate

The **Matrix of Vermont Plans, Initiatives, and Legislation** included everything that municipalities in Vermont *are required to complete* and other *existing resources and guides* for municipalities these guides need to be in conversation with.

Vermont Plans, Initiatives, and Legislation					
Topic	Name	Year (first enacted / recent update)	Core Function or Goals	Type	Overseeing Agency
Energy	Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan	2022	Maps out a statewide plan for meeting Vermont's energy service needs and for meeting the goals in the Global Warming Solutions Act	State plan	Vermont Department of Public Service (PSD)
Energy	Act 174 (Energy Planning)	2023	Act 174 establishes a new set of energy planning standards for developing municipal or regional enhanced energy plans. Plans that meet the new standards receive substantial deference in energy siting and permitting decisions.	Policy	Vermont Department of Public Service (PSD)
Energy	Guidance for Municipal and Regional Enhanced Energy Plans	2024	Steps, guidelines, and standards for developing municipal or regional enhanced energy plans.	Guidance for municipal plan	Vermont Department of Public Service (PSD)
Energy	Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP)	2022	Provides technical assistance and funding for energy investments in municipal buildings.	Program or Initiative	Agency of Administration - Buildings and General Services

Guides for municipal climate action

Social Resilience Process Guide

Municipal Plan Climate Guide

Capital Program Climate Guide

Social Resilience Process Guide

Provides step-by-step guidance for municipal staff and community partners to **work collaboratively** – centering the perspectives of **people who are most impacted** – to better understand social vulnerability and to identify pathways and priorities for **building social resilience**.

- Use as a way to integrate social resilience into existing plans
- Develop a standalone social resilience plan
- Use as part of disaster recovery, as a community organizing tool

Social Resilience Process Guide

Community investigation across 8 topic areas:

Housing

Jobs & Local Economy

Food

Community Connectedness

Utilities

Health

Transportation

Ecosystems

Social Resilience Process Guide

Example questions - Housing

Are there people in our community that experience housing insecurity? What does that look like for people in our community?

If our community has recently been impacted by a climate hazard (such as flooding or a large storm) or another significant economic stressor, what has been the impact on housing? How has this event affected some people more than others?

What types of housing are prevalent in our community? What types are not? How does that affect who is able to live here now or in the future?

What do these answers tell us about how we can build social resilience in our town, city, or region?

Municipal Planning Climate Guide

Supports communities with **integrating climate change considerations into their Municipal Plans**; provides guidance on how land use planning, zoning and bylaws, and infrastructure upgrades can move towards more resilient and low carbon communities in conjunction with other community goals.

For use by communities that are:

- Developing a municipal plan (start-to-finish, or just for one topic)
- Developing a standalone climate plan
- Low capacity

Municipal Plan Climate Guide

Uses the 5-step process outlined in Vermont Planning Manual

Step 1: Community Assessment

Step 2: Shared Community Vision

Step 3: Goals and Opportunities

Step 4: Map Out the Future

Step 5: Make it Happen

For communities interested in using this guide to develop a **standalone climate action plan**, follow the steps as outlined, skip Step 4. Considering climate change in future land use designations may be one of your “climate actions” after Step 5.

Municipal Plan Climate Guide

Includes all required elements in the Municipal Plan:

Step 1: Community Assessment

Are homes in our community equipped to stay cool in higher temperatures?

Step 2: Shared Community Vision

Which types of homes are most worrisome on hotter days?

Step 3: Goals and Opportunities

What steps has our community already taken to address these impacts?

Step 4: Map Out the Future

Step 5: Make it Happen

Municipal Plan Climate Guide

Includes all required elements in the Municipal Plan:

Step 1: Community Assessment

Step 2: Shared Community Vision

Step 3: Goals and Opportunities

Step 4: Map Out the Future

Step 5: Make it Happen

What does it look like for our community to thrive in a changing climate?

What will be important to maintain, evolve, and transform to achieve that vision?

Municipal Plan Climate Guide

Includes all required elements in the Municipal Plan:

Step 1: Community Assessment

Step 2: Shared Community Vision

Step 3: Goals and Opportunities

Step 4: Map Out the Future

Step 5: Make it Happen

Example Goal:

Capital planning supports the design and upgrades of infrastructure to withstand and operate in future climate conditions, considering multiple hazards that a community faces.

Municipal Plan Climate Guide

Includes all required elements in the Municipal Plan:

Step 1: Community Assessment

Step 2: Shared Community Vision

Step 3: Goals and Opportunities

Step 4: Map Out the Future

Step 5: Make it Happen

Climate change is expected to cause migration. What are some of the pressures and opportunities our community might experience?

How will our community grow in a way that prioritizes infill development while giving rivers and streams room to move?

Municipal Plan Climate Guide

Includes all required elements in the Municipal Plan:

Step 1: Community Assessment

Step 2: Shared Community Vision

Step 3: Goals and Opportunities

Step 4: Map Out the Future

Step 5: Make it Happen

Sample High-Impact Actions that include:

- Description of the action
- Benefits & co-benefits
- How to “scale up”
- How to “scale down”
- Opportunities for regional collaboration
- Identified partners, resources, and examples

Capital Program Climate Guide

Supports communities with **integrating climate change considerations into their Capital Program and Budget**. Provides a framework for thinking about how climate hazards impact maintenance or replacement timelines; design considerations for resilience and carbon reduction goals; and implications for capital, operations, and maintenance costs.

- Mirrors scaling up, scaling down, and regional approach as a framework for each step in the process
- Aligns with the Vermont League of Cities & Towns capital planning technical assistance

Capital Program Climate Guide

- **Framework for integrating climate into Capital Program**
 - Risk to existing assets - implications for repair, upgrades
 - Opportunities for modernization - O&M savings
 - Designing new facilities for 2050 (and beyond)
- **Steps for integrating climate into Capital Program**
 - Develop complete inventories of municipal assets
 - Map assets with climate hazards
 - Conduct energy assessments
 - Set up protocols for “good / better / best” for capital asset replacement, update, or design

Capital Program Climate Guide

Setting climate based
asset management
standards

1

Keep an Inventory
(and update it
regularly)

2

Risk
Assessment

3

Energy
Assessment

Plan ahead to
mainstream risk and
climate pollution
reduction

4

Set performance
goals and
measures

5

Adaptation
Pathways

5

GHG Reduction
Opportunities

Implement Climate
Action in Municipal
Budget

7

Funding
maintenance

8

Governance

Questions?

Any clarifying questions about the purpose of each of three guides and what they each cover?



Moving into the pilot phase

Over the course of the next 10 months, the State team seeks to **pilot these draft guides** with six Vermont municipalities to understand:

- What's working? What's not working?
- How can the guides be modified to lead to socially just and equitable municipal climate action in Vermont?
- What do we need to know that we can only learn in partnership with other communities?

Why become a pilot community?

- Receive **technical support** through a planning process
- Integrate **emissions reductions** and **climate resilience** into municipal plans
- Shape a **statewide program** with your town's perspective
- Uplift **lower capacity** communities



Your community might be a good fit if...

You have already started your municipal plan but still would like to consider climate change.

You are not currently doing any planning but you're interested in building strong relationships with socially vulnerable communities.

You have a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and Enhanced Energy Plan but you would like to build on that work or have a stand alone climate action plan.

You are planning to hire a consultant to support your Municipal Plan update but you haven't put out the RFP yet.

You are conducting a flood resilience planning effort and wish to expand public engagement.

You are interested in integrating Capital Planning into annual budget cycle but do not currently have a Capital Plan.

What will the pilot look like?

- **Peer-to-peer:** Cohort model for knowledge sharing and collaborative support with participating municipalities
- **Planning support from RPCs:** One pilot community will test a guide with significant TA support from an RPC (Note: all communities will receive some support from RPCs)
- **Planning support from SCC:** One pilot community that would hire a consultant will test a guide with TA support from SCC
- **Ad-hoc coaching:** RPCs and SCC will be available to provide 1:1 coaching to a community who is implementing a guide

What the pilot won't look like?

- We want these guides to be able to stand on their own, so TA will not involve us writing the plan for you without your partnership and engagement.
- The pilot will not provide additional funding to write a plan.
- This pilot will not be a cookie-cutter approach. We will work with each community to design a process that is impactful.
- This pilot will not leave you feeling on your own. We will be available for 1:1 coaching and technical assistance.

Timeline of the pilot program



** Pilot program evaluation may run through October 2026.*

After the pilot, the guides will be updated and then released widely in late 2026.

How to Apply!

Fill out the application form - applications will be considered on a rolling basis through January 2026. Applications are intentionally short and we may follow up about conducting an interview.

A few tips to things to think about to help you get started:

- **Know your team:** Who will be a part of the project? (Town boards or committees, community-based organizations, etc.)
- **Have a clear municipal lead:** Who will the local point of contact be for your pilot community?
- **Connect with planning initiatives (if applicable):** How can these guides fit into upcoming processes (capital planning, energy planning, hazard mitigation planning, vulnerability assessments, etc.)?

How to help get the word out

- Use the **partner outreach toolkit** to share information about the pilot program with your network
 - General outreach email
 - Blog or newsletter copy
 - Social media text & graphics



Q&A

Closing

What's next:

- Rolling enrollment
- We recommend you apply by **December 31, 2025** however that is not a hard deadline
- Pilot communities selected & launched in **January 2026**