

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING AGENDA**

Online & 2 Lincoln St.  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Thursday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
**6:30 PM**

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This meeting will be held in-person at 2 Lincoln St and remotely. To participate remotely:

- **JOIN ONLINE:** [Join Zoom Meeting](#)
- **JOIN CALLING:** (toll free audio only): (888) 788-0099 | Meeting ID: 953 1240 7791; Passcode: 040339

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [6:30 PM]
2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
3. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
  - a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
4. **MINUTES**
  - a. May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026
5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
  - a. Discussion of 2027 Comprehensive Plan update \* [6:35 PM]
  - b. Discussion and consideration of Land Development Code amendments, including Form-Based Code Proposal\* [8:00 PM]
6. **MEMBERS UPDATES** [8:25 PM]
7. **STAFF UPDATES** [8:27 PM]
8. **ADJOURN**

\*attachments included in the packet

*Agenda item timestamps are estimates of the starting time of each topic and are subject to change.*

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**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
MAY 7, 2026  
DRAFT**

**PLANNING COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Elijah Massey, Chair; Diane Clemens, Vice-Chair; Finn Hamilton (non-voting) Elena Juodisius, Scott McCormick; Kirstie Paschall

**PLANNING COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** None

**ADMINISTRATION:** Chris Yuen, Community Development Director;

**OTHERS PRESENT:** John Burnett, Bart Frisbie, Marcus Certa, Mark Mendes, David Minkoff, Darren Schibler

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Massey called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

**2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None.

**3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

**a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda**

None.

**4. MINUTES**

**a. March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026**

**SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by DIANE CLEMENS, to approve the minutes of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 20206, with corrections. Motion passed 5-0.**

Corrections:

-Naming customs will be consistent throughout.

**5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a. Discussion of the 2027 Comprehensive Plan Update Process**

Mr. Schibler, of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), provided an update regarding recent community engagement efforts, including two focus groups on housing and energy/climate issues. Business owner outreach is also underway. Regular progress reports are available. The budget for this project is on track, with 67% of the project budget being spent. The housing focus group, held on April 21st, attracted around twenty attendees. Mr. Schibler discussed the format of the focus group and specific brainstorming sessions. Attendees discussed a desire to maintain the village feel while allowing for housing development, with particular emphasis on green spaces, partnerships with developers, mixed-use development, and affordable housing options. Landlord-tenant relations were discussed, and the need to offer assistance to both groups. A revolving land fund for improvements to rental projects was discussed. Mr. Mendes discussed the need to have a variety of housing types in Essex Junction. Ms. Clemens discussed the connection between these topics and the rental registry, which was proposed several years ago, Mr. McCormick concurred. Mr. Schibler said the focus groups worked on identifying issues, rather than suggesting specific solutions. He said attendees felt that there should be a difference between approaches with larger rental properties and smaller landlords. Mr. Schibler discussed

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conversations with the Champlain Valley Expo relating to developing housing on the parcel and the need to address traffic operations.

The energy and climate focus group was attended by several experts in the energy industry. Key points included achieving Essex Junction's targets for electric vehicle adoption, reducing heating costs and improving renewable energy in the heating sector. Public/private partnerships were discussed, as well as regulatory and incentive-based approaches. Discussions also focused on sustainability strategies for Essex Junction, particularly regarding new developments at Five Corners and the Pearl Street corridor. Mr. Schibler discussed the balance between regulatory requirements and incentive-based programs, suggesting a three-pronged approach: regulatory measures for large developments, incentive programs for smaller buildings and retrofits, and grant-funded initiatives for existing buildings. The importance of connecting residents to existing resources was discussed, and the possible need for an energy coordinator. The possibility of municipal-based public transportation for specific destinations was discussed. Attendees explored ideas like renewable heating ordinances and geothermal technology, while acknowledging cost concerns and the need for equitable implementation. Mr. Schibler suggested reaching out to recent developers to see their reasoning for choosing specific heating technology. Mr. Yuen said there is no incentive for landlords to choose higher efficiency products if a tenant is required to pay the utility bills.

Mr. McCormick discussed new technologies which are being developed for multi-family units and said the City could help to provide additional information to developers on these options. Answering a question from Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Schibler discussed balancing the shift to renewable energy with cost realities. Programs exist to assist lower-income residents; however, it is important to look into why they are not being used as much as they could be. Answering a question from Mr. Massey, Mr. Schibler discussed state funding and assistance for energy-efficiency projects. Mr. Schibler said it is important to highlight the fact that energy-efficiency is a positive financial investment.

Mr. Schibler discussed business outreach efforts. CCRPC staff has visited numerous local businesses to learn more about how the City can better support them. Conversations have been insightful, and some of the challenges cited include signage visibility, parking needs, and building maintenance issues. This is particularly relevant to larger properties. Sandwich board signs were specifically cited as an issue. Mr. Schibler said, overall, most businesses are happy and satisfied with being in Essex Junction. Mr. McCormick discussed business promotion and a potential business association. He also discussed a desire to better engage with minority-owned businesses. Mr. Schibler suggested leveraging connections with the Vermont Professionals of Color Network and community liaisons at CCRPC. He suggested soliciting responses to specific documents, rather than open-ended questions. Cymone Beford, Economic Mobility Manager at CCRPC, may be available to assist with engagement. Mr. Schibler discussed efforts working with the Essex High School Business Club for door-to-door outreach. Business owner outreach and focus group formation will continue for the next month or so. Next month, the PC will discuss how to work through this information, and draft chapters will be available for review in August.

### **b. Discussion and consideration of First Congregational Church of Essex Junction**

Mr. Yuen discussed a proposal from the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction to add housing to their property to generate sustaining income in a way that aligns with their mission and values. He said this is a good idea, however there are neighborhood impact issues to consider. The plans are dependent on successfully rezoning the parcels from Multi-Family 3 to Village Center (VC) district zoning and

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changes to the future land use map. Church officials will present a general idea to the PC this evening, and details regarding zoning and neighborhood protections do not need to be reviewed tonight.

Mr. Burnett, of the First Congregational Church, said it is important for the church to diversify their income sources, as member contributions are down. He discussed redevelopment options to include mixed-use housing while continuing to maintain the thrift shop as a storefront. Ms. Clemens noted the historical status of all three buildings. Rezoning the property is essential to moving the plan forward. Mr. Massey noted the challenging nature of demolishing a historical structure, and Mr. Burnett said that church leadership is supportive of moving this forward. Any type of change to the exterior of the historic buildings must go through the review process. Mr. Mendes, Pastor of First Congregational Church, clarified that, while the Church Council has established a committee to investigate the feasibility of this project, no financial analysis has been conducted yet, and the congregation has not been formally consulted. Further design will only be done if zoning will not allow for such. Mr. Massey said there are several multi-unit rental properties in the immediate area. Mr. Yuen said development to the Sawyer House parcel is unlikely to have much impact on surrounding residential properties. He said form-based code would apply to any development. The proposed three or four-story buildings would likely be acceptable under the residential adjacency standards. Mr. Yuen said he believes that this proposal would not look out of place in the neighborhood.

The PC discussed adjusting the future land use map to allow for the potential church development project. All commissioners expressed support for the request, noting that the church property aligns with community feedback about pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and building character. Ms. Pascall said that the PC must consider precedent-setting in this process. Ms. Clemens suggested that this was a good opportunity to solicit feedback regarding changes to other parcels adjoining the VC district. Mr. Massey described the public input that would be involved with their process. Ms. Pascall noted that the church is an important part of the community, and that some of the character of the current parcel would be maintained. This feedback will be integrated in the draft Comprehensive Plan and future land use map, though the church will still need to go through a separate zoning revision process after the future land use map is approved.

### **c. Discussion and consideration of Land Development Code amendments, including Form-Based Code Proposal**

Mr. Yuen discussed the first draft of the document and technical difficulties in formatting that some PC members have experienced. He will resend the document as a PDF. He outlined a timeline for revisions, with a second draft anticipated by June 4<sup>th</sup> and a potential public hearing in August. Targeted outreach will occur in May and June. General public engagement will focus on the changes that are anticipated to be most important to the public. The PC discussed specific form-based code amendments regarding street room ratios, rights-of-way, building massing, and frontage types, particularly focusing on parking frontage standards in Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) and VC districts. Mr. Yuen suggested the future renaming of the VC District as City Center. Answering a question from Ms. Clemens, Mr. Yuen discussed screening and buffering requirements for surface parking. These new standards aim to improve pedestrian orientation while maintaining flexibility for certain development styles. Frontage relating to surface parking was discussed.

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Mr. Hamilton noted the rear setbacks in the form-based code, particularly a 30-foot requirement, could impact buildable area and reduce housing unit availability. He believes that the buffering requirements are too extreme. Mr. Yuen said the setback only applies under specific conditions, particularly when buildings reach maximum height. The residential adjacency does not add to the increased rear setback unless the building is much higher than the adjacent buildings. Mr. Massey confirmed that while setback reduces developable space, it helps balance housing needs with community concerns about impacts and change. Mr. McCormick concurred. Exceptions are available for smaller unit developments. Mr. Yuen said there are limits on what can be built on small lots for functionality and usability purposes. The PC indicated support for the thirty-foot setback as it aligns with form-based code goals and provides green space.

Mr. Yuen discussed the applicability, benefits, and waivers for form-based code compliance, particularly regarding landscaping standards. Mr. Yuen said projects which do not increase the gross floor area by more than 30% do not need to come to compliance. Regarding the proposed scoring system for landscaping, developers do not need to come in full compliance for projects which only impact a smaller area. Mr. Yuen reviewed the recent Chittenden Crossing and 8 Railroad Street projects and found that the 30 point threshold reasonably well. The PC decided to move toward using impacted area for landscape scoring and to test the new system with more cases. Ms. Juodisius discussed the applicability of internal renovations with minimal site disturbances. Mr. Yuen discussed changes of use for linear frontage and confirmed that single-family dwellings in the VC would remain unchanged under the current regulations.

Regarding proposed changes to design review overlay district boundaries, Mr. Yuen proposed plans to eliminate the VC and TOD districts from design review requirements as they would fall under the Form-Base standards. He addressed technical corrections to TOD district parking minimums and parking requirements in VC district. He noted that there are some properties in the VC district with no parking whatsoever. He suggested that should a new development provide less than 75% of the typically required parking spaces, the DRB should have the option to stipulate that the developer has to facilitate parking space lease options from nearby properties within a 600-foot radius is proposed. Mr. Yuen said this does not force the DRB to impose this, however it provides them the option of doing such. He said developers may be able to trade unused spaces in other nearby areas as well. All agreed that the DRB should be able to determine if the developer can facilitate parking in other nearby areas. Mr. McCormick discussed reserving spaces for residents in mixed-use developments. The VC currently has no required spaces per unit.

Mr. Yuen discussed unit mix requirements for larger residential developments. Mr. Massey asked if the PC is interested in requiring more than the 20% minimum requirement for units to have two or more bedrooms. Mr. Yuen said Essex Junction would like a better mix of units but noted that studios and one-bedroom units are currently in high demand due to limited availability in the market. Mr. McCormick said he believes the 20% figure is too low and Ms. Juodisius encouraged flexibility. Mr. Massey said additional offerings will help to allow more people to stay and move into the community. Mr. Yuen suggested seeking input from Framework, the project consultant.

Mr. Yuen discussed updates to development standards, including landscaping requirements, street design and infrastructure standards, bike lane requirements for new streets and parking requirements for commercial spaces. Architectural review is not required for smaller projects. Mr. Yuen said it has been

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common to assume retail use for parking calculations at the time of site plan application and asked for input on this process. The PC expressed preference for Option B, which would codify current practice. Mr. McCormick said Option B may provide an excess of spaces, however these could be leased out to other businesses or rental properties. He discussed the balance between maximizing units and providing sufficient parking. Mr. Yuen reviewed updates to parking waiver criteria, including a change to require off-site parking to be within 600 feet rather than 200 feet, and clarified that assigned parking spaces cannot be counted toward available waiver justification, even if they are vacant. This is to discourage assigned parking and to encourage the re-allocation of disused spaces to other residents or commercial tenants who need them.

The PC discussed several code amendments, including window wells and landscaping requirements. They agreed to codify a three-foot setback requirement for window wells in districts where there is otherwise a higher setback requirement. If there is no setback this is not applicable. The PC discussed how to determine the affected area for landscaping, and the applicability of interior-only renovations. This will be sent to Framework for further review. A landscape architect is currently required to be hired for properties of five units or above, when smaller projects only require a landscaping professional. This will be left as is. The technical review committee will continue to work on technical changes.

### **6. MEMBERS UPDATES**

Ms. Clemens said she attended the Chittenden County Regional Housing Convening on April 29<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Hamilton attendant Plan BTV 250 on April 30<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Massey said community input is being sought for the artist pitches for the Vermont Arts Council mural. Online surveys and in-person engagements are ongoing, and the working group will select an artist and move forward with the actual design in June. Both potential artists are from Vermont.

### **7. STAFF UPDATES**

Mr. Yuen said the City Council chose to install a buffered bike lane on Park Street and move the parallel parking from both sides.

### **8. ADJOURNMENT**

**SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by SCOTT MCCORMICK, to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned 9:24 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Darby Mayville

**TO:** Essex Junction Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Chris Yuen, Community Development Director  
**DATE:** Darren Schibler, Senior Planner & Project Manager; Maya Balassa, Planner  
**RE:** June 4, 2026 Meeting on Essex Junction Future Land Use Map

**Project Scope of Work Review**

To level-set where we are in this project, below is a summary of the contract tasks with the status of each:

Task	Description	Start	End	Status
1	Project Management	Jan-26	Apr-27	Ongoing
2	Review Existing Plans	Jan-26	Jan-26	Complete
3	Mapping and Analysis	Feb-26	Jun-26	In progress
4	Public Engagement	Feb-26	Oct-26	In progress
5	Policy Updates / Plan Drafting	Apr-26	Nov-26	Started in background
6	PC Work Sessions	May-26	Dec-26	Not yet started
7	Plan Adoption	Dec-26	Apr-27	Not yet started

**Engagement Update**

Since the May 7<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting, CCRPC has focused on reviewing engagement from the first two focus groups (Housing on April 21<sup>st</sup> and Energy & Climate on May 6<sup>th</sup>) – see *attached summaries*. In addition, we have continued door-to-door outreach to business owners and begun organizing a Business Owner Focus Group for later in June. Staff are also considering partnering with community liaisons to organize a discussion about economic mobility, ideally in alignment with the work of CCRPC’s Economic Mobility Manager. To ensure meaningful engagement, this may take several more months of preparation.

**Future Land Use Map Discussion**

As initial engagement for the Comprehensive Plan update winds down and CCRPC staff embark on preparing plan updates, it is important to address the overarching topic of the City’s Future Land Use Map early to confirm a general approach, then revisit it throughout the drafting process.

The current Future Land Use (FLU) map in the Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan is the same as the Zoning Map. Under Vermont’s planning and zoning statutes, zoning must be consistent with the FLU map. A more detailed and specific FLU map provides less flexibility to adopt zoning changes. This may be appropriate for a community where land use policy is less dynamic, which has been the case for Essex Junction in the last several decades. However, the community has identified a desire for significant growth and change for portions of the City in the coming decades. For the updated Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission should consider updating the FLU map with broader categories that more clearly support this growth. This will also allow for more flexibility and adaptation in the zoning map as change occurs.

At the same time, we have also heard from the community a desire to avoid losing the “Village” feel – keeping the built environment human-scaled and maintaining the social cohesion of existing residential neighborhoods. A new FLU map should identify areas where the scale of change should be more limited while still allowing for evolution of the housing stock and new homeownership pathways. To start this conversation, we will:

1. Provide some context on the statutory parameters for FLU maps and the basis for zoning districts;
2. Discuss approaches to updating the Future Land Use map and seek Planning Commission input on the preferred approach;
3. Review the purpose statements associated with current zoning districts to identify possible areas of consolidation and clarification – *see attached overview for reference*;
4. Discuss whether any changes to current geographic boundaries or general intensities of land use areas are warranted as we develop the map.

#### Possible Approaches

- *Bottom-Up*: Group existing zoning districts into broader land use areas.
- *Top-Down*: Divide the [regional future land use map](#) for Essex Junction into more specific municipal areas.
- *Clean Slate*: Start from scratch and define FLU areas using existing conditions and/or desired future conditions, regardless of any other maps.
- *Maintain / Evolve / Transform*: This framework outlined in the [Vermont Municipal Planning Manual, Module 1](#) seeks to identify the magnitude of change envisioned for each land use area.
- *Transect Mapping*: This framework, typically used as the foundation for form-based code, focuses more on the scale and intensity of development, rather than the character of uses.
- *Look Around*: Consider how adjacent or similar municipalities have structured their future land use maps.

#### **Questions for the Planning Commission**

1. What approach to constructing a Future Land Use map makes sense for Essex Junction?
2. What should the categories of the Essex Junction FLU map be?
3. What zoning districts / areas of the City fit together best to form a broader category of land use?
4. Do the LDC’s zoning district purpose statements adequately capture current conditions and future policy goals?
5. Are there areas where zoning district boundaries or policy goals should be changed?

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## Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan

### Results from Housing Focus Group 4/21/26

#### Summary

Key themes and takeaways:

- General support for small-scale infill housing
- Support for concentration of density in and around Five Corners
- Need expanded transportation networks to support housing
- Desire for more mixed-use, walkable development
- Protection of and investment in more third spaces (especially green spaces)
  - Other healthy amenities as well. Consider how to incentivize in development
- Desire for a diversity of housing types (senior housing, starter homes, rental)
- Emphasis on affordable housing
- Increased City participation in housing development
  - Partnership with CVE
- Vision for regulatory and process improvements
  - FCCEJ rezoning
  - Rental inspections
- Increased education/resources for tenants and landlords
  - Revolving loan fund for repairs / energy efficiency
  - Resource toolkit (this exists – promote it with educational events)
  - Translation of leases into other languages

#### Raw Notes

##### ***Housing Development Opportunities Theme***

##### **Strengths**

- EJ has regional draws: tree farm, CVE, train station, global foundries
- Great infrastructure, potential for more housing
- Examples of infill housing

##### **Opportunities**

- Encourage simple family homes to build/add onto their homes with in-law or small apartments
- Leverage underutilized public property (between Hiawatha and West Street)
- Allow development close to 5 corners to increase apartment development

- Dense development areas new 5 corners, including increased lot coverage and increased building heights
- Opportunities for accessory dwelling units (above + side) helps people retire +those looking for cheaper rent
- Rezone first congressional church to enable redevelopment of 2 houses on the property – create high rise housing
- Large field between Cascade and South Street
- Develop fairgrounds
- Funding supports for homeowners to help with maintenance and upkeep of housing/businesses
- Keep walkable community- expand restaurants/shops/small apartments with some quality

### **Aspirations**

- Can the city acquire properties and facilitate redevelopment (with public interest elevated)
- Design regulations – make house look nice
- Don't want to be like Winooski- the lack of recreation and green space associated with some of the development there
- Better design – preserve green space at 5 corners
- Recreation is imbedded in neighborhoods
- Preserve greenspace as much as possible
- Integrated commercial activity and engaging public spaces with new housing development
- Mixed-use development on large industrial lots near five corners/railroad street
- Commercial first floor and residential above in 5 corners
- Ensuring commercial spaces can be filled and successful
- Expand density and height of residential buildings to first Congressional Church property
- Balancing building a community that is both attractive and affordable

### **Results**

- New West Street triplex is overpriced and ugly
- Housing trust fund to support building rehabilitation. Homeowner down payment assistance for first time buyers, young families, ect.
- Affordable
- Start single family home opportunities (including tiny houses)
- Determine type of housing that is needed. Still want diversity of housing by type.

- Diversity of housing types. (size, tenants, students, mix types of housing within same building, single family homes)
- Concept of city purchasing key properties then manage the redevelopment of the property. Consult with developers about hinderances of moving forward. Parking garage near 5 corners.
- Tax incentives to fill ground floor commercial spaces associated with new development

**Housing Development Opportunities – SMART Actions**

<b>Redevelop prime locations that are currently parking lots into housing</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>Partner with developers/owners to rebuild to code to meet needs.</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>Demolish, rebuild, open</b>
	<b>A</b>	<b>Housing advisory committee can assist developers to see projects through.</b>
	<b>R</b>	<b>Increase housing, eliminate dead walking spaces. Introduce locations for 3rd spaces.</b>
	<b>T</b>	
<b>Create a revolving loan fund or other financial incentives for housing development</b>	<b>S</b>	
	<b>M</b>	<b>Have 5 projects per year</b>
	<b>A</b>	<b>Make permit process easier; consider waiving permitting fees</b>
	<b>R</b>	
	<b>T</b>	<b>Annual renewal</b>
<b>Partner with the Champlain Valley Exposition to create housing at the expo site</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>City and CVE conduct a feasibility study for a mixed use development on the site</b>
	<b>M</b>	
	<b>A</b>	
	<b>R</b>	<b>Add housing where there is available space</b>
	<b>T</b>	

## ***Quality Affordable Housing Theme***

### **Strengths**

- Safer alternative to urban housing (Burlington)
- Public land
- Density of multi-unit buildings can attract restaurants, transit, retail, etc.
- QA rentals support a growing workforce

### **Opportunities**

- Identity
- Senior housing
- Adding ADU's
- Identify the need by housing type
- Landlord and tenant resources

### **Aspirations**

- Specific bus pull-offs
- Housing resources for both renters and landlords
- Energy efficient rentals
- Public transit
- More affordable housing
- Improving traffic flow and capturing passersby
- Landlord resources for alternative to credit and rental housing new Americans
- Green spaces near affordable rentals

### **Results**

- Healthy homes = healthier people
- Quality housing stock across housing types, ages, etc.
- More universal design to meet broader range of needs
- Room in the market for people to be able to move around (downsize, upsize, etc.)

**Quality Affordable Housing – SMART Actions**

<b>healthy homes = healthier people</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>All rentals have adequate heat and cooling</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>Can the City inspect units?</b>
	<b>A</b>	<b>Maybe the goal could be tiered and the oldest units could be dealt with first</b>
	<b>R</b>	<b>Extreme hot and cold is bad for health, can create mold, and are expensive and waste resources</b>
	<b>T</b>	<b>By 2030</b>

<b>By 2035, 75% of approved housing and renovation designs will align with UD principles</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>Planning commission will fast track approval of new builds and renovation designs that adopt UD principles</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>Track approved designs</b>
	<b>A</b>	<b>Realistically, why isn't all housing design required to be more accessible? We all need it at some point</b>
	<b>R</b>	<b>It creates a bigger pool of housing that works for more than us</b>
	<b>T</b>	<b>By 2035, 75% of approved housing and renovation designs will align with UD principles</b>

<b>Expand the info available about rental housing in EJ in other languages in order to attract people who speak languages other than English</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>EJ provides small grants to landlords to have their listings/leases/etc. translated</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>Usage of the contract agents could be tracked. # of tenants could be self-reported.</b>
	<b>A</b>	<b>Contract with VT language justice project.</b>
	<b>R</b>	
	<b>T</b>	

	<b>S</b>	<b>City/advocacy group delivers 3-4 landlord and tenant resources webinars per year that cover low-no cost energy efficiency updates/healthy homes updates</b>
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	<b>M</b>	<b>Attended by x% of landlords/tenants. Goal is met when deliveries happen and are attended by landlords and tenants.</b>
	<b>A</b>	
	<b>R</b>	<b>Help educate tenants and landlords on energy efficiency opportunities to lower utility costs and improve indoor air quality/(make landlords aware of current code regulations and possible rebates)</b>
	<b>T</b>	

## ***Enhancing the Village Feel Theme***

### **Strengths**

- 5 corners is undisputedly central
- Train station, bus system, walkable
- Sidewalks maintained, cross walk signals
- Public spaces that serve many groups demographics present in the city
- Good existing diversity of housing stock
- Recreation, library, bus services
- Driven to connect our people with neighboring communities and their amenities
- Recreation program and library

### **Opportunities**

- Increases/foster regulations to meet goals
- More residents in 5 corners (more activation in the center)
- Attract and support grocery store
- Space for accessory dwellings
- Ownership of apartments and condos
- Housing for seniors and families
- Senior group activities outside the home
- Bus line isn't used, why?

### **Aspirations**

- Mixed owner-occupied housing and apartment buildings
- Preserve open space
- Overall attractive housing: aesthetics, space, services
- Add/replace retail shopping with mixed-use along Pearl Street
- Accessibility/ energy saving
- More comfortable walking development on Pearl Street
- Cap on building height. 10 stories = South Burlington image
- Local incentive (with commitments) to convert existing structures to ADU's
- Fast track development process
- Aging population

### **Results**

- Walkable/accessible network expanding from 5 corners
- No more empty lots at 5 corners
- Save existing housing

**Enhancing the Village Feel – SMART Actions**

<b>Ensure that new buildings have open space, third spaces, and common areas</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>Require or incentivize including activity amenities.</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>The amenities are built/included in the new building.</b>
	<b>A</b>	<b>Scale dependent, if administered property. Waived in lieu of fee that goes to a fund.</b>
	<b>R</b>	<b>Improve residents’ quality of life. Reduce isolation. Provide third spaces/community space.</b>
	<b>T</b>	<b>Begin in 1-3 years.</b>

<b>More parks, trees, walking, biking, connectivity</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>City and developments and landowners and committees work together</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>Track/map infrastructure (network gaps), park attendance, and community events</b>
	<b>A</b>	<b>Bike/walk infrastructure outside new development. Green infrastructure added with development</b>
	<b>R</b>	<b>It makes people want to live here and encourages people to keep living here. Quality of life</b>
	<b>T</b>	<b>5 Years</b>

<b>Create green spaces in new developments</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>City regulations require green infrastructure.</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>A place where you can sit and eat and talk with someone (preferably green space)</b>
	<b>A</b>	<b>Yes</b>
	<b>R</b>	<b>See “measurable”</b>
	<b>T</b>	<b>3-5 years</b>

<b>Add infill housing on the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction property</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>Rezone and change policy for FCCES to enable housing development</b>
	<b>M</b>	
	<b>A</b>	
	<b>R</b>	
	<b>T</b>	<b>Within 2 years</b>

## Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan

### Results from Energy & Climate Focus Group 5/6/26

#### Summary

Key themes and takeaways:

- Need to balance a regulatory vs. incentive approach to meeting energy goals
- Connect people to existing resources and partnerships
- Use an energy committee as a community engagement group
- Need more oversight of large buildings during construction – current codes aren’t being met / buildings aren’t performing
  - Renewable heating ordinance: observe South Burlington for a few years, replicate if it holds up
- Cool idea: jitney bus for recreation programs (not just for seniors)
- Connection to housing: revolving loan fund for energy upgrades in rental housing

#### SMART Actions

<b>Require some EV charging in new <u>large</u> multi-unit residential construction and possibly current buildings.</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>PC makes amendment to zoning bylaw</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>Compliance monitoring of new multi-unit</b>
	<b>A</b>	<b>Easy to implement for new construction. Harder for current buildings. Keep incentives for smaller buildings.</b>
	<b>R</b>	<b>Will help meet state goal for EV adoption and meet equity goals.</b>
	<b>T</b>	<b>One year (ideally aligned with TOD regulation amendments)</b>

<b>Increase the rate of weatherization projects completed through an</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>Energy Committee, Planning Commission, or Energy Coordinator; existing City communication channels.</b>
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<p><b>outreach / marketing campaign to residents and businesses about incentives available from the state for energy efficiency and electrification projects.</b></p>	<b>M</b>	<b>Number of homes weatherized</b>
	<b>A</b>	<b>Achievable if an outreach / marketing strategy is developed and implemented</b>
	<b>R</b>	<b>This will increase awareness and adoption of weatherization and heat pumps</b>
	<b>T</b>	<b>Ongoing; establish campaign within ____ year(s).</b>

<p><b>Investigate an on-demand shuttle services for Essex Junction, such as to group recreational events or to Costco.</b></p>	<b>S</b>	<b>EJRP (possibly in collaboration with Green Mountain Transit) would pilot a new program based on the Essex Senior Bus model.</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>Pilot implemented; number of riders served</b>
	<b>A</b>	<b>May need funding and staffing support</b>
	<b>R</b>	<b>This will help reduce traffic and vehicular energy demand while meeting equity goals for those with limited transportation options.</b>
	<b>T</b>	<b>One to two years</b>

<p><b>Complete a policy review of primary renewable heating ordinances applicable to multi-unit and mixed-use buildings.</b></p>	<b>S</b>	<b>Community Development staff and the Planning Commission</b>
	<b>M</b>	
	<b>A</b>	

	R	
	T	<b>Complete the review after 3 years of data from other communities (Burlington &amp; S. Burlington). If favorable, implement an ordinance in 1-2 years.</b>

<b>Pursue grants and other funding opportunities to improve efficiency in new and existing public buildings.</b>	S	
	M	
	A	
	R	
	T	

<b>Launch an initiative to support building energy and electric vehicle charging retrofits in multi-unit and commercial properties, focusing on the least efficient properties first.</b>	S	
	M	
	A	
	R	
	T	

## Individual “SOAR” ideas

### Strengths

- We are built along the rail corridors, not the river, so flood risks are not too bad
- EJ is already served by frequent all-day public transit – we’re set up for a higher than average non-car mode share
- Efficiency VT monthly energy efficiency charge; efficiency utility
- Talented, qualified technical and management City staff
- Progressive, active, and committed City Council!
- Global Foundries is here – leader in energy efficiency – worked intensely with Burlington
- High density area close to amenities
- High density housing (condos) helps with heating costs
- Walkability and public transit
- Reliable energy infrastructure
- Low cost thermal
- Newer housing stock
- Utility data
- Interconnected bike paths
- Good public Level 2 EV charging

### Opportunities

- Significant mid-rise development opportunities – these new buildings are likely to be reasonably efficient and may be highly efficient with a nudge or with incentives
- Evening & weekend transit frequencies tend need to be incentivized to be more broadly useful to more people
- Incentive programs (or ordinances) developed for elimination of fossil fuels in new buildings
- Promote solar on CSWD / Essex Town capped landfill
- Cooling & severe weather shelters highly coordinated
- Air sealing / weatherization/
- Incentives for remedial upgrades
- Low / moderate income navigation resources
- City promote electrification, EV chargers, and weatherization
- Alternative energy incentives, rebates, partnerships to help residents
- More education around energy efficiency for residents and businesses

- Additional public electric vehicle supply equipment, especially for multi-family housing
- Thermal energy storage
- Cold weather heat pumps
- Assess geothermal opportunities – how relevant is it here

### **Aspirations**

- Outreach, engagement, & communication weatherization program coordinated with local stakeholders
- Promote that Essex Westford School District has 100% renewable energy (if true?)
- Encourage multi-family retrofits
- More renewables adopted and installed in commercial businesses
- Cost of 200 amp upgrade in homes – electrification
- Concerns around building code & fire safety may be tempering opportunities for the addition of EV chargers in structured parking
- Trains; EE (energy efficient?) travel to major areas
- More solar
- Study if geothermal is feasible here
- Rental buildings have limited incentive to weatherize & electrify when tenants are responsible for utilities
- Heat pumps for condos
- More EV charging stations
- Appoint an energy coordinator (volunteer)
- Encourage more cold weather use of heat pumps for heating. Tough to compete with liquid propane gas, but better for environment
- Renewable upgrades should not increase energy burden
- Properly insulated retrofits (air handling, etc.)
- Commercial building efficiency upgrades
- RBES / CBES compliance?
- Density
- Compact development (walkability)

### **Results**

- Return to Montreal by Amtrak
- “X” number of low / moderate households (old stock) weatherized (and asbestos-abated)
- Geothermal

- Multi-family / condo electrification + renters
- More robust public electric vehicle supply equipment infrastructure
- City fleet vehicles switched to electric vehicles
- Everyone can afford their energy bills and are comfortable in their homes

## Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan Update

### Land Development Code Zoning Districts Overview and Purpose Statements

District	Density / Intensity	Use Categories	Purpose Statement
Village Center	Very High	Residential, Commercial, Civic	To provide a compact commercial center having a mix of commercial, governmental, cultural and mixed use buildings that are consistent with the purpose of a designated Village Center District, and a neighborhood development area as both are defined by the State of Vermont. The Village Center shall be the core for an ongoing revitalization that will improve the community's vitality and livability and the goal of having a Center that accommodates growth. Due to the historic nature of the residential neighborhoods surrounding the Five Corners area, the design and layout of any new developments or infill projects shall acknowledge the importance of the existing streetscape and enhance the area through an architectural design and site layout that enhances pedestrian connectivity to adjacent properties.
Transit Oriented Development	Very High	Residential, Civic, Commercial	The purpose of the Transit Oriented Development District (TOD) is to encourage development that supports a variety of transportation options including public transit (bus and rail), walking, biking and the automobile...
Highway-Arterial	High	Residential, Civic, Commercial	To provide areas for retail, wholesale, commercial, residential, service and professional businesses while minimizing negative impacts due to increased traffic.
Light Industrial	High	Commercial, Industrial	To provide areas for manufacturing, warehousing, research and development while maintaining high air and water quality
Mixed Commercial Use	High	Residential, Commercial, Civic, Light Industrial	To provide areas for mixed use development in locations which have adequate public and compatible surrounding land uses. A mix of residential, retail and office use is encouraged.
Multi-Family / Mixed Use 1	High	Residential, Civic	The Multi-Family/Mixed-Use-1 District is intended to allow high density multi-family development along low intensity commercial uses along major transportation and public transit corridors. High Density, Mixed Use developments and affordable housing with parking below grade or on the first floor of the building are encouraged. Development in the MF-MU1 District should support alternative modes of transportation, while accommodating the automobile.

District	Density / Intensity	Use Categories	Purpose Statement
Multi-Family / Mixed Use 1	Moderate	Residential, Civic	The Multi-Family/Mixed-Use-2 District is intended to allow high density multi-family development along low intensity commercial uses along major transportation and public transit corridors. High Density, Mixed Use developments and affordable housing with parking below grade or on the first floor of the building are encouraged. Development in the MF-MU2 District should support alternative modes of transportation, while accommodating the automobile. Developments within this district should be designed in such a way as to build upon the village character found in the core areas of the City.
Residential-Office	Moderate	Residential, Civic, Commercial	Provide areas for small office conversions of existing residential structures while maintaining residential type architecture. It is not the intent of this District to allow conversions which substantially alter the residential appearance of the structure or which alter the residential character of the neighborhood.
Planned Exposition	Moderate	Commercial, Civic	To provide an area for special events and exposition facilities while minimizing adverse traffic, sound and visual impacts. It is the intent of this district to encourage innovation in design and to encourage pedestrian, bicycle and bus access to such events.
Multi-Family Residential 1 (MF1)	Moderate	Residential, Civic	To provide areas for multi-family residential development and accessory uses.
Multi-Family Residential 2 (MF2)	Moderate	Residential, Civic	To provide areas for the construction of new multi-family dwellings and accessory uses.
Multi-Family Residential 3 (MF3)	Low	Residential, Civic	To provide areas for low density multi-family dwellings and accessory uses.
Residential 1	Low	Residential, Civic	To provide areas for large lot single family residential dwellings and accessory uses.

District	Density / Intensity	Use Categories	Purpose Statement
Residential 2	Low	Residential, Civic	To provide areas for high-density single family residential development and accessory uses.
Planned Agriculture	Low	Residential, Civic, Commercial, Conservation	To provide areas for active agricultural uses and provide mechanisms to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture. Prime agriculture or active farming land shall be preserved whenever possible through specific policies of the City. Property used for agricultural purposes shall be deemed the predominant use of land and shall be protected from the adverse effects of urban developments. If development is to occur, the preservation of open space for agricultural or recreation purposes is important to the long-term environmental sustainability and quality of life in the district. Projects are reviewed on an overall project density basis to allow for the preservation of open space while achieving full build out. Open space networks and preservation of important natural resources should be integrated with new development in such a way as to allow for continued agricultural uses or emerging open space opportunities with responsible development.
Open Space	Very low	Civic, Conservation	To provide and maintain open lands within the City and its neighborhoods, and to provide locations for public recreation and school facilities.
Flood Plain	Very Low	Conservation	<p>The purpose of this district, consistent with 10 V.S.A. § 751, is to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote the public health, safety and general welfare;</li> <li>2. Prevent increases in flooding caused by excessive development of land in flood hazard areas;</li> <li>3. Minimize and prevent loss of life and property, disruption of commerce, impairment of the tax base, and extraordinary public expenditures and demands on public services that result from flooding and other flood related hazards;</li> <li>4. Ensure that the City of Essex Junction and individuals remain eligible for federal flood insurance, disaster recovery funds, and hazard mitigation funds as may be available.</li> </ol>

**TO: Chris Yuen, Essex Junction Community Development Director**  
**FROM: Darren Schibler, CCRPC Senior Planner; Maya Balassa, CCRPC Planner**  
**DATE: June 1, 2026**  
**RE: Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan Progress Report #5**

CCRPC completed the following tasks in May 2026:

- Regular check-in meetings continued between CCRPC and the City.
- CCRPC staff, City staff and Scott McCormick coordinated with the Essex High School Business Club to continue door-to-door surveys of businesses, focusing on the Five Corners area.
- CCRPC staff finalized logistics and workshop materials for the Energy & Climate focus group, which was held on May 6 and included residents with expertise in energy efficiency programs, electric vehicles, energy equity issues, electric and natural gas utility operations, and renewable energy development.
- CCRPC staff created summaries of feedback received at the first two focus groups.
- CCRPC attended the May 7 Planning Commission meeting to provide an update on engagement efforts.
- CCRPC began coordinating a business owner's focus group to take place in mid-June at Boxcar Bakery.
- CCRPC began exploring approaches to updating the Essex Junction Future Land Use Map.

**Next Steps:**

- CCRPC staff will continue to conduct business owner interviews in and around Five Corners.
- CCRPC will host a business owner's focus group, to be publicized with assistance from City staff.
- CCRPC will begin incorporating initial outreach into plan chapters, starting with Energy & Climate in preparation for the July 2 Planning Commission meeting.
- City staff, Scott McCormick, and CCRPC staff will continue participating in the Municipal Climate Planning Guide pilot program.
- Based on Planning Commission input at the June 4 meeting, CCRPC will begin drafting a new Future Land Use Map and descriptions of each area.
- CCRPC staff will continue data and mapping updates to the plan in the background.

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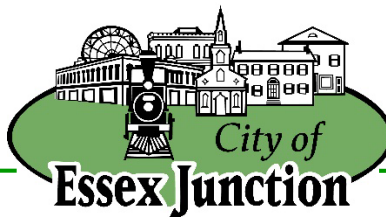
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**PROJECT PROGRESS AND BUDGET SUMMARY**

Task	Description	Start	End	Status
1	Project Management	Jan-26	Apr-27	Ongoing
2	Review Existing Plans	Jan-26	Jan-26	Complete
3	Mapping and Analysis	Feb-26	Jun-26	In progress
4	Public Engagement	Feb-26	Oct-26	In progress
5	Policy Updates / Plan Drafting	Apr-26	Nov-26	Started in background
6	PC Work Sessions	May-26	Dec-26	Not yet started
7	Plan Adoption	Dec-26	Apr-27	Not yet started

<b>CCRPC Budget Summary - Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan Update</b>				
	Personnel		Mileage + Materials	Total \$
	Hours	\$ Amount		
<b>Budgeted</b>	565	\$39,550	\$450.00	\$40,000
<b>Used</b>	233	\$16,310	\$249.98	\$16,560
<b>Remaining</b>	332	\$23,240	\$200.02	\$23,440
<b>% Remaining</b>	59%	59%	44%	59%

<b>CCRPC Budget Detail - Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan Update</b>				
Month	Personnel		Mileage + Materials	Total \$
	Hours	\$ Amount		
Jan-26	33.5	\$2,345.00	\$0.00	\$2,345.00
Feb-26	37.0	\$2,590.00	\$0.00	\$2,590.00
Mar-26	41.5	\$2,905.00	\$0.00	\$3,072.39
Apr-26	77.0	\$5,390.00	\$167.39	\$5,557.39
May-26	42	\$2,940.00	\$75.63	\$3,015.63



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Planning Commission

**From:** Christopher Yuen, Community Development Director

**Meeting Date:** June 4, 2026

**Subject:** 2026 Land Development Code (LDC) Amendments – First Draft Follow-Up

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**Issue:** Staff have prepared an updated summary of the Land Development Code (LDC) amendments for Planning Commission review.

### Discussion:

This memorandum summarizes the status of the 2026 LDC amendments following the May 7th Planning Commission meeting. The second draft reflects policy direction provided by the Planning Commission at that meeting, as well as ongoing technical review by Staff and the consulting team.

The anticipated bylaw amendment schedule is as follows:

The anticipated bylaw amendment schedule is as follows:

- May 7: Planning Commission review and comments ✓
- Throughout May and June: Targeted outreach to key stakeholders
- June 4: Planning Commission review of second draft
- July 2: Planning Commission review of full LDC amendment proposal; warn for public hearing
- Throughout July: Public engagement focusing on key issues
- August 6: Planning Commission Public Hearing
- September: Planning Commission Public Hearing #2 for revised proposal if needed
- October: City Council Public Hearing and Adoption

This memorandum is organized as follows: (1) Form-Based Code amendments to Sections 604 and 608, which represent the most significant changes in this draft; (2) outstanding questions forwarded to the consulting team for further consideration; (3) a summary of other amendments by chapter; and (4) items still pending technical review.

## 1. FORM-BASED CODE AMENDMENTS (Sections 604 and 608)

### Overview

The most significant amendments in this draft are major revisions to Section 604 (Village Center) and Section 608 (Transit Oriented Development) to incorporate the form-based code proposal developed through the Connect the Junction project. These changes have been developed collaboratively with the consulting team over a series of Planning Commission meetings, and the current draft reflects the consulting team's responses to issues and policy questions raised by the Planning Commission and Staff throughout that process. This section summarizes the changes thematically.

The Planning Commission reviewed the Form-Based Code changes in Chapter 6 during the May 7 meeting, but additional comments and suggestions are welcome.

#### Street Room Ratio and Building Massing

The draft addresses several questions that arose about how the street room ratio (the building-height-to-street-width standard), should be applied in practice.

The draft now specifies that street room ratio standards apply on each frontage for lots with more than one frontage line, ensuring that double-frontage lots cannot satisfy the standard from a single street-facing facade alone. The standards also now clarify that they apply only to the principal building closest to the frontage line, resolving the concern about how to treat rear buildings on multi-building sites such as large mixed-use developments.

To address conditions on narrow streets, the draft adds a Narrow Right-of-Way Adjustment provision. On frontages where the ROW is less than 50 feet, a minimum 50-foot ROW width is assumed for purposes of the height-to-width ratio calculation. Buildings on these narrower streets are also required to provide a minimum 10-foot setback along the frontage line, which the City may designate as public sidewalk or pedestrian zone. Where strict application of this provision would prevent an otherwise-permitted low-scale building form, the actual ROW width may be used for the ratio calculation instead. A separate provision allows rail right-of-way to be added to the street ROW width when calculating the ratio on frontages directly adjacent to rail — a condition relevant to portions of the TOD district.

#### Frontage Types

The draft adds a Parking Frontage Type, which was requested by the Planning Commission at the March 31st meeting. This type has been added to the TOD district's frontage standards and requires landscaping and screening. It has been further refined to allow a screened building option along 100 percent of the frontage. The Planning Commission should review the current proposal and provide any additional feedback.

Soft-edge design principles, which encourage permeable, pedestrian-friendly transitions between building facades and the public realm, have been integrated throughout the frontage type standards, with particular emphasis in the Linear Frontage type.

#### Applicability, Retrofits, and Waivers

The draft adds a Waivers and Exemptions section under the Applicability provisions of both Section 604 and Section 608, giving the Development Review Board flexibility to waive specific standards for good cause in unusual or constrained situations.

The Applicability section also now addresses how retrofits and additions are regulated. Projects that do not increase gross floor area by more than 30 percent may be permitted without full compliance with current form-based standards, provided that the degree of nonconformity is not increased and the intent of applicable standards is met. This determination may be subject to DRB approval. For landscaping, where changes to parking areas, circulation, or open space are proposed, landscaping must be brought into greater conformance with the applicable standards to the extent feasible given site conditions. Staff note that additional specificity on the definition of "affected area" for purposes of calculating the landscape scoring denominator may be warranted;

this question has been forwarded to the consulting team and is discussed further in Section 2 of this memorandum.

Regarding changes of use, the draft clarifies within the Linear Frontage Type that active commercial uses are intended and suggested rather than strictly required, providing flexibility where a space is repurposed or remains vacant over time.

The draft also addresses scale and applicability more broadly. The form-based standards are written to be scalable: two-story buildings can achieve the required street room ratio along most ROWs, frontage types and materials are flexible, articulation requirements apply only above certain thresholds, and landscape standards are proportional. The new Waivers and Exemptions section provides an additional safety valve for situations that the standards do not anticipate.

#### Single-Family Dwellings in the Village Center

The draft retains single-family dwellings as a permitted use in the Village Center district, consistent with the goal of not rendering the many existing single-family and historic structures in the VC nonconforming. Single-family dwellings are exempt from the Street Room and Frontage Type standards, and a separate setback standard applies to them.

#### Design Review Overlay District Boundary

The draft retains the Design Review Overlay (DRO) district and adjusts its boundary to exclude the areas now subject to the VC and TOD form-based code standards. Properties within the VC and TOD districts will be governed by the new form-based standards rather than DRO review. Properties outside those boundaries that are currently within the DRO will continue to be subject to design review as before.

#### Parking in the Village Center and TOD Districts

Section 604.F is clarified to confirm that there are no minimum motor vehicle parking requirements in the Village Center district, while bicycle parking requirements continue to apply.

In the TOD district, parking minimums that had been inadvertently omitted from an earlier draft have been restored to Section 708, along with waiver flexibility consistent with the rest of Chapter 7.

The draft also adds new language to Section 604.F to address a practical problem with residential parking in the Village Center: rental properties in the VC often lack on-site parking, and tenants currently have no reliable mechanism for arranging off-site parking even where nearby capacity exists. Under the new provision, where a proposed development includes residential dwelling units and would provide on-site parking at less than 75% of the otherwise-required amount for the residential component, the DRB may, as a condition of Site Plan approval, require the applicant to demonstrate that reasonably accessible off-site parking is available and to take reasonable steps to facilitate tenant access to it. Such steps may include identifying specific off-site parking facilities within 600 feet, providing written evidence of the parking owner's willingness to enter into lease arrangements, including written notification of parking conditions in residential leases, and designating a property manager responsible for assisting tenants in arranging off-site parking during the first year of occupancy. The DRB may not deny a Site Plan application solely because parking agreements are not yet executed at the time of approval, but may require executed

agreements prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. This provision applies only to the residential component of a development and does not affect review of any commercial component of the same application.

#### Unit Mix Requirements (604.D.2 and 608.D.2)

The draft adds a requirement that larger residential developments include a minimum share of multi-bedroom dwelling units in the VC and TOD districts. This reflects direction from the Planning Commission and City Council during the Connect the Junction plan approval process to encourage a broader diversity of unit sizes and layouts. The currently proposed language reads:

"Residential developments containing more than 20 dwelling units shall provide a range of unit sizes. A minimum of 20 percent of dwelling units shall contain two (2) or more bedrooms, unless an alternative mix is approved by the Development Review Board upon determination that the proposal supports the housing goals of the [Village Center/Transit Oriented Development] District."

The Planning Commission expressed interest at the May 7th meeting in exploring whether this requirement could be made more stringent. This question has been forwarded to the consulting team and is discussed further in Section 2 of this memorandum.

#### Landscaping Performance Score

The Landscape Performance Score minimum is retained at 30 points. The consulting team is considering adding scoring line items for bioretention that functions as snow storage and melt infiltration, soil health improvements, low-input species, and food cultivation.

#### Formula-Based Retail and Restaurant Standards

Formula-based retail and restaurant restrictions that had been removed from an earlier draft have been restored to the Village Center district, consistent with the Planning Commission's intent to preserve the aesthetic and commercial character of the VC and discourage generic chain-format development.

#### Minimum Lot Size

A minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet has been restored to the Village Center and Transit Oriented Development districts, consistent with the prior code version, to prevent overly small lot subdivisions in these areas.

#### Street Design and Infrastructure Standards

The draft carries forward the substance of the transit and bicycle infrastructure standards previously found in Section 608.J.5(d). New streets in the TOD district are required to incorporate bus stops coordinated with Green Mountain Transit (GMT), and applicants must submit written comments from GMT regarding proposed bus stops and facilities. New streets are also required to include bike lanes of at least five feet in width where needed to provide bicycle access and connectivity throughout the district.

The consulting team notes that the Street Room ratio and frontage type standards are intended to align building placement with existing street widths and accommodate future street improvements. Where the City's Official Map identifies a wider corridor, additional tools — including requiring ROW dedication or a parallel easement at the time of redevelopment — are available outside of the

LDC. The consulting team has also indicated availability to work on an official map under 24 V.S.A. § 4421 for the TOD district when the City is ready to pursue that.

## Chapter 2 Definitions

The consulting team is completing its cross-referencing of the new form-based code standards against the existing Chapter 2 definitions to identify all necessary additions and modifications. Additional definitions to support the form-based code are expected to be added in this or a subsequent draft and are discussed further in Section 2 of this memorandum.

## 2. OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS FORWARDED TO THE CONSULTING TEAM

The following questions arose at or prior to the May 7th meeting and have been forwarded to the consulting team for further consideration. The Planning Commission should review the consulting team's responses and provide direction as needed:

### Definition of "Affected Area" for Landscaping Retrofits

The draft addresses landscaping requirements for retrofits and additions but does not yet precisely define what constitutes the "affected area" for purposes of calculating the landscape scoring denominator. Two potential approaches under consideration are: (a) applying the existing 3% of construction cost threshold from Section 719, or (b) limiting the extent of the "impacted area" for purposes of determining the landscape scoring denominator. The consulting team has been asked to propose a clear definition. The Planning Commission should review the consulting team's response and confirm whether the proposed definition is workable.

### Unit Type Mix Requirements

As noted above, the Planning Commission expressed interest in strengthening the unit type mix requirements beyond the currently proposed 20 percent minimum for multi-bedroom units. The consulting team has been asked to assess whether current market conditions can support more stringent requirements and to provide a recommendation. The Planning Commission should review the consulting team's response and provide further direction.

### Form-Based Code Purpose Statement

The consulting team has been asked to revise the purpose statement for the form-based code sections to make it more accessible to lay readers. The Planning Commission should review the revised language and confirm it accurately captures the intent of the standards.

## 3. SUMMARY OF OTHER CODE AMENDMENTS

### Chapter 2 – Definitions

"Steps" have been added to the definition of "structure" to align with current permitting practices (201.C.212). A definition for "802 Homes Catalogue" has also been added (201.C.1).

### Chapter 5 – Development Review Procedures

**Zoning Permit Requirement (502.A):** The permit requirement has been clarified to expressly include any increase in habitable living space, including attics, bedrooms, basements, garages, and enclosed or winterized porches, to ensure that changes affecting sewer allocation are subject to municipal review.

A zoning permit is also now required for soil disturbance exceeding 400 square feet, consistent with current practice and to address stormwater quality impacts.

**Zoning Permit Extensions (502.A.9):** A second one-year extension is now available for larger projects, allowing up to three years of total permit validity if both extensions are used. The second extension requires that substantial improvement (approximately 50% completion) has been achieved and is not available for small projects that do not involve improvements to or the addition of a principal structure.

**Access to Public Roads (509.B.2):** The Zoning Administrator may now approve Zoning Permit Applications that propose walkways connecting directly to a sidewalk or street within the City's right-of-way, addressing a current gap in the code.

**Application Response Timelines (504, 512, 513, 514, 516):** Response timelines have been standardized across these sections to 10 days to determine completeness and 30 days to approve or deny an application, for consistency.

**Minor Site Plan Amendments – Change of Use (502.F.11(b)):** Staff may now administratively approve a change of use that results in an increased parking requirement, provided the total number of existing on-site parking spaces meets or exceeds the new requirement without a waiver and no other major amendment criteria are triggered. Previously, any increase in required parking spaces automatically triggered a major amendment requiring DRB review, regardless of whether adequate parking capacity existed on site.

#### Chapter 6 – Zoning Districts (Non-Form-Based Code Provisions)

**Design Review Overlay (620.B):** Language has been added specifying that applications using plans from the forthcoming 802 Homes Catalogue are exempt from design review, subject to three conditions: the parcel does not contain a structure listed or eligible for the State or National Register of Historic Places or identified on Map 2 of the Comprehensive Plan; the applicant submits the applicable plan set annotated to demonstrate conformance with all dimensional and use standards; and all other applicable development review requirements remain in full effect. The intent of this provision is to exempt buildings selected from the 802 Homes Catalogue from additional design scrutiny in the DRO district on the basis that these designs have been pre-vetted for design quality. The Planning Commission should confirm that the language and approach are acceptable.

**R1 and R2 Districts (618.A, 619.A, 618.H.1, 619.H.1):** Purpose statements for the R1 and R2 districts have been updated to reflect recent amendments permitting duplexes through fourplexes. Special standards have also been adjusted to accommodate certain 802 Homes Templates by allowing front entrances to be "clearly visible from the street" rather than strictly "facing the street."

#### Chapter 7 – Development Standards

**Signs (Section 714):** All references to non-Essex Junction zoning districts have been removed from Section 714. The Directional Sign definition (714.C.14) has been updated for consistency with other municipalities. Sign projection standards throughout Section 714.L have been adjusted to account for sloped surfaces.

**Parking Waiver Criteria (703.L)-** Parking waiver criteria and joint parking provisions have been reorganized into a new standalone Section 703.L, consolidated from former items 703.K.14 and 703.K.16. Three substantive changes are included: the maximum distance for off-site parking relied

upon in a waiver is increased from 200 feet to 600 feet; a new general condition provides that any spaces relied upon to justify a waiver — including spaces associated with a different use within the same development — may not be gated or reserved for exclusive private use in a way that makes them unavailable to users of the approved use; and a new waiver pathway is created for residential uses where required parking spaces are offered on an unbundled basis, separated from dwelling unit leases or sales. The Planning Commission confirmed at the May 7th meeting that these changes are acceptable as drafted.

**Long-Term Bicycle Storage (703.M.2):** Clarified which project types must provide long-term bicycle storage. An amendment to 703.M.2(a) and (b) closes a gap under which a shared bicycle storage room could satisfy the long-term storage requirement without containing any bicycle racks. Where long-term storage is provided in a shared facility rather than in a space private to each unit or in individual lockers, racks must now be provided in sufficient quantity to accommodate one bicycle per required storage space, meeting the rack style and performance criteria of the APBP Essentials of Bike Parking guide. Rack styles identified in that guide as "Racks to Avoid" are not permitted to satisfy this requirement. (Note: the bicycle parking standards previously at 703.L have been renumbered to 703.M as part of the parking waiver reorganization described above.)

**Window Wells as a Setback Exception (706.C.6):** The LDC does not currently define window wells or address their permissibility within required setbacks. New language has been added allowing a window well to be constructed within a setback no closer than three feet from the property line, consistent with approaches taken in Burlington, Denver, and West Des Moines. The Planning Commission confirmed at the May 7th meeting that this approach is acceptable.

**Landscaping (719.E):** Section 719.E has been reorganized for clarity, breaking the existing dense opening paragraph into numbered subsections covering applicability, landscape plan preparation requirements, and minimum landscaping cost requirements. No substantive changes were made to the underlying requirements. A new Section 719.E.1 clarifies that minimum landscaping cost requirements do not apply in the Village Center and TOD districts, which are subject instead to the new Landscape Performance Score systems established in Sections 604.H and 608.H. All other provisions of Section 719 continue to apply in those districts. Outside of the VC and TOD districts, the percentage-of-construction-cost standard continues to apply, including for Site Plan Amendments involving primarily interior changes.

## Chapter 14

Section 1414 has been updated to align with City policy and state statute.

### Formatting and Technical Corrections

A number of formatting and cross-reference errors have been corrected throughout the code, including: incorrectly italicized sentences in the Food Truck definition (201.C.103); the renaming of Section 503 from "Subdivisions" to "Approval of Subdivisions"; correction of Table of Contents page numbering; correction of a reference to the "HC" district in 704.D.10 (should read "HA"); fixed cross-references in 714.C.10.a.ii and 714.C.10.d; correction of a typo in 601.F ("seventy-two (47) feet"); clarification in 502.F.8 that Chapter 6 waiver requests are applicable (previously only Chapter 7 waivers were listed); fixed parking waiver criteria references in 703.K.1 and 703.K.3; addition of a missing word to the floor plan submittal requirement at 502.A.2.c; and correction of the Chapter 9 subchapter numbering.

#### 4. CHANGES PENDING TECHNICAL REVIEW

The following items remain under consideration by Staff and have not yet been incorporated into the draft. The 802 Homes team — including the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) and their consultant Utile — may provide additional suggestions on some of these items over the coming months:

- Exemption from minimum two-way parking aisle width requirements (703.C) for small housing developments, from single-family homes through fourplexes.
- Amendments to driveway apron paving requirements (703.K.3), particularly for single-family to fourplex retrofits. The LDC currently allows residential driveways of up to five homes to be gravel, but requires the apron to be paved 20 feet beyond the edge of the public right-of-way, which makes gravel driveways impractical on most small lots.
- Addition of a reference to VTrans Town Road and Bridge Standards.
- Review and update of regulations related to Sewer Connection and Allocation, including possible addition of a typical sewer bypass detail.
- Consideration of allowing CTE HDPE for water service as an alternative to copper.

**Cost:**

There is no direct cost associated with the proposed LDC amendments.

**Recommendation:**

The Planning Commission should review the LDC amendments included in the latest draft and provide comments as necessary. The Planning Commission should also provide feedback on all items discussed in this memorandum.

**Attachments:**

1. Draft LDC Amendments as of May 7, 2026 (provided separately via email in Microsoft Word and PDF format)