

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

Online & 2 Lincoln St.
Essex Junction, VT 0545
Thursday, July 3rd 2024,
6:30 PM

E-mail: cyuen@essexjunction.org

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Phone: 802-878-6944, ext. 1607

This meeting will be held in-person at 2 Lincoln Street and available remotely. Options to join the meeting 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. **REORGANIZATION**
 - a. Election of Chair and Vice Chair
3. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
 - a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
5. **MINUTES**
 - a. June 6th, 2024
6. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
 - a. Introductions for new Planning Commission member(s) [6:35 PM]
 - b. H.687 Summary as it relates to Municipal Planning* [6:55 PM]
 - c. Essex A North Lot Solar Project Petition for Certificate of Public Good [7:10 PM]
 - d. Land Development Code amendments, including discussion on following*: [7:15 PM]
 - Recap of Changes previously discussed*
 - Approval of Temporary Uses – Food Trucks and Trailers
 - Review of Dimensional Standards, based on “Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods”
 - e. Vermont Climate Action Plan feedback* [8:10 PM]
7. **MEMBERS UPDATES** [8:25 PM]
8. **STAFF UPDATES** [8:27 PM]
9. **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
PUBLIC HEARING
MINUTES OF MEETING
June 6, 2024
DRAFT**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Phil Batalion, Chair; Patrick Scheld, Vice Chair; Diane Clemens, Scott McCormick.

ADMINISTRATION: Michael Giguere, City Planner; Chris Yuen, Community Development Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Shawn Handy, Lexi.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Phil Batalion called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Commissioner McCormick requested adding a Commissioner update topic around the Climate Action Plan.

Director Yuen requested adding a sub-topic for the Land Development Code amendments related to the Vermont Homes For All Initiative.

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

- a.** Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
None.

4. MINUTES

- a.** April 4, 2024

MOTION by SCOTT McCORMICK, SECOND by DIANE CLEMENS to approve the minutes of April 4, 2024 as presented. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carries.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

- a.** Welcome for new City Planner Michael Giguere
City Planner Giguere introduced himself and provided a summary of his background and expertise.

- b.** Land Development Code amendments, including discussion on following topics:

- i. Change previously discussed in April
- ii. Approval of Temporary Uses – Food Trucks and Trailers

Director Yuen noted that there was a proposed amendment to allow for year-round operation of food trucks and trailers, saying that consecutive reviews would be allowed by staff if there were no issues. He said that it may be worth considering regulation on sound nuisance, given that there was one complaint regarding a food truck's generator noise.

Commissioner Batalion asked whether there is a noise ordinance, and Director Yuen replied that there is and that sound can be regulated, but that enforcement has been the issue around this topic in the past.

Commissioner Batalion said that he would be comfortable adding language around noise, or a requirement that generators be plugged in to minimize noise. Director Yuen said he would take this back and draft proposed language.

iii. Tandem Parking Spaces

Director Yuen noted that this was discussed in April and that there had been a question around length. He said that he researched what other municipalities in Chittenden County have for regulations and that 34 feet was a common length.

iv. Planned Unit Development open space requirements

Director Yuen said that this relates to allowing balconies in lieu of yard space, noting that he put wording into the amendments to allow for this.

v. Miscellaneous technical changes for technical consistency and cultural inclusivity

Director Yuen spoke briefly about the technical changes made within the LDC amendments. Planning Commissioners spoke about the technical change related to the definition of “Family.”

vi. Day Care/Family Care Facilities in residential and mixed-use districts

Director Yuen also noted that Day Care and Family Care Homes are not allowed uses in the Agricultural districts, but noted that there is quite a bit of residential development in those districts and said that there isn’t a good policy reason to bar those as uses in those districts, so he made changes to allow these as uses. He also noted that Day Care Facilities were not allowed in the Highway Arterial district and he also made a change to allow those as uses in that district.

vii. Uses not specified in the use-table

Director Yuen said that the proposed amendments would codify that similar uses (that aren’t specified in the use table) be treated the same as the specified uses they are similar to. He also said that if a use is not specified and isn’t similar to a specified use, the path would be to look at conditional uses, which would be reviewed and approved by the Development Review Board (DRB).

viii. Other changes for consistency with State Statute

Director Yuen spoke about other changes for consistency with Vermont law. He said that one is the MF-3 zone, which allows for 3 units per lot, which isn’t compliant with the HOME Act, which allows for 4 units per lot in residential districts. He said that this change would make the MF-3 zone similar to the R-2 district. He noted a new reference to statute regarding limits to municipal powers to regulate certain uses, such as emergency shelters.

ix. Multiple Residential Buildings per Lot

Director Yuen spoke about a change related to allowing multiple buildings per lot. He said that if four units are allowed in one larger structure, four should also be allowed for two smaller structures on the same lot (consistent maximum of four units per lot), for the R-1 and R-2 districts. Commissioner Batalion said he is supportive of this but would like City Council discussion and buy-in prior to proceeding with this amendment, since this change has the potential to change the landscape of the City.

x. Consistency of Density Limits between R1, R2, MF3, and R-O Districts

Director Yuen said that the MF3 and R-O districts are transition zones between the R-1 and R-2 districts and the City center. He said that they previously allowed for higher densities than the residential districts but aren't as high as the Village Center district. He said that however, now that four-plexes are allowed in residential districts through the HOME Act, the densities in the MF3 and R-O districts are lower than the residential districts. He said that there is no planning justification for this unusual density pattern, if these areas are to continue serving as transition zones. Commissioners agreed that it does not make sense for them to be less dense than the residential districts.

xi. Vermont Homes for All Initiative

Director Yuen said that the City applied to participate in the state's Homes for All Toolkit, which is for small-scale homebuilders, investors, and community leaders. He said that it also includes example housing typologies that come with pre-approvable plans. He said that because the City doesn't have a building code, it relies on its zoning to prevent unwanted housing typologies from being built. He encouraged Planning Commissioners to review the toolkit. Commissioner Scheld echoed this, speaking about how this toolkit helps making homebuilding and development more accessible.

Director Yuen asked whether now is an appropriate time for staff to review dimensional requirements in the lower-density neighborhoods (R1, R2, MF3) to see if they are following best practices to encourage missing infill housing. He noted that the TOD study will examine the main corridors, but that there is no separate initiative planned to look at the other neighborhoods. He said that this would entail looking at setbacks and lot coverage limits. Commissioners discussed this, and Director Yuen said that he will look into this and report back.

Commissioner Clemens asked that the chart related to Section 622 be oriented for better readability in the document.

c. Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission board member position

Director Yuen noted that a board position on the CCRPC is opening up and invited Planning Commissioners to apply, if interested.

d. Reschedule July and October meetings

Commissioners discussed rescheduling, and decided to reschedule the July meeting to July 3, 2024 and will address the October meeting at a later date.

6. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

a. Vision & Strategic Planning

Director Yuen that there is also an survey that is open to all department heads and commission and board members, in order to obtain feedback to help with prioritization. He encouraged Commissioners to fill out the survey.

Commissioner Batalion said that this is his last meeting and will not be reapplying for another term.

Commissioner Scheld said that he is moving to the Town of Essex and is unsure if he will be eligible for serving on the City's Planning Commission, or will have enough time to dedicate to serving, but he will continue to explore options.

b. Climate Action Plan

Commissioner McCormick said that the state's initial Climate Action Plan was approved in 2021 and that it needs to be updated by July 1, 2025. He said that subcommittees are working diligently to come up with amendments and conducting a gap analysis of what needs to be addressed in the next version of the action plan. He said that many of the items being discussed are items that the Planning Commission has also discussed, including affordable housing, land use changes, building codes, and weatherization programs. Director Yuen suggested having a dedicated item at the next meeting to update the Commission on progress on the next Climate Action Plan and solicit feedback.

7. STAFF UPDATES

Director Yuen said that the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) study has kicked off and the proposed timeline includes a four-day design workshop for the public at the end of the summer and anticipates the entire project wrapping up within the next year. He said that they are considering forming a steering committee for this project.

8. ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION by SCOTT McCORMICK, SECOND by DIANE CLEMENS, to adjourn the meeting.
VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carries.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 P.M.

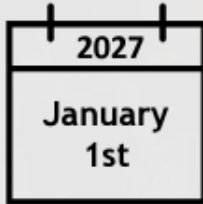
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H.687 Summary as it relates to Municipal Planning

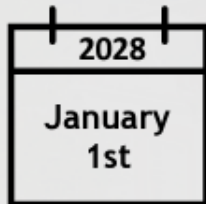


The following slides are adapted from Vermont League of Cities and Towns May 30, 2024
Legislative Wrap-Up Presentation

H. 687 - Extension of Interim Act 250 Exemptions



- Priority Housing Projects exempt from Act 250 (in designated downtowns, neighborhood development areas or growth centers) AND within one-half mile around these centers -- with permanent zoning and subdivision bylaws served by water OR sewer OR with adequate soils, are exempt from Act 250.
 - No permit required for 75 or fewer units of housing within a designated new town center, growth center, neighborhood -- if served by sewer OR water OR have adequate soils.
 - No permit for 50 units or fewer on 10 acres of land in designated village centers or within one-quarter mile of boundary if they have permanent zoning and subdivision bylaws and are served by sewer OR water OR with adequate soils...or in "census-designated urbanized area" with over 50,000 residents and within one quarter mile of a transit route.
 - No permit required for housing in designated downtowns with permanent zoning and subdivision bylaws served by public sewer OR water OR adequate soils
-



- No permit amendment is needed for accessory dwelling units constructed on existing single-family dwellings and accessory dwelling unit constructed does not count towards total units constructed in other projects
 - No permit required for converting a commercial structure to 29 or fewer housing units
-



- Retail electric distribution rebuilding projects are exempt (with qualifications)



New Jurisdictional Trigger: Road Rule - single road 800 feet OR combined road 2,000 feet (exempts municipalities) + rulemaking process



Forest Block and Habitat Connectors Rule Making Process



Exempts certain accessory on-farm businesses from permits for construction or improvements for sale or storage of qualifying products



Exemption for conversion of hotels and motels to permanently affordable housing











Location-Based Jurisdiction

Tier 1A	Tier 1 B	Tier 2	Tier 3
Municipalities can apply to exempt a geographic region from Act 250.	Municipalities can apply to exempt a geographic region from Act 250 ONLY for the construction of up to 50 units of housing on 10 acres or less or for mixed use development with 50 units or fewer of housing on 10 acres or less.	Act 250 as-is, with new jurisdictional triggers included in bill.	New rulemaking process to determine additional protections for “critical natural resources”. Language included to ensure no municipality is disproportionately impacted.

H. 687 - Qualifying for New Tier 1 Status

	Tier 1A	Tier 1B
Process for Designation	Legislative Body Applies	Muni Requests to be “Mapped”
Planning Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Plan • Consistent with downtown or village centers and planned growth areas, within approved future land use map designation • Permanent zoning and subdivision bylaws that do not have blanket exemptions for private and public land • Flood hazard and river corridor bylaws, applicable to entire municipality, consistent or stronger than... • Smart growth principals that regulate form and scale of development and allow for four stories • Historic character requirements • Natural communities, rare and threatened species protections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted and approved plan and planning process • Permanent zoning and subdivision bylaws (excluding flood hazard and fluvial erosion areas)
Infrastructure Requirements	Water and wastewater systems or planned improvements that have capacity to support development	Water, wastewater OR soils that can accommodate a community system
Staff	Municipal staff to support capital planning, development review, and zoning administration	Staff, officials, OR contracted capacity to support development review and zoning administration
Previous Act 250 Permit Requirements	Municipalities must take over enforcement of preexisting Act 250 permits	

H. 687 - Municipal Pre-emptions

	 On Farm Businesses	 Planning	 Multi-Family Units	 Hotel Conversion	 Parking	 More Parking	 AMP Timeline	 Appeals
Amended Statute	24 V.S.A. § 4412(11)	24 V.S.A. § 4348	24 V.S.A. § 4412	24 V.S.A. § 4413	24 V.S.A. § 4428	24 V.S.A. § 4414 (Act 47 of 2023)	24 V.S.A. § 4464	24 V.S.A. § 4465
What does it do?	Expands the definition of accessory on-farm businesses removing the requirement that 50 percent of the annual sales are produced on the specific farm.	Removes municipalities' ability to veto a regional plan.	<p>Municipalities may not require more land for duplexes</p> <p>Quadplexes allowed on the same size lot as single-unit dwellings</p> <p>Prohibits density and minimum lot size restrictions for multiunit dwellings</p> <p>Density bonuses rounded up</p> <p>Prohibits restrictions on unrelated occupants from residing in the same unit</p>	Adds "hotels and motels converted to permanently affordable housing developments" to list of uses with restricted municipal zoning authority.	<p>Sets maximum parking spot size limit to 9 feet by 18 feet, with exceptions</p> <p>Requires nonconforming parking spaces to count towards requirements when new residential units are being added to an existing unit</p> <p>Allows municipalities to count adjacent parking for residential parking requirements</p>	Parking minimums shall be rounded up when calculating minimum spaces in areas served by water and sewer.	Sets a new 120-day requirement for an appropriate municipal panel's hearing to be warned and noticed after receiving a complete application.	Raise the threshold of appeal from any 10 people to any 20 people.

Proposed 2024 Land Development Code Amendments Summary as of July 3, 2024

Overall purpose of the proposed Land Development Code (LDC) amendments:

1. Replacement and reorganization of sign regulations to be content-neutral, based on 2015 and 2022 supreme court caselaw specifying that local governments may only regulate signage based on content neutral criteria such as size, materials, lighting, moving parts, and portability. The text and formatting of the amended sign regulations have been adapted from the zoning text of a nearby municipality (Burlington VT), with specific regulations adjusted based on local context.
2. Adjustment of density limits of residential zoning districts to meet the requirements of the Vermont HOME Act of 2023 (Act 47) and to help meet statewide housing production goals.
3. Language and grammar throughout the document have been adjusted to improve consistency and for demographic and cultural inclusivity.
4. State Statute changes since the last LDC updates have been incorporated.

(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:*

The proposed amendments conform with the goals and policies of the City's Comprehensive Plan by enabling increased housing stock as called for in the Comprehensive Plan. Incorporating reference to the Five Corners Design Plan and standards to fulfill its purpose. In addition, these amendments are intended to enable increased housing stock throughout the City as called for in the Comprehensive Plan.

2. *Is compatible with the proposed future land uses and densities of the municipal plan:*

The proposed amendments are compatible with the proposed future land uses and densities of the municipal plan. The amendments include allowing for fourplexes as required by state statute in the R1 and R2 zoning districts.

3. *Carries out, as applicable, any specific proposals for any planned community facilities."*

The proposed amendments do not carry out any specific proposals for planned community facilities and it would not impact any plans for community facilities.

General amendments throughout the LDC include:

- Zoning district acronyms have been standardized for consistency.
- References to "Use Table", "Table of Uses" and "Use Chart" have been standardized to "Use Chart".
- References to "Church" have been changed to "Place of Worship" for more cultural inclusivity.

Chapter 2: Definitions

Specific amendments in this chapter include:

- Removed most sign definitions which were moved to Sign Standards in Section 714. [Section 201.G]
- Clarified the definition of “Temporary Structure” to reflect changes made to temporary use permits in Section 502 [Section 201.C]
- Definition of “Family” has been modified to remove limits on unrelated persons living together. This change is intended to enable a diverse spectrum of living arrangements outside of the traditional nuclear family. Since the passage of H.687, by the State Legislature, 24 V.S.A. § 4412 now prohibits municipalities from prohibiting unrelated occupants from residing in the same dwelling unit. [Section ??????]

Chapter 5: Development Review Procedures

Specific amendments in this chapter include:

- Limitations on municipal powers to regulate certain uses such as Schools, Hospitals, and Emergency Shelters have been clarified in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4413. [Section 502.C]
- Clarified how development applications that do not fall under a defined category in the Use Chart [Section 622] are to be reviewed by staff. [Sections 502.B - 502.D]
- Moved approval procedure for sign permits to Section 714 for clarity. [Section 502.H]

Chapter 6: Zoning Districts Regulations

General amendments in this section include:

- Grammar corrections and minor formatting changes.

Specific amendments in this chapter include:

- The Multi-Family-3 (MF-3) zoning district’s density limits have been raised to 4 units per lot to meet the requirements of the HOME Act (Act 47) of 2023. This was a technical oversight in the 2023 LDC amendments. [Section 603.D]
- Simplified the structure of density limits for the Multi-Family 3 (MF3) and Residential Office (RO) districts by removing incremental lot-size requirements for additional units within the same structure.
 - These districts serve as transition zones between the denser, mixed-use districts near the City Center and the smaller-scale residential neighborhood districts. Ever since the 2023 HOME Act- related zoning changes in the R1 and R2 residential districts, to allow up to four (4) total units per lot, the MF3 and RO districts’ density caps have been lower than the R1 and R2 Residential districts.
 - There is no planning justification for this unusual density pattern, and thus MF3 and RO districts were adjusted to match surrounding districts’ density limits.
- Reinstated rear setback minimum for Residential Office (RO) district that was removed from the from the LDC in 2011. [Section 609.C]

- Removed limitations on the number of permissible primary structures on lots in the Residential 1 (R1) and Residential 2 (R2) districts to allow for the flexibility for building multiple smaller structures, instead of a single, larger structure. The total size of buildings would still be limited by lot coverage limits. [Sections 618.B and 619.B]
- Added subsection clarifying review process for Uses not Specified in Use Chart outlined in Sections 502.B and 502.C [Section 622.E]
- Added Day Care and Family Care homes and facilities as permitted and conditional uses in the Planned Agriculture (PA) and Highway-Arterial (HA) districts to support existing and future residential development in these districts. [Section 622]

Chapter 7: General Development Standards

General amendments in this chapter include:

- Grammar corrections and minor formatting changes.

Specific amendments in this chapter include:

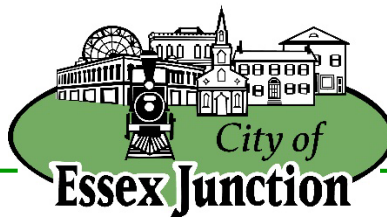
- Changes to allow for year-round operations of food trucks and trailers through consecutive temporary use permit renewals. Restrictions on the use of portable gasoline or diesel electric generators were included [Section 703.J]
- Added language to allow for the use of tandem parking spaces assigned to individual households to allow for more spatially efficient parking lot layouts. [Section 703.K.15]
- Moved regulations regarding holiday lights, and lighting directed at sign surfaces from the Sign Standards Section to the Lighting Section, for clarity and consistency. [Section 704.B and Section 704.E.3]
- Adjusted lighting regulations to allow for the use of string lights on commercial premises during typical business hours. [Section 704.B.10]
- Consolidated regulations on the placement of flagpoles and the display of flags to Section 714 Sign Standards chapter. [Section 706.C.6.d]
- Section 714's Sign standards have been fully replaced and reorganized to be content-neutral, based on 2015 and 2022 supreme court caselaw specifying that local governments may only regulate signage based on content neutral criteria such as size, materials, lighting, moving parts, and portability. The text and formatting of the amended sign regulations have been adapted from the zoning text of a nearby municipality (Burlington VT), with specific regulations adjusted based on local context. [Section 714]
 - Added new permit requirements for neon Window Signs. [714.L]
 - On large lots where a second freestanding sign is permitted, the allowable size for this second sign has been increased from 20 to 30 sq ft to offer a viable pathway to compliance for businesses that currently rely on the permanent display of temporary signs for visibility. [Section 714.L]
 - Wall Signs within 50' of the nearest public road have been increased to be capped at 80 sq ft. This was a compromise to ensure that signs located at auto-oriented commercial developments can be sufficiently viewed from the road while ensuring that future, human-scale redevelopment with shorter setbacks can limit signs to more reasonable sizes. [Section 714.L]

- Added flexibility for the placement of sandwich board -either within 15' of the front door of a business or within 15' from a vehicular or pedestrian entrance to the property on which the business is located. This change is intended to extend the applicability of the regulation to more types of business properties. Sandwich Boards are still required to be removed outside of business hours. [Section 714.L]
- Allowed for the use of Marquee Signs in more zoning districts with the added requirement that Marquee Signs located within the Design Review Overlay District (DRO) go through approval by the Development Review Board [Sections 714.L and 714.M]
- Created a table listing permissible sign types by zoning district [Section 714.M.2]
- Modified the language of Planned Unit Development (PUD) open space requirements to allow for balconies in multi-story, multi-unit buildings in lieu of traditional private yard space. [Section 723]

Chapter 8: Nonconformities

Specific amendments in this chapter include:

- Removed Sections 804 and 805 on Non-Conforming Signs, now located in Sign Standards.



MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Commission

From: Christopher Yuen, Community Development Director; Michael Giguere, City Planner

Meeting Date: July 3rd, 2024

Subject: Land Development Code (LDC) Amendments – Summary and Additional Changes to Consider

Issue: Draft amendments to the LDC have been updated based on the Planning Commission's feedback. Additional changes should be considered.

Discussion:

Draft Summary

With the appointment of a new member of the Planning Commission, City Staff has drafted a summary of the currently proposed amendments to the Land Development so far. The Commission should review the summary and provide comments, as needed. This draft summary is separately attached in the packet.

Recent Additions:

Additionally, a red-line version of the draft LDC amendments have been sent to Planning Commissioners. The following items have been addressed in the latest revision:

703.J.2.a Parking of Storage Trailers, Storage Boxes and Similar Structures

Language was added to the year-round food truck permit section to prohibit the use of portable gasoline or diesel electric generators for permit periods exceeding one month.

609.C RO rear setback

It was noticed that the rear setback minimum of eight (8) feet was removed from the 2011 LDC. This change was likely unintentional. For the latest draft, this has been added back in.

Consideration of changes to Dimensional Standards, based on "Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods"

Traditionally, Vermont neighborhoods provided a diverse mix of housing options for homeowners and renters representing different ages, abilities, and walks of life, ranging from single-family homes to four-plexes and above. This development pattern fell out of the norm as zoning regulations in the post-war era dictated a stricter regiment of the separation of uses, building types and layouts.

The Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development has developed resources to help municipalities facilitate the re-introduction of "missing-middle" housing into Vermont's residential neighborhoods. Two of the most relevant tools are:

- Homes for All: A 'Design & Do' Toolkit for Small-scale Home Builders, Investors & Community Leaders

- Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods (Attached)

During the June 6th meeting, the Planning Commission expressed a desire to review current residential district zoning regulations against the above guidance documents. Staff will outline some of the issues that have been found in this review for further discussion during the meeting. No specific amendments to the LDC's dimensional standards have been drafted as a result of this review so far, as the issues should be first discussed by the Planning Commission.

Cost:

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 items discussed in this memorandum.

Attachments:

1. Summary of Proposed 2024 LDC Amendments To Date
2. Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods

Vermont Climate Action Plan

SUMMARY



The Vermont Climate Action Plan

Vermont and the world are facing the impacts of climate change and it's time to act. The initial Vermont Climate Action Plan, released on December 1, 2021, outlines steps to cut climate pollution and help Vermonters prepare for extreme weather and other impacts caused by climate change.

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. To do this, Vermont will need to prioritize helping the people who will be most affected by climate change.

The Legislature established the Vermont Climate Council to draft the plan. As they drafted the plan, the Climate Council incorporated ideas and feedback from a wide range of Vermonters. In addition, the Climate Council developed this plan in coordination with the State of Vermont's Comprehensive Energy Plan (released November 2021), which details energy opportunities and challenges for the state. Five subcommittees shaped the plan: Rural Resilience and Adaptation, Agriculture and Ecosystems, Cross Sector Mitigation, Just Transitions and Science and Data.

The initial Vermont Climate Action Plan is a first step in climate action and will be updated at least every four years. The plan includes an implementation section for legislators and other state-level stakeholders to inform decision-making. The Climate Council will continue to 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.



Vermonters must be part of determining and implementing solutions to climate change. The Just Transitions subcommittee created *Guiding Principles for a Just Transition* to provide a framework for the Council and subcommittees to evaluate, adjust and prioritize recommendations based on how they will impact Vermont's impacted and frontline communities including those who are highly exposed to climate risks; experience oppression and racism, are excluded from opportunities or have less resources to adapt to climate and economic change; bear the brunt of pollution and negative effects from fossil fuels and extractive economies and are more likely to experience a job transition as Vermont addresses climate change.

Guiding Principles for a Just Transition

- Ensuring **inclusive, transparent, and innovative engagement** in the development of the plan and associated policies and program.
- Creating **accountable and restorative** recommendations that recognize inequality and seek to resolve them using clearly identified strategies.
- Moving at **the speed of trust** to provide adequate time to incorporate people's voices and prepare Vermonters for the transition to a sustainable climate future.
- Incorporating **solidarity** to create inclusionary spaces for all traditions and cultures, particularly for Indigenous communities, recognizing them as integral to a healthy and vibrant Vermont.
- Prioritizing the **most impacted first** through recommendations that address the needs of impacted and frontline communities first, providing the greatest benefits of transitions to these communities.
- Developing **supports for workers, families, and communities** that consider and plan for potential impacts on workers, families and their communities based on the implementation of Vermont's Climate Action Plan.

Climate Change in Vermont

The last decade was the warmest on record. The disruptions are already being felt, from extremely hot days in the summer to increasingly severe storms. If action isn't taken soon, by the end of the century, Vermont will see at least 57 days above 86°F a year under a high emissions trajectory.

Climate change presents many risks for Vermont, as the [Vermont Climate Assessment](#) shows. Not everyone is affected equally. This includes outdoor workers, low-income community members, BIPOC Vermonters, the old and young, people with health conditions or a disability, LGBTQ2 community members and others.

Here's what Vermont is facing:

- **More rain and flooding:** Extreme precipitation events, such as those with 2" or greater precipitation in a 24-hour period, will likely increase in frequency. These events could cause flooding that threatens homes, businesses, infrastructure, communication, and transportation systems.
- **Changes to agriculture:** Shifts in growing season lengths and more rain will complicate growing conditions for many crops, including apples and maple syrup, increasing the likelihood of crop damage or crop failure. Rising temperatures can also lead to heat-stress for livestock.
- **Different forests:** Ecosystems will be increasingly threatened by invasive species and shifts in the seasons.

Extreme weather events disrupt lives, and place people, communities, farms, forests, waterways, businesses and livelihoods at risk. At the same time, tackling the challenge of climate change presents opportunities. Reducing emissions and preparing for the impacts of climate change improves people's health, protects Vermont's farms, forests, and water bodies, and supports new jobs in clean energy.

ENERGY ECONOMY AND OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO CLIMATE ACTION

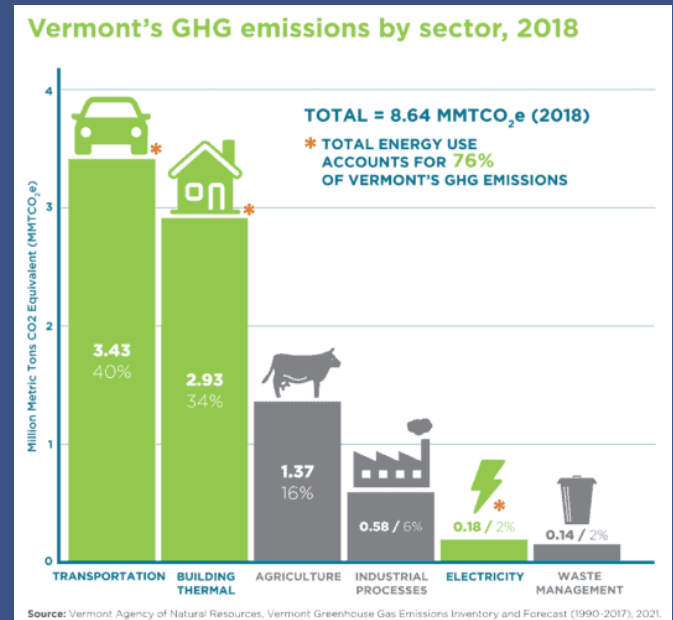
Vermont's current dependence on fossil fuels leads to high and unpredictable energy costs for Vermont households and businesses. Some are more burdened by energy costs than others. For example, renters and low-income Vermonters pay a greater percentage of their income for energy and rural households tend to spend more on transportation.

Transitioning off fossil fuels presents significant opportunities for Vermonters including lower energy costs, greater investment in the regional economy and more high-paying jobs in the weatherization, electricity and clean energy sectors.

With federal, state and utility incentives, the up-front costs of electric or renewable energy options can often be lower than costs for new fossil fuel equipment and less expensive to operate. For example, electric vehicles can save rural Vermonters more than \$1,500 per year on average to operate, require less maintenance and cost less due to incentives.

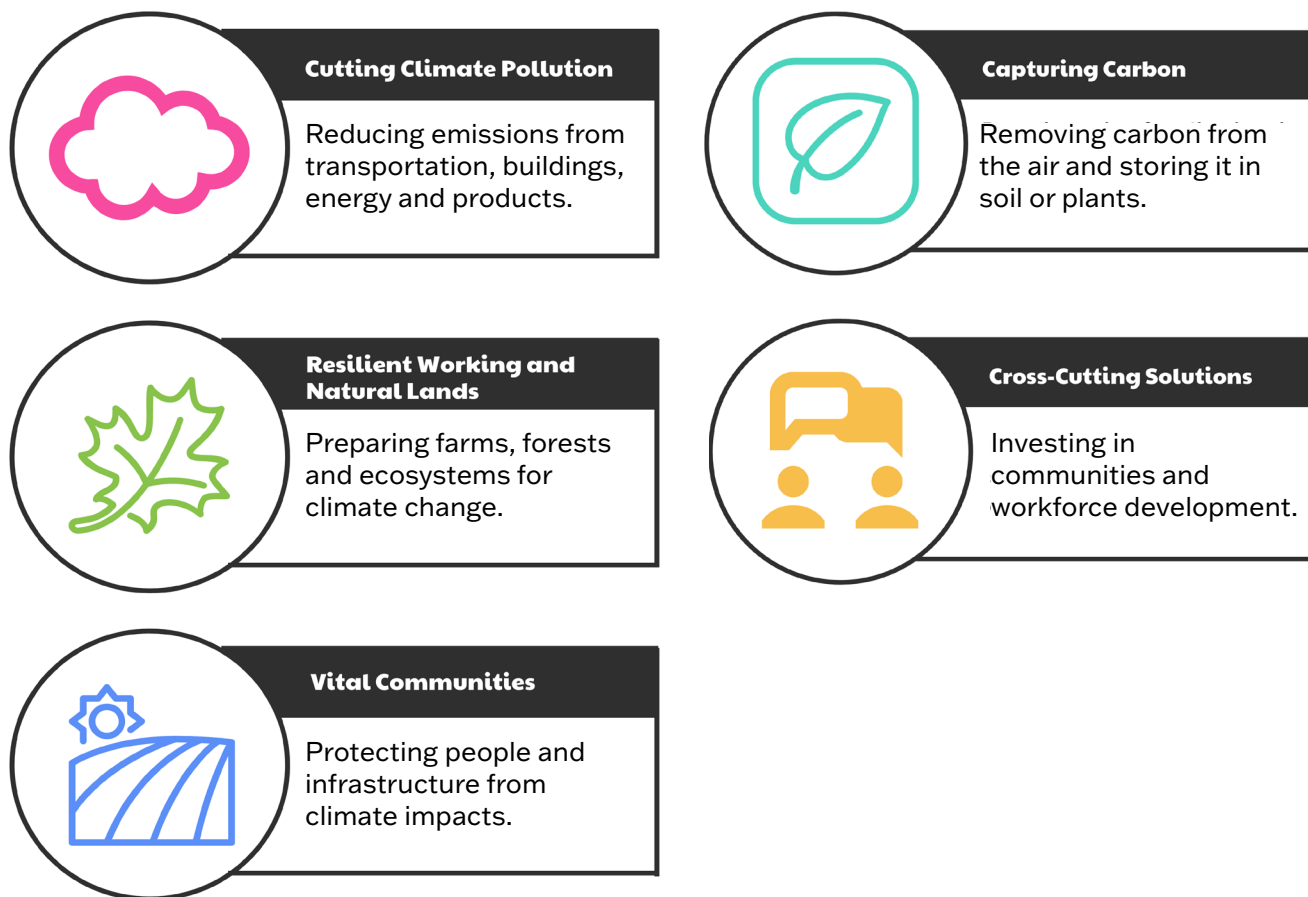
Delivering clean energy is also an opportunity for local energy providers, helping home and business owners weatherize buildings and install heat pumps or other alternatives. In 2020, clean energy jobs made up 6 percent of total employment in Vermont, with the median wage being higher than the statewide median. Growing this sector can be a win for the local economy, workers, and Vermont households.

In Vermont, emissions come from the following sources and are addressed in the Climate Action Plan:



Vermont Climate Action Plan Pathways and Strategies

The Vermont Climate Action Plan is organized into five impact areas:



The criteria used to evaluate strategies in the Vermont Climate Action Plan included the ability to reduce climate pollution and prepare for climate impacts, cost effectiveness, and how actions will have the most benefit and harm reduction for frontline communities.

A summary of each impact area is outlined in the Pathways, Strategies and Actions table. For more information including the cost effectiveness, co-benefits and feasibility of the actions visit <https://climatechange.vermont.gov>.