

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

Online & 2 Lincoln St.  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
6:30 PM

E-mail: [cyuen@essexjunction.org](mailto:cyuen@essexjunction.org)

[www.essexjunction.org](http://www.essexjunction.org)

Phone: 802-878-6944, ext. 1607

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. March 31<sup>th</sup>, 2026
5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
  - a. Discussion of 2027 Comprehensive Plan update process \* [6:35 PM]
  - b. Discussion and consideration of First Congregational Church of Essex Junction Future Land Use Map and future zoning amendments\* [7:15 PM]
  - c. Discussion and consideration of Land Development Code amendments, including Form-Based Code Proposal\* [7:25 PM]
6. **MEMBERS UPDATES** [8:25 PM]
7. **STAFF UPDATES** [8:27 PM]
8. **READING FILE**
  - a. February 2026 telephone survey results on Vermonters' Views on Housing Availability and Affordability
9. **ADJOURN**

\*attachments included in the packet

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

*This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings of the Planning Commission, like all programs and activities of the City of Essex Junction, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the City Manager's office at 802-878-6944 TTY: 7-1-1 or (800) 253-0191.*

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
MARCH 31, 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; Michael Giguere, City Planner; Chelsea Mandigo, Water Quality Superintendent

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Marshall Distel, Robert Frederick, Sarah Lukins, Katherine Magee, Nick Meyer, Amanda Svensson

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Massey called the meeting to order at 6:31 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 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

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

Corrections:

-The first sentence in Item 5B should be included as the last sentence of Item A.

-In the third paragraph of Item 5A, the following sentence shall be edited to read: “Ms. Juodisius suggested mortgage lenders or realtors, as well as a diversity of housing types.”

-In Item 5b, it should be noted that Mr. McCormick would like to participate in the energy focus group, rather than facilitate it.

**5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a. Discussion and of Phased Implementation of TOD Master Plan Zoning Changes related to Wastewater Capacity Constraints**

Ms. Mandigo said that she would like to discuss the impact of allowing ten-story buildings in certain zones of Essex Junction of the wastewater infrastructure. She said that the West Street pump station is older and due for a retrofit and is also the pump station that has the highest flow in Essex Junction. It is currently at its max capacity, and funding, shared with the Town of Essex, has been approved for retrofitting. This is anticipated to occur in June of 2027. Replacing a portion of the force main along West Street will also be necessary to accommodate a higher capacity. Thus, Mr. Yuen is recommending a phased approach to implementing TOD Master Plan zoning changes, prioritizing updates to the VC and TOD districts in the

## ESSEX JUNCTION PLANNING COMMISSION

3/31/26

PAGE 2

near term, while deferring changes to the HA and MF-MU1 districts until wastewater infrastructure constraints are resolved.

Answering a question from Mr. McCormick, Ms. Mandigo said that approximately 70% of flow on the West Street pump station is from the Town of Essex. Once the pump stations are upgraded a flow meter will be installed which will better be able to more accurately track this. Mr. McCormick said that he believes that the Town of Essex should also have restrictions on development as well. Ms. Mandigo said that minor development requests, such as accessory dwelling units, will not have a substantial impact on the station. She said that the allocation issue has gotten worse during the last six months. Mr. McCormick said that this project is not included in the Capital Program Review Committee's project list, Ms. Mandigo said that this is since it is an enterprise fund. Once the project is complete it will be able to support the type of density that the PC would like to see put in place. Mr. Yuen said that once the sewer projects are underway, the zoning changes can be fully implemented. All agreed to move forward with Mr. Yuen's suggestion of a phased approach to implementing the TOD Master Plan zoning changes.

### **b. Introduction of Draft Form-Based Code Proposal**

Mr. Yuen said that staff has been testing these regulations against upcoming recent and developments in Essex Junction and has identified six main issues. He suggested that PC members bring up specific technical issues to him directly and said that he would like to focus on policy decisions today. Ms. Lukins and Ms. McGee, both of Framework presented the draft of the form-based code. Ms. McGee reviewed the sections of the code that Framework is proposing updates to, and the reasons that such updates are being suggested. Mr. Massey said that focusing the conversation on the six staff identified topics that need clarification would be the most helpful. He requested public input, of which there was none.

The first topic discussed was the street room ratio. Mr. Yuen said that this can help to ensure that corridors feel human-scale. He raised two main questions, if the current proposed 1:1 ratio is appropriate and if the rail right-of-way (ROW) should be counted for the purpose of street room ratio. He said that it could be difficult to determine where the street ROW ended and the rail ROW began as the City has an easement on rail property for the road in some instances. Ms. Clemens initially suggested that the rail ROW should not be included due to different regulations of these areas. The Commission discussed the merits of both options and noted that regardless of the street room ratio, building height limits would remain. Ms. Juodisius suggested that requiring the inclusion of rail ROW as a part of the street room width may inadvertently lead to an increased minimum allowable height at the street frontage. The Commission subsequently agreed that for purposes of determining the street-room, applicants should be given the option to include or exclude the Rail ROW as a part of the street room width if the Rail ROW is adjacent to a road .

The Commission discussed setback requirements and building height ratios in the Village Center district. Ms. McGee clarified that while zero setbacks are only allowed for active commercial uses, buildings without commercial frontage would require minimum setbacks. The group debated whether to maintain the current 1-to-1 street room ratio or increase it, with some expressing concerns about the constraints this might impose on development. Ms. Clemens raised questions about whether to negotiate specific setback distances or codify them in the regulations, referencing the 4 Pearl Street project as an example. The Commission discussed the balance needed between meeting housing targets and preserving the aesthetic character of the Village Center Zoning district.

## ESSEX JUNCTION PLANNING COMMISSION

3/31/26

PAGE 3

The PC discussed specific situations where the 1:1 ratio could require an overly tall building, and the potential of a more situational approach. Aesthetic concerns, the “squished” feeling that some may experience when driving past taller buildings close to the road, open space requirements in front of the building, and the implementation of step-backs were also discussed. Mr. Yuen said that staff has reviewed several recent or proposed developments to compare the street room to determine if a 1:1 ration is appropriate. Staff has created illustrations of what the maximum limit of height would look like in specific areas. Ms. McGee presented massing options showing how developers could implement varied setbacks while meeting the street room ratio and maximum height requirements. All other frontages will have some type of setback.

Mr. Yuen asked if corner lots should be subject to the street room ratio on both sides. He said that applying the street room standards to both sides may be overly limiting where side streets are particularly narrow, but only applying only to one side could cause an unbalanced look. Ms. Magee said that a mix of setbacks and step backs could be integrated. She said that the street room standard as is will result in the desired type of urban environment desired. She also suggested a baseline 60-foot right-of-way assumption, which could be moved up or down if necessary. Mr. Massey said that there are people in the community who are very concerned about the impact that large developments will have on the community. Ms. Clemens spoke of the need for street trees. The Commission subsequently agreed to maintain a 1-to-1 street room ratio with a 50-foot minimum setback assumption for narrow streets, combined with a required minimum setback along the side facing the narrow street.

Regarding the residential adjacency section, Mr. Yuen asked if the increased setback should be based on the difference between proposed building height and the maximum allowable building height in the adjacent residential zone; rather than the difference between the maximum allowable building height in the parcel being developed and maximum allowable building height in the adjacent residential zone. The Commission agreed that the former makes more sense. Ms. Magee said that the residential adjacency is fairly typical, but sad that additional setback requirements have been added due to concerns about a ten-story building being placed next to a single-family home.

The Commission discussed the proposed residential adjacency section should supersede existing buffering standards in the Land Development Code. Mr. Yuen said the existing buffering standards only apply to multi-family housing adjacent to single family homes. They do not apply if the adjacent property has been converted to a duplex or higher. He believes that the proposed residential adjacency section would standardize requirements. The Commission decided that the residential adjacency section should supersede existing buffering standards in the Land Development Code.

Regarding the list of allowable primary materials (75% of the primary façade), Mr. Yuen compared these standards to recently constructed projects. The group discussed material requirements for building facades in the TOD and VC district, specifically focusing on high-quality fiber cement siding. Diane expressed concerns about cement siding being overused based on community feedback, but Katherine clarified that the current 75% minimum requirement and articulation provisions should help prevent monotonous facades. The group decided to maintain the existing list of materials rather than restrict options, reasoning that removing any materials would limit developer choices and diversity.

## ESSEX JUNCTION PLANNING COMMISSION

3/31/26

PAGE 4

The meeting then focused on evaluating a new landscape performance scoring system against an existing approved master plan at Chittenden Crossing. Mr. Giguere presented findings showing the approved plan scored below the proposed minimum threshold of 30, leading to discussions about whether this threshold should be adjusted. The current LDC requirements are for 2-3% of the project cost to be spent on landscaping. He said that this is a robust landscaping plan but did not get to half the performance score that would be required with the proposed form-based code standards. Ms. Magee said that she will run a few other tests with built site plans to ensure that these are plausible. She provided examples from Seattle that meet the lowest thresholds. Mr. Yuen said that the form-based proposal is more objective and that he believes that it will get better results. Mr. Meyer encouraged the City to include green infrastructure and a vibrant streetscape in the green space in downtown Essex Junction. He believes that the current landscaping requirement of “2-3% of construction costs” has been a failure and questioned the validity of the financial figures used in previous applications. Mr. Yuen suggested doing a little more testing and calibration to determine whether this method can be successful. Ms. Juodisius noted that pedestrian amenities, such as painted benches or public art, were elements that counted towards the existing landscape requirements but not the new proposed scoring system but that these features would now be regulated under the frontage standards requirement. All agreed to further investigate, but the PC supported the proposed form-based requirements.

Regarding screening of at-grade parking structures, Mr. Yuen said that some recent examples in Winooski may not be permissible under the proposed code as written. He suggested that the proposed strict requirements are reasonable in the VC district but suggested that the PC to consider if this is too strict in the TOD district. Ms. Magee said that she generally does not recommend having parking on a frontage unless space is limited, however some of the negative impacts could be mitigated with screening. Ms. Juodisius that there can be situations where it can be very difficult to get sufficient parking in small corner lots in the Village Center if a liner building is required. Ms. Clemens said that underground parking is not always possible due to the high-water level. She said that it is important to remember that many people will always have a motor vehicle. Mr. McCormick discussed options to have indoor parking in a more aesthetic way and said that he is concerned about not having enough parking in the Village Center. Mr. Massey said that he does not believe that a developer would build without sufficient parking. The Commission subsequently asked for an additional frontage type in the TOD district to be added that incorporates a mix of screened parking and linear building elements. It asked for fir tge ratui if the parking to active frontage to roughly reflect that of Winooski's form-based code. For the Village Center, while the preference is to maintain current requirements, The Commission asked Framework to explore whether additional modifications are necessary to ensure the rule are workable for small lots.

Framework will provide guidance on the impact of form-based code to small and medium sized developments. Mr. Massey said that he does not want to see form-based code discourage small developments. Mr. Yuen will work with Framework to ensure that this is not the case. Ms. Magee said that this would not apply to any developments that do not require site plan review. An exemption could be created for façade materials for mid-range developments.

In public comment, Ms. Svenson asked if traffic diversion and pedestrian safety would be a part of form-based code. Mr. Yuen detailed other engineering initiatives and efforts to create and maintain a bike/walk

## **ESSEX JUNCTION PLANNING COMMISSION**

**3/31/26**

**PAGE 5**

network that are currently occurring in Essex Junction. Ms. Svenson asked if screening would prevent on-street parking, Mr. Massey said that it would not.

### **c. Discussion and consideration of First Congregational Church of Essex Junction Zoning Amendment**

**SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by ELENA JUODISIUS, to table discussion and consideration of the First Congregational Church (5c) item to the May meeting. Motion passed 5-0.**

Ms. Juodisius said that she believes that the PC is generally in favor of this idea, however additional time is needed to discuss it.

### **6. MEMBERS UPDATES**

Ms. Clemens discussed an upcoming regional housing event on April 29, 2026 and encouraged PC members to sign up to attend.

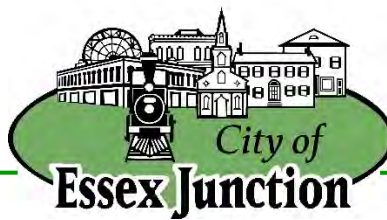
### **7. STAFF UPDATES**

Mr. Yuen said that two Comprehensive Plan focus groups have been scheduled and said that he would like to see a PC member at each. The housing focus group is on April 21 at 6 PM, and Ms. Paschall will attend. The climate and energy focus group will be held on May 5<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM, and Mr. McCormick will attend. A regional infill housing workshop will be held on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

### **8. ADJOURNMENT**

**ELENA JUODISIUS made a motion, seconded by SCOTT MCCORMICK, to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned 10:16 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Darby Mayville



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Planning Commission

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

**Meeting Date:** May 4, 2026

**Subject:** 2027 Comprehensive Plan Update – Focus Group Progress

---

**Issue:** Update on the status of community focus groups conducted as part of the 2027 Comprehensive Plan update process.

### **Discussion:**

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), which is managing the Comprehensive Plan update, has completed the Housing focus group. The Energy & Climate Resilience focus group will have taken place prior to Thursday's meeting.

CCRPC Senior Planner Darren Schibler and Planner Maya Balassa will present live at Thursday's meeting with a summary of feedback from the Housing focus group as well as first impressions from the Energy & Climate Resilience focus group. A written summary of the Housing focus group feedback is still being finalized by CCRPC staff.

Raw focus group results are included in the packet for Commissioners who wish to review them in advance. A May progress report is also attached.

### **Cost:**

N/A

### **Recommendation:**

This memo is for information only.

### **Attachments:**

- May Progress Report
- Housing Focus Group Raw Results

**TO:** Chris Yuen, Essex Junction Community Development Director  
**FROM:** Darren Schibler, CCRPC Senior Planner; Maya Balassa, CCRPC Planner  
**DATE:** May 1, 2026  
**RE:** Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan Progress Report #4

CCRPC completed the following tasks in April 2026:

- Regular check-in meetings continued between CCRPC and the City.
- CCRPC staff and Scott McCormick distributed flyers to businesses on Pearl Street and conducted business owner interviews or left surveys for them to complete.
- CCRPC staff finalized logistics and workshop materials for the Housing focus group.
- CCRPC staff coordinated with DHCD and City Management on the payment process for focus group participant stipends.
- The project team (including PC member Kirstie Paschall as a facilitator) hosted the Housing focus group on 4/21/2026 which 17 members of the public attended, including a range of renters, homeowners, landlords and property owners, developers, real estate agents, municipal elected and appointed officials, and business owners.
- CCRPC advised Community Development staff on the 60 Old Colchester Road development application and its consistency with the 2019 Comprehensive Plan. This led to discussion of potential approaches to future land use areas and purpose statements to be included in the 2027 Plan.

#### **Next Steps:**

- CCRPC staff will continue to conduct business owner interviews in and around Five Corners. This may include coordination with the Essex High School Business Club.
- The project team will finalize logistics and workshop materials for the remaining focus groups, which will be held on:
  - Energy & Climate Resilience: May 6, 6-8pm
  - Business & Economic Mobility: late May / early June depending on availability of business owners
- CCRPC will begin summarizing the results of engagement to present to the Planning Commission at their June or July meeting.
- CCRPC staff will continue data and mapping updates to the plan in the background.

#### **CONTACT:**

Darren Schibler  
Senior Planner & Project Manager  
[dschibler@ccrpcvt.org](mailto:dschibler@ccrpcvt.org)  
(802) 540-2508

Maya Balassa  
Regional Planner  
[mbalassa@ccrpcvt.org](mailto:mbalassa@ccrpcvt.org)  
(802) 846-4490 ext. 122

**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>	112	\$7,840	\$167.39	\$8,007
<b>Remaining</b>	453	\$31,710	\$282.61	\$31,993
<b>% Remaining</b>	80%	80%	63%	80%

<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	\$167.39	\$3,072.39

LOTS OF PRIME LOCATIONS THAT ARE CURRENTLY PARKING LOTS

S	PARTNER w/ DEVELOPERS / OWNERS TO REBUILD TO CODE TO MEET NEEDS
M	DEMOLISH, REBUILD, OPEN
A	<del>PREPARE</del> HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE CAN ASSIST DEVELOPERS TO SEE PROJECT THROUGH.
R	INCREASE HOUSING, ELIMINATE 'DEAD' WALKING SPACES. - INTRODUCE <del>SPACE</del> LOCATIONS FOR 3RD SPACES?
T	

**Action 1:**

Place Sticky Note Here	S	
	M	
	A	
	R	
	T	

**Action 2:**

Place Sticky Note Here	S	
	M	
	A	
	R	
	T	

**Action 3:**

--	--	--

Money → More opportunities to subdivide

Create a revolving loan fund or other financial incentives

S	5 projects a year
M	5 projects a year
A	make permit process easier waiver permit fees ←
R	additional business in unutilized land
T	for annual

Provide resources for developers w/ types, business models, examples (city and partner to develop w/ landlord - non-profit funds)

S	resource toolkit
M	
A	
R	
T	

Action 2:

Place Sticky Note Here	S	
	M	
	A	
	R	
	T	

Action 3:

Buildings  
with open  
space, third  
spaces, common  
Areas

S	Require or incentivize including indoor, outdoor, + healthy activity amenities
M	The amenities are built / included in new buildings
A	Scale dependent, if administered properly. Waved in favor of fee to admin.
R	- Improve resident quality of life. Reduce isolation - Provide third space / community space.
T	Begin 1-3yrs.

**Action 1:**

Place Sticky Note Here	S	
	M	
	A	
	R	
	T	

**Action 2:**

Place Sticky Note Here	S	
	M	
	A	
	R	
	T	

**Action 3:**

Parks  
Trees  
Walking → →  
Biking  
 Connectivity

S	City + Developments + Land Owners + Committees (local motion)
M	Track/Map Infrastructure (Network gaps) Park Attendance + Community Events
A	Bike/walk Infrastructure outside new development Green Infrastructure Added w/ development.
R	It makes people want to live here & encourage people to keep living here. Quality of Life.
T	5 years.

Action 1:

Create green spaces in new developments Place Sticky Note Here	S	City - Regulations on Green Infrastructure Developers
	M	A place where you can sit + eat + talk w/ someone (preferably green space)
	A	Yes
	R	See measurable...
	T	3-5 years

Action 2:

Place Sticky Note Here	S	
	M	
	A	
	R	
	T	

Action 3:

<p><del>add</del> add housing on FCCEJ property (infill)</p>	S	
	M	
	A	
	R	
	T	within 2 year.

Action 1: rezone & name policy changer for FCCEJ to enable housing development.

<p>[Redacted]</p>	S	
	M	
	A	
	R	
	T	

Action 2: Create Green Space near S corner where you can eat and talk.

<p><del>Add</del> Partner with The CVE to create housing <del>at</del> at the expo site</p>	S	
	M	
	A	
	R	housing being added where there is available space.
	T	

Action 3: City & CVE conduct a feasibility study for a mixed use development on site pursue

Place Sticky Note Here	S	
	M	
	A	
	R	
	T	

**Action 1:**

Place Sticky Note Here	S	
	M	
	A	
	R	
	T	

**Action 2:**

Place Sticky Note Here	S	City/advocacy group delivers 3-4 landlord and tenant resource webinars per year that cover low-no cost energy efficient updates/healthy home updates. Attendance by X% of landlords, tenants.
	M	Goal is met when deliveries happen and are attended by
	A	
	R	Help educate tenants and landlords on energy efficiency opportunities to lower utility costs and improve indoor air quality (make landlords aware of current code reqs and possible rebates)
	T	

**Action 3:**

How do we create incentives for landlords to make or maintain improvements?

<p>Healthy Homes = Healthier People Place Sticky Note Here</p>	S	All rentals have adequate heat + cooling
	M	Can the city inspect units?
	A	maybe the goal could be tiered + the oldest units could be dealt with first
	R	extreme hot + cold are bad for health, can create mold, + are expensive + waste resources
	T	By 2030,

**Action 1:**

<p>More units meet Universal design standards Place Sticky Note Here</p>	S	Planning commission will fast-track approval of new builds + reno designs that adopt UD principles
	M	track approved designs
	A	Realistically, why isn't all housing design required to be more accessible? We all need it at some point.
	R	It creates a bigger pool of housing that works for more of us.
	T	By 2035, 75% of approved housing + reno designs align with UD principles.

**Action 2:**

<p>append the info available about rental housing in EJ in other languages Place Sticky Note Here in order to attract people who speak languages other than English.</p>	S	EJ provides small grants to landlords to have their listings/leases/etc. translated
	M	usage of the contract grants could be tracked. # of tenants could be self-reported
	A	contract w/ VT language justice project
	R	
	T	

**Action 3:**

- what did people agree on?

- point of tension?

- how to get these things through

- what can the city do

- the land is private

- money is finite

- how the ~~interest~~ relationship w/ developers should be

o questions

- do developers want citizens advising them?

- ~~would~~ how do get private landowners to develop what we want to see?

# Strengths

# Opportunities

E) has regional drains  
 - Tree farm  
 - CVE  
 - Train station  
 - Global Foundries

Great Infrastructure  
 (everything is within sewer service area)  
 Potential for more housing

Examples of infill housing

large field between Cascade & South Street  
 DEVELOP FOREGROUNDS

Dense development of areas near 5 corners. Including increased lot coverage and increase building heights

Funding supports for homeowners to help w/ maintenance and upkeep of housing/businesses

leveraging underutilized public property (between hwy 101 & West St)

balancing building a community that is both attractive and affordable

opportunity for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) helps people retire + those looking for cheaper rent

Allow development close to 5 corners to increase apt development.

Keep Wilfrido Community expand restaurant/shops/small apt w/ some quality

# Results

Can the city acquire properties and facilitate re-development?  
 (with the public interest elevated)

don't want to be like Winoski - a the lack of recreation & green space associated with some of the development there.

Better design  
 Preserving green space @ 5 corners

NEW WEST ST TRIPLEX  
 - OVER PRICED  
 - UGLY

Determine type of housing that is needed. Still want diversity of housing by type.

Design Regulations  
 Make houses look nice

in neighborhood

MAXIMIZE GREEN SPACE AS POSSIBLE

Housing trust fund to support building rehabilitation, - homeowner downpayment assistance for first time buyers, young families, etc.

concept of city purchasing properties then manage the "development" of the property. Consult with "developers" about hindrances of moving forward.  
 ② Parking Garage near 5 corners

Commercial activity and engaging public spaces with new housing development

re-use development on large industrial lots near five corners/ railroad st.

commercial first floor  
 residential above in 5 corners

table

Diversity of types  
 - size  
 - tenants (age)  
 - students  
 - types of housing & other buildings than same developments

ensuring commercial spaces can be filled & successful

Expand density + height of residential buildings to First Congregational Church property

Starter single family home opportunities (including tiny houses)

tax incentives to fill ground floor commercial spaces associated with new development?

# USING

# OPPORTUNITIES

greenspace access + ownership opportunities (public spaces nearby, shared collective green-spaces, etc., small plots)

STILL

TRANSFORMING INTO INNOVATION CENTER



TABLETOP EASEL PAD

super sticky  
2x STICKING POWER\*

TABLEAU À FEUILLES MOBILES POUR TABLE

super collant  
2x L'ADHÉRENCE\*



# Strengths

# Opportunities

Attract and support Grocery store,

5 Corners is undisputedly central

Train Station, Bus System walkable

sidewalks well maintained  
Cross walks signals

Increase/Foster regulations to meet goals

More residents in 5 corners (more activation in the center)

Space for accessory dwellings

PUBLIC SPACES THAT SERVE MANY GROUPS/AGES ARE PRESENT IN CITY

Good existing diversity of housing stock

DRIVEN TO CONNECT OUR PEOPLE W/ NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITIES +

Group SENIOR activities outside the home

Ownership of Apartments + Co-op

Housing for Seniors and Families

Recreation - Library Pub Services

Recreation Program + Library

Bus line used why? ie: route being cancelled

# Inspirations

# Results

Mixed owner-occupied and apartment buildings

ADDITIONAL RETAIL ~~AND~~ SHOPPING W/ MIXED USE ALONG PEARL ST

Preserve Open Space

Overall attractive Housing - Amenities Space Services -

WALKABLE/ACCESSIBLE NETWORK EXPANDING OUTWARD FROM 5 CORNERS

Accessibility Energy Saving

More comfortable walking development on Pearl Street

Cap on Bldg height 10 stories = 5 Building image

No more empty lots at 5 corners

Save existing Housing

LOCAL INCENTIVE (w/ COMMITMENTS) TO CONVERT EXISTING STRUCTURES TO ADU

Fast Track Development Process

Aging Population

# AGE FEEL

shared collective green-spaces, etc, small plots

SETS 1

# QUALITY AFFORDABLE RENTALS

Green spaces near affordable rentals

landlord resources for alternatives to credit + rental for newcomers

Public transit

Energy efficient rentals

Room in the market for people to be able to move around (downstairs, upstairs, etc)

Quality Section across housing types, ages, etc

Transit + capturing way passes

Housing Resources for both landlords & renters

More affordable housing

Specific Bus Pull-offs

## Aspirations

## Results

More universal design to meet a broader range of needs

Healthier People = Healthier Homes

QA Rentals support a growing workforce

density of multi-unit buildings can attract restaurants, transit, retail, etc.

landlord + Tenant Kosaras

Identify the need by housing type

Softer Alternative to urban housing (Burlington)

Public Good

Senior housing

Identify

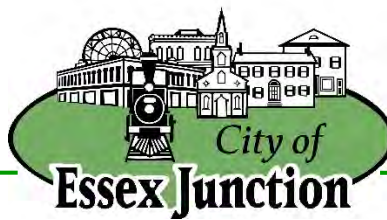
Adding ADUs

## Strengths

## Opportunities

shared collective green spaces, etc. multiply





## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Planning Commission

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

**Meeting Date:** May 4, 2026

**Subject:** Potential Rezoning of FCCEJ Properties to Village Center (VC)

---

**Issue:** Discussion of the desired future land use designation for one or both First Congregational Church of Essex Junction (FCCEJ) parcels as part of the upcoming Comprehensive Plan update, with the goal of informing a subsequent rezoning from Residential-Office (R-O) to Village Center (VC).

### **Discussion:**

The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction (FCCEJ) has shared a vision to partner with a developer to introduce housing on its properties at 1 Church Street / 3 Church Street and 37 Main Street. The goal of this effort is to create a source of sustaining income for the organization while continuing to support and expand its community-serving mission. Based on initial conversations, staff understands that a redevelopment concept would likely include a mix of market-rate and affordable housing.

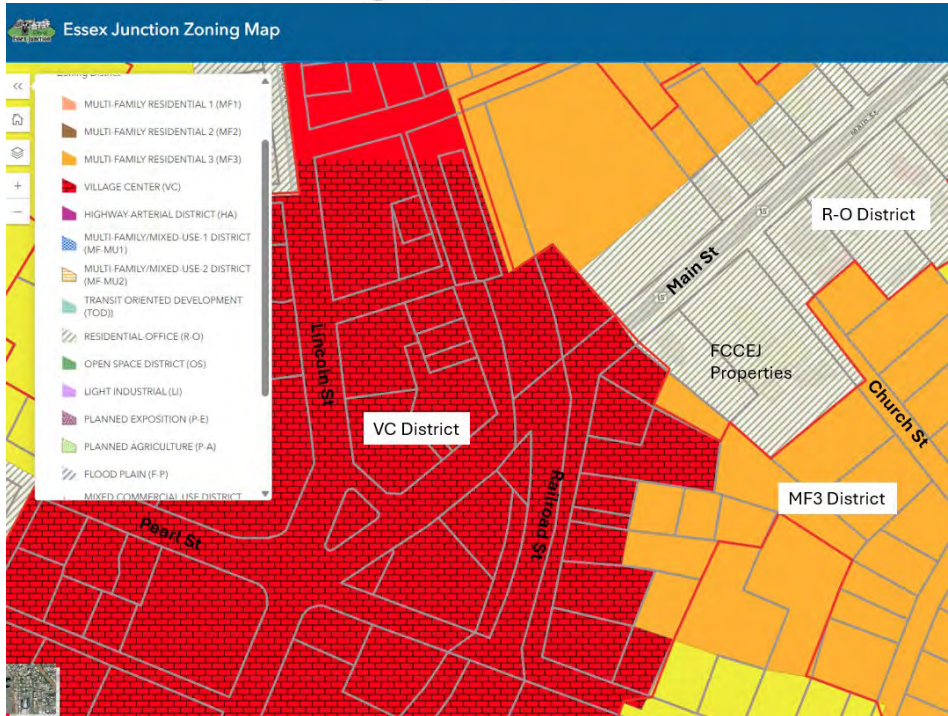
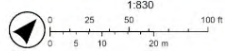
Staff has been in communication with FCCEJ leadership regarding the regulatory framework affecting these properties. The parcels are currently located in the Residential-Office (R-O) district but are immediately adjacent to the Village Center (VC) district.

As outlined in the attached March 25, 2026 letter to FCCEJ, the R-O district imposes significant limitations on residential density, lot coverage, and overall redevelopment potential. By contrast, the VC district is intended to support compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development and would allow substantially greater flexibility for housing development, while still subjecting the properties to Historic Preservation Overlay review.



3/13/2026, 3:10:42 PM

Parcels - Active



An important consideration is the relationship between zoning and the City's Comprehensive Plan. The currently effective Future Land Use Map is largely a direct reflection of the existing zoning map, and Vermont's enabling statutes (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117) require that zoning bylaws be "in conformance with" the municipal plan. After consultation with Regional Planning Commission staff, the standard process calls

for a Future Land Use Map amendment before advancing a corresponding zoning map change. As a result, staff does not intend to include this rezoning in the current 2026 Land Development Code update; it would instead be considered in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan update, with adoption anticipated in 2027.

The 2019 Comprehensive Plan describes the Village Center as a compact, mixed-use core intended to accommodate growth, enhance walkability, and support economic and community vitality. Given the FCCEJ properties' location and proximity to the existing VC boundary, staff believes there is a strong basis for designating these parcels as Village Center (or similar) in the updated Future Land Use Map.

While this sequenced approach may extend the overall timeline, development processes of this nature are inherently lengthy, and this deferral is unlikely to materially affect FCCEJ's ultimate redevelopment timeline. In the meantime, clear direction from the Commission on the intended future land use designation for these parcels would assist FCCEJ in planning development partnerships and assessing project feasibility.

**Cost:**

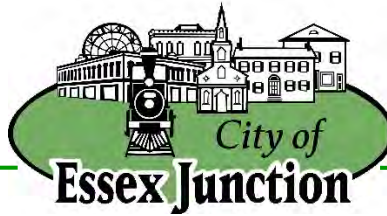
N/A

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission discuss the desired development outcomes for these parcels and provide direction on the intended future land use designation so that FCCEJ can factor this into its planning.

**Attachments:**

- March 25, 2026 Letter to FCCEJ Leadership
- March 26, 2026 letter from FCCEJ



March 25, 2026

First Congregational Church of Essex Junction  
1 Church Street  
Essex Junction, VT 05452

Dear FCCEJ Leadership,

Thank you for sharing your vision for the future of the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction (FCCEJ) properties. The City of Essex Junction has reviewed the current regulatory landscape affecting your sites and wishes to give you a clear picture of your options, the constraints you will face, and a potential path forward through rezoning. This letter is intended to be informative rather than a formal regulatory determination, and we encourage you to follow up with our office to discuss next steps.

## 1. Your Properties and Their Historic Status

The City's review covers three properties on two lots associated with FCCEJ, all of which are listed on the Vermont State Register of Historic Places:



*Figure 1: Plan view of FCCEJ properties. Approximate property boundaries have been highlighted in black for emphasis.*

- **1 Church Street: The Church Building.** Originally constructed in 1867 with wood framing and clapboard siding, the building was encased in brick in 1913–14 and is the architectural centerpiece of the complex. Today it serves as a house of worship and a civic hub hosting several Christian congregations, a food pantry, preschool programs, and more than 20 community groups.

- **3 Church Street: The Parsonage.** Built in 1890, this clapboard residential structure sits on the same parcel as the church and includes a detached barn-style garage (c. 1895). The State Register describes it as a well-preserved vernacular-style home on a stone foundation.
- **37 Main Street: The Queen Anne House.** A two-story Queen Anne style home built in 1870, located on a separate parcel but owned and operated by FCCEJ as a donation- and volunteer-based thrift shop. It is situated southwest of the church and accessible via the church parking lot.

The listing of all three buildings on the State Register is a significant fact with regulatory consequences, described below. It is also an asset: historic designation can open doors to state and federal preservation tax credits and grant funding that could help offset rehabilitation or new construction costs.

## 2. What the Historic Preservation Overlay District Means for You

Because all three buildings are on the State Register, any development application (whether for additions, alterations, new construction on the site, or demolition) will be subject to Section 621 of the City's Land Development Code (LDC), the Historic Preservation Overlay District (HRO). This applies regardless of which zoning district your properties are ultimately in. Here is what that means practically:

### **Development Review Board (DRB) review is required.**

Any application for construction, alteration, addition, or demolition must go through Historic Preservation Review at a public hearing before the DRB, conducted in conjunction with site plan approval. Routine maintenance that does not change appearance, materials, or color is exempt.

### **New additions are allowed but must meet specific design standards.**

The LDC incorporates the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which guide how additions must relate to original structures. The key requirements are:

- New additions must not destroy historic materials and must be visually distinguishable from original fabric. Distinctly contemporary additions are acceptable, but additions that pretend to look historic are not.
- New additions must be compatible with the massing, size, and scale of the historic structure.
- Additions must be designed so that, if removed in the future, the original structure would remain unimpaired.
- Historic character, including distinctive materials, finishes, and craftsmanship, must be preserved. Deteriorated features should be repaired rather than replaced.
- Construction or cleaning techniques that could damage historic materials (such as sandblasting) are prohibited.

In practice, this means housing additions or new residential buildings on your site are achievable, but they will need to be thoughtfully designed in dialogue with the DRB. Engaging a qualified architect with historic preservation experience early in the process is strongly recommended.

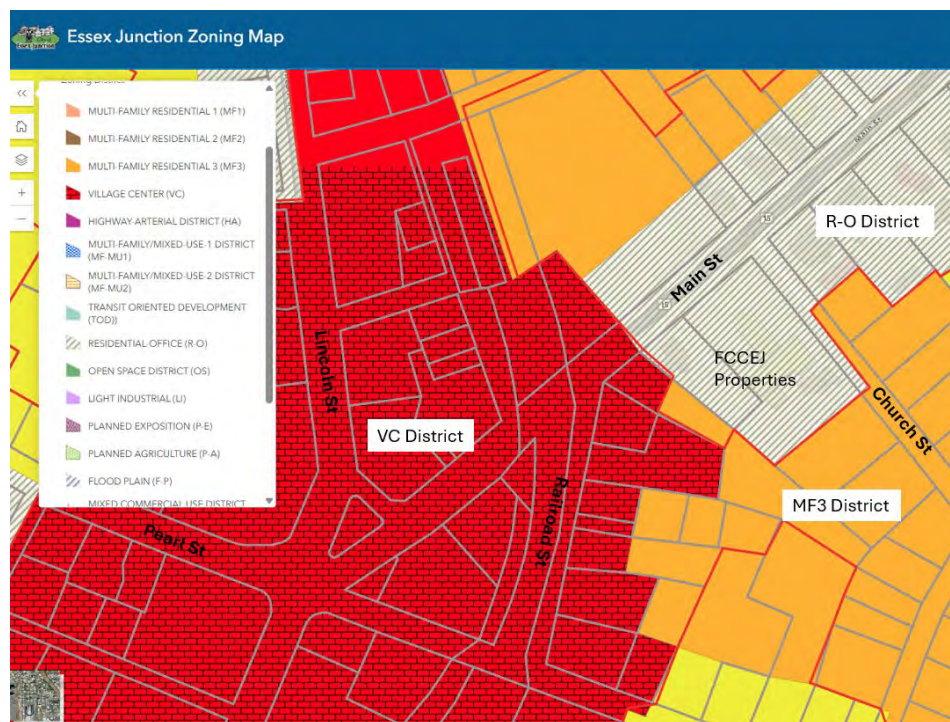
### Demolition of any of the three buildings is discouraged and highly regulated.

The LDC is explicit that demolition of listed historic structures is a last resort. To pursue demolition, you would need to submit:

- A structural engineer's report assessing the building's integrity and the feasibility of rehabilitation;
- An economic feasibility report from a qualified professional demonstrating that rehabilitation is not financially viable;
- A statement of compliance with demolition standards.

Demolition can only be approved on grounds of proven economic hardship, structural failure, or a redevelopment plan providing significant community benefit. Even then, the historic structure must be documented per the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) standards, and construction of the replacement project must be fully financed and permitted before demolition can begin. We raise this so you have the full picture should you be considering demotion and replacement of either of these buildings.

### 3. Current Zoning: Residential-Office (RO) and Its Limitations



Both parcels (1 Church Street / 3 Church Street and 37 Main Street) are currently zoned Residential-Office (RO). The RO district is primarily intended to allow small professional office conversions of existing residential structures while maintaining neighborhood character. It is not designed for dense residential redevelopment. The relevant constraints are:

- **Maximum 6 dwelling units per lot.** The RO district caps residential density at six units per lot across no more than two principal structures. This is a hard ceiling.

- **40% maximum lot coverage (which you already exceed).** Both properties currently exceed the RO district's 40% lot coverage limit. This includes all structures and impermeable surfaces such as parking areas.
- **35-foot / 3-story height limit.** Building height is capped at three stories or 35 feet.
- **Setback requirements.** Minimum 15-foot front yard, 8-foot side and rear yard setbacks apply, further constraining buildable area on already-tight urban lots.

The RO district, in short, was not designed for the kind of income-generating, dense residential development your organization is envisioning. Pursuing housing growth under RO would require working within strict dimensional limitations and would still result in a low unit count.

#### 4. The Case for Rezoning to Village Center (VC)

We believe there may be strong case to rezone one or both FCCEJ parcels from RO to the Village Center (VC) district. This would likely first require a change to the future land use map in the City's comprehensive plan, so that any subsequent zoning amendment is in alignment.

**Why the VC district fits your situation:** Your properties already sit directly on the border of the VC district. Rezoning them would be a modest, logical extension of an existing boundary rather than a fundamental change in the character of the area. The VC district is designed for the kind of compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, dense residential development that we believe your organization is seeking to achieve.

**What the VC district offers that RO does not:**

- **No maximum density.** The VC district does not cap dwelling units per lot. The only practical limits are the ability to meet setback, parking, lot coverage, and building height requirements as determined through Site Plan Review.
- **Flexible lot coverage.** Lot coverage in the VC is determined by the DRB through Site Plan Review rather than set as a fixed maximum. Given that you already exceed the RO limit, this is a significant advantage.
- **No setback requirements for commercial or mixed-use buildings.** This provides far greater flexibility in how new structures relate to the street and to existing buildings.
- **Greater height allowance.** Buildings may rise to four stories or 58 feet. Affordable housing developments may be permitted up to five stories or 72 feet, subject to compliance with the Vermont Fire and Building Safety Code.
- **No minimum parking requirement.** While the DRB may require parking as part of Site Plan Review, there is no mandated minimum, which is valuable on constrained urban sites.

Rezoning to VC would not eliminate your historic preservation obligations; those attach to the State Register listing and apply in any zoning district. But it would remove the dimensional and density constraints that hinder the potential for housing infill on your properties.

We note that the VC district's design standards are probably well-suited to a historic church campus. The VC requires buildings to contribute to a pedestrian-friendly streetscape, be at least two stories, and reflect the architectural character of the surrounding area, all of which align naturally with the scale and setting of the FCCEJ complex.

We also note that that the City is currently drafting some changes to the VC zoning district which would allow for further increases in allowable height, paired with stricter design standards. Given the spatial constraints of your property, we do not anticipate that the additional height allowance beyond the existing four-story height limit will impact the feasibility of redevelopment on your property.

## 5. What a Rezoning Would Require

Rezoning is a legislative act initiated by the City, not a permit issued to an individual applicant. The process involves:

- A proposal from City planning staff, initiated with input from property owners and the public;
- Review and recommendation by the Planning Commission;
- Consideration and adoption by the City Council through a warned public hearing process.

The City is open to exploring a rezoning application for your properties. Because the change involves a modest boundary adjustment that logically reflects existing land use patterns and the City's Comprehensive Plan goals for increased density near the Village Center, we believe it is a reasonable and defensible proposal. We would work with you throughout the process.

## 6. Summary of Your Main Options

In practical terms, you have three broad paths forward, which are not mutually exclusive:

### **Option A: Pursue housing development under current RO zoning.**

This is possible but significantly constrained. You would be limited to 6 total units per lot, would need meet lot coverage requirements, and would still be subject to full Historic Preservation Review. This path is unlikely to generate the income scale your organization is seeking.

### **Option B: Request rezoning to VC, then pursue development.**

Rezoning would remove density and dimensional barriers, align your properties with the City's Comprehensive Plan objectives, and position you to pursue a more significant residential development. Historic preservation obligations would remain, but you would have far more flexibility in what you can build.

### **Option C: Pursue adaptive reuse and preservation-based financing.**

Regardless of zoning, your State Register listing makes your properties potentially eligible for Vermont historic preservation tax credits and federal Historic Tax Credits. These are significant sources of financing for rehabilitation and new construction projects on historic sites. Before committing to a development approach, it may be worth consulting with a preservation consultant or developer experienced with tax credit projects.

## 7. Recommended Next Steps

We recommend the following as a starting point:

- **Continue to coordinate with city staff on the potential rezoning.** We are currently working through a comprehensive plan update and a set of related zoning amendments over the next year.
- **Consult a real estate professional to assess development feasibility.** Before investing in design or permitting work, it is worth engaging a real estate advisor familiar with Vermont's development market to evaluate what kind of project is financially viable on your site, what density makes sense, and how to structure any development partnership.
- **Consult a preservation architect.** Any development on your site will require DRB Historic Preservation Review. Engaging an architect with historic preservation credentials early will save time and strengthen your application.
- **Explore tax credit financing.** Vermont and federal historic tax credits can be substantial. A developer or consultant familiar with these programs can help you assess feasibility.

We recognize that FCCEJ plays an important role in the life of Essex Junction as a house of worship, community gathering space, food pantry, and home for dozens of community organizations. The City genuinely wants to help your organization find a sustainable path forward, and we believe rezoning combined with sensitive historic infill development could serve both your mission and the community's goals for housing growth near the City Center.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to our office with any questions. We look forward to working with you.

The relevant pages from the State Register of Historic Places for all three FCCEJ properties are attached. The City's Land Development Code, including Section 621 (Historic Preservation Overlay District), Section 609 (Residential-Office), and Section 604 (Village Center), is available at: <https://www.essexjunction.org/codes/development-code>.

Sincerely,



Christopher Yuen  
Community Development Director  
City of Essex Junction

March 26, 2026

Community Development Director  
City of Essex Junction  
2 Lincoln Street  
Essex Junction, VT 05452-3154

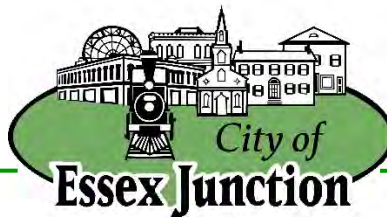
Dear Christopher Yuen,

Thank you for your letter of 25 March 2026. We, at the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction (FCCEJ), are very interested in pursuing Option B as you outlined in Section 6 of your letter. We feel that this would give us the greatest possibility to maintain a fiscally viable presence in Essex Junction while continuing to be an active participant in our vibrant community.

Toward that end, we would be happy to work with the City planning staff to further the rezoning of our FCCEJ properties from R-O District to VC District.

I look forward to working with you.

John R. Burnett Jr.  
FCCEJ



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Planning Commission  
**From:** Christopher Yuen, Community Development Director  
**Meeting Date:** May 7, 2026  
**Subject:** 2026 Land Development Code (LDC) Amendments – First Draft

---

**Issue:** Staff have prepared a set of amendments to the Land Development Code (LDC) for Planning Commission review.

### Discussion:

The amendments include major revisions to the form-based code standards for the Village Center (VC) and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) districts, targeted policy updates across several chapters, and technical corrections throughout the code.

The Planning Commission is asked to review the attached redline draft and provide feedback. The draft is being provided separately via email in Microsoft Word format with track changes enabled, so that commissioners can toggle the tracked changes on and off as needed.

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) specific policy questions on which Staff seek Planning Commission direction; (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 should review the Form-Based Code changes in Chapter 6 to confirm that all issues identified during previous meetings have been addressed to the Commission's satisfaction. 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 this landscaping

retrofit threshold may be warranted and welcome PC input. 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.

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

The draft adds a requirement that larger residential developments include a minimum share of multi-bedroom dwelling units in the VC and/or 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. Commissioners should review the specific threshold and unit share requirements as drafted in the redline.

#### 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. The Planning Commission should review the current scoring structure and provide any additional feedback or suggested additions.

#### 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 cross-referencing existing definitions in Chapter 2 with the new form-based standards to identify necessary additions and modifications. Additional definitions to support the form-based code are expected to be added in a subsequent draft.

## Design Professional Requirements in VC and TOD

Site plans and landscaping plans submitted for projects in the Village Center and TOD districts will follow the professional certification requirements that Chapter 5 currently establishes for site plans and landscaping plans generally. Staff may separately propose adjustments to Chapter 5 on this topic independent of the Connect the Junction work.

## 2. SPECIFIC POLICY QUESTIONS FOR PLANNING COMMISSION DIRECTION

The Planning Commission is asked to provide direction on the following policy questions, which are not yet fully resolved in the draft:

### 1. Parking Requirements for Commercial Space with No Identified Tenant (703.C.2)

The LDC does not currently specify how to calculate minimum parking requirements for a proposed building that includes vacant commercial space with no identified tenant. In recent projects such as 197 Pearl Street, ground-floor commercial space was evaluated using the "Retail Sales Establishment" standard by default, despite the actual use not being known at the time of application. Staff present two options:

Option A: Do not apply minimum parking requirements to vacant commercial space when the use type is unknown at the time of Site Plan application. Parking requirements would apply once the property owner submits a Zoning Permit to occupy the space. The property owner would be responsible for accounting for a range of potential commercial uses to ensure that future parking requirements can be met.

Option B: Specify that any Site Plan proposing commercial space with an unidentified tenant shall use "Retail Sales Establishment" as the default land use type for calculating parking requirements (2.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area). This reflects current practice and is included in the current draft, but may result in more spaces being required than are ultimately necessary.

Staff seek PC direction on which approach to adopt.

### 2. 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 proposed alongside this reorganization: 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 should review these proposed changes and confirm the approach is appropriate.

3. Window Wells as a Setback Exception (706.C.6)

The LDC does not currently define window wells or address their permissibility within required setbacks. Staff propose adding language that would allow 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 should confirm whether this approach and distance standard are acceptable, or suggest alternative parameters.

4. Landscaping Applicability for Interior Renovation Site Plan Amendments (719.E.3)

The LDC currently requires that "all new development, construction or reconstruction" comply with landscaping requirements. Recent DRB decisions, including those for 67 Lincoln Street, 34 Park Street, and Tractor Supply Company, have raised questions about how this standard applies to Site Plan Amendments for primarily interior projects. The Planning Commission should provide input on two questions:

First, should the applicability of landscaping requirements be adjusted for Site Plan Amendments that involve only interior changes?

Second, for primarily interior projects, the 2%–3% project cost landscaping requirement may yield only minimal site improvements, making it difficult to justify the expense of a hiring a landscape professional. Does the Planning Commission see a need to maintain that requirement for these types of projects, or should an exemption or threshold be established?

### 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.

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.

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.)

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.

## 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 are under consideration but are not yet included in the current draft, pending technical review by City staff:

- 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 format with track changes enabled)



# Vermonters' Views on Housing Availability and Affordability

---

Key findings from a statewide telephone survey of 404 registered voters

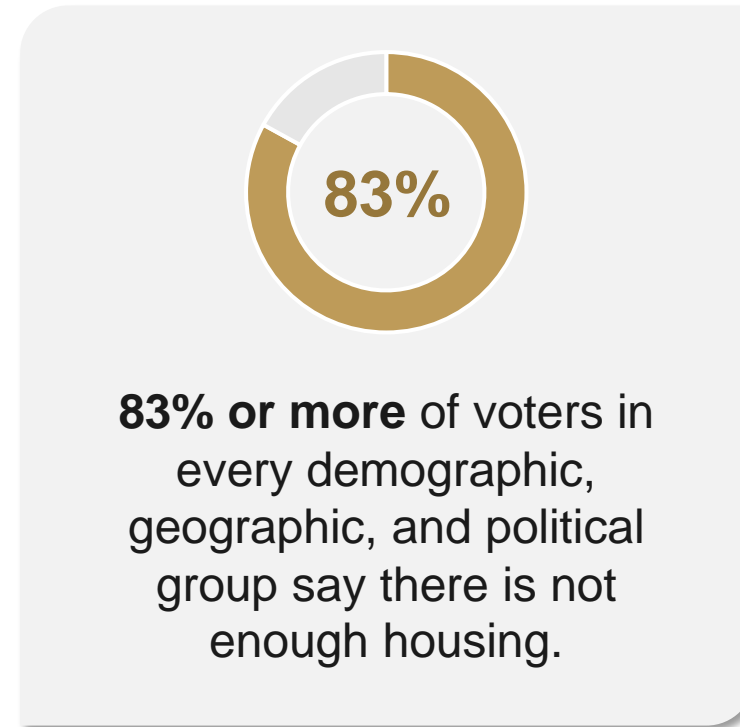
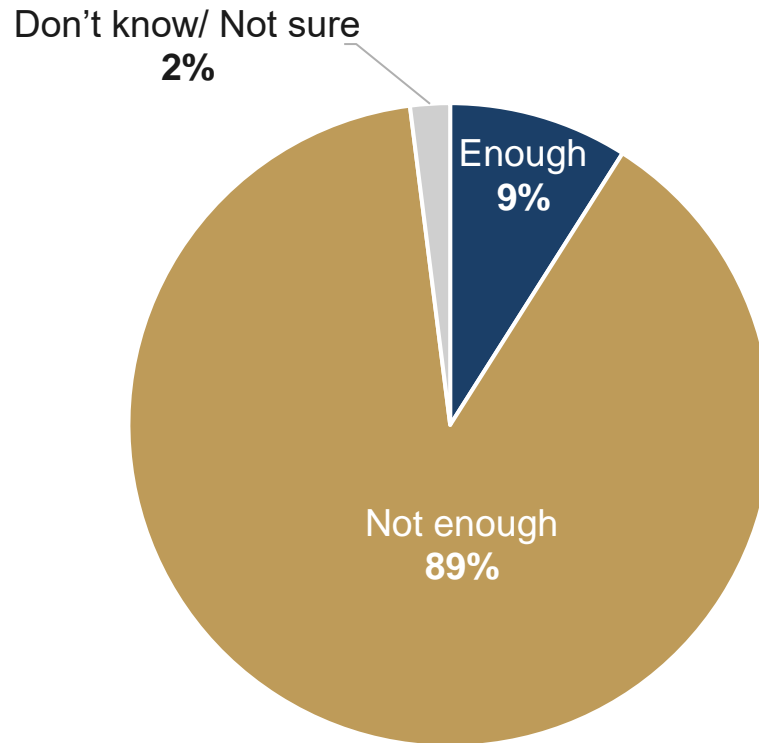
Conducted February 12-16, 2026

Margin of error:  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points

LET'S  
BUILD HOMES

# There is no debate among Vermonters: there is not enough housing that people can afford.

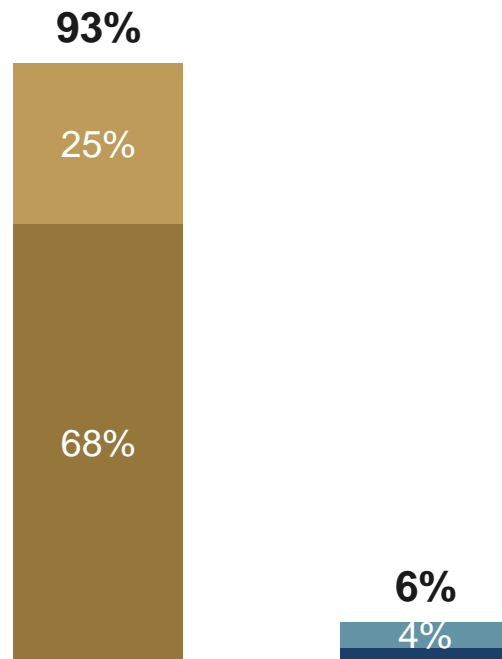
*Generally speaking, do you think Vermont has enough homes that are affordable for average people to buy or rent, or not enough?*



# The cost of housing is viewed as a huge problem, especially for younger Vermonters.

Would you say that the cost of renting or buying a home in Vermont is a ...

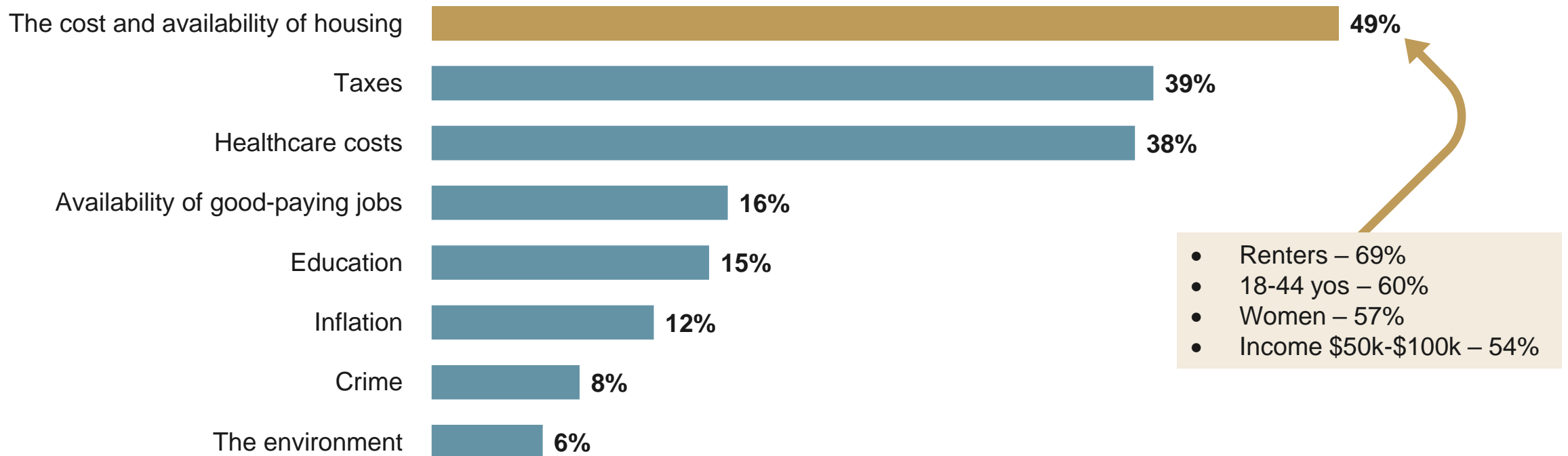
■ Major problem ■ Somewhat of a problem ■ Minor problem ■ Not really a problem



Major problem %	
18-44	73
45-64	66
65 and older	66
Parents of <18	80
Non-parents	65
Northern counties	76
Chittenden	70
Central counties	67
Southern counties	63

# Even in the context of other key issues, housing is paramount in importance.

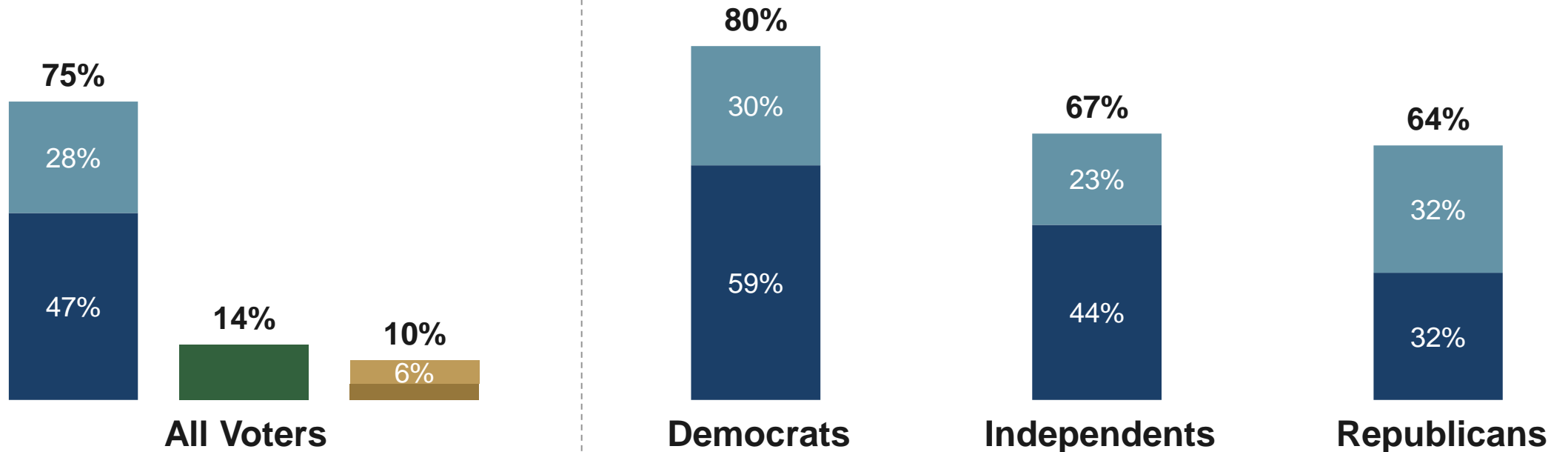
*Most important issues or challenges facing Vermont (1 to 2 chosen)*



# Three in four say it's important for the legislature to take action on housing.

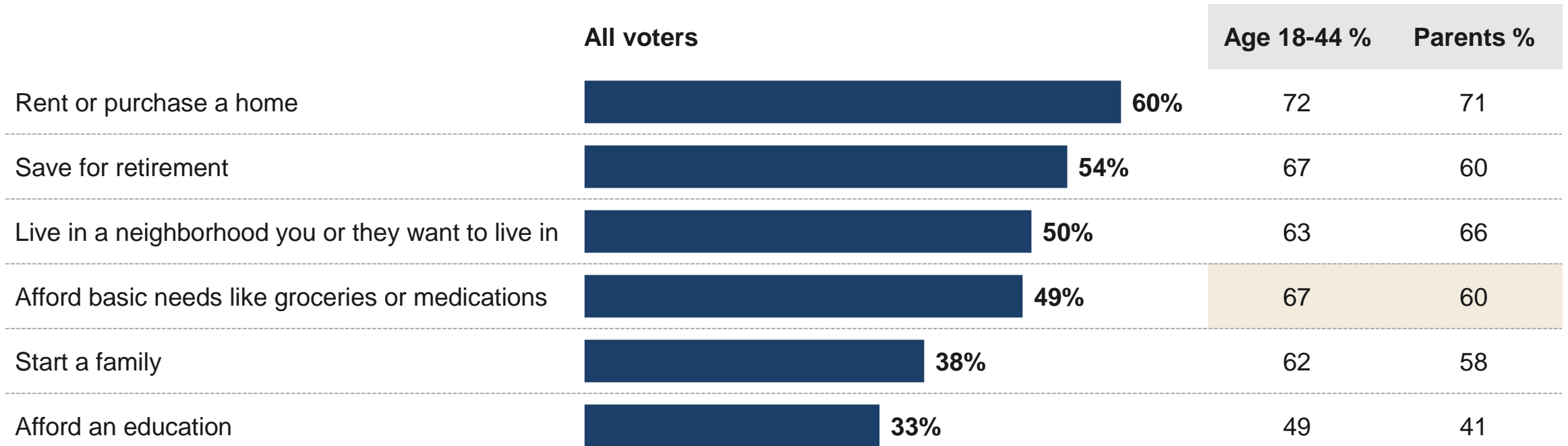
*How important do you think it is that the state legislature takes action to deal with the housing situation in the state?*

■ Extremely important   ■ Pretty important   ■ Just somewhat important   ■ Not that important   ■ Not important at all



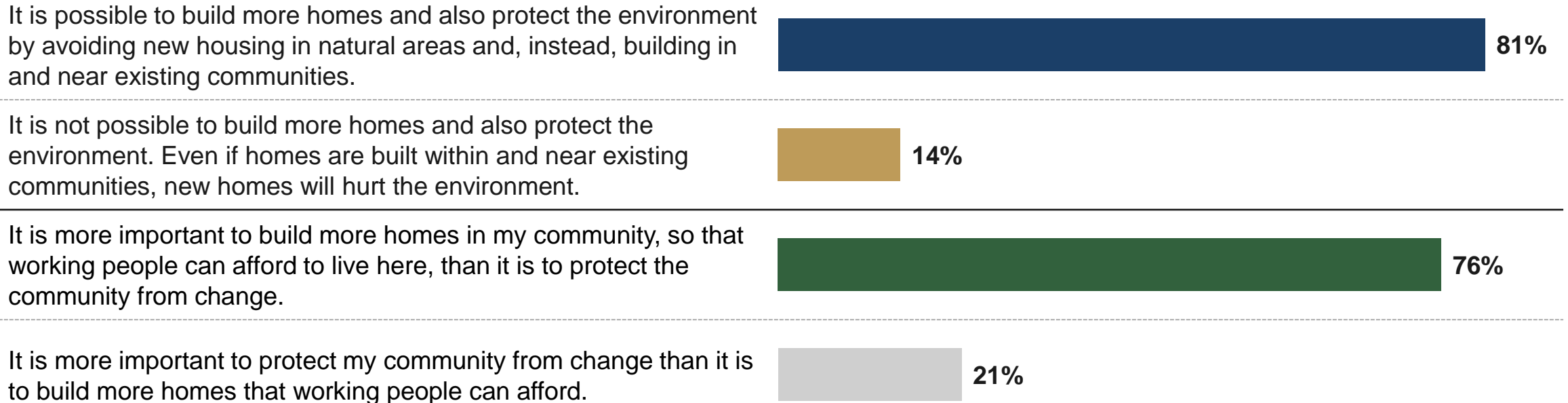
# The cost of housing has real and extensive downstream effects on people's lives.

*Have housing costs had a negative impact on your ability, or the ability of anyone you know in your community in Vermont, to do any of the following?*



# Vermonters firmly reject two premises: more housing has to hurt the environment and protecting communities from change is a priority over building housing.

*Which of the following is closer to your view?*



# In a mini “debate” about how to approach housing, voters come down on the side of doing more by over two-to-one.

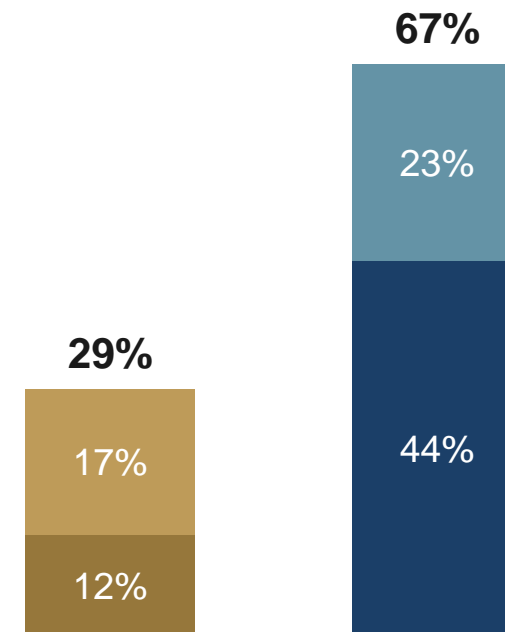
**STATEMENT A:** Rapidly building more homes is the wrong way to address Vermont’s housing crisis. It would lead to overcrowding, harm the environment, and hurt people’s quality of life. Any development should be a gradual process to ensure a safe and sustainable long-term solution.

**STATEMENT B:** Vermont's housing shortage is hurting our economy and communities. A lack of homes means sky-high housing costs, fewer workers, struggling businesses, and an aging population that threatens the viability of our schools, hospitals, and essential services. We can build homes, protect the environment and create a more affordable and vibrant state.

*Which statement do you agree with more?*

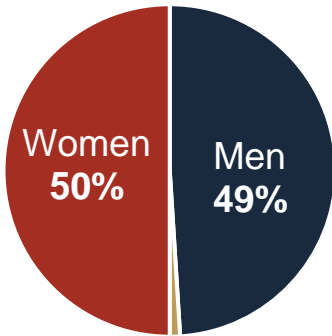
- A - somewhat more
- A - much more

- B - somewhat more
- B - much more

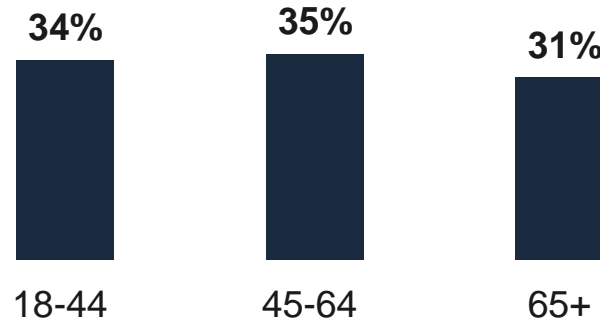


# Appendix: Profile of the Sample

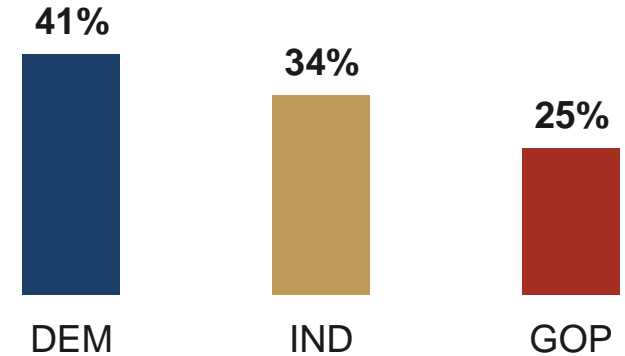
*Gender*



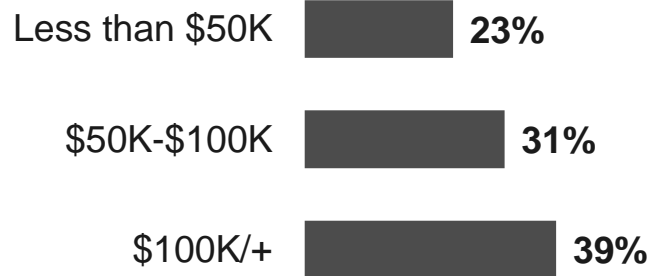
*Age*



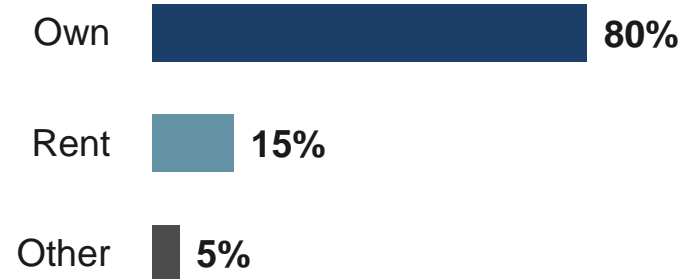
*Party ID*



*Household Income*



*Housing Situation*



*Parental Status*

