

City of Essex Junction

Planning Commission

Meeting Agenda



TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2026 • 6:30 PM
Online & 2 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452

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1. **CALL TO ORDER** [6:30 PM]
2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
3. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
 - a. Comments from Public
4. **MINUTES**
 - a. July 2, 2026
5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
 - a. Comprehensive Plan Update - Draft Sections [6:35 PM]
 - i. Chapter 2 – Community Vision and Strategies
 - ii. Chapter 3 – History; Trends
 - b. 2026 Land Development Code (LDC) Amendments* [7:45 PM]
 - i. Form-Based Code Public Engagement Review* [7:45 PM]
 - ii. Discussion of unit mix requirements* [8:05 PM]
 - iii. Review draft LDC amendments and consider warning a hearing for September [8:15 PM]
6. **MEMBER UPDATES**
7. **STAFF UPDATES**
8. **ADJOURNMENT**

*attachments included in the packet

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

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**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
JULY 2, 2026
DRAFT**

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

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

ADMINISTRATION: Chris Yuen, Community Development Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Cymone Bedford, Darren Schibler

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Massey called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

None.

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda

None.

4. MINUTES

a. June 4th, 2026

SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by ELENA JUODISIUS, to approve the minutes of June 4th, 2026, as amended. Motion passed 5-0.

Amendment:

-Ms. Clemens will be listed as absent.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Committee Reorganization

Mr. Yuen said this is a required to be voted upon each July.

ELENA JUODISIUS made a motion, seconded by SCOTT MCCORMICK, to nominate ELIJAH MASSEY as Chair and DIANE CLEMENS as Vice-Chair. Motion passed 5-0.

b. Introduction to Economic Mobility & Opportunity Initiative

Ms. Bedford, Economic Mobility Manager at the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) presented on the Economic Mobility and Opportunity Initiative. This project is sponsored by the International City Managers Association and is a 30-month national program involving four municipalities in Vermont, including Essex Junction. She discussed economic mobility, which is defined as creating economic success for a person or persons over their lifetime. She read the vision statement, "We aim to be a region where everyone has access to civic participation, entrepreneurship and attainable housing."

Ms. Bedford discussed the three-part definition of upward mobility, discussing dignity & belonging, economic success and power & autonomy. She said entrepreneurship resources are offered through partnerships with Green Mountain Credit Union and Kiva Institute, as well as additional peer learning opportunities through networking. She discussed the housing trust funds as a helpful tool to strategically invest in various housing priorities. She discussed the Community Academy Program, which will help provide relationship-building opportunities with town departments and help to identify future community leaders. A business meet and greet event will be held on August 25th 2026 at the South Burlington Public Library. She said a festival series is planned by the downtown association to promote member cities.

Mr. McCormick raised concerns about ensuring alignment between the work being done by the CCRPC and Ms. Bedford and Essex Junction's work on revolving loans and comprehensive planning initiatives, suggesting the need for better coordination. Ms. Bedford discussed the community academy program, which is currently in the co-design phase and aims to have a draft ready for review in the fall, aligning with the next commission member appointment cycle in June. The PC discussed the potential for involving business owners and commission members in the program, particularly for housing trust fund initiatives. Answering a question from Mr. McCormick, Ms. Bedford confirmed that a housing trust fund could support both new construction and retrofits of existing homes. Ms. Bedford explained housing trust funds, which accumulate money from developers choosing in-lieu fees for affordable housing and can be used for various housing-related initiatives. These include: helping residents become homeowners, renovating dilapidated buildings, and aiding local workers in buying homes with a deed restriction which requires at least one person in the home be a local worker.

c. Comprehensive Plan Update - Draft Sections (Natural Environmental Resources, Energy, Enhanced Energy Plan)

The PC discussed terminology changes from "Village center" to "City center" throughout the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Schibler clarified that, while some references were updated, there may still be inconsistencies that need addressing. He reviewed the project progress calendar. He presented updates to the Energy & Natural Resources sections, noting that the Energy chapter was streamlined with updated data and references while maintaining the City's enhanced Energy Plan status. He clarified that while renewable energy development is encouraged rather than mandated, the plan focuses on allowing appropriate development while protecting other resources. He noted that rooftop solar is preferred over ground-mounted installations in the City center. Mr. Schibler discussed new content which was added addressing electric vehicles and thermal efficiency needs, while removing redundant information and updating policies to reflect current state requirements, including new energy equity considerations. Community input has been integrated into the document. He discussed new requirements for forest block habitat connector analysis and balancing renewable energy development with natural resource protection. Mr. Schibler discussed Vermont's conservation design priorities, recommending that the city stick with the state-regulated highest priority areas rather than adding additional priority levels to avoid regulating existing development. All agreed. Mr. Schibler and Ms. Clemens discussed other actions which could be taken to facilitate wildlife movements in areas of existing development.

Mr. Schibler discussed historic preservation standards for renewable energy development, with the PC deciding to maintain them as advisory guidelines rather than enforceable requirements due to practical implementation challenges and financial viability concerns. Mr. Yuen detailed current historical preservation practices in the City, noting that Development Board review can be required however

financial viability is taken into consideration. Ms. Clemens brought up a concern about historical properties being converted into multiple rental units, and whether historic preservation could be addressed or applicable in these types of situations.

Mr. Schibler discussed the organization and structure of the enhanced energy plan appendix, noting that it is currently disorganized and contains too much technical detail that may not be accessible to the average reader. The PC expressed concerns about the document's readability and suggested reorganizing it to better integrate the four key sectors (transportation, housing, energy, and climate change) while maintaining essential information in an appendix. Mr. McCormick said the Comprehensive Plan does not give a good sense of what is most important to the community and noted that many projects which appear to be perpetually not completed are included. He said it reads more like a technical report than a readable document and noted a lack of education in the processes of City government. He suggested that information regarding state requirements be included in the energy section and better integrating the various sectors so that they are more connected with one another. Mr. Schibler said it is important to balance technical requirements with clear communication of priorities. The appendix will continue to have more technical details. Mr. McCormick expressed a desire to continually engage the PC in this process, as well as City Council members. Mr. Schibler will present to the City Council on the Comprehensive Plan in June and will ask about the level of input and engagement that they would like in this process. A draft of the plan must be prepared by December.

Mr. McCormick discussed challenges with staffing needs, particularly for coordinators in key sectors like economic development, energy, housing, and transportation, noting budget constraints and staff time limitations. He said volunteer committees require additional staff time and stipend costs. He encouraged long-term planning for these issues. Ms. Clemens said additional staff could be included as a suggestion in the plan. Mr. Hamilton spoke of the financial impact of renewable energy on housing. Mr. Schibler discussed restructuring how cross-sector connections are presented in the plan, with suggestions to use color-coded pillars or references to show how different actions connect to multiple plan sections rather than separating them by chapter. Mr. Massey said it is important to have a readable way for City residents to easily see the connections between chapters.

The PC also discussed the format for presenting goals, policies, and actions, deciding to maintain a hierarchical structure similar to the main Comprehensive Plan rather than using a long list of unstructured actions. Mr. Schibler presented a proposed timeline and organization structure, grouping related themes like energy, natural environmental resources, and agriculture together. He said he would like to hear input on both timing and the grouping of the chapters. Mr. Massey discussed the idea of better including the Winooski River as a community asset, describing it is an untapped community asset for community recreation. Mr. Yuen discussed correspondence about this concept and noting potential opportunities through developer negotiations and private property coordination.

d. 2026 Land Development Code (LDC) Amendments – Updated Draft

Mr. Yuen said public outreach on the LDC is currently underway, and that information will be included in water/sewer bills. It will contain easily accessible information about form-based code. The DRB recently reviewed the LDC amendments. Mr. Yuen detailed changes which have been made to the LDC since the PC last reviewed it. The Commission discussed the unit mix requirements, splitting between keeping the current 20% requirement and increasing it to 30%, with a compromise reached at 25%. Ms.

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7/2/26

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Clemens spoke of the benefit to families from having a better mix of residential unit types. Mr. Massey said there is nothing preventing future Planning Commissions from adjusting this rate if necessary, or a change being requested by the City Council. Ms. Paschall said recent studies have shown that there is a strong need for one-bedroom units. The PC also reviewed technical changes including driveway apron surfacing standards, fenestration (the design, arrangement, and proportioning of openings in a building's exterior) definitions, and updates to municipal farming regulations due to new state legislation. Mr. Yuen discussed the 802 homes design prototypes, and said the location of the doors may not be in compliance with Essex Junction's regulations. All were amenable to future conversations with 802 Homes to ensure that they can comply. Ms. Clemens brought up technical concerns and other edits, which Mr. Yuen will review.

e. Reschedule August Meeting

The August meeting was rescheduled to August 11th, 2026.

6. MEMBERS UPDATES

None.

7. STAFF UPDATES

None.

8. ADJOURNMENT

SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by ELENA JUOSIDIUS, to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned 9:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Darby Mayville

TO: Essex Junction Planning Commission
FROM: Chris Yuen, Community Development Director
DATE: Darren Schibler, Senior Planner & Project Manager; Maya Balassa, Planner
RE: August 11, 2026 Meeting on Draft Plan Chapters

Project Scope of Work Review

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

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

Recap of Last Meeting

At the July 2nd meeting Planning Commission meeting, CCRPC staff presented a first round of edits to Chapters 4.5 (Natural Environmental Resources), 4.1 (Energy), and Appendix D (Enhanced Energy Plan). The PC was generally supportive of the changes, but agreed with CCRPC staff that there could be better organization of content between Appendix D and Chapter 4.1. Therefore, CCRPC has moved the Statewide Context and Implementation sections of Appendix D into Chapter 4.1, which ensures the actions are prominent as in other chapters while providing sufficient context for the lay reader to understand the actions, referring them to Appendix D for full analysis of energy use and targets. CCRPC staff have also reviewed the energy-related actions to ensure they are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART), and have reorganized them into a format of Vision, Goal, and Action which will be used in other chapters of the plan.

In addition, the discussion of development constraints has been moved to Chapter 4.5 where other Natural Environmental Resources are discussed. CCRPC staff suggest that the related discussion of Siting Policies be moved to Chapter 4.11 (Land Use), and will discuss this further with the PC in October.

New Chapter Drafts

- 2.1 Community Values, Vision, and General Goals
- 2.2 Accomplished Objectives
- 3.1 Historical Development Patterns
- 3.2 Historic Resources

Commissioners had requested that the Plan better address the connections between various themes of the Plan. Therefore, CCRPC staff began work on earlier chapters that will set context for the document and connect it to the 2024 Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan (CVSAP), as well as other City initiatives. Content on prior initiatives from the 2014 plan have been deleted. Note that Chapter 2.3, which identifies top priority actions for the next 8 years, will not be edited until all other chapters have been drafted.

Overall questions for the Planning Commission are listed below for discussion, but additional detailed questions are included in the comments of the draft chapters.

PDF copies of the revised chapters and new draft chapters with track changes are included in the PC's packet. Clean versions are available on Sharepoint here:

https://ccrpcvt.sharepoint.com/:f:/s/ExternalShare/IgBdak4L6QOTQJ7p8HDJngSIASrk_Jor9XMWayeq6Xr4Rgo?e=8GAZzB

Questions for the Planning Commission

- Does the Commission agree that discussion of the CVSAP pillars provides sufficient context for the major themes of the plan and the connections between them?
- Are the Key Actions of the CVSAP still relevant and reflective of the community's direction? Do they adequately describe the City's priorities for implementing its vision, or is further clarification needed for some or all? Are additional Key Actions needed?
- Is the description of the history of merger with and separation from the Town of Essex thorough, accurate and succinct?

Looking Ahead

At the September meeting, CCRPC will plan to present drafts of the following chapters:

- 4.2 Agriculture and Community Forestry
- 4.4 Open Space, Recreation, and Public Health
- 4.6 Natural Hazards Resiliency

The current schedule of chapter drafting and adoption timeline is attached to this memo.

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Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan Update

Chapter Drafting & Adoption Timeline (version 7/15/2026)

PC Plan Work Session #1	7/2/2026	4.1 – Energy 4.5 – Natural Environmental Resources
PC Plan Work Session #2	8/6/2026	2 – Community Vision and Strategies 3 – History, Trends
PC Plan Work Session #3	9/3/2026	4.2 – Agriculture and Community Forestry 4.4 – Open Space / Recreation / Public Health 4.6 – Natural Hazards Resiliency
PC Plan Work Session #4	10/1/2026	4.9 – Housing 4.11 – Land Use
PC Plan Work Session #5	11/5/2026	4.8 – Utilities / Facilities 4.10 – Transportation
PC Plan Work Session #6	12/3/2026	4.3 – Business / Economic Development 4.7 – Education and Child Care
PC Plan Work Session #7	1/7/2027	1 – General Planning Background / Executive Summary 5 – Implementation
PC Plan Work Session #8 (Complete Draft)	2/4/2027	Final Draft Plan Proposal Report / Checklist
Annual Meeting / Elections	3/2/2026	Annual Meeting has been moved to Town Meeting Day
PC 1st Hearing Notice / Report Distributed	3/4/2027	At least 30 days before first PC hearing [24 V.S.A. 4384(e)]
PC 1st Hearing	4/8/2027	Note that this would be a week later than the normal Planning Commission meeting, but is a better fit for statutory timelines
CCRPC PAC Review of Plan	4/14/2027	Next available PAC meeting after public hearing notice and time for CCRPC staff review [CCRPC Municipal Plan Review Guidelines]
PC 2nd Hearing (optional)	5/6/2027	Can submit to Council immediately or do so at June meeting
Council Warns Public Hearing	5/12/2027	Warned for 6/23/2027
1st Council Public Hearing	6/23/2027	At least 30 days after PC submits to Council [24 V.S.A. 4385(a)]
Final Council Public Hearing	7/21/2027	At least 15 days after prior public hearing [24 V.S.A. 4385(b)(1-2)]
Council Adopts Plan	8/11/2027	At next meeting following final public hearing [24 V.S.A. 4385(c)]
CCRPC Approval of Plan	8/18/2027	Next CCRPC Board meeting following City Council approval of plan [24 V.S.A. § 4350 , CCRPC Municipal Plan Review Guidelines]

2.1. Community Values, Vision and General Goals

An important stage of any planning process is the identification of community values. The values are used in establishing a vision for the future and general community goals. Together they are used to identify what the community is striving to become or maintain as well as the challenges and opportunities it faces. They define the Plan and provide focus to the Planning Process. More specific goals and actions are identified in the chapters that follow.

Heart and Soul

In 2012 and 2013 both the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction engaged in an in-depth community conversation called Heart & Soul of Essex. Through Heart & Soul of Essex, the community was engaged in multiple ways to learn what the shared values are, and a better understanding of the community's collective hopes for the future was gained. Six values were established through 43 neighborhood conversations (involving almost 350 people who live or work in the community) and a survey completed by 540 people (including 352 people who had not previously participated in a Heart & Soul activity). **Heart & Soul identified six core values which are Education, Local Economy, Thoughtful Growth Health and Recreation, Community Connections, and Safety. Thoughtful Growth emerged as the most pressing issue in the community.** The six values are listed below. Each value is followed by the General Goals and Vision for the Village.

Education: Essex invests time, energy, and resources to ensure that our highly respected schools meet the needs of everyone in the community. We are proud to support learning that extends beyond the traditional classroom and includes the arts, athletics, and vocational instruction. Community programs, and libraries offer diverse and affordable opportunities that prepare residents of all ages for lifelong learning and for work in an evolving economy.

Vision and General Goal: To continue to provide Village residents with a **DIVERSITY** of vocational and educational opportunities, and cultural and recreational amenities to ensure lifelong learning for all.

Local Economy: Our residents contribute to a vibrant economy by working for and patronizing a diverse mix of businesses, from small, locally-owned enterprises to international corporations. We are committed to fostering an environment that produces a world-class workforce and a strong economy for years to come.



Commented [DS4]: Suggest deleting information about Heart & Soul and replacing with a summary of the 2024 Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan.

~~**Vision and General Goal:** To recognize and enhance the role of Essex Junction's existing business and industrial base for both the local **ECONOMY** and the Chittenden County **REGION** as a major employment and transportation center.~~

~~**Thoughtful Growth:** We value wide open spaces and tight knit neighborhoods, rural roads and vibrant downtown streets. Essex is a place where we can enjoy a beautiful view, walk in the woods, and go out to eat without ever leaving town. We support a diverse housing mix, opportunities for business development and a transportation system with a variety of options including a connected network of walking and biking routes.~~

~~**Vision and General Goal:** To ensure a well balanced and desirable **COMMUNITY** with a **DIVERSITY** of options to live, work and play. With a healthy and vibrant Village Center (aka **DOWNTOWN**) as the focal point including a full range of services and activities, surrounded by the Junction's highly valuable **NEIGHBORHOODS**, and connected with a network of walking and biking routes. This vision can only be reached by encouraging new development in commercial, industrial and multi family districts within the Village while managing this new **GROWTH** with high standards to both protect and improve the **IDENTITY** of the Village's historic character, and to minimize **LAND USE** conflicts that may occur from infill and redevelopment of underutilized properties. Additional General Goals include: Cultivate public and private investment options for community improvements. Cooperate with adjoining communities to ensure quality development; and to protect the Village from negative impact of adjoining development. Minimize the total economic cost of providing housing, utilities, transportation and public facilities and services (aka **COST EFFICIENCY**).~~

~~**Health and Recreation:** We value public places for outdoor and indoor recreation for all ages and abilities. We treasure Indian Brook reservoir, Tree Farm Recreation Facility, neighborhood parks and the chance to connect by bicycle or on foot. We believe the design of the Village should support positive health behaviors and food access. Community institutions provide education and programs to support healthy lifestyles.~~

~~**Vision and General Goal:** Maintain an aesthetically attractive **URBAN ENVIRONMENT** that is sensitive to the **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**.~~

~~**Community Connections:** Our deep connections with each other make Essex special. Neighbors help each other during good times and bad. We value diversity and welcome everyone. We build our sense of community at local events such as the Memorial Day Parade, Annual Block Party and Winter Carnival. Our local newspapers and online forums give us plenty of ways to stay in touch. Residents participate in local government and volunteer.~~

~~**Vision and General Goal:** Encourage strong public PARTICIPATION in all public decisions affecting the development or redevelopment of the urban area.~~

~~**Safety:** Essex is a safe place where neighbors watch out for one another. We value an active, visible police force and strong fire and rescue services. Upgrades to our physical infrastructure will allow us to move about our community with comfort and security.~~

~~**Vision and General Goal:** Establish a network of walking and biking routes.~~

Design Five Corners

The community values identified during the Heart & Soul process and follow-up public engagement were used to create a large-scale design and vision of the Village's future called Design Five Corners which focused on the potential future development of the Village Center. Three key takeaways were identified during this process. Future development and redevelopment in the Village Center should:

- 1) — Maximize space in the Village Core
- 2) — Calm traffic, and
- 3) — Reclaim more space for people.

Several popular design elements were identified during this process and included central greenspace and pocket parks, buildings lining the streets, a pedestrianized Main Street, multi-story mixed-use buildings, and additional street trees.

Creating a place where people want to be is fundamental in revitalizing the Village Center. Pedestrian volumes at the Five Corners have been increasing since 2001 and traffic volumes have been relatively steady for the past 25 years. These factors indicate that conditions are good for implementing an approach towards the Five Corners consistent with the community values identified in the Heart & Soul and Design Five Corners processes. This approach is guided by the conceptual design presented in the Design Five Corners report. While this conceptual design cannot be implemented "as is" (the Village cannot mandate privately-owned developments), it can be used as a general template for evaluating proposed development with the values of the community.

A central piece of the implementation of the Design Five Corners is the development of the Crescent Connector to connect Main Street (VT15), Maple Street (VT117), and Park Street (VT2A). Several zones of opportunity for new public spaces become possible with the development of the Crescent Connector. In addition, the creation of the Crescent Connector adds 29 new parking spaces in the Village Center.

Commented [DS5]: Seems like it's still worth retaining information about Design Five Corners since its goals and actions are still playing out. If retained, this section should be updated with information about the Crescent Connector's completion and redevelopment along Park Street.

The Crescent Connector will also make possible the closing of one leg of the Five Corners (Main Street). This is expected to decrease the average vehicle delay through the intersection by 40%, eliminate lost time (when no vehicles are passing through the intersection), increase the capacity of the intersection by 789 more vehicles per hour, and significantly decreasing the length of lines of vehicles waiting to pass through the intersection. The closure of Main Street will also decrease the distance (and number of lanes) that pedestrians will need to cross and allow for traffic to move concurrently with pedestrian crossing.

Creating a walkable environment in the Five Corners is consistent with the identified community values and can provide a competitive advantage to local businesses.

Thoughtful Growth in Action

Thoughtful Growth in Action (TGIA) is a project that focused on exploring new approaches to planning governance structure in the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex Junction. The project stemmed from the belief, highlighted by the Heart & Soul of Essex project, that the community wants a shared vision that honors and builds on the unique characteristics of the Village and the Town outside the Village. Moving towards a shared vision, however, may be complicated by the current planning structure of two Planning Commissions and two Zoning Boards. TGIA developed a set of four recommendations for the Town of Essex Selectboard and Village of Essex Junction Trustees to consider:

Recommendation #1: Move to create a joint Planning Commission and two separate Development Review Boards.

Recommendation #2: Use a phased approach to structural changes.

Recommendation #3: Empower boards to establish a timeframe and work with staff to make a plan for transition.

Recommendation #4: Continue to explore and implement ways to improve public participation in planning.

Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan

Starting in August 2023, following its separation from the Town of Essex, the City of Essex Junction worked with FutureIQ to deliver a 5-year Strategic Action Plan driven by community engagement. This included listening sessions, two community surveys, a “think-tank” workshop, focus groups, and an open house. Community members were asked to describe

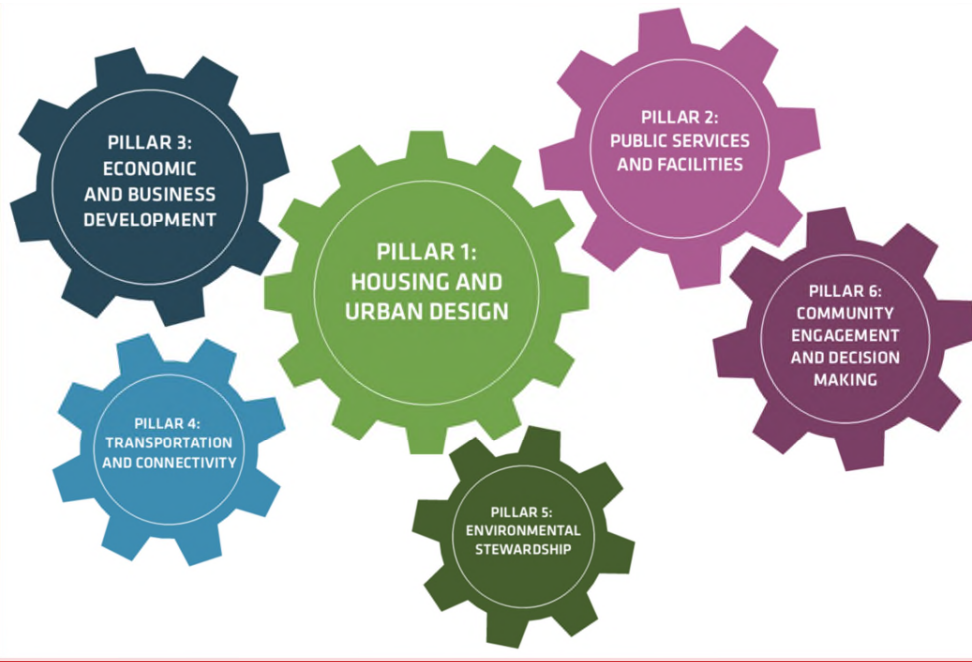
Commented [DS6]: This is clearly no longer relevant, but is it worth talking about the separation of the City from the Town?

their ideal future as adaptive and growing into possibilities vs. protecting and preserving what exists, and for community-led vs. market-led approaches to achieve that future. The final report indicates that the City endorses a “Community Representation Model”:

“This scenario forecasts a future where the City of Essex Junction becomes known for its inclusive and welcoming ethos. As a result, the population is both economically and ethnically diverse. The economic approach is community led while having a strong focus on adapting and growing as a community. Community connectivity is significant in relation to amenities, activities, and engagement as well as practicality via cycle lanes, trails, and public transportation. Walkability and cycling are encouraged and there are passive and active greenspaces within the city. Inclusivity and equity are demonstrated via affordable housing, vertical development and incentives and new businesses. There is investment in the public good and shared amenities and resources that create desirable living conditions. There is a focus on community vitality across the city with vibrant amenities and activities. The enviable location is attractive to people wishing to move to the city due to its amenities, character, sense of community and proximity to the airport, Burlington, and the landscape of Vermont.”

The Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan, adopted in July 2024 by the City Council, also lays out six distinct but interdependent strategic pillars representing major themes that underpin the preferred future for the City.

Commented [DS7]: Does the Planning Commission want to use the 6 pillars of the CVSAP as the “vision” to organize this plan? Does that include using the Key Actions within the pillars? Does anything need to be modified or fleshed out to apply to all elements of the plan?



Commented [DS8]: May want to adapt this into a different image that conveys "pillars" rather than gears.

Connect the Junction

This transit-oriented development (TOD) master plan, developed by the City of Essex Junction and adopted December 17th, 2025, establishes a vision for a more pedestrian-friendly City Center and Pearl Street corridor with more diverse housing options, vibrant public spaces, and safe and accessible options for walking, biking, and busing. The plan recognizes the currently constrained housing market in Essex Junction and the broader region as an opportunity to position public investments and incentivize the private sector to create a built environment that meets the City's transportation, housing, and urban design goals. The plan's specific goals include:

- Prioritize People
- Capitalize on the Crescent Connector
- Develop to add Activities and Amenities
- Add Housing Thoughtfully
- Make more Connections
- Make the Assets Shine
- Essex Junction for Essex Junction

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The City will achieve these goals using a range of planning and design tactics relying on both private and public sector actions and investments, such as:

- Establish a “road diet” for Park Street and Pearl Street that allocates less roadway space for cars and more space for cyclists and pedestrians to naturally slow traffic and improve safety and economic activity.
- Focus on Railroad Avenue as a pedestrian hub that can be used for events, street vendors, and other activation activities. Related to this, consider ways to activate Main Street for pedestrian uses through temporary closures.
- Revise the Land Development Code to enable taller buildings with more housing capacity.
- Enact design guidelines for streetscapes, entrances, and amenities constructed through private and public development.
- Develop an official map that identifies new streets and public improvements.
- Invest in public parks and spaces and support community efforts to provide amenities and public art.

Economic Mobility Initiative

Starting in 2026, the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), in partnership with the municipalities of Essex Junction, Shelburne, South Burlington, and Winooski, are engaged in a 30-month, grant-funded Economic Mobility and Opportunity Program through the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). This national initiative supports local governments in advancing equity and economic mobility through cross-sector collaboration and data-informed strategies and decision-making. The Economic Mobility Manager is working across the four participating municipalities to address systemic barriers that affect residents’ abilities to access stable housing, good jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities, and long-term financial security. The position supports collaborative projects that expand opportunity, strengthen partnerships, and advance inclusive community development throughout the region. Collectively, “We aim to be a region where everyone has access to governance participation, entrepreneurship, and attainable housing.” Building the City’s economic development program upon this approach has the potential to make inclusion economically beneficial and vital to the city in the long-term.

Comprehensive Community Engagement Plan

One of the key actions of the Community Engagement and Decision Making pillar of the 2024 Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan was to create a Comprehensive Community Engagement Plan (CCEP) for Essex Junction to foster a sense of community identity by creating an environment of connection and meaningful community dialogue. The City began

work on the CCEP in late 2026 to outline the City's approach, strategies, and engagement roles. The plan is built on the idea that everyone has the right to be informed, consulted, involved, and empowered. The CCEP clarifies how City staff and elected and appointed officials will and will not engage with community members to build trust, conduct effective engagement, and foster good governance. The CCEP also provides a toolkit for staff and officials to use in designing and implementing their engagement efforts. While the outreach conducted for the 2026 Comprehensive Plan largely preceded the development of the CCEP, it used a similar framework and process for ensuring inclusive and meaningful engagement.

2.2. Accomplished Objectives

The following is a list of planning accomplishments from ~~2014-2019~~2019-2027:

- Resolved the question of merger with the Town of Essex, which ultimately resulted in separation of the municipalities and a clearer vision for the future of each.
- Finalized design and constructed the Crescent Connector, an extension of Railroad Street on the southeast side of Five Corners. This has improved traffic flow in peak times and for some pass-through traffic to this busy intersection while opening up new opportunities for mixed-use development in the core of the community.
- Continued improving the urban tree canopy through annual plantings in coordination with private property owners. Also, continue preparing for emerald ash borer in neighborhoods with high prevalence of ash trees.
- Conducted the Connect the Junction Transit-Oriented Development Plan and adopted regulations to increase development intensity along transit corridors to support ridership. This plan also identifies opportunities for bike- and pedestrian-oriented improvements.
- Maintained maps of walking and biking routes, and established bike locker rentals for the municipal parking lot on Railroad Avenue in support of multi-modal transportation goals.
- Advanced the Design Five Corners project by acquiring land for a pocket park to support pedestrian activity in support of local businesses. Also, experimented with closure of Main Street between Five Corners and Railroad Street through the "Meet Me on Main" event.
- Expanded outdoor access to the Brownell Library during the pandemic by constructing a heated, shaded pavilion.
- Continued to conduct TV scoping of sewer lines and conducted an assessment of the water supply system for lead piping.
- Renovated the municipal offices at 2 Lincoln Street to address building maintenance issues and update interiors while improving accessibility to the for Essex CHIPS space and the Senior Center.

- Awarded funding and continuing implementation of Amtrak Train and Bus Station Improvements (implements Transportation Objective 8.1)
- Implemented a design review and historic review overlay district (implements Land Use Objective 6.1; Land Use Objective 12.1; Priority Goal Objective 2.1)
- Amended dimensional and design standards into zoning regulations for R1 and R2 districts to allow for additional infill housing while maintaining the quality of residential areas (implements Land Use Objective 2.1)
- ~~Completed the Thoughtful Growth in Action Report which explores new approaches to planning governance structures in the Town and the Village.~~
- ~~Actions to accomplish the Design Five corners concept~~
- ~~IBM site was acquired by Global Foundries.~~
- ~~A collaboration between the Village and the Center for Technology Essex (CTE) developed a new curriculum for CTE that includes an Urban Tree Nursery.~~
- ~~The Village Center District was designated a Neighborhood Development Area by the State of Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development.~~
- ~~Through a joint effort, the Town and the Village were awarded a state grant to develop a phosphorus control plan to identify phosphorus reduction mechanisms.~~
- ~~Trustees and Selectboard hire unified manager for both municipalities in 2018.~~
- ~~Gained funding for the Crescent Connector Road, which will ease congestion at Five Corners.~~
- ~~Visioning for the train station completed and an application for funded has been submitted.~~
- ~~The Village received a Bronze Walk Friendly Community Designation due to its sidewalk coverage, Safe Routes to School Program, excellent pedestrian plan, and regional coordination.~~
- ~~The Village and the Town collaborated on bike/walk studies for Pearl St. and Main St.~~
- ~~Successfully encouraged investment in the Village Center, for example Park St senior housing and the mixed-use building at 4 Pearl St.~~
- ~~Responded to residents' desires and encouraged to a coffee/bakery to locate in the Village Center.~~
- ~~Completed traffic calming improvements and bike lanes on Pearl Street from West Street Extension to Champlain Valley Expo.~~
- ~~The Village approved a 300,000 sq. ft. light industrial master plan for the Champlain Valley Technology and Innovation Park campus on Maple Street to allow for more diversity in uses.~~
- ~~Construction completed on a new police station~~

- ~~• The Vermont Land Trust, with funding assistance from the Village, purchased development rights on 271 acres of the Whitcomb Farm in March 2014. Additional development rights were purchased on approximately 143 acres in 2015.~~
- ~~• A 2.2 MW solar project was constructed on the Whitcomb Farm.~~

2.3. The Planning Challenge: Toward 2027-2035 and Beyond

Essex Junction is a dynamic and largely developed community with a good mix of residential, commercial, and industrial development. It has desirable neighborhoods, accessible parks, and open space areas, and established downtown and commercial centers. Portions of its commercial areas can be classified as mature urban with underutilized properties that present opportunities for redevelopment and renewed investment. Therefore, the planning challenge for Essex Junction is to manage growth, encourage reinvestment in the existing urban environment, protect existing neighborhoods and ensure that redevelopment or new development enhances the vitality and maintains the "Neighborhood Village Feel" character of Essex Junction.

Land use goals that the Village-City has set for itself will be detailed in the chapters and sections that follow. However, the most important issues that are being grappled with today will define the priorities for Essex Junction for the coming eight years.

Goal 1: Assist and work with existing businesses to stay and grow in Essex Junction.

Objective 1.1 Encourage and assist new businesses and clean industries to invest in Essex Junction.

Objective 1.2: Maintain a favorable business climate in Essex Junction.

Objective 1.3: Engage in policies to make progress on the transit specific strategies in the Town's Economic Development and Vision Plan including #4 (regional multi-modal improvements), #10 (freight rail service expansion), and #12 (transit-oriented development).

Objective 1.3: Continue efforts to revitalize the Village center and attract business through public investment in infrastructure.

Goal 2: Promote thoughtful growth.

Commented [DS9]: The section following this will be the "Top Priority Actions," which will be rewritten at the end of the plan drafting process. CCRPC will work with the Planning Commission to identify top priority actions and gather public input on the same.

4.1. Energy

The 2024 Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan outlined the following key actions for the City under the pillar of Environmental Stewardship:

Encourage Clean Energy and Efficiency Options

There is strong support for embracing clean energy / renewable energy options. This can also include energy efficient approaches, such as home weatherization. This can be undertaken at an individual homeowner level, and at a citywide level. This topic needs more information and support for homeowners to make the transition, and there is an important educational role the City can play in assisting with information and demonstration examples.

Create a City-Wide Comprehensive Sustainability Plan

The City of Essex Junction needs a comprehensive long-term sustainability plan. There are many topics raised through the planning work that need to be picked up in such a plan, such as investment in renewable energy, emission reduction, waste management and recycling programs, climate mitigation efforts, and overall environmental stewardship...

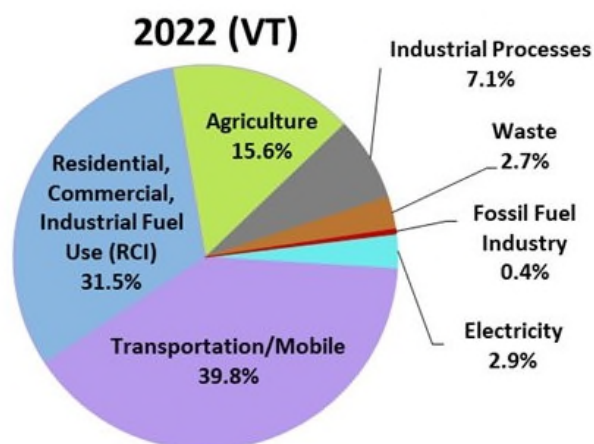
In service of these key actions, this Comprehensive Plan aligns Essex Junction's local land use and municipal policies to help advance the State of Vermont's Comprehensive Energy Plan.

Climate Change

Temperature and precipitation records for the latter half of the 20th century show that Chittenden County's climate has changed: winters became warmer and summers became hotter. Lake Champlain freezes over later and less frequently, and the growing season lasts longer. While it is unknown exactly how future climate trends will specifically affect Chittenden County, precipitation throughout the northeast is projected to increase as much as 10 percent over the century. Climate model forecasts for the Northeast US predict that during this century temperatures will continue to increase, as will extreme heat days and heat waves. As captured in the Global Warming Solutions Act (GSWA), there is consensus in Vermont that that changes in climate worldwide are a result of human activities, mainly the burning of fossil fuels. Current and predicted changes in climate will have broad implications for environmental quality, natural communities, public health, built environment, and local economy. The 1990-2022 Vermont Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Forecast determined that 8.09 metric million tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (MMTCO₂e) were generated in the state in 2022. As shown in Figure X, there are two main sectors that generate

most of these emissions: transportation accounts for 39.8 of state's emissions, and heating fuels account for 31.5%.

Figure 1. Vermont's Emissions by Sector in 2022



Source: 1990-2022 Vermont Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Forecast.

The GSWA set goals to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to:

- 26% of 2005 levels (7.26 MMTCO₂e) by 2025
- 40% of 1990 levels (5.23 MMTCO₂e) by 2030, and
- 80% of 1990 levels (1.74 MMTCO₂e) by 2050.

The latest (2022) version of the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan is aligned with the GWSA and lays out the following targets for the energy sector to achieve the required greenhouse gas emissions reductions:

- To obtain 90% of all energy across all sectors (transportation, heating and electricity) from renewable sources by 2050, with the interim goals of 25% renewable by 2025 and 45% renewable by 2035.
- In the transportation sector, 10% of energy needs will be met with renewable energy by 2025, and 45% by 2040.
- In the thermal sector, 30% of energy needs will be met with renewable energy by 2025, and 70% by 2042.
- In the electric sector, 100% of energy needs will be met with carbon-free resources by 2032, with at least 75% from renewable energy.

As noted in the Vermont Climate Action Plan, climate change mitigation and adaptation measures are varied and include many strategies the City is already undertaking for other reasons. For example, the City's efforts to increase sidewalks and bike paths will provide residents with an alternative mode of transportation that does not produce greenhouse gas emissions. The Climate Action Plan identifies priority strategies and actions, and provides guidance on actions for interested municipalities, employers, and individuals. The Plan includes actions for both reducing the ways we contribute to climate change (climate mitigation) and to adapt in ways that make us more resilient to a changing climate (climate adaptation). Appendix D of this Comprehensive Plan provides additional context for the state's climate and energy goals.

Essex Junction Energy & Climate Actions

This Comprehensive Plan was developed according to the Department of Public Service's energy planning standards for municipal plans. This includes setting goals and actions to shift away from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy in the transportation and heating sectors, to increase energy efficiency in all sectors, and to site additional renewable energy generators within the community.

When this plan is given a determination of energy compliance from the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, it will have substantial deference in the Public Utility Commission's (PUC) review of whether an energy project meets the orderly development criterion in the Section 248 process. Appendix D contains further discussion of the Section 248 process and municipal enhanced energy planning in Vermont along with analysis of existing energy use and targeted future energy changes that support the actions in this chapter. To align this plan with the State of Vermont's Comprehensive Energy Plan goals, the Village and the Town of Essex developed a joint enhanced energy plan. The enhanced energy plan, found in Appendix D, is the Essex Community's plan for shifting away from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy in the transportation and heating sectors, increase energy efficiency in all sectors and site additional renewable energy generators.

The Comprehensive Energy Plan aims to reduce total energy consumption per capita by 15% by 2025, and by more than 33% by 2050; to weatherize 25% of all homes by 2020; and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from within the state to 50% of 1990 levels by 2028, and to 75% of those same levels by 2050. The challenges set forth in the Comprehensive Energy Plan are not easily met.

Commented [DS15]: Insert text box from Appendix D about substantial deference here?

The energy plan describes how the Essex Community intends to act to implement the state energy goals outlined above. Meeting these goals will require ambitious action to transform the way the Essex Community uses, stores, and produces energy.

The following transformations ~~are needed for the Essex Community~~ Essex Junction as are the most likely pathway to meet these goals by 2050, given current technologies:

- Establish enough renewable energy generation sites to generate ~~between 211,386 to 353,629~~ 65,992 MWh of electricity, ~~which is 40,937 MWh more than the present.~~¹
- Increase electric vehicles to ~~89%~~ 98% of passenger vehicles registered in ~~the Essex Community~~ Essex Junction.
- ~~Fuel 96% of heavy-duty vehicles with biodiesel or other renewable carbon-free fuel sources.~~
- Weatherize ~~100%~~ 50% of homes and ~~38% of~~ commercial and industrial establishments.
- Heat ~~60%~~ 93% of homes with electric heat pumps and ~~14%~~ 3.4% of homes with wood.
- Reduce Heat 38% of businesses with electric heat pumps and 11% with wood.

The following actions indicate how the City intends to implement the energy goals outlined above across the three major sectors of buildings, transportation, and the electricity grid, plus an additional category for general actions. Meeting these goals will require ambitious action by the City, its partners, and the general public to transform the way the community uses, stores, and produces energy.

Buildings

Goal/Vision: Essex Junction's goals and targets for thermal energy use shall be met equitably, and primarily through energy conservation, efficiency, and fuel switching while transitioning away from fossil fuels. To achieve this, the City General Policy: Essex Junction will support implement regulatory and non-regulatory initiatives that result in decreased greenhouse gas emissions, reduced energy consumption, and increased renewable energy generation.

¹ The renewable energy target is expressed in MWh because the target is intended to be technology neutral. The Essex Community's target takes into account both electricity used in the commercial, industrial, and residential sectors. The target is modeled based on population and electricity usage. The Essex Community makes up 43% of electricity used in Chittenden County; therefore, the community's target is among the highest in the County.

Goal 1: Conduct outreach to promote thermal energy efficiency and fuel switching in non-municipal buildings.

Action 1.1: Host education programs and collaborate with Efficiency Vermont, utilities, and energy vendors to encourage energy efficiency in existing residential and commercial buildings and to educate residents and businesses about heating pumps, advanced wood heating, geothermal heating, renewable natural gas, and other renewable technologies. Provide residents with information on heating assistance programs on an annual basis to make those in need aware of the programs.

Action 1.2: Facilitate a workshop and/or conduct building walk-throughs for owners of rental housing to encourage implementation of energy efficiency measures.

Action 1.3: Support efforts to use geothermal heating or Thermal Energy Networks by:

- i) Explicitly allowing such systems in the Land Development Code, subject to appropriate review of environmental impacts;
- ii) Actively coordinating with municipal departments and state agencies to address potential barriers when geothermal or TEN projects are proposed;
- iii) Addressing requests from property owners and project developers exploring the use of geothermal and TEN systems.

Goal 2: Update the Land Development Code to incentivize or require measures to reach the City's thermal sector energy goals.

Through the Public Works Director, monitor energy used by City buildings annually to describe progress towards energy goals

Action 2.1: Work towards a plan to replace existing municipally-owned streetlamps with solar-generating lamps, provided that these can be harmonized to the extent feasible with design constraints. Within 3 years, the Planning Commission will study whether to require compliance with the Vermont Building Energy Stretch Code for all development under the Essex Junction Land Development Code.

Action 2.2: In 3 years, the Planning Commission will complete a policy review of clean heat ordinances enacted by the Cities of Burlington and South Burlington, which require new construction and renovation to use heating and ventilation systems that reduce or eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. If the review is favorable, implement an ordinance within a further 2 years.

Action 2.3: Within the next 8 years, the Planning Commission and City Council will study whether to establish a municipal building code enforcement program similar to Burlington and Winooski. This could include implementing a time of sale policy to ensure existing buildings, especially older rental housing, are in compliance with the State of Vermont Building Energy Code.

Transportation

Essex Junction has a unique opportunity within the county to support greater transportation choice and reduce automobile dependency since it is a relatively compact community with an extensive sidewalk network where local services are within walking distance to residences. The City is also served by public bus and rail. Residents have more transportation choices than many neighboring communities that have a more suburban/rural land use pattern. Further support of higher density infill and redevelopment in core areas of the City will steer people towards choices that reduce energy demand.

Goals and actions listed here are specific to energy use in transportation. Refer to the transportation section of the Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan for additional goals and actions related to land use and transportation and improving transportation efficiency.

Vision: Essex Junction will be served by varied modes of transportation with automobile use balanced by increased availability of public transit, sidewalks, and multi-use trails to reduce transportation energy demand and reduce costs for all users. Transportation systems shall be integrated with land use policy in such a way that improvements are compatible with the overarching settlement pattern of compact settlement surrounded by a productive rural countryside.

Goal 1: Maintain partnerships with organizations that help advance transportation sustainability for Essex Junction.

Action 1.1: Community Development staff (or the Energy Committee, if created) will partner with Drive Electric Vermont, nonprofit organizations, vehicle dealers, and/or state agencies to organize high-visibility events where people can see and test drive EVs, such as energy fairs and summer festivals. Events should also leverage local newspaper and public access coverage to showcase residents and organizations that are helping to propel the transition to EVs.

Action 1.2: City Management will use the City website to promote the Drive Electric Vermont webpage, which connects users to financial incentives, dealers, and recharging stations for EVs.

Action 1.3: Within 2 years, Community Development staff will coordinate with CarShare Vermont to identify potential public parking locations for a CarShare program in Essex Junction. Within a further 1 year, make a CarShare program available within the City.

Action 1.4: City Management will use the City website to promote the Go Vermont webpage, which provides ride share, vanpool, public transit, and park and-ride options.

Action 1.5: City Management will invite Green Mountain Transit to present annually to the public, staff, and municipal officials about public transit services available, funding status, and opportunities for improvement.

Goal 2: Develop a Citywide Multimodal Transportation Plan.

Action 2.1: Amend the Land Development Code to provide incentives (such as reduced parking requirement) for employer programs that encourage transit use, telecommuting, carpooling, vanpooling, walking, and biking for employees' commute trips.

Action 2.2: Community Development staff will connect developers and employers with the Chittenden Area Transportation Management Program and the commuter benefit programs they offer.

Action 2.3: City Management will use the City website to provide information on such programs and benefits that may be available for using them.

Action 2.4: Assess the number of park-and-ride spaces and explore opportunities to expand the number of spaces and provide greater connectivity between public transit and park and ride locations.

Action 2.5: Annually, coordinate with the school district to maximize ridership for public school buses and minimize use of private vehicles for student transport. Explore working with a bus company who is converting its bus fleet to electric.

Action 2.6: Within 3 years, Community Development staff will lead an effort to explore establishing a microtransit system similar to the Senior Bus for additional destinations and events available to the entire community, focusing on those who have limited access to private transportation. If such a program seems viable, implement it within a further 2 years.

Goal 3: Ensure the availability and affordability of electric vehicle charging in Essex Junction.

Action 3.1: Within 2 years, the Community Development Department will assess current access to workplace charging (to the extent known) and identify strategic locations in busy areas (large employers or areas of high visitation in the City Center) where charging stations should be added or expanded.

Action 3.2: Within 1 year, the Planning Commission will revise the Land Development Code to require installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure in all new and significantly renovated development.

Action 3.3: Community Development staff will participate in the regional electric vehicle charging and operational support plan starting in FY27 to increase charging availability and use. This may include providing additional charging stations at prominent publicly owned locations such as municipal or school parking lots, as well as parking areas near public transportation and park and rides.

Action 3.4: Lead by example by replacing the City's vehicle fleet with electric or biodiesel fuel vehicles as fossil fuel-burning vehicles reach the end of their useful life.

Commented [DS16]: This may belong better in the main plan's transportation section

Commented [DS16R2]: Additional considerations: parking in City Center given anticipated TOD density

Commented [DS17]: Does Essex Junction need a park-and-ride? Or is the Amtrak station serving that purpose? Should something be said about that here?

Commented [DS17R2]: Scott agrees - talk less about park and ride and more about public transit

Goal 4: Enhance transportation safety for all modes.

1. Continue to work with Local Motion to make the Essex Community safe and welcoming for bicycling.
2. Continue to identify issues and opportunities for walk-bike improvements and connections, including gaps and barriers in the sidewalk network to ensure better walkability particularly for those with limited mobility.
3. Ensure that sidewalks and paths are well lit to provide a sense of safety for users at night.

Commented [DS18]: This may belong better in the main plan's transportation section

Commented [DS19]: Should these be adapted into actions about Bicycle-Friendly Community status?

Renewable Energy Generation

Vision: The City of Essex Junction shall support regulatory and non-regulatory initiatives that result in decreased greenhouse gas emissions, reduced energy consumption, and increased renewable energy generation within its borders sufficient to meet regional and state goals.

This means that within the City:

- An additional 6,265 MWh per year of new renewable electricity will be produced by 2032;
- 29,972 MWh per year will be produced by 2040; and
- 40,937 MWh per year will be produced by 2050.

Goal 1: Accommodate sufficient renewable electricity generation in Essex Junction to meet state and regional goals.

Action 1.1: Within 8 years, the Planning Commission (or Energy Committee, if created) will create a map of specific preferred sites for renewable energy generation to send a message to potential developers that these are the locations where the City would like to see development of renewable electricity generation.

Action 1.2: Promote community solar net metering through public education and outreach.

Action 1.3: The Planning Commission and City Council will encourage and support proposed renewable energy projects that are consistent with the siting policies of this plan through letters of support to the Public Utilities Commission.

Action 1.4: Within 5 years, the Planning Commission (or Energy Committee, if created) identify the potential for all municipally owned sites to accommodate renewable energy generation, such rooftop solar on municipal buildings and parking lot canopies on public lots.

Action 1.5: Study the capabilities of existing buildings to support roof-mounted solar PV systems in zoning districts where it is deemed appropriate for a better estimate of this potential.

Goal 2: Improve electric efficiency in the community.

Commented [DS20]: Community solar net metering is currently functionally impossible to permit under PUC rules, so this action was broadened to all net metering.

Commented [DS20R2]: Also, is this an action the City wants to commit to? What would this look like? May need to significantly reframe.

Action 2.1: Within 2 years, the Planning Commission (or Energy Committee, if created) will create a plan to replace existing municipally owned-streetlamps with solar-generating lamps, provided that these can be harmonized to the extent feasible with design constraints.

Action 2.2: Continue to require energy efficient street lighting for new developments and when replacing existing lamps.

Land Use and Government

The relationship between transportation, land use and energy consumption is extremely important and is an area in which the community can have a large impact through development regulations and infrastructure. According to the Vermont Energy Action Network's 2025 Progress Report², about 40% of the state's energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions are tied to the transportation sector. Therefore, a reduction in vehicle miles traveled by passenger vehicles can have a big impact on energy consumption. Certain land use patterns can reduce dependency on the automobile by providing greater transportation options through compact mixed-use developments where people can choose to walk, bike, use public transportation or drive an automobile. Refer to the Land Use section of the Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan for more information and actions related to land use and energy in the City.

City government can lead by example in all of the above sectors by ensuring the efficiency and sustainability of municipal buildings and operations. In addition, the City is uniquely positioned to provide incentive programs and public financial support for those who otherwise wouldn't have access to the resources to invest in efficiency and sustainability initiatives.

Vision: Essex Junction remains committed to development patterns and building energy use that result in the efficient use of energy. Higher density infill and redevelopment is supported in the City Center and Pearl Street corridor to reduce demand on energy. The City is a leader and an active partner in meeting the community's energy goals.

Goal 1: Promote an energy efficient land use pattern of compact development in areas planned for growth surrounded by open lands.

² Vermont Energy Action Network (2025). *Annual Progress Report for Vermont on Energy, Affordability, and Emissions*. <https://eanvt.org/2025-annual-report/>

Action 1.1: Continue to require and incentivize high-density commercial and mixed-use buildings in the City Center and Pearl Street corridor within the Land Development Code.

Action 1.2: To reduce the need to travel longer distances for basic needs, Community Development and economic development staff will work specifically to bring a grocery store to the community within the next 8 years.

Action 1.3: Within 5 years, the Planning Commission and City Council will study establishing an energy fee or revolving loan fund that would fund weatherization improvements and renewable energy infrastructure such as rooftop solar and electric vehicle charging stations.

Goal 2: Increase the City's capacity to lead the community in thermal energy efficiency and fuel switching efforts.

Action 2.1: Establish an Energy Committee to help promote existing weatherization and energy efficiency programs to the community and guide the City's efforts to improve its own buildings.

Action 2.2: Fund a Buildings Coordinator position to develop energy implementation plans, monitor energy used by City buildings annually to track progress towards goals, coordinate municipal thermal energy use efforts, and encourage residential and commercial energy conservation. As an initial step, make this goal a priority for the City Manager.

Goal 3: Improve the electric efficiency of municipal operations.

Action 3.1: Within 2 years, the Planning Commission (or Energy Committee or Buildings Coordinator, if established) will create a plan to replace existing municipally owned-streetlamps with solar-generating lamps, provided that these can be harmonized to the extent feasible with design constraints.

Commented [DS21]: Diane: positions cost money and that's a barrier, but maybe this plan has to set a goal of getting staff support to advance the plan's goals. @Darren Schibler

Commented [DS22]: This used to be Harlan Smith, but now falls to Ricky Jones or whichever department owns the building. Interest in a more comprehensive study / coordination

Appendix D - Essex Junction Enhanced Energy Plan

Adopted by the Village of Essex Junction Trustees August 13, 2019

Readopted by the Essex Junction City Council August 11, 2027

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Purpose

This energy plan is a vision for Essex Junction to align its local land use and municipal policies to help advance the State of Vermont's Comprehensive Energy Plan. This plan is incorporated by reference in the 2026 Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan and was developed according to the Department of Public Service's energy planning standards for municipal plans. When this plan is given a determination of energy compliance from the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission it will have substantial deference in the Public Utility Commission's (PUC) review of whether an energy project meets the orderly development criterion in the Section 248 process. The Energy Compliance section of this plan contains further discussion of the Section 248 process and Municipal Enhanced Energy Planning in Vermont.

Statewide Context

Since releasing a [Comprehensive Energy Plan](#) (CEP) in 2011, Vermont has been working toward a goal of obtaining most of its energy from renewable resources by 2050. Renewable energy, as defined by [24 V.S.A. §4303\(24\)](#), "means energy available for collection or conversion from direct sunlight, wind, running water, organically derived fuels, including wood and agricultural sources, waste heat, and geothermal sources." The 2022 CEP sets the following statewide goals for renewable energy:

- To obtain 90% of all energy across all sectors (transportation, heating and electricity) from renewable sources by 2050, with the interim goals of 25% renewable by 2025 and 45% renewable by 2035.
 - In the electric sector, 100% of energy needs will be from carbon-free resources by 2032, with at least 75% from renewable energy.
 - In the thermal sector, 30% of energy needs from renewable energy by 2025, and 70% by 2042.
 - In the transportation sector, 10% of energy needs will be from renewable energy by 2025, and 45% by 2040.

The CEP goals are consistent with the goals set in [10 V.S.A. § 578](#) by the [2020 Global Warming Solutions Act](#):

- Reduce statewide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 26% below 2005 levels by 2025;
- Reduce GHG emissions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030;
- Reduce GHG emissions to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

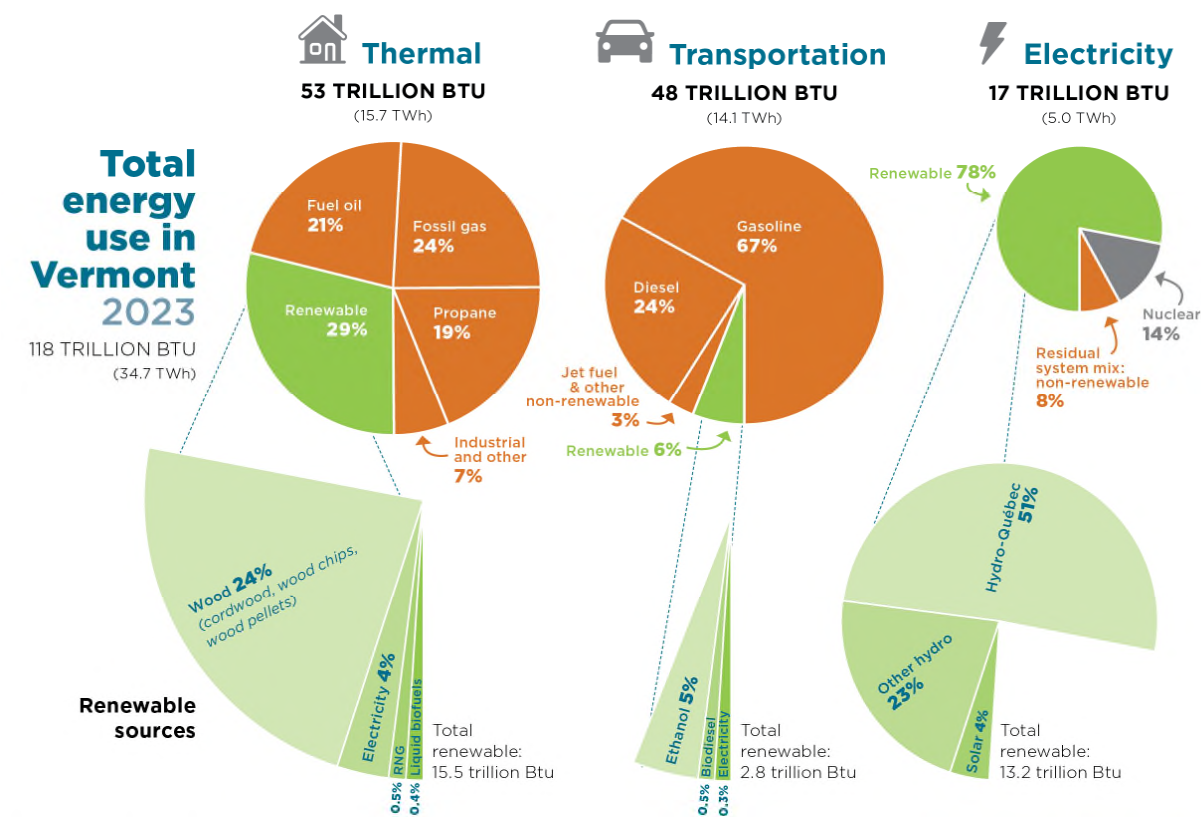
The state's 2022 CEP makes many policy recommendations to move toward these goals. The recommendations aim to foster economic security and independence, safeguard environmental legacy, drive in-state innovation and job creation, and increase community involvement and investment as well as ensure equitable energy burden and access to renewable energy opportunities. The plan prioritizes improvements in energy conservation and efficiency and the development of renewable, local sources of energy. The CEP acknowledges that these goals are ambitious and will require transformational changes to our built environment and utility infrastructure, how we produce and distribute energy, and individual choices to consume less and invest in alternatives that may not be the most convenient or the lowest cost. As of 2023:

- Vermont only obtains 27% of its overall energy from renewable resources.
 - The electricity sector is the most renewable at 78% (after accounting for Renewable Energy Credits).ⁱ
 - The thermal sector is 29% renewable.
 - The transportation sector is most dependent on fossil fuels at 6% renewable.¹

Commented [DS1]: Review to confirm these statements are accurate.

ⁱ Renewable Energy Credits are marketable property rights to renewable attributes of power generation that can be claimed by Vermont electric utilities to meet their requirements under the Renewable Energy Standard Law ([30 V.S.A. Chapter 89](#)).

Figure 1. Total Vermont Energy Use, 2023.

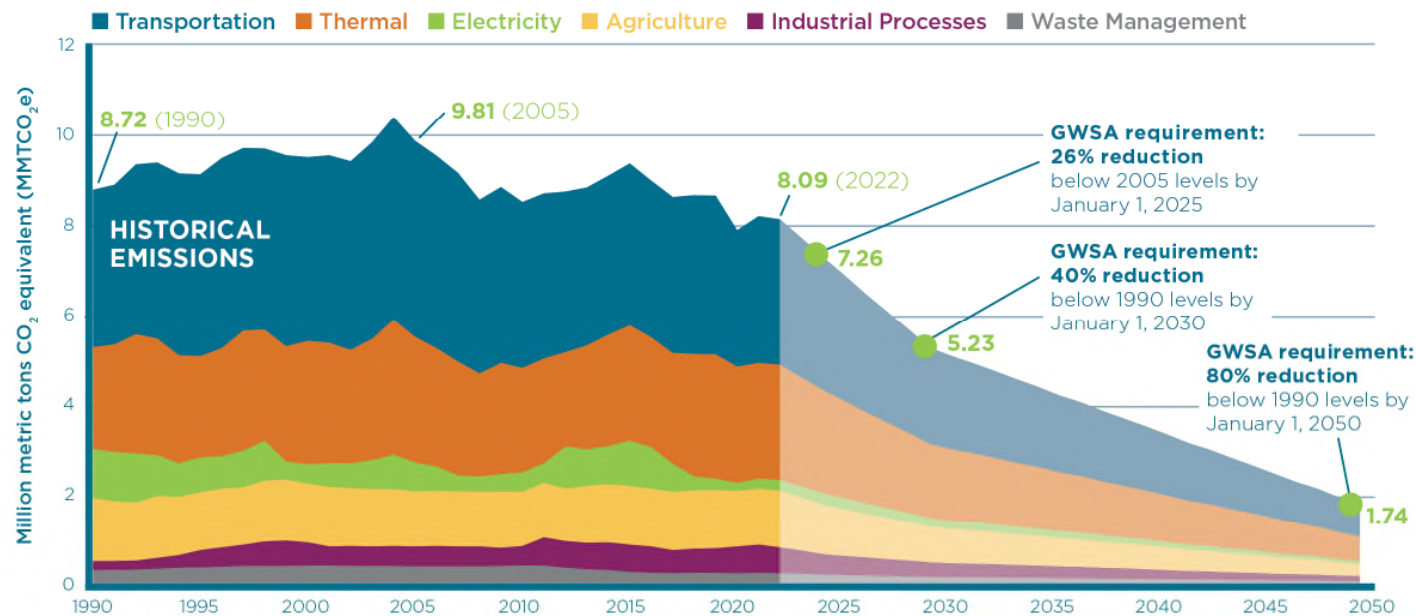


Sources: EIA State Energy Data System, 2025; Efficiency Vermont, 2025; Vermont Department of Public Service, 2025; Vermont Department of Taxes, 2025; EAN, 2025. **Notes:** The electricity pie chart does not include electricity used for thermal and transportation purposes, as that electricity usage is shown in the respective thermal and transportation pie charts. Percentages may not sum exactly to 100% due to independent rounding. Electricity used for thermal purposes is estimated based on the number of cold-climate heat pumps and heat pump water heaters installed in VT, as well as the estimated number of homes with electric resistance heat/hot water. Electricity used for transportation is estimated based on the number of electric vehicles registered in VT. The electricity pie chart shows Vermont's electricity portfolio after accounting for Renewable Energy Credits (RECs). One result of this is that wind and biomass generation in Vermont do not show up as electricity resources, since RECs from those resources are primarily sold out of state. Fuel oil includes a small amount of kerosene, which accounts for 0.7% of total thermal energy use. "Industrial and other" includes residual fuel oil, asphalt and road oil, lubricants, and special naphthas.



Figure 2. Vermont Historical Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Future Requirements.

Vermont's historical GHG emissions and future requirements



Source: Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, "Vermont Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Forecast: 1990-2022," 2025. **Note:** A small amount of emissions from the "fossil fuel industry" category (i.e., fugitive emissions from fossil gas pipelines in VT), accounting for 0.4% of Vermont's overall emissions in 2022, is not visible on this graph.



While the state has made some progress on meeting its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, particularly in the electricity sector, much more aggressive measures would be needed to meet the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) targets for 2025, 2030, and 2050. Achieving these goals for renewable energy use and GHG emissions will certainly require action on a state (and even national) scale to shift the choices available to consumers. For example:

- Individuals will not be willing to make the switch from gasoline to electric vehicles until the national automotive industry scales up production of electric vehicles while providing a network of charging infrastructure similar to the gasoline fueling station system of the last century.
- Switching building heating systems to more efficient electric options will not be cost-effective until substantial investments in weatherization are made, all of which will require expansion of the skilled trades workforce.
- Transitioning our electric grid to 100% carbon-free and 75% renewable (whether generated locally or regionally) while accommodating the increased demand and reliability to meet transportation and heating needs will require upgrades in electric grid infrastructure at the transmission, distribution, and domestic service levels.

Local Context

While these challenges may seem daunting for a small city, understanding this context can help local leaders anticipate how these large-scale changes will affect our own community. It is also important because without greater participation and mobilization at a local level, these goals are unlikely to be achieved. Finally, placing Essex Junction in this larger context will help the City focus on the most impactful actions we can take locally, regardless of whether and when these larger trends occur.

This plan describes how Essex Junction intends to act to implement the state energy goals outlined above. Meeting these goals will require ambitious action to transform the way the City uses, stores, and produces energy.

The following are transformations needed for Essex Junction, as the most likely pathway to meet these goals by 2050, given current technologies:

- Establish enough renewable energy generation sites to generate 40,937 MWh of electricity.
- Transition passenger vehicles registered in Essex Junction to 98% electric or hybrid
- Weatherize 50% of homes and commercial and industrial establishments
- Heat 93% of homes with electric heat pumps and 3.4% of homes with wood
- Heat 38% of businesses with electric heat pumps and 12% with wood

To meet these goals, Essex Junction has prioritized multiple actions under the following general categories: (i) Land Use; (ii) Transportation; (iii) Thermal and Electric Energy Conservation and Efficiency; and (iv) Renewable Energy Generation and Storage. See the implementation section for additional information.

Commented [DS2]: Figure out a way to say this given the heat pump # target

Energy Compliance-Enhanced Energy Planning

In 2016, Act 174 established a process for “enhanced energy planning” for municipalities. Enhanced energy planning sets up the framework for municipalities to update their municipal plans according to a set of energy standards developed by the Vermont Department of Public Service (PSD). If a municipal plan meets these standards, the plan is given a determination of energy compliance from the regional planning commission. The detailed standards and guidance for municipal enhanced energy plans are available on PSD’s [Act 174 webpage](#).

A determination of energy compliance, which was granted to Essex Junction’s plan by CCRPC on September 18, 2019, means that the PUC will give the municipal plan *substantial deference*. This means that a land conservation measure or specific policy shall be applied by the PUC in determining whether a jurisdictional energy siting project meets the orderly development criterion in the Section 248 process, unless there is a clear and convincing demonstration that other factors affecting the general good of the State outweigh the application of the measure or policy. This is a higher standard of review than a municipal plan would otherwise receive in the Section 248 siting process.

Siting of Renewable Energy Generation

Essex Junction can have input over the siting of renewable generation facilities in a few ways through the policies contained in this plan. The community can define preferred sites for generation facilities and include policies to identify the scale and type of generation facilities to occur in specific areas within the community. Also, the City can restrict renewable generation facilities where appropriate.

[Vermont’s Net Metering Rules](#) (Rule 5.100, effective 7/1/2017, revised 11/12/2024) define preferred sites for renewable energy development (any renewable technology besides hydroelectric). Compared to non-preferred sites, net metering on preferred sites can be larger (up to 500 kW instead of 150 kW) and such projects receive financial benefits in the net metering rates. Systems up to 15kW and rooftop solar systems up to 500kW go through a registration process rather than the full Public Utilities Commission process. However, all other projects do not have an expedited review process and must meet the same requirements as any other system. Preferred sites as defined under the PUC rule include:

- On a structure not dedicated for electricity generation
- Landfills
- Parking lot canopies over permitted paved areas
- Gravel pits
- Previously developed land
- Superfund sites
- Brownfields
- Municipal-designated sites
- On the same parcel or directly adjacent parcel as a customer taking 50% or more of the output

ACT 174 AND SUBSTANTIAL DEFERENCE

In 2016, Act 174 established a process for “enhanced energy planning,” which encourages municipalities to write plans that are “energy compliant.” This plan meets the standards for energy planning established by Act 174 and outlined in 24 V.S.A. §4352. Therefore, the policies of this plan will receive substantial deference in §248 proceedings. The Public Utility Commission shall apply the land conservation measures or specific policies in accordance with their terms unless there is a clear and convincing demonstration that other factors affecting the general good of the State outweigh the application of the measure or policy. This is a higher standard of review than “due consideration,” which the municipal plan’s policies would otherwise receive.

Municipally designated preferred sites must be identified through a joint letter of support by the Town and/or Village planning commissions, Town and Village legislative bodies and regional planning commission. Project developers are encouraged to reach out to the Planning Commission(s) and Community Development staff to discuss projects in advance of submitting a petition.

Constraints

Some areas are not appropriate for any type of development, including types of renewable energy generation facilities existing as of the date of this plan. The State of Vermont has defined certain resources as known and possible constraints, which are protected by the ECOS Regional Plan and state agency review during the Public Utility Commission review process. Municipalities can add local constraints based on their own land use policies; Essex Junction has not identified any local constraints to development beyond those identified by the State. In determining whether known or possible constraints are present, on-site field verification should be conducted.

Known constraints indicate areas in which development, including renewable energy generation, is not suitable. See Map 2 for the location of known constraints within the community. Possible constraints indicate areas in which the effects of development, including current types of renewable energy generation facilities, may need to be mitigated, or where development may prove unsuitable after site investigation. See Map 3 for the location of possible constraints in the community.

Table 1. Development Constraints

State Known Constraints	State Possible Constraints
- FEMA Designated Floodway - VT DEC mapped River Corridors - National Wilderness Areas - State-significant Natural Communities - Vernal Pools (confirmed) - Class 1 and 2 wetlands (VSWI and advisory layers)	- Agricultural Soils* - Hydric Soils - Act 250 Agricultural Soil Mitigation Areas - FEMA Special Flood Hazard Areas - Protected Lands (State-owned and private conservation lands) - Deer Wintering Areas - The following features from Vermont Conservation Design: - Highest Priority Interior Forest Blocks - Highest Priority Connectivity Blocks - Highest Priority Physical Landscape Blocks - Highest Priority Surface Water and Riparian Areas

~~*While the State will consider the impacts of development on agricultural soils, it is not the intent of the City of Essex Junction to protect primary agricultural soils from development considering agricultural operations (outside of community gardens) are not feasible on small parcels isolated from more intact open agricultural areas. Further, mitigation of these soils through state development approval processes does not seem appropriate in such an urban environment.~~

Siting Policies

The policies in this section are the land conservation measures to be applied in the PUC’s review of a petition for a renewable generation facility. The City of Essex Junction will use the following siting policies to determine support for identifying a municipally designated preferred site and in the review of Section 248 applications.

1. The City of Essex Junction strongly encourages development of renewable energy generation facilities on rooftops, parking lots, on parcels or directly adjacent parcels to a customer that has been allocated more than fifty percent of the net-metered system’s electrical output, previously-developed sites, brownfields, landfills, former mineral resource extraction areas, and municipally designated sites.

Commented [DS3]: This section has been copied to the Natural Environmental Resources chapter of the main document. It should be deleted here once the Siting Policies have been moved to the main document as well.

Commented [DS4]: Consider deleting. Municipalities do not have jurisdiction over this issue, so stating an opinion about State rules doesn’t really make sense in a municipal plan.

Commented [DS5]: Now that more of this appendix has been moved into the main plan, it may make sense to also move these policies to the Land Use chapter. Otherwise, references should be made to these siting policies in the Land Use, Energy, and Natural Environmental Resources chapters of the main document.

2. For sites and buildings in the state-designated City Center that are listed or eligible for the State or Federal Register of Historic Places, redevelopment (including adding rooftop solar or wind generators) should follow the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Structures ([36 CFR § 67.7](#)). See Appendix A for additional guidance on integrating renewable energy generation facilities into historic buildings.
3. Locate ground-mounted solar larger than 15 kW AC (except for parking lot canopy solar installations) and wind turbines with a hub height larger than 30 meters (98 ft.) outside of the state designated Center and historic districts on the state or national register.
4. Development, which includes renewable energy generation facilities, shall not take place in areas with known constraints. Development shall first explore alternatives to creating adverse impacts on possible constraints; if adverse impacts cannot be avoided, they shall be minimized and mitigated where possible. In determining whether known or possible constraints are present, on-site field verification shall be conducted.
5. With the exception of preferred sites listed in policy 1, development of large-scale renewable energy generation facilities (capacity greater than 500kW) shall be located only within industrial zones.
6. Locate energy generation proximate to existing distribution and transmission infrastructure with adequate capacity and near areas with high electric load (See [Green Mountain Power's Solar Map](#)) to reduce the need for new distribution and transmission extensions.
- ~~7.~~ Where feasible, pair renewable energy generation with electrical energy storage to ensure energy is utilized to the fullest potential, to increase resiliency/reliability of electricity during outages and decrease fossil fuel usage during peak periods. Renewable energy generation projects that can accommodate energy storage are strongly encouraged.

Commented [DS6]: If ground-mounted solar / wind are prohibited under other policies, the only likely projects are rooftop solar or wind. Unless there is a historic preservation concern, nothing in the LDC's design control practices really applies here, so this was rewritten to focus on historic preservation.

However, keep in mind that most rooftop solar will not go through a PUC hearing process - instead, there is a registration process under the Net-Metering Rule. There is limited ability for the City to ensure these standards are enforced; the City Attorney should be consulted on whether this policy could be used in the aesthetic standards of the Rule. Furthermore, this policy must apply to all types of development.

Commented [DS7]: Revised to be consistent with the ECOS Plan siting policy on centers and historic districts.

Commented [DS8]: This has been moved to the Natural Environmental Resources chapter in order to align with the discussion of constraints.

Implementation

Land Use and Development Policies

The relationship between transportation, land use and energy consumption is extremely important and is an area in which the community can have a large impact through development regulations and infrastructure. According to the Vermont Energy Action Network's 2025 Progress Report², about 40% of the state's energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions are tied to the transportation sector. Therefore, a reduction in vehicle miles traveled by passenger vehicles can have a big impact on energy consumption.

In recent years communities are realizing the important connection between transportation and land use, which impacts energy use. Certain land use patterns can reduce dependency on the automobile by providing greater transportation options through compact mixed-use developments where people can choose to walk, bike, use public transportation or drive an automobile.

Goal: Essex Junction is committed to development patterns and building energy use that result in the efficient use of energy.

General Policy: Higher density infill and redevelopment is supported in the core areas of the City to reduce demand on energy. (See the Land Use section of the Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan for more detail).

Actions

1. Consider requiring the Vermont Building Energy Stretch Code for all development in the Essex Junction Land Development Code.
2. In 3 years, complete a policy review of clean heat ordinances enacted by the Cities of Burlington and South Burlington, which require new construction and renovation to use heating and ventilation systems that reduce or eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. If the review is favorable, implement an ordinance within 2 years.
3. Within the next 8 years, study whether to establish a municipal building code enforcement program similar to Burlington and Winooski. This could include implementing a time of sale policy to ensure existing buildings, especially older rental housing, are in compliance with the State of Vermont Building Energy Code.
4. Within 1 year, revise the Land Development Code to require installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure in all new and significantly renovated development.
5. Continue to require and incentivize commercial and mixed-use buildings in the Land Development Code, and work specifically to bring basic needs like grocery stores to the community.
6. Explore the idea of an energy fee or revolving loan fund that would fund weatherization improvements and renewable energy infrastructure such as rooftop solar and electric vehicle charging stations.
7. Consider waivers and fee reductions for development that meets energy goals, such as installing electric vehicle charging infrastructure and providing ride-sharing options.
8. Continue to require energy efficient street lighting for new developments and when replacing existing lamps.
9. Refer to the land use section the Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan for more information related to land use in the City.

"Stretch code" means a building energy code that achieves greater energy savings than the base code. All development subject to Act 250 must follow the energy stretch code. Efficiency Vermont offers an incentive-based program to improve insulation/air sealing and heating systems to support energy projects.

Commented [DS9]: Currently the Implementation section (including goals, policies, and actions) comes before the sections containing important context. Should these be reorganized, either to put the context first, or to interweave goals, policies, and actions within the context for each topic (thermal, transportation, and electricity)?

Commented [DS10]: Is it worth specifically naming City Center and Pearl St / TOD area?

Commented [DS11]: Thoughts on the structure of "Goal / General Policy / Action?" Does this make sense, and is it consistent with the rest of the plan?

Commented [DS11R2]: Hierarchy is good
Make references to other sections (e.g., transportation) - keep it organized thematically

Commented [DS12]: CCRPC staff generally have not yet "SMARTened" actions in this plan. The PC should consider how it wants to prioritize actions in the plan for all chapters - as we work through them, or at the end of the Comp Plan update once all actions have been reviewed?

Commented [DS13]: Move to thermal section

Commented [DS14]: Move to transportation section

Commented [DS15]: Move to thermal section

Commented [DS16]: Move to electricity section

Transportation

Essex Junction has a unique opportunity within the county to support greater transportation choice and reduce automobile dependency since it is a relatively compact community with an extensive sidewalk network where local services are within walking distance to residences. The City is also served by public bus and rail. Residents have more transportation choices than many neighboring communities that have a more suburban/rural land use pattern. Further support of higher density infill and redevelopment in core areas of the City will steer people towards choices that reduce energy demand. Refer to the transportation section of the Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan for more information related to transportation in the community.

Goal: Essex Junction should be served by varied modes of transportation with automobile use balanced by increased availability of public transit, sidewalks, and multi-use trails to reduce transportation energy demand and reduce costs for all users.

General Policy: Transportation systems shall be integrated with land use policy in such a way that improvements are compatible with the overarching settlement pattern of compact settlement surrounded by a productive rural countryside.

Goal 1: Actions Reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips by establishing strategic park-and-ride locations, and by partnering with ridesharing, car sharing, and public transit organizations.

1. Partner with Drive Electric Vermont, nonprofit organizations, vehicle dealers, and/or state agencies to organize high-visibility events where people can see and test drive EVs, such as energy fairs and summer festivals. Particular attention should be made to electric pickup trucks and motorcycles. Events should also leverage local newspaper and public access coverage to showcase residents and organizations that are helping to propel the transition to EVs.
2. Promote the Drive Electric Vermont webpage, which connects users to financial incentives, dealers, and recharging stations for EVs. Promote the Go Vermont webpage, which provides ride share, vanpool, public transit, and park-and-ride options.
3. Support employer programs to encourage transit use, telecommuting, carpooling, vanpooling, walking, and biking for employees' commute trips. Encourage employers to offer such programs and provide information on tax benefits that may be available for doing so.

Action 1.1: Assess current access to public and workplace charging (to the extent known) and identify strategic locations in busy areas (large employers or areas of high visitation in the City Center) where charging stations should be added or expanded.

Action 1.2: Provide charging stations at prominent publicly owned locations such as municipal or school parking lots, as well as parking areas near public transportation and park-and-rides. Municipalities may develop their own charging stations, or work with private companies.

4. Lead by example by replacing the City's vehicle fleet with electric or biodiesel fuel vehicles as fossil fuel burning vehicles reach the end of their useful life.

5. Assess the number of park-and-ride spaces and explore opportunities to expand the number of spaces and provide greater connectivity between public transit and park-and-ride locations.

6. Work with the school district to maximize ridership for public school buses and minimize use of private vehicles for student transport. Explore working with a bus company who is converting its bus fleet to electric.

7. Invite Green Mountain Transit to present annually to the public, staff, and municipal officials about public transit services available, funding status, and opportunities for improvement.

Commented [DS17]: Bikeshare program @Darren Schibler (Scott's idea)

Commented [DS17R2]: Also CarShare

Commented [DS18]: Implement TDM policies

Commented [DS18R2]: Mention CATMA

Commented [DS19]: Does Essex Junction need a park-and-ride? Or is the Amtrak station serving that purpose? Should something be said about that here?

8. Continue to work with Local Motion to make the Essex Community safe and welcoming for bicycling.
9. Continue to identify issues and opportunities for walk-bike improvements and connections, including gaps and barriers in the sidewalk network to ensure better walkability particularly for those with limited mobility.
10. Ensure that sidewalks and paths are well lit to provide a sense of safety for users at night.
11. Refer to the transportation section of the Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan for more information related to transportation in the community.

Commented [DS20]: Should these be adapted into actions about Bicycle-Friendly Community status?

Thermal Energy Conservation and Efficiency

Because heating of buildings accounts for 45% of energy use and 40% of greenhouse gas emissions,³ achieving building energy efficiency is an important pathway to meeting local, regional, and state energy goals. High efficiency buildings (both new construction or retrofits) offer multiple benefits: saving money on utility bills, improved safety and maintenance, and comfort. Additionally, the money saved from doing energy improvements gets recirculated into the community instead of being exported out of the region as purchased energy.

Building weatherization, which includes air sealing, insulation, and upgrading heating systems, is the most cost-effective way to reduce heating energy consumption and heating bills. However, the initial capital investment for weatherization improvements on a home can be unaffordable for some households and businesses. Various organizations like Efficiency Vermont and financial institutions provide incentives and low financing to make thermal and electric efficiency retrofits possible. The actions in this section provide a plan for how the City can work with these organizations to educate residents and businesses about the programs and technologies available.

Another approach to ensuring efficient buildings is regulation. The State of Vermont has adopted the Vermont Residential and Commercial Building Energy Standards (RBES and CBES) to require that new development and alterations to existing buildings are using all types of energy efficiently. The municipal zoning administrator is responsible for providing the energy code to land use permit applicants, who must certify that they have complied with the code. Before occupancy, the Vermont Division of Fire Safety inspects commercial and large residential buildings for compliance with building codes.

However, there are challenges to achieving compliance. State inspectors do not specifically check for CBES compliance. This reflects feedback gathered from Essex Junction business owners in 2026 that heating, cooling, and ventilation systems in newer buildings were not performing adequately. For small residential buildings regulated under RBES, there is no inspection nor enforcement mechanism, and a 2025 study noted that only 54% of new builds complied with the current RBES; this number has likely declined as the standards have become more stringent.⁴ Because renters typically pay for utilities, including heat, inefficient buildings create higher energy burden among those who do not have the authority or possibly the financial resources to complete upgrades that would reduce their utility costs.

In focus groups for the 2026 Comprehensive Plan, community members suggested that the City take a more active role in building safety and energy code enforcement to improve energy equity, which could involve greater coordination with the state or establishing its own building code enforcement program. Another approach could be to implement a time of sale energy retrofit ordinance for rental housing like the City of Burlington has done. Time of sale retrofits target older buildings, particularly multi-family housing, that aren't being reached by voluntary incentive programs.

In addition to heating efficiency, some Vermont municipalities have begun requiring that heating systems use renewable energy sources through clean heat ordinances for new construction and alterations; it is still unclear whether such ordinances will be successful or face legal challenges.

Community feedback also acknowledged the need to balance regulatory and incentive-based approaches to achieving building energy efficiency. When upgrades are required, there is no basis for incentive programs (though need-based assistance may still be available). Therefore, people are less likely to meet standards unless there are significant consequences to not doing so. Regulatory approaches may be more appropriate for new, larger-scale buildings, while education and incentives may be more effective for small, existing buildings that need upgrades.

Goal: Essex Junction's goals and targets for thermal energy use shall be met equitably, and primarily through energy conservation, efficiency, and fuel-switching while transitioning away from fossil fuels.

General Policy: Essex Junction shall support regulatory and non-regulatory initiatives that result in decreased greenhouse gas emissions, reduced energy consumption, and increased renewable energy generation.

—Actions

Action 1.1: Establish an Energy Committee to help promote existing weatherization and energy efficiency programs to the community and guide the City's efforts to improve its own buildings.

Action 1.2: Fund a Buildings Coordinator position to develop energy implementation plans, coordinate municipal efforts and encourage residential and commercial energy conservation. As an initial step, make this goal a priority for the Public Works Director.

1. Continue to explore energy efficiency and renewable energy options for all municipally-owned and sponsored facilities, from buildings to street lighting. Findings and recommendations should be based on an audit of all municipally-owned and sponsored facilities and a subsequent cost-benefit analysis for upgrading or replacing those facilities.

Action 1.3: Host education programs and collaborate with Efficiency Vermont, utilities, and energy vendors to encourage energy efficiency in existing residential and commercial buildings and to educate residents and businesses about heating pumps, advanced wood heating, geothermal heating, renewable natural gas, and other renewable technologies. Provide residents with information on heating assistance programs on an annual basis to make those in need aware of the programs.

Action 1.4: Promote wood stove change-out programs that take older non-EPA certified stoves out of service and replace them with more efficient and lower-emitting cord and pellet stoves.

2. Facilitate a workshop and/or conduct building walk-throughs for owners of rental housing to encourage implementation of energy efficiency measures.

3. Through the Public Works Director, monitor energy used by City buildings annually to describe progress towards energy goals.

4. Work towards a plan to replace existing municipally-owned streetlamps with solar-generating lamps, provided that these can be harmonized to the extent feasible with design constraints.

Renewable Energy

Goal: Generate an additional 6,265 MWh of new renewable energy by 2032; 29,972 MWh by 2040; and 40,937 MWh by 2050.

General Policy: The City of Essex Junction shall support regulatory and non-regulatory initiatives that result in decreased greenhouse gas emissions, reduced energy consumption, and increased renewable energy generation.

—Actions (or Energy Committee, if created)

Commented [DS21]: Diane: positions cost money and that's a barrier, but maybe this plan has to set a goal of getting staff support to advance the plan's goals. @Darren Schibler

Commented [DS22]: This used to be Harlan Smith, but now falls to Ricky Jones or whichever department owns the building. Interest in a more comprehensive study / coordination

Commented [DS23]: Does this belong in thermal? Do we move to a general section?

Commented [DS24]: [Ann Land](#) Can we incorporate the findings and recommendations of Essex Junction's MERP assessment here? Would it make sense to have an action to continue funding energy audits and assessments of municipal buildings?

Commented [AJ24R2]: Sure. Some of the measures were completed in the Town Hall project. Here is the link to the spreadsheet with all the measures: [MERP Chittenden Municipal Assessment Reports Summary-2024.xlsx](#)

Commented [DS24R3]: Added to the heating section intro under Existing & Future Estimates of Energy Consumption, may need to reorganize later

Commented [DS25]: While this is a good action, only about 1% of Essex Junction homes heat with wood. Is this an action the City wants to invest in currently?

Commented [DS25R2]: Scott says: not worth it

Commented [DS26]: This is really more of a policy; the goal should be generating enough renewable electricity to meet state / regional goals (and maybe talk about why)

~~Action 1.1: Identify and map specific preferred sites for renewable energy generation to send a message to potential developers that these are the locations where the City would like to see renewable energy generation development.~~

~~Action 1.2: Promote community solar net metering through public education and outreach.~~

~~Action 1.3: The Planning Commission and City Council will encourage and support proposed renewable energy projects that are consistent with the siting policies of this plan through letters of support to the Public Utilities Commission.~~

~~Action 1.4: Within 5 years, the Planning Commission (or Energy Committee, if created) identify the potential for all municipally owned sites to accommodate renewable energy generation, such rooftop solar on municipal buildings and parking lot canopies on public lots.~~

~~1. Study the capabilities of existing buildings to support roof-mounted solar PV systems in zoning districts where it is deemed appropriate for a better estimate of this potential. Within 2 years, the Planning Commission (or Energy Committee, if created) will create~~

Commented [DS27]: Community solar net metering is currently functionally impossible to permit under PUC rules, so this action was broadened to all net metering.

Commented [DS27R2]: Also, is this an action the City wants to commit to? What would this look like? May need to significantly reframe.

Existing and Future Estimates of Energy Consumption

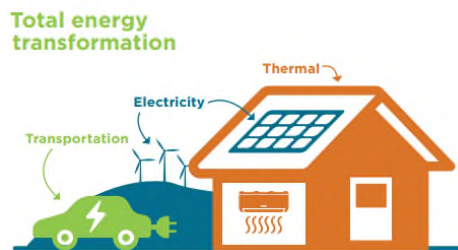
The data in this section provide an overview of current energy use and a sense of the trajectories and pace of change needed to meet the State's energy goals. Note that these data are a starting point for considering a renewable energy future. It also shows one pathway Essex Junction could take contribute to meeting the State's energy goals. Targets for each sector (transportation, heating, and electricity) are also provided to demonstrate milestones along the way toward meeting 90% of total energy needs with renewable energy. However, this is not intended to prescribe a single future path. The actions or technology changes that the Essex Community will take will very likely change between now and 2050, as new and improved technologies become available.

Regardless, Essex Junction must plan for a major shift away from fossil fuels in the transportation and heating sectors to renewable sources of energy. In addition, the community must increase efficiency in transportation, heating and electric energy use. Finally, the City must accommodate new renewable energy generators.

Targets for future energy use are drawn from the Long-Range Energy Alternatives Planning (LEAP) analysis for Chittenden County, completed by the Stockholm Environment Institute and the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management. The LEAP model is an accounting framework that shows one possible path for Chittenden County and its municipalities to meet the state energy goals. See the [2026 Chittenden County ECOS Plan Supplement 6](#) for information about the methodology.

Commented [DS28]: Update link

To achieve these targets a concerted effort in Essex Junction is needed, including residents, businesses, community groups, and government, to conserve energy and transition to renewable sources. The Planning Commission has recommended multiple projects in each area based on community feedback and discussions with City staff. Completing the projects will lead to energy savings and an improved quality of life for all residents of the City through financial savings, improved air quality, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.



Heating

The building inventory in the Essex Community includes government buildings, commercial buildings, and homes. Municipally owned structures range from the recently remodeled and more energy efficient City Offices to historic inefficient buildings such as the public works depot. With a goal of saving tax dollars by improving energy efficiency of municipally owned structures, the City has conducted an overall energy assessment and is developing a retrofit plan for several municipally owned properties. Examples of these include the Village Wastewater Treatment Facility’s combined heat and electric power system, which uses methane captured from anaerobic digestion to feed the water treatment process and provide service to the facility’s buildings. The City offices at 2 Lincoln Street were significantly renovated in 2025 to seal air leaks, provide better insulation, optimize heating systems and transition to heat pumps, and upgrade lighting to LEDs, all of which have reduced heating and electricity use. These renovations also included installing a Level 2 electric vehicle charger. Improvements to other municipal buildings, such as the public works depot and the fire station, face financial, design, and permitting challenges that will require more resources than other improvements due to their age. However, these investments will save energy and money in the long run and showcase energy efficiency renovations for historic buildings.

Commented [DS29]: Confirm these details

Residential Heating

According to the American Community Survey, in 2022 about 72% percent of homes in the Essex Community used natural gas for heating, and an additional 10.7% used some other form of fossil fuel (see Table 2). This does not account for the fossil fuels in the electricity supply mix (typically about 10%) for homes heating with electricity. The remaining portion of homes heat with renewable sources of either electricity or wood.

It is difficult to know the type of electrical equipment used in homes heated with electricity. Homes heated with electricity could be using electric resistance heat or cold climate heat pumps. Historically, electric heating (through electric resistance) has been expensive and inefficient, but new technology such as heat pumps (which heat and cool air using a refrigerant process) and weatherization of homes will make heating with electricity viable from both a financial and energy planning perspective. The efficiency of wood heating has also improved with the advent of wood pellets and high-efficiency stoves. Further improvements in home heating, such as combined air and water heating with energy storage systems, will also benefit new construction.

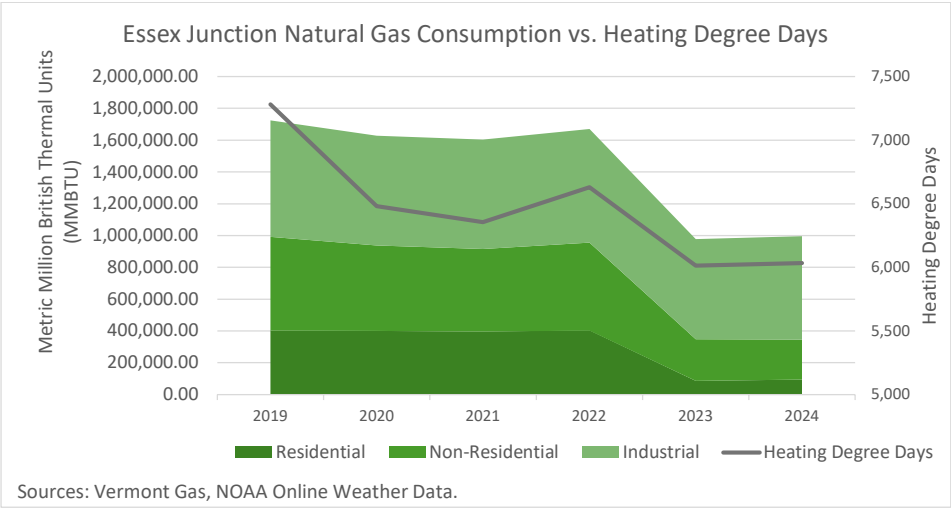
Table 2 Home Heating Fuel Type

Type	Estimate (# of homes)	Percent of Total	Margin of Error
Total	4,761	100%	+/-225
Utility gas	3,311	72.0%	+/-272
Propane	184	3.9%	+/-103
Electricity	831	17.5%	+/-203
Fuel oil, kerosene	322	6.8%	+/-150
Coal or coke	0	0.0%	+/-16
Wood	45	0.9%	+/-39
Solar energy	0	0%	+/-16
Other fuel	0	0%	+/-16
No fuel used	56	1.2%	+/-58

Source: 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B25040.

Figure 1 shows that natural gas consumption for residential, commercial, and industrial users continues to track closely with variations in heating degree days (HDD)ⁱ in the year. Note that data on usage of delivered fuels (propane, fuel oil, and kerosene) is not readily available, and efforts to establish a reporting system for Vermont have stalled with the repeal of the Clean Heat Act.

Figure 3: Natural Gas Consumption and Heating Degree Days



Efficiency Vermont and Vermont Gas report data on residential projects undertaking energy efficiency measures in Essex Junction (see Figure 2). These measures include weatherizing buildings (sealing air leaks and improving insulation), using more efficient heating and cooling systems such as heat pumps, and installing smart thermostat systems to avoid peaks and troughs in heat output are all important steps building owners should take to help reduce heating energy use. The data indicate a steady, but slow trend in residential weatherization projects; keep in mind that data on building weatherization is difficult to track and the data below is not a complete measure of the homes weatherized to date. A more significant trend is that, according to Efficiency Vermont, about 18.5% of Essex Junction homes have installed heat pumps in the last three years.

Commented [DS30]: Might be worth looking back at old Efficiency VT reports to better quantify what % of residences have been weatherized.

Table 32: Essex Junction Residential Energy Efficiency Projects

Essex Junction Residential Energy Efficiency Projects	2014-2020 (est.)*	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total	% of Total Homes
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ⁱ Heating Degree Days is a measure of building heating demand; for a single day, it is the difference between the average air temperature and 65 degrees Fahrenheit (the air temperature above which buildings generally don't require heating).

Total Residential Projects (includes projects below and others)	895	307	300	327	278	2,107	42.5%
Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®	72	4	6	3	4	89	1.8%
Other Weatherization Projects	28	7	8	11	6	60	1.2%
Residential New Construction Projects	284	1	0	0	0	285	5.7%
Subtotal of weatherized homes	384	12	14	14	10	434	8.8%
Other Selected Measure and Engagement Counts							
Home Energy Visits	9	3	2	5	6	25	0.5%
Heat Pump Water Heater Installations	33	21	16	21	25	116	2.3%
Cold Climate Heat Pump Installations	259	285	120	252	194	1,110	22.4%
Wood Heating Installations	7	9	3	3	5	27	0.5%
Sources: Efficiency Vermont, RPC Report Produced 6/2024; CCRPC Housing Database (there were 4,955 total Essex Junction homes in 2023)							
*Before 2020, data for Essex Junction was combined with Essex Town. This figure represents an estimate based on each municipality's share of total housing units (approximately 50%).							

Looking to the future, Tables 3 and 4 lay out goals for Essex Junction's use of thermal energy, which include reducing the amount heating needed through weatherization and transitioning to heating systems that do not use fossil fuels.

Table 43 Essex Junction Targets for Residential Thermal Energy Use (2025-2050)

Essex Junction Targets for Residential Thermal Energy Use	2025	2035	2050
Projected number of future residences*	5,017	5,957	7,708
Residential thermal energy use (MMBtu)	463,247	269,274	165,792
Energy saved by weatherization or other thermal efficiency measures (MMBtu)	55,647	142,399	189,355
Estimated number of Homes weatherized	1,081	2,336	3,780
Percent of residences weatherized	22%	40%	50%
Heat pump energy consumed by residences (MMBtu)	81,584	79,588	77,592
Estimated number of heat pumps in homes	1,527	4,410	7,188
Percent of residences using heat pumps	30%	74%	93%
Wood heat (cord wood + wood pellets) consumed by residences (MMBTU)	11,897	18,601	23,305
Estimated number of residences using wood heat	114	187	262
Residences using wood heat (%)	2.3%	3.1%	3.4%
Utility gas Heat Energy consumed by residences (MMBtu)	283,710	148,125	12,540
Estimated number of residences using utility gas	2,726	1,493	130
Percent of residences using utility gas	54%	25%	2%
Sources: LEAP Model, Department of Public Service			
*Growth rate for future residences is based on municipal 10-year average annual change of new homes built between 2012-2022, annual rate is 1.73%. This may not align with growth rates anticipated for housing targets required under 24 V.S.A. § 4382(a)(10).			

Residential energy costs are often overlooked due to the current low cost of natural gas, the stable cost of electricity and the high cost of heating efficiency improvements and switching from equipment dependent on fossil fuels to those using renewable energy. Efficiency Vermont and Vermont Gas provide technical assistance, rebates, and referrals to ENERGY STAR®-certified contractors and low-interest energy efficiency loans for homeowners, landlords, and business owners, all of which can help reduce the up-front cost.

While the City has already come close to meeting its 2025 goals for electrification, this does not appear to have influenced residential consumption of fossil fuels for heating. This may indicate that residents are still relying primarily on fossil fuel heat, only using heat pumps when there is less overall heating demand. Residents may also have installed heat pumps primarily for cooling and may not use them for heating, and the incentives available have made heat pumps more appealing as a luxury, rather than a cost-saving investment.

One possible reason for the slow progress on weatherization is that the savings from these improvements may take 5 years, 10 years, or even longer to cover the initial cost, which may not be appealing to those who do not plan to occupy the property that long. In addition, unlike other improvements a homeowner can undertake, having high energy efficiency does not improve a home’s value or make it more competitive on the real estate market, especially in Essex Junction’s highly constrained housing market.

Even so, energy costs and potential savings are an important factor in home affordability, which ultimately determines who can live in the community. If Essex Junction hopes to remain affordable and welcoming to people of all income levels, the City (perhaps through a newly established Energy Committee) should provide education to potential home buyers and renters on how to evaluate a home’s energy costs; the City could also educate realtors on why energy performance is an important factor for renters and buyers as well as sellers. These efforts may help increase demand for high-performing homes and therefore willingness to invest in improvements.

The City should also work with partners at Efficiency Vermont and Vermont Gas to understand whether residential efficiency and electrification incentives are having the intended impact, why residents are choosing electrification over weatherization, and why this has not changed consumption trends. This may lead to modifying the residential incentives available or improving marketing and education efforts. If incentives and education do not lead to progress, the City may need to consider regulatory approaches to achieving its residential thermal energy targets.

Commercial Heating

The LEAP model also sets targets for commercial thermal efficiency and electrification (see Table 4). Efficiency Vermont also reports on commercial and industrial establishments undertaking energy efficiency measures in Essex Junction (Table 5). Municipal-level data on weatherization is not available, but regional data shows that the vast majority of these measures are lighting upgrades (i.e., switching from incandescent or fluorescent to LED lighting) or related to electrical equipment efficiency, and weatherization or heating efficiency projects represent less than 2% of projects. Still, these data only include projects completed through Efficiency Vermont programs, so they likely undercount the number of projects, especially for commercial establishments where minimizing costs are a higher priority than for residences.

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Table 54. Essex Junction Targets for Commercial Thermal Energy Use

Essex Junction Targets for Commercial Thermal Energy Use	2025	2035	2050
Projected Number of future commercial establishments*	869	944	1,067
Percent of Commercial Establishments Weatherized	22%	40%	50%
Energy Saved by Weatherization (MMBtu)	39,552	78,154	110,538
Number of Heat Pumps installed in Commercial Buildings**	1,622	4,906	6,275
Commercial Establishments Using Wood Heating (%)	9%	10%	12%
Commercial Thermal Energy Use Attributable to Wood Heating (MMBtu)	59,318	72,621	89,956

Sources: VT Department of Labor, ECOS Plan Forecasts, CCRPC Bottom-Up Approach for Commercial Sector

**Growth rate for future commercial establishments is based on the ECOS Plan employment forecast rate of 0.83%*

*** Contemplates multiple mini split heat pumps per commercial establishment. However, larger commercial establishments would likely use a centrally ducted system.*

Table 65. Essex Junction Commercial & Industrial Energy Efficiency Projects

Essex Junction Commercial & Industrial Energy Efficiency Projects	2014-2020 (est.)*	2021	2022	2023	Total
Total Commercial & Industrial Customers Served	1,737	129	137	140	2,143
Total Commercial & Industrial Projects	984	95	94	95	1,268
Small & Medium Business Walkthroughs	0	0	0	40	40
Cold Climate Heat Pump Installations	100	42	9	8	159
Heat Pump Water Heater Installations	1	0	2	1	4
Wood Heating Installations	0	0	0	0	0

Table 76. Chittenden County Commercial Energy Efficiency Measures

Commercial Measures Installed	Percent of Projects
Air Conditioning Efficiency	0.33%
Compressed Air	0.04%
Cooking and Laundry	0.03%
Design Assistance	0.09%
Flexible Load Management	0.02%
Hot Water	0.14%
Industrial Process Efficiency	0.03%
Lighting	96.78%
Motors and Motor Controls	0.14%
Refrigeration	0.80%
Space Heating	1.51%
Thermal Shell	0.02%
Ventilation	0.07%

The costs and long-term savings of heating efficiency improvements and switching from equipment dependent on fossil fuels to those using renewable energy will largely be borne by tenants of commercial buildings, who may or may not be the building owners. Through outreach conducted in 2026, several Essex Junction business owners who lease commercial space reported that their landlord has neglected to address issues of energy efficiency or building code compliance. In some cases, tenants have been required to pay for repairs and upgrades, even though they do not have the resources to do so and may not benefit from them beyond the term of their lease. Not only does this dynamic prevent the City from meeting its energy and climate goals, it creates a less welcoming climate for businesses, which in turn makes the major commercial areas less attractive to customers. The City should conduct outreach to commercial landlords to better understand how they can better support their

commercial tenants and work towards community goals for business support and energy use. Business owners and residents have also advocated for the City to take a stronger role in landlord-tenant relations and possibly code enforcement.

Electricity

Electricity usage has not been tracked for Essex Junction separately from the Town until 2024, and there is a gap in data reporting for 2025, but the best estimates for the City are reported in Table 7, and county-wide trends are reported in Table 8. These indicate that electrical usage has remained relatively steady around annual fluctuations due to winter and summer temperatures, even as there has been growth in the number of residential premises. However, in recent years there has been an upward trend in average residential usage, likely due to shift towards electric heating systems and vehicles. Therefore, it is even more important to continue promoting electrical efficiency in appliances and smart

technologies that reduce demand during peak times, which often requires use of non-renewable electricity sources imported from the regional grid.

Table 87. Essex Junction Annual Electricity Use

Sector	2021-2023 Average
Commercial & Industrial (kWh)	405,137,643
Residential (kWh)	35,589,609
Total (kWh)	440,727,251
Count of Residential Premises	5,722
Average Residential Usage (kWh)	6,220
Source: Efficiency Vermont, 2024 RPC Report Produced 6/21/2024. Data for Essex and Essex Junction were not separated prior to 2023, therefore an average usage by municipality was calculated for the most recently available data.	

Though Essex Junction’s average residential electricity consumption is lower than the county’s, the City accounts for an outsized portion of regional commercial and industrial electricity use due to the presence of the GlobalFoundries plant for a semiconductor manufacturing. GlobalFoundries, which comprises over 90% of the electricity consumed within the City, now operates its own electric utility subject to state goals for electrical efficiency and use of renewable electricity sources. This includes

implementing plans to build solar panels on hundreds of acres of parking lots across GlobalFoundries’ campus that will produce dozens of megawatts of electricity once complete.

Table 98. Chittenden County Annual Electricity Use

Chittenden County Annual Electricity Use (kWh)			
Sector	2021	2022	2023
Commercial & Industrial	1,279,142,373	1,327,755,966	1,148,337,163
Residential	467,639,941	469,417,104	473,361,725
Total	1,746,782,314	1,797,173,070	1,621,698,888
Average Residential Usage	7,533	7,521	7,610
Count of Residential Premises	69,789	70,357	70,708

Source: Efficiency Vermont, 2024 RPC Report Produced 6/21/2024.

The LEAP model (see Table 9) has estimated future electricity demands and intermediate targets for electricity savings and renewable generation in line with the Vermont CEP to demonstrate the importance of maintaining and accelerating this momentum.

Table 109. Essex Junction Electric Efficiency Targets

Essex Junction Electric Efficiency Targets	2025	2035	2050
Total cumulative electric energy saved from improvements in area residential equipment efficiency, in kWh	833,048	4,632,597	8,375,878
Residences that have increased their Electric Efficiency	319	1,772	3,204
Total cumulative electric energy saved from improvements in area commercial equipment efficiency, in kWh	173,571	847,457	700,039
Commercial and Industrial Establishments that have Increased Their Electric Efficiency	82	400	400
Source: Energy Efficiency Utility Potential Study, CCRPC, and the Department of Public Service			

Renewable Electricity Generation

Table 10 shows the current inventory of renewable electricity generation sites within Essex Junction, both public and private. Green Mountain Power’s Essex #19 hydroelectric dam on the Winooski River at VT-2A accounts for about 68% of this total. For the purposes of documenting existing generation, the energy generated from the hydro dam is allocated equally between the City and the Town of Williston because the jurisdictional boundaries split the centerline line of the Winooski River. The next largest producer is the wastewater treatment facility’s combined heat and power system, which provides electricity to the facility (in addition to heat) as a by-product of methane digestion; this also reduces emissions of methane, one of the most potent greenhouse gases. The remaining generation within the City comes from roof-mounted or ground-mounted photovoltaic (PV) solar systems scattered throughout the community. Though located physically outside its boundaries, the City has secured a power purchase agreement with Green Lantern Solar, LLC, which supplies 80% of municipal buildings’ electricity needs from a 500 kW PV facility on River Road. This shows how the City has demonstrated leadership in deployment of renewable energy resources. Combined, renewable electricity resources supply approximately 5.9% of the estimated current (2023) electric energy used within the community, and about 72.5% of its residential usage (which excludes GlobalFoundries’ consumption).

Table 117 Existing Renewable Electricity Generation

Type	Number of Sites	Power (MW)	Energy (MWh)
Solar	292	4.95	6,505.63
Wind	0	0	0
Hydro	1	4.03	17,629.50
WWTP*	1	0.15	760
Biomass	1	0.15	919.80
Total	294	9.13	25,814.93
Source: Vermont Department of Public Service, Generation Scenarios Tool, Distributed Generation Survey + data as of 1/31/2023			
*Wastewater Treatment Plant combined heat and power system			

Regardless of ultimate use, the transformation to renewable sources of electricity will require increased generation from a variety of sources including biomass, hydro, solar, and wind. Table 11 outlines the targets for renewable generation set forth in the ECOS Regional Plan for Essex Junction, which were derived from an analysis of how the region could achieve its targets consistent with the state goals for energy use and the LEAP model. A total target (with milestones at 2032, 2040, and

2050) was allocated to each municipality based on population, current electricity demand, and land available for renewable electricity generation. The municipality’s existing generation was subtracted from the total target to calculate the incremental target, which is the new capacity that must be created by the target year.

Table 1244. Essex Junction Renewable Electricity Generation Targets

Essex Junction Renewable Electricity Generation Targets	2032	2040	2050
Total Target (MWh)	31,320	55,027	65,992
Incremental Generation Target – Any Technology (MWh)	6,265	29,972	40,937
Grid Distribution Capacity (MW)*	119.6	97.6	87.4
Sources: CCRPC and the Department of Public Service			
*Grid Distribution Capacity data includes both Essex and Essex Junction (data not available for Essex Junction separately)			

Grid distribution capacity is an important factor when it comes to creating new electricity generation within the community; Table 11 shows the anticipated remaining capacity assuming the targets for each milestone year have been

met. Thankfully, Essex Junction has more than enough capacity to accommodate its targets. Additionally, electricity storage technologies such as batteries, fuel cells, pumped hydroelectric, and compressed air systems can store excess power generated by intermittent renewable sources. These will become more important as their technology develops and the proportion of generation from renewable sources increases. The community should work with electric utility companies to support these infrastructure needs.

Supplying the community’s electricity needs primarily through local PV solar systems and wind turbines will require a significant portion of land area. Map 4 and Map 5 show the areas in the community where conditions are appropriate for solar and wind energy generation, such as slope, aspect, elevation, and modeled wind speed. These are classified into prime areas (appropriate conditions and no known or possible development constraints) and base areas (appropriate conditions, but with possible constraints to avoid or mitigate). The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Public Service (PSD) and the Vermont Center for Geographic Information (VCGI), has conducted a mapping analysis for the region that estimates renewable electricity generation capacity (see Table 12). This estimates the energy potential of various generation technologies based on models of the elevation, slope, and aspect of land or modeled wind speed. It removes areas of known constraints and applies a reduced capacity factor for areas of possible constraints where development density may be more limited. See the Constraints section of this plan for a full list of constraints; see Supplement 6 of the ECOS Regional Plan for more information on the mapping analysis conducted by CCRPC.

Table 13.12. Essex Junction Land Available for Renewable Electricity Generation

Essex Junction Land Available for Renewable Electricity Generation			
	Acres with Prime Potential	Acres with Base Potential	Total Energy Potential (MWh)
Solar	110	859	42,095
Wind	1	13	669
Solar Rooftop	105		61,399

Source: CCRPC and the Department of Public Service, Vermont Center for Geographic Information

Electricity generation potential from woody biomass is difficult to model and therefore not included in the analysis. Areas that could supply woody biomass are generally privately-owned forest lands or City properties, most of which are intended for conservation, and those that may be used for silviculture will also have to consider demand for saw timber and other forest products that will compete with uses of wood for energy. Furthermore, electric generation efficiency from woody biomass is low—around 25% at most—compared to other sources ([2016 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan](#), p. 339). Woody biomass would be better used for heating or combined heat and power.

Hydroelectric generation potential also is not modeled because it is unlikely to increase significantly in the community for several reasons. There are few additional sites for large facilities, and smaller facilities have limited generation potential. Furthermore, site design and permitting are extremely challenging due to the significant impacts on stream geomorphology and aquatic habitats. That said, the City of Essex Junction wholeheartedly supports development of micro-hydro and will seek to work with stakeholders to investigate the feasibility of such projects.

According to CCRPC’s mapping analysis, there is enough suitable land for development of renewable energy generation to meet the community’s targets through rooftop solar alone. However, while the mapping analysis attempts to accounts for factors like roof aspect, slope, and other reasons that a rooftop may not be suitable, it is ultimately an

approximation. Because these sites are already developed, solar generation may be compatible with other land uses if developed in a way that is in harmony with existing development patterns and existing aesthetic norms especially in the Village Center District and the Town's Historic Preservation and Business Design Control Districts. Preferred sites should be the focus of renewable energy development over undeveloped land, or historic districts. The Essex Energy Committee has partnered with solar developers to promote adoption of rooftop solar in the community by hosting informational events for both residential and commercial building owners.

The community should plan for other forms of generation, including parking lot canopy solar (which are captured in the "prime" and "base" potential areas, since existing developed areas are not removed from the analysis). GlobalFoundries is already taking advantage of their large areas of parking lots to redevelop them for ground-mounted solar (not as canopies). Other preferred sites for net metering systems include brownfields, landfills, and former mineral resource extraction areas. Wind turbines may also be located on previously-developed sites, but wind generation efficiency drops exponentially with turbine size, and only small-scale turbines should be sited near developed areas, so the generation potential for these sites would be limited. There are nevertheless good reasons to consider small-scale wind on municipal lands as a means of reducing electrical costs and setting an example of the small-but-important steps residents and businesses can take to work towards Essex Junction's goals. There are also many other technologies (i.e. hydro, district heating, biomass, and possibly networked geothermal) that could be used to offset the need to utilize land for electricity generation. The policies on siting renewable energy generation facilities should be reviewed and adjusted as steps are taken towards the goal of 90% renewable energy use by 2050.

Renewable Energy Development Siting

Renewable energy generation facilities shall not take place in areas with known constraints; if impacts to possible constraints cannot be avoided, they shall be mitigated. Renewable energy installers should be encouraged to develop in tandem with other uses that could occur on a given site to add value in a way that speaks to holistic development patterns rather than a standalone facility. This type of development could also locate renewable energy installations on the same site as high energy users and reduce the need for distribution and transmission line upgrades.

Facilities with a generation capacity greater than 500kW are considered utility-scale and shall be located in designated industrial or commercial zones, where constraints are less numerous, impacts are more easily mitigated, and there is less competition for other land uses than in other areas. Other areas would have to be considered on a case-by-case basis, with developers encouraged to interact directly with City staff and committees in advance of issuing an advance notice under Section 248.

Within the designated City Center District, all development (including renewable energy generation facilities) that impact sites and buildings that are listed or eligible for the State or Federal Register of Historic Places shall follow the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Structures ([36 CFR § 67.7](#)) to avert or minimize undue adverse impact on historic resources.

Transportation

As noted in the Transportation section of the Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan, the City has been and continues to be, a transportation hub. The only Amtrak station in Chittenden County exists in the City; an active bus terminal, and five state highways are also present. Promoting compact development, providing more options for walking, biking, and public transit, and reducing single-occupancy vehicle trips can reduce energy use in the transportation sector.

Essex Junction currently relies almost exclusively on fossil fuels for its transportation energy (Table 13). About 93% of light-duty vehicles (passenger cars and light trucks) used fossil fuels in 2022, and there are no electric heavy-duty vehicles on the market (though some may be able to use biofuels). Locomotives (Amtrak passenger rail and freight rail) still rely on diesel, and there are no plans to transition to electric as is more common in urban areas.

The LEAP model indicates that, to reach 2050 targets, total transportation energy use in the community (including light-duty and heavy-duty vehicles) must decrease significantly and steadily (Table 14). In addition, light-duty vehicles will create a significant demand for electricity by transitioning from fossil fuels, while heavy-duty vehicles will likely transition to using biodiesel almost exclusively (though this is not modeled in the latest LEAP data).

Table 1413. Essex Junction Current Household Transportation Energy Use

Essex Junction Current Household Transportation Energy Use	
Total Energy Consumption for Light Duty Vehicles (LDVs) (2022)	539,745 MMBTU
Total Energy Consumption for Fossil Fuel LDVs (2022)	535,461 MMBTU
Total Energy Consumption for Electric LDVs (2022)	4,284 MMBTU
Fossil Fuel Burning LDVs Registered to Households (2022)	12,926
All-Electric (Battery) LDVs (2023)	203
Plug-in Hybrid LDVs (2023)	155
Total Electric Light Duty Vehicles (2023)	358
Total Electric LDVs as % of Municipality’s Total Vehicles	2.8%
Sources: Transportation Research Center, Drive Electric Vermont; MMBTU = Metric Million British Thermal Units	

Table 1514. Essex Junction Projected Light Duty Vehicle (LDV) Transportation Energy Demand

Essex Junction Projected Light Duty Vehicle (LDV) Transportation Energy Demand	2025	2035	2050
Estimate of total light-duty vehicles*	13,426	14,787	17,090
Estimate for number of area battery electric and plug-in hybrid LDV	738	7,742	16,784
Light Duty Electric and Hybrid Electric Vehicles (% of Vehicle Fleet)	5.5%	52.4%	98%
Non-Electric Light Duty Energy Demand** (MMBtu)	797,706	378,402	50,519
Electricity Demand for Light Duty Transportation (MMBtu)	12,521	131,246	247,905
Biofuel share of biofuel-blended LDV transportation energy consumed	8%	10%	10%
Source: LEAP Model, UVM Transportation Research Center			
*Growth rate for LDV is based on the municipality’s 10-year average annual change of new homes built between 2012-2022, annual rate is 1.73%			
**Non-Electric vehicles include those that use gasoline, diesel, ethanol, compressed natural gas, and biodiesel			

The technological improvements and decreasing price of hybrid and all-electric vehicles (“EVs”) will allow for a steady transition from fossil fuel to renewable sources for light-duty vehicles. The community can become “electric vehicle ready” by requiring that buildings (including residences and places of work) are built and retrofitted with EV charging infrastructure, while also encouraging development of public charging stations. [Drive Electric Vermont](#) has information on the use of EVs.

Because of the urgent need to make progress towards these goals, Essex Junction should actively pursue both incentive-based and regulatory strategies to encourage conservation and efficiency. This could include a revolving loan fund for installing EV chargers and upgrading electrical service and panels to support them, or an energy fee that funds public

energy improvements (such as EV charging stations and rooftop solar grants or loans), with waivers or reduced rates for those who make their own improvements.

It is important to note that even though EVs can save money in the long term because electricity can be a cheaper source of energy than gasoline, so far EV adoption has primarily occurred among the affluent who can afford the larger up-front cost. There has also been a limited market for used (and therefore cheaper) EVs since the technology is newer, which means that households with lower incomes may not be able to afford new or used EVs. From 2020-2025, the State of Vermont attempted to address this inequity under the [Clean Transportation Incentive Programs](#), which offered financial assistance towards the purchase of used EVs, e-bikes, and high-efficiency used vehicles to low- and moderate-income households. However, the funding for that program expired and has not been recapitalized. However, there is now a larger market for used EVs, and e-bikes are more widely available than ever. The City should continue to promote adoption of these technologies through public outreach and education events (such as test ride / drive events) in partnership with DriveElectric Vermont and the Vermont Clean Cities Coalition, making sure to note the options available to households of different incomes.

Through some of these events, partners have heard hesitation to adopt these technologies from certain households for specific reasons. There are limited EV options for larger passenger vehicles needed by larger households. Residents who live in large multi-unit buildings have limited charging infrastructure available (making plug-in hybrids a better option). And many households are dependent on public transit, which limits their options for meeting certain needs (e.g., bringing a large amount of groceries home, or traveling with a child in a stroller). To address these barriers, the City can:

- Set up a microtransit or carpool program for residents who need to reach specific destinations not accessible by public transit; this could be modeled on the Essex Senior Van program
- Require new multi-unit dwelling development to include electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- Continue to require and incentivize commercial and mixed-use buildings in the Land Development Code, and work specifically to bring basic needs like grocery stores to the community
- Continue to address gaps and barriers in the sidewalk network to ensure better walkability, particularly for those with limited mobility (e.g., people in wheelchairs, using strollers or carts, etc.) by installing ADA-compliant curb cuts and sidewalk ramps, installing benches, etc.
- Continue to ensure that sidewalks and paths are well-lit to provide a sense of safety for users at night

Government

As the primary source of regulation and enforcement in the community, as well as a source of guidance, the City government can champion energy reform and efficiency.

The community needs to prepare for energy-related issues beyond its control. As the community and state take steps to improve efficiency, reduce consumption, and incorporate more renewable electricity into the mix, large-scale renewable generation sites such as solar farms may wish to locate in Essex Junction. Though the community may take pride in locally-produced, renewable energy, other Vermont towns can attest to the controversy that can arise when wind turbines are placed atop ridgelines or solar arrays fill previously undeveloped fields.

The [Vermont Public Utilities Commission \(PUC\)](#), rather than the community, issues permits for electric transmission and electric generation facilities. As a result, energy projects are not subject to direct municipal land use regulation, though

the changes made by Act 174 of 2016, provide new means of local control through solar setbacks, site designation, and this plan. Moreover, the community can rely on this plan to engage in the Section 248 process to ensure that local land use policies are considered and enforced in the orderly development criterion of the permitting process conducted by the PUC.

Appendix A

The standards in this section shall apply to all development (including renewable energy generation) located in the specified areas identified.

Design Control Best Practices

This section outlines the best practices for locating net-metered roof-mounted solar facilities up to 500 kW in the City of Essex Junction's Designated City Center/historic district. The best practices in this section are intended to preserve character-defining features of these areas while accommodating the need for renewable energy generation to the extent practical.

1. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
2. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
3. Utilization of low-profile solar panels is recommended. Panels shall be within ten percent (10%) of the average height of existing adjacent buildings and not be visible from the public right of way. Solar shingles laminates, glazing, or similar materials should not replace original or historic materials. Use of solar systems in windows or on walls, siding, and shutters should be avoided.
4. Panels should be installed flat and not alter the slope of the roof. Installation of panels must be reversible and not damage to the historic integrity of the resource and district.
5. Solar panels should be positioned behind existing architectural features such as parapets, dormers, and chimneys so they are not visible from the public right of way.
6. Use solar panels and mounting systems that are compatible in color to established roof materials. Mechanical equipment associated with the photovoltaic system should be unobtrusive.
7. Solar panels should be installed on rear slopes or other locations that are not visible from the public right-of-way. Panels should be installed flat and not alter the slope of the roof. Installation of panels must be reversible and not damage the historic integrity of the resource and district.
8. Flat roof structures should have solar panels set back from the roof edge to minimize visibility. Pitch and elevation should be adjusted so they are not visible from public right-of-way.
9. Use of solar systems in non-historic windows or on walls, siding, or shutters should not be visible from the public right of way.

¹ Vermont Energy Action Network. (2025). *Annual Progress Report for Vermont on Energy, Affordability, and Emissions*. <https://eanvt.org/2025-annual-report/>

² ~~Vermont Energy Action Network (2025). *Annual Progress Report for Vermont on Energy, Affordability, and Emissions*. <https://eanvt.org/2025-annual-report/>~~

³ ~~Ibid.~~

⁴Energy Futures Group (2025). *Vermont Residential Energy Code Administration Plan*.
https://www.vapda.org/uploads/1/3/1/8/131894470/vt_energy_code_administration_plan_2025.06.30.pdf



MEMO

To: Planning Commission

From: Chris Yuen, Community Development Director

Meeting Date: August 11, 2026

Agenda Item: 2026 Land Development Code (LDC) Amendments – Updated Draft

ISSUE:

Staff have prepared an updated draft of the Land Development Code (LDC) amendments for Planning Commission review and advance to public hearing if ready.

DISCUSSION:

Background

This memorandum summarizes the full set of proposed 2026 LDC amendments as they currently stand. It is written to be understandable on its own, including for readers who are seeing this work for the first time, and it reflects the changes integrated since the July 2nd meeting, the consulting team's responses to outstanding questions, and ongoing technical review.

An updated draft of the amendments is provided separately by email in three formats: a Microsoft Word version with track changes, a PDF with markup, and a clean PDF without markup. The Word version allows commissioners to toggle the tracked changes on and off.

Updated Schedule

The proposed schedule is as follows:

- August: Planning Commission reviews a refined ("good copy") draft on August 11th.
- September: Planning Commission Public Hearing- if the Commission is satisfied with the August draft the Planning Commission can warn a hearing for September 3rd.
- October: City Council Public Hearing and potential adoption- if no major changes result from the Planning Commission hearing, the City Council could hold a Public Hearing and adopt the Land Development Code edits on October 14th.

Commissioners should anticipate that adjustments may still arise as the draft moves through hearings and is sent to City Council.

Public Outreach Underway

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Development Code amendments to the City Council on July 22, 2026. Most recently, Commissioners Scott McCormick and Elijah Massey staffed a public information display on the form-based code during the August 4 National Night Out event at the Essex High School grounds. Public comments received so far have been summarized and separately attached.

This memorandum is organized as follows: (1) the form-based code amendments to the Village Center and TOD districts, which are the most significant part of this package; and (2) other code amendments by chapter

FORM-BASED CODE AMENDMENTS (Sections 604 and 608)

1. Overview

The centerpiece of this package is a form-based code for the Village Center (VC) and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) districts, developed through the Connect the Junction project with the consulting team. A form-based code differs from conventional zoning in what it focuses on. Conventional zoning mainly regulates the use of a property; a form-based code focuses on the physical form of buildings and how they shape the public realm, including height, how a building sits on its lot and meets the sidewalk, and street-level activity.

The central purpose is to replace today's subjective design review, which asks whether a building's design is "harmonious" with its surroundings, with clear, objective, measurable standards. This makes review more predictable for applicants and the City, applies consistently from project to project, and writes the community's design expectations into rules rather than leaving them to case-by-case judgment.

The standards are organized below by topic. The Planning Commission reviewed earlier versions of these standards at prior meetings; this section incorporates the refinements made since.

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The most prominent objective standard governs building height in relation to the width of the street. The code uses the concept of a "street room," the outdoor space framed by the buildings lining a street, and requires building height to stay in proportion to street width (a height-to-width ratio between 1:2 and 1:1) along the front of the building. Where a building would sit tall relative to its street, the upper floors must step back to bring the proportion back into range. This keeps the street-facing portion of buildings in human scale even where greater height is allowed behind it.

Several refinements resolve practical questions about how the ratio applies (Section 604.E.1 / 608.E.1): the standard applies on each frontage of a corner or double-frontage lot rather than just one face; it applies only to the principal building closest to the street, so rear buildings on larger sites are not caught by it; on streets with a right-of-way narrower than 50 feet, a 50-foot width is assumed for the calculation (with a 10-foot frontage setback that the City may use as sidewalk or pedestrian space, and relief where strict application would block an otherwise-permitted low-scale building); and rail right-of-way may be counted toward street width where a frontage is directly adjacent to rail, which is relevant in parts of the TOD district.

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A Parking Frontage Type, requested by the Planning Commission at the March 31st meeting, has been added to the TOD district and refined to allow a screened building option along 100 percent of the frontage, with landscaping and screening required. Soft-edge design principles, encouraging permeable, pedestrian-friendly transitions between buildings and the public realm, have been integrated across the frontage types and emphasized in the Linear Frontage. The Linear Frontage also clarifies that active commercial uses are intended and suggested rather than strictly required, providing flexibility if a space is repurposed or sits vacant over time.

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In both districts the code regulates where parking goes and how it is screened, so that parking does not detract from the pedestrian environment (Section 604.G / 608.G, referencing Chapter 7). Surface parking is directed to the rear of the lot behind the principal building; structured parking at the ground floor must be wrapped by a liner building along street frontages; and shared parking and joint access are encouraged.

New language in Section 604.F addresses a longstanding practical problem in the Village Center, where rental units often come without on-site parking and tenants have no clear way to lease nearby spaces. Where a residential development would provide less than 75 percent of the otherwise-required parking for its residential component, the DRB may require the applicant to demonstrate that reasonably accessible off-site parking is available and to take reasonable steps to help tenants access it (such as identifying specific facilities within 600 feet, providing evidence of the parking owner's

willingness to lease, including parking information in leases, and designating a manager to assist tenants in the first year).

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Rather than prescribing specific plantings, the code uses a Landscape Performance Score: a points-based system that assigns values to landscape elements based on environmental benefit, tree canopy contribution, and site quality, with a minimum score required for development in the VC and TOD districts (Section 604.H / 608.H). The minimum score is 30 points.

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The code now defines how the score applies to retrofits and additions. For additions, alterations, and expansions to existing development, the Landscape Performance Score may be calculated based on the "impacted area," now expressly defined as the portion of the site directly subject to the proposed improvements (new or modified buildings, parking, circulation, grading, and landscaped areas in the project), rather than the entire parcel (Section 604.H.2(c) / 608.H.2(c), with a corresponding clarification in the Applicability section). This resolves the open question from the June 4th memo about how to define the "affected area" for the scoring denominator.

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To encourage a broader diversity of unit sizes, the code requires that larger residential developments include a minimum share of multi-bedroom units (Section 604.D.2 / 608.D.2). At the June 4th meeting the Planning Commission asked whether the previously proposed 20 percent minimum could be strengthened. The consulting team advised that, given current market conditions and the local mix of household sizes, a requirement of up to 40 percent two-or-more-bedroom units is reasonable, but that going higher is not recommended. At the July 8 meeting, following internal discussion, the Planning Commission recommended a minimum requirement of 25 percent two-or-more-bedroom units in developments of 20 units or more, with an available DRB waiver option where determined to be necessary to support a district's housing goals. As requested by the DRB, a summary of peer municipalities regulations surrounding unit mix requirements have been included in a separate memo.

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The form-based standards are written to be scalable, so they work for small and large projects alike, and they include a Waivers and Exemptions provision giving the DRB flexibility to waive specific standards for good cause in unusual situations (Section 604.C / 608.C). Retrofits and additions that do not increase gross floor area by more than 30 percent may be permitted without full compliance, provided the degree of nonconformity is not increased and the intent of the standards is met. Site plan and landscaping plan submittals in these districts follow the existing Chapter 5 procedures (Section 502).

10. Single-Family Dwellings and the DRO Boundary

Single-family dwellings remain a permitted use in the Village Center and are exempt from the street room and frontage type standards, with a separate setback standard, so the area's many existing single-family and historic homes are not made nonconforming. The Design Review Overlay (DRO)

district is retained but its boundary is clipped to exclude the VC and TOD areas now covered by form-based standards; properties elsewhere in the DRO continue under design review as before.

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The boundary of the Historic Review Overlay District has been adjusted to now include the Village Center (VC) Zoning District. This allows a unified set of historic review rules across the city center and the City's five major corridors.

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14. Chapter 2 Definitions and Purpose Statement

Definitions supporting the form-based code have been added to Chapter 2, completing the consulting team's cross-reference of the new standards against the existing definitions. The form-based code purpose statement has also been revised to read more clearly for a lay audience (primarily in Section 600, with minor updates in Sections 604 and 608).

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17. Zoning Permit Extensions (502.A.9): A second one-year extension is available for larger projects (up to three years total) where substantial improvement has occurred; not available for projects without a principal structure.

18. Access to Public Roads (509.B.2): The Zoning Administrator may approve walkway connections to a sidewalk or street in the City's right-of-way.
19. Application Response Timelines (504, 512, 513, 514, 516): Standardized to 10 days for completeness and 30 days to approve or deny.
20. Minor Site Plan Amendments – Change of Use (502.F.11(b)): Staff may administratively approve a change of use that increases the parking requirement where existing on-site spaces already meet the new requirement without a waiver and no other major-amendment criteria are triggered.

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

21. 802 Homes Catalogue Exemption from Design Review (620.B): New language exempts a new building that the Administrative Officer determines is selected from and conforms to the 802 Homes Catalogue from DRB design review, subject to three conditions: the parcel contains no 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 catalogue plan set annotated to demonstrate conformance with all dimensional and use standards; and all other development review requirements remain in effect. The intent is that these catalogue designs are pre-vetted for design quality and do not need additional local design scrutiny. (Reviewed at the June 4th meeting; included here for completeness.)
22. Primary Pedestrian Entrance in R1 and R2 (618.H.1 / 619.H.1): The requirement that the principal building's primary pedestrian entrance face the street has been broadened, based on feedback from the 802 Homes team and PC member input, to accommodate certain catalogue home designs (including rotated layouts). The standard now offers three compliance paths: an entrance facing the street; an entrance accessed through a porch, deck, or stoop with an entry or defined access way facing the street; or an entrance on a side elevation within ten feet of the front building facade. Because these are independent alternatives, a design needs to satisfy only one.

Chapter 7 – Development Standards

23. Parking Waiver Criteria (703.L): Waiver and joint-parking provisions reorganized into a standalone Section 703.L, with the off-site distance increased from 200 to 600 feet, a condition preventing waiver-relied-upon spaces from being gated or reserved out of availability, and a new pathway for unbundled residential parking. (Confirmed acceptable by the Planning Commission on May 7th.)
24. Long-Term Bicycle Storage (703.M.2): Closes a gap by requiring that shared bicycle storage rooms actually contain racks (one per required space), meeting APBP guidance and excluding "Racks to Avoid." (Bicycle standards renumbered from 703.L to 703.M as part of the waiver reorganization.)
25. Window Wells (706.C.6): New language allows a window well within a setback no closer than three feet from the property line. (Confirmed acceptable by the Planning Commission on May 7th.)
26. Signs (Section 714): Erroneous Non-Essex Junction district references removed; Directional Sign definition (714.C.14) updated; projection standards adjusted for sloped surfaces.

27. Stormwater Management (Section 716): The stormwater regulations have been reorganized and combined under Section 716. In addition, requirements for Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control (EPSC) for projects of various scales have been clarified and strengthened.
28. Landscaping (719.E): Reorganized into numbered subsections (applicability, plan preparation, minimum cost) with no substantive change; new 719.E.1 confirms the minimum landscaping cost requirements do not apply in the VC and TOD districts (which use the Landscape Performance Score), while the percentage-of-construction-cost standard continues to apply elsewhere, including for primarily interior site plan amendments. (Reflects the Planning Commission's May 7th direction to leave the underlying applicability standard as written.)
29. Driveway Apron Surfacing (703.K.3): The driveway surfacing standard has been revised. The current code allows residential driveways serving up to five homes to be gravel but requires the apron to be paved 20 feet beyond the right-of-way, which forces most of a driveway to be paved on shallow lots even though the only purpose is to keep gravel off the sidewalk and road. The revised standard requires a short paved apron, the greater of five feet from the nearest road surface, sidewalk, or shared-use path, or the right-of-way line, with an additional 10 feet of paving where the average grade just inside the right-of-way (measured over a 15-foot run) exceeds 5 percent, and preserves DRB waiver authority. This follows the regional norm among neighboring Vermont municipalities.
30. Minimum Driveway Width for Small Residential (705.B): A new provision allows residential uses up to a four-family dwelling to use a single-lane, two-way driveway with a minimum width of 10 feet, and clarifies that the parking-lot aisle width standards of Section 703.C.2 do not set the minimum width for these driveways. The de facto 24-foot requirement came from the aisle standards being applied by default in the absence of an express residential driveway minimum; this is most relevant where parking is at the side or rear of a home. A companion passing-area/turnout provision (705.B.5) addresses longer shared driveways, and a conforming note was added to Section 703.C.2. (These two driveway items were listed as "pending technical review" in the June 4th memo and have now been drafted and integrated.)
31. Section 724 – Farming, Agriculture, and Poultry: Section 724 has been substantially revised to comply with Vermont Act 166 (2026), which restores and expands the state farming exemption under 24 V.S.A. § 4413(d) and adds a poultry mandate under 24 V.S.A. § 4412(15). The revised section preserves as much municipal authority as the statute allows while meeting its requirements: it retains a general prohibition outside the agricultural districts, recognizes the state farming exemption (including the carve-out allowing municipal regulation of livestock on farms under one contiguous acre), expressly carves out plant cultivation as required by statute (while excluding cannabis and hemp and preserving generally applicable health and safety standards such as the visibility triangle), and addresses poultry by deferring to Municipal Code Chapter 17 and the statute. Conforming updates were made to the Section 201 definitions and the Section 622 use chart. The corresponding amendments to Municipal Code Chapter 17 (the backyard chicken ordinance) are still being drafted and are not part of this LDC package.
32. VTrans Town Road and Bridge Standards (Appendix A, Section 122): A reference to the VTrans Town Road and Bridge Standards has been added to Appendix A.

Chapter 11

33. The Sewer Regulations have been revised for clarity. The intention is to remove some sewer requirements in the Land Development Code and relocate to the standalone Sewer Ordinance. In order to retain the regulations in the gap between the adoption of the Land Development Code and the adoption of the Sewer Ordinance edits; an addendum has been added to Chapter 11 with language that will be moved to the Sewer Ordinance. It is intended that if the standalone Sewer Ordinance is adopted prior to the adoption of the LDC amendments, the addendum will be removed in from the final copy.

Chapter 14

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

Formatting and Technical Corrections

35. Various formatting and cross-reference corrections throughout, including the Food Truck definition italics (201.C.103); renaming Section 503 to "Approval of Subdivisions"; Table of Contents page numbering; the "HC"-to-"HA" reference in 704.D.10; cross-references in 714.C.10.a.ii and 714.C.10.d; a typo in 601.F; clarification in 502.F.8 that Chapter 6 waivers apply; parking waiver references in 703.K.1 and 703.K.3; a missing word in 502.A.2.c; and Chapter 9 subchapter numbering.

COST:

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

RECOMMENDATION:

If the Planning Commission is satisfied with the draft Land Development Code amendments and the accompanying report prepared pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4441(c), staff recommends approving the report and directing staff to warn a public hearing for September 3, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

I move that the Planning Commission approve the Report Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4441(c) for the proposed 2026 Land Development Code amendments and direct staff to warn a public hearing on the proposed amendments for September 3, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Public Engagement Summary (as of August 6, 2026)
2. Memo on peer municipalities' unit mix requirements
3. **Draft** Report to Commissioner of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4441(c)
4. Draft Land Development Code Amendments (track changes PDF)
5. Draft Land Development Code Amendments (clean PDF)



MEMO

To: Planning Commission

From: Chris Yuen, Community Development Director

Meeting Date: August 11, 2026

Agenda Item: 2026 Land Development Code (LDC) Amendments – Updated Draft

ISSUE:

Staff have prepared an updated draft of the Land Development Code (LDC) amendments for Planning Commission review and advance to public hearing if ready.

DISCUSSION:

Background

This memorandum summarizes the full set of proposed 2026 LDC amendments as they currently stand. It is written to be understandable on its own, including for readers who are seeing this work for the first time, and it reflects the changes integrated since the July 2nd meeting, the consulting team's responses to outstanding questions, and ongoing technical review.

An updated draft of the amendments is provided separately by email in three formats: a Microsoft Word version with track changes, a PDF with markup, and a clean PDF without markup. The Word version allows commissioners to toggle the tracked changes on and off.

Updated Schedule

The proposed schedule is as follows:

- August: Planning Commission reviews a refined ("good copy") draft on August 11th.
- September: Planning Commission Public Hearing- if the Commission is satisfied with the August draft the Planning Commission can warn a hearing for September 3rd.
- October: City Council Public Hearing and potential adoption- if no major changes result from the Planning Commission hearing, the City Council could hold a Public Hearing and adopt the Land Development Code edits on October 14th.

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19. Application Response Timelines (504, 512, 513, 514, 516): Standardized to 10 days for completeness and 30 days to approve or deny.
20. Minor Site Plan Amendments – Change of Use (502.F.11(b)): Staff may administratively approve a change of use that increases the parking requirement where existing on-site spaces already meet the new requirement without a waiver and no other major-amendment criteria are triggered.

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

21. 802 Homes Catalogue Exemption from Design Review (620.B): New language exempts a new building that the Administrative Officer determines is selected from and conforms to the 802 Homes Catalogue from DRB design review, subject to three conditions: the parcel contains no 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 catalogue plan set annotated to demonstrate conformance with all dimensional and use standards; and all other development review requirements remain in effect. The intent is that these catalogue designs are pre-vetted for design quality and do not need additional local design scrutiny. (Reviewed at the June 4th meeting; included here for completeness.)
22. Primary Pedestrian Entrance in R1 and R2 (618.H.1 / 619.H.1): The requirement that the principal building's primary pedestrian entrance face the street has been broadened, based on feedback from the 802 Homes team and PC member input, to accommodate certain catalogue home designs (including rotated layouts). The standard now offers three compliance paths: an entrance facing the street; an entrance accessed through a porch, deck, or stoop with an entry or defined access way facing the street; or an entrance on a side elevation within ten feet of the front building facade. Because these are independent alternatives, a design needs to satisfy only one.

Chapter 7 – Development Standards

23. Parking Waiver Criteria (703.L): Waiver and joint-parking provisions reorganized into a standalone Section 703.L, with the off-site distance increased from 200 to 600 feet, a condition preventing waiver-relied-upon spaces from being gated or reserved out of availability, and a new pathway for unbundled residential parking. (Confirmed acceptable by the Planning Commission on May 7th.)
24. Long-Term Bicycle Storage (703.M.2): Closes a gap by requiring that shared bicycle storage rooms actually contain racks (one per required space), meeting APBP guidance and excluding "Racks to Avoid." (Bicycle standards renumbered from 703.L to 703.M as part of the waiver reorganization.)
25. Window Wells (706.C.6): New language allows a window well within a setback no closer than three feet from the property line. (Confirmed acceptable by the Planning Commission on May 7th.)
26. Signs (Section 714): Erroneous Non-Essex Junction district references removed; Directional Sign definition (714.C.14) updated; projection standards adjusted for sloped surfaces.

27. Stormwater Management (Section 716): The stormwater regulations have been reorganized and combined under Section 716. In addition, requirements for Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control (EPSC) for projects of various scales have been clarified and strengthened.
28. Landscaping (719.E): Reorganized into numbered subsections (applicability, plan preparation, minimum cost) with no substantive change; new 719.E.1 confirms the minimum landscaping cost requirements do not apply in the VC and TOD districts (which use the Landscape Performance Score), while the percentage-of-construction-cost standard continues to apply elsewhere, including for primarily interior site plan amendments. (Reflects the Planning Commission's May 7th direction to leave the underlying applicability standard as written.)
29. Driveway Apron Surfacing (703.K.3): The driveway surfacing standard has been revised. The current code allows residential driveways serving up to five homes to be gravel but requires the apron to be paved 20 feet beyond the right-of-way, which forces most of a driveway to be paved on shallow lots even though the only purpose is to keep gravel off the sidewalk and road. The revised standard requires a short paved apron, the greater of five feet from the nearest road surface, sidewalk, or shared-use path, or the right-of-way line, with an additional 10 feet of paving where the average grade just inside the right-of-way (measured over a 15-foot run) exceeds 5 percent, and preserves DRB waiver authority. This follows the regional norm among neighboring Vermont municipalities.
30. Minimum Driveway Width for Small Residential (705.B): A new provision allows residential uses up to a four-family dwelling to use a single-lane, two-way driveway with a minimum width of 10 feet, and clarifies that the parking-lot aisle width standards of Section 703.C.2 do not set the minimum width for these driveways. The de facto 24-foot requirement came from the aisle standards being applied by default in the absence of an express residential driveway minimum; this is most relevant where parking is at the side or rear of a home. A companion passing-area/turnout provision (705.B.5) addresses longer shared driveways, and a conforming note was added to Section 703.C.2. (These two driveway items were listed as "pending technical review" in the June 4th memo and have now been drafted and integrated.)
31. Section 724 – Farming, Agriculture, and Poultry: Section 724 has been substantially revised to comply with Vermont Act 166 (2026), which restores and expands the state farming exemption under 24 V.S.A. § 4413(d) and adds a poultry mandate under 24 V.S.A. § 4412(15). The revised section preserves as much municipal authority as the statute allows while meeting its requirements: it retains a general prohibition outside the agricultural districts, recognizes the state farming exemption (including the carve-out allowing municipal regulation of livestock on farms under one contiguous acre), expressly carves out plant cultivation as required by statute (while excluding cannabis and hemp and preserving generally applicable health and safety standards such as the visibility triangle), and addresses poultry by deferring to Municipal Code Chapter 17 and the statute. Conforming updates were made to the Section 201 definitions and the Section 622 use chart. The corresponding amendments to Municipal Code Chapter 17 (the backyard chicken ordinance) are still being drafted and are not part of this LDC package.
32. VTrans Town Road and Bridge Standards (Appendix A, Section 122): A reference to the VTrans Town Road and Bridge Standards has been added to Appendix A.

Chapter 11

33. The Sewer Regulations have been revised for clarity. The intention is to remove some sewer requirements in the Land Development Code and relocate to the standalone Sewer Ordinance. In order to retain the regulations in the gap between the adoption of the Land Development Code and the adoption of the Sewer Ordinance edits; an addendum has been added to Chapter 11 with language that will be moved to the Sewer Ordinance. It is intended that if the standalone Sewer Ordinance is adopted prior to the adoption of the LDC amendments, the addendum will be removed in from the final copy.

Chapter 14

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

Formatting and Technical Corrections

35. Various formatting and cross-reference corrections throughout, including the Food Truck definition italics (201.C.103); renaming Section 503 to "Approval of Subdivisions"; Table of Contents page numbering; the "HC"-to-"HA" reference in 704.D.10; cross-references in 714.C.10.a.ii and 714.C.10.d; a typo in 601.F; clarification in 502.F.8 that Chapter 6 waivers apply; parking waiver references in 703.K.1 and 703.K.3; a missing word in 502.A.2.c; and Chapter 9 subchapter numbering.

COST:

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

RECOMMENDATION:

If the Planning Commission is satisfied with the draft Land Development Code amendments and the accompanying report prepared pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4441(c), staff recommends approving the report and directing staff to warn a public hearing for September 3, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

I move that the Planning Commission approve the Report Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4441(c) for the proposed 2026 Land Development Code amendments and direct staff to warn a public hearing on the proposed amendments for September 3, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Public Engagement Summary (as of August 6, 2026)
2. Memo on peer municipalities' unit mix requirements
3. **Draft** Report to Commissioner of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4441(c)
4. Draft Land Development Code Amendments (track changes PDF)
5. Draft Land Development Code Amendments (clean PDF)

Form-Based Code Public Comments Received as of August 6th, 2026

The following comments were received in response to public outreach on the form-based code proposal (utility bill insert, news release, newsletter, web pages, and tabling at National Night Out). Comments are reproduced verbatim. Names, email addresses, street addresses, and other personal identifying information have been removed. Comments are presented in the order received.

Comment 1 — received July 8, 2026

Subject: Design of new building replacing Lincoln Inn

Feedback, as requested by “Form-Based Code” email:

I would love to see three changes when the Lincoln Inn is torn down. I do not support planning an identical building across the street:

1. More green up front. There is too much concrete. There must be more imagination regarding some sort of green space in front of the building. There seems to be room to pull the building away from the road. I also see residents having trouble walking their dogs, so their dogs urinate on the concrete areas (sometimes).
2. The model of small stores/restaurants on the first floor has history now. Would y'all agree it's a mixed review? Perhaps Essex Junction can design for a larger space on the bottom, attracting an organization that needs a larger space?
3. Is there a way to capture a bit of the building's history?

Thanks for asking for feedback,

[Name and address removed]

Comment 2 — received July 9, 2026

Subject: Comments: new rules / new buildings

Greeting EJPC members -

I'm writing to provide comments on the New Rules that are being proposed for New Buildings.

1. It's not clear by the example provided in the mailed flier where in the Village there could be 9 or 10 story buildings based on the example provided (see included image). The buildings in this image appear to be 6 stories tall (with a set back 7th story). The street appears to be four lanes for vehicles, plus two lanes for bikes, plus sidewalks. It's not clear to me where in the proposed zones the streets have a "W" this large and as such it is not clear to me where in the Village buildings will be allowed to be H = 6 stories (let alone > 6).

A much more useful presentation of the proposal, I believe, would be to provide a 3D rendering of the impacted zones in the Village showing new buildings constructed to their maximum "H" based on the local "W". This would allow Villagers to more properly assess the impact of the proposal.

2. How much capacity will be added under this maximum buildout scenario? What data indicates that this much new housing is needed? What is the current residential occupancy rate in the Village and surrounding area? What will be the impact of this population growth on Village/town/district resources?

3. What is the current vacancy rate of store fronts in the Village and surrounding areas. The latter seems relevant as new construction in the Village center seems to have difficulty attracting/sustaining businesses, thus is additional spaces could be underutilized as well.

4. When will be the meeting to discuss this proposition?

[Name and address removed]

Comment 3 — received July 10, 2026

Subject: Input on Connect the Junction

I'm writing to provide input on the New Rules that are being proposed for New Buildings.

1. The example provided in the flyer is very deceiving. The buildings in the image appear to be 6 stories tall (with a set back 7th story). The street appears to be 4 lanes for vehicles, plus two lanes for bikes, plus sidewalks on both sides. The flyer strongly implies that for any building in the proposed zone, the H (height) of the building will equal the W (width) of the street, including bike lanes and possibly sidewalks; however, there is currently no place in the proposed zones where the building in this image with a W large enough to support a $H > 6$ stories would fit, much less anywhere that would support the 9 or 10 story buildings that the zoning changes are proposing. Yet this proposed H change, plus real estate listings claiming that certain lots being offered for sale are zoned for 10 stories, makes me believe that zoning permits are going to be issued up to the maximum height regardless of the width of the street.

A much more useful presentation of the proposal is to provide a 3D rendering of the proposed zones in the Village showing new buildings that would be constructed to their maximum "H" based on the local "W". This would allow Villagers to more properly assess the impact of the proposal.

2. What data indicates that this much new housing is needed? What is the current residential occupancy rate in the Village and surrounding area? How much capacity will be added under maximum buildout? What will be the impact of this population growth on Village/town/district resources and assuming that it will be significant, will the developers be responsible for paying the full amount of the infrastructure improvements needed to support their projects? Are schools being included in the planning process so that they will be able to accommodate the increased population? What will be the impact of this population growth on traffic?

3. What is the current vacancy rate of store fronts in the Village and surrounding areas? The latter seems relevant as new construction in the City Center seems to have difficulty attracting and retaining businesses. Why would you assume that it would be different for any additional buildings?

4. Where are these new walkable spaces mentioned in the flyer? I've heard repeated talk of turning a portion of Main Street at 5 Corners into a walk street. The impact on the surrounding neighborhoods as traffic is re-routed to accommodate this would be significant. And also, what about the Main Street block between Railroad Ave. and 5 Corners is there that makes anyone think that it would and should become a vibrant walk street?

5. When will there be more meetings to discuss this proposition?

[Name and address removed]

Comment 4 — received July 14, 2026

Subject: Form Based Code Map marking

Hello,

I was looking at the website about the proposed form based code. The site is well laid out and easy to navigate and very clear... Thank you! I did have a question about the map shown here:

[web page link]

What do the thick red lines indicate?

Thanks,

[Name removed]

National Night Out Engagement Summary

Planning Commission volunteers engaged with members of the public on Tuesday, August 4th as a part of National Night Out. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive in support of the drafted regulations. 100% of participants indicated that they support the proposed changes as seen in the images below.



MEMO

To: Essex Junction Planning Commission

From: Maya Balassa, CCRPC

Meeting Date: August 11, 2026

Agenda Item: 2026 Land Development Code (LDC) Amendments – Updated Draft

Introduction

Staff reviewed how five Chittenden County municipalities regulate this issue: Winooski, South Burlington, Williston, Essex, and Shelburne. The review focused on three questions.

1. Does the bylaw require developments to provide a diversity of unit types?
2. Is there a project size threshold at which any such requirement is triggered?
3. Do inclusionary zoning standards include regulations about unit type and size?

Each municipality's regulations are summarized in comparison table with the differences summarized below.

Comparison of Unit Type and Size Regulation in Selected Chittenden County Municipalities

Municipality	Unit type mix required?	Threshold	Bedroom diversity provisions	Inclusionary bedroom / size standards	Incentives tied to unit size / type
Winooski (ULUDR, eff. 6/8/2026)	No general mandate	Inclusionary applies at 20+ units (Sec. 5.16.B)	Only via inclusionary: average bedroom count of affordable units must equal or exceed market-rate average (Sec. 5.16.E.4); 3+ bedroom affordable units count as two toward the requirement (Sec. 5.16.D.4)	Affordable units must be at least 80% of average market-rate unit size (Sec. 5.16.E.5)	Incentives tied to projects that include 3+ bedrooms per unit (5.14.D.2)(5.14.E)
South Burlington (LDR, adopted 9/2/2025)	Yes; affirmative mandate	Subdivisions and General PUDs with more than 4 units must provide 2 or more dwelling unit types (Sec. 15.A.13; Sec. 15.C.06(G)(6))	Bedroom count per unit qualifies as a dimension of unit type in multi-family buildings of more than 4 units (Sec. 15.A.13); Traditional Neighborhood Developments: 3+ housing types in projects with 10+ acres (no type over 50%), 2+ types in projects with 4-10 acres (neither type over 60%) (Sec. 15.C.05(F)(8))	Inclusionary at 10+ units (Sec. 18.01(B)); average bedrooms of inclusionary units must equal or exceed market-rate average (Sec. 18.01(C)(5)(c)(iii)(I)); minimum habitable areas 450 sf studio to 1,200 sf for 3+ bedrooms (Sec. 18.01(C)(5)(c)(i))	Inclusionary set-asides scale from 10% (10-24 rental units) to 20% (25+) (Sec. 18.01(C)(1)); bonuses under Sec. 18.01(D)
Williston (WDB,	No; explicitly not required,	None	Incentive only: "Offer Housing Choices" growth	None; inclusionary (5+ dwellings, Sec. 11.3)	Inclusionary compliance exempts projects from

Municipality	Unit type mix required?	Threshold	Bedroom diversity provisions	Inclusionary bedroom / size standards	Incentives tied to unit size / type
amended 4/1/2025)	"strongly encouraged" (Sec. 38.10.1)		management criterion awards 0-20 points for a mix of dwelling types and sizes (Secs. 11.7.3, 11.8.2)	has no bedroom parity; affordable units may differ in floor area (Sec. 11.3.3.2)	growth management scoring (Sec. 11.3.4.1); 20% affordable earns 40% density and 1 additional floor (Secs. 19.2.6.2-3)
Essex Town (Zoning Regulations, eff. 10/9/2023)	No	None	None; bedroom count used as a ceiling in PUD-C (residential limited to congregate and 1-2 bedroom units, Sec. 6.6)	No inclusionary zoning	Voluntary density bonuses up to 25% (25% of bonus units affordable, Sec. 6.4(K)(3)); up to 400% for all multi-unit projects with 25% of total units affordable (Sec. 6.4(K)); ETC design guidance encourages a diverse housing mix (Table 2.16(A)(8))
Shelburne (ULUR, adopted 1/28/2026)	No; district purpose language encourages missing middle types (Secs. 3302.A(2), 3302.E)	Inclusionary applies at 20+ lots or units (Sec. 5302.A)	Only via inclusionary: at least 75% of for-sale inclusionary units must have 2+ bedrooms (Sec. 5304.K)	Minimum habitable areas: 600 sf 1-bedroom / 800 sf 2-bedroom / 1,000 sf 3-bedroom (Sec. 5304.J); 10% set-aside with tiered AMI distribution (Secs. 5304.A, 5304.F)	Density bonus of 1.5x the excess inclusionary percentage, up to 25% (Sec. 5308.A); exemption for projects with 50% of units at or below 150% AMI (Sec. 5302.C)

This is for information only; no action is needed unless the Planning Commission wishes to further adjust the unit mix requirement from the drafted 25%.



MEMO

To: Essex Junction Planning Commission and Interested Parties
From: Chris Yuen, Community Development Director
Meeting Date: September 3, 2026
Agenda Item: 2026 Land Development Code Amendments – Report Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4441(c)

This report is prepared in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4441(c), which provides that “*when considering an amendment to a bylaw, the planning commission shall prepare and approve a written report on the proposal.*” The report is required to provide a brief explanation of the proposed amendments, including the statement of purpose required for notice under 24 V.S.A. § 4444, and findings on how the proposal (1) conforms with or furthers the goals and policies of the municipal plan, including the effect of the proposal on the availability of safe and affordable housing, and 24 V.S.A. §§ 4412, 4413, and 4414; (2) is compatible with the proposed future land uses and densities of the municipal plan; and (3) carries out, as applicable, any specific proposals for planned community facilities.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the proposed 2026 Land Development Code (LDC) amendments is to implement the **Connect the Junction Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Master Plan**, adopted by the City Council in December 2025, and to make a number of other, more technical corrections and updates to the LDC to meet the requirements of state planning law (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117) and to comply with the City’s Comprehensive Plan. The centerpiece of the amendments is a new **form-based code** for the Village Center (VC) and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) districts (Sections 604 and 608), which replaces the current subjective “harmonious with its surroundings” design review standard with clear, measurable standards governing building height in relation to street width, setbacks and buffers next to residential neighborhoods, building frontage and articulation, parking location and screening, landscaping, and residential unit mix. The amendments also include technical updates to development review procedures and timelines, definitions, parking and driveway standards, sign standards, and agricultural use standards required to conform to Vermont Act 166 (2026), together with updates to the City’s sewer and water system provisions.

Brief Explanation of the Proposed Amendments

1. Form-Based Code for the Village Center and TOD Districts (Sections 604, 608, with supporting definitions in Section 201 and Section 600)

A form-based code regulates the physical form of buildings, rather than only their use, through objective and measurable standards. The proposed standards include:

- Building height in proportion to street width (the “street room”), requiring upper-story setbacks where a building would otherwise sit tall relative to its street (§§ 604.E.1 / 608.E.1);
- Increased setbacks and landscaped buffers where a VC or TOD parcel abuts a lower-scale residential district, with a 30-foot setback and buffer where the height difference is four or more stories (§§ 604.D.3 / 608.D.3);
- Frontage type standards governing how a building meets the sidewalk, encouraging storefronts, entrances, and windows and discouraging blank walls and parking facing the street (§§ 604.E.2 / 608.E.2);
- Façade composition, materials, and articulation standards for larger buildings (§§ 604.F / 608.F);
- Parking location and screening standards, including a new pathway addressing off-site parking for residential development in the Village Center (§§ 604.G / 608.G, referencing Chapter 7);
- A points-based Landscape Performance Score, with a minimum score of 30 points, and a defined method for applying the score to additions and retrofits (§§ 604.H / 608.H);
- A minimum unit mix requirement of 25 percent two-or-more-bedroom units for larger residential developments (20 units or more), with a Development Review Board (DRB) alternative-mix pathway (§§ 604.D.2 / 608.D.2);
- Scalable applicability standards and a waivers and exemptions provision for retrofits and additions (§§ 604.C / 608.C);
- Retention of transit and bicycle infrastructure standards for large-parcel redevelopment in the TOD district, including coordination with Green Mountain Transit (GMT) on new bus stops and five-foot bike lanes where needed for district connectivity.

2. Other Technical Amendments (by chapter)

- Chapter 2 (Definitions): New and revised definitions supporting the form-based code, the 802 Homes Catalogue, and other technical corrections (§ 201).
- Chapter 5 (Development Review Procedures): Clarified zoning permit requirements, a second permit extension option for larger projects, allowed for the Zoning Administrator to approve walkway connections, standardized 10-day completeness and 30-day decision timelines, allowed for staff to administratively approve a change of use that increases the parking where the required parking already exists, and consolidation of prior stormwater- and land-disturbance-related review sections into Section 713 (§§ 501–514, 516).
- Chapter 6 (Zoning Districts): An 802 Homes Catalogue exemption from design review subject to specified conditions, and a broadened primary-entrance standard in the R1 and R2 districts to accommodate certain catalogue home designs (§§ 600, 618, 619, 620).
- Chapter 7 (Development Standards): Reorganized parking waiver and bicycle storage standards, revised driveway apron and minimum driveway width standards for small residential uses, reorganization of the Stormwater Management regulations with increased rigidity for impervious sign standard corrections, allowance of window wells within the setback, landscaping reorganization, and a substantially revised Section 724 (Raising, Keeping, or Harboring Livestock) to conform to Vermont Act 166 (2026), which amends the state agricultural exemption under 24 V.S.A. § 4413(d) and adds a poultry standard under 24 V.S.A. § 4412(15).
- Chapters 9, 11, and 14 and Appendices A, B, and C: Subdivision infrastructure dedication numbering corrections, updated sewer use, private sewage disposal, and sewer allocation

provisions, updated water system delinquent-payment provisions, and a reference to VTrans Town Road and Bridge Standards.

Findings Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4441(c)

(1) Conformance with the Goals and Policies of the Municipal Plan, Including the Availability of Safe and Affordable Housing, and 24 V.S.A. §§ 4412, 4413, and 4414

The City's current Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2019 and remains in effect while the City undertakes a scheduled update (the 2027 Comprehensive Plan Update). Both the 2019 Comprehensive Plan and Connect the Junction Master Plan, adopted by City Council in December 2025. The Connect the Junction Master Plan is the City's implementing plan for the City Center and Pearl Street Corridor. The plan calls for a denser center that includes taller buildings in some locations to help meet the City's share of the region's housing targets. The proposed form-based code is the direct zoning implementation of that plan: it replaces a subjective, unpredictable design review standard with objective standards intended to allow the additional housing and mixed-use development the plan calls for, while managing the transition to adjacent residential neighborhoods through required setbacks, buffers, and stepbacks.

The 2019 Comprehensive Plan also supports the proposed Land Development Code changes through supporting addition housing, economic development, better transportation, and to grow thoughtfully. The following are objectives and goals from the 2019 Comprehensive Plan that support the draft edits:

- Objective 1.2: Encourage the development of a diverse array of residential units in the Village Center and Pearl St. Districts.
- Goal 2: Promote thoughtful growth.
- Objective 2.3: Promote the redevelopment of underutilized properties in the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Village Center District.
- Objective 2.4: Continue improvements in the public realm for a high-quality pedestrian experience.
- Objective 2.6: Continue to work with the community through a charrette process to develop design standards for the Downtown.
- Objective 1.2: Encourage the development of a variety of residential units in the Village Center and Pearl Street Districts.
- Objective 1.4 Encourage a mix of land uses and mixed-use buildings to enhance the streetscape and add value aesthetically, economically, and socially to the Village Center.

On this basis, the proposed amendments conform with and further the housing, transportation, and land use goals and policies of the municipal plan.

Effect on the availability of safe and affordable housing: The proposed amendments are expected to have a positive effect on the availability of housing. The form-based code is designed to enable the additional housing density contemplated by the Connect the Junction plan, including greater building height along the Pearl Street corridor. The minimum unit mix requirement (25 percent two-or-more-

bedroom units with 20 or more units) is intended to broaden the range of household sizes the City's housing stock can serve. The 802 Homes Catalogue exemption from design review reduces regulatory cost and delay for a State-vetted set of attainable housing designs. Revised parking standards and revised driveway standards for small residential uses are intended to reduce the cost of building housing without compromising safety. None of the proposed amendments reduce the availability of safe or affordable housing.

24 V.S.A. § 4412 (Required Provisions): The proposed amendments do not remove or narrow any of the required provisions of § 4412, including provisions for accessory dwelling units, group homes, mobile home parks, and child care facilities. The revised Section 724 (Raising, Keeping, or Harboring Livestock) is drafted to conform to the poultry-keeping standard added at 24 V.S.A. § 4412(15) by Act 166 (2026).

24 V.S.A. § 4413 (Limitations on Municipal Bylaws): Section 724 has been substantially revised to conform to the expanded state agricultural exemption at 24 V.S.A. § 4413(d), as amended by Act 166 (2026).

24 V.S.A. § 4414 (Zoning Bylaws; Specific Types of Regulations): The amendments are consistent with § 4414, including its provisions governing planned unit developments, accessory dwelling units, and other conditional and specific uses. The form-based code standards for the VC and TOD districts, the revised planned unit development review procedures in Section 511, and the revised accessory apartment and home occupation provisions are drafted within the scope of the City's authority under § 4414.

(2) Compatibility with the Proposed Future Land Uses and Densities of the Municipal Plan

The proposed amendments are compatible with, and are intended to implement, the future land use categories in the 2019 Comprehensive Plan and the regional future land use map. The Form-Based Code regulations implement the Comprehensive Plan future land use categories of Village Center and Transit-Oriented Development zoning districts. Those zoning districts are in the Downtown Center category in the Regional Future Land Use Map of CCRPC's ECOS Plan. While the future land use map of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan generally follows the zoning map in the Comprehensive Plan, the Comprehensive Plan states that the future land use "may allow for greater densities and building heights in certain core mixed-use zoning districts to realize the necessary energy, social community, and village investment goals needed to enhance the vibrancy of the Village core."

Alongside the Form-Based Code, the technical amendments to Chapters 5, 6, and 7 do not change the future land use pattern or density of any zoning district.

(3) Specific Proposals for Planned Community Facilities

The proposed amendments carry out specific proposals for planned community facilities identified in the Connect the Junction TOD Master Plan. For redevelopment of large parcels in the TOD district, the amendments retain and carry forward standards requiring new streets to incorporate bus stops coordinated with Green Mountain Transit, with written GMT comments required as part of review, and to

include five-foot bike lanes where needed for connectivity across the district. These standards implement the plan's transit and multimodal infrastructure recommendations for the City Center and Pearl Street Corridor. The amendments to Chapter 11 (Sewer Regulations) and Chapter 14 (Water System Management and Use) do not propose new community facilities but update the regulatory framework governing existing public sewer and water infrastructure.

Availability

Copies of the proposed amendments are available on the City website (www.essexjunction.org) and by contacting Chris Yuen, Community Development Director, at cyuen@essexjunction.org.

DRAFT

City of Essex Junction

Planning Commission

Notice of Public Hearing

September 3, 2026



This meeting will be in-person at 2 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction, VT and available remotely.

Options to watch or join the meeting remotely:

Join Online: [Click here to join the meeting](#); or visit essexjunction.org for meeting connection information

Join Calling: (toll free audio only) 888-788-0099 | Meeting ID: 953 1240 7791; Passcode: 040339

The Essex Junction Planning Commission will hold **a public hearing on September 3rd at 6:30 PM** to receive public comment on proposed amendments to the Land Development Code. The centerpiece of the proposed amendments is a new form-based code for the Village Center and Transit Oriented Development districts, which replaces the current design review standard with clear, measurable requirements governing building height in relation to street width, setbacks and buffers next to residential neighborhoods, how buildings meet the sidewalk, building materials and articulation, parking location and screening, landscaping, and unit mix. The form-based code implements the Connect the Junction Transit Oriented Development Master Plan, adopted by the City Council in December 2025. The proposed amendments also include a number of other, more technical changes throughout the Land Development Code, including updates to definitions, development review procedures, application timelines, parking and driveway standards, sign standards, agricultural use standards to conform to Vermont Act 166 (2026), and sewer and water system provisions.

Copies of the proposed amendments, as well as a report on how the proposed amendments comply with State Statute and the City's Comprehensive Plan, are available on the City website (www.essexjunction.org), and/or by contacting Chris Yuen (Community Development Director) at cyuen@essexjunction.org. A list of the affected section headings follows, as required pursuant to Title 24, Chapter 117 V.S.A. Section 4444(b).

Land Development Code Sections:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 201 – Definitions | 508 – Approval of Activities Involving Private Water Supply |
| 303 – Development Review Board | 509 – Activities Involving Access to Public Roads |
| 501 – Procedures of General Applicability | 511 – General Review Procedures for Planned Unit Developments |
| 502 – Approval Procedures for Activities Requiring Review under Chapters 6 and 7 | 512 – Approval of Activities Involving a New Connection to the Public Storm Drainage System |
| 503 – Subdivisions | 513 – Approval of Activities Involving the Construction of a Stormwater System |
| 504 – Approval of Activities Involving Public Sewers | 514 – Approval of Activities Involving the Disturbance of More Than 0.5 Acre of Land |
| 507 – Approval of Activities Involving Public Water Lines | |

516 – Approval of Activities Involving
Development Within 200 Feet of a Waterway,
Floodplain, or Wetland

600 – Official Zoning Map

601 – Multi-Family Residential 1 (MF1)

602 – Multi-Family Residential 2 (MF2)

604 – Village Center (VC)

605 – Highway-Arterial District (HA)

608 – Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

612 – Planned Exposition (PE)

614 – Flood Plain (FP)

618 – Residential 1 (R1)

619 – Residential 2 (R2)

620 – Design Review Overlay District (DRO)

621 – Historic Preservation Overlay District
(HRO)

622 – Use Chart

703 – Parking and Loading

704 – Lighting

705 – Curb Cut and Access to Public Streets

706 – Accessory Uses and Structures

707 – Fences

713 – Stormwater Management

714 – Sign Standards

719 – Landscape and Tree Planting
Requirements

724 – Raising, Keeping, or Harboring Livestock

725 – Abandonment of Structures

906 – Streets

914 – Dedications of Public Infrastructure

915 – Private Infrastructure

1101 – Sewer Use Rules and Regulations

1102 – Private Sewage Disposal Systems and
Private Sewer Systems; Sewer Allocation

1414 – Delinquent Payments

Appendix B – City Council's Policy for Funding
Engineer Plan Review and Inspections

Appendix C – City Council's Policy for Funding
Development Review by the City Attorney

Notice Date – August 19, 2026

Public Works Specifications and Related
Policies:

Appendix A, Section 121 – Variations and
Waivers

Appendix A, Section 122 – Town Road and Bridge
Standards